



**PRESS STATEMENT**  
**STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ADDRESSING FGM/C**  
**WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015.**  
**NAIROBI, THE STANLEY HOTEL**

We the representatives of various media institutions in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania as well as representatives of various institutions mandated to work towards the elimination of FGMC including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The Italian Association for Women in Development (AIDOS) The Anti FGM Board in Kenya and the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), do affirm the need for equality of the rights of women.

We join the global community in recognizing Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGMC) as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. FGMC reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. The practice often infringes on the rights of children since it is nearly always carried out on minors and violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life. An estimated 100 million to 140 million girls and women are believed to have been subjected to FGM. They are predominately in sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab States. In Africa, more than three million girls have been estimated to be at risk for FGM annually. Indeed very recent estimates by The World health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank and the United Nations Population Division reveal that most of the high-FGM-prevalence countries also have high maternal mortality ratios and high numbers of maternal death.

Many International, regional as well as National legal instruments explicitly ban FGM/C. These instruments include the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have domesticated the provisions of these instruments in their domestic laws. We do recognize that the law in itself does not fully deter the practice and hence the need for a multi-pronged strategy in addressing the elimination of FGM/C. The role of media in combating social injustices and discrimination any society cannot be underrated. The media is key in shaping public opinion and attitudes, determining the public discourse and thereby shape peoples political, cultural and economic priorities. The media is also instrumental in influencing

public policy and challenging existing inequalities and norms through its agenda setting role. To this end, we affirm the role of media as a catalyst for social change.

The media in the East Africa region therefore has a critical role in supporting the campaign to end female Genital Mutilation and Cutting. We call on the media within the East African region to enhance its coverage of FGM/C, through the improvement of both quality and coverage of the practice. A sustained coverage of the health, social and psychological consequences of FGM/C, as well as highlighting existing best practices in the abandonment of FGM/C will not only shape what and how the public thinks about FGM/C, but it will also have a positive influence in behaviour change. If the media takes on the issue of FGM/C in its educative role we will definitely turn around the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action more quickly than the case has been in the last 20 years, through positive influence on the existing cultural climate.

We laud the efforts of the UNFPA- UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting in their multi-pronged strategy in addressing FGM/C, and specifically for paying attention to media as a social change agent. We call on all stakeholders to collaborate with media both at national and community levels, to strengthen awareness on FGM/C.

### **For Further Information**

Anti FGM Board: [ceoantifgmboard@gmail.com](mailto:ceoantifgmboard@gmail.com): tel 020-2242332

Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) [info@amwik.org](mailto:info@amwik.org) : tel 0722201958

**Signed**

Anti FGM Board

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Association of Media Women in Kenya

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Association of Italian Women in Development (AIDOS)

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UNICEF – UNFPA Joint Programme on FGM/C

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