

PRESS RELEASE

UNFPA partners with Finland to shape a more equal future for young women and girls in Tanzania

11 October 2021, Dar es Salaam – Today on the International Day of the Girl Child, UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, in Tanzania launched a \$6,154,748 programme, “*Chaguo Langu Haki Yangu – My Choice My Rights*” funded by the Embassy of Finland. The three and a half year programme will focus on empowering young women and adolescent girls, including those living with disabilities, to uphold their right to live free from violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. Project activities will focus primarily on Mara and Shinyanga Regions, mainland Tanzania, and Zanzibar.

Notwithstanding the progress and commitment by the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to tackle gender inequalities, gender-based violence remains a daily reality for many women. At the same time adolescence is also a period of increased vulnerabilities for girls. Nationally one in 10 women are subjected to FGM in Tanzania, despite its criminalization, with Mara region reporting one of the highest FGM prevalence rates in the country at 32 percent. More than half of adolescent girls are married by the age of 18 in Mara and Shinyanga regions. Driven by persistent discriminatory norms, gender-based violence and harmful practices deny women and girls their rights, choices and chances to thrive, and are barriers to the realization of national and global development goals and sustainable and inclusive development.

“Every young woman and girl has within her possibilities that should flourish as she moves into adulthood, shaping her future and, with it, the world,” said Jacqueline Mahon, UNFPA Representative in Tanzania. “UNFPA is committed to eliminating the obstacles that stand in the way of women and girls’ voices, choices, consent and equality. Their rights must be at centre of the better and more equal world we have collectively promised to deliver.”

In Mara and Shinyanga regions, UNFPA will build girls' and young women's agency to uphold their rights to live free from violence, and realize their potential, by leveraging existing structures, including Adolescent Girls Clubs, and initiatives such as Alternative Rites of Passage to FGM. In Zanzibar, the project will partner with faith-based leaders, who have been working with UNFPA as champions of ending gender-based violence for several years. Young women and girls, including persons with disabilities, will drive programme activities, identifying community needs and solutions, while commitment to uphold young women and girls' rights in project districts will be harnessed through extensive outreach at UNFPA-supported Community Knowledge Centres.



Police Gender and Children’s Desks and One Stop Centres, that provide survivors of justice with comprehensive support and protection services, duty bearers’ capacity, and national polices and laws that uphold women and girls’ rights will all be strengthened. The UNFPA-supported *Jumuishi – Inclusion –* database in Zanzibar will also be expanded to collect and analyse data on gender-based violence and harmful practices among persons living with disabilities in Shinyanga and Mara Regions, to ensure project activities meet the unique needs of this marginalized population.

Gender equality is a fundamental value and goal of the Finnish Foreign Policy. Finnish Ambassador Ms. Riitta Swan said: “When young women and girls cannot exercise their rights, including their right to live free from violence, their potential is squandered and economic growth and inclusive development suffer. We must work together, and do more and do it better, including with persons with disabilities, to deliver on our vision of a future where all young women and girls can live in peace, freedom and equality, reaching the furthest behind first and leaving no one behind.” With this new programme, Finland aims to ensure that women and girls, including those with disabilities, will be able to participate more fully in society and live free from violence.

The *My Choice My Rights* programme will support the coordination and implementation of the Five-Year National Plans of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children, in both the Tanzania mainland (2016/17-2021/22) and Zanzibar (2017-2022), and will be implemented in collaboration with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, including local government authorities.

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