








KENYA CASE STUDY

Review of Technology-Based Interventions
to Address Child Marriage and Female
Genital Mutilation

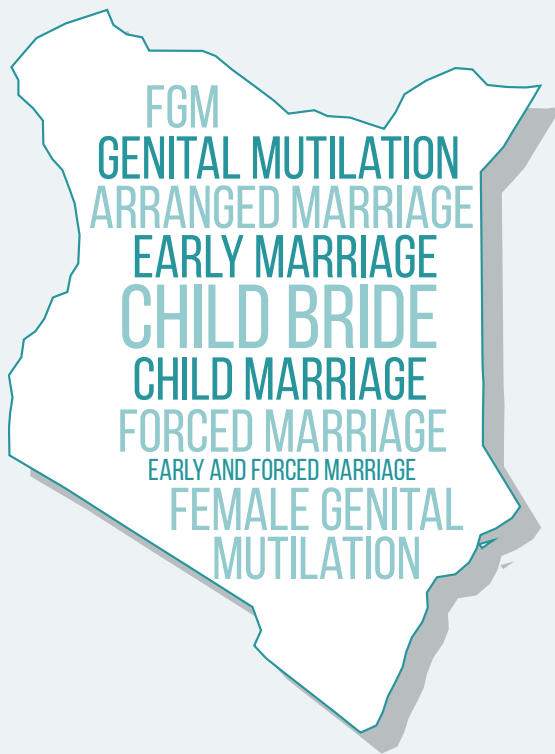
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KENYA OVERVIEW

	Child marriage prevalence¹ (girls married before the age of 18 years, as a proportion of all girls)	23%
	FGM prevalence² (proportion of women and girls aged 15–49 years)	21%
	Internet users³ (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	61% of men 42% of women
	Mobile phone ownership⁴ (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	94% of men 88% of women
	Level of government support for digital literacy⁵ (scale 0–3) ⁶	High: 3

NEWS ABOUT HARMFUL PRACTICES: WORD CLOUD MAPS AND NUMBERS OF REPORTS

FIGURE 1. GDELT word cloud. Most common words portrayed in the reports of the global media for both FGM and child marriage in Kenya (2014 – 2022)



Note: This word cloud map was produced with data from the Event Database of the GDELT project, which monitors the world's broadcast, print, and web news in over 100 languages; identifying the people, locations, institutions, topics, publications, sentiments, numbers, quotations, pictures and occurrences linked to events worldwide. After filtering the database for a comprehensive pool of keywords related to FGM and child marriage and technology in Kenya, the most common words portrayed in the reports related to these issues are mapped in a country word cloud. The bigger the font size, the more frequently the word appears.

FIGURE 2. Number of reports covering the topic of child marriage in Kenya, compared with other countries (2014–2022)

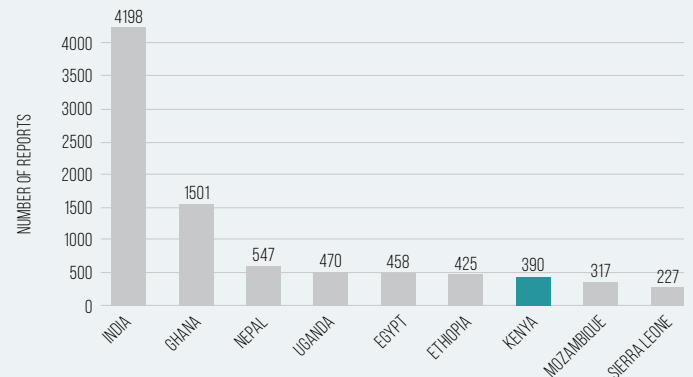
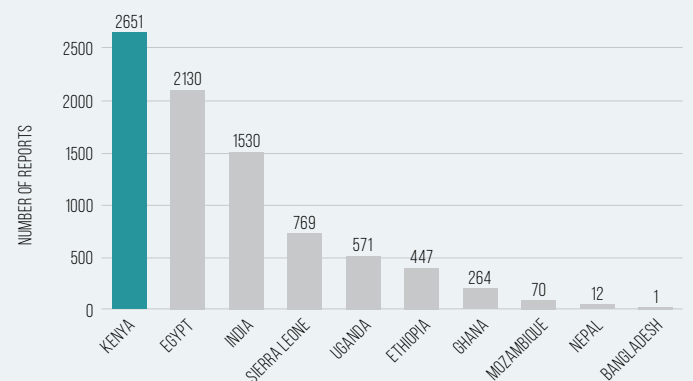


FIGURE 3. Number of reports covering the topic of FGM in Kenya, compared with other countries (2014–2022)



Note: After filtering the GDELT project database for the actors, actions and associated reports pertaining to FGM and/or child marriage in Ethiopia, it can be observed that there are a total of 425 reports corresponding to child marriage and 447 reports corresponding to FGM in the country.

THE CONTEXT OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND FGM IN THE COUNTRY

According to Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from 2014, 4.2 million girls and women alive in Kenya today wed before reaching 18 years of age, of which 1.1 million were married by the age of 15. Put differently, one in four young women in Kenya (23 per cent) marry during childhood. Vulnerability to this problem increases for populations in the lowest wealth quintiles, as it does for girls with no access to education or lower educational attainment levels, and for those living in rural areas. The phenomenon is further associated with a higher risk of gender-based violence; in fact, 39 per cent of girls who were married by age 18 have experienced intimate partner violence within the last 12 months, whereas 24 per cent of those married afterwards report the same experience.⁷

Regarding FGM, it is important to note that the Kenyan government has actively tried to mitigate the practice over the past few decades. For

example, FGM was legally banned in 2001,⁸ and a few years ago the national government set the ambitious goal to eliminate it by 2022.⁹ Despite these efforts, just over one in five girls (21 per cent) in Kenya have undergone FGM, a figure that varies based on ethnicity and region of the country. It is more common for FGM to occur among Muslim (51 per cent) and non-religious (33 per cent) communities.¹⁰ Unfortunately, there are reasons for concern that demand quick intervention. On one hand, the average age to be subjected to FGM has dropped from 12 to 9 years old,¹¹ and on the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have exacerbated both child marriage and FGM, at the same time as safe spaces for girls were decreasing and prevailing stigma increasing.¹² It is worth noting that while 10 per cent of girls and women in 2008 shared the opinion that FGM should continue, this percentage fell to 6 per cent in 2014.¹³

THE TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT IN KENYA

All around the world, young people are accessing information through digital technologies like never before, which opens opportunities for greater civic participation, increased knowledge, and empowerment. However, what the technological landscape offers to youth is different in each country. In Kenya, this landscape has quickly evolved

in the last few decades. To give an example, while only 36 per cent of the total population had access to electricity in 2011, in 2020 this number rose to 71.4 per cent.¹⁴ Even though it is estimated that, in 2020, 24.1 per cent of people had access to the internet (measured by the proportion of households that have access and that have used the internet in the past 12 months),¹⁵ the internet gender gap was reportedly reduced significantly in the last few years, decreasing from 31.2 per cent in 2021 to 12.2 per cent in 2022, meaning that, currently, 74 per cent of men and 65 per cent of women are internet users.¹⁶

Despite low internet penetration and limited access to electricity, cell phone usage is notably high in Kenya: in 2020 there were 114.2 subscriptions to public mobile telephone services (post-paid or prepaid) per 100 inhabitants. Mobile internet usage is made possible by an extensive network coverage, even available in most rural areas. According to data from the International Telecommunications Union, 94 per cent of Kenyans could connect to at least 3G mobile networks in 2020, and 77 per cent had 4G coverage.¹⁷ The presence of this infrastructure is reflected in the type of technology-driven and technology-enabled interventions addressing child



marriage and FGM in the country, some of which heavily rely on mobile phone messaging (SMS). Unfortunately, the GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report 2022 notes that while 88 per cent of women and 94 per cent of men own a mobile phone or device, only 36 per cent of women and 59 per cent of men have access to mobile internet. Furthermore, in 2021 women were less likely to own a smartphone than men (34 per cent vs. 48 per cent)¹⁸, which contributes to the significant gender gap in mobile internet usage (38 per cent).¹⁹ This also suggests that it is harder for women to use applications and other advanced phone technologies.

Digital literacy is another area in which Kenya has made significant strides. One key indicator to measure it is 'support for digital literacy', understood

as the existence and extent of government strategies aimed at enhancing related skills. Research conducted by the Economist Impact resulted in a score of 3 out of 3 in this regard for Kenya, considering that the government implemented the Digital Literacy Program in 2013, as well as the creation of other similar national initiatives.²⁰ The program is still ongoing and over 75,000 public primary schools have received the training. In addition, Kenya scored 2 out of 4 points in the National Female E-Inclusion Policies Indicator, which assesses the existence of strategies that address the gender digital divide. Despite progress, there is still a long way to go in terms of the adoption of digital skills. The study conducted by WEF in which citizens self-assessed their digital skills resulted in a national score of 4.5 out of 7 points in 2019.²¹

MAPPING OF TECH INTERVENTIONS

The interventions mapped in this section stem from an initial landscape exercise conducted jointly by UNFPA and UNICEF, followed by a systematic review of publicly available data and information on technology-driven and technology-enabled interventions addressing child marriage and/or FGM in Kenya. The compiled information was curated and complemented with insights emerging from key informant interviews conducted with local stakeholders.

CODING TYPE OF INTERVENTION

- [☉] Technology-driven intervention/solution (tech is a core element)
- [☐] Technology-enabled intervention/solution (tech is secondary to the intervention, there are other non-tech components))

♀ FEMINIST LENSES	
The seventh column of the interventions table below identifies how organizations have included feminist lenses into the design and implementation of the interventions by highlighting four key aspects:	
1 Consultation with experts and/or community leaders	Consultations with gender or thematic experts and/or local leaders were conducted during the development, implementation, and/or monitoring and evaluation of the interventions.
2 Consultations with target group(s)	The interventions incorporated, at any stage, consultations with the populations targeted, especially girls and women of different ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, classes, and other social markers.
3 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instruments	Monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out to measure the intervention's progress and sustainability, and/or to generate disaggregated information, gender-sensitive/responsive indicators, and/or gender analysis frameworks.
4 Women and/or girl-led organization(s)	The intervention was designed and/or implemented, partly or completely, by a women and/or girl-led organization(s).
Additional descriptive information about the feminist lenses and potential intersectional approach (i.e., addressing ethnicity, language, class or other aspects of the target group's identity) is provided within the table, following the general description of each intervention, which can be identified by the use of this symbol [♀]. This analysis is based on information collected during semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and/or publicly available information.	

PASHA APP / 2022 – ONGOING / ○

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF UNFPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-FGM Board Referral services 	FGM	Launched in two counties, but the goal is to reach the whole country.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Service development and strengthening Individual level empowerment 	Mobile phone application	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations with target group(s) M&E instruments

The Pasha²² app, a recent initiative of the Joint Programme, is both a preventive and responsive tool. The app allows users to access information on violence against children (VAC) and FGM, as well as to anonymously report cases of FGM in real time.²³ Survivors are thereby referred to governmental or civil society service providers²⁴ (i.e., legal aid, psychosocial support, placement for temporary shelter, education). Monitoring of each case is also documented through the app. In an effort to improve accountability, user data on reporting and case monitoring is shared with relevant duty-bearers at the local and national levels to highlight bottlenecks from service providers, but also to ensure quick intervention as needed.²⁵ According to a representative from UNICEF Kenya, UNICEF and UNFPA were motivated to jump-start this intervention given the existing problem of the undercounting of several FGM cases in government databases, due to the lack of a proper classification system. The goal, however, is for the government (particularly the Anti-FGM Board in Kenya), to become the full owner and manager of the tool, and to achieve its implementation at the national level. Though it is too soon to measure the impact, the local authorities in other counties, beyond the two where the pilot was launched, have already enlisted to adopt the app in their area. Furthermore, this tool is already enabling young people to talk about FGM safely and making reporting more accessible than ever before in the country.²⁶

♀ This intervention integrated an intersectional feminist approach by ensuring that young women's perspectives and feedback were closely considered during the design and development of the app during 2021. To do so, representatives from women-led organizations working in diverse communities of Kenya were involved in community discussions and training to disseminate the use of this tool.

I-CUT APP / 2017 – UNKNOWN / ○

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LakeHub Foundation Technovation Challenge 	The Restorers, a group of young women formed when still attending in high-school	FGM	Unknown	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Service development and strengthening Individual level empowerment 	Mobile phone application	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Women-led organization

i-Cut connects girls at risk of FGM with rescue agents and offers support for girls and women who have already been subjected to this practice.²⁷ A distress button has been integrated into the app to facilitate reporting, as well as information about cutting and its negative effects on girls. i-Cut was developed by a group of young women (The Restorers) led by Stacy Owino, computer science and mathematics student who, like her other four colleagues, was just 18 years old at the time the project was launched in 2017. The team is mentored by Dorcas Owino, the director of Lakehub Foundation, a hub for innovative projects. The project has been met with both detractors and supporters. On one hand, The Restorers won the innovation award granted by Technovation Challenge in 2018. On the other side, a few people have openly complained about the application, with a man saying the creators did not understand the culture of FGM.²⁸

♀ This feminist approach is embedded into this intervention through the design, development and leadership of the group of young female creators.

CAMPAIGN “SPOT IT! STOP IT!” / 2020 – 2021 / ☉

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● UNICEF ● Joining Forces Alliance ● Rotary Club ● Safaricom ● Airtel ● Boda bodas (transportation system) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, through the Department of Children Services ● Local radio and television stations 	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide (initially launched in 3 counties)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual level empowerment 2. Family and community engagement 3. Service development and strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Traditional media (TV spots, radio dramas, radio call-ins, newspaper inserts, posters) ● Community-based merchandise 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultations with experts and/or community leaders 2. Consultations with target group(s) 3. M&E instruments

In response to the significant experience and threat of violence faced by children in Kenya, UNICEF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection developed the ‘Spot it! Stop it!’ campaign, a communication intervention created within the framework of Kenya’s VAC National Prevention and Response Plan 2019–2023.²⁹ The campaign, described as a communication for development initiative,³⁰ is guided by the ‘Behavioural Drivers Model’, which is used to understand what drives behaviour and behavioural change. The insights from this research and consultation process served to promote human rights, target leadership, influence social norms and transform communities. This specific campaign encouraged communities to take responsibility for every child’s well-being by using storytelling; for example, animated heroes for young children are presented with particular calls for action: ‘ALERT, REPORT, CALL 116’. While a formal evaluation has not yet been conducted, reporting of VAC cases was especially high (up 80 per cent in cases involving children between ages 6–10 and 15–17 years) during January 2021, when the campaign was active on national media.³¹

♀ This intervention integrated a feminist approach by ensuring the engagement of decision and policymakers from diverse sectors and levels, including from government and civil society as well as community, cultural and religious leaders, to develop and increase the campaign’s impact.³² Monitoring of mass media outlets (e.g., radio, TV, newspapers) was also carried out to measure the campaign’s reach.

SHUJAAZ / 2009 – ONGOING / ☉

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
N/A	Shujaaz	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual level empowerment 2. Family and community engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Web platform ● Social media ● SMS messaging ● Print media 	N/A ³³

Shujaaz is a multimedia platform that uses comic books, social media and SMS messaging to engage with young adults, boys and girls in Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. The comic tells the story of a 19-year-old disc jockey and influencer living in the outskirts of Nairobi who faces issues in his community such as early pregnancy, child marriage and FGM.³⁴ In the digital environment, young people are encouraged to come together and talk about their experiences, as well as their vision for the future and the obstacles standing in their way.³⁵ According to the website, Shujaaz has “7.3 million comic book readers, 4.4 million social media followers, and receives over 60,000 SMS messages every month”, which means it has managed to reach about 56 per cent of young Kenyans and 24 per cent of the youth of the United Republic of Tanzania. As a result of their “innovative approach to storytelling and audience engagement”, Shujaaz has received two International Emmy Awards, among other accolades.³⁶

CHILDLINE KENYA / 2006 – ONGOING / ☉

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan International Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Children – SOS Children's Villages Child Helpline International 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, through the Department of Children Childline Kenya 	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individual level empowerment Family and community engagement Service development and strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helpline Social media 	N/A ³⁷

As the official website states, Childline Kenya was established to “create an enabling environment for children to voice their concerns, be listened to and be linked with essential services through a coordinated referral system nationwide” by harnessing the power of technology. The helpline was launched in 2006 as a non-profit initiative with support from Plan International, SOS Children's Villages and the Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Children. In 2008, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the service was made available on mobile devices for free after adopting the number 116. The toll-free service is now run by both Childline Kenya and the Government of Kenya, with the former being a technical partner for the latter. Response to cases is coordinated by children's officers at the county and sub-county levels, and case management data are input into the National Child Protection Information Management System. The referral services include child therapy, medical support, legal aid, mediation and family therapy, rescue services and temporary shelter.³⁸



ENDNOTES

- 1 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2022a), *Kenya country profile*
- 2 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2020e), *Kenya country profile*
- 3 Gallup (2019), as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 4 GSMA (2022a)
- 5 Economist Impact (2022)
- 6 The score on government support for digital literacy, on a scale from 0–3 (low to high), reflects a government plan or strategy to address digital literacy for students and/or teachers – through the design and development of courses in ICT skills, computer science, programming or other classes for students; and through ICT capacity-building courses for teachers. A zero score indicates that the government does not have such a plan/strategy, neither for students and nor for teachers; a score of 1 reflects a plan for student digital literacy but without including teacher capacity-building; a medium score of 2 indicates a current plan for both; and the highest score of 3 reflects a plan addressing both students and teachers, and with the courses and capacity-building starting at the primary school level.
- 7 UNICEF (2020e)
- 8 UNICEF (2020e)
- 9 Bhalla (2019)
- 10 UNICEF (2020e)
- 11 UNICEF (2022i)
- 12 Esho et al. (2022)
- 13 UNICEF (2022a)
- 14 IEA, IRENA, UNSD, the World Bank and WHO, as cited in the World Bank (2020i)
- 15 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 16 Gallup (2022), as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 17 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 18 GSMA (2022a)
- 19 ITU as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 20 Economist Impact (2022)
- 21 As cited in the World Bank Data (2019a)
- 22 “Pasha” means “to inform” in Swahili
- 23 Anti FGM Board (2021)
- 24 UNICEF and UNFPA (2020b)
- 25 Anti FGM Board (2021)
- 26 Information obtained from an interview with a UNICEF Kenya representative
- 27 Mitchell (2017)
- 28 Mlaba (2021)
- 29 UNICEF (2021d)
- 30 The Communication for Development approach is no longer named as such, and instead UNICEF refers to social and behavioural change (SBC).
- 31 UNICEF (2021f)
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Organization/intervention not interviewed
- 34 Shujaaz Inc. (n.d)
- 35 UNICEF (2020d)
- 36 Shujaaz Inc. (n.d)
- 37 Organization/intervention not interviewed
- 38 Childline Kenya (n.d.)

REVIEW OF
**TECHNOLOGY-BASED
INTERVENTIONS**
TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE AND
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

