

KOMESHA FGM SASA! PROJECT

Human Interest Story | year 2, Quarter one: January – June 2026

Joyline survived FGM; now she's stopping it.

BACKGROUND

In the remote village of Chesongoch Biyaa, located in the hilly outskirts of Marakwet East, Elgeyo Marakwet County, lives Joyline Maiyo, a 49-year-old mother of seven, six daughters and one son. In a community where Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains deeply rooted and the months of November and December are synonymous with mass cutting ceremonies, Joyline has become a symbol of courage, hope, and change.

As an FGM survivor herself, Joyline knows the hidden wounds that the practice leaves behind. For years, she carried emotional pain without understanding its source. Like many women in her community, she believed the trauma was simply part of life.



fig 1: Participants during a PFA training in Chesongoch

A TURNING POINT

Everything changed when she participated in a Psychological First Aid (PFA) training delivered as a key activity under the EU Komesha FGM Sasa! Program. The training helped her recognize the psychological effects of the violence she had experienced and equipped her with practical skills to navigate this long-lived trauma and to provide emotional support to others facing trauma.

"It was the first time I understood that what I had been carrying for years had a name. The training opened my eyes not only to my own healing journey but also to the silent pain so many girls carry after undergoing FGM. I promised myself that my daughters would never experience what I went through, and I would do everything within my power to protect other girls."Joyline

Joyline had already made a bold personal decision years earlier not to subject any of her six daughters to FGM despite the immense pressure that emanated from her community. After the PFA training, her commitment grew beyond her own family and extended to the entire community.

INTERVENTION: TEN GIRLS PROTECTED



Fig 2; A community health promoter during a PFA training in Chesongoch

During the December cutting season last year, ten girls sought safety after they sensed they were being targeted for FGM. Their resolve to seek safety was due to Joyline's community effort to raise awareness at the community level and build trust with young adolescent girls. Her school initiative to offer school-going girls PFA support and talk to them about FGM increased their confidence to receive protection from Joyline.

Working closely with the local chief, Joyline intervened before the girls could be subjected to the cut. She used PFA skills to create a safe space for the girls to express their fears, anxiety, and uncertainty.

The village is located far from children's rescue centres, making immediate placement of at-risk girls challenging. In this case, the local chief supported Joyline in safely reintegrating the girls into the community while ensuring that measures were put in place to monitor their well-being. Since then, Joyline has conducted regular follow-up visits to assess their safety and provide ongoing support.

This community-based approach to rescue requires constant vigilance. Joyline remains alert because she recognizes the significant risks the girls continue to face. Given that no legal action was taken against those responsible and the girls remain in the same households that previously exposed them to the risk of undergoing FGM, there is an ongoing concern that the practice could still be carried out. Consequently, continuous monitoring and engagement with the families and community leaders remain essential to safeguarding the girls from harm.

"Every girl who remains in school instead of undergoing FGM is a victory for our community. I wish I could have saved every girl who was cut last season, but these ten remind me that change is possible. Their courage gives me strength to continue." Joyline

ONGOING CHALLENGES

While Joyline celebrates these victories, she remains deeply affected by those she could not reach.

"Many girls were still subjected to FGM. When I saw the fear and shock in the girls we rescued, I could only imagine the trauma experienced by those who went through the cut without anyone to comfort them. I pray that one day every survivor will have access to psychosocial support so they can heal from wounds that are often invisible."

SUSTAINED ACTION & VISION

Recognising that prevention cannot begin only when the cutting season approaches, Joyline has taken the conversation to schools, women's groups and her local church. She believes lasting change starts with continuous dialogue throughout the year.

Looking ahead, Joyline dreams of establishing a support group for girls who have already undergone FGM, a safe space to share experiences, receive emotional support, and begin healing from trauma.



Fig 3: Joyline during a PFA training

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Today, Joyline is widely recognised as one of the most active community champions addressing FGM in Chesongoch by uniquely integrating psychosocial support and mental wellness for survivors and at-risk girls.

Despite the limited availability of professional psychologists and mental health services in her remote community, Joyline believes the PFA training has empowered local champions to bridge a critical gap.

“The skills we have learned may not replace professional counselling, but they help us listen, comfort, and guide survivors toward hope. Every conversation, every home visit, and every girl we protect brings us one step closer to a community where girls can grow up free from violence, fear, and harmful traditions.”

CONCLUSION

For Joyline, ending FGM is no longer simply about preventing a harmful cultural practice. It is about restoring dignity, promoting healing, and ensuring that every girl can live to her full potential in an enabling environment.