



MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD





The International day of the Girl child is an important event in the world to remind the society of taking seriously the importance of the girl child in society. PROCMURA which in its programme focus deals with Christians and Muslims working together for the welfare of society took the issue of the girl child seriously.

In consultation with its constituencies, PROCMURA deemed it appropriate to celebrate this event with the African and world community by marking the day in three countries Kenya, Sierra Leone and Rwanda . This year's celebration was marked globally under the theme **"My Voice Our Equal Future"**, but PROCMURA marked the day under its coined subtheme **"Stop Teenage Pregnancies"**.

The unprecedented phenomena of teenage pregnancies among vulnerable communities in the wake of COVID 19, accentuated the need for a functional discussion of the problem. To mitigate this challenge, PROCMURA rolled out awareness raising campaigns in Kenya and Sierra Leone, and a capacity building workshop in Rwanda.

The Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), whose Vision Statement is to see "A continent where Christian and Muslim communities in spite of their differences, work together for justice, peace and reconciliation, towards the holistic development of the human family and the environment," is committed to the actualisation of this vision. In commemorating this day, PROCMURA emphasised on the significance of **justice** for the girl, **peace** and a **healthy human family**, where the rights of the girl child are protected at Family, Community and National levels.



In Kenya, the PROCMURA Central Office in conjunction with the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) and the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA), marked the International Day of the Girl Child in Isiolo County, at the Isiolo police grounds. The General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Adrake Komi, expounded on the theme of the celebration. He noted PROCMURA's committed to the empowerment of the girl child and women. He intimated that, this is an area under the PROCMURA Women Programmatic thrust, which is one of the focal areas of its Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024.



The General Adviser of PROCMURA, expounding on the theme of the celebration in Isiolo County, Kenya

The event brought on board government officials, education authorities, religious leaders and representatives of faith-based organisations. These authorities raised their voices on the needs and challenges of the girls, and called on joint actions from all stakeholders to provide safe spaces for girls to maximize their full potentials. The girls took central stage in the discussions as they shared their stories. The representatives of the girls, Zini Kiende, a class eight Learner, in her poem titled “We will lift our voices”, highlighted the fact that poverty and harmful cultural practices are some of the factors depriving girls from maximize their full potentials. She noted that, poverty contributes to lack of sanitary towels, which sometimes makes it difficult for some of the girls to stay in school. She called on the girls to remain focus on their education, which is the key to a better life ahead.



Zini Kiende, presenting her poem, in Isiolo County, Kenya

It was remarkable when religious leaders in Isiolo, Kenya decided to break the silence and called on all religious leaders to employ their moral authority to create safe spaces for the girl child, even around religious premises and institutions. They expressed their commitment to the course by issuing a statement of commitment, where they stated their willingness and commitment to preach and teach against discriminations, and violations against the girl child. The statement is signed by Bishop Stephen Kalunyu and Sheikh Ahmed set of the Isiolo Interfaith Network ([See full statement on the PROCMURA website](#))



Bishop Stephen Kalunyu, reads the statement of commitment by religious leaders



PROCMURA's Team Leader-Finance and Administration, Ms. Joy Wandabwa gave a briefing on the "Kike Health Kits", which comprised of reusable sanitary towels, underwear, soaps, face masks and sanitary bags. She intimated that; the health kits donated to the girls will solve the challenge of sanitary towels for a period of two years. She called on the girls to stay in school when the schools will be opened, and concentrate on their studies, rather than falling prey to men, in search of sanitary towels. She re-echoed the commitment of PROCMURA, FECCLAHA, and CAPA in collaborating with the Isiolo Interfaith network and other stakeholders, to ensure that all discriminations against the girl are addressed. .



Ms. Joy wandabwa, PROCMURA's Team Leader, addressing the audience

It was ecstatic as the speaker of Isiolo County Assembly, Hon Hussein Halake Roba, guaranteed all stakeholders, of his constant support and collaboration, after which he handed over the "Kike Health Kits" to about two hundred girls in Isiolo, Kenya



Hon Hussein Halake Roba, the speaker of Isiolo County Assembly giving out the Kike Health Kits



In Sierra Leone, the PROCMURA Area Committee joined hands with the Ministries of Education, Social Welfare, Gender & Children's Affairs and Justice, to organise a campaign against violence meted on the girl child, with emphasis on teenage pregnancies. School girls from communities in three localities; Kenema in the Eastern province, Waterloo in Western, and Magburaka in Tonkolili district, Northern Province were brought together. The girls shared their stories and noted that, teenage pregnancy, rape, child labour, and negative cultural practices are some of the challenges and barriers to the development of the girl child. The engagement by stakeholders also mapped out possible ways for girls' empowerment and safety. The stakeholders resolved to continuously partner with the PROCMURA Area Committee in Sierra Leone to advocate for the rights of the girl child.



Speeches presented by the representatives of the girls in the celebrations in Sierra Leone



A cross section of the celebrations in Sierra Leone



In Rwanda, the PROCMURA Area committee organised a workshop in conjunction with the National Committee of Women Leaders, the Gender and Trauma Healing Department of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, and Religious Leaders. The workshop was held under the theme **“Girls dignified lives through GBV Prevention and teenage pregnancy”** The girls were schooled on matters on sexuality and menstrual health. They had a conversation on how to identify early signs of sexual harassments, and how to adequately respond to those negative suggestions. Girls were also trained on how to look out for other girls, and be peer educators especially in schools. One hundred girls were handed Hygienic Kits. The Hygienic Kits composed of; (sanitary towels, Soap, body oil, and underwear). The occasion was graced by the Vice President of Presbyterian church in Rwanda, and senior Muslim leaders. Christian and Muslim religious leaders during the workshop condemned cultural, religious, and all practices and beliefs that relegate the girl child. They pledged their commitment to the course, and expressed wiliness to work with PROCMURA on the subject matter.



A group photo of participants in Rwanda



A group discussion of girls, facilitated by women in the training in Rwanda



The activities implemented during the commemoration of the international day of the girl in PROCURA' constituent counties, articulates the importance of gender equality and human rights towards the well-being and health of the girl child. The initiatives are in consonant with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and also in line with the African union's agenda 2063, where the importance and contributions of the girl child in the development of the society is considered earnestly. The programmes provided a platform for the girls to share their stories.

