**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

**PARTICIPATORY AND TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN AND TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH POPULAR EDUCATION MODEL**

HFAW is not-for-profit, non-partisan organization registered in 2013 and works with rural communities to reduce gender inequalities through economic empowerment, gender advocacy with FGM as a priority, promoting sexual, reproductive health and advancing human rights in Kenya through Popular Education Model. HFAW has a top priority to end FGM and the economic wellbeing of very many rural women who are experiencing high levels of marginalization.

**Structural Inequality Issues Hindering Empowerment of Women and Abandonment of FGM**

*Pervasive gender-based violence (GBV).* A combination of patriarchy, illiteracy, early pregnancies, and GBV, especially female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), are conditions that shrink self-efficacy and extinguish hope.

*Limited farming skills.* Currently, women toil all day but outputs are insufficient to lift them from poverty. This exhausting labor, added to household chores and childrearing, leaves little energy for any activities that might lead to social or economic empowerment. Many women lack access to information about best animal husbandry practices such as upgrading animal breeds, improving feeding, upgrading care for the young and preserving feed for times of scarcity. Women who raise crops also lack access to information that could improve their yields such as identifying and obtaining high quality seeds, seed protection, improving soil quality or minimizing risk by diversifying their businesses.

*Lack of business skills.* Women have good business ideas and ambition, but to them, farming is a way of life rather than a business. Other barriers to success include backlash or violence from men in their families who feel threatened by women’s financial independence. Accordingly, they need to develop the courage and skills to advocate for themselves to gain support from family members.

*Lack of access to loans and credit.* The majority of women do not have collateral to back bank loans. When they do access funds, their lack of knowledge about financial literacy and social entrepreneurship undermine their chances for success. Women need to improve their skills in budgeting, savings, debt management and gain information about financing options.

*Limited markets.* If they only sell in local markets, women may end up competing with neighbors and selling for low prices. Farmers would benefit from a market plan outlining where to sell in more profitable markets or partnering with the private sector to gain access to better markets.

*Lack of civic education*: Majority of rural women do not understand their constitution and rights guaranteed in that constitution. People cannot stand up for their rights if they are not aware that they have those rights. They cannot elect leaders of integrity and cannot hold their leaders to account in terms of service provision and use of government funds allocated to them.

*Goal and Objectives****.*** The overall goal is to end structural gender inequalities among Kenyan rural women to allow them access to true social economic and political empowerment. We want to end FGM, poverty and political marginalization. We have designed a comprehensive project that seeks to improve women’s economic wellbeing by providing agricultural and financial skills thus improve food security; provide advocacy against FGM and information about women and human rights; Provide access to credits and technical support on how to best use those loans for advancement.

The goal will be achieved by means of six objectives. Women will: 1) adopt best practices learned from agricultural experts and increase yields; 2) improve their business practices through knowledge gained about financial literacy and entrepreneurship; 3) gain access to loans and credit; and 4) increase their access to markets 5) advocacy against FGM and other harmful practices such as early pregnancies and child labor, child marriages and 5) civic and political engagement.

**Solution**

Attacking any one of these issues in isolation is much less effective and the described conditions will continue especially because these conditions are sustained because of structural inequalities affecting women and girls. HFAW uses popular education in its multi-prong approach. Popular education is type of critical consciousness raising which allows the community to critically evaluate its situation: its problems, causes of these problems, effect of these problems on them as a community and collective actions to take in order to end these problems. We continue to work on these issues in small incremental steps and we are beginning to see positive change (see our website).

In 2016, HFAW received a $10,000 grant to prevent GBV with priority of ending FGM and improve economic wellbeing for women from United Methodist Women (IMWYC). With their support and others such as the Girl generation, we have been able to reach 14 schools out of possible 77 schools in Nyamira County, one of the places among Kisii community where FGM is rampant. We were able to also train health and law enforcement officers to provide better response to GBV and FGM survivors. We require an additional **$9,000 to be able to reach an additional 9 schools with anti-FGM messaging.**

In in addition, in 2017, HFAW designed a $25,000 project to help reach 50 women with agribusiness and the necessary support mentoring program as well as a project to reach 100 women with finance and entrepreneurship skills training, to reach 50 women with small scale loans to grow their businesses. To implement this project, HFAW received and $20,000 to continue with the economic empowerment-specifically to provide agribusiness to 50 women and financial and business skills to 100 women. This includes $5000 to lend to women for their access to credits. We are in the process of implementing this project with over 50 women receiving agribusiness education and over 35 women have applied an received loans so far receiving from our Hope Women’s Fund, and plans are underway for the finance and business skills training. We are lacking $5000 to meet all targets for this grant target by end of May 2018.

**HFAW is requesting your support in raising $15,000 in order to find the $9000 for school advocacy and $5000 for the economic empowerment targets plus $1000 administrative charge. Our goal is to get this done by end of May 2018.**