



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD October 11, 2023

THEME: "Invest in Girls' Rights: Our Leadership, Our Well-Being"

I am honored and privileged to welcome you all to this International Day of the Girl Child celebration organized by Echo Network Africa (ENA) in collaboration with our Local Implementing Partner. The theme of this Year's celebrations is particularly close to my heart and to the work of ENA especially because this is what we exist to do - Invest in the leadership and well-being of Girls and Women. In fact, this is what ENA has done for the last Forty Years and counting, I have been privileged and blessed to have been part of this journey of empowering girls and women to change the lives of their families for the better.

I am delighted that the world is now agreeing that the leadership and wellness of women matter. I celebrate this recognition for society must accept that Girls and women have equal rights and that they deserve to live a dignified life as all human beings should. After all, haven't we all made in God's image?

Yes we have! Shouldn't men and women, boys and girls enjoy the blessings of God equally? Indeed we should! That is the essence of gender equality - Men and women, boys and girls participating and included in the life of society as God intended and as provided for in the human rights charter as well as in our constitution, among other statutes.

However, the truth is, this is not always the case. Our girls are still being subjected to painful and dehumanizing cultural practices such as FGM. We still have remuneration disparities among genders with women taking home way less for performing similar jobs. The contribution women make doing unpaid work including nursing our babies and running homes remains under-recognized and unrewarded. Women are still struggling to access clean water and affordable health care, and in fact, girls and women are still dying from childbirth.

More girls are still confronted by the triple threat of HIV and other STDs, teenage pregnancies, and gender-based violence.

Furthermore, girls and women are still excluded from leadership at all levels, especially political leadership. Here in our country, we are still struggling to get the Constitutional requirements for the not more than two-third gender principle fully implemented - this is more than Ten years since the promulgation of the Constitution in 2010! We are aware of Counties like Uasin Gishu that have been declared temporarily dissolved by the court on account of failing to adhere to these constitutional provisions.

In short, girls and women (I always say that girls grow to become women) are still struggling. A lot has indeed improved since I was a little girl decades ago - more girls are going to school, we have better health care, more women are now in leadership and more girls and women have money. However, we are not there.

Are we? I know we are not but I also know that we have the capacity to change things for the better. I pray that this celebration will help unlock these capacities so that girls being born today will find a much better, safer, and equal world.

I urge all of us to do what we can in our individual and collective capacities to change the lives of our girls for the better. We must make a commitment to transform the lives of all girls in Africa. As ENA, we promise to play our part and work with like-minded partners until every girl is accounted for. Together, we can make the world safer, better, and happier for boys and girls, men and women.

I wish you God's blessings and a happy International Day of Prayer the Girl Child!

Asanteni Sana!

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