

The image features a background photograph of two women. In the foreground, a woman with dark skin and curly hair is smiling, wearing a traditional beaded necklace with yellow, red, and green beads. In the background, another woman with dark skin is smiling, wearing a red polo shirt. The ActionAid logo is in the top left corner, and the title 'Case study: Janet and Theresa' is in the bottom left corner. The photo credit is in the bottom right corner.

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Case study: Janet and Theresa

Photo Credit: Kate Holt/Shoot The Earth/ActionAid

Case Study: Janet and Theresa

Janet, 13-years-old, walked for six days through the Kenyan bush to escape being mutilated. She tells us how she found hope and a new life through the support of the Kongelai Women's Network in Kenya's West Pokot region.

"There are eight of us in my family and we are very poor. My father doesn't have a job and only does casual work. Both my mother and grandmother have had female genital mutilation and thought that it was normal for me to go through the same."

"They had never been to school and didn't see the point in me going either. Home was very bad as we only had a little land and often there wasn't food. I know that other girls in my village who were circumcised bled a lot and were in a lot of pain and I didn't want these bad things to happen to me. Girls couldn't continue with their education after the procedure. I saw a girl from my village giving birth when she was very young. She was in a lot of pain and during the delivery her child died."

"My father wanted to have me circumcised to make money from cows for my dowry. I was very scared and so I ran away from home, first to my uncle in the hope he would protect me. Instead he told me that he was going to have me circumcised so that he could get my dowry."

"So I ran away through the bushes. I met a woman on the road who told me that in Kongelai there was a woman who would look after me. I didn't know who this was but I spent six days on the road, sleeping in the trees at night where I felt safe from my father and uncle. I feared that I was going to be followed."

Theresa Chepution is a widow, mother of nine and a member of the Kongelai Women's Network in Kenya's West Pokot region. Her experience of female genital mutilation has been traumatic and life-changing. She lost two of her children as a result but took Janet into her own home.

"Janet travelled for six days to escape forced female genital mutilation. When she arrived at my home I knew I couldn't turn her away. I was determined to find the resources to help her."

"In order to afford the additional costs of schooling and uniform for Janet I burned charcoal to sell. She is one of two older children in her class but she is learning well. We must help girls like Janet who want a better future for themselves."

Janet's parents still don't know where she is. She is going to school for the first time and hopes in the future she can get a job and go home to help her parents.

"We need to continue to raise awareness amongst other people about the dangers of female genital mutilation to convince them that it is wrong. In my community it was the boys who taunted us and insulted us if we hadn't had it done, saying that if we didn't we would never get married. Parents must be made aware that it shouldn't happen to their daughters just so they can get the dowry and wealth. This is wrong."

"In my old community many girls still go through female genital mutilation – I would say that around eight out of ten girls still have it done to them and get married early. One day I would like to go back to my community and be able to discourage other girls from having it done and encourage them to go to school."

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Case study: Christine

Photo Credit: Kate Holt/Shoot The Earth/ActionAid

Case Study: Christine

Christine, 17 years old, was subjected to female genital mutilation when she was 15, before being forced to marry a much older man. With ActionAid's support, Christine has now been in school for two years as a boarder.

"My mother and brothers said it was the only thing for my future. When it had been done to me and I was in seclusion, an old man came to my brothers and gave them 15 cows to marry me. When I heard about the arrangement I went to my brothers and mother and asked them why they were forcing me to marry an old man against my will who I didn't even know. They told me I had to follow this man even if I didn't want to."

"I didn't want to go and cried. I was forced to stay inside his home for a week. I looked out the window and saw other children playing outside so I asked if I could go and play with them but the old man refused as he was afraid that I would escape."

After a week, Christine escaped the house and ran to Kongelai where she sought help from the head of the mixed primary school who subsequently contacted ActionAid. By working with the Kongelai Women's Network, ActionAid was able to help Christine find a place at school. The chief of Christine's village was contacted and alerted to what had happened and her family is beginning to accept the wrongdoing. Christine is building a relationship with her family.

Christine says: "Female genital mutilation is very bad for women. Life becomes painful and it isn't necessary. My aim in life is to support the cause against female genital mutilation."

"I tell other girls that they shouldn't do it and to tell their families that there is now a law to protect them. I tell them about my experiences and how painful it was and the problems it can cause them later on in life. I tell them that if they are mutilated they will be married off to an old man like I was and they won't be able to finish school. My hope for the future is that no girls in Pokot have to go through what I went through. I think this is possible – we just need more time and education."

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Case study: Rosaleen

Photo Credit: Kate Holt/Shoot The Earth/ActionAid

Case Study: Rosaleen

Rosaleen Chepkoror, 16 years old, was subjected to female genital mutilation, but escaped forced marriage after the Kongelai Women's Network stepped in. She lives in the West Pokot region of Kenya.

"I originally attended school to year five but I had to leave as there was nobody who could help me pay my exam fees. I would try to return to school but every time I did they would send me home saying that I owed them money. My family is very poor and they had no livestock and nothing to sell. After a year of staying at home my father started to tell me that I should be circumcised and my mother agreed."

"One day I visited my aunt's house and when I arrived my cousins were being cut and my parents forced me to go through female genital mutilation. We were put in seclusion and during that time people were visiting my father to negotiate a dowry. We didn't know who these people were and I didn't want to be married to someone I didn't know."

"Whenever I think about the operation I feel pain. When I went into seclusion I was told by the older women that we were now mature and that we were very brave and ready for marriage. In my mind I knew that I wasn't old enough to be someone's wife."

"Female genital mutilation is bad and I have heard about women going through very painful labour because of it. Some even lose children and this is unnecessary. It isn't natural to have the scar and it is very ugly. I wish that I had more information as a younger girl so that I didn't believe my family that it was my only option. I do tell other girls about the consequences of female genital mutilation. I have to, because I understand now what the consequences are. I don't see how being circumcised has had any benefit for me."

"After the seclusion I was very scared to return to my house but by the time I got there the Kongelai Women's Network had heard what had happened to me and had visited my parents. They were waiting for me and asked if I wanted to stay at school. I wasn't ready to be a wife or leave school so they persuaded my father that he should let me continue my studies. He agreed but he didn't have the money to pay."

The Kongelai Women's Network, which is supported by ActionAid to campaign against female genital mutilation, helped Rosaleen to go back to school. She also works, collecting firewood and water for her neighbours, so she isn't reliant on her parents.

"I save this to pay for my exam fees and so I am not a burden to my parents. My father is now quiet and has taken a back seat."

"In our last school holidays, ActionAid organised a female forum at my school. It was a forum to empower us and talk to us about what our choices as women are. I learned a lot, particularly about the need to stay at school and learn as much as I can. After I was lured into being circumcised I lost so much time with my education and am now far behind other girls in my school."

"I thank ActionAid very much for what they are doing. It is very important that other girls don't have to go through with the same as me. When I am older I hope to train other girls about their options. It is important that women are given the opportunity to tell other people about their experiences and how to make their life better."

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Case study: Atuko



Photo Credit: Kate Holt/Shoot The Earth/ActionAid

Case Study: Atuko

Atuko Lodyonghole is a 64-year-old father of nine living in the West Pokot region of Kenya. Having seen the impact of female genital mutilation on his two eldest daughters, he now speaks out against it and refuses to let his other daughters be cut.

"I have nine children, five girls and four boys. Five of my children are in school. My two oldest daughters are married and one is at college. I have been selling baby goats to keep my children in school."

"I have come to realise that female genital mutilation is not important and is an outdated tradition. The most important thing for my children is that they are educated and can get good jobs as I never had that opportunity. It is much better for girls to get jobs than to get a dowry for them. When I was at school there were hardly any girls in my class, but I now know how important education is for everyone."

"After a girl has been circumcised they don't go back to school and are expected to marry which marks the end of their childhood. There are a lot of complications for girls when they are cut. Two of my eldest daughters went through female genital mutilation when I still had the old cultural thinking."

"While they were in isolation some suitors came for them and so I gave them away to be married. During the seclusion period older women will go and talk to girls about all of the things they need to know; how to behave as a woman and a wife. I have one other daughter who is now in her second year of college training to be a teacher."

"Female genital mutilation harms girls and is wrong. Women can have many complications during childbirth because of it. The problem is that people in our culture see it as a rite of passage as it marks a girl becoming a woman."

"In the past men would view girls who hadn't undergone female genital mutilation as weak and uncourageous and they would be taunted in school by boys. The uncut girls were looked down upon by the whole community and were thought of as children."

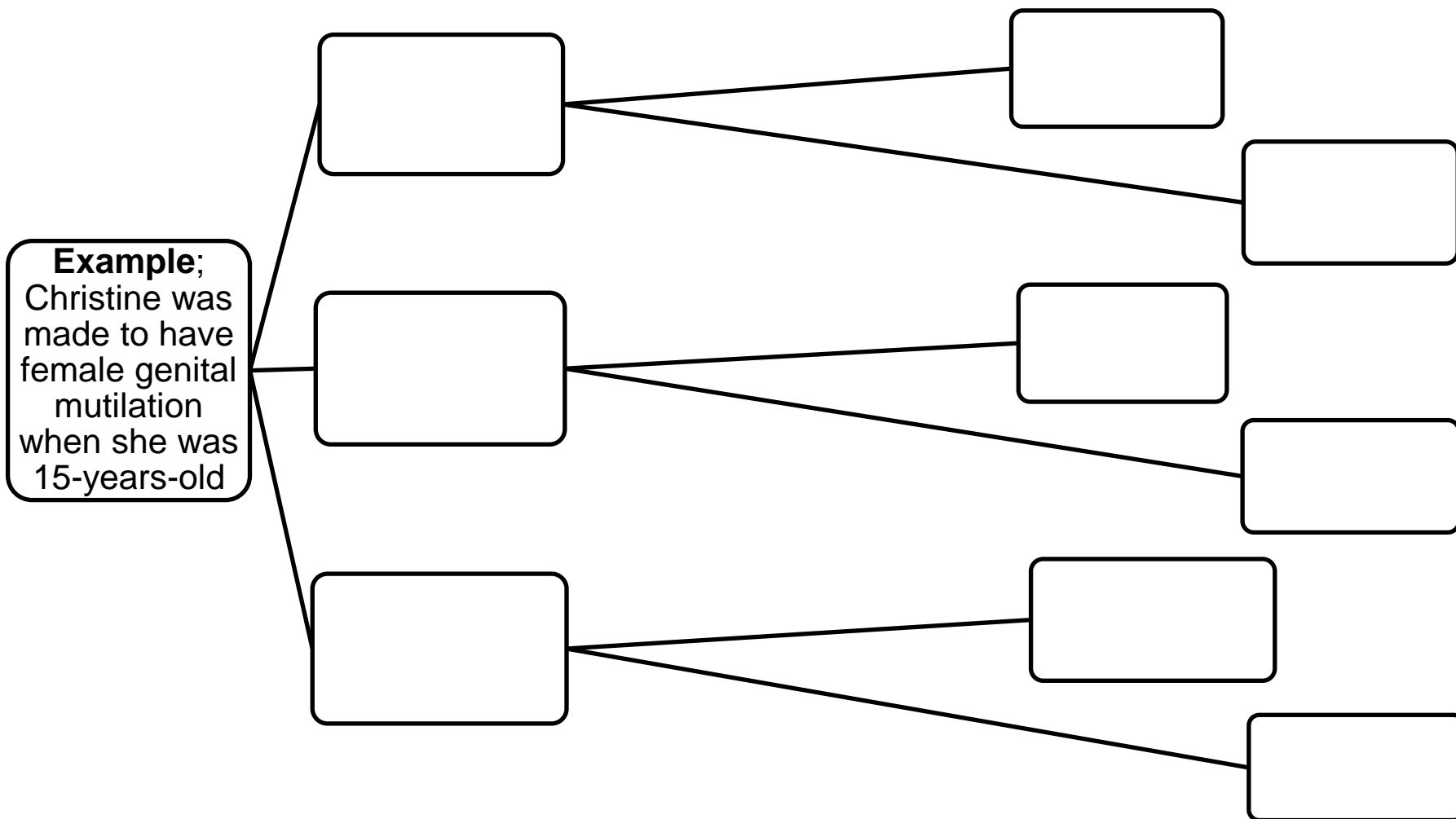
Atuko credits his daughters, and the Kongelai Women's Network, who are supported by ActionAid, with helping him to understand the dangers of female genital mutilation.

"My daughters have been attending the girls' club at school organised by ActionAid. What they learn in these classes they have brought home and taught me. We have been able to discuss the issues and this has been very helpful to all of us. Through ActionAid we also understand the laws that are in place now in Kenya, and what the penalties are if they are broken."

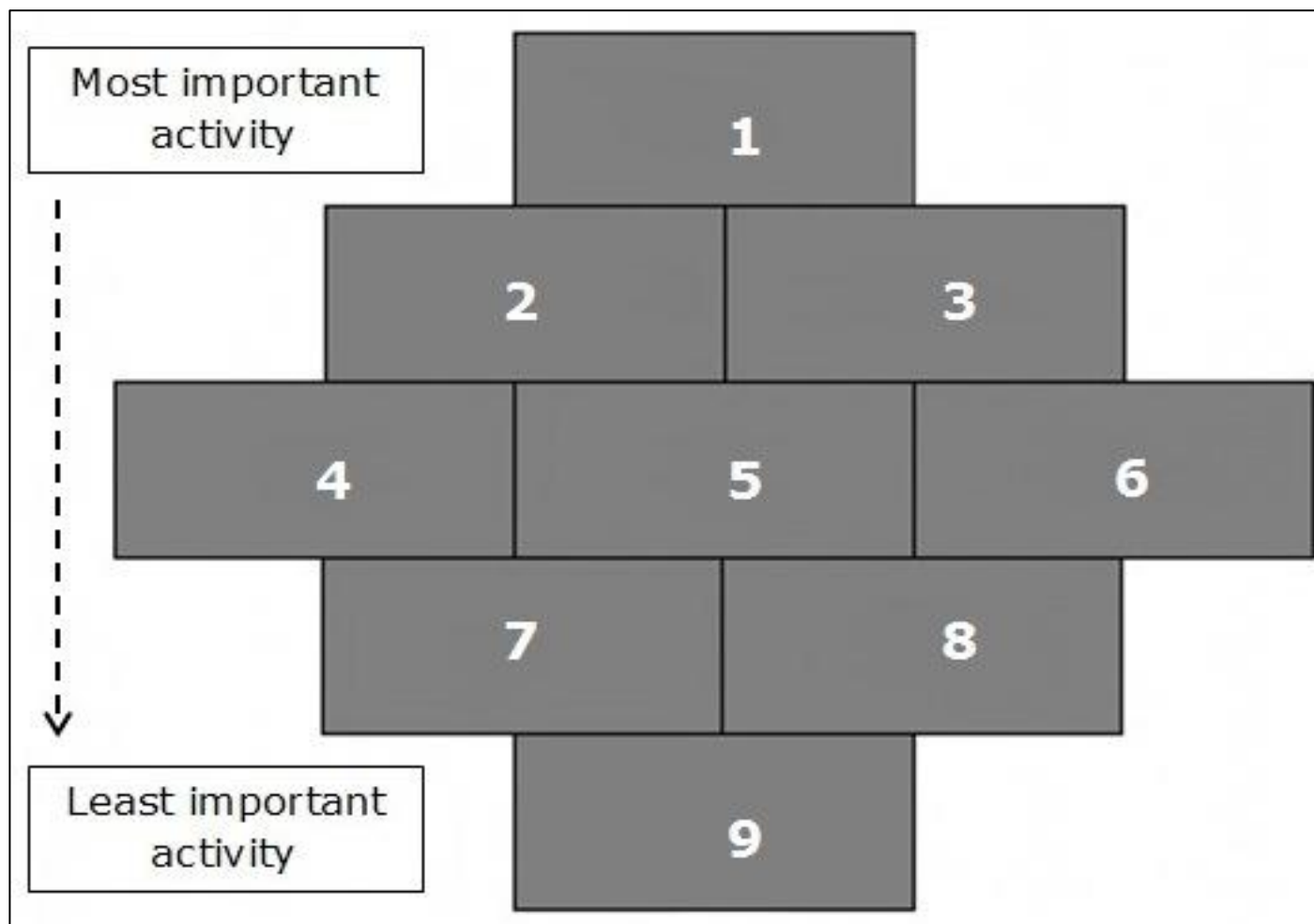
"I am trying to tell other men in my community that they shouldn't push their daughters into it. I tell the men that there is no need to have their daughters cut so that they can get married to make them money. It is better to educate the girls so they can get jobs."

"We still need to do more to make people understand. I am very grateful to ActionAid for supporting our girls in the schools and for making us more aware of the issues. We need more support to be able to reach the very rural areas with our messages though, and to ensure that girls are still not being circumcised in secret. My hope for the future is that my daughters will graduate from school and be successful."

Consequences chart



Diamond 9



Diamond 9

Radio programme to raise awareness - £200

Impact of female genital mutilation discussed by FGM survivors, healthcare professionals and religious leader

School fees, uniform and basic items for a year- £120

For a girl who has run away from home to escape female genital mutilation

Three school visits from members of a local Women's Network - £64

Children and teachers learn about girls' rights, dangers of female genital mutilation and why abandoning the practise is positive for girls, families and communities

Run a girls' club for a month - £25

Girls learn about the dangers of female genital mutilation, their right to refuse and where to go for help

Run a men's forum for six months - £53

Men and boys learn about the dangers of female genital mutilation and how to support each other to help end the practise in their community

Teacher training - £170

For a school teacher to be made fully aware of the dangers of female genital mutilation and how to help reduce the practise within their whole community

Village leader meeting - £283

To discuss their challenges and progress made with ending female genital mutilation

Word search

The dangers of female genital mutilation are

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection
- Infertility
- Death

Female genital mutilation is

- Damaging
- Dangerous
- Preventable

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