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**PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED
TO PROMOTE BEHAVIOR CHANGE: A STUDY OF FGM
ERADICATION CAMPAIGN IN KEIYO-MARAKWET
COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is at present one of the major problems that several countries in the developing world are ominously faced with, on the alter of cultural practices. Kenya prides itself of initiatives numerous, a tireless bid to eradicate the vice, yet the practice persists in some communities. In 1997 a new approach was initiated to provide an alternative rite of passage that excludes the 'cut', a function of research findings which held that the practice had a strong cultural significance as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. This approach was adapted among the Keiyo community in 2003 and named '*Tumdo Ne Leel*'. Though this campaign against FGM has run for several years now, there is evidence that the practice still lives on in sections of the Keiyo community. This study thus aimed to establish the challenges hindering the adaptation of *Tumdo Ne Leel* as an alternative rite of passage in Sanctum of Keiyo. Specifically, the study aimed at: finding out the public perceptions on the communication strategies used to promote *Tumdo Ne Leel* among the Keiyo community; finding out the perceptions of girls on *Tumdo Ne Leel* as an alternative rite of passage; establish how the opinion leaders in Keiyo made sense of *Tumdo Ne Leel*; and to establish the public perceptions of an adult woman who has undergone *Tumdo Ne Leel* among the Keiyo community. This was a cross-sectional study employing qualitative design to obtain data from parents, opinion leaders and young girls of the circumcision age. The study was carried out in Chang'ach Barak sub location, Kibargoi division in Keiyo Marakwet County. A multi-stage sampling approach involving purposive and convenience sampling was used to identify a sample of 41 participants in the study. In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions were then used to generate data. Data from the interviews was translated, transcribed, edited, interpreted and summarized and finally, analyzed. Emerging themes were then identified and organized into categories that formed the basis for data coding, analysis and interpretation. Selected verbal quotes were used to add credibility to the conclusions made and to give voice to participants in their own words. Findings of the study suggest that even though *Tumdo Ne Leel* program has been going on in the community for almost ten years, a large segment of the population is yet to be reached. Some of the respondents who had heard about it or participate in the campaign criticized the channel used in the campaign. It emerged that the church had been used as the main platform to pass the message to the community hence those who were not religious projected the campaign to the religious groups. Besides the skepticism associated with the programme, some participants perceived the programme as harmful since it was 'misleading' young people to abandon their traditional practices, the pride of their ancestors. However, not all the participants were against the campaign. Others had embraced it and they were optimistic that it would be helpful.