

## **Rachael Ouko**

***“People talk of changing the world and leaving it better than they found it. To make this a reality, we need to start by tackling the challenges that surround us every day.”***

Rachael devotes her life to educating women about reproductive and sexual health. She is a program coordinator for Femme International, an organization that promotes women’s health through education in East Africa.

Rachael was born and raised in Mathare slum in Kenya. Having had no education or even informal discussion about menstruation or sexual health, Rachael was unaware that sex could or would lead to pregnancy. Upon falling pregnant at 17, she was forced to drop out of school and was abandoned by her parents. Having been told that an overdose of paracetamol would end the pregnancy, Rachael took the desperate decision to overdose. Rachael’s baby survived but, due to a lack of healthcare services, she was unable to get any support during her pregnancy.

When her son was 2 years old, Rachael met Julius Mwelu, founder of Mwelu Foundation, by chance, who was studying photography and film. Immediately taken by the creativity, Rachael was inspired to return to school to finish her O-Levels. It was then that she started to talk to girls and women about sexual and reproductive health, determined that young women should be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to take charge of their own bodies – and lives. She believes that doing so will help to achieve SDGs 3 and 5. Rachael has been involved with Femme International for 7 years and puts her passion for film making to good use, creating her first film, [‘Being a Girl’](#). Alongside her education and advocacy work, she is studying accounting.

Rachael is incredibly proud of her son, who is now fourteen and thriving, and has ambitions to become a footballer.