

Political will, multistakeholder governance and user involvement



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Intersectorial group on FGM (Grupo Intersectorial sobre MGF)

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In order to develop an action plan to fight female genital mutilation, in 2007 Portugal created an intersectorial working group. It is made up of people with different areas of expertise from the public administration, international organisations and NGOs. The group's diverse composition allows it to tackle FGM from different perspectives including health, reproductive and sexual rights, justice, immigration, gender equality, development cooperation and education.

The group develops policy measures that have been included in the two national action programmes for the elimination of FGM which have run from 2009 to 2011 and from 2011 to 2013 respectively.

The programmes are well designed and address the problem of FGM in Portugal in a consistent way, which takes the legal and political framework and the international dimension into account.

A diverse working group

Portugal started to tackle female genital mutilation (FGM) at the policy level in 2003, when it was included in a national plan against domestic violence. In 2007, with support from the European Union Daphne programme, it set up an intersectorial group to develop a national action plan to address FGM. While this project was under way the Family Planning Association (APF) presented its contribution to the project to Jorge Lacão, Secretary of State of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and to Elza Pais, the President of the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG). It proposed that a working group on FGM be set up. The Secretary of State welcomed the idea and became the mentor for this group, which was made up of people with different areas of expertise from the public administration, international organisations and NGOs. The group's diverse composition allows it to tackle FGM from different perspectives including health, reproductive and sexual rights, justice, immigration, gender equality, development cooperation and education.

The group develops policy measures that have been included in the two national action programmes for the elimination of FGM which have run from 2009 to 2011 and from 2011 to 2013 respectively. The group and the action programmes can be considered as complementary and inter-connected aspects of Portugal's work on FGM.

The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), which is responsible for the implementation of policies on citizenship and gender equality, coordinates the group and ensures the implementation of the measures listed in the FGM action programmes. The government makes a high-level input through the current Secretary of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Equality, Teresa Morais, who presides its meetings. The group meets approximately every 2 months at the CIG's request.

Well-designed programmes

The programme outcomes include advocacy and awareness-raising, the prevention of FGM, support for girls and women who have been subjected to FGM or are at risk of it as well as their families and immigrant organisations, and training for professionals. The measures are aimed at girls and women subjected to FGM or at risk of it, their families, immigrant communities, professionals (health, education, media, justice, security forces, socio-cultural mediation, cooperation, call-centres and researchers), policy-makers, students, youth organisations, civil society organisations, universities, international organisations, religious leaders and the public at large.

The programmes are well designed and address the problem of FGM in Portugal in a consistent way, which takes the legal and political framework and the international dimension into account. They fit within the country's wider gender equality policies, and are anchored institutionally by the support they have from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the fact that they are coordinated by the CIG. Although neither the intersectorial group nor the action programmes have specific state budgets of their own, they are allocated an annual budget by the CIG and resources are also made available by the members of the intersectorial group.

Simultaneously, during 2012 the intersectorial group encouraged immigrant associations to apply for support for projects on FGM under measure 7.7 of the Human Potential operational programme (POPH), which supports projects to combat gender-based violence.

The initiative's success was founded on the government's active role in pushing FGM onto the political agenda, and on the involvement of public bodies, international organisations and NGOs in an intersectorial working group responsible for putting policy on FGM into practice. Attendance at the group's meetings was compulsory, which was good for coherence and maintaining momentum. Another key factor was the fact that practising communities were involved in developing and implementing the policies.

However the second action programme might have been more effective if the first programme had been monitored and evaluated so that its lessons could be taken into account. As it was, the programme went ahead without clear indicators or timescales being established. Neither were the communities that practice FGM involved in developing or implementing the programmes. Specific budgets should also be defined for the intersectorial group and the action programme.

Currently, the Third Programme of Action for Preventing and Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation 2014-2017 is under way. It was designed to take into account the proposals of the external evaluation of the previous programme. In order to strengthen work with risky communities and their leaders, which is identified as a priority, the intersectorial group on FGM was extended to include three immigrant associations.

Contacts/Further Information

Contacts

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Further information

[CIG website \(in Portuguese\)](#)



[Second Programme of Action for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation \(.pdf\)](#)



[Third Programme of Action for Preventing and Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation 2014-2017 \(pp 145-164\) \(.pdf\)](#)



[Equality portal page on 2nd Action Programme against FGM](#)



[Associação para o Planeamento da Família \(APF\) page on FGM](#)



Metadata

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