we are ICF

Estimation of the number of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the EU

Engaging with communities and actors on female genital mutilation: exchange of challenges and good practice

The importance of engaging with communities and ensuring cooperation amongst actors

Kate Regan, Project Coordinator, ICF



The importance of engaging with communities

- Community-led' approaches to tackling FGM recognise the influence of social norms in the continuation of the practice (Mackie, 2000; UNICEF 2010).
- Allows for community knowledge and resources to be capitalised on to improve intervention effectiveness.
- Promotes a sense of ownership of the intervention by community members, allowing them to work to determine the most appropriate way to address the problem.
- Can reduce community resistance and enhance long-term sustainability. (Barrett, H.R. et al 2015)



The importance of ensuring collaboration amongst actors

- A response to FGM that is strategic, enhanced and multi-agency should involve:
 - Safeguarding teams, police; community-based groups; FGM champions; local decision-makers; frontline professionals; asylum administrative staff, and more.
- Combination of approaches can enable change in attitudes among affected communities:
 - enhanced government intervention; better legal protections; improved community engagement and awareness (The Tackling Female Genital Mutilation Initiative, 2016)



Improving outreach to and engagement of communities – findings from this study

- The need for **holistic and on-going support services** for women and girls at risk of FGM.
- The importance of training professionals, particularly in the health care sector, to effectively engage with women and girls at risk of FGM and to bridge the gaps between institutions and 'hard-to-reach' communities.
- Awareness raising initiatives that illustrate the dangers of FGM, the legal consequences of engaging in the practice, and existing support services, help build trust between stakeholders and affected communities.
- Austria: holistic long-term support; relationships of trust; training of professionals
- Denmark: sex education in affected communities; bridging gaps in social services; mutual training
- Spain: inter-regional outreach; discourses on violence; limits of legislation
- Luxembourg: migrant education; training of professionals

Cooperation with actors – findings from this study

- The **dangers of working in 'silos'** at the national level, and the need for platforms for mutual dialogue and experience sharing.
- The importance of establishing a harmonised approach to combat FGM at the national level, that can be effectively implemented at the regional and local levels.
- The need to develop joint activities to combat social and political discourses that contribute to the marginalisation of migrant communities.
- *Austria*: enhancing reception conditions; lack of efficient cooperation; sustainable financing
- Denmark: national policies and legislation; cultural attitudes
- Spain: responsibilities of actors; discourses of migration
- Luxembourg: resource mobilisation; EU and national framework; supporting asylum seekers



Challenges to engaging with communities and ensuring cooperation amongst actors

Isma Benboulerbah, Network Coordinator End FGM European Network



Tackling FGM in Europe - Strategies for Effective Community Engagement

- Engagement: "the process of getting communities fully involved in the decisions that affect them"
 - Involving communities in every step of the process
 - Actively and meaningfully collaborating with them
 - Shaping key programmes and policies not "for" communities but "<u>WITH</u>" communities

"Affected communities"

- Not a homogeneous group addressing complexities to ensure a tailored and effective community engagement
- Settled migrants ≠ Newly migrants
- Empowering communities
- Gender and age-sensitive

Engaging with FGM-affected communities

Sanitary Challenges – COVID 19

- Ensuring that the participants feel safe and willing to participate
- Clarifying the objectives of the FGs with potential participants
- Ensuring social distancing access to hand gel and masks
- Potential phone interviews

Challenges in engaging with communities

- Hard to reach communities or hard to reach organisations?
- Language and cultural barrier
- The taboo of talking about FGM FGM is not an easy topic to discussion for community members
- FGM-affected communities are "small" in Europe ensuring anonymity is our priority
- Ensuring anonymity and protecting the participants adaptation regarding the national legislation



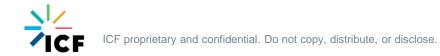
7 Principles for effective and meaningful community engagement

- 1. Understand community context & needs
- 2. Engage & communicate appropriately
- 3. Ensure inclusive collaboration
- 4. Empower & develop leadership
- 5. Do no harm
- 6. Be accountable & transparent
- 7. Involve communities in monitoring & evaluation



Recommendations

- Structured mechanisms to meaningfully engage FGM-affected communities
- FGM-affected communities at the heart of the activities
- Be aware and acknowledge the current hostile political climate against PoC/migrant/Muslim communities in Europe
- Promote a positive, non-discriminatory and non-stigmatising narrative to ensure participation and trust-based relationship
- Systematically engage and empower FGM-affected communities FGMaffected communities at the heart of the activities
- Refer to our <u>POSITION STATEMENT</u> Tackling FGM in Europe -Strategies for Effective Community Engagement on our website



Initiatives to improve outreach to communities and cooperation between actors to protect girls at risk of female genital mutilation

Good practice example: FEM Süd

FEM Jud

Umyma Eljelede, FEM Süd, Austria



Aims and objectives

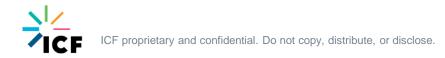
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- Raising and promoting awareness of FGM/C among women and men in the practicing community
- Provide appropriate health and psychosocial consultation and medical surgical care for women and girls who have been subjected to FGM/C in Mother Languages
- Protect women and girls at risk
- Sensitisation, training and educating professionals (across health sector: midwives, gynaecologists, nursing school, paediatricians maternity care etc...; different social sectors and educational fields: Children and youth welfare, refugee service etc...
- Developing a community-based educational dialogue to highlight and explore knowledge of attitudes toward and practice of FGM/C in the at-risk communities
- Change the behaviour of practising communities residing in the Austria to NO MORE FGM/C TABOOS

Whose involved?

- Women's Health Centre FEM Süd
- City women's service "MA 57"
- Austrian Foreign Ministry "BMEIA"
- Federal Ministry for Women, Families and Youth
- The Austrian Integration Fund "ÖIF"
- Women's Health programme of City of Vienna
- Austria platform, Stop FGM
- Since when?
 - September 2007



- As a result of 13 years of working in FGM/C field, FEM Süd has led to:
 - Increased interest in women's health issues and FGM/C of health and educational staff and refugee services;
 - Provision of psychosocial counselling and crisis intervention services to 100 + women and girls who have had gone or at risk of FGM/C (from more than 21 countries annually)
 - Extensive work and contact with different FGM/C practicing communities in Austria – leading to a better acceptance of services and increased demand from communities
 - More than 50 lectures on health topics related to FGM/C with more than 475 participants annually



F.F.W.)ud

Overview of acheivements:



- 2009: International conference on FGM "State of the art of medical treatment and prevention" F•E•M•/ind
- 2009 2018: Established three FGM/C out patients clinics in three main Hospitals in Vienna
- 2018: "INTACT peers" project "Education, awareness raising and training key persons from risk communities" - training of 24 women from 7 practicing communities in Austria to work in health and social awareness in their communities. More than 60 in the relevant communities
- 2018: 2 new women's health centers join the board
- 2019: "INTACT MEN project 18 men from 5 practicing communities trained to spread awareness on FGM/C in their communities
- 2019: "INTACT Expert" project offering professional consulting and teachings program across Austria
- 2007-2019: Several multilingual booklet about FGM/C for local practicing communities
- **2020:** FGM e-learning for professionals
- Working in developing and implementing guidelines on FGM/C for Austria



