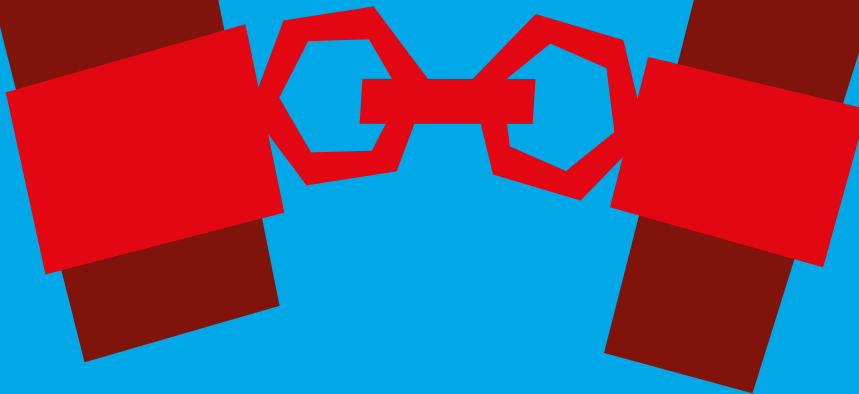


FACTSHEET 3 OF 4

FGM & FORCED MARRIAGE

EXPLORING THE LINKS



WHAT IS FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (World Health Organisation).

FORCED / CHILD MARRIAGE*

* *F/C Marriage*

A forced marriage is any marriage which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both of the parties and/or where one or both of the parties is/are unable to end or leave the marriage, including as a result of duress or intense social or family pressure. Child marriage is a marriage in which at least one of the parties is a child. Although boys also enter into early marriage, girls form the majority of child spouses.

HARMFUL SOCIAL PRACTICES

Like F/C Marriage, FGM is not only a form of violence against women. Both practices are a set of social norms, approved by a community as a whole and directed at controlling female sexuality and reproductive rights.

SHARED SOCIAL DRIVERS

FGM and F/C Marriage exist in contexts where women are not equal to men. Women's limited economic opportunities, patriarchal customs regulating female sexuality, religious misconceptions and peer pressure, are the major factors that allow both practices to persist.

FGM AS A PREREQUISITE TO F/C MARRIAGE

Girls who have experienced FGM are often reported to be more desirable "bride-assets" and, therefore, are more likely to be subjected to F/C marriage. On the other hand, girls who have not undergone FGM, being considered "impure" and "incomplete", have fewer chances to be married, and, therefore, are at risk of poverty and social stigma.

SOCIAL NORMS & GENDER INEQUALITY

The practice of FGM and F/C Marriage is rooted in gender discrimination and justified by the value system that places girls and women subordinate to boys and men. Both are broadly linked to the social status, respectability and honour of the families, which are maintained through the marriageable value of girls.

SHARED SOCIAL FUNCTION

Like other behavioural norms, FGM and F/C Marriage bear specific social importance and fulfil specific social functions within a community. The two practices are used as instruments of infringement on female autonomy and as a means of preserving the "sexual purity" of women. Both may also be used as a "social status incentive" that women are deprived of otherwise.

WHERE ?

>28

More than 28 countries in Africa and several countries in Asia and the Middle East.

02% – 98%

Prevalence rates vary from country to country from 98 % in Somalia to 2 % in Uganda and Cameroon.

SOCIAL

Practiced in households at all educational levels and all social classes.

RELIGION

No major religion advocates or mandates the practice of FGM. Despite this, FGM is practiced by Muslims, Christians, and Animists.

EU

FGM is mostly present in those communities originating from countries affected by FGM.

COMPLEX COORDINATED COMMUNITY CHOICE

The global dimension of FGM requires the development of transnational interventions, focused on building bridges between communities living both in Europe and in affected continents, particularly Africa.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

FGM affected communities in developing countries have often have higher priorities than the abandonment of FGM, such as access to health, education, sanitation, agricultural improvement, and food processing, among others. It is crucial to incorporate the abandonment of FGM as a key element in achieving development objectives in these areas.

BRIDGING COMMUNITIES

Many migrant communities affected by FGM maintain strong ties with their countries of origin, where women and girls are sent to undergo FGM. This link often impacts the decision of whether or not to perform FGM. Empowerment of diaspora on communities through their active participation in designing tailored approaches for combating FGM both in the EU and the countries of origin is crucial for promoting abandonment of FGM.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- 1 Comprehensive research and data collection on the links between FGM and F/C Marriage.
- 2 Harmful Practices need to be targeted in an integrated way, through programmes that take into consideration the possible links between FGM and F/C Marriage.
- 3 Actions aimed at informing women of the harmful effects of FGM and F/C Marriage should be accompanied by alternative tools for self-empowerment and the creation of a safer social environment for girls and women.
- 4 Holistic, multi-spectral, long-term interventions that take into consideration social and cultural norms and that involve the whole community in Europe and in the countries of origin.
- 5 Rather than developing programmes focusing exclusively on the prevention of FGM or F/C Marriage, the most effective interventions are those that address the abandonment of both practices within broader development policies, programmes and projects.

CASE STUDY

FROM RAISING AWARENESS TO BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

The behaviour change approach (BCA) is deemed to help individuals and communities through a series of steps, which build on each other and provide opportunities to examine behaviour that can result in sustainable changes in the social norms of a practicing community.

REPLACE – “Pilot toolkit for replacing approaches to ending FGM in the EU: implementing behaviour change with practicing communities” in the UK and Netherlands. Funded by the European Commission the project seeks to end FGM among communities affected by the practice across Europe. It uses a BCA combined with participatory action research methods to identify particular behaviours and barriers that can “be changed” to end FGM. It seeks to offer an alternative to the prevailing approaches that expect individuals to change their behaviour with a mere focus on raising awareness of the health and legal issues associated with FGM. In 2011, the project developed a toolkit, which provides guidelines on how to use the behaviour change methodology with organisations working on prevention with affected communities. The second part of the project included the communities living in Portugal, Spain and Italy and a new toolkit with these experiences will be launched soon.

<http://www.replacefgm2.eu/toolkit/REPLACE-FGM-toolkit.aspx>

ACCESS FULL SERIES

<http://goo.gl/WhLPYgHERE>

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