

Against Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting FGM/C Through Empowerment and Rejection (**AFTER** project)

Understanding FGM/C

What is it ?

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting or FGM/C refers to all procedures that involve partial or total destruction of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. In some countries around the world, mainly in Africa, FGM/C is a harmful cultural practice and an extreme form of sanctioned violence and discrimination against women.

Why does this issue need to be addressed in the Irish context?

In Ireland, it is estimated that 3,780 women have already experienced FGM/C¹ and according to ActionAid's latest study, based on Central Statistics Office 2011 data, a further 2,639 girls may currently be at risk; this number is expected to rise with the results of the 2016 national census.

Ireland has signed up to international agreements such as the Istanbul Convention to abolish human rights violations such as FGM/C, which shows Ireland's commitment to combat all violations of women's and girl's rights. Specialised organisations in the country such as AkiDwA and the Irish Family Planning Clinic (IFPA) are working on raising awareness and providing support and services to victims and potential victims of FGM/C. To contribute to these efforts and as part of the **AFTER** project, in mid-2016 **ActionAid Ireland** completed a national level analysis and a **regional study** of available service providers in Cork (in relation to FGM/C). Cork was selected for the study as is the largest county in Ireland, second most populated after Dublin, has a large migrant population but limited services available compared to Dublin.

Facts & Findings - What have we found with the study?

- 13,559 women, 12,417 men and 2,639 girls under the age of 15 from countries where FGM/C is practised are living in Ireland; (40 % living in Dublin where resources and services

on FGM/C are available). Within these general figures, 1,058 women, 1,073 men and 201 girls under 15 are living in Cork.

- There has been an increase of immigrant populations residing in Ireland coming from all the FGM/C practising countries e.g. Somalia, Sudan, Togo and Uganda.
- There is a limited legal and policy framework on the issue of FGM/C in Ireland. The Criminal Justice (FGM) Act 2012 makes it illegal for someone living in Ireland to perform FGM/C. There are a number of policies protecting children; the Children's Act 2015 being the latest. However a specific Irish Crime Classification System code for FGM/C has yet to be developed.
- In comparison with Dublin, there has been little public action against FGM/C in Cork and the level of awareness on the issue is very low. The majority of the 16 participant organisations in the study conducted by ActionAid provide services on violence against women and 10% work specifically with migrants but they have limited knowledge and no information or budget to work on FGM/C.
- Only 3 out of the 16 interviewees were aware of the FGM/C law in Ireland and could answer related questions properly. All those who were reached during the study were left with information on the law in Ireland and with a copy of 'Towards a National Action Plan' which has general information on FGM/C (produced by the National Steering Committee on FGM).

¹ FGM: Information for Healthcare Professionals Working in Ireland (AkiDwA, 2nd Edition, June 2013).



- There is a lack of awareness on FGM/C among service providers and the general public in Cork. Only 30% of the participants had received some training on FGM/C as part of general trainings on violence against women.
- 90% of the organisations interviewed are delivering services on women’s health or domestic violence and the other 10% are providing information and support specifically to migrants.
- None of the interviewed organisations were able to identify any local/regional groups campaigning against FGM/C in Cork.
- Interviewees pointed to limited resources as a challenge for their services which they struggle to maintain. **They felt it would be important to have specific support, information, training, education and services for women who have undergone FGM/C.**

What do we do now?
Our **recommendations** to the
Government of Ireland to
ensure girls and women **are**
fully protected and supported

Adopt and implement the actions outlined in the National Action Plan as a ‘significant step towards ensuring that relevant national authorities participate in best practices on effectively combating all forms of violence against women and girls, including FGM’

Direct additional resources to and develop care pathways at the regional level in Cork city and county for the provision of medical treatment and psychosexual therapy for survivors of FGM/C

Direct additional resources to the provision of training for service providers on the issue of FGM/C; this study revealed poor / no knowledge on the issue of FGM/C on the part of many healthcare providers

ActionAid Ireland was established in 1983, the key objective is to address the structural causes of violence against women and girls. With support from Irish Aid, EC and the Irish public, **ActionAid** supports women’s rights in six countries in Africa and Asia.

The **AFTER** (**A**gainst **F**GM/C **T**hrough **E**mpowerment and **R**ejection) project was initiated in 2016 with support from the Rights, Equality & Citizenship programme of the European Union to work with migrant women and girls from FGM/C practicing countries. **ActionAid** is a member of the National Steering Committee on FGM/C.

If you are interested in supporting ActionAid or learning more please visit: www.actionaid.ie



“This report has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme of the European Union. The contents of this product/ report are the sole responsibility of ActionAid Ireland and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.” **AFTER Project JUST/2014/RDAP/AG/HARM/8001**