Engaging Midwives and Frontline Healthworkers in FGM Elimination

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Female genital mutilation is a global issue - it can be found around the world.
A recently published UNFPA study analyzes the issue with a focus on girls ages 15-19. The FGM status among those girls is likely to reflect FGM rate of incidence.

Percentage of girls aged 15-19 experiencing any form of FGM, where data are available, latest data

- High prevalence countries (more than 60%)
- Medium prevalence countries (20%-60%)
- Low prevalence countries (less than 20%)
- FGM is not prevalent in these countries

Source: UNFPA analysis based on DHS and MICS, 2002-2014, and WHO.
WHY is FGM is Practiced?

FGM is deeply rooted in tradition cultural beliefs that include:

- Prerequisite for marriage
- Rite of passage to adulthood
- Hygiene
- Ensure virginity
- Represent ethnic or cultural identity
- Control sexuality
• **Education is key:**
  – Daughters of uneducated mothers significantly more likely to undergo FGM

• **Acceleration of FGM abandonment is needed:**
  – A growing population in the 29 countries means the number of girls and women cut will increase even if prevalence levels decline

• **Encouraging signs:**
  – 60% of men and 66% of women living in the 29 FGM prevalent countries think the practice should stop
  – FGM is decreasing in the majority of countries
Quick Facts

**FGM/female circumcision** - Partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs

- Widely Practised - 29 African countries + some in Middle East, Asia and Latin America
- 130-140m – already undergone FGM
- 3m undergo FGM every year
- Deeply rooted in tradition
- Growing trend of medicalization (study – 18% or 1/5 cases done by medical practioners; in some countries even 3 out of 4 cases)

Need to engage midwives and other frontline HWs

- As trusted members of communities – unique knowledge of cultural practices and who is performing FGM – can play critical role in abandonment
- At times perpetrators of FGM – unable to resist social pressure (rooted in culture)
- Lack knowledge - or ignorance of health consequences of FGM
- Unable to advocate

Midwives can make a major difference!
Role of Midwives to Help Prevent FGM

Why do midwives play a key role in FGM prevention?

- Frequent contact with communities
- Understand health practices and social dynamics
- Authority on health and well-being
- Can identify leaders to target
- Crucial players in ending medicalization of FGM
HOW CAN MIDWIVES HELP PREVENT FGM?

- Role Model
- Counselor
- Advocate
UNFPA – global leader on FGM and Midwifery

UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM

Global Midwifery Programme
What is needed

- Sensitization
- Training
- Building their advocacy skills
What is UNFPA doing...

• Global, regional and national advocacy in engaging healthworkers
• Mainstreaming FGM prevention and care in SRH progs and services
• Building capacities of healthcare providers in FGM prevention and case management
• Mainstreaming FGM training in midwifery curriculum
• Revision of WHO guidelines on management of FGM health complications
• In-service training of midwives using new interactive e-learning module
• Engaging men and boys
Key Objectives of the e-Learning Module on FGM Prevention:

The interactive, multi-media E-Learning module with built in quizzes will help educate midwives:

- Human rights violations and health complications caused by FGM
- Strengthen their capacity to serve as champions of FGM prevention through enhanced skills as role models, counselors and advocates for change.

The module can be accessed from: [http://fgmprevention.unfpa.org/](http://fgmprevention.unfpa.org/)
OBJECTIVES

1. Reduce the number of midwives performing female genital mutilation, including re-infibulation by 50%.

2. Double the number of midwives trained on FGM prevention and care.

3. Strengthen the capacity of midwives to serve as champions in female genital mutilation prevention.

4. Engage the Midwifery Associations in the 17 target countries in the global campaign to end female genital mutilation.

5. Increase the awareness of policy-makers on the key role midwives can play in female genital mutilation prevention and care.

6. Ensure that all target programme countries have FGM integrated into the midwifery curriculum.

7. Increase the number of girls and women receiving prevention and care services.
Thank you!