

**Against
Female**

**Genital Mutilation
in Europe**

**CHANGING
ATTITUDE**

Coordinated by

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As recognized by the main International Conventions, Female Genital Mutilations constitute a crime, a violation of Human Rights, of the Rights of the Child and a gender discrimination that prevents women from fully living their lives.

The trauma of the intervention, the risk of contracting dangerous infections and diseases, and the negative consequences for the future life of women and mothers who undergo mutilation, will forever mark their existence. Rules and social conventions make this practice an obligatory ritual for the acceptance of the girl and her family within the communities. These girls, in turn, are under pressure from the communities of the country of origin, also in view of a possible return.

I was
mutilated
when I was
5 years old.

My father did not agree, that day he was at work. I remember my mother and my grandmother holding me still, lying on the floor. The cut happened in a moment, then the suture with acacia thorns. My legs were tied and immobilized to allow the wound to heal. I remember the pain. I will always remember it. ”

“

Amina, a Somaliland woman who lives in Italy



The Phenomenon

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a vast and complex phenomenon, which includes traditional practices ranging from the partial incision or total removal of female external genitalia. Girls and women who have suffered the mutilation, face serious and irreversible risks to their health, as well as heavy psychological consequences.

UNICEF estimates that in the world the number of women living with genital mutilation is around 125 million.

Given the current demographic trends, we can calculate that every year about three million girls under the age of 15 add to these statistics. Most of the girls and women who suffer from these practices live in 29 African countries, while a considerably lower number lives in countries with Islamic predominance in Asia. There are also cases of FGM in Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States, especially among immigrants from Africa and South-West Asia: these are episodes that occur quite illegally, and therefore it is difficult to take a census of them. The practice of FGM is the expression of a deeply rooted gender inequality based on a mix of cultural, religious and social factors inherent to families and patriarchal communities.

In Europe

In the EU-27 and in Croatia, there are no systematic survey using a harmonized approach to data collection on FGM. The European Parliament resolution of 24 March 2009 on FGM, indicates that around **500,000 women living in the EU have been exposed to genital mutilation.**

It is estimated that every year 180,000 children in Europe are at risk of genital mutilation.

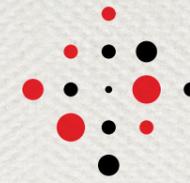
In general, Female Genital Mutilation is not practiced in the EU, but women and girls have been undergone to a genital mutilation in their home countries before moving to the EU or while traveling outside the EU.



Chat Project

The **CHAT project – Changing Attitude – Fostering dialogue to prevent FGM**, involves 6 European countries: Italy, Portugal, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It aims to prevent and combat all forms of Female Genital Mutilation in Europe, by increasing awareness of people on social and gender discrimination and about the danger of practice. Therefore, it is necessary a change of attitude within the communities at risk, in Europe and in the countries of origin.

The two-year project will end in May 2018.

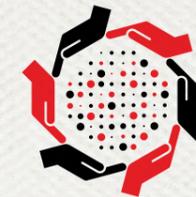


The CHAT project includes three main actions

Encouraging a process of mobilisation and change of behavior within the communities at risk through training and support of **144 Positive Deviants (Change Agents)**, who, in turn, can involve more than **2400 people in this change**.



Orienting the Corporate Social Responsibility strategies of European organizations to fight against gender violence and to support the **prevention of FGM**.



Supporting migrants' associations for the accomplishment of **actions of co-development** that can become factors of change in the countries of origin. The interaction with migrants' associations is carried out in a series of workshops about the theme, by implementing activities of co-development and by raising awareness within Embassies and Consulates.

The project adopts an intercultural communication approach based on dialogue, mutual learning and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

The final number of the beneficiaries of the project is 180,000 girls at risk of FGM each year in Europe.

Project Updates

Up to now, around **100 Change Agents** have been involved in the project; about **175 meetings and workshops** were held on awareness and divulgation of information on the issue; about **45 migrant associations** were involved; about **100 companies** were contacted, **48** of which actively participate in the proposed activities. Finally, **15 embassies** were involved.

What Can You Do?

In case you were aware of the possibility that a child is at risk of suffering a genital mutilation in **Italy**, you can contact the toll-free number **800 300 558**, dedicated to the prevention and contrast of Female Genital Mutilation practices, managed by State Police officers in collaboration with the Equal Opportunities Department of the Council Presidency.

The service welcomes warning and reports of crime occurring in Italy, giving information on health facilities and volunteer organizations to apply to.

At **European level** it is possible to visit the End FGM EUROPEAN NETWORK website, at the following link <http://www.endfgm.eu/> and contact the institution; or contact the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), at the link <http://eige.europa.eu/about-eige/contact-us>



Interview with Edna Moallim, a Somaliland woman, Change Agent in the Chat Project

Why did you decide to participate to the CHAT project?

“At the beginning I was a bit hesitant to participate in this project because we have always talked about FGM in a very judicious, negative way, but without the will to arrive at a solution or to talk about it in an objective way, to people who practice this “culture”. Surely enough it is not a positive tradition for the people themselves. But people who practiced that till now did not do it to harm the child. A mother does nothing that can damage her daughter. It is a cultural identification that concerns society. After talking to the project leaders, I realized that the CHAT project wants to start from a comparison with different cultures. We want to try to understand why people are so attached to this practice. The basic idea is to make a general analysis of the practice and of the consequences of it. I liked this approach and prompted me to participate.”

“I live in Italy since '93. I have two children born in Milan. I like to be present, to commit myself to the Somali community. At the beginning, when I

arrived, we were many, today we are much less numerous. But we have always been very close, we are a united community. The subject of FGM is discussed more in the West and less in the country where it is practiced. Here, among us, today there is much awareness of the mistakes made at a cultural level. It is also true that someone believes that FGM should still be done, but perhaps in a different way. However, in our community today we know what FGM is, and what are the consequences of the practice.”

Which results can you achieve with the CHAT project?

“In my opinion, this project can have two effects: the first one is to have an intergenerational confrontation with young people, to make sure that they drive the change. The second effect is to be able to talk about the problem in a different way, without prejudices. Those who do not adopt this practice can try to understand who adopts it, where they come from, why they make that choice. We must not only condemn, but try to understand. Together. To change FGM.”



Further Information

In order to deepen the knowledge of the topic, we recommend the interview with Dr. Abdulcadir Omar Hussein, a Somaliland gynecologist at the Careggi Hospital of Florence and head of the Regional Reference Center for the prevention and treatment of complications related to female genital mutilation.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTvWYyYRRY>

For more information, we suggest watching the videos below:

Sara's Story: FGM Aware made by MEDIA CO-OP, a team of award-winning media professionals who specialise in creating digital media and films for the third sector and broadcast television. *Sara's Story* is a short animated film that provides information on the causes and possible impacts of Female Genital Mutilation. The film does not include any graphic or real life images of FGM. The film is based on real-life accounts by women survivors of FGM. Produced in Scotland by <http://mediaco-op.net/> for Women's Support Project <http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk/>, with funding from the Scottish Government.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXYI8IkRRq8>

All You Need To Know About FGM | End FGM: published by the Guardian, in the video the UK's leading FGM consultant Dr Comfort Momoh MBE explains what FGM is and its consequences.

 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HN1mulqvv5g>

We also recommend the readings of the documents indicated below:

Female genital mutilation in the European Union - Report

<http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/female-genital-mutilation-european-union-report>

UNICEF Data: Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women

<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation-and-cutting/#>

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

Project Partners

Italy

Fondazione L'Albero della Vita



Portugal

Associação para o Planeamento da Família



Austria

African Women's Organisation



Spain

Fundación Wassu-UAB



Netherlands

Himilo staat voor hoop in de toekomst



United Kingdom

IKWRO - Women's Rights Organisation



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