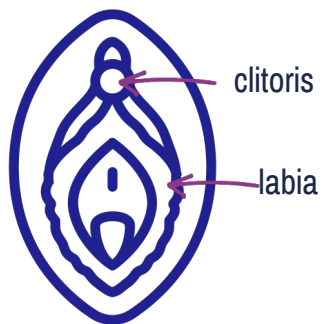


# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) AND DISABILITY

## GLOSSARY



### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM):

It is a practice that involves the **damaging of the external female genitalia** (private parts between the legs), notably the **clitoris**, for **non-medical reasons**. FGM is most often practised on girls under 18. It is abuse and a **violation of human rights**. It is practised in diverse communities around the world and is often about controlling the bodies and sexualities of women. This is a **form of gender-based violence**.

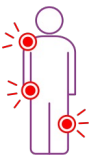
#### Examples:



lower  
limbs  
disability



partial  
or total  
deafness



chronic  
pains

### Disability:

The first article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) defines persons with disabilities as those who **have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments**. These impairments, in interaction with various **barriers**, may hinder their **full, equal and effective participation in society**.

There is a distinction between disability, which refers to the **interaction between someone's impairment and their environment** (human-rights-based approach) and the impairment itself (medical approach). Impairment is "an injury, illness, or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a loss or difference of physiological or psychological function."

### Holistic Health

This is an **approach to health** that is focused on the person's **well-being as a whole**. This includes physical, psychological, emotional, social, spiritual and sexual health.

### Accessibility

Accessibility is the characteristics, elements and functionalities of products, devices, services, systems and environments that **ensure equal access to persons with disabilities**, including those using assistive technologies. It is a **prerequisite** for persons with disabilities to **live independently** and participate fully and equally in society.

#### Examples:



braille



ramps



# HOW ARE FGM AND DISABILITY RELATED?

1

Female Genital Mutilation can happen to **anyone with female genitalia**. This means that **people and children with disabilities** can also be at risk or be Survivors of the practice.

2

Female Genital Mutilation can cause severe **life-long consequences** both on the physical and mental health of Survivors. These consequences, ranging from chronic infections and chronic pain to mental illnesses, can have a long-lasting **impact on the ability of Survivors to access and enjoy normal activities**. The consequences of FGM mean that it can create impairments in some Survivors, and thus lead to disability.

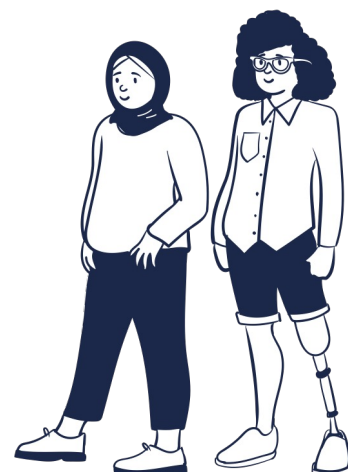
3

The **hostile environment** that **persons with disabilities** face (due to inaccessibility, stigma, discrimination, etc...) can make it **more challenging** to seek help and protection when at risk of being subjected to FGM. It can also create **specific needs** in terms of care and support for FGM Survivors with disabilities.

4

FGM and Disability are both **sensitive topics** that are often overlooked and misunderstood. FGM survivors with disabilities are **less likely to have their rights and needs advocated for and protected**.

**Then, how can we provide for people at the intersection of FGM and Disability?**



# Providing for people at the intersection of FGM and Disability:



There is a **lack of research** on the overlaps between Disability and FGM. We need to collect more data about how they intersect to make sure to **include everyone** in our work.



**Information and services** for FGM Survivors should be **accessible to all**, including persons with disabilities, regardless of administrative status and/or financial resources.



Facilities delivering services should be accessible for persons with disabilities. Information on FGM support should be made available in **different accessible formats**. It includes easy-to-read, information in sign language, and information in braille and large formats.



**Healthcare providers** and **social workers** need to be **trained** on how to support persons with disabilities and FGM Survivors with a holistic health approach.



Prevention of FGM must seek to protect **all** people at risk. Helplines, safe houses and support centres must be **child-friendly, culturally sensitive and accessible** for all persons with disabilities.

## WORDS MATTER!

When referring to people who have had FGM, **call them FGM Survivors**, not victims.

When referring to persons with disabilities, there is **no consensus** on **identity-first** (disabled person) or **person-first language** (person with disabilities). The European Disability Forum uses “persons with disabilities”.

FGM is a **harmful practice; avoid using words** like “inhuman”, “barbaric”, and “disgusting” **which can cause more hate** towards communities and Survivors.

**Avoid terms that imply** that persons with disabilities are not normal or of **less value than others**. Terms such as “handicapped people”, “differently abled”, “handicapable”, and “special needs” are to be avoided.

To talk about FGM, **avoid using graphic language and images** that can be triggering for Survivors.

Assistive **devices** (wheelchairs, hearing aids...) **provide freedom** and do not constrain. Avoid terms such as “wheelchair-bound” and **defer to user-related terms** like “wheelchair user”.

**When in doubt: ask people/organisations directly what language they prefer!**