

# FGM & LGBTI RIGHTS

## WHY SHOULD LGBTI ACTIVISTS AND ACTIVISTS AGAINST FGM WORK TOGETHER?

- ▶ A central tenant of both **FGM** and **LGBTI** activism is **bodily autonomy** – the **right to choose** about one's own body and to be protected from gender-based violence.
- ▶ **Gender-Based Violence** (GBV) results in **significant harm** both to those exposed to FGM and to LGBTI people; our work aims to **improve protections from GBV** and ensure that policies and services benefit both communities.
- ▶ **FGM** can and has been used to **control** the sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or sex characteristics of LGBTI women, as a form of so-called “**conversion therapy**”.
- ▶ We must create a space for the people at the **intersection of FGM and LGBTI** issues. **Some LGBTI individuals are FGM Survivors** and they will face challenges based on both aspects of their identities.



## GLOSSARY <sup>[3]</sup>

### FGM

Female Genital Mutilation comprises all procedures involving the removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM. It is estimated that around 600.000 women are living with the consequences of FGM in Europe.

### INTERSEX

is a term that relates to a range of physical traits or variations that lie between stereotypical ideals of male and female. Intersex people are born with physical, hormonal or genetic features that are neither wholly female nor wholly male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. Many forms of intersex exist; it is a spectrum or umbrella term, rather than a single category.

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

refers to each person's capacity for profound affection, emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

### LGBTI

Abbreviation for 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex.'

### GENDER IDENTITY

Refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

### NON-BINARY

is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity is not encompassed or represented by 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely.

### TRANS

is an inclusive umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth. Trans men are people who were assigned female at birth and identify as men.

### SEX CHARACTERISTICS

is a term that refers to a person's chromosomes, anatomy, hormonal structure and reproductive organs.

# LIVING AT THE INTERSECTION OF LGBTI COMMUNITIES AND FGM-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES:

There is a **lack of research and data on LGBTI Survivors of FGM**. Their experiences and challenges lack visibility in both anti-FGM and LGBTI activist spaces.



In a study on the sexual and reproductive health rights of FGM Survivors [1], our Belgian Member Gams Be interviewed **two lesbian FGM Survivors: Asma and Samira**.



## SAMIRA

I would like to speak with someone like me, who lives the way I live. Sometimes I get discouraged.

## ASMA

When I first started being in the LGBT community, I saw that [being cut] was kind of a drag. In fact, there was a victimisation of cut women: "Ah poor thing, she's cut ..." Yet the people [to whom] we must ask questions and demand accountability are the people who excised them, and not the people who have been cut! [...]

## NOT ALL FGM SURVIVORS ARE WOMEN!

In a podcast on FGM and Intersectionality [2], Scarlet Udaan interviewed a **queer non-binary FGM Survivor, Dena Igusti**.

## DENA

There isn't much conversation that deals with how, for anyone within the LGBTQ community [who is an FGM Survivor], you are tied to cis-straight womanhood in this particular way [...] The statistics that we know of FGM only talk about women and girls and there is not much conversation about the fact that non-binary people and trans men also fall into this statistic.



## SOURCES

[1] Gams Belgique, February 2021 - Besoins et demandes en matière de santé et droits sexuels et reproductifs des femmes concernées par les mutilations génitales féminines en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale.

[2] Scarlet Udaan, November 2020 – Podcast on FGC and Intersectionality with Dena Igusti.

[3] Sources: End FGM EU "What is FGM?", FGM in Europe Map, ILGA-Europe Glossary, European Commission Legal Gender Recognition study.

Infographic in collaboration between the End FGM European Network and ILGA-Europe.  
Read more on FGM on [www.endfgm.eu](http://www.endfgm.eu). Find out more about LGBTI rights on [www.ilga-europe.org](http://www.ilga-europe.org).