

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION



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**SIGRID** RAUSING TRUST







Female genital mutilation (FGM) is internationally recognised as a **violation of human rights**. FGM is one of many manifestations of unequal gender relations across the globe, and **is a form of** violence against women and girls that we, as the End FGM European Network, urgently **seek to bring to an end**. FGM can be a difficult subject, so it is essential that when discussing, writing or talking about the practice, we are mindful of the words we use, in order to speak about it with sensitivity.

More than that, using inaccurate or stigmatising language when talking about FGM can **spread misconceptions** and even **be** detrimental to both women, girls and communities directly affected by it.

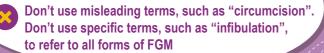
This leaflet serves as a short, practical guide. We set out recommendations for using language that is both sensitive and impactful in the global movement to end FGM. We also highlight words and phrases that can be **counterproductive** to the movement or create challenges and barriers for FGM-affected communities.

LANGUAGE IS AN ESSENTIAL AND POWERFUL TOOL IN ENDING FGM,



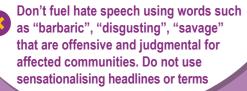








Use comprehensive, respectful and non-stigmatising language



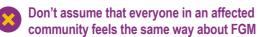


Use positive images

Don't use shocking images that risk causing re-traumatisation of FGM survivors and of affected communities. Don't use graphic images or details such as blades or blood



Use the term "affected communities" as opposed to "practising communities" because it encompasses those who wish to leave the practice behind

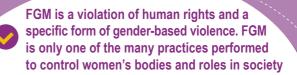




Use the same words survivors choose to use when speaking, without re-phrasing what they say. Use factually-based arguments











Recognise all types of FGM are as harmful physically and/or psychologically. No hierarchy can be made in the pain and the trauma caused by FGM

Don't focus only on the physical procedure itself



Recognise FGM abandonment as a feminist issue. FGM aims at controlling women's bodies and sexualities. Both women and men play a role in the continuation or abandonment of the practice



Don't label FGM as a "women's issue"

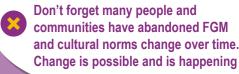


Women and girls who have undergone FGM are survivors, not victims. Acknowledge survivors' resilience and strength





Tell positive stories as a way of promoting FGM abandonment. Show that change is possible and can be inspiring to others



Like every dictatorship that needs to hide its crimes, silence is its best weapon. Every time we raise our voices, we take a step towards equality. Help us raise awareness about this reality, because what is not known does not exist

HAYAT TRASPAS, CO-FOUNDER OF SAVE A GIRL SAVE A GENERATION



SAMIRA FALL, RESEARCHER - FGM SURVIVOR

\*\*People often tell me they feel sorry for me when I tell them I've been cut. They see me as a victim and they ask me intrusive questions ,

SALIMA EL HAD], INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDENT

When people learn that FGM is also done in Egypt, they start telling me 'oh so you don't have any pleasure'. My intimacy isn't a topic that I want to discuss with just anybody. My trauma and my past are mine and I don't want people to assume anything about me. Just stop ""



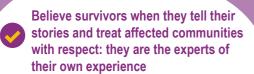
YASMINE AMARI, MIDWIFE

## $\geq$ WHEN TALKING WITH A WOMAN AFFECTED BY FGM OR WITH MEMBERS OF AN AFFECTED COMMUNITY



Let people own their narrative and understand that every survivor has a different experience

Don't assume you already know their story, don't assume all stories are the same



Don't minimise survivors experiences when they tell their stories

Let survivors tell you who they are and what they do today. Listen and respect them

Don't reduce survivors to their traumas and their pasts

Use the terms the po

Use the terms the person you are talking to prefers to use, as many terms are used worldwide to refer to FGM

Don't use judging language and avoid alienation



Respect boundaries

Don't be intrusive and don't ask questions that might re-traumatise the survivor. Do not ask personal questions, or intimacy-based questions



Create a positive and safe environment when talking with a member of an affected communities

Don't play a survivor in opposition to her community.
Don't judge a survivor's family for practising FGM

Some girls get cut by doctors, in medicalised facilities. But that doesn't make it any less harmful and we need to raise awareness on the consequences of all forms of FGM, including medicalised FGM,

SOKHNA FALL BA, CO-PRESIDENT OF THE END FGM EUROPEAN NETWORK



"Not involving men in the fight against FGM is like a doctor treating symptoms of a disease and ignoring the disease" >>>

TONY MWEBIA. MEN END FGM ADVOCATE

## MYTHS - VS - FACTS -

People who practise FGM are "barbaric" and "irrational"

When a family accepts to carry out FGM on its daughter, they wish to protect her against being stigmatised and socially excluded. A woman who has undergone FGM is socially accepted within her community and the society, and is ready to marry



Some forms of FGM are minor

All forms of FGM are harmful.

Any form is a violation of human rights and a form of gender-based violence



FGM is not prescribed by Islam or by any other religion. FGM existed prior to the existence of monotheistic religions and is to this day also practised in some Christian communities for example



FGM is an African issue

More than 200 million women worldwide have undergone FGM.
FGM happens on every continent in the world except Antarctica, it is a global issue. Also, in several African countries FGM is not practised



FGM is only practised by undereducated, socially disadvantaged people or in rural contexts

FGM occurs across all cultural and socio-economic groups

On many occasions, people have felt comfortable to ask me and other young women 'Have you undergone FGM?'



Practising FGM in a hospital reduces risk



Medicalised FGM (when practised in a healthcare facility) can be as harmful as when done traditionally and does not necessarily lead to a 'safer' practice. The psychological and physical effects of FGM remain serious and concerning





FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.endfgm.eu









