



RENA INDONESIA

Rena Herdiyani is the vice-chair of Kalyanamitra, a women's rights organization in Indonesia that has been doing advocacy on FGM since 2006, including public awareness-raising and discussion at the community level.

“ FGM happens in regions across Indonesia. People do it because they are following their family's traditions and what their religious leaders advise. They don't know that FGM is not part of Islamic teaching.

A lot of FGM is performed by traditional midwives or circumcisers who do it as their profession. We interviewed a traditional circumciser in North Jakarta and she said she used a small knife and took a little bit the size of a grain of rice from the baby's clitoris. You can also get FGM done in clinics where they offer a package for baby girls shortly after birth – piercing the ears and FGM at the same time. This is done by professional medical staff.

There are some misconceptions about FGM. People think it makes a woman less forceful sexually. They also think it is good for the health of the baby girls but they don't know in what way. They think it has no bad impact on the health of girls or later in life.

Any forms of FGM, even symbolic, is a violation of women's rights.

In 2008, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), Indonesia's top clerical body, issued a fatwa supporting female circumcision. This fatwa has become a barrier that is preventing the government from fighting to eliminate FGM or introducing legislation to outlaw it.

Public awareness is part of our work, especially at the grassroots and from a health perspective. We have had good engagement at the international level but it has been very difficult to get funding for our FGM work, either in Indonesia or internationally.

We need to find progressive and influential religious leaders that can convince the community to change their practices and mind-sets, which stems from gender stereotypes that people have internalized when they were young from what they were told by family, school, religious teachings and society in general. ”



For Rena's full story head to equalitynow.org/Rena

FGM/C IS GLOBAL
but so is the
movement to end it