



## ***Gender-related vulnerabilities in the EU asylum procedures: Spotlight on FGM***

### **Speakers & Moderators**

- **Bintou Bojang, Activist, Innocent Crocodile**

Bintou Bojang is a Gambian FGM survivor who fled to Germany and was granted international protection. Bintou is an activist and founder of Innocent Crocodile, a community-led organisation campaigning against FGM. She will speak about her experience going through the asylum procedure in Germany.

- **Annalisa d'Aguanno, GAMS Belgium**

Annalisa d'Aguanno is a psychologist at GAMS Belgium, an organisation working towards the abandonment of FGM. She is a graduate of Clinical Psychology at the Free University of Brussels and trained at the Belgian Institute of Applied Victimology. She is a co-author of the guide « Femme excisée et réfugiée, ma façon d'exister – Savoir-faire et Savoir-être en entretien » (2012). Through the individual consultations, she listens to the women « beyond the words » and observes the body language. She is so fascinated by the body language that in 2010, she initiated a workshop for corporal expressiveness, for women victim of gender based violence, which she still currently co-animates. She is following a course in Art Therapy at the Rhapsodie Center in Brussels.

- **Clara Caldera, AIDOS**

Clara Caldera is a Programme Officer at AIDOS, an Italian non-governmental organisation established in 1981. AIDOS has been engaged in programs and projects for the abandonment of FGM for almost 30 years in several African countries, giving financial, technical and organizational support to local NGOs. AIDOS is a partner in the EU-funded project 'European Knowledge Platform for Professionals dealing with Female Genital Mutilation'. The online training and learning platform will serve as a European resource and education centre on FGM. The platform which includes training modules on asylum, child protection, health and other relevant areas, will be officially launched in February 2017.



- **Dr Luc Declaire, Psychiatrist**

Dr Luc Declaire is a psychiatrist and ethnopsychiatrist. He is the Head of Geriatric Psychiatry at the Scheutbos Geriatric Centre and Vice President of the Société Balint Belge. Dr Declaire has contributed to «Femmes, excision et exil: Quel accompagnement thérapeutique possible?», a review, produced by GAMS Belgium, of the different therapeutic approaches and techniques currently used in Belgium with women affected by FGM and forced marriage.

- **Christine Flamand, INTACT asbl**

Christine Flamand is the coordinator of INTACT. INTACT is a legal expertise center on FGM and other forms of gender-based violence in Belgium. It is a founding member of the End FGM European Network. INTACT aims to protect women and girls from FGM through the respect of legal norms (national, European, international). It also supports individuals and professionals in legal or judicial proceedings (legal consultations, follow-up of applications for asylum, support for professionals confronted with child victims or children at risk, trainings on FGM). Christine Flamand holds a Master's Degree in Law and has been working for more than 20 years in different NGOs on refugee issues. She has also been a consultant for UNHCR on refugee status determination, with a focus on gender based violence and child protection.

- **Silvana Günther, German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees**

Silvana Günther is a Deputy Head of Unit at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Germany, a federal authority within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of the Interior. With its decentralised locations, including branch offices, arrival centres and decision-making centres, it is in direct contact with all players in refugee protection and integration work. It decides on asylum applications on the basis of the Asylum Act (Asylgesetz), of the Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz), as well as of European directives and regulations. The preconditions for granting international protection, the existence of political persecution as defined in the Basic Law (Grundgesetz), as well as bans on deportation, are examined within the asylum procedure. The Federal Office includes the Asylum and Migration Information Centre, a central specialist information facility.

- **Mary Honeyball MEP**

Mary Honeyball is a Member of the European Parliament for the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D) since 2000. She is a member of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and has written a report on the situation of women refugees and asylum seekers in the EU. Prior to becoming an MEP, she worked in the charity and non-governmental sector.

- **Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, Journalist**

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson is a Brussels-based journalist and author of the critically-acclaimed new book, *Cast Away: Stories of Survival from Europe's Refugee Crisis*, published by Portobello Books in the UK in May and The New Press in the US in September. She writes regularly on human rights, asylum policy, foreign affairs and other issues for publications including TIME, The Independent, The i, Newsweek, and Monocle Magazine.

- **Aji Rohey Manka, Network Ambassador**

Aji fled Gambia as she feared she would be subjected to FGM and has been granted international protection in Cyprus. She will be talking about her experience fleeing FGM and seeking asylum in Cyprus. Aji is one of the End FGM European Network's FGM Ambassadors, a newly launched project. The Ambassadors are women and men affected by FGM who will work with the Network to increase the public's understanding of FGM, empower communities and foster their mobilization.

- **Irene Masci, Cidis Onlus**

Irene Masci, as part of Cidis Onlus Perugia staff, has experience in the field of migration and over the years was responsible for the managing of several projects targeting migrant women. Cidis Onlus, an Italian Ngo working with migrants, has been working with the Umbria Centre for the study and prevention of Female Genital Mutilations and ASGI (Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration) to create a local network of institutions, experts and professionals to provide protection to women and girls affected by FGM. In collaboration with the Umbria Centre on FGM, Cidis Onlus has been able to provide more services to the asylum-seeking FGM survivors hosted at their Emergency Reception Centre, including counseling, de-infibulation procedures and support for their individual documentation to be presented to the Territorial Commissions for the Recognition of International Protection and to the Civil Tribunal competent for an appeal in the case of a rejection. This collaboration, merging cultural mediation, medical-anthropological and legal practice has proved effective in promoting awareness on FGM and its longer-term complications on sexual and reproductive health, informing those affected on Italian legislation and in helping them access international protection.

- **Annemarie Middelburg, Researcher**

Annemarie Middelburg is a consultant in the field of women's rights, with a unique expertise on FGM. She holds an LLM in Public International Law & Human Rights (*cum laude*). She successfully defended her PhD thesis entitled *'Empty Promises? Compliance with the Human Rights Framework in relation to Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Senegal'* in March 2016. Her book contains a legal analysis, literature research and an in depth empirical study (five months fieldwork in Senegal – conducting interviews with over 50 respondents at government level, international organizations and NGOs). She has worked on various research projects, including for the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), UNFPA, the Scientific Research and Documentation Center (WODC) of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice and Victim Support the Netherlands. Her most recent article *'Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting as a Ground for Asylum in Europe'* will be published in November 2016 in the *International Journal of Refugee Law*. She has also served as an expert witness during several court cases in relation to asylum and FGM in the United States and Europe.

- **Peggy Mulongo, NESTAC UK**

Peggy is a doctoral researcher and a Cross-cultural Mental Health Practitioner with 15 years' experience of working with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in the UK, raising awareness on different issues surrounding mental health and cultural beliefs. She is the co-founding member of NESTAC, a Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) addressing primarily the needs of BME populations living in the North West of England, since 2003. Peggy is an expert in delivering culturally adapted therapeutic support to asylum seeker and refugee families, especially women from African descent, who have experienced mental distress such as that associated with Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Domestic Violence (DV), or other forms of gender based violence. Peggy is

an FGM Campaigner and the initiator of the FGM Programme called Support our Sisters (SOS project), BJM Award-Winner 2015.

- **Naana Otoo-Oyortey, End FGM European Network Board President & Executive Director of FORWARD UK**

Naana Otoo-Oyortey MBE, is the Executive Director of the Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD), the lead agency working in the UK to end FGM. As a social activist and women's rights defender, Naana is passionate about building young women's leadership and voice, and giving them access to tools to research their situation and develop their skills as change agents. FORWARD is an African Diaspora women-led campaign and support non for profit organisation. FORWARD strives to advance and safeguard the sexual and reproductive health and rights of African girls and women globally, particularly focusing on FGM, child marriage and obstetrics.

- **Debora Singer, Asylum Aid**

Debora Singer is Policy and Research Manager at Asylum Aid, an NGO based in London, where she has managed the Women's Project since 2004. The Women's Project provides legal representation, information, policy and communications functions with the aim of creating a more gender-sensitive asylum system. Debora has published books, training manuals and films focusing on women's experiences in the asylum system and the problems they face in credibility assessment. Debora has an MA in Refugee Studies and was appointed MBE for services to women in 2012.

- **Martin Vegter, Defence for Children International - Netherlands**

Martin Vegter is a legal advisor on children's rights and migration at Defence for Children Netherlands. Defence for Children Netherlands carries out projects on migrant children, child protection, child abuse and sexual exploitation, education, information and training on children's rights. Martin regularly deals with cases of girls who (or whose parent(s)) claim asylum on the basis of the risk of FGM upon return. On behalf of Defence for Children Netherlands, he supports these cases in cooperation with their lawyers.

- **Andrea Vonkeman, UNHCR Bureau for Europe**

Andrea Vonkeman has worked as a Senior Policy Officer at UNHCR's Bureau for Europe in Brussels since 2011. During the past years, she has been closely engaged in the discussions around the recasting of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) instruments, particularly those relating to gender based violence. In particular she worked with the End FGM European Network on a Guide on the interpretation of new provisions relating to GBV (with a focus on FGM) in the recast CEAS instruments. Before joining the Europe Bureau she worked on community based SGBV prevention and response strategies with a focus on FGM, notably in refugee camps in Kenya. Previously, she was Regional Refugee Status Determination Adviser in the Middle East and Northern Africa and before that, she served UNHCR in various capacities, i.a. in the Great Lakes region of Africa, in East and West Africa, in South East Asia, and in the Western Balkan region. Andrea holds a Master's Degree in International and European law with a specialization in refugee law from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.