

Preamble

Female Genital Mutilation (FMG), also known as Female Genital Cutting (FGC), comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It has no health benefits and harms girls and women in many ways.

FGM involves removing and damaging healthy and normal female genital tissue, and hence interferes with the natural function of girls' and women's bodies. The practice causes severe pain and has several immediate and long-term health consequences, including difficulties in childbirth and endangering the child.

Communities that practise female genital mutilation report a variety of social and religious reasons for continuing with it. However, seen from a human rights perspective, the practice reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. Female genital mutilation is nearly always carried out on minors, aged between 0 and 15 years, and is therefore a violation of the rights of the child.

The practice also violates the rights to health, security and physical integrity of the person, the right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment, torture and cruelty, and the right to life when the procedure results in death. An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of FGM/FGC. In Africa an estimated 92 million girls aged 10 years and above have undergone FGM/FGC.

AMREF's Position on FGM/FGC

AMREF concurs that FGM/FGC is a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

AMREF is convinced that interventions against FGM/FGC must address the social and cultural values and sensitivities associated with the practice and must involve entire communities, both men and women, from the planning stage through to programme evaluation.

AMREF believes that application of knowledge available through a common, coordinated approach with the UN and other like-minded organisations and institutions can generate positive social change at community, national and international levels and lead to abandoning of FGM within a generation.

AMREF confirms its commitment to supporting governments, communities, women and girls in order to achieve the abandonment of FGM/FGC in the near future.

AMREF engages its partners on the ground – especially families and communities – so that they can make a collective and coordinated choice to abandon the practice, and so that no single girl or family is disadvantaged by the decision.

AMREF and other programme implementers need to coordinate activities among stakeholders.

Through socio-anthropological studies, ways of combating the practice while avoiding a culture clash are being explored and encouraged. Along these lines, AMREF is committed to working with communities to identify and support alternative rites of passage and to scale up this model where applicable.

In summary, AMREF supports the World Health Organisation's efforts to eliminate FGM by focusing on:

- **Advocacy and social mobilisation: breaking media silence by producing unified anti-FGM/FGC messages**

- **Developing publications and advocacy tools for international, regional and local efforts to end FGM/FGC within a generation**
- **Research: generating knowledge about the causes and consequences of the practice, how to eliminate it, and how to care for those who have experienced FGM/FGC**
- **Integration of the issue of FGM/FGC in the classroom and in out-of-school teaching**
- **Creating and supporting anti-FGM/FGC youth groups in universities, schools, youth centres and other youth outlets**
- **Encouraging community health workers and traditional birth attendants to integrate anti-FGM/FGC education during their visits to pregnant mothers**
- **Educating and strengthening traditional leadership**