

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation, also commonly referred to as Female Circumcision, FGM or Female Genital Cutting, is defined by the World Health Organization as 'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons'.

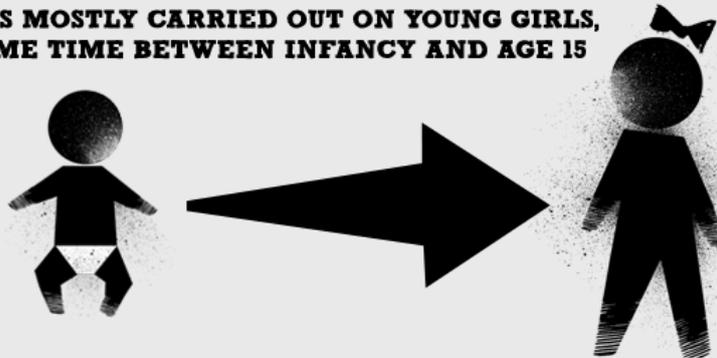
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)



**MORE THAN 3 MILLION GIRLS IN AFRICA
ARE AT RISK OF FGM ANNUALLY**



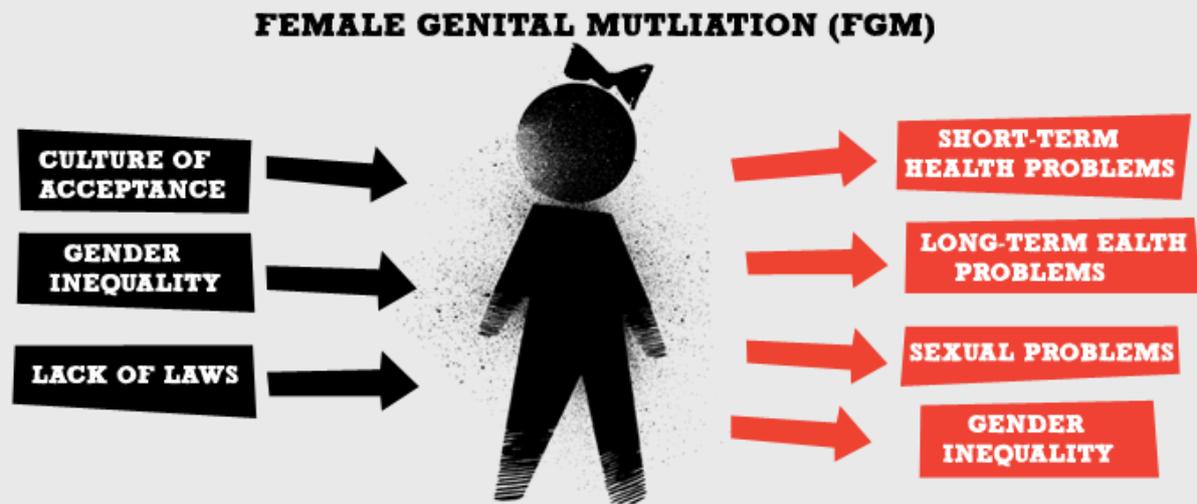
**FGM IS MOSTLY CARRIED OUT ON YOUNG GIRLS,
AT SOME TIME BETWEEN INFANCY AND AGE 15**



Sources:
WHO, Female genital mutilation fact sheet No. 241, 2008
EU, Resolution on FGM, 2009)
www.waggs.org



Why does Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) happen?



Causes:

Culture of acceptance – In some communities, FGM has become a cultural practice. It is thought of as a way to make girls “clean” and “beautiful” in preparation for marriage and is a result of social norms which consider this act a necessary part of raising a girl properly.

Gender inequality – the low position of women and girls in communities means they are not given equal access to education, employment and decision-making roles. As a result their needs and wants are not listened to and they are not viewed as equal in their relationships, leading to their sexual rights not being acknowledged. FGM is seen as a way of controlling a woman’s sexual behaviour as it is believed that it will suppress her sexual desires and help her to resist “illicit” sexual acts that may harm the family honour.

Lack of laws – There may be no laws to stop FGM. If it is illegal as a practice, there may be poor implementation of legislation and prosecution of offenders. Families may also take girls away to other countries to have the practice done elsewhere.

Consequences:

Short-term health problems – Girls and young women who undergo FGM will experience blood loss and severe pain. They are likely to be traumatised and experience shock.

Long-term health problems – FGM harms the long-term health of girls and young women. It not only removes and hurts healthy and normal parts of the vagina, but it can harm the way girls' bodies work, leading to problems with becoming pregnant, problems in childbirth and urine infections. It can also lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

Sexual problems – FGM can diminish and stop sexual enjoyment for girls and young women.

Loss of education/decision-making power – Studies show that FGM is linked to girls dropping out of school at a young age as the short-term health problems can lead to frequent absence and poor performance. Girls who drop out of school earlier then go on to earn less and have less decision-making power over choices of marriage and child planning as their peers.

Gender inequality – The practice of FGM and controlling girls and young women’s bodies reinforces their low position in society.