6. The «STOP FGM» Project

I. MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST FGM IN TANZANIA

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FGM IN TANZANIA

In Tanzania Female Genital Cutting (FGC), or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), is carried out in 10 out of 26 regions of the country. The prevalence of women undergoing the ritual is estimated at 18%. The figure may look small compared to neighbouring Kenya that has 50%, or Somalia with over 90%, but the situation is so bad in some parts of Tanzania that it has been recorded that 81% of women are affected by FGM.

There are many NGOs and CBOs active in anti-FGM Campaigns in Tanzania, with activities ranging from offering counseling and shelter to victims to awareness raising for cultural decision makers and members of the societies. The organisations operate at the grassroots, at the regional level, as well as at the national level as part of international networks. They include the Inter Africa Committee, Tanzanian Chapter, and the Anti Female Genital Mutilation Network (AFNET), to name just a few.

Tanzania is one of the African countries that have a law against FGM. The Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act of 1998 criminalised FGM and the offense carries a sentence of up to 15 years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 300,000/= (US$300).

Despite the campaigns and the enactment of the law on FGM, people still carry out the practices and, recently, the age, times and even locations of the practice have changed to avoid detection.

ABOUT TAMWA

TAMWA was formed in 1987 primarily to focus the media on women and children’s rights in Tanzania. Through its over 100 members, the organisation advocated for the protection of women’s rights in different social settings and sectors, particularly with regard to the issues of gender-based cruelty. Through its innovative and strategic use of radio, television, newspapers and magazines to disseminate messages in a simultaneous media blitz, TAMWA has succeeded in generating public debates, and therefore, facilitated the breaking of the silence on social issues that were considered taboo in the society.

Among the campaigns TAMWA has implemented are those against wife battery, the killing of elderly women due to misguided witchcraft beliefs, rape, discrimination against women in decision making, HIV issues from a gender perspective and FGM. TAMWA, on behalf of the
Feminist Activism Coalition (FemAct) members in 1998, pioneered advocacy and lobbing campaigns for the enactment of a law that complements the organisation’s goals. The Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act is designed to protect women and children from abuse. The following year, in collaboration with other civil society organizations, TAMWA lobbied for the enactment of the Land Act which, among other things, recognised for the first time women’s rights to own, and have a voice on, land issues.

THE STOP FGM PROJECT

In 2002 TAMWA, in collaboration with AIDOS and NPWJ, embarked on the Stop FGM campaign.

Activities

Surveys: TAMWA conducted surveys in 5 regions that have the highest prevalence of FGM in the country: Arusha 81%, Dodoma 67%, Mara 43%, Kilimanjaro 37% and Singida 35%.

The surveys involved visiting villages to learn about their socio-cultural environment and the economic issues that are a priority to them.

TAMWA researchers also collected views regarding FGM: what it symbolises, their awareness level of health effects and legal implications, and what THEY think is the solution to the problem.

Radio programmes/spots: A fifteen-minute radio programme titled 'Tubadilike' (Let’s Change) is produced weekly and aired by the state radio (RADIO TANZANIA). Experts as well as ordinary people are featured in the programme to highlight various issues including the human rights of women with regard to FGM.

Media Bangs: The launch of the campaign and its progress received publicity countrywide, and beyond Africa. The project’s activities are constantly in the news.

'Sauti ya Siti' (The Magazine of TAMWA): A special issue on FGM was produced in Tanzania’s two main languages -- English and Kiswahili.

IEC Materials: We produced press kits regarding the issues and distributed these to journalists in all media houses for easy reference in their daily activities. Posters and calendars have been produced and distributed to fellow activists within the government and in the communities. Messages on the materials reflect results from TAMWA village surveys.

Training: Workshops for journalists and editors were held to raise their awareness on FGM so as to increase their participation in the campaign. Another workshop for theatre artists is being planned to raise their awareness to produce plays and songs in line with the Stop FGM campaign.

Achievements

— Over 150 information articles on the campaign have been published in local and regional newspapers.
— International media such as Voice of America (VOA), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Radio Deustche Welle (DW) have picked up the campaign in Tanzania through their Kiswahili service programmes.
— The Solemn Appeal Manifesto, launched on December 23 2002, received wide coverage
and has already collected signatures from hundreds of Ministers, Members of Parliament, Judges, government officials, members of the civil societies, journalists and ordinary people from all corners of the country; signatures are still being collected.

— The 'Tubadilike' programme aired through the State Radio is popular and receives much feedback in the form of letters from listeners.

— Press Kits produced have been widely used by journalists and activists from other organisation for the campaigns. The kits include the survey findings.

— Villagers reached by TAMWA’s campaign were mobilized to be part of the solution to eradicate FGM. They formed committees to monitor FGM practices in their areas and are willing to carry out social awareness-raising programs with fellow villagers.

— Public debate on the need to stop FGM has been initiated and there is regular feedback in the mainstream media through letters to the editor, editorials, cartoons and poems.

— There has been an increase in the number of people who visit TAMWA offices to inquire about the Stop FGM Campaign and request the use of IEC materials produced for campaigning.

— There has been more involvement of men in the campaign. In our view, this is one of the biggest successes because findings showed that men were the key decision makers in societies; at a conference a woman stood up and said, “If men assure us they will marry our daughters even if they are not circumcised, we will stop it.”

— Among the number of visitors who flood the TAMWA office for information on FGM are secondary school students who are doing projects. They have approached TAMWA for data on various campaigns against violence against women, particularly FGM. I have personally attended to groups of over 25 students in the last 4 months. They were all boys!

**CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

Results from the surveys suggest that tackling FGM in Tanzanian villages requires a complex approach due to the various levels of understanding among numerous cultural stakeholders. Our journalistic approach to the issue realized its mission by shining light on areas that need attention. As mentioned during this meeting time and again, communication is important to the victims, parents and village leaders -- men and women.

— Some understand health risks
— Some reject any interventions
— For some, it is the issue of risking the loss of power and status (village elders, even Parliamentarians!)
— Victims reject interventions for fear of social outcasting (linked with poverty and illiteracy among women)
— Some are willing to change, and request security from members of the community

Communication on initiatives that need more support and possible duplication in other areas: Masai Girls Secondary School for Pastoral Children

Information dissemination regarding the legislation: Many are not aware of the Law
— Some escape punishment through loopholes in the law, e.g., 10,000/= for a Pastoralist who owns 300 cows worth millions makes a mockery of the fine and the good intention of the Law.
— Some change tactics and mutilate infants
- Protection of women over 18 forced to be mutilated during delivery

It is a challenge for TAMWA and its partners and activists, to constantly monitor progress, change, even failure in campaigns, and to report these developments back through the media so that responsible organs, including the judiciary and members of the society, take up these issues. This is only possible through effective strategies of communication.

II. THE STOP FGM INTERNATIONAL APPEAL AND WEB PORTAL

CRISTIANA SCOCCA
AIDOS Project coordinator

The project "Stop FGM", presented in the framework of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, intends to give a contribution to the fight against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), a traditional practice prevalent in 28 African countries and, more recently found among immigrant communities in Europe, North America and Australia.

BACKGROUND

Female genital mutilation is the collective name given to several different traditional practices that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural, ethnic, religious or any other non-therapeutic reasons. The most severe form is infibulation, which consists of the excision of part of the external genitalia and narrowing/stitching of the vaginal opening.

Based on the limited data available, it has been estimated that between 100 to 130 million girls and women, mostly from Africa, have been subjected to FGM, and each year an estimated 2 million more girls undergo some forms of the practice. Most of them live in Africa, a few in the Middle East and Asian countries, and increasingly in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America and Canada due to the continuation of the practice by immigrants from countries where FGM is common.

The effects of FGM have severe short term and long term health consequences. Most physical implications result from infibulation. Obstetric complications are the most frequent health problems, resulting from vicious scars in the clitoral zone after mutilation.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project specific objectives are the following:
1. increase the awareness in Africa and at European and international level on the severe violation of human rights resulting from the practice of FGM through the launch of an
international Appeal signed by the world’s prominent personalities;
2. collect and disseminate information to the various stakeholders on what is being done in various countries, both in Africa and in Europe, to eliminate the practice of FGM, and assess the strategies to change individual behaviour and social norms;
3. foster the role of civil society in monitoring Government efforts to eliminate FGM and in holding Governments (in Africa and in Europe) accountable for failure to fulfil their international obligations;
4. assess the role of the judiciary system in enforcing legislation prohibiting FGM;
5. develop information and communication campaigns to accompany legislative measures with a nation-wide appropriate pilot/demonstration campaign in Tanzania;
6. enhance the capacity of African NGOs to collect and disseminate data and information on the practice through the internet;

PARTNERS OF THE PROJECT AND LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT

The project has been presented by AIDOS, Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo (Italian Association for Women in Development) in partnership with NPWJ, No Peace Without Justice, and TAMWA, Tanzania Media Women’s Association.

AIDOS provides general co-ordination for the project activities and is responsible for the narrative and financial reporting to the EC. AIDOS has also to carry out the realisation of the web site.

NPWJ is responsible for the international Appeal publicity, the organisation of the Event in Brussels in December 2002 for the launch of the “Stop FGM” campaign and the organisation of the Experts consultation in June 2003 in Egypt.

TAMWA is responsible for the organisation of a Pilot project involving the media in Tanzania, a nation-wide education and information campaign.

Moreover; the project foresees the collaboration of seven African NGOs for the research and updating of information on the activities implemented in Africa, the collecting of signatures of local personalities, and the spread of the international Appeal and the Experts Consultation results on the African continent.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INITIATIVES

Activity 1 : Web site
A web site in English, French and Arabic, will be created as a comprehensive tool to document and spread information concerning the various activities for the eradication of FGM, as well as a concrete instrument to bring about change by reaching and involving different actors at the international level and by drawing attention to what is going on in Africa and in Europe.

Activity 2 : Training of local NGOs
An extensive assessment of the different activities to eliminate FGM in the African countries will be carried out by seven local NGOs, selected among those which have already worked with AIDOS in Africa and have the structure and capacity to carry out this activity. In principle the seven NGOs will be the National Committees of the Inter African Committee in
Ethiopia, Egypt, Mali, Nigeria, Gambia, Benin, and Burkina Faso. The seven NGOs will act as area co-ordinators, in order to extend the project activities to all the African countries. They will collect the information regarding FGM prevalence and actions for its elimination not only in their own country, but also in the neighbouring countries. A 5-day training course was organised in November, 2002 in Rome for one researcher from each national committee on research methodology, collection, and preparation of the documentation for uploading the web site, and on the technical aspects involved in managing the information system and the software.

**Activity 3: Appeal/Manifesto of Leaders of the International Community**

On the occasion of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on December 10-11, 2002, AIDOS and NPSG organised a Conference/Media event in Brussels calling on the world’s prominent personalities, e.g., Nobel prize winners, International personalities, and political leaders, to take a leadership role in the campaign against FGM and sign an Appeal/manifesto drafted on the basis of the motion presented in the European Parliament in November, 2001 by a wide group of European Parliamentarians.

The promoters and first signatories of the Appeal/manifesto were invited to this Conference. The Appeal/manifesto was published in several international and national newspapers and magazines, including African publications, in order to sensitise public opinion to the importance of legal instruments of protection from FGM and respect for Human Rights.

**Activity 4: Experts Consultation**

A 3-day Experts Consultation will be organised on June 21-23, 2003 in Cairo, Egypt with the participation of 2 representatives, one from the government and one from the civil society, from those countries which have already enacted legislation on FGM (Burkina-Faso, Central African Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda), in order to compare policies and strategies, learn from success stories, discuss which measures are necessary to effectively enforce the legislation, and which additional activities have to accompany punitive legislation.

The Expert Consultation, which will include technical consultation from the Center for Reproductive Rights (New York), will focus on the analysis and comparison of laws and policies aimed at eliminating FGM, on increasing international awareness and strengthening the action of civil society and governments involved in the struggle against FGM, thereby identifying the most effective legal and political tools.

**Activity 5: Pilot Project with the Media in Tanzania**

A pilot project will be carried out in Tanzania for a nation-wide education and information campaign using all the media. The partners in the initiative deem of great importance a test of a media strategy in at least one African country, and Tanzania was chosen for a number of reasons related to the fact that FGM is practised with a high prevalence despite the adoption in July, 1998 of a specific law (Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act) which criminalises FGM. Moreover, in Tanzania, there is a high rate of HIV/AIDS infection, which can be linked with FGM practices.
EXPECTED RESULTS

The expected results are the following:
— Efforts to address FGM are part of a long-term process that seeks to make governments accountable for women’s rights. The challenges associated with stopping FGM should awaken us to the reality of the profound social and political changes that must occur to eliminate discrimination against women. Women’s inequality is a global phenomenon that must be combated by a host of strategies and means that are responsive to the specifics of any given context.
— To eradicate an ancient practice such as FGM, and to be able to save the life and well-being of millions of African girls and women, will require a long-term commitment and the engagement of a multitude of actors in Africa: Governments, NGOs working on gender issues, NGOs working at the community level, the judiciary systems, and the media. Criminal laws alone will not change behaviour. On the other hand, educational efforts, while often successful, cannot entirely eliminate adherence to the practice.
— It is estimated that African Governments will make more firm commitments to fight against the practice by devoting attention and resources to a multi-strategy approach toward eliminating FGM and accompanying these initiatives with legislative measures and nationwide information, education and awareness-raising campaigns. It can be expected that governments will become more receptive to the efforts of local NGOs and international organisations also engaged in the struggle. It can also be expected that the European Governments will increase their engagement in financing programmes and projects at the local level through development aid.
— The pilot media project in Tanzania is expected to have a great impact at the community level and contribute directly to the eradication of the practice of FGM. The campaign will seek to raise the awareness of the people with regard to FGM, encouraging behavioural and attitudinal changes. On the other hand, it can be expected that this media project, the first of its kind in Africa, will be taken as an example by other African countries where the situation is conducive to a similar media campaign.

Apart from all the press features and radio and TV programs directly financed by the project, the media practitioners will also play a key role in disseminating information from the surveys, training sessions and meetings with the different stakeholders.

III. THE DICTIONARY OF FGM

SOPHIE BESSIS
Journalist and Writer

At the end of the ’70s, the issue was almost totally hidden, but the knowledge of FGM has continued to spread and deepen since the end of that period. In fact, since the ’80s, the issue of FGM has acquired legitimate standing on both the levels of denunciation and research.

However, a book has yet to exist that synthesizes the knowledge of this phenomenon and
is accessible to the general public (mass media, governors from the North and South, NGOs not involved in the issue, and so on). This is the reason why the STOP FGM campaign has taken the initiative to write a “The Dictionary of FGM”, which will be a valuable working tool and source of information for all the people and associations interested in this problem.

This tool will be even more useful since the phenomenon of FGM has extended and become more complex in recent decades. In those countries (above all African) where genital mutilations are frequent, the situation has changed according to the political will and the actions taken to eliminate the practices. On the other hand, as a result of South-North migrations, numerous western countries today count large communities of native people from countries where FGM is practiced. In Western Europe, in North America and Australia, FGM is no longer a far away exotic habit, but practiced every day.

Thus, we can justify an inventory of the places FGM is being practised in the world. Taking into account that available information remains insufficient and partial for many countries, the Dictionary does not pretend to be exhaustive. It will attempt to collect the maximum information available for every country, deal with the main topics, and give space to FGM questions within specific socio-cultural contexts, with the intention of provoking insights into more effective strategies for its elimination.

**How is the Dictionary Structured?**

The general presentation of the issue is followed by a dictionary for each country, organized by geographical area: the African countries, the Arabic countries, the Asian countries, the countries where FGM is sporadically practiced. Western countries will be subdivided in two sections.

1) General Information on FGM:
   — Awareness raising steps
   — Conventions and international resolutions which condemn FGM
   — Types of FGM
   — The consequences of FGM on women’s health
   — Short bibliography

2) African and Asian countries where the practise is ancient: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Egypt, Emirates, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Uganda, Center African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Yemen.

3) Western countries where the practise is new: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Italy, Norway, New Zealand, The Netherlands, United States of America, Sweden, Switzerland.

The main topics for each country:
   — The socio-economic context
— Country Statistics: population, demographic growth level, GDP, GDP per person, balance of expenses for health and education, population medical coverage, number of people living in poverty.
— Health and Education Statistics: mothers’ and children’s mortality, the number of girls enrolled at school.

The Status of Women

Information on the subject is indispensable due to the fact that the general situation of women exposed to FGM is outside the global norm: the more women are dominated by tradition, laws and discriminatory social practises, the harder it is to eradicate FGM. For western countries, we will try – as far as possible – to understand the phenomena within the immigrant communities.

Social Conditions: marital status, prevalence of polygamy, median age at marriage, fecundity, age at first motherhood.
Economic and Political Conditions: paid work, political responsibilities.

The Prevalence of FGM

— Statistics: how many mutilations; which type of mutilations; ethnic, regional and religious subdivisions; age at mutilation, and so on.
— Improvements: if it is possible, comparative data to aid in understanding FGM’s possible evolutions.
— Social Attitudes: men’s and women’s perspectives on FGM.

Legislation and Politics

— FGM Laws: which are the laws in the country taken into consideration? Is it a modern law? Laws in the other countries.
— Political Will: the attitude of the governments regarding this phenomenon, political commitment or its absence for the eradication of FGM. Is the law to abolish FGM respected?

Organisations and Activists

— Sources of Additional Information
AFRO–ARAB EXPERT CONSULTATION ON LEGAL TOOLS FOR THE PREVENTION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION