**Activism Project Blog**

**Female Genital Mutilation**

1. **Introduction**

* Female genital mutilation is the partial or total removal of the external genitalia of women.
* WHO opposed to all forms of FGM
* WHO declares that FGM is a violation of the human rights of women and girls

Female genital mutilation (FGM) has been the subject of discussion, especially in circles that fight against women's rights. It refers to the partial or the total removal of the external genitalia of women. This can be done through various means, cutting, removing and even pricking of the external genitalia and, in turn, sewing it up for non-medical reasons (Muteshi et al., 2016). It is mainly carried out for traditional reasons globally, and traditional circumcisers often oversee the process. The World Health Organization is opposed to all forms of FGM and declares it a violation of the human rights of women and girls.

1. **Basic Factual Information**

* There are more than 200 million women and girls globally
* These women and girls are saturated within 31 countries
* Approximately 3 million girls are at risk of FGM every year
* The acknowledgement that the prevalence of FGM has been reducing in the past decade
* One in three girls undergoes FGM in 31 countries instead of one in two countries 30 years ago.
* Somalia with the highest percentage of FGM.

The statistics released on FGM prevalence are pretty saddening. WHO (2020) notes that about 200 million women alive today in 31 countries where prevalence is high have gone through FGM. This practice is highly concentrated in Africa, North Africa, West Africa and some parts of East Africa. The country with the highest prevalence of FGM is Somalia, while Egypt has the highest total number of women who had gone through FGM (UNICEF, 2020). However, other countries in the Middle East and Asia also continue to practice this vice. WHO (2020) also notes that approximately 3 million girls are at risk of FGM every year. Notably, there has been a reduction in the number of women and girls undergoing FGM in the past three decades. One in three girls undergoes FGM in 31 countries instead of one in two, 30 years ago.

1. **Why is FGM a Problem?**

* FGM has no health benefits
* The risk of FGM increases with the severity.
* There can be immediate and long term problems with FGM
* Immediate problems include severe bleeding, infections, shock, fever, genital swelling etc.

FGM has been proven to have no known health benefits, and most of the people practising it just want to fulfil traditional beliefs and roles. It is essential to understand that the risk of FGM will increase with the severity. This means that it depends on the specific organs that were removed and the tissues that they affected. FGM can cause both immediate and long term problems for women and girls. Some of the primary problems include severe bleeding, infections, genital swelling, fever, and fatal cases girls and women can die. These immediate problems come because the circumcisers do not have the necessary experience to ensure that they conduct FGM safely or even stop conducting it.

1. **Why is FGM a Problem?**

* Long term problems
* Urinary problems
* Sexual problems
* Risks during childbirth
* Psychological problems

The long term problems of FGM include urinary problems such as urinary retention and pain when passing urine. Women may also experience sexual problems, including pain during intercourse. Another common problem is that women may experience overall dissatisfaction during sexual intercourse because of the knife. Studies have also shown that women who underwent FGM are at a higher risk of requiring caesarian section during childbirth. They are also at the risk of post-partum haemorrhage (Khosla et al., 2017). Women who undergo FGM are also at the risk of long term psychological problems. The procedure itself results in high psychological stress. This can trigger anxiety, depression and even suicidal thoughts among the victims.

1. **What Is Being Done?**

* Raising awareness of the problem of FGM
* Working with resident communities
* Improve educational reach so that girls can know that they have a right to control what is happening to their bodies

There have been various initiatives and strategies globally attempting to stop or at least reduce FGM practice. One of the ways this is being done is through raising awareness of the problem. It is not enough to keep shouting that FGM is not suitable for women and girls. There is a need to raise more awareness of elements such as the cutting season to remain alert. Another strategy has been working with resident communities to get them to see the adverse effects of FGM. The improvement of education among communities that practice FGM is another strategy as it helps every girl to understand that they have a right to control what is happening to their bodies.

1. **What Is Being Done?**

* The acknowledgement of the existence of various organizations that are helping in the fight against FGM.
* UNICEF
* Equality Now
* Action Aid UK

Notably, various organizations are helping in the fight against FGM. It is pretty commendable that there are hundreds of organizations that are fighting this problem within society. However, for this presentation, only three organizations will be discussed-UNICEF, Equality Now, Action Aid UK. UNICEF has partnered with UNFPA in 17 countries. Here, they work with communities to help and transform social norms from within while still partnering with governments to make laws that will help ban FGM. Equality now leverages legal advocacy and community partnerships to push governments to advocate laws that make FGM illegal. Action Aid UK helps in this fight by providing shelter to people who have escaped from the practice in their communities.

1. **What Can You Do to Combat FGM?**

* Volunteering to raise awareness on the dangers of FGM
* Donations to organizations that are in the fight against FGM
* Signing petitions

This is a fight that needs the involvement of numerous parties if it is to be won. As such, there are various ways in which people willing to support the course can do so. The first way is through volunteering and offering services to the organizations fighting against FGM. The services can include community outreaches or even professional services. The other way that people can combat FGM is through donating to organizations. Most of these organizations depend on donations to survive and continue with their excellent work. People can also sign petitions that widely available to compel governments to change their laws to ban FGM. You can sign or even start your petition at <https://www.change.org/m/end-female-genital-mutilation>. Below are some of the links where you can volunteer and donate.

<https://www.actionaid.org.uk/events-and-fundraising/volunteer-abroad>

<https://www.equalitynow.org/donate>

**References**

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