

PILOT PROJECT

NUMBER 3

GFMW Partners with The Egyptian Women's Horizon Association (EWHA) GIZA, EGYPT

GFMW partners with EWHA to help **Combat Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM)/(FGC)** by providing educational and microeconomic incentive programs that enables FGM/FGC practitioners to start new businesses and offset lost income from FGC procedures.

Through their programs EWHA addresses gender problems in Egypt which are broadly defined and include: early marriage, incest, rape, wife beating, illiteracy, preference for boys, unemployment, lack of adequate political participation by women, sexual harassment, challenges imposed by patriarchy, misunderstanding of Quranic texts by the public and lack of adequate education and clarification by religious leaders, imams and mullahs at the mosques.

The Global Fund For Muslim Women (GFMW) through it's grants supports the following educational component of EWHA to help advance efforts to combat FGC.

PROJECT'S GOALS:

- Increase public's awareness on womens rights in general and the dangers of FGC in particular and its social psychological, health effect on the girls, with aim to eliminate FGC.
- Educational programs aimed at Imams to help them see that FGC predates Islam and is a harmful cultural practice rather than religious mandate.

- Working to dissuade practitioners of FGC procedures, such as the midwives, health "Barbers" and nurses, to relinquish this part of their health practice.

The EWHA established **5 literacy classes** for women in the Omrania District in cooperation with the government's Adult educational center with 15 women in each class (thus benefitting 75 women from this program); The second set of 5 classes are currently ongoing. These comprehensive educational classes were not only for literacy but also focused on women's development and include lectures, seminars, cultural site visits, reproductive health and FGC awareness sessions and training.

The Community leaders were engaged in the process to advance the mission. This program enabled 2 midwives and 2 health barbers to relinquish their FGC practice and become productive and positive change agents in their society. The impact is clear. Every one of these formal FGC practitioners used to conduct between 2 – 3 operations weekly, more than 120 operations yearly. $120 \text{ operations} \times 4 \text{ persons} = 480 \text{ operations annually}$. **That means 480 girls were saved from being subjected to this procedure last year alone, when four FGC practitioners became anti FGC advocates.**

Meetings, seminars and discussion with the residents in the targeted area are used to help increase public awareness about FGC. The people of the area are becoming more receptive to the new message and the discussion on the harmful effects of female circumcision. Through this process public trust is being built and they are beginning to feel comfortable using the EWHA's office facility as a resource and as a counseling/consulting center.

Although FGM/C has been shown to have many harmful effects, both physical and emotional, the practice is sustained by a set of social rewards. The idea is to set in motion a dynamic for positive change in which a core group enlists others as a way of changing social norms and improving marriage prospects of girls who have not been cut.

ABOUT FEMALE GENTAL CUTTING:

Female genital mutilation, or cutting, predates Christianity and Islam - it is thought to have originated in the time of the pharaohs. UNFPA and UNICEF, through a joint program launched in 2007, are leading efforts to end this persistent violation of the basic human rights of girls and women in one generation.

Female Genital Cutting, although **the law** to ban FGC was passed in 2008

in Egypt, it is still practiced in Egypt besides many other countries. The law was an important first step in changing people's attitudes and demands for the procedure and has helped the percentage to decline from 92% to 88%. The new law prevents the FGM procedures from being conducted in hospitals and clinics, but people who still believe in FGC/M turn to **Midwives, Nurses and Health Barbers** to conduct the procedure under poor sanitary and unsupervised condition, which puts young girls at higher risk from complications ie bleeding, infection and psychosocial challenges. The challenge is compounded by the fact that it is much more difficult to convince the women to give it up, than to convince the men.

- Some midwives who have their own interest in the continuation of the practice of female circumcision.
- The belief that FGC helps the girl to become adult and achieve completeness of her femininity.
- The belief that circumcision is desirable in religion and that's why it is called 'sunnah'.

Although FGM/C has been shown to have many harmful effects, both physical and emotional, the practice is sustained by a set of social rewards. That is why a number of culturally sensitive strategies are employed to encourage large core groups to abandon FGM/C together. These include media campaigns, community debates, garnering the support of stakeholders (especially professional associations, religious leaders, parliamentarians, civil society and NGOs), encouraging group commitments to abandonment, and legal measures.

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/female-genital-cutting.pdf>

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/female-genital-cutting.cfm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_genital_mutilation