

UNICEF COTE D'IVOIRE ELIMINATION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Issue:

According to the preliminary results of the MICS 2006, nearly 87% of the women in Northern Côte d'Ivoire have been victim of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). FGM/C is still practiced among most population groups in Cote d'Ivoire, even though prevalence is higher within some ethnic groups, the Muslim population and in rural areas.

Regions	% of excised girls from 15-49
North	87.9
North - West	87.8
West	73.3

There is a strong social consensus around these mutilations. Initially done to prepare the young girl to womanhood, FGM/C practices affect an increasing number of younger girls and even babies. The main reasons given to justify FGM/C practice are the following: i) it is a way to test the courage and the endurance of the young girls, ii) it is a guarantee for the wife's faithfulness, iii) it is a ritual of purification and social integration (preparation to life as a housewife), iiiii) it is a religious requirement.

These practices have been continuing despite the adoption, almost ten years ago, of a law prohibiting FGM/C. Actions developed until now by local partners have been focusing on sensitization and informing the community and in particular the excision practitioners, on the consequences of FGM/C for women's and girl's health. It has been observed that if some excision practitioners give up their knives, thus reducing the offer of services for FGM, the families look for excision practitioners in other settings. Therefore, fighting FGM requires tough measures to reduce the service offer (including judicial repression) but also to reduce the demand for excision, by tackling social conventions in favour of FGM/C.

Global Objective:

To guarantee the promotion and protection of girls' and women's rights and in particular the right to bodily integrity and to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Specific Objectives:

To decrease the prevalence of FGM/C in the target areas.

Expected results:

- Decreased prevalence of FGM/C in the target areas;
- Increased commitment and capacity of partners including religious/traditional leaders, partner organizations, women associations, service providers and citizens to address FGM/C through training, information and experience sharing;
- Increased technical and policy making capacity and improved coordination of government actors and policies to eliminate FGM/C;
- Strengthened mechanisms/networks at the community level for the protection of girls and women;
- Increased capacity and involvement of media to promote the rights of the girl-child and to use communication as a mean to promote social change;
- Effective legislation and social support mechanisms that improve government and community capacity to protect girls at risk from FGM/C are in place.

Approach:

The followed approach recognizes that the decision to abandon the practice must come from communities themselves and must reflect a collective choice, based on human rights and on the realization of its harmfulness.

The key is to pursue the abandonment of FGM/C as part of a larger process of social change. The adopted approach is to form a critical mass to bring about change and publicly declare these intentions at the community level, through capacity building of communities and public discussion that is non-judgmental and non-directive. This should be complemented by strengthening institutional capacity of national bodies involved in combating this practice; introducing legislation and social support mechanisms, i.e. a supportive environment.

Key activities:

The project will implement a Community Empowerment Programme that will focus on the following activities:

- Establish and strengthen child protection and women's networks/committees at local and national level;
- Identify, mobilize and train peer educators: local community members, traditional and religious leaders, teachers, health workers, members of civil society on FGM/C and its dangers, legal framework, rights of women and children, community mobilization and communication for behavioural change;
- Awareness raising activities by the trained actors within the communities through mass and door to door sensitization campaigns;
- Sensitize, inform and train media on FGM/C and girls' and women's rights;
- Promote and support dissemination of spots, messages, debates on local and national media;
- Develop and enforce policies and laws for the protection of girls and women and the promotion of their rights.

Budget:

Description	Total cost (in US\$)
Establishment and strengthening of child protection and women's networks/committees	30,000
Identify and train peer educators	30,000
Awareness raising activities	20,000
Sensitize, inform and train media	20,000
Communication tools	20,000
Develop and enforce policies and laws	10,000
Supervision, monitoring and evaluation	25,000
Staffing	40,000
Operational costs	19,500
<i>Sub total</i>	<i>214,500</i>
Recovery costs at head quarters (7%)	15,015
TOTAL	229,515