

Improving the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Empowering regional, national and local stakeholders to transform social norms

The challenge

Female Genital Mutilation includes all procedures involving the removal of some or all of the external female genitalia without any medical need to do so. This is a severe violation of the human rights to health and physical integrity. FGM also violates women's rights, and children's rights, as girls often suffer from the practice at a very young age. The lifelong health consequences of FGM include birth complications, infections, chronic pain, trauma and severe psychological stress.

FGM is both an expression and a cause of gender inequality. The underlying causes of FGM are deeply entrenched in the social fabric, driven by rigid social norms, gender roles, and cultural practices, often linked to other forms of gender-based violence, such as early marriage.

In all three countries, there are ongoing political efforts to eliminate FGM and develop integrated strategies to strengthen the rights of women and children. FGM has been banned in Ethiopia since 2005 and in Sudan since 2020. Similar legislation is currently going through the consultation phase in Somalia, the federal state of Puntland and Somaliland. However, there is a lack of regional coordination: key actors are unable to adequately implement preventive measures systematically.

The objective

The project is designed to strengthen the contribution of relevant state and non-state actors at local, national, and regional levels to social norm change related to FGM and other forms of gender-based violence.

This objective is rooted on the premise that by enhancing institutional capacities, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and empowering communities, we can create a sustainable shift in social norms that will ultimately reduce the prevalence of FGM and related forms of GBV in the targeted regions.

Project title	Improving the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the Horn of Africa
Commissioned by	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Project regions	Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, Afar and Somali Somalia: Mogadishu, Puntland, Jubaland and Somaliland Sudan: Eastern Sudan States
Lead executing agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Duration	02/20 – 06/2027

Our approach

The cultural norms that perpetuate FGM can only be dismantled through coordinated efforts that engage communities and leverage the influence of both governmental and civil society organizations. The empowerment of role models and change agents helps to break up patriarchal structures in which FGM is rooted. The project thus contributes to strengthening the human rights of girls and women to life, equality, non-discrimination, education and welfare. Moreover, the project promotes social, societal, political and economic participation of women and girls. The prevention of FGM also improves the sexual and reproductive health of women and girls. In the longer term, the project contributes to placing the fight against FGM on the local, regional, and global political agenda. It is targeting selected regions of Ethiopia (Afar and Somali), Sudan (Eastern Sudan States), as well as in Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland where up to 90% of women and girls over 15 years of age are affected by FGM.





1. Capacity development



The project supports broad political and social changes to prevent FGM and other forms of GBV in the partner countries. To this end, we are strengthening the institutional capacities of governmental and non-governmental

organizations and supporting the skills development of their employees. This is achieved through joint learning and networking with other relevant actors, enabling them to more effectively drive the social norm changes underpinning harmful practices against women and girls.

2. Exchange, coordination and cooperation



The project aims to strengthen cooperation between key state and non-state actors to eradicate FGM and other forms of GBV at regional, national, and local levels. By bringing together actors from our partner countries, the project enables them to combine their strengths and jointly develop strategies for lasting,

sustainable change. This collective effort contributes to transforming social norms at a systemic and structural level. Regional conferences and training sessions will serve as important platforms for exchange and learning, enhancing coordination efforts. A diverse range of stakeholders will contribute their knowledge and experience to foster evidence-based, context-sensitive strategies and joint actions to eliminate harmful practices. Universities and research institutions will be strengthened to conduct action research on social norm changes, providing critical insights to inform local and regional policies. Religious leaders, as key gatekeepers of beliefs, will be engaged to help guide transformation processes within selected communities. Feminist youth and women-led organizations will be empowered to challenge the status quo through stronger coordination and partnerships, focusing on shifting social norms, supporting policy change, fostering leadership among women and girls, and amplifying their voices for broader societal impact.

3. Awareness raising



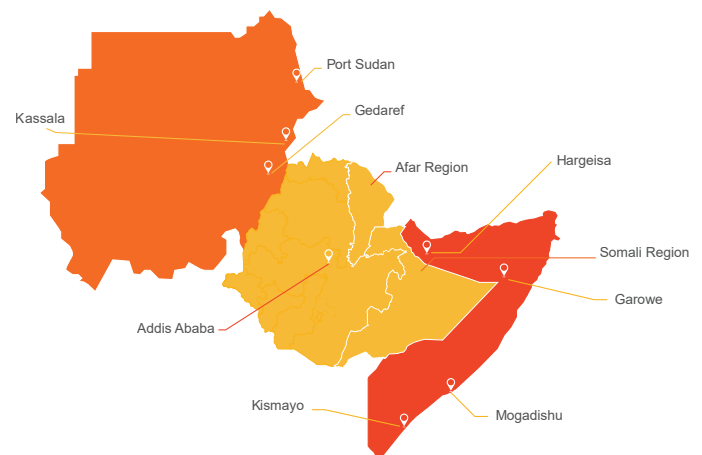
The ongoing process of social change towards abandoning FGM will be reinforced by supporting information and awareness-raising measures implemented by state and non-state stakeholders at the local, national, and multinational level.

A focus will be on Generation Dialogues and other community-level awareness-raising activities for schools, health care workers, youth groups, women-led organizations. A Community Initiative Fund (COIN-Fund) has been established which aims to support and incentivize efforts made on a local level by non-governmental as well as community-based organizations. These activities will empower community members to reflect on their own perceptions and attitudes towards FGM and other related forms of GBV. This contributes to changing social norms on an individual, interpersonal and socio-cultural level.

Our Achievements

- Across the three implementation countries, 558 people were trained on different topics such as Gender transformative approaches, Communication, Coordination and Networking
- More than 25.000 people were reached through 56 Community Initiatives in Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan
- 4 Generation Dialogues in Somalia, Ethiopia and Somaliland were conducted and 10,000 were people reached
- 2 Regional Exchange Conferences of the National Task Forces against FGM were conducted
- The project supported the Ethiopian National Alliance and the National Task Forces against FGM in Somalia and Somaliland technically and financially

Implementation areas in the Horn of Africa



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