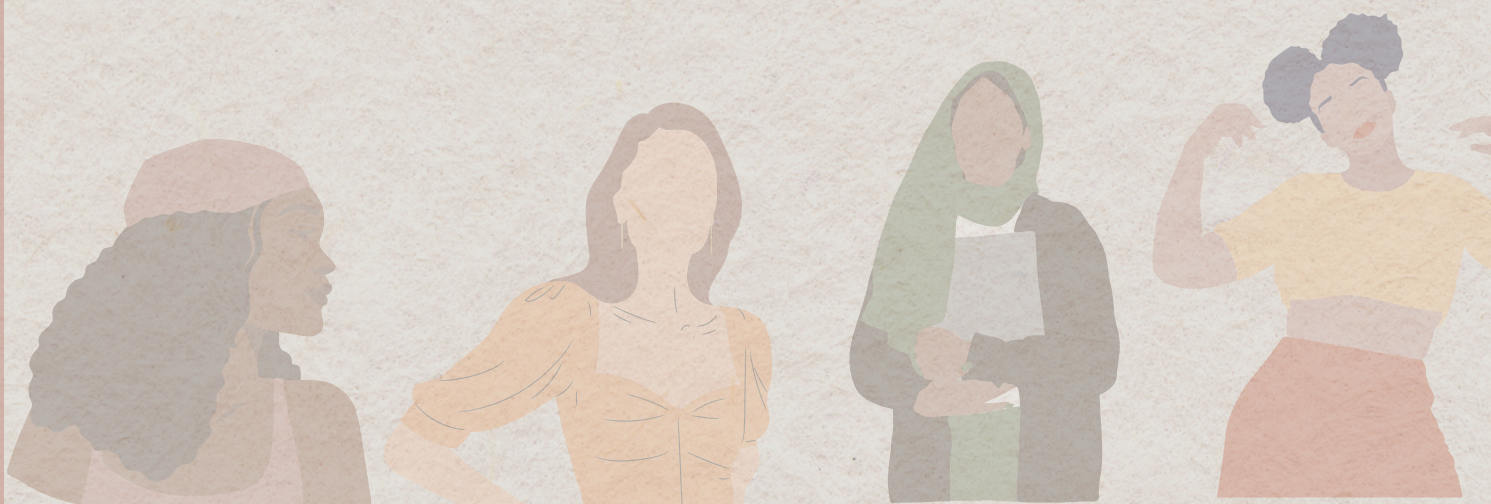


ACTION PLAN



Guide for Training and Awareness-raising of Female Genital Mutilation /FGM/



Fundació Autònoma Solidària, 2024

Written by: Rosana Carvalho Paiva (Fundació Autònoma Solidària)

Translation: Vilamint

Layout: Agència La Hiperclòrica

During the preparation of this guide, discussion, and review sessions were held with the participation of Andrea Ruedas (Equality and Diversity Service, UAB), Beatriz Ory (Metges del Món), Gal·la Gavilan (student from Gender Sociocultural Studies, UAB), Gemma Ferreón Rivera (Directorate-General for Migration - Generalitat de Catalunya, Refuge, and Anti-Racism), Josefina Cachina (AHCAMA, Hospital del Mar), Lauren Emily Bradley (Psychology student, UAB), Mariela Patricia Aguayo (Department of Nursing, UAB), Nogay Ndiaye Mir (anti-racist and Afro-feminist activist), Serra Comas Antich (family and community nurse), Susana Herzog (Gender Policy Service / Women's Information and Support Service, Terrassa) and Yakhare Maya Traore (Association of African Women of Terrassa). We would like to thank them all for their valuable contributions.

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1. Introduction and Background: Our Starting Point

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is defined by the World Health Organization as "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons" (WHO, 2016). It is a harmful practice that contravenes various international human rights instruments. As a manifestation of violence and gender inequality, it particularly violates the rights of women and girls to protection and well-being.

FGM is a violation of the rights to health, safety, and physical well-being, as well as the right of the individual not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment, and the right to life. It is important to emphasize that FGM has no medical or health justification, and it leads to both physical and psychological complications for women and girls in the near and long term, including the risk of death.

Locally practiced in at least thirty (30) countries across Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and South America, the prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) varies according to countries and ethnic groups. Due to diaspora movements, the practice has spread globally. According to the latest indicators, it is estimated that **around 600,000 women in Europe live with the consequences of FGM, and an additional 190,000 women and girls are at risk of undergoing this harmful practice in seventeen European countries**, according to data from the End FGM European Network.[1]

With deep cultural, social, and ethnic roots, female genital mutilation (FGM) is a complex phenomenon. Resolutely confronting it means joining the fight to preserve the physical and psychological health, as well as the lives, of women and girls who are victims and survivors of this grave violation of human rights.

[1] [FGM in Europe](#) | [End FGM](#).

1. Introduction and Background: Our Starting Point

This work requires public policies and educational initiatives to ensure that people who may encounter this issue in their day-to-day work are properly prepared. It is essential to act by offering prevention and support to survivors without re-victimizing them. Additionally, a review of the current Protocol of Actions to Prevent Female Genital Mutilation (2007) is advisable, particularly regarding the measures applied in cases of risk and punitive actions.

In this regard, this guide aims to promote multi-agency cooperation for the development of working methods and tools in addressing FGM. It presents a summary of the conclusions drawn from the European project CHAT Plus, the acronym for "**Changing Attitudes Plus: youth engagement to prevent FGM in Europe.**" Implemented in five (5) countries (Spain, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Portugal), this initiative aims to heighten awareness of FGM by enhancing youth **involvement through activities focused on communication for behavioural change.** The goal is to contribute to the reduction of the estimated number of girls at risk of FGM through an attitude shift within communities, starting with new generations.

The CHAT Plus project, implemented in Catalonia by the Fundació Autònoma Solidària and Fundació WASSU during the 2023-2024 academic year, **fostered the involvement of thirty young people who participated in the project's initial training stage.** They were then encouraged to proceed to a second stage, during which, as young agents of change, they actively participated in additional training and awareness-raising activities for a broader audience.

As a result, fourteen (14) awareness-raising activities were conducted, such as talks and meetings at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), the University of Vic, high schools, community centres, and other public institutions. The young participants also made contributions to communication materials, including scripts and appearances in videos for social media and a comic.

1. Introduction and Background: Our Starting Point

An additional aspect of the project involved offering online training sessions delivered by experts on FGM, who focused on professional approaches in the healthcare, community, and educational sectors.

Building on this experience, specific needs were identified, which have served as the basis for structuring the initial proposals of this guide. This document is therefore the result of a collection of conclusions drawn during the implementation of the corresponding project and **during a review and discussion process involving various key agents from public administrations, the UAB and social associations and movements**. All contributions were essential in defining, refining and expanding the proposals.

The participation of the young agents of change who collaborated in the project was crucial, particularly thanks to their contributions in addressing training and awareness needs. We would first like to highlight the interest that the conferences and outreach activities generated among the participants. Most came to these sessions with little prior knowledge and their willingness to learn was evident, especially among students. Participants also strongly recognized the need to include the topic of FGM in their academic and professional training.

In the context of the UAB, the main **challenge is strengthening the practicable knowledge** of people working in the health, social care and legal professions and students in training as future professionals in these fields.

Additionally, there is also need for complementary awareness-raising actions alongside training sessions. It is understood that combatting FGM is a **highly complex issue**, lying at the intersection of the defence of the rights of migrants and refugees, critical interculturalism, sexual and reproductive rights, and the prevention of and response to gender-based violence. Therefore, it is a matter that must be considered in dialogue with these other dimensions and social phenomena, including the prevention of forced marriages.

1. Introduction and Background: Our Starting Point

In order to be effective, the prevention and response to FGM must be carried out with a human rights-based gender approach, while maintaining an empathetic understanding free from ethnocentrism, paternalism, and racial, ethnic, or religious prejudices. All of this must also be done in alignment with the paradigm of education for global justice and the feminist perspective defined in the 2023-2026 Development Cooperation Plan,

The final challenge lies in **maintaining the intersectional and human rights paradigm. An essential part of this is working in collaboration with communities of migrant origin and anti-racist associations** to strengthen their role as professionals or community leaders, while ensuring that women and girls affected by FGM are always treated as persons endowed with rights. This measure is vital to promoting an attitude shift. Ultimately, it is important to remember that establishing a foundation for a future without FGM is a step forward in transforming the world towards global justice.

2. Legal Framework and Measures on Female Genital Mutilation in Catalonia and Spain

Female genital mutilation is a harmful practice that violates the principles of the international human rights system, as reflected in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Beijing Declaration (1995), and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (2003). The United Nations General Assembly explicitly condemns the practice through resolutions 67/146 (2012) and 69/150 (2014), urging states to ban it and take responsibility for raising awareness about its impact.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that FGM contravenes the principles of human dignity outlined in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter, 2003), and the Maputo Protocol (2003), which addresses the rights of women in Africa. These instruments emphasize that **the fight against FGM is deeply rooted in the activism and mobilization of African women and is not confined to legal frameworks or a Western perspective.**

In Spain, since 2003, FGM has been criminalised under the Spanish Penal Code, in Section 2 of Article 149, following an amendment included in Organic Law 11/2003 on specific measures relating to public safety, domestic violence and the social integration of foreigners. **FGM is punishable by six (6) to twelve (12) years' imprisonment**, with aggravating factors in cases where the victim is a minor or incapacitated and, in the case of parents, additional penalties of special disqualification from exercising parental authority.

2. Legal Framework and Measures on Female Genital Mutilation in Catalonia and Spain

In this context, Spanish Organic Law 3/2005 changes the criteria on the territorial jurisdiction of Spanish judges, with the result that the mutilation of a girl in a third country can be charged in Spanish courts if she and her guardians reside in Spanish territory. Furthermore, healthcare professionals are legally required to inform the authorities of any possible criminal act.

The protocols established by regulations on the intervention and care provided by healthcare and social services personnel prioritize actions that use **strategies of dialogue, information, and commitment as tools for prevention**, turning to police and court intervention only as a last resort.

This perspective is present in both national protocols in Spain (Common Healthcare Protocol for Female Genital Mutilation, 2015) and regional protocols (Catalan Protocol for Preventing Female Genital Mutilation, 2007). Spanish Law 17/2020 on the rights of women to eradicate gender-based violence states that FGM or the risk of undergoing it is considered a form of sexual violence and violence within the social or community sphere, even if there is explicit or tacit consent from the woman.

Therefore, **all women who are survivors of FGM are entitled to the same rights as other female victims of sexual and gender-based violence.**

However, communities and activists argue that these approaches can be coercive in nature and may not be effective in promoting change. This has led to calls for a regional **review of the Protocol and the implementation of intersectional training and awareness-raising for health, social care and education professionals.**

The need to eradicate FGM is outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as one of the targets for promoting gender equality (SDG 5, target 5.3): "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage, and female genital mutilations." In fact, including this issue in university education is in keeping with the provisions of Spanish Royal Decree 822/2021 regarding the alignment of university studies with the SDGs.

3. Proposals for Awareness-Raising and Training on Female Genital Mutilation

OBJECTIVE AND STRATEGIC PILLARS

As discussed in the introduction, the recommendations set out here are based on actions carried out as part of the CHAT Plus project. Therefore, they focus on the specific context of that experience (that is, the context of the UAB) and on activities related to training and awareness-raising. To reach educational and prevention goals, it is necessary to include other sectors beyond the university. Therefore, we have expanded the scope of the guide, and the working group created to review it, by incorporating various key sectors. These are divided into four categories that we use as a reference for shaping proposals for action:

Public administration:

Professional staff from the regional government of Catalonia, municipalities, and departments and directorates responsible for public policies related to migration, feminism, and anti-racism.

Professionals:

Healthcare, education, and social services staff, legal professionals, law enforcement bodies, and programme staff from third-sector organisations.

Universities

Technical, management, and administrative staff (PTGAS, in Catalan), teaching and research staff (PDI, in Catalan), and students.

Affected communities

Individuals or families of migrant origin and organisations working to combat FGM.

3. Proposals for Awareness-Raising and Training on Female Genital Mutilation

Based on this experience, we also conclude that it is essential to address certain **challenges**. These challenges and the key stakeholders they affect are listed below.

Public administration

- **Review of the Action Protocol to Prevent FGM:** review preventive measures to avoid the re-victimization of women, considering:
 - Coercion by family and community, considering the patriarchal nature of communities that engage in FGM, and the difficulties women face in confronting the practice.
 - The reproduction of institutional racism in the approach to FGM in health, social care and educational services.
 - Coercion connected with institutional racism in the approach of healthcare and social services, especially as regards the signing of commitment documents and forced medical examinations of racialized girls.
 - The stigmatization of people from certain African countries (such as the Gambia and Senegal) in healthcare services, particularly in situations prior to international travel.
 - The lack of support for women as is required for victims of sexual violence.
- **Involving law enforcement agencies** in awareness-raising strategies.
- Developing measures to ensure that the approach to FGM in the **education sector** does not lead to stigmatisation and systematic suspicion of racialized students.

Objective and Strategic Pillars

3. Proposals for Awareness–Raising and Training on Female Genital Mutilation

Professionals

Objective and Strategic Pillars

- **Anti-racist and decolonial training and awareness** for health, education, and social care professionals.
- Support for health, education, and social care professionals in light of the **emotional impact** of direct intervention in FGM cases.

Universities

Objective and Strategic Pillars

- Strengthening the participation of individuals from communities as subjects of the knowledge generation processes through **research methodologies** that incorporate decolonial perspectives and the critique of academic extractivism.
- Developing measures to ensure that the inclusion of FGM as part of training and awareness-raising does not lead to stigmatisation and systematic suspicion of **racialized students**.

Affected communities

Objective and Strategic Pillars

- The need to foster strategies to **involve boys and men** from relevant communities in FGM prevention measures.
- Considering the generational gap in awareness activities and reflection on **how to engage with Spain-born young people** from migrant backgrounds.
- Strengthening the leadership of communities, including the **participation of religious leaders** in the dialogue on FGM.
- Review of the political **participation of migrant communities** from Middle Eastern and Asian countries also affected by FGM.

Similarly, other **cross-cutting challenges** are identified that need to be addressed in the work on FGM across professional, public administration and academic activities:

Cross-cutting Challenges

- Considering **linguistic diversity** in the development of informational materials and documents aimed at affected communities.
- Reflecting on the **use of language, images, and narratives** that may reinforce stigmas and further victimize women and girl survivors.
- **Struggling against the stigmatization** of all people from specific countries, without regard to ethnicity.
- Strengthening the **representation** of people from affected communities in various training and awareness-raising activities.

3. Proposals for Awareness-Raising and Training on Female Genital Mutilation

To achieve the proposed objectives, three (3) **strategic pillars** have been defined, with proposals tailored to the specific groups they target.



PILLAR 1. TRAINING

Public administration

Training

- Identifying the **training needs of professional staff** to create the necessary conditions that will allow the other proposed advocacy activities to be carried out.
- **Reviewing the curricula of professional training courses and higher-level vocational programmes** in the social and community services fields: Social Integration and Care for People in Situations of Dependence

Professionals

Training

- Offering specific **training courses for professionals** in the social care, educational, legal, health, and public security sectors.
- **Updating, printing, and disseminating existing manuals and guides** aimed at health, education, and social services professionals.

3. Proposals for Awareness-Raising and Training on Female Genital Mutilation

Universities

Training

- Offering **accredited training on FGM focused on academic, teaching, technical, and research staff** in the faculties and degree programmes of education, nursing, medicine, social work, law, political science, sociology, and anthropology.
- **Reviewing the curricula** of the faculties of Nursing, Medicine, and Education to include the approach to FGM in undergraduate and master's courses.

Affected communities

Training

- Promote vocational training as an intercultural **mediator to enhance** its role in primary care social services.





PILLAR 2. AWARENESS- RAISING

Awareness-Raising

Professionals

- **Produce and disseminate new visual materials** (brochures and fliers) and video awareness content, while also increasing circulation of existing ones, ensuring that they address cross-cutting issues in the fight against FGM, such as anti-racism, intersectional feminism and critical interculturalism.
- Foster **activities such as workshops** and information sessions involving activists and members of community associations.

Awareness-Raising

Universities

- **Produce and promote visual materials** (brochures and fliers) and video awareness content, along with increasing the circulation of existing ones. These resources should complement and strengthen the training actions aimed at the university community (students, teaching and research staff).
- **Promote activities** such as workshops and information sessions involving activists and members of community associations.

3. Proposals for Awareness-Raising and Training on Female Genital Mutilation

Affected communities

Awareness-raising

- **Involve activists and community leaders** as key figures in awareness-raising activities in associations, schools, community centres, adult education centres and other public institutions.
- **Produce and disseminate visual materials** (brochures and fliers) and video awareness materials, along with increasing the circulation of existing ones, ensuring the materials include the specific perspective, content, and languages of the communities they are aimed at.





PILLAR 3. ADVOCACY

Public administration

Advocacy

- Promote **collaborative and socially participatory** work with communities to **revise the Protocol of Actions to Prevent FGM.**
- Carry out training and awareness-raising activities for staff members.
- **Interdepartmental cooperation within the administration, involving associations and community organisations**, as well as intercultural mediators.
- **Strengthening the FGM Committee** and territorial FGM task forces, increasing their dynamism and capacity to advocate throughout the country.
- **True recognition of the rights of survivors** as victims of gender-based violence.

Professionals

Advocacy

- (Third Sector Organisations) Establish **international cooperation** relations to strengthen prevention and awareness networks and actions involving affected countries.

3. Proposals for Awareness-Raising and Training on Female Genital Mutilation

Universities

Advocacy

- **Promote service-learning methodology** to meet the needs of community associations and other third-sector bodies.
- Encourage the **participation of technical, managerial and administrative staff** (PTGAS, in Catalan), teaching and research staff (PDI, in Catalan) and students in the FGM committee and territorial working groups.
- **Promote applied research** that informs public policy.
- Establish international **cooperation relations** with institutions and universities in **countries affected by FGM** to strengthen research, training and advocacy actions.
- Include FGM in gender **equality policies** and responses to gender-based violence.

Affected communities

Advocacy

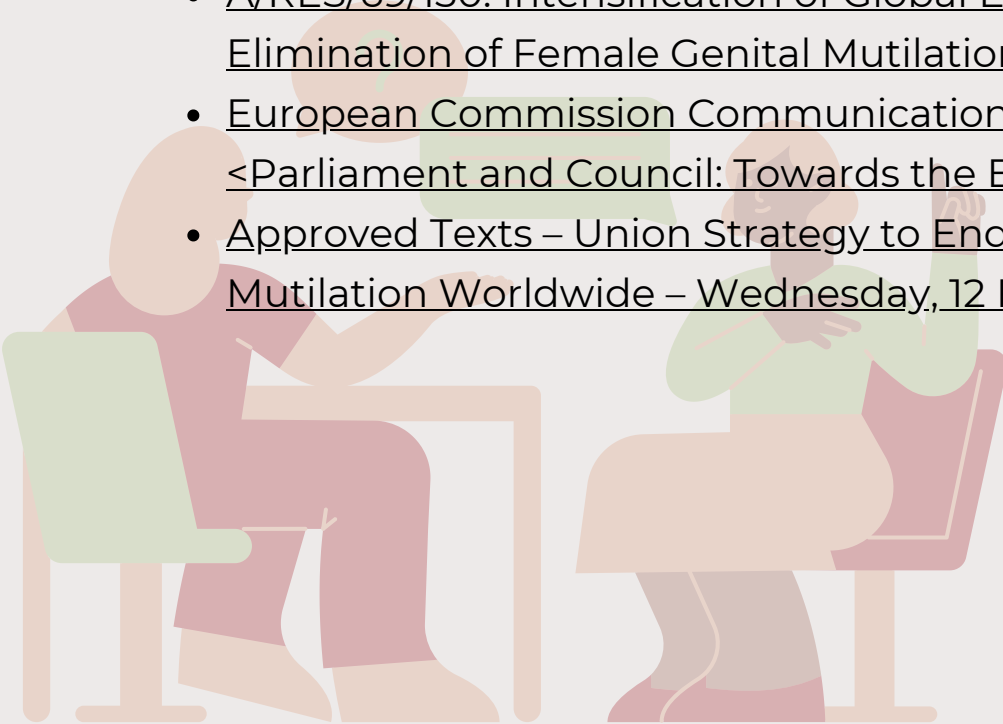
- **Active participation in the process of reviewing** the Protocol of Action to Prevent FGM.
- Strengthen community participation in the FGM Committee and territorial task forces to promote **equitable participation**, considering smaller associations and regional spread.
- **Foster the involvement of religious leaders** in awareness-raising activities and community interventions.
- **Establish international cooperation relationships** to strengthen activism and advocacy networks, as well as prevention and awareness-raising activities with affected countries.
- **Ensure heterogeneity in the participation** of actors combatting FGM, especially those working from an anti-racist and intersectional perspective.

4. References and Supporting Materials



DECLARATIONS

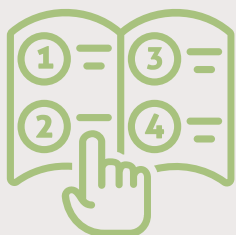
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- Beijing Declaration, 1995
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 2003
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter)
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003
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- A/RES/67/146. Intensification of global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation, 2012
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- Protocol for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation in Terrassa (Catalonia).



MANUALS AND GUIDES

- UNICEF Resource List: Reports, Case Studies, Briefs, Technical Notes, and More for Practitioners and Policymakers
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4. References and Supporting Materials



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- Fundació Autònoma Solidària – Fundació Wassu: *Projecte CHAT Plus*.
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