



# REPORT ON UNFPA- UNICEF/PSA Joint Program on FGM/C: ABANDONMENT PROJECT

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## UNFPA- UNICEF/PSA Joint Program on FGM/C: ABANDONMENT PROJECT

**Final report**

# Table of contents

- Table of contents .....3**
- Acronym .....4**
- Foreword .....5**
- Executive Summary .....6**
- Introduction .....7**
- Results summary according to the Indicators.....8**
- Output 1.....10**
- Output 2.....12**
- Challenges .....17**
- Recommendation.....18**
- Lessons learnt .....19**

## Acronym

FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
IEC	Information Educational and Communication
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOWDFA	Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs
NGO	Non Government Organization
SBC	Somalia Broadcasting Corporation
PSA	puntland Social and Youth Development Association
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
T4D	Technology for develop
GBVWG	Gender based violence working group

## Foreword

FGM is a very retrogressive tradition which violates women's human rights. The reasons for practicing FGM are usually hidden within the pressures that the community has imposed on women and girls. The social pressure that has been imposed on girls' is big. In Somalia it is challenging to be the only or among the few who are not mutilated in the society. In many societies mutilation has been a mandatory in order to be socially accepted and respected as a woman, for these reason FGM is a culturally influenced practice.

Culture symbolizes a way of life in a specific group and it is found universally (Leininger 1994, 125). Every person is connected to a culture. The culture is also connected to and influenced by communication and environment. It forms a base for persons world view. This abstract concept of behavior in a culture includes values, beliefs and practices. Culture is something that is passed from one generation to the next who might change it somehow, but yet it always has some constant stability.

Somali is one of the communities that is still embedded in cultural practices, FGM is still widely practice in the community, in Puntland State of Somalia the prevalence is very high and for these facts many Non Governmental organizations and government agencies have joined hands in the FGM/C fight and through this corporation indelible milestones have been achieved in eradicating the practice.



## Executive Summary

In 2013 PSA in partnership with UNICEF implemented a FGM abandonment project, in Puntland state of Northern Somalia, the aim of the Project was to sensitize and educate communities in the region why FGM practice needs to be eradicated and abandoned, this was done through conducting workshop/ forums, competitions, regional consultative meetings, theatre festival, Youth Communiqué, Youth dialogue, National youth conference, all these was aimed at creating a critical mass of population who will spearhead FGM/C abandonment advocacy.

In the six months of the project implementation many things were achieved as per the project's objectives, despite challenges incurred, a lot of lessons were learned too, which will help a lot in implementation of future projects.

The project ended in June 2013 but up to December some activities were still going on, namely; monthly workers forum, construction of a huge billboard in the centre of the town, monthly publication of *HIMILO* magazine, regular postings of relevant articles on our Facebook page and distribution of stickers with FGM/C abandonment messages, we felt that the fight against the practice has to be a continuous process and that is what informed our decision to carry on with some activities after the closure of the project.



## INTRODUCTION

From January to June 2013, Puntland Social and Youth Development Association (PSA) with the support of UNFPA-UNICEF implemented a FGM/C abandonment joint program; in order to curb Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which is becoming a worldwide problem. There is a need for strategies that will help to eradicate and prevent the practice.

Furthermore, there is a pressing need to raise awareness about the health and legal issues and about the services and sources of information that are available amongst communities that practice Female Genital Mutilation. Matters of Female Genital Mutilation should be handled with sensitivity taking into account differing cultural issues, but the welfare of women and girls should be the main goal. Despite laws forbidding the practice, FGM has proven to be an enduring tradition; difficult to overcome on the local level with deeply held cultural and sometimes political significance. The difficulty lies significantly in the fact that the practice, as an identifying feature of a native culture, is firmly associated with the potential of young women. There-fore, for only one or a few families within a given setting to "deprive" their daughters of the operation is to significantly disadvantage them in finding husbands. Because the practice holds such cultural and marital significance, the individuals willing to end the practice must realize the necessity to work closely with the local communities affected by FGM.

For these reasons, Puntland Youth and Social Development Association (PSA) brought on board the locals through Community dialogues/ education sessions, number of inter-communities meetings/gatherings, Press releases, TV shows, Radio programs, number of youth and religious leaders declarations, field visits for monitoring/ planning/ review meetings and follow ups, through these avenues many people were reached, especially the youth who form an integral part of every society.

Through the youth national conference held in Garowe a lot was achieved, we created a youth pool, which members are from all parts of Puntland state and the members will have an impact on his/her respective home area. Also through the PSA-Parliamentarian conference a lot was achieved, first, as an organization dealing with FGM abandonment programs, we sensitized and educated the parliamentarians on why the practice needs to be abandoned and eradicate within the population they represent, we gave them facts on medical grounds, financial impact that comes with FGM/C and the trauma the girl child experience due to the practice and at the end of the session they were fully convinced why the practice need to be discarded, they promised to give us support in whichever way possible.

## Results summary according to the Indicators

INDICATORS ;	MILESTONES IN NUMBERS
<p>No. of Community of dialogue/ education sessions and number of people reached by category.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4 community dialogues and forums were conducted, 245 participants, <b>116</b> being male( 99 youth 17 adult) and <b>129</b> female (96 girls and 33 women)</li> <li>▪ FGM/C workers forum meets once a month throughout the year in PSA’s conference room.</li> </ul>
<p>No of inter-communities meetings/gatherings and number of people reached by category.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One community sensitization on FGM was conducted.</li> <li>• 3 Football Match, one theatre festival and one song competition was organized to sensitize members of the public on the need of FGM abandonment with 393 Participants, 151 being Female and 242 Male.</li> <li>• FGM/C workers forum held one common football match.</li> </ul>
<p>Press releases, TV shows, Radio programs (no of each broadcasted, level of people involved and approximate number of people reached.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 radio talk shows were held in Daljir Radio Station reaching approximately 85,000 households.</li> <li>• 2 of our Community Forum/platform &amp; Youth Dialogue clips were recorded and later aired on Horn Cable TV reaching more than 150,000 households.</li> <li>• 83 articles, messages, pictures and links on FGM/C abandonment were posted on Facebook (contents of the messages focus on youth), <a href="http://www.facebook.com/psasom">www.facebook.com/psasom</a>. Website visitors are over 54,000 youth in a day.</li> <li>• 65 awareness articles and stories on FGM/C abandonment focusing on youth were published in <i>Himilo</i> Newspaper and over 6000 copies were printed and distributed.</li> <li>• 500 embroiled pens, 300 Posters, 400 T-shirts</li> </ul>



	<p>and 2 big bill boards were produced and disseminated to the 5000 youths, religious leaders and FGM/C Practitioners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A large bill board was constructed in Bosasso town.</li> <li>• We embraced technology (T4D) by using Cell-phone in sending messages to all targeted individuals, in form of messages.</li> </ul>
<p><b>No. of youth and religious leaders declarations and number of participants.</b></p>	<p>Four youth and religious leaders' declarations were made and participants appended their signatures on a piece of cloth as part of committing themselves, more than 1450 people participated.</p>
<p><b>Field Visits for monitoring/ planning/ review meetings and follow ups</b></p>	<p>-PSA participated in 3 FGM/C Task Force meetings.</p> <p>- PSA participated in 3 review meeting on FGM/C between PSA FGM/C project Team and UNICEF.</p>

At the end of each events there was unanimous agreement among the participants that there is an urgent need to discard FGM practice, also public declaration were made on abandonment of FGM/C and to stop the practice.



## OUTPUTS 1

### Local level commitment obtained for FGM/C abandonment

PSA conducted 7 workshops/ forums and 3 competitions namely Football Tournament, Regional Consultative Meeting, “Ten Persons Contact Persons”, Song Competition, theatre Festival, Youth Communiqué, Youth dialogue, 1 National youth conference, PSA-Parliamentarians forum and youth-Parliamentarians-religious leaders conference to 897 beneficiaries including religious leaders, Elders, Youth, Health professional, FGM practitioners, MOWADAFa & MOE region coordinators, the trainings were held in Puntland region, Bosasso and Garowe. The events was designed to build the knowledge and skills of the above mentioned groups in regard to FGM abandonment and eradication and also to educate and sensitize the Parliamentarians and Youth, the main objectives of these workshop/forums was to increase local level commitment to FGM/C abandonment among Youth and Youth Networks and to build the capacity of the community members in advocating and creating awareness on actions that leads to abandonment of the retrogressive practice.

### THE FGM/C FORUM GROUP

The idea of FGM/C workers forum came from Bossaso GBVWG, it was established on 27th July 2012 in order to reinforce and supplement the roles of working Group through FGM/C workers forum and Case management conference, in this stage, PSA was chosen to spearhead the forum.

The forum was assigned with coordination function and information sharing facilitation platform among the FGM/C stakeholders in ensuring proper sharing of information about FGM/C related issues/activities that contribute in technical inputs in order the forum workers to achieve the project objectives with tangible results.

The member organizations have been holding monthly meetings since its inception, on 6<sup>th</sup> February the forum workers organized Zero tolerance day and developed a common plan in which they all agreed on activities to be implemented jointly by all members once in a month.

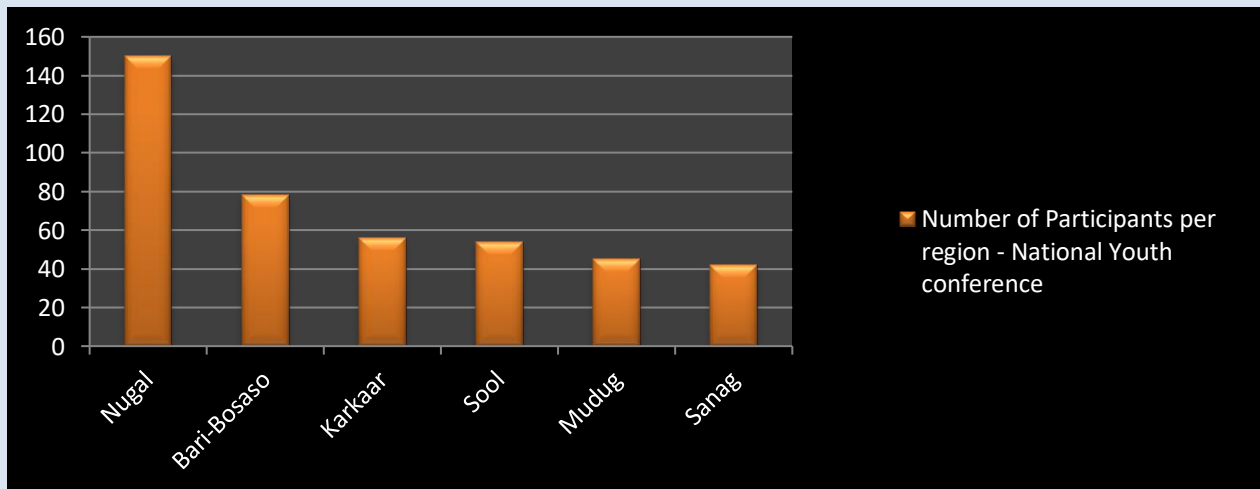
The FGM/C workers Forum objectives are:

- Provide technical support in relation to FGM/C programming.
- Facilitate program coordination to enhance coverage and avert duplication.
- Information sharing and updates on FGM/C abandonment.

## Youth conference



At the end of each events there was unanimous agreement among the participants that there is an urgent need to discard FGM practice, also public declaration were made on abandonment of FGM/C and to stop the practice.



## OUT PUT 2

### Media Campaign and other forms of communications organized to publicize FGM/C abandonment and support implementation of program activities

PSA conducted a number of media campaigns, TV and radio programs on abandonment of FGM/C within the period.

Two radio talk-shows were done during the period, it was held on Radio SBC in Bosaso town, on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013. It was chaired by SBC Radio station's News reporter; the panellist were religious leaders, Female Doctor, youth representative, MOWODAFI representative, and Mr. Mustaph PSA's Project Officer. The forum deliberated on many issues in regard to FGM; FGM background, Islam view on FGM practice, role of youth in FGM eradication, health complications posed by FGM, How to reach vulnerable girls vis-a-vis how protect them from undergoing the practice and declaration against the practice. The programme was aired live on radio and it reached approximately 30,000 people in and outside Puntland region.

We also held one community Forum/platform & Youth dialogue (National media) where we invited *Horn Cable TV* to record the clips, which were later aired by the station and it reached approximately 40,000 households.

Facebook being one of most significant and powerful social networks among the youth and general population, we regularly post articles, messages and photos on FGM abandonment on our Facebook fan page - [www.facebook.com/pages/puntland-fgm-coordination](http://www.facebook.com/pages/puntland-fgm-coordination) . The page is visited by over 3,000 youth per day. The aim of these articles is to enhance knowledge, attitude change, understanding of the consequences of FGM/C practices and a wide elaboration why FGM/C is not an Islamic practice.

Also articles and stories on FGM/C awareness are published in *Himilo* magazine on a monthly basis and over 500 copies are printed and distributed every month, *Himilo* magazine is a monthly youth journal produced by PSA and reaches a large section of the youth in Puntland. 500 embroiled pens, 200 Posters, 100 brochures, 100 booklets, 400 T-

- 12 -

shirts were produced and distributed to 2000 youths, religious leaders and FGM/C Practitioners and 2 big bill boards were erected. Some of the messages on these items directly targeted both mothers and grandmothers; because they have the last decision to the girl's fate on FGM/C, whether to undergo it or not, the messages on the IEC materials targeted youth by encouraging them to get married to girls not circumcised.

### **Use of technology for development to advocate for FGM/C abandonment**

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Use for technology in advocating for FGM/C abandonment proved to be so imperative in our operations. We used cell-phones (SMS), social media and multimedia services which included, audio, photos and video clips to reach to youth and policy makers on FGM/C abandonment. Use of this method has proved to be so effective in sending text messages, taking photographs and sharing with the target groups. The rationale of using the preferred technology was based on the fact that mobile telephones and social media are a viable and relevant means to engage youth in dialogues and advocacy to address social determinants, which may lead to behavior change. Furthermore, the technology is youth friendly, uses minimal costs and makes it easy for youth to participate in activities. T4D was also used by the youth to organize events and sending personal or group invitations to an event.

Through the T4D the youth have been able to communicate through online discussion groups, messages and social media and have used the forums to express opinions.

### **Achievements**

- Formation of a national Youth Network composed of young people who feel passionately about FGM/C abandonment , and a national Youth Conference on FGM/C was held and attended by over 350 youth across PL
- Recruitment of youth to join the advocacy cause and sharing information at a faster pace.
- Communicating with decision makers- the Youth network held 4 dialogue sessions with Parliamentarians on the FGM/C policy and legislation

- Organized collective action- the Youth network organized a peaceful demonstration in the streets of Garowe and to the Parliament to protest against the Parliamentarians action to edit and approve FGM/C legislation that allows girls to undergo the ‘sunna’ type of FGM/C
- Raised awareness and shape attitudes- Successful advocacy results through T4D has helped to bring together a number of ‘Positive Deviants’ girls who have not undergone FGM/C to come together
- Increased public awareness on FGM/C abandonment and garnering mass media coverage- Most PSA activities are covered by many media houses.
- Enhanced linkages with Somalia Youth in diaspora who are very positive in advocating for FGM/C abandonment in diaspora and at home

## CONSTRUCTION OF A BILL BOARD

We designed a “Saharla” bill board with the message “....***there is no changing Allah’s creation.....Because I care, I will protect girls from FGM/C and choose my bride based on love and integrity***”....we were suppose to erect the billboard in Bosasso airport but we were informed that the airport is about to undergo renovation, where by all the structures within and around the precincts will be brought down to give it a face-lift, for



this reason, we had to change our plans for the choice of the site, we finally settled for a place near Bosasso municipality building, we arrived at the decision after a number of consultations and

assessments, the area is very strategic and meets our goals and objectives, the site is daily visited by hundreds of people and due to the size of the board and its visibility from distance, it raises peoples curiosity and draws them near to have a glimpse of it and in the process they get the intended message.

The billboard was erected on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013; we also printed the replica of it in form of stickers and distributed them to all social places and joints like cafeterias, shops, streets, schools and in the market. Our target is for the message to reach as many people as possible, especially the male youth.

## Football tournament





**Radio Talk-Show in Somalia Broadcasting Corporation Studio**



## CHALLENGES

- FGM practitioners (circumcisers) suggested that they won't give up practicing FGM/C until they are given alternative source of income.
- Some of the participants still believe that FGM keeps the girl dignity.
- There was inadequate or limited time to cover all participants' needs in FGM training.
- Young girls still cannot talk freely about FGM/C.
- Old and mid-age women still believe FGM/C is a religion and cultural requirement.
- Male leaders i.e. elders, scholars, religious leader see FGMC as women issue and they say, " women must talk about their own issues"
- Monitoring and follow up is challenging since the partner capacity is limited.
- Documentation of results and good practices.

## Recommendation

- ❖ More emphasize is needed on the boy child, FGM/C is not only about girls, boys need to be educated on advantages of marrying girls who have not gone through FGM/C, we have come to learn that one of the biggest pressure why girls goes through FGM/C is for in order to get husbands in future.
- ❖ Need to increase youth knowledge of FGM/C and their role in the abandonment of the practice.
- ❖ Lobby for enforcement of existing anti-FGM/C laws is needed.
- ❖ Islam analogies (Qiyas ) which is applicable on Anti-FGM campaigns is needed to be produced.
- ❖ There is a need to establish youth FGM/C commission.
- ❖ There is a need to create Anti - FGMC religious committee in Puntland State.
- ❖ Lobby for more legislation on Anti-FGM is required.
- ❖ Establishment of Anti-FGM/C committees in community level are needed.
- ❖ Need to develop and publish Somali FGM manuals (Somali version).
- ❖ Youth committees need to be established and be trained on community level mobilization activities and advocacy on FGM/C abandonment.

## Lessons learnt:

- ❖ In the course of program implementation, there was a strong indication that working closely with youth, religious leaders and government officials is an effective strategy in facilitation of abandonment of the practice in Puntland. This is because youth are 70% of the general population in Puntland and have unequivocal power to influence community members.
- ❖ There is misconception between religious groups on FGM/C some says “there is no Koran verse which emphasize female circumcision” and some other says, “ FGM/C is religious requirements because there is Hadith which emphasize on sunna circumcision”
- ❖ Youth and male involvement in advocacy activities is crucial since they are the decision makers and potential husbands to the girls who are vulnerable or victims to the practice.
- ❖ Effective advocacy and media campaigns greatly impact national advocacy on FGM/C abandonment.
- ❖ T4D makes it easy and convenient for youth to participate in advocacy and allows for integration of advocacy into their daily route. As a generation who is both comfortable and fluent with using technology, the key lesson for the program is to harness these skills.
- ❖ Making deliberate efforts to combine technology and youth advocacy will give youth a voice, increase their personal efficacy for participating in advocacy, and impact the social determinants that affect the health status of people in their communities and throughout the world.