

## **Health bodies demand zero tolerance on FGM by all health personnel and pledge to be at the forefront of the generation where FGM ends**

Contact: Dr Morissanda Kouyaté, Inter-African Committee (IAC), [morissanda@gmail.com](mailto:morissanda@gmail.com), +251 911 8085 70

ADDIS ABABA, 6 FEBRUARY 2015. Today, as we mark the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), spearheaded by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC), a coalition of leading health bodies are committing to mobilise their members and use their spheres of influence to accelerate an end this extreme form of violence against women and girls around the world.

FGM is an extreme human rights violation that has no medical benefits, but has dangerous health consequences. Every year, three million girls are at risk and, in some countries, FGM procedures are increasingly carried out by health personnel. This 'medicalisation' of FGM is one of the biggest threats to its elimination.

Health personnel are supposed to protect rather than cause harm. They are tasked with providing care and support and are usually the trusted first points of contact for women and girls. Many health personnel are already leading advocates for ending FGM and provide excellent care, but we need a final push to make sure that every single professional comes on board.

Recalling the UN General Assembly Resolution on FGM, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) join the IAC, the Africa Coordination Centre for Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (ACCAF), The Girl Generation, Forma, FORWARD and Equality Now, to urge:

- All health personnel to fully adhere to the Hippocratic Oath and their obligation to protect the health and well-being of their patients, which includes not performing FGM.
- Regulatory bodies in *all* countries to ensure that health professionals do not promote the medicalisation of FGM.
- Health personnel to not only protect girls at risk of FGM, but also provide physical, psychological and emotional care and support to survivors.
- All health professional bodies to ensure that FGM care and prevention are part of their training and education programmes.

*"During the regional workshop for health professionals, organised by the IAC in 2009 in Nairobi, a strong African Health Workers Network was created for accelerating Zero Tolerance to FGM. The commemoration of February 6, 2015 is an opportunity to further engage this important network. Fighting FGM is part of the improvement of the health of women and girls."*

- Dr Morissanda Kouyaté, Executive Director, IAC

*"FIGO has condemned the practice of FGM since 1994, when it issued a General Assembly Resolution on FGM at its triennial World Congress in Montreal. Since then, it has worked with its Member Societies in countries where FGM is prevalent to set policies and sound practice for its elimination in these countries. FIGO is working hard to prevent the medicalisation of FGM through encouraging its Member Societies to work closely with health workers in the field"*

- Professor Hamid Rushwan, FIGO Chief Executive

*"The ICM recognises FGM as a harmful practice and a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It condemns FGM and its medicalisation, and believes that FGM and other related practices, harmful to the health of women or infants should be eliminated."*

- Frances Day-Stirk, President, International Confederation of Midwives (ICM)

*“The RCOG fully supports this initiative. It is imperative that all involved in women’s health protect the women and girls in their care and do what they can to spread awareness amongst their colleagues. As an international medical body, we have members based in countries where FGM is still practiced and I would urge them to uphold the Hippocratic Oath. We are updating our clinical guidelines and applaud the IAC, Equality Now and Girl Generation for making the non-medicalisation agenda a priority for the profession.”*

- Dr David Richmond, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)

*“The Royal College of Midwives has been at the forefront in the fight against FGM and, through the Intercollegiate Recommendations has encouraged the UK government and other agencies to act to end FGM. We wholeheartedly support this call. Stopping this terrible and violent assault on girls and young women is as relevant here in the UK as it is throughout other parts of the world. It is through working together with colleagues in other countries and applying pressure that we will end this practice.”*

- Cathy Warwick, Chief Executive, The Royal College of Midwives (RCM)

*“All governments should urgently put in place legislative and regulatory frameworks against the medicalisation of FGM with punitive measures for those who engage in the practice and institutions in which FGM is performed.”*

- Mary Wandia, FGM Programme Manager, Equality Now

*“This 6<sup>th</sup> February, The Girl Generation applauds the many thousands of health workers across the African continent and beyond who have been at the frontline of promoting positive change to end FGM. By standing together with a common voice this Zero Tolerance Day, health workers everywhere can make a real difference to the lives of girls and women. Save a girl, save a generation.”*

- Nimco Ali, Networking and Social Media Coordinator, The Girl Generation

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## **About FIGO**

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) is the only organisation that brings together professional societies of obstetricians and gynecologists on a global basis. FIGO's vision is for women of the world to achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. For over 60 years FIGO has collaborated with the world's top health and donor bodies.

[www.figo.org](http://www.figo.org)

## **About the ICM**

The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) supports, represents and works to strengthen professional associations of midwives throughout the world. There are currently 116 Midwives Associations, representing 101 countries across every continent. ICM is organised into four regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe. Together these associations represent more than 300,000 midwives globally.

[www.internationalmidwives.org](http://www.internationalmidwives.org)

## **About RCM**

The Royal College of Midwives is the voice of midwifery. It is the UK's only trade union and professional organisation led by midwives for midwives. The vast majority of the midwifery profession are its members. The RCM promotes midwifery, quality maternity services and professional standards. We support and represent our members individually and collectively in all four UK countries. It influences on behalf of its members and for the interests of the women and families for which they care.

[www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk)

### **About RCOG**

The RCOG is a medical charity that champions the provision of high quality women's healthcare in the UK and beyond. It is dedicated to encouraging the study and advancing the science and practice of obstetrics and gynaecology. It does this through postgraduate medical education and training and the publication of clinical guidelines and reports on aspects of the specialty and service provision. With 12,500 members, half of whom are based outside the UK, the RCOG focuses on developing and shaping standards in clinical practice across the globe.

[www.rcog.org.uk](http://www.rcog.org.uk)

### **About the IAC**

The Inter-African Committee on traditional practices affecting the health of women and children (IAC) is an African regional umbrella body that has been working on policy programmes and actions to stop FGM in the African Region and around the world for the last 30 years. It was formed on February 6 1984 in Dakar, Senegal, by African delegates to a seminar organised by a United Nations NGO Working Group on Traditional Practices based in Geneva, with the support of UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and the Ministry of Health of Senegal. It was formed at a time when female genital mutilation was a highly controversial and a 'sensitive' issue for discussion and there was a critical need for an African regional voice in an international campaign against FGM.

<http://www.iac-ciaf.net/>

### **About the ACCAF**

Africa Coordination Centre for abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (ACCAF) was formally established in 2012 as a trans-disciplinary, both in approach and personnel to champion efforts and address the gaps in abandonment of FGM/C in the Africa region within one generation. The Centre is hosted by the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, at the University of Nairobi with the overall aim of strengthening capacity in the region for research, implement interventions and monitor progress in accelerating efforts towards the abandonment of FGM/C and improved care for women and children suffering negative consequences of the practice

<http://accaf.uonbi.ac.ke>

### **About The Girl Generation: Together to End FGM**

The Girl Generation is a global campaign that supports the Africa-led movement to end FGM. Its vision is a world where FGM ends in one generation. The campaign will amplify the issue on the international stage. It will bring attention to inspirational stories of change from some of the most affected countries on the African continent. It will accelerate the worldwide movement to end FGM by galvanising action, by supporting campaigns across Africa, and by pushing for more resources to end FGM.

The Girl Generation provides a positive identity under which the global movement can rally, and a common platform for the idea that **together, we can end FGM**.

[www.thegirlgeneration.org](http://www.thegirlgeneration.org)

### **About Forma**

forma was founded to raise the voice of the FGM/C survivor through counselling and artistic expression, to educate community health professionals about the practice and its resulting effects, and to build community awareness of FGM/C so it can be ended. It seeks to raise national awareness—thus adding to the global movement to end FGM now.

[www.formafgc.org](http://www.formafgc.org)

### **About FORWARD**

FORWARD (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development) is committed to gender equality and safeguarding the rights of African girls and women. It is a leading African diaspora women's campaign and support organisation. It works through partnerships in the UK, Europe and Africa to transform lives, tackling discriminatory practices that affect the dignity and wellbeing of girls and women. Its focus is on female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and obstetric fistula.

[www.forwarduk.org.uk](http://www.forwarduk.org.uk)

### **About Equality Now**

Equality Now is an international human rights organisation which works for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women and girls around the world.

[www.equalitynow.org](http://www.equalitynow.org)