

Report on High-level Symposium towards Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

Purpose

The Ifrah Foundation, Orchid Project, Trocaire, the AMISOM Political and Gender Units and the Federal Government of Somalia held a conference in Mogadishu to support and highlight the Somali Prime Minister’s public commitment to progress FGC abandonment legislation through Parliament. The conference aimed to build on existing momentum supporting the abandonment of FGC in Somalia and share national and international best practice, stimulating dialogue amongst religious leaders, civil society, health professionals and community representatives.

Attendees

Over 150 people attended the conference, including:

- Representatives from the Federal Government of Somalia: the Attorney General, Minister of Religious Affairs, Deputy Minister of Women and Social Affairs, Deputy Minister of Information and ten other members of parliament
- Representatives from Regional Government: Ministers of Women and Human Rights for the Regional States of Galmudug and South West, representatives for Jubaland and Puntland
- Representatives from UNFPA, UNICEF, UNSOM
- Religious groups, womens groups and a wide range of civil society organisations
- Representatives from universities
- Local and international media



Attendees at the conference

Speakers

- Ifrah Ahmed, Gender Advisor to the Prime Minister, stated the need to find solutions within society, expressing the duty of citizens to support young girls and women
- The Attorney General, Ahmed Salad, stated that FGC was prohibited by religion and a violation of Human Rights
- H.E Abdulkadir Sheikh Ali, Minister of Religious Affairs, shared that *“according to Islam, it is prohibited to destroy any part of the female genitals”*
- Deputy Federal Minister of Information, Abdullahi Roble, pledged to continue supporting awareness raising to end the practice
- The Minister of Women and Human Rights, Her Excellency Zahra Mohamed Samatar, shared their work campaigning for an end to FGC and drafting a law against the practice
- AMISOM Representative, Mrs. Stella Maranga, (Head of Gender Unit) shared their work on ending FGC and reminded participants of the Maputo Protocol
- Puntland State Representative Maryan, shared her experiences of awareness raising and passing legislation to criminalise FGC as well as the stages in a woman’s life when she is most affected by the practice

Outcomes:

- A spotlight was shone on the existing work already being done in Somalia towards the abandonment of FGC at community level
- Discussions were held amongst youths, civil society, and religious leaders best practice for ending FGC, addressing current challenges faced
- Participants were able to seek answers to many questions surrounding the practice, for example on health impacts and the link between FGC and religion. Challenges were raised around the distinction between religious and traditional practices
- Participants agreed that all forms of FGC are unacceptable in Somalia to all people either directly or indirectly affected
- The conference was covered in [The Guardian](#) and Somalia radio and TV, including Somali National TV, Universal TV, Puntland TV, Horn Cable, Royal TV, Somali Channel, Ethiopian TV, BBC Somali Services, Voice of America, Kulmiye Radio, Gobolka Banadir and Star Radio, reaching a wider audience with the understanding of the changing political atmosphere on FGC
- The next steps of discussion following on from the conference will deliberate the specific details of future legislation. There will be more in-depth study into the elements required to implement an abandonment programme in Somalia, coordinated by Ifrah Ahmed in her role as Gender Advisor to the Government of Somalia

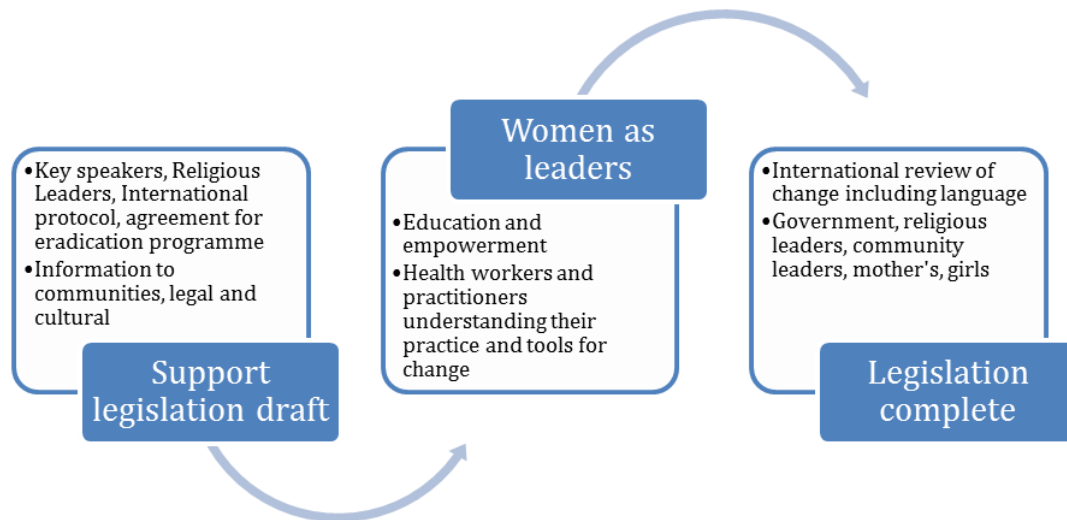


Diagram from the Ifrah Foundation

Recommendations

- Strengthen advocacy to support legislation to be passed in parliament
- Build the capacity of competent facilitators to support both national and community-based interventions
- Educate women, practitioners and others on the short term and long term effects of FGC, for example, recurring infections, painful urination, menstrual complications as well as the risks associated with child birth

- Enable change through a shared understanding that the cultural beliefs condoning FGC no longer hold religious value: *'women who perform FGM/C need to know that it is against our religion'*
- Develop a new common language, acknowledging religious terms, to support the development of an process to end the practice
- Enable international sharing of information from other countries, with the intention to review lessons learned and guide an FGC model theory of change

Further information

For further information and contact details of the organisations involved, please visit the websites listed below:

- Orchid Project: <https://orchidproject.org/>
- The Ifrah Foundation: <https://www.facebook.com/IfrahFoundation/>
- Trocaire: <https://www.trocaire.org/>
- AMISOM: <http://amisom-au.org/>
- Federal Government of Somalia: <http://www.villasomalia.gov.so/>