FGM/C
A Under-Recognized Form of Gender-Based Violence in the United States

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Introduction
Who are we and what do we do.
Shirley Luo works at the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence addressing issues of gender-based violence.

She is the Resource Center Coordinator and is responsible for analyzing and presenting program data, organizing and presenting trainings and webinars.
Mariya Taher has worked for over a decade on gender-based violence issues.

She is 1 of the 5 co-founders of Sahiyo and the organization was founded around the belief that storytelling in all forms can create change.
Dr. Natoschia Scruggs

Dr. Natoschia Scruggs in the U.S. End FGM/C Network’s National Director.

Natoschia has held positions over the years in academia, at NGOs, and in government, including having served for nearly five years as principal advisor on research to Ambassador Susan Rice, Ambassador Samantha Power, and Ambassador Nikki Haley at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.
Carey Walovich is the US End FGM/C Network’s Partnerships & Operations Manager.

She manages the day-to-day operations of the Network as well as the vital relationships, collaborations, and projects with members and stakeholders.
WHAT IS FGM/C

FGM/C stands for Female Genital Mutalation/Cutting
How many people know someone who has experienced FGM/C?
“FGM/C involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.”
TYPES OF FGM/C

- NO FGM
- TYPE 1 - CLITORIDECTOMY
- TYPE 2 - EXCISION
- TYPE 3 - INFIBULATION
Mental and Physical Effects of FGC

**Sexual Pain**
FGC survivors can experience pain during intercourse, vaginismus, and decreased sexual desire and pleasure

**Childbirth**
FGC can cause disrupted labor, postpartum hemorrhaging, and infant and maternal death

**Mental Health**
FGC is a traumatic experience that can cause PTSD, depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues

**Infections**
Immediately after and in the long term, FGC can cause severe infections in the affected region

**Urinary and Vaginal Health**
FGC can cause urinary tract problems, painful menstruation, and other long term health issues

**Death**
Infections from FGC, blood-loss, and other issues can ultimately lead to death
If Khatna affected sex life, is it positively or adversely?

Respondents from Q26
(n=108)

- Adversely: 87%
- Positively: 7%
- Unsure: 3%
- Left answer blank: 3%
JUSTIFICATIONS FOR FGC

01 To Control Sexuality
02 Marriageability
03 Tradition and Culture
04 'Cleanliness'
05 Religion
My jaw fell to the ground.
200 million women and girls are living with the effects FGM/C in the world.
FGM/C IS GLOBAL

FGM/C is present in at least 92 countries around the world.

- CATEGORY 1: Countries with nationally representative surveys on FGM/C
- CATEGORY 2: Countries with indirect estimates on FGM/C
- CATEGORY 3: Countries with small-scale studies on FGM/C
- CATEGORY 4: Countries where media reports and anecdotal evidence refer to occurrence of FGM/C

History of the U.S. Movement
Have you heard about anti-FGM/C work in the U.S?
women and girls are living with or at risk of FGM/C in the US.
History in the U.S.

- FGM/C was routine medical practice in the U.S. for most of the 19th and 20th centuries to prevent and treat lesbianism, masturbation, depression, hysteria, and nymphomania.
  - These procedures were covered by insurance until 1977.

- Recent non-medical incidents reported from members of white Christian communities

- An estimated 500,000+ women and girls living in the U.S. are at risk, or have undergone FGM/C (CDC 2016). However, est. is problematic because:
  - Only examines immigrant communities from specific countries
  - Use indirect techniques = apply country prevalence est. to immigrant communities
  - Does not account for migration factors (i.e. characteristics of women in the country of origin vs. those who have migrated to the U.S.)
The number of women and girls at risk of FGM/C varies widely across the states.
Multi-Sectoral Survivor Centered Strategy
FGM/C Trends in the U.S.


**Increased Awareness**
US efforts focus on prevention, protection, research, and care

**Increased Government Support**
Inter-Agency Working Group on FGM
Government reports, policy statements and recommendations
Research Funding

**Increased Collaborations**
US End FGM/C Network
- End Violence Against Girls: Summit on FGM/C
- Official launch 2018
- 400+ indiv. Members and ↑ 50 orgs
- State/City Coalitions

**Survivors & Communities Speak out**
↑ Survivor Led Initiatives
Limited support survivors and survivor led organizations

**Increased Intolerance**
Islamophobia
Anti-immigrant sentiment

**Insufficient Resources**
Limited access to funding and capacity building for CBOs

Sustainability challenges
FGM/C LEGISLATION IN THE UNITED STATES

1996
Criminalization of FGM/C
Congress declares FGM/C a criminal offense

2013
Vacation Cutting Ban
Federal law amended to include a travel provision

2017
U.S. v Nagarwala
First federal prosecution of a U.S. doctor for preforming FGM/C

2018
District Court Decision
Federal law struck down. Only 27 states have laws against FGM/C

2019
Denial of Appeal
The Federal court denies House appeal of federal law

2021
Stop FGM Act
H.R. 1600 is passed into legislation, increasing the criminal penalty for FGM/C

2021
U.S. v Badri
First federal prosecution of vacation cutting
State Laws on FGM/C
COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Islamophobia
Despite the fact that FGM/C has no religion, some people incorrectly think that it only happens in Muslim communities.

Only in Africa
While FGM/C does happen in 29 countries in Africa, it happens in 92 countries globally in total, 63 outside of Africa.

It doesn't happen here
Many in Europe in America don't believe it happens where they live, but that is false.
04

FGM/C and GBV
What connections do you see between FGM/C and other forms of gender-based violence? (i.e. domestic violence, sexual assault, etc.)
'Don’t be scared, it’s just a small pinch.’
FGC and Gender-Based Violence

Relationship

FGC is a form of gender-based violence and child abuse.

FGC can be a learned behavior of childhood, is often surrounded by a culture of silence/stigma/shame, and is a form of generational violence like many other types of GBV.
COVID-19 and FGM/C
Covid-19 and FGM: *Lessons learned from Ebola*

**Key Effects on FGM Prevention and Care**
- Social isolation and loss of social support
- Loss of access to education, reproductive health & protection services
- Loss of livelihoods
- New opportunities for young people to take on positive, new roles in their communities

**Key Program Recommendations**
- Support response plans grounded in children’s rights gender analysis & address the increased risks of GBV
- Support efforts aimed at interrupting FGM/C during the pandemic & beyond
- Support access to digital tools for education, health, psychosocial support and social protection services (e.g. sexual and reproductive health services, GBV services)
- Support research both during and post-pandemic
The Impacts of COVID-19 on FGM/C

Key Findings: Orchid Project Report (September 2020)

- Increased rates of FGM/C reported across East and West Africa due to COVID lockdowns
  - Seen as opportunity to carry out FGM/C undetected

- Lack of FGM/C integration into COVID responses
  - Leaving girls at risk and survivors with no access to services

- Economic hardships pushing parents to seek “bride prices” and cutters who may have abandoned practice to begin again in order to generate income

- Shrinking space and capacity of CSO’s to reach communities with FGM/C education and services
  - Lack of funding for CSO’s to continue FGM/C work

- Increased use of social media to reach communities
Resources for Service Providers
Resources for Providers

- Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services (BRYCS) – Health Practitioners Guide to Providing Culturally Competent Care for Women and Girls Affected by Female Genital Cutting
- Dahlia Project – Female Genital Trauma: Guidelines for Working Therapeutically with Survivors of Female Genital Mutilation
- AHA Foundation – Training Curriculum for Law Enforcement, Educators, and Service Providers
More Resources

- US End FGM/C Network
- An Educational Toolkit to Empower Survivors
- Female Genital Trauma: Guidelines for Working Therapeutically with Survivors of Female Genital Mutilation
- Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) – A Visual Reference and Learning Tool for Health Care Professionals (Booklet)
- Obstetric Care for Women Affected by Female Genital Cutting
  - And many more........
Questions?
THANK YOU!

Do you have further questions?

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