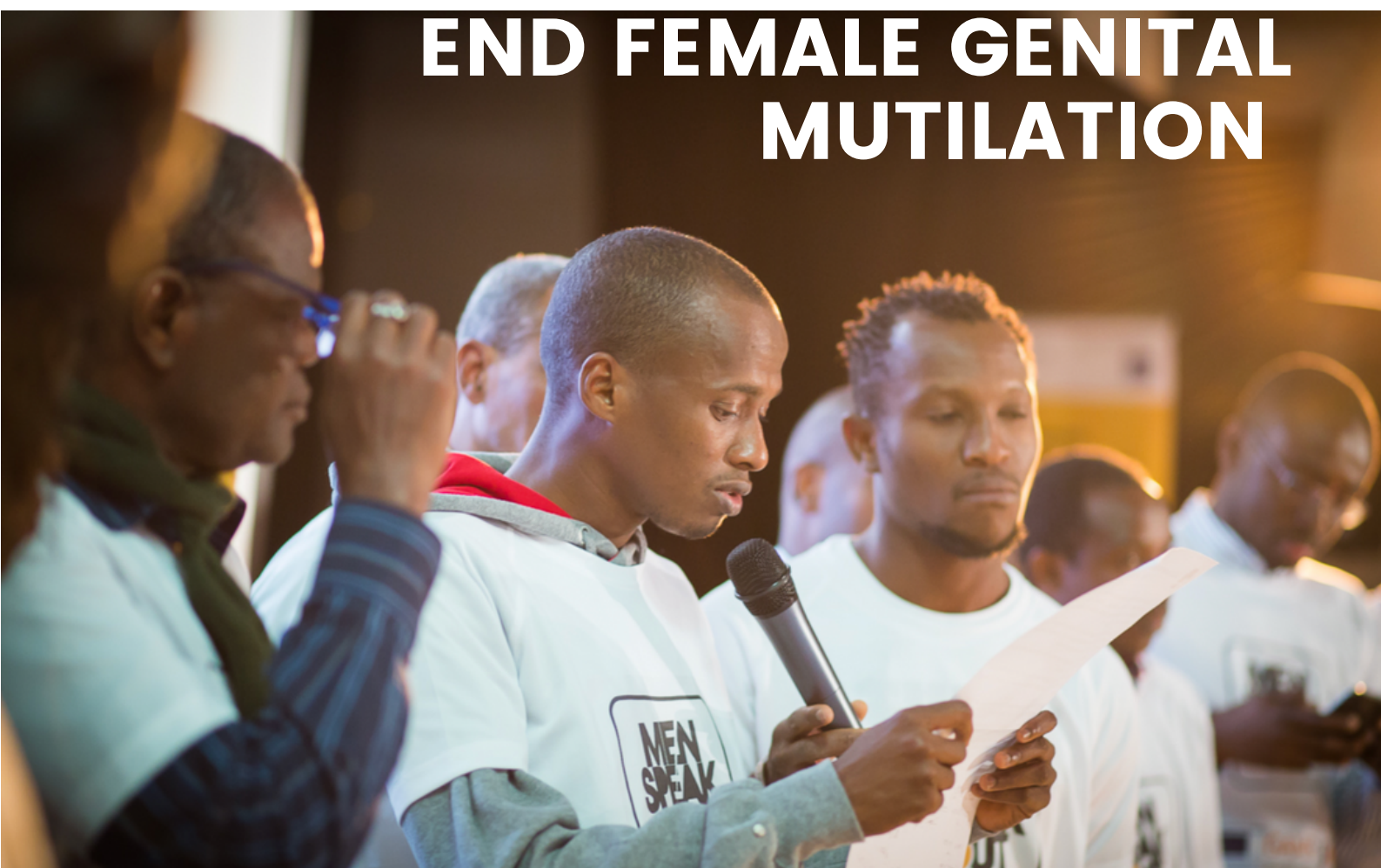


# PRACTICAL SHEET ON MEN INVOLVEMENT TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**To deconstruct preconceived ideas about FGM and to end the social norm, all members of the community have to be involved.**

In 2023, the Community of Practice is focusing on how to work with men to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and create a society free from negative social norms that affect girls and women such as FGM.

On 22 June 2023, COP FGM organised an online training on the sustainable involvement of men to end FGM at the request of its members. This training provided a space and a platform for sharing and learning from those who have applied various promising strategies. The training was led by Seydou Niang, a trainer and specialist in field activities with men's groups on gender issues and gender-based violence such as FGM.

The objectives of the training were to discuss the different methods and channels for working with men on FGM, to address the challenges of involving men in the fight against FGM, and to map out avenues and make recommendations based on the trainer's field experience.

Two years ago, the Community of Practice on Female Genital Mutilation (COP FGM) had a similar conversation about engaging men to end FGM. In the spirit of deepening that conversation, and because of its relevance to this year's theme of: Gender transformative approaches to ending female genital mutilation-Engaging men for lasting change.



*Strategies to abandon FGM must include sustainable involvement of men. As a societal issue, FGM cannot be dealt with by one side of the community.*

Read more [Working on Masculinities \(copfgm.org\)](https://copfgm.org)



Male involvement in ending FGM

# MEN INVOLVEMENT IN PROJECTS & PROGRAMMES \_ CURRENT SITUATION

During the workshop on "Involvement of Men in Ending FGM, the trainer and the participants revealed the following:

- The participants confirmed that they were working with men, which shows the importance of including men in the creation of strategies to abandon FGM.
- Working with men of all ages, both older and the youngest gives good results, however, young people might find it difficult to express themselves about sexuality and social norms out of respect for older men.
- FGM awareness-raising activities with men from both practising and non-practising communities can be an advantage as it allows men from practising communities to have other perspectives.
- Men from communities where FGM is practised express themselves better on this subject when they are among themselves, as they don't shy away from analysing their community.
- Awareness raising with men from practicing communities can be powerful because once the men are convinced, they speed up the understanding of many people in their communities.
- Working with gender mixed groups has its pros and cons. Men can learn other aspects they never thought of, which is informative. on the other hand, women may not be able to fully express themselves.



*While working with mixed groups, it is important to be aware of power dynamics. In the context of an FGM awareness-raising workshop for men (young and old), the community leaders\_who are generally older men\_could take up too much space in the debates, discussions, and in the positions taken.*

To learn more

[Training report – sustainable involvement of men in ending FGM](#)



# CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

The difficulty of working on power dynamics in FGM awareness-raising activities with men

- Questioning power dynamics when faced with men who do not want to share power with women or who do not always understand that women need to take part in decision-making spheres can be challenging.



How can we challenge power dynamics and ensure that men understand the importance of their power and privileges?



The first thing to do is to focus on men first. Use power games that are constructed through the education they received, through socialisation, through the roles they have been assigned. When organising activities with men, it is important to begin by asking them about the impact of patriarchy on their lives



Start taking interest in these men without focusing on FGM. Work on their well-being first of all, so that they can open up and be prepared to discuss and listen. They will be aware of the privileges they have and gradually question the various sufferings they have experienced as men, whether consciously or unconsciously or in the name of patriarchy



Create an environment of trust. Tackling much broader issues such as sexuality by focusing on men's sexuality and then on the difficulties in their sexual lives that most women who have undergone female genital mutilation may experience. Creating an environment of trust helps to ensure that men feel that there is an interest in them and their experiences, not only to join a cause that, in their view, has nothing to do with them



Make them allies. The aim is not to put them in the position of saviours of women who have been subjected to FGM, but conscious members of the community who advocate for the wellbeing of everyone.

## The difficulty of mobilising men from communities affected by FGM for awareness-raising activities.

- The way the men are mobilised in their communities will have an impact on the work they do. We need to make sure that the work will continue even if the people who initiated the mobilisation are no longer there.



How do you mobilise the men with whom you want to set up FGM awareness-raising activities?



The working strategy to adopt when you want to mobilise the men and boys with whom you want to carry out awareness-raising activities in a sustainable way is to give them a sense of responsibility for the themes that will be addressed during these activities (e.g. sexuality, socialisation, gender violence, etc.) by giving them questions to prepare before the debates so that they can carry out research and question the narratives.



Show them that they are just as important in the fight against FGM. In the communities concerned, it is important to target active men who are already involved in a cause, in a cultural, political or even sport association, etc.

## The difficulty of carrying out awareness-raising activities on FGM with men on a long-term basis while keeping their interest to tackle FGM

- Social norms take a long time to change. It is of high importance for men to keep the momentum in interest in the fight against FGM for as long as it will take to eradicate it.



How do men stay interested in the issue of FGM on a long-term basis, when it is generally considered to be a women's issue?



The starting point is to focus interest on the people themselves. As an activist/ awareness-raiser, you have need to know if your objective is to raise awareness only or to keep people interaction going. Ask the people you are working with what they need to keep the momentum and support them in building a structure. Solutions have to come from them.



For in-depth work, it's recommended to tackle issues that are not directly linked to FGM at first, because this will help to build a rapport with the men and boys involved. This will help build trust with the group of men involved. It is this environment that will create openness and space to raise the issue of FGM and GBV continuously.



*To deconstruct the arguments and justifications that the people put forward to justify the issue of female genital mutilation - there are a lot of questions about religion and in particular the link with the Islamic religion - learn about the counter arguments that were previous presented*



To learn more,  
read

**"THE SUN DOES NOT DRY LINEN IN THE SHADOW" -  
par Seydou Niang.**

**Stratégies concertées de lutte contre les MGF  
([strategiesconcertees-mgf.be](http://strategiesconcertees-mgf.be))**



For more details,

**Deconstructing preconceived ideas about female  
genital mutilation, page 3 (religion and FGM),  
GAMS Belgium (2020). "Mutilations sexuelles -  
Déconstruire les idées reçues", Brussels)**

# CONCLUSION

- To involve men and boys sustainably in FGM awareness-raising activities, you need a core group to work in depth over the medium to long term to conscientiously carry the message to their communities
- While conducting awareness-raising activities on FGM, it is best to work in pairs (a man and a woman facilitator). Working with a man as facilitator is necessary, at least initially (to break down stereotypes that are a result of socialisation (Deconstructing the relationship between genders and working on masculinities)).



*workshops conducted with men must go beyond the issue of female genital mutilation and incorporate gender issues. The aim is to ensure that the men understand the consequences of female genital mutilation as well as a good understanding of the unequal gender relations and gender norms that are harmful to the health and well-being of women in general.*

For more details



**Why is it important to work on masculinities with men and young boys in communities affected by Female Genital Mutilation?**

