

Africa Advocacy Foundation (AAF)

FGM activities report in Southwark – 2016

Planned activities:

- Training of Community Champions
- Monthly women only discussions
- Monthly man to man talks
- Faith group activities
- Community outreach
- Support for survivors
- Training frontline professionals

Training of Community Champions

During the past 6 months, we've recruited, trained and deployed 16 Community Champions most of them survivors to help us deliver our work and engage with FGM practicing communities in Southwark.

The champions have accessed 4 weeks FGM course focusing on a number of skills including understanding of FGM in all its forms, the law, independent advocacy skills, basic counselling and effective community engagement strategies. Champions were given other opportunities to expand their skills through practical activities such as shadowing experienced volunteers and project workers on community engagement activities enabling them to gain first hand knowledge on relevant issues within communities affected by FGM. The training of Champions is ongoing and new volunteers are trained and supported accordingly.

Community champions are a valuable resource to our FGM work and contribute immensely in reaching to individuals and families that would not normally be easy to engage through conventional approaches. This approach helps break down communication, cultural and faith barriers, builds trust and creates a sense of community ownership on activities hence resulting in increased uptake.

The Champions undertake a variety of roles including social media campaigns, attending meetings, organising and gender specific activities including sister's circles and man to man discussions, translation and interpreting services, outreach sessions in various settings, distributing leaflets and information to the community.

The table below provides background information about the champions.

Table 1: FGM Champions

Age group	Male	Female	Language spoken
14-24	1	5	Somali, Krio, Arabic, French, Yoruba
25-44	2	5	Swahili, Somali, Krio. Arabic, French
45-64	0	2	Somali
65+	0	1	Somali

Women only discussions

In order to gain access to the hard to reach members of the community, we have set up 'Sister's Circle' – small gender specific group discussions which mostly take place in people's homes, cafes, hairdressers or familiar environment where participants feel most comfortable especially among people they know and trust and using the appropriate language to express their experiences and feelings confidently. This enables participants to have open and frank conversations about the practice and other associated myths and taboos etc. Women are able to share personal stories, relationship issues and help each other to overcome their problems. It is a very useful platform for educating the women on FGM with respect to faith, family dynamics, the law rights, sources of support available and the roles they can play as advocates against the practise

These sessions are mostly spearheaded by the Champions in terms of organisation and facilitation with active involvement of participants. Since April, we have delivered 9 sessions involving a total of 89 young women & girls and 27 families from FGM practicing communities in Southwark particularly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast Communities.

Table 2: Women- Sisters Circles

Age group	Number	Country of Origin
16-24	26	<i>Somalia (8), Ethiopia (1), Nigeria (4), Sierra Leone (11) and Ivory Coast (1), Guinea (1)</i>
25-44	37	<i>Somalia (13), Ghana (2), Ethiopia (1), Nigeria (7), Sierra Leone (11) Ivory Coast (1), Guinea (1), Sudan (1)</i>
45-64	19	<i>Somalia (4), Ghana (1), Nigeria (3), Sierra Leone (5) Ivory Coast (3), Senegal (1) Eritrea (1), Kenya (1),</i>
65+	7	<i>Somalia (2), Ghana (1), Sierra Leone (3), Nigeria (1)</i>

Man to Man discussions

To get men involved in the FGM discussions, we've taken similar approach to sister's circles to instigate conversations in private environments, and the sessions are led by experienced male advocates who are also trained champions.

We organised 7 man to man discussions each involving 8-13 participants (69 in total from Somali, Ghana, Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) to increase knowledge and challenge myths and attitudes surrounding the practice.

These sessions provided a platform for discussions and debates for men from various backgrounds, some of whom experiencing challenges in their intimate relationships as a result of FGM. The sessions also explored levels of awareness of FGM and its effects on the health and wellbeing of women, the issue of children and duty to protect them, men's

attitudes on FGM and what they can do to end it. The key outcome following these discussions was getting the men to pledge to protect their daughters from FGM and asking them to engage other men in active and informed debates on the practise so as to help demystify the myths and change community attitudes in order eradicate FGM

Table 3: Men; Man-Man Talks

Age group	Number	Country of Origin
16-24	13	<i>Somalia (2), Eritrea (1), Nigeria (3), Egypt (1) Sierra Leone (2) Sudan (1), Ghana (2), Kenya (1)</i>
25-44	29	<i>Somalia (9), Eritrea (1) Ghana (2), Nigeria (7), Sierra Leone (5) Ivory Coast (1), Guinea (1), Gambia,(1) Liberia (1), Ivory Coast (1),</i>
45-64	23	<i>Somalia (7), Ghana (1), Nigeria (4), Sierra Leone (5) Ivory Coast (2), Senegal (1) G.Bissau (1), Egypt (1), Sudan (1)</i>
65+	4	<i>Somalia (1), Nigeria (1), Sierra Leone (2)</i>

Engagement with Faith Groups

We held 3 faith specific sessions in Peckham, Old Kent Road and in Camberwell which was facilitated by 1 Pastor and 2 Imams who are trained FGM advocates. Over 400 people participated in the sessions and majority were from FGM practicing communities.

Table 4: Faith Communities- Congregations

Age group	Percentage	Country of Origin of congregations
16-24	22%	<i>Somalia, Eritrea Nigeria, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Sierra Leone Sudan, Ghana, Kenya Ivory Coast, Guinea, Gambia, Liberia, Somalia Senegal ,G.Bissau, Cameroon, Benin</i>
25-44	30%	
45-64	32%	
65+	16%	

Community Workshop and out reach

We anticipate that we will hold 2 community workshops (events) in Southwark in partnership with other key stakeholders in the borough. We will hold discussions with the FGM lead in Southwark to agree on dates, themes and setup of the workshops

Support group, counselling and therapeutic activities for survivors

AAF offers various support services for survivors of FGM including one to one counselling, group support and therapeutic activates such as yoga, poetry writing and art. Activities are delivered by experienced staff, volunteers and a qualified Counsellor.

Majority of those participating in these activities have experienced trauma due to the practice of FGM. After the initial assessment, we agree a support plan tailored to the indentified

needs of the individual and this will determine the number of sessions, areas of discussion, review timelines, signposting, referrals etc.

Since April 2016, we held over 258 direct one to one counselling sessions involving 43 FGM survivors including 17 women from Southwark with each receiving at least six counselling sessions.

26 support group sessions were successfully held involving over 204 survivors with 56 women from Southwark. The group facilitators participants jointly agree on topics of discussion and the sessions are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries.

These activities gives participants the opportunity to share their stories learn from each other, build support networks and access information on other services. Group sessions enable participants to overcome health problems, isolation, low self esteem, physical or emotional abuse, shame etc.

Table 5: Counselling: Women Survivors

Age group	Number	Country of Origin
16-24	5	<i>Somalia (3), Nigeria (1), Sierra Leone (1) Sudan (1),</i>
25-44	8	<i>Somalia (4), Ghana (1), Nigeria (1), Sierra Leone (2)</i>
45-64	4	<i>Somalia (1), Nigeria (1), Sierra Leone (1) Sudan (1)</i>
65+	0	

FGM Awareness Training Frontline Professionals

During the 6 month period, AAF successfully trained 96 frontline professionals mainly teachers and support staff from three Southwark schools i.e. Bellenden Primary school, Michael Faraday Primary school and University Academy of Engineering South Bank School.

After the training the participants reported increased knowledge and confidence on the approaches of working with children at risk of FGM and the reporting procedures in relation mandatory reporting duty and better of working families affected by FGM. Majority also reported that the training had enhanced their capacity to respond more appropriately to girls and families affected by the practice

We are currently in talks with Michael Faraday Primary school to provide support and educational workshops to parents and communities affected by FGM in their school.

Table 6: Professionals trained

School	Total attended
Bellenden Primary School	26
Michael Faraday Primary school	40
University Academy of Engineering South Bank	30

Way Forward:

More support in reaching out to more schools and other professionals on Southwark will enable our team to engage more professionals by the end of this financial year.