



MARKET DAY SENSITISATION AND BASELINE SURVEY ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

STATISTICS REPORT

***Central River
Region***

November 2018

***Produced by:
Think Young Women***

***A Survey Funded by:
AmplifyChange***

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FOREWORD

Over the years, The Gambia Government has initiated a number of activities on women's rights. Despite the various national interventions and achievements, there still remain some significant injustices inflicted against women, in the form of sexual and gender-based violence, leading to gender gaps and inequities that expose young people to reproductive health problems; Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), resulting to poor maternal health indicators for women and girl-children of The Gambia are key factors.

The Gambia has enacted various legislation safeguarding women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. In 2015, the Women's Act 2010 was amended to include a prohibition on FGM, a form of sexual gender-based violence (GBV). However, sex and sexuality are hardly spoken about in Gambian communities. Thus, the sexual reproductive health and rights of women and girls is an issue for concern. Having enacted legislation and put in place punishments in the form of fines and imprisonment for people who perform FGM and child marriage in The Gambia, it is not enough to bank on this law but to also reach people in their communities with not just information about the existence of such a law, but also with accurate and adequate information about FGM and Child Marriage and the need to stop the practice in the Gambia.

In line with the recommendations and findings in the AmplifyChange 2017 funded project, this survey is an expansion project to cover the Central River Region (CRR) of The Gambia, a constituency with a very high prevalence rates on GBV as per the 2013 Demographic Health Survey. This was a one-day activity that was conducted within and around the Brikamaba Market, Central River Region on a "Lumoo" (market day), aimed at reaching vendors, especially market women and men. As part of the survey, questionnaires were administered, and participants were sensitized through individual and group discussions held on FGM and child marriage.

The findings of this survey show that while media platforms are the main medium of transmission of messages on FGM and child marriage, there is need for continuous grassroot awareness. The findings further establish a very important factor in that most of the populace in the region believe that the state is vested with the utmost responsibility in protecting girls from harmful traditional practices such as FGM and child marriage. This report contains detailed data and findings.

We hope that this report will contribute significantly to efforts geared towards the abandonment of these harmful practices in The Gambia. We promise to play our part fully, in solidarity with the forerunner Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in the campaign and with absolute commitment and respect to the values that we all share in common and cherish. We are ready to be held accountable for the results we achieve and for the support and resources we receive to bring an end all forms of harmful traditional practices.

Musu Bakoto Sawo
National Coordinator

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This *Market Day Sensitisation and Baseline Survey on FGM* in the Central River Region (CRR) could not have been possible without the financial, technical and moral support of some institutions and individuals who believe in Think Young Women (TYW), youth dynamism and power. It is our great pleasure to convey our gratitude and appreciation to the following:

- Amplifychange, its financial support without which it would have been difficult to carry out this survey;
- We acknowledge the support of the National Youth Council and Central River Region Regional Youth Committee;
- All the respondents who took part or were interviewed during the exercise. We are extremely grateful for their participation;
- We recognise Ms. Haddy Jonga, the Programme Officer who oversaw the implementation of this activity;
- We commend the Consultant and Data Analyst, for his time and efforts in making this campaign a success and preparing this analysis report;
- The data collectors for their commitment and support in the realisation of the objectives of the survey;
- Gratitude goes out to TYW members currently in and out of The Gambia and volunteers for their contributions;

BACKGROUND

In order to develop a more effective programme of intervention in the campaign to abandon the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) it is necessary to identify the knowledge and attitudes of people about FGM and the gaps therein.

In line with the recommendations and findings in the AmplifyChange 2017 funded project, this survey is an expansion project to cover the Central River Region (CRR) of The Gambia, being a constituency with a very high FGM prevalence rates as per the 2013 Demographic Health Survey.

This Baseline Survey study has therefore been conducted cognisant of the priority objectives of the Market Day Sensitization which are to:

- Raise awareness about Sexual and Gender-Based Violence with specific focus on FGM;
- Encourage the use of dialogue in changing the mind-sets of people concerning FGM;
- To gauge the perception of people living and working in the Central River Region on FGM, the reasons for its practice and to understand their perception;
- To document and share the voices of young people regarding FGM/C so as to influence policy makers;
- Encourage the use of media messages such as pictures, flyers and videos in convincing the general public to actively engage in the abandonment of FGM in The Gambia;
- Empower the general public on issues of FGM in order to accelerate its abandonment

METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted to gauge the Knowledge, Attitude and Perceptions (KAP) of respondents on FGM. A cross sectional descriptive survey was employed in this study with the target population being 250 respondents from various communities in Central River Region. The respondents were chosen randomly and also based on their willingness to participate in the survey. A questionnaire was developed, and a draft was sent to Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) for review. Adjustments were made to some components based on suggestions from GBoS before the actual data collection process took place.

The data collection activity commenced on 17 November 2019 at 10:00 am. The survey team consisted of enumerators and volunteers some of whom were staff of TYW and trainers. Interviews were conducted on a face to face basis and in a language the respondents were most fluent in. Where language barriers exist, translators were used to ensure that the questions asked by the enumerators were well and truly understood.

After the data collection activity, the questionnaires were checked for consistency and completeness. The coding for data entry was done in excel and upon completion, Stata version 14 was used for generation of tables. The data was presented in charts and bar graphs and was also analysed using frequencies and percentage.

STATISTICAL RESULTS

Socio demographic characteristics of the respondents

This subsection presents data on the socio demographic characteristics that were considered in this survey. Respondents, who were interviewed, were asked questions such as their age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, educational level, religion and region of origin. Some of the characteristics are disaggregated by gender and presented below.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of respondents by age, gender, ethnicity etc. It shows that, 18.8 per cent of the respondents are between the age group 35-39 years, followed by those in the age group 20-24 years (12.8 %) and 30-34 years and 40-44 years with 12.4 per cent each. This shows that majority of the respondents are within the working age population. Furthermore, results from the table also shows that majority of the respondents are Fulas (39.2 %), followed by the Wolof ethnic group (26.8 %) and Jola/Koroninka (21.6 %); while Sarahule ethnic group recorded the least proportion with 1.2 per cent. However, with the exception of the Fula ethnic group, there are more males than females in the rest of the listed ethnic groups.

Analysis by marital status further shows that 77.2 per cent of the respondents are married, out of which 76.9 per cent are males and 77.4 per cent are females. This is followed by those that are single (16.0 %), with 20.2 per cent being males and 13.0 per cent females. The results also show that 57.2 per cent of the respondents are non-literate, out of which 40.1 per cent are males and 63.7 are females. Whereas, 40.4 percent are literate, constituting to 49.0 per cent males and 34.2 per cent females.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender, Age Group, Ethnicity, Marital Status, Educational Level and Region of Origin

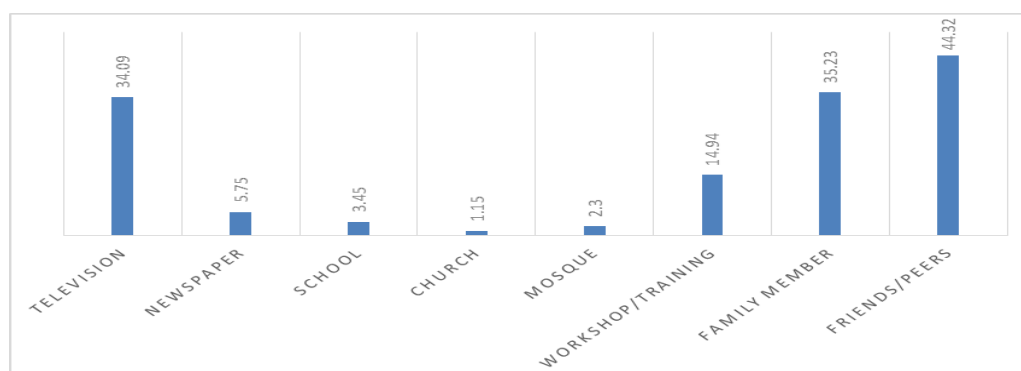
AGE GROUP	Female	Male	Total
15-19	7.5	2.9	5.6
20-24	12.3	13.5	12.8
25-29	13.0	9.6	11.6
30-34	15.8	7.7	12.4
35-39	13.7	26.0	18.8
40-44	13.7	10.6	12.4
45-49	4.1	8.7	6.0
50-54	5.5	5.8	5.6
55-59	2.7	4.8	3.6
60-64	3.4	1.9	2.8
65+	2.1	4.8	3.2
Not Stated	6.2	3.9	5.2
Ethnic Group			
Mandinka	3.4	3.9	3.6
Fula	46.6	28.9	39.2

Wolof	22.6	32.7	26.8
Jola/Karoninka	21.2	22.1	21.6
Sarahule	0.7	1.9	1.2
Serere	3.4	6.7	4.8
Bambara	0.0	1.9	0.8
Other	0.7	1.0	0.8
Not Stated	1.4	1.0	1.2
Marital Status			
Single	13.0	20.2	16.0
Married	77.4	76.9	77.2
Divorced	2.7	1.0	2.0
Widowed	4.8	0.0	2.8
Not Stated	2.1	1.9	2.0
Educational Level			
Non-Literate	63.7	48.1	57.2
Lower Basic	13.0	14.4	13.6
Upper Basic	6.9	11.5	8.8
Senior Secondary/High	12.3	16.4	14.0
Post-Secondary	2.1	6.7	4.0
Not Stated	2.1	2.9	2.4
Region			
West Coast Region	1.4	2.9	2.0
Central River Region	93.8	87.5	91.2
North Bank Region	0.0	1.0	0.4
Not Stated	4.8	8.7	6.4

Occurrence and information

This subsection presents the sources(s) of information on FGM of respondents if they had any, and the occurrence of FGM in their communities. Figure 1 below shows that majority of the respondents cited their source of information on FGM as their friends/peers (44.3 %). This is followed by those who got information from family members (35.2 %) and the television (34.1 %). However, Mosque (2.3 %) and Church (1.2 %) registered the least proportions of respondents' source of information on FGM.

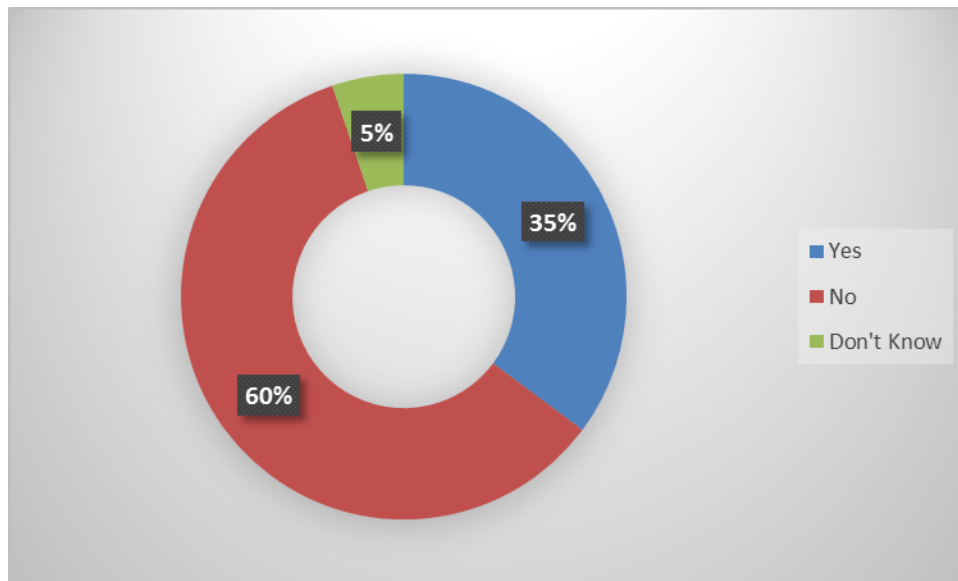
Figure 1: Source of information



Practice of FGM

The figure below shows that 35 per cent of respondents stated that they practice FGM in their communities, compared to 60 per cent who reported that FGM is no longer practiced in their communities.

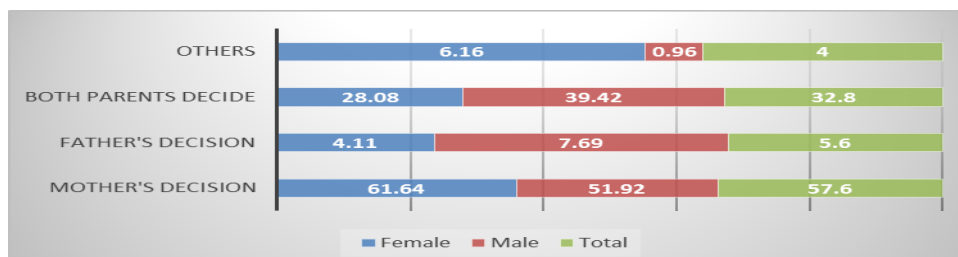
Figure 2: Practice of FGM



Decision on FGM

Respondents were asked a question pertaining to whom mainly decides if a girl should be circumcised and whether FGM should be stopped and the most effective way to stop FGM. This was mainly to assess the knowledge of respondents on FGM. Results from the figure below shows that 57.6 per cent of respondents reported that it's the mother's decision, compared to 32.8 per cent who said it's the decision of both parents; and 5.6 per cent reported that it is the father's decision. Analysis by gender further shows that there are more males than females who reported that FGM is decided by both parents, and the father. While there are more females than males who said, it's the mother's decision.

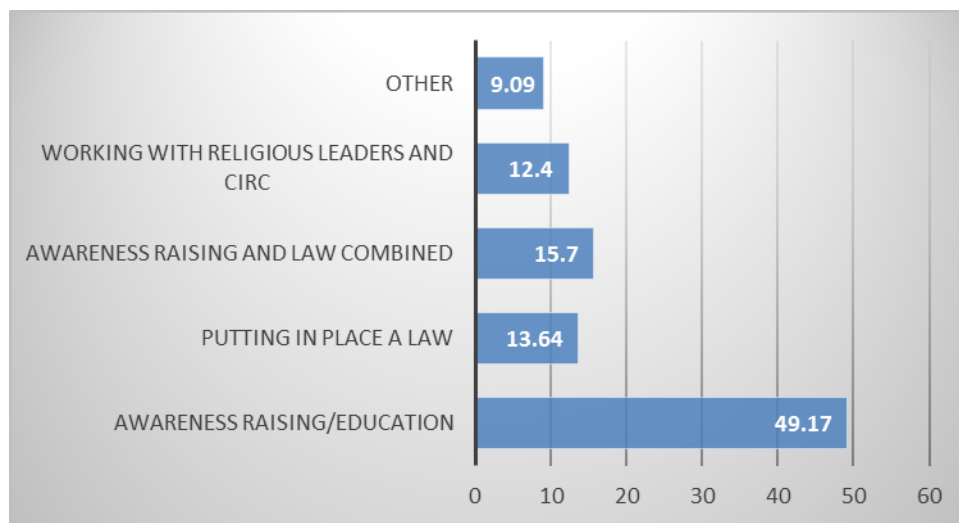
Figure 3: Who decides for a girl to be circumcised



The most effective way to stop FGM

The figure below shows the percentage distribution of the most effective way to stop FGM. The data shows that the highest proportion of the most effective way to stop FGM cited by respondents was awareness raising/education (49.2 %), followed by awareness raising and law combined (15.7 %). Nonetheless, putting in place a law (13.6 %) and working with religious leaders and circumcisers (12.4 %) were also cited by significant proportion of the respondents.

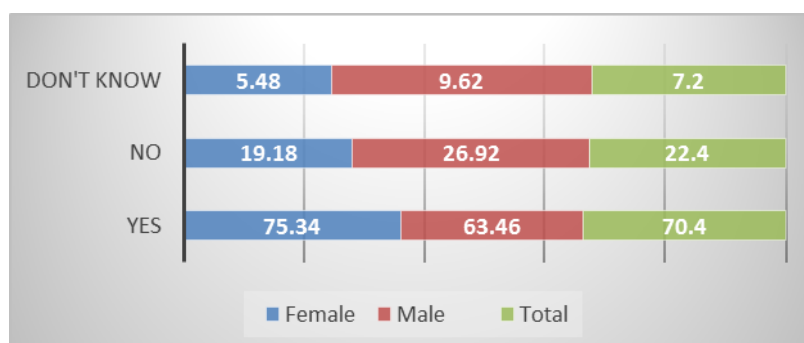
Figure 4: Most Effective way to stop FGM



Perception

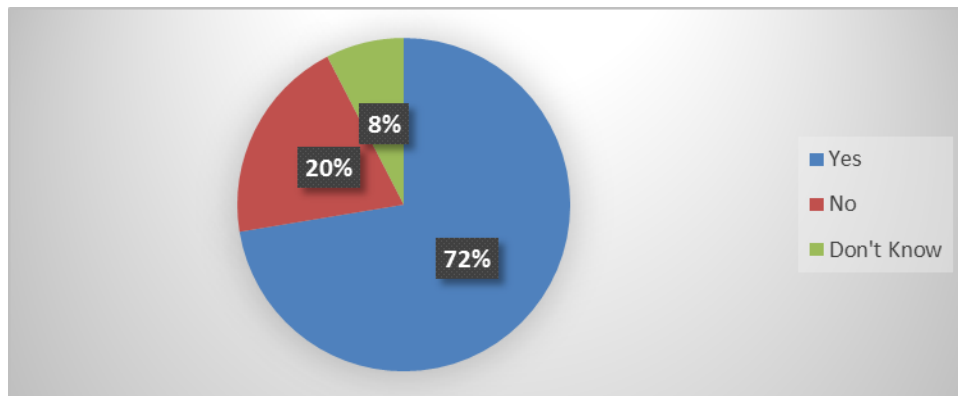
Figure 5 below shows that 70.4 per cent of the respondents said that they considered FGM a harmful practice. Out of this, 75.3 per cent are females and 63.5 per cent males. Whereas, 22.4 per cent of the respondents do not consider FGM a harmful practice; of which 19.2 are females and 26.9 males.

Figure 5: Do you Consider FGM a Harmful Practice



The data in the figure below shows that a significant proportion of respondents (72 %) consider FGM a violation on the rights of a child/woman.

Figure 6: Do you Consider FGM a violation of the rights of a child/woman



During the survey, respondents were asked if they thought FGM was a religious obligation or requirement. The data in figure 7 below shows that, 60 per cent of the respondents said no, whereas, 34 per cent responded yes and 6 per cent did not know.

Figure 7: DO you think FGM is a religious obligation or requirement

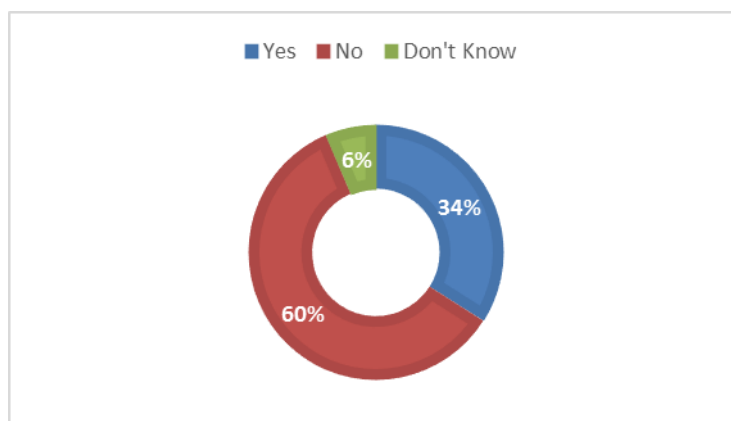


Figure 8A shows that majority of the respondents (74 %) said that they think FGM is a practice that should be stopped, compared to 23 per cent who said it should not be stopped. This shows that people have been paying keen attention to the negative impact FGM has on society and thus, more awareness and sensitisation should be done to further reduce the proportion of those who said it should not be stopped. Furthermore, figure 8B shows that 68 per cent of the respondents reported that they have ever opposed FGM; while 32 per cent have not.

Figure 8A: Do you think that FGM should be stopped

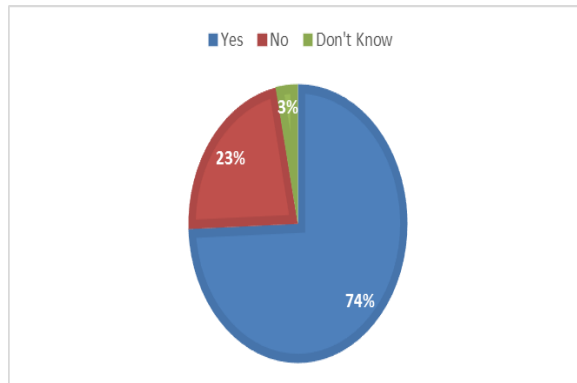
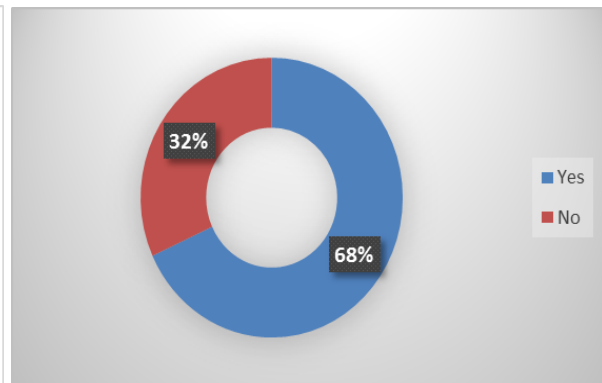


Figure 8B: Have you ever opposed FGM



Data in the figure below shows that, a significant proportion of respondents (76 %) said that they think it is their obligation to protect girls against FGM; while 24 per cent said it is not their obligation. Figure 9B further shows that majority of the respondents stated that it is the obligation of the government (55.6 %) to protect girls against FGM. This is followed by those who stated that it is the obligation of religious leaders (17.5 %).

Figure 9A: Do you think that it is your obligation to protect girls against FGM

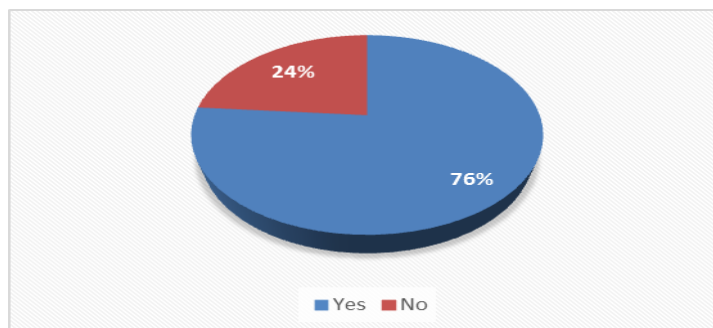
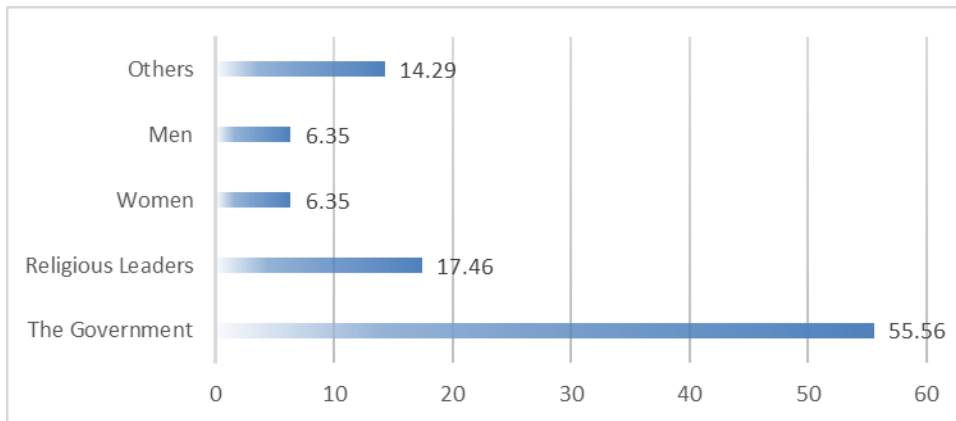
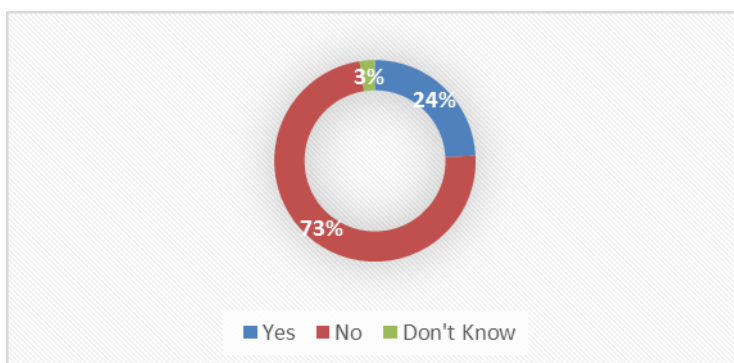


Figure 9B: whose obligation do you think it is to protect girls against FGM?



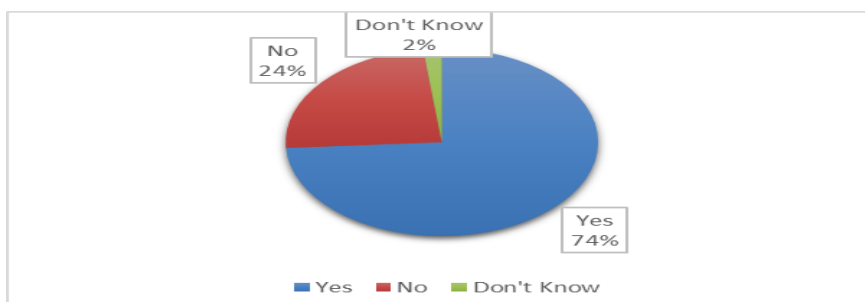
Respondents were also asked if they would carry out FGM on their own daughter and the figure below presents data on this. It shows that a significant proportion of respondents (73 %) stated that they would not carry out FGM on their daughter. While 24 per cent stated that they would and 3 per cent said they don't know.

Figure 10: Would you carry out FGM on your own daughter



The figure below presents data that was specifically obtained from only male respondents. It shows that when asked if they would marry an uncircumcised woman. Majority of the men (74 %) stated that they would, while 24 per cent stated that they would not.

Figure 11: Would you marry an uncircumcised woman (For Male respondents only)



Respondents were also asked if they knew that The Gambia has ratified anti-FGM child rights conventions. The data shows that 64.4 per cent stated that they knew, out of which 69.2 per cent are females and 19.2 per cent are males. Whereas, 25.5 per cent of the respondents stated that they did not know, of which 57.7 per cent are females and 33.7 are males. Moreover, respondents were further asked if they were aware of the existence of any legislation prohibiting FGM in The Gambia. Figures 12B shows that 79.2 per cent of the respondents stated that they know of the existence of any legislation, of which 74 per cent are males and 82.8 are females. However, 16 per cent of the respondents said that they did not know of the existence of any legislation, constituting to 23.1 per cent males and 11 per cent females.

Figure 12A: Do you know if The Gambia has ratified anti-FGM child rights conventions?

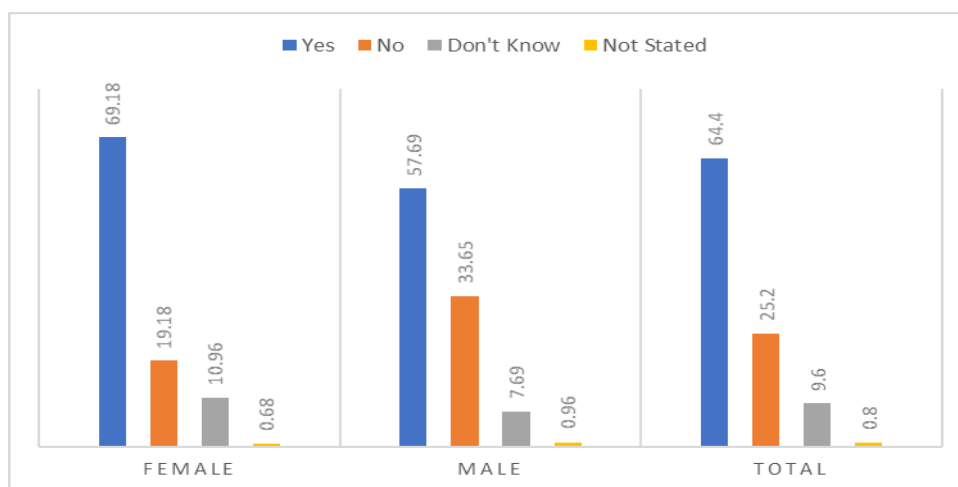
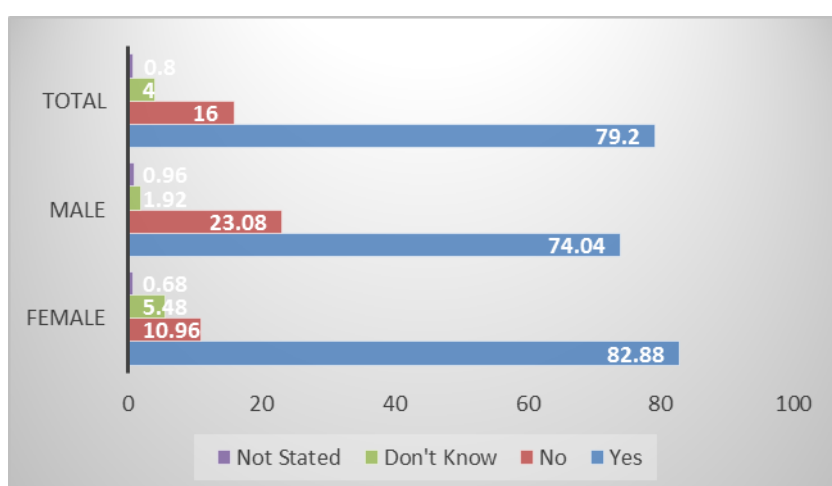


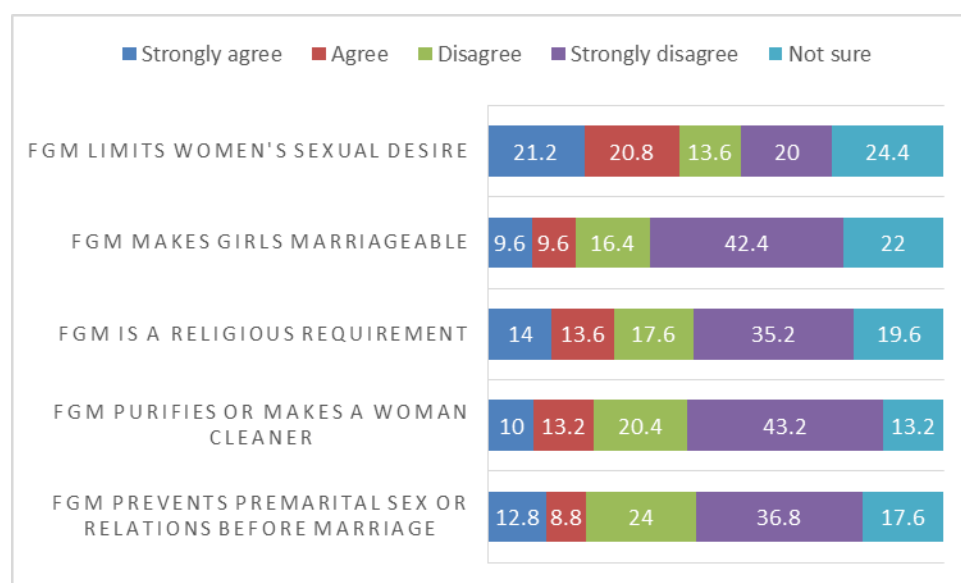
Figure 12B: Are you aware of the existence of any legislation prohibiting FGM in The Gambia



Attitudes towards FGM

The figure below presents data on the attitude of respondents towards FGM. It shows that 21.2 per cent of respondents strongly agree that FGM limits women's sexual desire and 20.8 per cent also agree to this. However, 24 per cent of respondents disagree that FGM prevents premarital sex/relations before marriage, while 43.2 per cent strongly disagree that FGM purifies or makes a woman clean.

Figure 13: Attitudes towards FGM



ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Occurrence and information

Respondents were asked on the main sources they derive information on FGM from and the results indicated that 44.3 % was from their peers/friends; 35.2% was from and the institutions of worship such as the Mosque (2.3 %) and Church (1.2 %) registered the least proportions of respondents' source of information on FGM.

This confirms that FGM is affiliated to religion as such religious leaders, congregations in houses of worship refrain from discussing FGM and therefor sharing of information in such platforms are limited. It is important that religious leaders are targeted in advocacy programmes relating to FGM to ensure that they are part of the positive social change in relation to the subject matter and be positive drivers of change.

Clearly, community outreach is of essence as almost 50% of the respondents rely on discussions with their peers to obtain information relating to FGM as such, it is important that advocates disseminate the right information during community outreach.

Practice of FGM

35 per cent of respondents stated that they practice FGM in their communities, compared to 60 per cent who reported that FGM is no longer practiced in their communities. This is a great improvement compared to the May 2017 figures when the Booth Campaign and Survey on FGM and Child Marriage was conducted in the said region.

Thus, it shows that even though more advocacy programmes need to be put in place for the awareness of the harmful effect FGM has on the girl child. There has, nonetheless, been a significant impact on the various intervention programs launched and has therefore, led to the reduction of FGM practice in The Gambia this year.

This is a motivation for advocates to initiate more innovative intervention to ensure that the 35% practice rate is significantly lowered.

Decision on FGM

Respondents were asked a question on who decides for FGM to be performed on a girl child. Results shows that 57.6 per cent of respondents reported that it's the mother's decision, compared to 32.8 per cent who said it's the decision of both parents; and 5.6 per cent reported that it is the father's decision.

As highlighted in the statistics, analysis by gender further shows that there are more males than females who reported that FGM is decided by both parents, and the father. While there are more females than males who said, it's the mother's decision.

Clearly, women seem to be the main decision-makers on FGM in this region and the promoters of FGM. The findings may later reveal the reason why women champion FGM but it is important at this juncture to note that the women need to be mainly targeted in this region to ensure a significant reduction on FGM if not a total eradication.

The most effective way to stop FGM

The highest proportion of the most effective way to stop FGM cited by respondents was awareness raising/education (49.2 %), followed by awareness raising and law combined (15.7 %); enactment of the law (13.6 %) and working with religious leaders and circumcisers (12.4 %).

This finding supports the theory that the main method of eradicating FGM in high prevalence rate communities is social change communication methods and awareness raising intervention. Although, it is appreciated that enactment of laws are also sustainable preventive measures, the general community perspective of its effectiveness appears to be low.

Perception on FGM

In gauging the perception of the respondents on FGM the following questions were asked:

- Do you consider FGM is harmful practice?

The findings indicated that 70.4 per cent of the respondents said that they considered FGM a harmful practice out of which, 75.3 per cent are females and 63.5 per cent males. Whereas, 22.4 per cent of the respondents do not consider FGM a harmful practice; of which 19.2% are females and 26.9% males.

This is a clear indication on the gap on men not having adequate knowledge on the effects of FGM. 26.9 still of the belief that FGM is not a harmful practice is a cause for concern which requires immediate intervention.

- Do you consider FGM a violation of the rights of a child/woman?

The findings revealed that a significant proportion of respondents (72 %) consider FGM a violation on the rights of a child/woman. This is an indication that FGM is now been recognized as violation of rights of a child/woman and the interventions by anti-FGM advocates appears to be effective. However, although a smaller proportion of respondents (20 %) reported that they do not consider FGM a violation, it still leaves room for more awareness to be creation in this regard.

- Do you consider FGM as a religious obligation or requirement?

The data in 60 per cent of the respondents do not consider FGM as a religious obligation whereas, 34 per cent considered it as a religious obligation and 6 per cent

did not know. The fact more 25% of the respondents consider FGM as a religious obligation confirms the belief that FGM is affiliated to religion. Based on this finding, it is important to reiterate the fact that religious leaders must be highly targeted and sensitized on FGM.

- Do you think FGM should be stopped?

Majority of the respondents (74 %) believe that FGM is a practice that should be stopped whilst 23 % believe that practice should be maintained. Again, this indicates that the interventions of the Anti-FGM advocates are increasingly successful. It is important that more awareness raising activities be conducted with a strategic approach to ensure a change of perception of the outstanding 23%.

- Have you ever opposed FGM?

68 per cent of the respondents reported that they have opposed FGM but 32 per cent indicated that they have never opposed FGM. FGM is deeply rooted cultural practice that dates many years back. It has been condoned for the longest time and the stigma attached to the opposition of the practice is known.

As a result, the culture of silence regarding FGM is still maintain and difficult to break. It can be concluded that the 32% that have never opposed the practice maybe as a result of the culture of silence and as such, capacity building and awareness raising encouraging individuals to break the culture of silence regarding the harmful traditional practice.

- Do you think it is your obligation to protect girls from FGM?

Since the findings have revealed that community members perceive that FGM is a rights violation, it is not surprising that 76% of the respondents believe that it is their obligation to protect girls against FGM. The more community members are enlightened on the issue, the more it becomes a concern in society thereby leading to community members being obligated to protect girls.

- Whose obligation do you think it is to protect girls from FGM?

Majority of the respondents stated that it is the obligation of the government (55.6 %) to protect girls against FGM. This is followed by those who stated that it is the obligation of religious leaders (17.5 %). This finding indicates that the community members acknowledge that the government is a relevant stakeholder in ensuring an end to FGM. In this regard, individuals need the requisite capacity building to be able to hold government accountable in ensuring an effective implementation of the Anti-FGM laws.

- Would you carry out FGM on your own daughter?

A significant proportion of respondents (73 %) stated that they would not carry out FGM on their daughter. While 24 per cent stated that they would and 3 per cent said they don't know. This finding is quite encouraging as it indicates the willingness of the community to ensure an end to FGM.

- Do you know if The Gambia has ratified anti-FGM child rights conventions?

The data showed that 64.4 per cent stated that they knew that Gambia has ratified anti-FGM child rights convention, out of which 69.2 per cent are females and 19.2 per cent are males. Whereas, 25.5 per cent of the respondents stated that they did not know, of which 57.7 per cent are females and 33.7 are males. Clearly, women appear to be more aware of the existence of legislations protecting women and girls on FGM than men. This is very vital to note as it appears that men should be widely reach out to in the popularization of the law.

- Do you know if The Gambia has ratified anti-FGM child rights?

The findings show that 79.2 per cent of the respondents stated that they know of the existence of any legislation, of which 74 per cent are males and 82.8 are females. However, 16 per cent of the respondents said that they did not know of the existence of any legislation, constituting to 23.1 per cent males and 11 per cent females. As initially stated, women appear to be more aware of the existence of legislations protecting women and girls on FGM than men. This is very vital to note as it appears that men should be widely reach out to in the popularization of the law.

Attitudes towards FGM

The purpose of this part was to understand the reaction of the community in relation to certain cultural misconceptions on FGM especially the misconception that failure to perform FGM encourages premarital sex, makes a woman impure amongst others. Interestingly, the finding reveals that that 21.2 per cent of respondents strongly agree that FGM limits women's sexual desire and 20.8 per cent also agree to this. Therefore, almost 50% agree that FGM attempts to restrict a woman's sexual desire. It is also noted that 36.8% strongly disagree that FGM prevents premarital sex/relations before marriage, while 43.2 per cent strongly disagree that FGM purifies or makes a woman clean. This is evidence that the community members are becoming aware that these are cultural misconceptions that are justifiable. By these feedbacks, it is time for advocates to amplify their voices to ensure that all cultural misconceptions are clarified.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Conclusions

The results presented above generally depict the basic idea of the respondents regarding FGM. This survey by Think Young Women is part of efforts to have a greater understanding of the dynamics of FGM, the gaps in knowledge and practice and what better and more sustainable strategies could be employed to stop FGM in this generation. It is also part of a long-term process aimed at ensuring greater government and young people-led organisations involvement in the protection of women's rights.

The findings in the survey reveal the need to scale up awareness raising on FGM and its effects and on the anti-FGM legal instruments and national laws, actively involve young men in the fight against FGM, and intensify advocacy for the legal prohibition of FGM. It also reveals that eliminating FGM will require a multi-strategy approach by the Government and civil society organisations, guided and underpinned by a respect for the human rights of women and girls.

After a critical look at the findings, the following are conclusions drawn from the findings:

- FGM widely believed to be practiced in the communities, a decision mainly taken mothers.
- There is however, a consensus between couples in deciding for the girl child to go through FGM.
- The level of acceptance that FGM and child marriage are both harmful to and violations to the rights of a girl child is significantly decreasing.
- These two phenomena, are still believed to be religious obligation/requirements by many people, though some people believe otherwise. Nonetheless, the general believe is that they should be stopped.
- Raising awareness on the harmful effects of these practices as well as community dialogues are believed to be the most effective ways of stopping these two phenomena.
- Government is widely identified as the main authority obligated to protect girls against FGM and child marriage

Recommendations

Based on the results of this survey, the following recommendations are being put forward to assist planners, policy makers and all relevant stakeholders in decision making:

- Intensify awareness campaigns and popularization of the Anti-FGM legislations with a specific focus on men and boys;
- Conduct more community radio shows and Television talk show with specific focus on FGM to reach out to the populace in the communities
- Encourage more participation of religious leaders on Anti-FGM campaigns to clarify misconceptions on FGM and Child Marriage as religious obligations.
- Reinforce government law enforcement with the requisite information and skills to diligently prosecute violations of the Anti-FGM law.
- Capacity Building exercises for women to ensure they possess the requisite knowledge and skills to campaign and resist FGM within the community