**Case Study 4**

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

**(Secondary)**

**What’s happening?**

According to UNICEF, more than 200 million girls around the world live with the consequences of FGM.

What is FGM? It involves partially or totally cutting or injuring female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

The practice often occurs using non-sterile equipment and without anaesthetic. It can cause severe pain and bleeding. In the long term, it can lead to infections, and complications for the mother and her child during childbirth. It can also affect women psychologically for years.

FGM is not necessary and has no health benefits.

FGM is practiced in some 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Migration means that the practice has spread to Europe and America.

In most of the countries where FGM is practiced it has been made illegal. Most women and men who are familiar with the custom also want it to stop. Why then, is it still happening? There’s social pressure from families and community leaders to ' cut ' women so that they can be accepted as ' clean ' and ready to marry.

However, where charitable organisations educate and empower girls, it’s possible to eradicate this practice.

*\* Please note that the contents of this unit includes information on treatment that is cruel and that can upset some young people. Make sure you create an atmosphere in the classroom where pupils feel safe and free to speak. Oxfam has advice on discussing sensitive issues in the classroom here:* [*https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/teaching-controversial-issues*](https://ssl.microsofttranslator.com/bv.aspx?ref=TVert&from=&to=en&a=https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/teaching-controversial-issues)

**Introductory Activity:**

**What is FGM, and how does it affect girls – true or false?**

Before looking at the case studies, you can introduce the theme by completing the following quiz, which is based on an activity by Action Aid.

You can either copy the cards below and ask small groups to look at them, or do this activity with the whole group, calling out each statement one by one. The pupils' task is to decide whether the statements are true or false.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. FGM involves deliberately cutting the external sexual organs of women. | 2. In many countries, women without any training perform FGM, using non-sterile knives or sharpened stones and without any anaesthetic. |
| 3. The main victims of FGM are children – normally between four and twelve years of age. | 4. FGM has many health benefits. |
| 5. Women have to have FGM performed on them in order to give birth | 6. FGM is based on religion. |
| 7. FGM is not an offence in the UK. | 8. FGM is a form of abuse. |
| 9. FGM is a violation of human rights. | 10. I can't do anything to prevent FGM |

Notes to the Teacher:

1, 2, 3, 8 a 9 are correct.

4, 5, 6, 7, a 10 are false:

4. Girls are at risk of dying from blood loss or because of infection, either during or after suffering from FGM.

5. Women who have suffered FGM are likely to experience difficulties in giving birth.

6. There’s nothing religious about FGM. It’s a ' traditional ' practice, derived from custom rather than religion.

7. There’s a penalty of up to 14 years ' imprisonment for anyone who is found guilty of practicing FGM. It is also against the law to take a girl outside the UK to perform FGM.

10. By expressing yourself and saying that FGM is unacceptable, you’re adding to the international pressure to put a stop to this.

**Discuss:**

After revealing the answers, you could lead a discussion with the group. Are they shocked by these facts? What could be done in their opinion, to prevent FGM?

**Case Study 1: Mamie’s Dream (Sierra Leone)**

Look at the video by Plan International, where Mamie tells her story in her own words: [https://youtu.be/QY6annOXZQM](https://ssl.microsofttranslator.com/bv.aspx?ref=TVert&from=&to=en&a=https://youtu.be/QY6annOXZQM)   
  
"Because I was born a girl", says Mamie, "I've had to face many difficulties along the way – avoiding FGM, getting pregnant when I was a teenager, and getting an education."   
  
In a country where 73% of girls do not complete their education, Mamie's dream to become a teacher in Sierra Leone seemed impossible – but she was determined to succeed.   
  
*\* Note that the language of the film is not easy, as Mamie speaks in her own words.*

**Discuss:**

After seeing the film, ask:

1. What was Mamie’s attitude towards education
2. In your opinion, why did her family want to have FGM performed on her?
3. Mamie refused to have FGM. What were the consequences of this decision?

**Story 2: ‘Empowering Women, Transforming Communities’ – Kakenya Ntaiya**

[](https://www.thextraordinary.org/media/k2/items/cache/83a9554230ed6e6cccfe522a2a4bd53e_XL.jpg)**Watch ‘Empowering Women, Transforming Communities’, a talk by Kakenya Ntaiya here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nM21P8lJ2I>, where she describes how she transformed her community in a rural area of Kenya by providing education for women.

*(\* Please note that the talk is quite long, and it might be an idea to show just a section of it)*

**Discuss:**

1. Kakenya mentions a traditional Masai community. Apart from lack of access to education, what other problems were the women facing?
2. What did Kakenya do to ensure that the girls in her school felt safe and healthy?
3. By creating a boarding school for girls, Kakenya was going against some of the traditional practices and prejudices of her village. Which groups did she have to persuade about the value and importance of what she was doing? Why was it important for her to have their support?

**Response:**

* Imagine you are a girl in Kakenya’s school. **Write an article or blog** about how the school has changed your life. What are your hopes and dreams for the future?
* What **about creating an exhibition or short film about FGM** that shows the scale of the problem, and what can be done about it – including action by the UK government and the Welsh Assembly Government.

**Action**

* **Organise an event** in your school / community to raise awareness about FGM and the harm done to girls around the world – some in Britain.
* **Write a letter to your local newspaper** or **do a radio interview** to raise awareness of the problem and what people can do to stop it
* **Plan a campaign** to put pressure on the UK/ Welsh Assembly Government to create change.

You can write to your Member of Parliament or Assembly Member using the ' Write to Them ' website: [www.writetothem.com/](http://www.writetothem.com/)

**Sources:**

* World Vision: facts about FGM: <https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-facts>
* World Health Organisation (WHO) – Important facts about FGM: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>
* UK Government – FGM: the Facts: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-leaflet>
* Action Aid ( including some case studies) <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/violence-against-women-and-girls/female-genital-mutilation-what-is-fgm>
* Resources from Action Aid on FGM: <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/school-resources/resource/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-teaching-resources>

