

# ORCHID PROJECT

WORKING TOGETHER TO END  
FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING

## Knowledge Sharing Dialogues on FGM/C: Evidence-based Strategies for Success

### Rationale

The Global Research Agenda to Strengthen Evidence Generation and Utilisation to Accelerate the Elimination of FGM was produced by UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and Population Council-Kenya in 2022 (1), building on a systematic review of evidence on interventions to reduce the prevalence of FGM/C (2). The research agenda and review of evidence point to where progress has been made in developed evidence on strategies to address FGM/C, and where gaps still remain.

The Orchid Project is committed to enhancing access to evidence through publications, which makes it easy to apply to practical projects and to a variety of different contexts. The Orchid Project curates research through the FGM/C Research Initiative, translates it into relevant languages, and creates products to support the uptake and application of evidence.

The Orchid Project believes that a key gap in the curation and dissemination of research and evidence is in identifying evidence builders who can share their experiences, their research, and the evidence they have generated on their approaches that are specific to the cultural and contextual realities of various regions and communities.

The *Knowledge Sharing Dialogues on FGM/C: Evidence-based Strategies for Success* approach intends to support the closing of research gaps by exploring available evidence and insights from regional practitioners, activists, academics, and policymakers.

## Knowledge sharing dialogue process

This initiative brings together researchers, practitioners, and policy makers with experience of working to end FGM/C in a particular region through a series of online events and, where possible, culminating in a face-to-face knowledge exchange at the end of the process.

The overall aim is to generate a shared body of knowledge, drawing on both research and practical experience in relation to FGM/C by facilitating a series of virtual knowledge sharing fora in which researchers, practitioners and policy-makers will present, review and critique

- the evidence on the impact of FGM/C initiatives on the movement to abandon the practice
- the challenges and achievements of local actors in community-based work to end FGM/C
- the challenges and drivers in developing and implementing policies in relation to FGM/C and evidence of the impact of these policies.

This enhanced body of knowledge will be used to inform future programming, policy-making, and research on FGM/C in a particular region.

The methodology has been developed and piloted in dialogue around the topic of alternative rites of passage by the ARP working group (3) and by Orchid Project in a series of dialogues in the Horn of Africa (4,5,6).

## Steps of the process

1. **Establish an Advisory Board** of 8-12 people including researchers, practitioners, and policymakers with experience working to end FGM/C in a particular region. The group operates as a community of practices and meets every quarter throughout the project.
2. **Drafting of a briefing paper** written in collaboration with the advisory board which identifies the existing body of knowledge, the range of initiatives used in relation to FGM/C in the region, and the current status of policy-making on FGM/C in the region.
3. **Open dialogue fora**

Note: For each fora below, the primary focus of each forum is to engage in semi-structured dialogue. The stimulus material will be prepared in advance and briefly presented. Guidance will be provided to presenters, who will be encouraged to focus on stimulating dialogue and collaborative learning, rather than merely disseminating their research findings, programmes, or policies. The questions for the breakout dialogue sessions will be generated organically from the responses to the mini-presentations (see Van Bavel et al., in press). Breakout rooms will be used to maximise interaction. Interactive

tools e.g. Jamboard, shared learning documents, etc., are used to capture dialogue. Each forum lasts approximately 4 hours.

- a. **Forum 1a / Forum 1b (two virtual events linked) for researchers and academics.** 10-12 researcher-participants, responses to the mini-presentations.
  - b. **Forum 2a / Forum 2b (two virtual events linked) for practitioners, CBO, and NGO representatives.** 10-15 participants.
  - c. **Forum 3a / Forum 3b (two virtual events linked) for policymakers and government representatives.** to 8-12 participants, including representatives of health, education, gender, social development, child protection, and religious affairs.
4. **Development of a collaborative paper building on the initial briefing paper and dialogue fora** - this paper builds on the initial briefing paper to expand reference to available evidence, include local knowledge from community-based practitioners, and advocates, and to align with dialogue priorities presented by participants (4)
  5. **Practitioner resource:** This resource takes the content of the briefing paper and presents it in an accessible format for practitioners to apply to their work. Learning from the process in the Horn of Africa demonstrated that utilising the UNICEF six elements of abandonment as a framework helps create opportunities for the application of existing evidence through an easy-to-understand structure (5).
  6. **Research agenda**—As a result of the dialogues and review of evidence in the collaborative paper, key research questions and priorities can be identified, and a summary paper developed outlining these questions and their alignment with the Global Research Agenda (1, 6).
  7. **Dissemination and continued engagement-dissemination** events for the produced publications via online publication, webinar, and/or presentation at conferences on FGM/C provide an opportunity for uptake of the resources as well as invitation for continued engagement through a regional, multidisciplinary community of practice (COP). This COP is tasked with taking forward the research agenda and further dissemination of the collaborative paper and practitioner resource.

# Next steps for Orchid Project

- Conduct knowledge sharing dialogues in West Africa, primarily with participants from southern Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and The Gambia.
- Conduct knowledge sharing dialogues in the Middle East and North Africa, primarily with participants from Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen, Oman, Iran, Turkey, and Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Conduct knowledge-sharing dialogues in South and Southeast Asia, primarily with participants from the Asia Network.

## References

1. Matanda Dennis and Lwanga-Walgwe Esther (2022). A Research Agenda to Strengthen Evidence Generation and Utilisation to Accelerate the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and the Population Council, Kenya.
2. Matanda, Dennis, Melanie Croce-Galis, Jill Gay, and Karen Hardee. 2021. "Effectiveness of interventions designed to prevent or respond to female genital mutilation: A review of evidence." Nairobi: UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and Population Council Kenya.
3. Van Bavel, H, Newell-Jones K, Hughes L and Kaul A (in prep/press) [Inclusive Knowledge Production for a More Comprehensive Understanding of Alternative Rites of Passage and their role in FGM/C Abandonment](#)
4. Orchid Project (2025). Horn of Africa: Signs of Change. Available at : [https://www.fgmcri.org/media/uploads/Region%20Research%20and%20Resources/HoA/signs\\_of\\_change.pdf](https://www.fgmcri.org/media/uploads/Region%20Research%20and%20Resources/HoA/signs_of_change.pdf)
5. Orchid Project (2025). Horn of Africa: Accelerating Change. Available at: [https://www.fgmcri.org/media/uploads/Region%20Research%20and%20Resources/HoA/accelerating\\_change.pdf](https://www.fgmcri.org/media/uploads/Region%20Research%20and%20Resources/HoA/accelerating_change.pdf)
6. Orchid Project (2025). Horn of Africa: Evidence of Change. Available at: [https://www.fgmcri.org/media/uploads/Region%20Research%20and%20Resources/HoA/evidence\\_of\\_change.pdf](https://www.fgmcri.org/media/uploads/Region%20Research%20and%20Resources/HoA/evidence_of_change.pdf)

# About Orchid Project

Orchid Project is a UK- and Kenya-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) catalysing the global movement to end female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Its strategy for 2023 to 2028 focuses on three objectives:

1. to undertake research, generate evidence and curate knowledge to better equip those working to end FGM/C;
2. to facilitate capacity-strengthening of partners, through learning and knowledge-sharing, to improve programme designs and impacts for the movement to end FGM/C; and
3. to steer global and regional policies, actions and funding towards ending FGM/C.

Orchid Project's aim to expedite the building of a knowledge base for researchers and activists is being fulfilled in the **FGM/C Research Initiative**. [research@orchidproject.org](mailto:research@orchidproject.org), <https://www.fgmc.org/>

## About End FGM/C Network to Africa

The End FGM/C Network, Africa (African Network) is an African-led initiative providing a unified voice to influence decision-makers and drive coordinated advocacy to end Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) across Africa. We are a network of civil society organizations dedicated to creating a sustainable movement to end FGM/C across the continent, similar to regional networks in Asia, North America, and Europe. <https://endfgmafrica.org/>

*All cited texts in this project summary were accessed between January and March 2025, unless otherwise noted.*

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