

Towards Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation in Tanzania: Role of Community Leadership and Ownership

Jane Sempeho, Frida Ngalesoni, Serafina Mkuwa, Omari Kimbute, Single Benjamin

AMREF Health Africa in Tanzania

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C) remains to be one of the public health concerns in more than 29 countries across Africa and the Middle East, with Tanzania not being an exception. The study was conducted in 2 districts of the Tanga region (Kilindi and Handeni), which explored the local communities' perception of FGM and the strategies that will make the community show ownership and continue with the fight against FGM.

Methods: Qualitative research method was applied, and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with community and government leaders were held in six villages from both districts. There were Focus Group discussions (FGD) with mature males and females in the villages that participated. The obtained data in audio form were transcribed, translated, and analyzed using a thematic approach.

Results: There is a marked reduction in the FGM practices although community members confirm sporadic cases done secretly without public celebration as they used in the past. . The involvement of community leaders who are also custodians of the culture was mentioned by most of the participant. Educating the girls and women was also cited as one of the key factors in fighting FGM, while inter-tribal/race marriage with tribes that do not practice FGM was seen as a significant cultural turning point against FGM.

Conclusions: It is recommended that for the communities to own the fight against FGM, the focus should be on educating girls significantly increasing the number of those admitted in Secondary schools, fostering the collaboration of community leaders with government officials in the lower levels of administration and continuous sensitization of the communities through seminars, workshops, and public meetings.

