

USAID Policy on Female Genital Cutting (FGC)

Effective Date: 09/01/2000

I. Policy

By this guidance, USAID recognizes FGC as a harmful, traditional practice that violates the health and human rights of women and hinders development.

USAID opposes any practice of or support for Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and works toward the goal of total elimination of FGC. Under no circumstances does USAID support the practice of FGC by medical personnel.

As a highly sensitive and culturally specific problem, USAID believes that entire communities must be involved in efforts to eliminate FGC to create an enabling environment for change. This policy on FGC is designed to support the Agency Strategic Plan and other existing U.S. Government (USG) policies, in addition to supporting the international community's policies and efforts to reduce the incidence of FGC in the affected areas.

While taking into account the Agency's staffing, programmatic, and financial constraints, USAID will undertake the following actions to ensure that the issue of FGC is effectively integrated into and deliberately considered within Agency policy, programs, and strategies:

- Update the Agency strategy to guide future activities in the areas of health (especially reproductive health), human rights, education, gender, democracy, governance and other relevant areas;
- Support indigenous NGOs, women's groups, community leaders, and religious organizations to ensure that eradication activities are culturally appropriate and will reach all stakeholders, including men and boys;
- Acknowledge that, while USAID supports host country legislation against the practice of FGC, a successful elimination process is one that ends the demand for the practice. Therefore, USAID will continue to work in close partnership with indigenous groups at the community level, as well as with global and national policymakers, to promote broader education and dissemination of information on the harmful effects of FGC in order to reduce demand;
- Establish a regular liaison with other donors/activist groups to gather information and develop a framework for research and advocacy that will enhance collaboration and coordination of elimination efforts, share lessons learned, and stimulate public understanding of FGC as a health-damaging behavior and a violation of fundamental human rights.

USAID has established an Intra-Agency Working Group on FGC that has taken the lead in building capacity and commitment to address FGC eradication. Members represent Africa Bureau, Global Health, Office of Women in Development, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, and Bureau of Humanitarian Response. The Agency's approach is cross-sectoral, recognizing that FGC affects female reproductive health, the status of women, democracy and human rights.