

Should young people be involved in ending FGM and why or why not?

FGM is a violation of a female's rights and is considered child abuse. It is also a practice that passes from one generation to another; it is carried out mostly by women for the purpose of ensuring a girl's virginity, purity and marriage ability. So - to put it plainly, it is carried out by women, to make their daughters 'suitable' for men.

So how do we go about breaking this cycle of abuse? Prosecution is important - as is legislation, but ultimately the aim must be to stop FGM happening in the first place. That's where young people come in. It is vital for young people to get involved in issues like FGM because they are the future. This means that if they are educated and know about the harms that FGM causes, they will not only teach and protect their children which can ultimately eradicate this horrific practice within their own families, but they can also educate others and help them challenge the issues they want to change.

Young people are less restricted and less inhibited. They are (or should be) feisty. They are the people who can bring the right type of attention to demolish the practice of FGM in regards to raising awareness on social media, of making it 'cool' to stand up to abuse and lead change. They are the first in a generation of change. They can, and will end FGM if they are given a chance, the right information and a platform.

Giving young people opportunities and real empowerment enables them to achieve anything; it makes them feel proud and have a passionate drive to become advocates to help raise awareness of this and other violations of human rights. They can also develop vital skills (communication, confidence for public speaking) for their own personal growth and see first-hand the differences they're making in society. So the new generation - particularly the new generation of girls will be stronger, more vocal and more in control of their lives.

If girls are empowered - their families, their communities and the whole country benefit. I think it is extremely important for young people to be involved within the ending process of female genital mutilation (FGM).

By Najmo Mahdi