

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

AFRICA/FGM: UK – FGM Policies May Be Alienating Some African Diaspora Communities

By Nazia Parveen and Aamna Mohdin

WUNRN (18.02.2021) – <https://bit.ly/2ZHWzDu> – Safeguarding policies introduced to protect women and girls against female genital mutilation (FGM) are instead eroding trust and alienating African diaspora communities, a study has found.

Current FGM safeguarding measures are undermining the welfare and safety of the women and young girls they seek to protect,

with families feeling racially profiled, criminalised and stigmatised, according to the report.

The report, published by African women's rights organisation Forward and the University of Huddersfield, examines the lived experiences of FGM safeguarding policies and procedures in the UK.

Based on interviews with communities and professionals, including serving police officers, it found that health and social care workers, teachers and the police are concerned about the growing mistrust within their communities, and are sceptical of the need to single out FGM from other forms of child abuse.

Key findings included that safeguarding policies enacted since 2014 may have inadvertently done a great deal of harm to families, communities and young girls, potentially across the UK.

They increased the scrutiny, suspicion and stigmatisation experienced by families in many areas of their lives, from school, to healthcare, to overseas travel, the report said. These experiences had taken a significant toll on the mental health of parents, who said they had no intention of carrying out FGM on their daughters, and in some cases even campaigned against it.

Professionals participating in the study expressed equal concern over the ways in which the current policies had

burdened some families, and warned against a growing disconnect between them and the diaspora communities.

“The current FGM safeguarding policies are causing quite a lot of harm. Communities are feeling targeted and that they are racially profiled. There is a general sense of assumption that many of these African diaspora communities are having the intention of subjecting their daughters to FGM, even if in some of the cases that’s not actually true,” said Amy Abdelshahid, lead author and head of evidence at Forward.

She added there is an excessive focus on families from certain communities when they travel abroad. “Sometimes they may receive home visits from social services and police investigating them and interrogating before they are able to travel,” she said.

Asha, from the Somali community, who participated in the study, said: “When children are going on summer holiday, mothers face fear ... The assumption is that you are going on holiday and you are doing FGM to your daughter. It’s really the holiday that you were thinking about.’’

Abdelshahid said participants also spoke of having to endure repetitive and uncomfortable conversations about their own FGM and their intention of having it carried out on their daughters in healthcare settings.

“What we’re seeing is that in different touchpoints of their lives, they are getting that constant scrutiny by different

types of professionals across many areas,” she added.

In an interview with a police detective, she said singling out FGM as a particular issue could be stigmatising for a community, “whereas we should be looking at all forms of abuse within every community”.

Abdelshahid said: “We think the policies could end up being counterproductive.”

She pointed to a quote in the report by a social worker who warned communities are staying away from them. “And that is really alarming, because if community organisations are not able to do the awareness raising and grassroots work that has proven to be very effective in the past, then we’re risking undermining quite a lot of fundamental and essential work.”

The report makes a series of recommendations to address FGM in a more compassionate and inclusive way, including the introduction of more holistic training for professionals, re-examining the current policies and a focus on policies that recognise the role of communities in eliminating FGM.

However, the feminist campaigner Nimco Ali – who has been a key figure in the global fight to end FGM – praised the work being carried out by the government, stating that the practice would only be eradicated via legislation and state-level involvement.

Ali, who is a survivor of FGM and was appointed by the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, as an independent adviser to help draw up a strategy to tackle violence against women and girls, said: “When I was growing up it was all about trying to work with communities – which is good – but FGM is an organised crime. The idea that we need to return to talking and negotiating with communities is a non-starter.

“I absolutely understand [the need] for the state to take control of this issue, and it is the reason FGM was added to the Children’s Act. We are going to ask uncomfortable questions. Why are we offended that these questions are being asked? We need these safety nets.”

Victoria Atkins, the Safeguarding Minister, said: “Female genital mutilation is a crime. It causes extreme and lifelong physical and psychological suffering to women and girls and we will not tolerate this child abuse taking place in our country.

“The government introduced tough safeguarding laws which compel certain professionals to report if they have encountered a potential child victim of female genital mutilation, regardless of what community they are from.”

Photo credits: Pacific Press/LightRocket via Getty Images

Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-

content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line **1266**

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1266**

Notice: Undefined index: **et_footer_layout** in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1267**

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1267**

Notice: Undefined index: **et_template** in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1268**