



MINISTÉRIO DOS NEGÓCIOS ESTRANGEIROS
Direção-Geral de Política Externa

**Progress report on the implementation of
resolution “Intensifying global efforts for the
elimination of female Genital mutilation:
report of the Secretary-General”**

Input from Portugal

Preventing and addressing FGM can be challenging due to several factors, like the lack of awareness, the cultural sensitivity and the deeply rooted in cultural and traditional practices. Addressing FGM requires a delicate balance between respecting cultural diversity and protecting the human rights and well-being of girls and women. Also, the migration and mobility in migration from countries where FGM is prevalent, and the stigma and secrecy that which surround them difficults to gathering accurate data and identifying victims.

In Portugal, measures to combat and prevent FGM began in 2009, with the approval of the first national action plan to prevent and eliminate FGM. They are currently part of the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 "Portugal + Igualdade", specifically in the Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (PAVMD) , whose instrument for the four-year period 2023/2026 was approved on August 14 (2023).

The Electronic Health Record - Professional Area is a web platform that allows the registration and sharing of information between the various institutions of the National Health Service. It was created in 2012 by the Shared Services of the Ministry of Health.

We have been promoting greater dissemination of this registration system, crucial for epidemiological surveillance of the violence phenomenon and good practices support.

For clinical data on female genital mutilation (FGM), an individual tab was created where it is possible to record, for each woman submitted to FGM, the following variables:

current age, registration date, institution where the registration is introduced, type of mutilation (type 1; 2; 3; 4) , age and country where the mutilation was performed, whether it was performed during the stay in Portugal (yes/no), scope in which the woman was observed (consultation; hospitalization; pregnancy; puerperium), whether the women were informed of the legal framework (yes/no), if and what are the associated complications (uro-gynecological; sexual; obstetric; psychological).



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In 2023, 223 records of FGM were made on the platform, with an increase of 14,84% compared to the previous year.

There is a predominance of cases carried out in Guinea-Bissau (67.4%) and Guinea Conakry (26.5%). Others such as Senegal (3.1%), Gambia (1.3%). Eritrea, Central Africa Republic, Sierra Leone, and Somalia each registered 0.4%.



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This aspect reinforces the information already known, considering the predominance of immigrant communities residing in Portugal and the estimated prevalence of FGM in these countries. From 2014 until 2023, a total of 1076 cases have been registered in Portugal.

Despite the above, there is an effort to raise awareness of this harmful traditional practice among the general population and among migrant communities where the prevalence of the practice is high.

The National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and Protection of Children and Young Persons has been registering and intervening in the cases of risk of FGM in children and young persons, as well as in situations in which the mutilation has taken place outside of Portugal, but the child is a resident or has Portuguese nationality.

In Portugal, the following measures to eliminate and prevent FGM were taken:

(i) Since 2016, three national campaigns on preventing and combating FGM (online campaign and brochure) have been launched to raise awareness among the public and technical professionals working in the field, with the aim of deconstructing myths associated with the practice, as well as some of the main warning signs to look out for. The latest campaign was launched on February 6, 2024, on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

There are Airport campaigns to prevent FGM carried out at the three national airports throughout the summer school holiday period, raising awareness of the consequences of the practice and providing information on support resources.

(ii) Also the publication of a Model of signage and prevention of victims in Portugal and when traveling to countries with FGM practice and early, child and forced marriages. The model is intended for all entities that contact with communities affected by the practice of FGM or child, early and forced marriages, seeking to list the currently existing mechanisms to protect children and young/minors from the risk of leaving national territory to be subjected to said traditional harmful practices. Border authorities can therefore make the appropriate referral of cases found in a border environment.



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(iii) In 2021, a review and update, by the General Directorate of Health, of the guidelines addressed to health professionals on preventing and combating FGM, was made.

(iv) Support was reinforced (from 60.000€ to 80.000€) to NGO's representing communities at risk of FGM for the development of projects in territories with the highest prevalence of FGM.

As of December 2023, this technical and financial support provided to entities working in the field of preventing and combating harmful traditional practices (HTPs), namely FGM, has started supporting eleven projects aimed at preventing FGM. This support, worth a total of 80,000 euros, is financed through social gaming funds managed directly by the equality authority.

(v) Creation of Support Offices for Victims of Domestic Violence and/or Harmful Traditional Practices in the three National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants. These Support Offices aim to provide an integrated and proximity response through specialized service, also guaranteeing information and personalized guidance to migrants and descendants in Portugal.

(vi) The project "Healthy Practices- End Female Genital Mutilation", is definitively inscribed the prevention and fight against FGM in national and local health policies. Currently there are 10 territories with the highest prevalence of FGM intervened by the Project (Metropolitan area of Lisbon, which corresponds to 18 municipalities). In each territory there are focal points and support teams made up of health professionals and local action plans to prevent and combat FGM, in close coordination with NGO's representing the affected communities.

Until the end of 2023, the Healthy Practices - Ending Female Genital Mutilation project guaranteed work anchored in the health structures/services closest to the population - Public Health Units (CIG protocol, ACM and the Lisbon and Tagus Valley Regional Health Administration) in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

The "healthy practices" project working group is currently working on the design of a new protocol, now for a nationwide intervention program, initially extending to the regions of Porto and Coimbra.

The project has worked on three areas of action, namely integration into public policy instruments, training for professionals and community intervention. At a territorial level, the prevention and fight against FGM was introduced into Municipal Plans in thematic areas such as health, equality, violence, or migrants.

(vii) In 2023, 74 training actions were carried out in the area of health. 180 professionals were trained (6 editions of the Postgraduate course in "Sexual and Reproductive Health: Female Genital Mutilation", the last of which took place in 2022 with 30 professionals trained).



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In terms of community intervention, 32 women/children at risk of FGM were identified by hospitals and health centres. Also, by the end of 2023, 275 people (538M/340H) had taken part in 9 community information meetings on FGM.

(viii) Postgraduate training on FGM for health professionals has been running since 2012. This is the result of a protocol between the Commission for Gender Equality, the National School of Public Health, and the Directorate-General for Health. A new edition will begin in September 2024.

(ix) Regarding the training of judges and prosecutors, the Center for Judicial Studies (CEJ) provides both initial and life-long training on various topics of fundamental rights and constitutional law, in the form of courses, workshops or seminars, which include DV, gender-based violence and FGM.

(x) The IAPHP project is an initiative under the European Commission's CERV-2022-DAPHNE programme. Started in March 2023, this two-year project is led by the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu (IPV), in Portugal, and also includes in Portugal the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), the Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV), and Community Impact (C-Impact), involves three more partners from three countries: the PRAKSIS Association of Greece, Fondazione Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità (ISMU) from Italy, and Victim Support Europe (VSE) from Belgium.

This important project aims to provide training in intercultural mediation focused on the prevention of harmful traditional practices (HTP). Within the scope of this project, a Toolkit has already been published, and is designed to equip frontline professionals with the necessary resources to prevent, identify and respond to HTPs affecting migrant and refugee women. It is a resource that offers guidance and support to professionals working in the education, health, social services and justice sectors.

The PDF version of the e-book was also the basis for the development of a set of digital tools, on a platform that contains additional resources such as educational videos, other toolkits, practical recommendations, and case studies. The IAPHP Toolkit is freely accessible to all professionals and to the general public. It is hoped that this resource will increase awareness, empowerment and confidence among professionals working to combat HTPs.



IAPHP-Toolkit_v2.3.
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Training sessions (under construction) will also be held for frontline professionals. The training modules cover several essential topics to address HTPs and promote effective intercultural mediation. These include understanding cultural nuances and barriers,



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prevention methodologies, power dynamics, legal support tailored to victims' needs, and identifying procedures to address HTPs affecting these women. In parallel with the training of professionals, IAPHP will organize awareness-raising sessions (under construction) for migrant and refugee women. These sessions aim to empower women with skills that include recognizing early signs of possible aggression, understanding the grievance process, rights, procedures, and institutions relevant to intervention, and knowing how to activate support mechanisms.

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In what concerns the elimination of **child, early and forced marriages (CEFM)**, in February 2021, Portugal established the first working group on the prevention of CEFM, composed by several members from key sectors, such as attorney general's office, criminal police, immigration and borders service, commission for the promotion of the rights and the protection of children and young people, UNICEF Portugal, NGO's that work with domestic violence, sexual assault and human traffic victims, etc .

The working group created a repository with documentation, articles, theses, news, national and international reports and legislation, reviewed literature, developed an inquiry model to consult those who work in the field and key sectors, worked on a proposal to standardize the concepts of "child, early and forced marriage" and launched an awareness campaign to public service professionals and other professionals with intervention on the field.

A set of recommendations were produced by the working group. The purpose is to develop intensive training based on the know-how and recommendations that are produced in this context. This training complements the currently ongoing major training program that is being organized by the National Institute of Administration around prevention and elimination of violence against women and domestic violence, which

¹ https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/RCM-92_2023-de-14.08.pdf



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implements the “Common training plan on violence against women and domestic violence” produced in 2020.

In a first stage, this plan will cover more than 12.000 trainees from five sectors (home affairs; justice; education; labour, solidarity and social security; and health) as well as from the National Support Network for Domestic Violence Victims, and magistrates (regarding the latter, it will initially cover more than 80 professionals across the country).

In 2022, the Secretary of State for Citizenship and Equality created an emergency reception home for victims of CEFM with 10 places.