

REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL

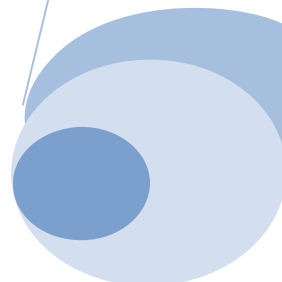
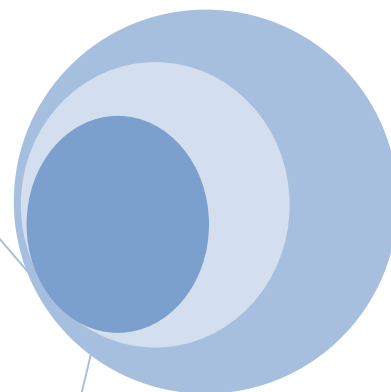
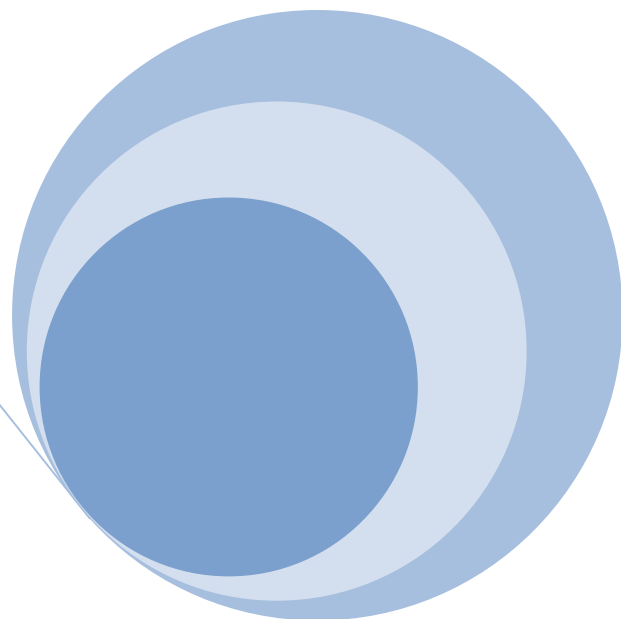
**Minister of the Family, National Solidarity, and
Feminine Entrepreneurship**

**EVALUATION OF THE
NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR
THE ABANDONMENT OF THE
PRACTICE OF FEMALE GENITAL
MUTILATION**

**With technical support from Mme.
Astou DIOP-DIAGNE, International consultant in
Planning, Gender and Development**

SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. THE PROBLEM

In Senegal, female genital cutting (FGM/C) is a *social convention* to which communities must conform even though the practice is extremely damaging to health and constitutes a flagrant violation of the rights of women and young girls. However, thanks to information campaigns, educational programs, and advocacy work in favor of FGM/C abandonment, positive progress has occurred leading to a *transformation of this convention* in favor of total abandonment of the practice. The DHS IV, Senegal 2005, corroborates this assertion, noting a *decline in the proportion of circumcised women in older generations compared with more recent generations*. From 31% in the 45-59 year old group, the proportion has dropped to 25% in the 15-19 year old group.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN 2001 -2005

The abandonment of FGM/C constitutes a major objective of the Government of Senegal. The government has consistently expressed its political will to improve the health and the status of women and children by ratifying all international instruments which call on governments to work towards the abandonment of FGM/C. The elaboration of the 2001-2005 Action Plan for the Total Abandonment of FGM/C and the 2007 adoption of the Regional Action Plan to accelerate the elimination of FGM/C have concretized this commitment.

Several NGOs, associations, and networks intervene alongside the government to promote the total abandonment of FGM/C. Among these are: COSEPRAT, TOSTAN, *Enda Action in Casamance*, branch of *ENDA SYNFEV*, the Network of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, the Network of Journalists on Population and Development, the Network of Traditional Communicators, and the Senegalese Association for Family Well-Being (ASBEF). To varying degrees, they benefit from technical and financial support from partners from the international community (UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, UNIFEM, GTZ and other Foundations) for the implementation of their programs.

3. RESULTS OF THE ACTION PLAN

To accelerate the abandonment of FGM/C in Senegal, the 2001-2005 Action Plan had 4 major objectives as follows:

- (i) Contribute to improving general knowledge on FGM/C and the rights of women and girls.
- (ii) Integrate lessons on FGM/C into formal and non-formal education programs.
- (iii) Improve the care available to women who have undergone FGM/C and the enforcement of the law against FGM/C across Senegal.
- (iv) Coordinate all interventions for the abandonment of FGM/C at all levels.

Components of the Action Plan included research, education, awareness-raising, and advocacy activities developed by different groups. The results obtained in terms of output and effects are as follows:

3.1. Results of the National Action Plan

The programs developed during the implementation of the Action Plan led to significant results in the areas of “communication and social mobilization” and “non-formal education”, as well as positive impact on behaviors and attitudes in communities that are now in favor of respect for the rights of women, abandoning FGM/C, and improving the social status and leadership role of women.

➤ *Results in the Area of Research*

Several studies were conducted during the implementation of the Action Plan: *studies on the situation of FGM/C in baseline communities; investigations of knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to FGM/C in*

communities and in educational structures; *operational studies on varied aspects of FGM/C and evaluations of the impact of different programs.*

Despite the importance of these studies, the objective of increasing knowledge on FGM/C in Senegal was only partially attained. Knowledge of FGM/C was improved to some degree, but not uniformly, due to uneven coverage of the areas by different actors (with concentration in the south) and a difference in the extent of their interventions in the zones studied. Also, there were fairly important pockets of resistance noted in the North and in the department of Velingara, leading to certain actors experiencing difficulties in developing their programs with local support.

➤ ***Results in the Area of Training***

During the implementation of the Action Plan, activities were undertaken to integrate the subject of FGM/C in (i) the formal education system, including training programs for teachers and health professionals and in (ii) non-formal education programs.

However, the objective of integrating the subject of FGM/C into the formal education system and into training programs for health professionals has not been achieved.

Only the *non-formal education component for training community participants has been achieved* through the development of training modules and a community based education program, developed by NGOs. Specifically, **Tostan** conceived and developed a comprehensive program integrating human rights, health and literacy. *In the area of formal education, FAWE* developed and experimented a capacity building strategy for certain key people in elementary and secondary schools, but the actual integration of FGM/C and human rights sessions into the formal school curriculum at different levels of the educational system has yet to take place.

As for health workers, with the exception of the initiatives of the *ASBEF and the ENDSS*, which have introduced themes related to FGM/C in their training of health personnel, the integration of FGM/C in the curriculum of training schools for health professionals is not yet widespread. The current availability of the WHO's curriculum on FGM/C as well as the inclusion of FGM/C in the current protocol for reproductive health services undoubtedly constitute important elements for the elaboration of a training module on FGM/C.

➤ ***Results in the Area of Awareness Raising***

During the implementation of the Action Plan, numerous activities of information, awareness raising, mobilization, and advocacy were undertaken for the abandonment of FGM/C.

Taking into account all of these activities, it is possible to say that the objective of sensitizing and mobilizing communities in favor of the recognition and defense of the rights of women and young girls has been attained.

The awareness raising and social mobilization activities have led to the start of a large debate about FGM/C and have increased the knowledge of populations on the issue, as well as intensified their commitment to the abandonment of excision. The throwing down of knives and public declarations of abandonment of FGM/C are multiplying. By 2007, 3,307 villages had declared an end to the practice.

➤ ***Empowerment and capacity building activities led by the government and NGOs:***

After the passing of the law penalizing FGM/C and the elaboration of an Action Plan to work towards the definitive abandonment of FGM/C in Senegal by 2015, a structure of implementation and coordination of the activities of the Action Plan as well as a network regrouping the NGOs intervening in the area of FGM/C abandonment were also planned.

This objective, which targeted the reinforcement of capacities of the Government and NGOs in the planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan, has not been attained.

Several reasons have been noted to explain this situation:

- The institutional instability of the Ministry for the Family, which is responsible for the implementation of the Action Plan.
- The lack of a National Committee of coordination.
- The lack of a Network of NGOs organized for the abandonment of FGM/C.
- The absence of management tools (Operational plans) and of monitoring and evaluation tools (Monitoring and evaluation plan).
- The unequal mobilization of resources by participating organizations.

3.2. Effects of the accomplishments of the Action Plan

The results in terms of effects relate mainly to the social and environmental changes at the heart of the communities.

↪ *Effective changes in terms of socio-cultural behaviors*

In the areas where the NGO programs were implemented, the attitudes and behaviors of populations have evolved positively:

- ✓ Men and women denounce discrimination, violence, and FGM/C in ever-increasing numbers.
- ✓ Women have an improved understanding of their human rights to health, education, leadership, water, and a healthy environment. They have also acquired an awareness that they must unite to claim and defend their rights.
- ✓ Evolution in the social conventions that founded the practice of FGM/C: With collective momentum, communities mobilize and decide to adopt a new social convention vis-à-vis FGM/C. They organize public declaration ceremonies where communities decide to turn in knives and publicly abandon the practice of FGM/C.
- ✓ Through family and social networks, awareness raising activities are spread to villages that did not benefit from the community education program, and the decisions to abandon FGM/C and other harmful practices are part of a harmonized and consensual process of change of social conventions, ensuring a better social concordance between villages.
- ✓ Meanwhile, men and women are aware that for the decisions to abandon to be sustained, they must be upheld by mechanisms such as the application of the law and the reconversion of cutters (according to men), and by the continuous awareness raising activities on the dangers of excision and the reinforcement of dialogue at the heart of the community (according to women).

↪ *Increased leadership of women in zones where the Action Plan has been implemented.*

The evaluation team has noted real progress in the improvement of social positions and leadership of women.

- Women have acquired an awareness that they must unite to claim and defend their rights. Those who benefited from the Tostan program say that thanks to the knowledge acquired they are now able to participate alongside men to make decisions about the socio-economic development of their communities.
- They have gained confidence in themselves and take initiatives to respond to their needs. They organize in associations or groups and are members of the Community Management Committees and ASCs where they occupy posts of responsibility.
- They noted their active presence in awareness raising teams to lead informational and monitoring activities in their villages as well as those of neighboring communities, as well as the initiatives they have taken to develop income generating activities in order to respond to their needs and contribute to the improvement of living conditions in the community.
- The women who were encountered on site demonstrated real capacities to analyze their situation, explain the progress made thanks to Tostan's education program, and to indicate the paths that they have taken to maintain their new skills and continue to move forward. In fact, during the focus groups, many expressed their determination to never again move backwards.

↪ *Real commitment of the populations for the defense of their rights and development of their communities.*

- The intervention strategies of the Tostan program have favored the involvement of communities which have manifested a real motivation to pursue their information, awareness-raising, and mobilization activities, even after the departure of Tostan.

- The villages are organized in Community Management Committees (CMC), created as part of the Tostan program. Recognized as agents of change by the populations, the members of the CMCs have taken the lead and are responsible for organizing coordination and monitoring activities to ensure the lasting of knowledge and development acquired.
- Awareness raising teams composed of teenagers, women leaders, and local officials are created to discuss themes of the Tostan program modules and carry out awareness raising activities in the neighboring villages on the importance of ending FGM/C and to prepare public declarations for collective abandonment.
- The evaluation team has also noted that the commitment of communities for the abandonment of FGM/C has reinforced an awareness that they must take charge of the development of their communities. This commitment is materialized by the creation of ASCs and the collective development initiatives centered on the protection of rights of women and children, the cleaning activities in the villages (once a week) and the undertaking of community projects.
- The active involvement of public authorities on issues related to human rights and FGM/C must also be noted. This is demonstrated by the inclusion of these issues in development policies and strategies.

↳ ***Recognition of the Tostan strategy as a pertinent approach in favor of the promotion and defense of the rights of women.***

- The evaluation demonstrated the pertinence of an integrated community education approach and social mobilization, as well as the important impact that it has had on the abandonment of FGM/C in several regions of Senegal.
- The evaluation also revealed that Tostan is currently the only NGO to intervene in the field in a significant way with an important potential and technical capacity. Tostan has developed a comprehensive community education package founded on a human rights approach. Tostan has equally built a regional training center in Thiès.
- The different categories of collaborators (Government, Parents Associations, NGOs, communities) all agree on the results obtained in this area and recognize that these results are in large part due to Tostan's strategy, which uses the most successful approach in bringing up cultural questions and influencing changes in African social norms.
- The communities and collaborating organizations that the team interviewed suggested that the Government take into account this fact and that it capitalize on the successes of Tostan by adopting its program as a national program to accelerate the abandonment of FGM/C in Senegal.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Analysis of the situation of FGM/C and the implementation of the Action Plan have allowed us to learn the following:

- ✓ There are still pockets of resistance, linked to religion, influenced by immigrants, and to the persistence of certain detractors especially in the North and in the department of Vélingara.
- ✓ The Government, in addition to its will to accelerate the definitive abandonment of FGM/C, must increasingly take charge of the implementation of the Action Plan by putting in place the institutional mechanisms that will permit it to play its roles of advocacy, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.
- ✓ The unequal access to financing from donor partners and the discontinuity of financing are major constraints for NGOs, which have a hard time leading intensive and monitored activities.
- ✓ The passing of a law and abandonment declarations alone are not sufficient to definitively dissuade populations from ending the practice of FGM/C.
- ✓ The inclusion of communities by giving them the responsibility for communal structures can ensure ownership and the continuation of awareness raising and training activities.
- ✓ Public declarations for abandonment have the double effect of rendering the actions of renouncing FGM/C visible as well as easing the passing of the torch as they encourage neighboring communities to become involved and also commit to abandoning FGM/C.
- ✓ Improvement of socio-economic conditions of populations can help in changing behaviors and attitudes towards abandoning FGM/C.

5. THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

To make the progress lasting and sustainable, and to ensure the generalization of the process of FGM/C abandonment, several challenges have been identified:

▪ *The challenge of sustainability*

If the interventions ending with the abandonment of FGM/C are to lead to lasting changes, the durability of the changes require a sustained commitment of all participants in the community as well as long term financing.

▪ *The challenge of coordination and monitoring*

Facing the institutional deficit noted during the implementation of the Action Plan and in addition to the strong will to accelerate the definitive abandonment of FGM/C, the Government must increasingly appropriate the implementation of the Action Plan by putting in place the institutional mechanisms that will allow it to fully play its roles of impulsion, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation.

▪ *The challenge of partnership between all participants in the Action Plan*

The lack of synergy between participants has been one of the weak points of the Action Plan. The Plan would have undoubtedly performed better if the governmental and non-governmental participants had worked together to develop their programs for the abandonment of FGM/C. A real collaboration between all participating parties would have permitted for a more efficient mobilization of funds, a better coverage of zones where FGM/C is prevalent, a harmonization of approaches and tools used and especially a diversification of personnel to respond to the socio-economic needs of the communities, whose satisfaction is considered to be determinant in the durability of the socio-cultural changes.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To meet these challenges and ensure the acceleration of the abandonment of FGM/C by 2015, the following measures must be taken:

Measures to be taken by the State:

- Create, by ministerial decree, framework for the implementation of the Action Plan: the National Coordination Committee as well as regional and departmental committees.
- Update the Action Plan with operations plans and monitoring and evaluation plans.
- Make the Tostan program a national program that will be available and accessible to all other participants and designate Tostan as the organization which will reinforce the capacities of other partners.
- Include a line in the national budget for the financing of the Action Plan's activities.
- Encourage authorities to support the definitive abandonment of FGM/C by giving the next "Head of State's Grand Prize for the promotion of women" the theme of FGM/C abandonment.

Measures to be taken by other partners

- Support the simplifying of the Action Plan, the law against violence against women, and good behaviors in terms of interventions in favor of the abandonment of FGM/C.
- Support the functioning of the coordination frameworks of the Action Plan, the elaboration of a plan for monitoring and evaluation of the Action Plan, and the creation of a database on FGM/C.
- Mobilize as many resources as possible in favor of the abandonment of FGM/C.

Measures to be taken by civil society

- Put into place the network of NGOs and other intervening associations to reinvigorate and increase the efficacy of their interventions with a concerted synergy.
- Encourage collaboration between the NGOs and associations that intervene in the same zones for an increased synergy of interventions and efficient use of available resources.
- Reinforce the implication of the different participants in the process of implementation of the Action Plan.
- Develop a of mobilization of resources strategy for the execution of the Action Plan.

