



# Evaluating the Impact of Sensitisation Workshops on Religious Leaders' Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Somaliland: A Case Study from Côte d'Ivoire

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## Abstract

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) remains a persistent practice in many settings, often sustained by socio-cultural and religious norms. Religious leaders hold considerable influence in shaping these norms. This case study explores an intervention targeting these leaders in a specific region. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of a sensitisation workshop on religious leaders' knowledge and attitudes towards FGM/C in Somaliland, Côte d'Ivoire. Its primary objective was to measure changes in their understanding of the health consequences and their stance on the practice following the intervention. A qualitative case study design was employed. A purposive sample of 24 religious leaders from Somaliland participated in a two-day sensitisation workshop. Data were collected using pre- and post-workshop questionnaires and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was applied to identify changes in knowledge and attitudes. Post-workshop analysis indicated a discernible shift in participants' perspectives. Many leaders demonstrated a clearer understanding of the adverse health outcomes associated with FGM/C. A central theme was the re-framing of FGM/C as a harmful cultural practice without foundation in core religious doctrine, representing a move away from prior justifications. Targeted sensitisation workshops can improve religious leaders' knowledge and foster attitude change against FGM/C. Engaging these influential figures is a pertinent step towards altering the social norms that perpetuate the practice. FGM/C eradication programmes should integrate structured engagement with religious leaders. Scaling up such workshops

and providing ongoing support would enable leaders to advocate within their communities. Monitoring the long-term impact on community practices is recommended. Female genital mutilation, cutting, FGM/C, religious leaders, sensitisation, workshop, knowledge, attitudes, Somaliland, case study. This case study provides practical evidence on the potential of faith-based engagement to shift discourse on FGM/C, contributing to the literature on normative change strategies within public health.

**Keywords:** *Female genital mutilation/cutting, Somaliland, religious leadership, health education, attitudinal change, West Africa*

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