

Project Adkeyso: Addressing Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting in Somaliland

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Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C) is the procedure of intentionally causing injury and altering the vulva of a young girl or woman for non-medical reasons¹. There are four types of FGM/C however, type III or infibulation, remains the most dangerous because the procedure consists of the narrowing of the vaginal opening by creating a seal with the labia majora through stitching². With infibulation, there will be a need for further surgeries or re-infibulation, which requires reopening of the stitches covering the vagina to allow for intercourse or childbirth³. FGM/C increases susceptibility to negative health complications like excessive bleeding, infections, shock, and death⁴. Long term effects of FGM/C include pain during intercourse, increased risk of childbirth complications, and PTSD⁵.

Somaliland, a zone in northern Somalia, has one of the highest prevalence rates of FGM/C in the world, at 98% and it affects all women and girls regardless of socioeconomic and educational background and location⁶. Studies indicate that girls are cut between the ages of 8 and 10.⁷ There are a few organizations that work towards ending FGM/C in Somaliland however, there is a lack of open communication between programs allowing for gaps in overall progress.

Project Adkeyso aims to decrease the prevalence of FGM in Somaliland and to increase awareness of health risks associated with FGM. The objectives include reducing FGM through

¹ Female genital mutilation. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>.

² *ibid*

³ Country Profile: FGM in Somalia and Somaliland. (2019). *28TooMany*, 1–136. Retrieved from [https://www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Country Research and Resources/SomaliaSomaliland/country_profile_somalia_and_somaliland_v1_\(march_2019\).pdf](https://www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Country%20Research%20and%20Resources/SomaliaSomaliland/country_profile_somalia_and_somaliland_v1_(march_2019).pdf)

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

educational and therapy-based programs and increasing knowledge about FGM-related health risks and gender-based violence. Project Adkeyso requests \$357,812 for a whole year from January 5, 2021, to January 4, 2022. Project Adkeyso will carry out three program components which include Mommy & Me: counseling session between midwives, psychologists, mothers, and their daughter will allow for open and transparent conversations, Group couple counseling between newlywed and/or expecting couples with an anti-FGM Imam to reinforce that FGM/C is not an Islamic obligation, and Big Walashaa-Little Walashaa which is a peer-mentoring program that fosters positive relationships with girls in the community and learns about FGM, GBV, and human rights

Success for Adkeyso would look like transparent dialogues about FGM in all sectors. Men will be more aware of their role in the matter and women will thus be able to make safer choices regarding their decisions with their bodies and their daughters' bodies. In order to know that Adkeyso is being successful in carrying out its goals and objectives, there will be three qualitative interviews given to the participants, one in the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the year to monitor progress.

Adkeyso will be a step in the right direction towards the eradication of FGM. Due to the nature of the problem, it is important to establish positive and healthy relationships between the staff and the community. After evaluation, the program will be able to expand in the future and create a ripple effect. The program will be sustainable because of the utilization of community members and inclusion in important communal decisions. Through the collaboration of key stakeholders like Imams and other programs that have a strong following in Somalia, Adkeyso will be able to bridge discrepancies between the community and find the best way to be culturally respectful but still make a positive change.