ITALY NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO PREVENT AND ELIMINATE FGM

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Premise

Female immigration is growing constantly here in Italy. Human beings throughout history have always migrated from one region to another, primarily for trade or environmental reasons but in recent times for economical motives and to seek refuge from war or famine. Women represent an important percentage of this population; we are seeing more and more women taking this journey alone. When they arrive in the new country they discover a wide range of problems linked with adapting to the new culture making life harder, especially where their maternal and family roles are changed radically in their daily lives. Coming from a different culture they are confronted with a challenge; to not forget their origins and their culture, but at the same time they must adapt to this new social and cultural environment, thus calling into play their experience. These women risk impoverishing themselves, their role and identity values without finding a solid replacement.

The initial data showing the growth of female immigrants in Italy is in itself a positive sign, showing that generally, families are settling and that the process of migration in Italy is becoming a stable and lasting phenomenon.

It would be limiting to think that immigrant women as well as men come here just for work reasons, pushing them into stereotypical roles. It should be noted that just less than half of female immigration is due to reasons of work, while the remaining part has a stabilization effect on immigrant families in the host country.

Having said that, there is an urgent need to adjust the immigration laws to offer those who arrive in the country a clearly defined civil cohabitation agreement that respects the dignity of freedom and legitimate aspirations, highlighting the road to full integration and citizenship with commonly agreed rules, including
rules that make it clear for the first time in Italy, that in our territory the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) of any kind, much less for a ritual purpose, is illegal and will be punished in the most severe way.

All forms of FGM are considered violent acts toward the female body. A key issue for the African women's movement was to understand what factors are crucial to the perpetuation of the practice, or what the reasons are that encourage families to practice this traditional act on their daughters, even in countries where they emigrate.

Now women's associations that oppose the phenomenon have for some time, with major efforts, focused on the causes of FGM which are based on beliefs of health, under which FGM leads to a higher state of purity and cleanliness among women, could even improve the fertility of the couple. In addition to a better definition of feminine identity, with some populations, FGM contributes to their socio-economic significance, to impose male domination of the woman, being considered a guarantee of loyalty and a commitment to chastity of the women offered to the man. As the fundamental subject of this social act, requiring that the practice FGM is performed, the man is considered to be a primary perpetrator of the phenomenon, although this role is often undermined in practice.

We must also avoid creating cultural stereotypes due to ignorance or prejudice. Even in the case of FGM it is necessary to remember that for health, reproduction, sexuality and pleasure, concepts are understood differently in different cultural realities that we summarily call “African”.

1.2 Female immigration in Italy

Women currently represent nearly half the migrant population worldwide, reaching numerical proportions so far reached only by men. The feminisation of the migration processes is however at times and in different ways dependant on the country or location from where you look. In Central European countries (France, Germany and United Kingdom) most of the female immigrants came to reunite with their family some time after the male migration. In southern European countries (Spain, Portugal, Italy), however a considerable
number of women migrated entirely autonomously. Regarding Italy, statistical research on immigration shows the arrival of female immigrants begins around the mid 1960s.

The leaders of what we might call the first wave of female immigration were Filipino, Eritrean and Cape Verdean women. These first arrivals spent almost all their time inside the home, engaged in the work of domestic staff and carers of children and the elderly.

In the late 80s and early 90s the significance of female immigration grows again with respect to Italy giving rise to the second phase of women. In this period along with a considerable number of single women from different countries of central-southern America and Eastern Europe many women arrive with their families. In this second phase the women are predominantly from families fleeing firstly from Somalia, then the former Yugoslavia and finally Albania, escaping war or serious conflict.

During the 1990s the third phase consisted of women, mainly wives, who came for family reunification, from North African countries like Morocco as well as the areas most affected by migration, such as Albania, China and to a lesser extent by some countries of Latin America and Africa. Alongside these, single female workers continue to emigrate from Africa and Latin American countries, and especially from Eastern Europe.

The women, like men, are more present in areas of the centre-north of the country, and some of these areas the number of women is close to or even exceeds the male percentage as for example in Tuscany.

### 1.3 FGM in Italy: Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Number of women</th>
<th>Number of men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>1217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>2895</td>
<td>5648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>2851</td>
<td>3398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>8420</td>
<td>7217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibuti</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>18876</td>
<td>46791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>4957</td>
<td>4015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>4175</td>
<td>2481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>15811</td>
<td>20729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>1247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>21877</td>
<td>15856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep. Central Africa</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep. of Congo</td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>1508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>10873</td>
<td>48984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>2806</td>
<td>3608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>1321</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>413</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>961</td>
<td>1734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>102240</strong></td>
<td><strong>169796</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Istat [www.demoistat.it](http://www.demoistat.it) at 31st December 2007

These datas report the number of immigrants (male and female) that have residence in the italian territory and having regular documents (sejour permit). Here are reported the number of people coming from countries where FGM are practiced. These datas do not take into account immigrants with no regular documents.

For the moment we are unsure on the exact numbers of daughters from the countries that practice FGM. We hope to obtain more information on this shortly.

**Considerations:**

- It’s clear that in Italy the migrant population is still predominantly male.
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- The nationality of the women from countries that practice FGM above 2000 units are: Somalian, Senegalese, Nigerian, Ghanese, Ethiopians, Eritrean, Egyptian, Ivorians, Cameroonian and Burkinabe (Burkina Faso).
- The female immigrant population is higher than the male immigrant population for the following countries: Tanzania, Sudan, Nigeria, Niger, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Ivory Coast.
- These figures refer to the population officially resident in the Italian territory, therefore we believe that data on population actually present in the Italian territory is far higher.
- The phenomenon of FGM affects a significant number of women and not an insignificant number of girls (around fifty, regarding the three main countries where infibulation is commonly practiced; Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia). Many women who have undergone FGM have made their daughters undergo the same procedure, in some cases before emigrating to Italy, others after they had already arrived in Italy. The cultural pressure to conduct this mutilation is very strong from their families back in the home countries and leads to girls being mutilated in the settling countries.

1.4 Italian Legislation and the government action plan to prevent and fight FGM

From 09 January 2006 the law 09/01/2006 Law No.7 (provisions concerning the prevention and prohibition of female genital mutilation) came into force in Italy. After a legislative process begun in the late 90s, the political parties agreed on a text which, overturning the initial suggestion of purely punitive measures, favours a broader outlook. The law foresaw some preventive measure like information and sensitization campaigns addressed to communities, the monitoring of cases, trainings teachers of schools and health workers, the creation of a toll free number and international cooperation programmes.

With November 16th 2006 decree was instituted a Commission for the Prevention and Fight against Female Genital Mutilation, as part of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities, introduced with the, registered December 5th 2006. Moreover Committee for the prevention and prohibition of female genital mutilation as part of the Ministry for Health established under the 6th September 2006 decree. It was a multidisciplinary group
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composed by experts from the Ministry of Health, doctors (gynaecologists), OIM representatives from Rome, the Ministry for State Education, the Ministry for Internal Affairs, Equal Opportunities, University and Research, representatives from the different Italian regions and provinces (Abruzzo, Emilia Romagna, Lombardy, Puglia, Tuscany), cultural mediators and experts from organisations and associations working in the area. The aim of this committee was to create a guideline for health care workers and people working with immigrant communities from countries where female genital mutilation is practised; for prevention, assistance and rehabilitation of women and girls who have been victims of these practices. The Guideline was presented in 2007 by the Ministry for Health.

13th August 2007 Italian government invited organizations to present projects for the prevention and fight of FGM. The “Avviso Pubblico” (Public Advise) scheduled 3 kinds of projects:

a. Research-action Projects in order to study the phenomenon in the Italian territory in order to promote more effective methodologies of intervention for the prevention and fight of FGM

b. Information and Sensitization Campaigns aimed to realize campaigns for fight and prevention that could foresee the production and diffusion of informative material in places where immigrants coming from countries at risk of FGM meet.

c. Formation and education on FGM and rights of children addressed to operators of the sector in particular: teachers, cultural and linguistic mediators and doctors.

Below you find the 21 project that were approved by the government and that will see their conclusion on 30th September 2009.

A. Research-action Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoter</th>
<th>Project name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Istituto Nazionale per la Promozione della Salute delle Popolazioni Migranti ed il contrasto delle Malattie della Povertà (INMP) (National Institute for the Promotion of Health of Migrant Population and the Fight of the Poverty Illnesses)</td>
<td>Incidenza, significati e percezioni delle Mutilazioni Genitali Femminili: dalla ricerca-azione a modelli di intervento. (Impact, significante and perceptions about Female Genitale Mutilations: from research actions to intervention models.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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| Cooperativa Sociale Kantara scrl  
(Social Cooperative Kantara scrl) | Sister's care |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Parsec –Associazione            
(Association Parsec)              | Ricerca e interventi sociali Stop MGF -Ricerca Azione 
(Research and social interventions Stop FGM – Research Actions) |
| UCODEP Onlus                    
(UCODEP no profit ngo)           | I SEGGI INVISIBILI: conoscenza e azioni per la prevenzione ed il contrasto delle MGF in Italia 
(Indivisible Signs: knowledge and actions for the prevention and fight of FGM in Italy) |
| Comune di Pescara               
(Pescara Municipality)           | D.A.D.A. MAP -Diritti e Autonomia per le Donne Africane -Mappa e ricerca territoriale sulle MGF in Abruzzo 
| Fondazione ISMU -Iniziative e studi sulla multieticità 
(Fundation ISMU –Initiatives and Studies on multiethicity) | Mutilazioni genitali femminili e dinamiche di mutamento: prospettive socio-antropologiche 
(Female Genital Mutilations and Dynamics of changing: socio-antropological perspectives) |
| Associazione italiane donne per lo sviluppo 
(Aidos)                           | Mutilazioni dei genitali femminili e diritti umani nelle comunità migranti. Percorso integrato di ricerca, formazione e sensibilizzazione per la prevenzione ed il contrasto di una pratica tradizionale da abbandonare. 
(Female Genital Mutilations and Human Rights in Migrant Communities. Integrated path of research, education and sensitization for the prevention and fight of a traditional practice to be abandoned) |

B. Information and Sensitization Campaigns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoter</th>
<th>Project name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Istituto per gli Studi sui Servizi Sociali ISTISSS                     
(Institute of Studies on Social Services ISTISSS)                       | Corpi consapevoli: mutilazioni genitali femminili ed integrazione nello stato di diritto 
(Aware body: female genital mutilations and integration in the law)     |
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Associazione NO.Di. - “I Nostri Diritti”
Association No.Di. “Our Rights”
Stop MGF - Campagna informativa e di sensibilizzazione
(Stop FGM – Informative and Sensitization Campaign)

LILA (Lega Italiana Lotta AIDS)
LILA (Italian League Fight AIDS)
Bikaloro. La scelta consapevole
(Bikaloro. Aware choice)

Centro Interculturale Regionale “Gli Anelli Mancanti”
(Intercultural Regional Centre “Missing Rings”)
Prima persona plurale (1st Plural Person)

Associazione ARCI e NOSOTRAS
(ARCI association and Nosotras)
GEMMA: rete di tutela dei diritti delle donne
(GEMMA: defence of women rights net)

Associazione Alma Terra
(Alma Terra Association)
AURORA: percorsi positivi di cittadinanza. Strumenti per contrastare e prevenire le MGF
(AURORA: positive paths of citizenship. Instruments to fight and prevent FGM)

Associazione italiane donne per lo sviluppo (Aidos)
(Association of Italian Women for Development-AIDOS)
Mutilazioni dei genitali femminili e diritti umani nelle comunità migranti. Percorso integrato di ricerca, formazione e sensibilizzazione per la prevenzione ed il contrasto di una pratica tradizionale da abbandonare. (Female Genital Mutilations and Human Rights in Migrant Communities. Integrated path of research, education and sensitization for the prevention and fight of a traditional practice to be abandoned)

c. **Formation and education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promoter</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Associazione Alma Terra Alma Terra Association</td>
<td>AURORA: percorsi positivi di cittadinanza. Strumenti per contrastare e prevenire le MGF (AURORA: positive paths of citizenship. Instruments to fight and prevent FGM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istituto Nazionale per la Promozione della</td>
<td>Alta formazione e aggiornamento dei mediatori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salute delle Popolazioni Migranti ed il contrasto delle Malattie della Povertà (INMP)</td>
<td>Intercultural mediators for the prevention and fight to female genital mutilations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associazione italiane donne per lo sviluppo (Aidos) (Association of Italian Women for Development-AIDOS)</td>
<td>Female genital mutilations and human rights in migrant communities. Integrated path of research, education and sensitization for the prevention and fight of a traditional practice to be abandoned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Camillo (Saint Camillo)</td>
<td>Stop MGF (Stop FGM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comune di Pescara (Pescara Municipality)</td>
<td>D.A.D.A. FORM - Diritti e Autonomia per le Donne Africane - Percorsi formativi per la prevenzione ed il contrasto delle mutilazioni genitali femminili.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCODEP Onlus (UCODEP no profit)</td>
<td>I SEGNI INVISIBILI: conoscenza e azioni per la prevenzione ed il contrasto delle MGF in Italia (Indivisible Signs: knowledge and actions for the prevention and fight of FGM in Italy).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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2. THE STEERING COMMITTEE:

In order to set up Italian National Action Plan the Steering committee organized several formal and informal exchanges of views and experiences. The Steering Committee was composed by representatives of 3 of the most committed organization on the fight of FGM: Nosotras, No.Di. and IOM Italy and by representatives of of foreigner women, no profit ngos, immigrants ngos and local authorities.

The Steering Committee was specifically composed by:

1. **Nosotras**, ngo of foreigner and Italian women based in Florence from 1998. The main purposes of Nosotras to promote self-determination of every women, to make the most of immigrants women subjectivity, to reject every kind of racism and xenophobia, To take actions to eliminate violence against women that represents a violation of human rights and violence that has origin in injurious, consuetudinary or traditional practises, cultural discrimination and extremism. Nosotras is strongly committed in several activities of sensitization related to FGM.

2. **No.Di.**, ngo based in Rome and active in the defence of the rights of immigrant women. It works with the Immigration Office of Rome offering several services to foreigner women: information front offices organized by linguistic mediator and activities and cultural initiatives addressed to immigrant women to promote their integration and socialization. No.Di. is furthermore active in information and sensitization campaign for the prevention and fight against FGM.

3. **IOM Italia.** Established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. Through its mission statement, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to, among others, uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants. In this framework FGM is approached as hindering integration and as a form of gender-based violence (GBV), as well as being a reproductive health and human rights issue.

4. **Associazione Artemisia**: born in 1991 as a result of a huge work started at the end of 80’s on the thematic of violence. It is inside the Italian Coordination of Services on Violence against women and children and carries receive houses for women escaping from violence. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM.

5. **CESDI Livorno – Centro Servizi Donne Immigrate** (Service Centre for Immigrant Women). Born in 1997 it is composed by women from all over the world. The purpose of the organization is the relation of friendship between immigrant and Italian women; to inform immigrant women helping them with the territorial services; to join cultural and social activities. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level.

6. **L’ Associazione Donne Insieme**, (Women together) born in Arezzo in 1994, is formed by women of 16 nationalities. Its aim is to make a friendship relation between immigrant and Italian women, to organize
socio-cultural activities and to valorize the individual skills of women also in relation to job. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level.

| 7. | **Le A.P.I.** - Associazione Per l’Intercultura (Association for Interculture), born in Pistoia in 1998, is composed by foreigner women, it has several services for women to help them in the access to public services, intercultural mediation and teaching about multiculturalism in schools. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 8. | **Centro Donna di Collegno** (To) provides informative and socialization service for women. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 9. | **ARCI** – national cultural association for the promotion of immigrants rights. The organization has the coordination of campaign activities against FGM at national level. |
| 10. | **Associazione Mediamente**: organization of cultural linguistic mediators working for helping immigrants for social inclusion. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 11. | **Nero e Non Solo ONLUS**: antiracist ngo based in Caserta. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 12. | **Associazione socio-culturale islamica in Italia**: Socio-cultural Islamic association in Italy. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 13. | **Associazione Donne al Centro-Huesera Onlus** (Rome): Foreign women against violence and for rights of immigrant women. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 14. | **Novaradio**: FM radio promotion of rights of immigrant. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level with FM spots. |
| 15. | **Associazione studenti africani dell’Università degli Studi di Firenze**: Association of african students of University of Florence. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 16. | **Associazione III Febbraio**: National Organization for the Promotion of refugee rights. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 17. | **Rawa**, organization based in Florence for the promotion of rights of women al over the world. The organization is committed in activities of sensitization against FGM at local level. |
| 18. | Representatives of foreigner communities. |
| 20. | **Regione Toscana**: Assessorato alla Sanità, Assessorato Pari Opportunità Commissione Pari Opportunità, Tavolo Regionale sulle MGF. Tuscany Region (Territorial Sanitary and assistential Services Sector and Learning, health promotion and Clinical Government activities sector), Regional Table on FGM. With the Project “Salvare la diversità, non la sofferenza” (Save the diversity not the suffering) is particularly committed in FGM issues and has developed its own regional action plan of Tuscany Region whose aim are: development and promotion of the project related to the booklet on FGM, learning classes for socio-sanitary operators involved directly on FGM issues, organization of services of taking in charge, strenghtening of the Regional Reference Centre on FGM. |
2. THE NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

3.1 Goals

In line with the Italian law n 7 of January 9th 2006 – Italian law against FGM - the Italian national plan goals are:

- to prevent
- to stop
- to repress

the MGFs as violations of the fundamental human rights to the integrity of the person and the health of the women and the children.

Specific Goals:

- To raise awareness for those working in the sector who are aware of the negative and harmful aspects of FGM;
- To promote the analyses and opposition strategies produced within African organisations against FGM;
- To spread information and material related to the opposition actions undertaken in Africa, Italy and other European countries;
- To identify and promote good practices to oppose and fight against FGM.
- To organise informative campaigns targeting immigrants coming from the countries where FGM is practised.
- To plan initiatives that raise awareness in collaboration with: voluntary organisations, non-profit associations, health centres - specifically centres of excellence recognised by the World Health
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Organization - communities of immigrants coming from the countries affected by the practice of FGM.

- To encourage the development and promotion of socio-cultural integration of people’s fundamental rights, particularly the rights of women and children.
- To organise courses for infibulated pregnant women, allowing them to knowledgeably face their pregnancy.
- To promote updating programmes for primary and high school teachers with the help of cultural mediators.
- To monitor progressive cases in health care centres and the social services.

3.2 Guidelines: The approach against FGM

- the fight against FGM must be absorbed by our culture
- Condemning FGM must go hand in hand with empowering women and all communities until everyone’s right to look after their own health is confirmed and protected,
- The FGM problem must be referred to as part of a general circle of female ethical topics
- The fight against female genital mutilation also has political implications
- The FGM problem must be referred to as part of a general circle of female ethical topics
- Find the correct way of speaking about FGM to be efficacy
- Be in international network for an exchange of experiences (ex: IAC and Euronet)
In addition to increasing knowledge of this specific context, it is also fundamental that the FGM problem be correctly placed in its ethical dimension: the fight against FGM must in fact be absorbed by our culture, as were many female issues in Italy not long ago (the right to vote, divorce, abortion and, more currently, the controversy surrounding IVF) and not be allowed to become a niche battle, a fringe issue solely referring to the difficulties deriving from multiculturalism and the interests of a few groups.

Condemning FGM must go hand in hand with empowering women and all communities, until everyone’s right to look after their own health is confirmed and protected, so that society provides the necessary support for women to improve their living conditions and welfare. This improvement should never be delegated: let us remember that this problem is real, although it comes in different forms, even in our own communities. Many teenagers, for instance, riskily follow diets that society imposes upon them in order to achieve an aesthetical model that constrains women from childhood, is accepted by their mothers and is sought after by men.

The FGM problem must be referred to as part of a general circle of female ethical topics, not simply considered as a regrettable medical problem that can only be resolved if the laws and medical culture are changed. This is an issue of rights and as such must be taken on by society as a whole.

The fight against female genital mutilation also has political implications: such practices in fact involve and significantly influence female identity, depending on the interference of external factors and inner strength of reaction. A fundamental element from this perspective is the awareness that such practices can hardly be understood and overcome if we limit ourselves to publicly analysing and intervening. These practices are deep-rooted within the family structure and play an important role in children’s identities, women’s identities, and in defining the roles and reciprocal competences of the sexes. A form of inclusion must be found that clearly respects people’s private life, but that is also effective in people’s domestic lives. Otherwise this would only inflict further damage on women and their quality of life.

Today new cultural references are imposing themselves, and this is thanks to the thoughts and actions of women fighting for the total eradication of FGM. They are determined to be heard and to affirm their identity without jeopardising the moral and cultural balance of the society to which they belong.
It would be a particularly heinous form of racism to think about cultures and the traditions that differ from those in the West as monolithic and fixed structures and not similar to ours with complex social forms in permanent evolution that respond to moral issues deemed fundamental. And this is in large part due to the movements and claims of women. And African women, because already involved in a well-established process of empowerment, remain guardians of culture and especially African moral traditions; this is why they are a vital element of their people’s identity. It is crucial that their voices be heard and that they be given active support and the ability to intervene.

### 3.3 Areas of intervention

A national Plan of Action should operate inside the legislative framework; so it is shaped inside the provisions of the Italian laws and divided in 4 areas conceived as central fields for the prevention and fight of FGM. Prevention Activities represents the central and most important focus of Italian National Plan.

- **AREA A:** Legal
- **AREA B:** Research
- **AREA C:** Education
- **AREA D:** Information and Sensitization Campaigns
- **AREA E:** International Cooperation Programmes
Area A: Legal

**Aim: enact legislation to prohibit FGM in Italy**

Law is one of the necessary instruments of prevention and fight against FGM that should be provided inside a National Plan of Action. From 09 January 2006 the law 09/01/2006 Law No.7 (provisions concerning the prevention and prohibition of female genital mutilation) came into force in Italy. After a legislative process begun in the late 90s, the political parties agreed on a text which, overturning the initial suggestion of purely punitive measures, favours a broader outlook. Several key points of the law are:

- The importance given to prevention of the phenomenon (through initiatives to implement socio-cultural integration, working with immigrant communities and opening a school of debate on the intercultural theme of the rights of girls and women.)

- Next it is proposed to train socio-medical staff (an especially delicate role in the perspective provided by law for the rehabilitation and assistance to women who have suffered FGM) and that there is an intention to involve pregnant women and victims of FGM through informative courses for proper preparation for childbirth.

This preventive approach does not preclude severe punishments for those who cause FGM, including the temporary disqualification of medical professionals involved. It also seeks to prevent girls being subjected to this type of intervention during travel in their land of origin, applying the penalties in this case to perpetrators whenever they return to Italy. The intention of this law is to operate according to international guidelines that call for collaboration between all states to eradicate the phenomenon of FGM. There is a will across all political forces to eradicate a practice widely condemned as a violation of fundamental human rights. Women’s associations who have been working for years in the field of preventing and combating the phenomenon also support the choice of an ad hoc legislation. It is feared that the lack of a specific legislation for this crime can weaken the efforts of those who fight against it. It is thought that it is easier for a woman to invoke the law to persuade the family against FGM for their daughters.
It is also seen as an instrument that prevents the medicalization as a means to justify and to accept the practice. However, a law alone is not enough to ensure the eradication of the phenomenon. Although you can make it perfect it owes its application to many factors. One of these may be the strength of immigrant communities against an idea that is still not widely accepted and shared, hence the importance of involving the women immigrants themselves and their associations.

Law 7 / 2006 honours and is reinforced by reference to articles 2, 3, 32 of the Italian Constitution as well as enshrining the ideals set out in the Declaration and Program of Action adopted in 1995 at the IV World Conference on Women. A strongly reaffirmed challenge, more than ten years after the Beijing Conference, that the rights of women are an integral part of our human rights. Finally, the law includes in its mechanism, methods to assist the African community in becoming aware, including training courses for social service and health professionals who work in direct contact with them.

The law says: “Any person who causes female genital mutilation in the absence of therapeutic needs or causes a mutilation of the female genital organs can be punished with an imprisonment of four to twelve years”. However, it defines the practice of female genital mutilation as: the clitoridectomy, excision, infibulation or any other practice that has harmful effects of that part of the body.

This law also includes that it is a punishable offence when the act is committed abroad by nationals or foreigners resident in Italy, or in Italy by Italian citizens or foreigners residing in Italy. In this case, the culprit is punished at the request of the Ministry of Justice.
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Area B: Research

Aim: Enquire about the impact of FGM in Italy, study methodology of campaigning and action to prevent and oppose FGM

Actions:

1. do a national research inquiring on the impact of the phenomenon on the Italian territory.

The research should include:

- international and national publications on the subject,
- studies on the European and on African countries where FGM are practised: type of FGM practised, ethnic groups that use the practice, presence or lack of specific laws against FGM, implementation of these laws.
- Individuation of the law scenario of reference at national, European and international level.

2. Mapping

- Mapping of the campaigns and initiatives to fight FGM at national and international level in order to promote the analyses and opposition strategies produced within African organisations against FGM and to identify and promote good practices to oppose and fight against FGM.

- Mapping the target communities in the area of interest: the number of people, socio-demographic characteristics and places people meet with the purpose of strengthening or activating contact with the communities and other sector workers. This mapping has to show the places and centres most suitable to do the information and sensitization campaign and the organizations and institutions having contacts with people coming from world areas at risk.

3. Monitoring FGM cases in national territory through health facilities and social services.
**Area C: Education**

**Aim:** give instruments to recognise, monitor and prevent FGM to operators that work with immigrants coming from countries at risk; provide information to second generation students and infibulated pregnant women.

**Actions:**

1. Promote special updating programs for teachers in compulsory education, also using people with recognized experience in the field of cultural mediation, to help them to prevent female genital mutilation with the involvement of the parents of the children and the immigrant children, and to spread the knowledge of women's and children's rights in school;

2. Organization of classes about issues related to FGM addressed to operators of the sector in particular: cultural linguistic mediators, social workers, educator in refugee seeker centres, Italian language teachers and sanitary staff in order to raise awareness for those working in the sector who are aware of the negative and harmful aspects of FGM;

3. Organization of classes for students addressed especially to second generation immigrant students;

4. Organization of courses for infibulated pregnant women, allowing them to knowledgeably face their pregnancy.

5. Publication and Diffusion of an Handbook about women rights for Teachers of L2 as an instrument to promote women rights while teaching Italian language.
**Area D: Information and Sensitization Campaigns**

**Aim:** to do information and sensitization campaigns to make the communities aware of the consequences of FGM, give them instruments to be agent of change - let the entire population to know about the phenomenon.

**Target Groups**
- target Communities and Religious communities coming from the countries affected by the practice of FGM.
- Political institutions
- Population

**Stakeholders**
- Associations, voluntary organisations, non-profit associations, Women ngos, human rights ngos
- Political institutions
- Prevention centres and hospitals
- Universities
- Schools
- Institutional offices providing services: Employment centres, Information office for foreigners, libraries, hosting houses for women etc.
- Social cooperatives

**Actions:**

1. Create information campaigns aimed at immigrants from the countries at risk of FGM when granted a visa at the Italian consulates and at their arrival at the Italian frontiers, aimed at spreading knowledge of the fundamental rights of the person, particularly of women and children, and of the prohibition existing in Italy against practising female genital mutilation;

2. Find a correct informative campaign of sensitization, made by different types of campaign;

3. Producing informative material (including the national law against FGM) in the most common languages of the communities at risk of FGM (Arab, English, Tigrinya, Amharic, French, Somali), producing and/or making artistic and audio-visual products available;

4. Distributing informative material in the following centres: health authorities; advisory services; administrative detention centres (CPT); nursery schools, primary and secondary schools; centres for L2 courses (in the public and social private sectors); employment centres; migrant areas; places where people from at-risk communities meet;
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5. Producing and/or making artistic and audio-visual products available;

6. To publicize the international countries campaigns against the MGFs; To spread information and material related to the opposition actions undertaken in Africa, Italy and other European countries;

7. Creation of a toll free number that along Italian law provisions has to be established within three months from the date in which this law comes into effect, aimed at receiving notification from whoever comes to know about the execution, on Italian territory, as well as to give information about the voluntary organizations and health structures operating near the immigrant communities from countries where such practices are executed;

8. Actions that promote awareness initiatives with the participation of voluntary organizations, no profit organizations, health facilities, in particular the centres recognized for excellence by the World Health Organization, and with the communities of immigrants coming from countries where female genital mutilation is practised in order to develop social-cultural integration on the respect of fundamental human rights, particularly of women and children;

9. Organize groups of mutual aid and workshops between women coming from areas at risk aimed to do a publication with stories told by the women and a declaration of abandoning of the practice.

10. Organize information initiatives in community festivity days, organize events such as concerts, national days and shows, during which informative material on FGM can be distributed.

11. Organize zero tolerance days

12. Create active networks to promote women rights. Definition of a network of organizations and institutions for the defence of rights at national level. This network, composed by various institutional subject and ngos, should be a reference group at national level to promote actions and politics about FGM.
Area E: International Cooperation Programmes

Aim: prevent FGM starting from cooperation and development aid to countries at risk of FGM

Actions:

1. Development cooperation programmes led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and particularly the programmes aimed at promoting the human rights of women in countries where, even if prohibited by laws, female genital mutilation is still practised;

2. Cooperation programmes for education and information projects for the local populations addressed at discouraging such practices as well as creating centres against violence that may take in young girls who want to escape such practices or women wanting to prevent their own daughters or any underage relatives undergoing them.