

ORCHID  PROJECT

WORKING TOGETHER TO END
FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING



Annual Review

2021/22



Cécile Belaman
Orchid Project Chair

Foreword from the Chair of the Board

Because FGC is a social norm, we have continued to put grassroots voices at the forefront of our work, so there is no conversation about them without them. By partnering with organisations in Kenya and Ethiopia, we have delivered pioneering projects that accelerate the end of cutting in practising communities. We have also shared knowledge and best practice with organisations and activists working to end the practice, so they have access to the information they need to accelerate their work. This way, we are catalysing the global movement to end female genital cutting.

We have also seen a lot of changes and developments at Orchid Project in the last year. Our Board Treasurer, Delphine Rive, stepped up as Interim CEO for seven months and did an incredible job so that we could continue getting closer to our goal of ending FGC. We have now appointed a brilliant new CEO, Asenath Mwithigah, who is well-versed in the issues of FGC and women’s rights, and is based in Kenya. In addition, during this time we joined forces with 28 Too Many, a leading organisation that has driven policy reform and evidence-based research and knowledge to end female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). These two developments I am sure will only strengthen Orchid Project and enhance the movement to end FGC.

Over the last 12 months, Orchid Project saw how COVID-19 has driven an increase in female genital cutting (FGC). However, we’ve worked harder than ever to ensure we do not abandon the two million more girls that are predicted to be cut because of the pandemic.

In campaigns and through our work with The Asia Network to end FGC, we have emphasised the global nature of the issue and the gap in funding. We have spotlighted cutting at global events and highlighted how FGC is impacted and impacts on other issues, such as education and climate change, throwing off the silo that defines FGC as a ‘niche’ issue.

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What is Female Genital Cutting (FGC)?

Female genital cutting (FGC) is a harmful practice involving the full or partial removal, or injury to a girl's external genitals, for non-medical purposes. On average, girls are subjected to FGC before the age of five, although this varies between different communities and can happen at any time from a girl's birth to adulthood. FGC is not an obligation of any religion and has no known health benefits. Far from it, the practice can cause long-lasting physical and psychological damage for more than 4.1 million girls at risk of cutting every year. In some cases, this can include death.

Also referred to as female genital mutilation (FGM) and female circumcision, the practice is recognised internationally as a violation of human rights, the rights of the child and women's rights.

It is estimated that more than 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone female genital cutting, worldwide. This figure is based only on the 32 countries that measure and report on the practice. Although we know that girls are affected by FGC in over 95 countries globally, so this figure underestimates the true scale of the practice. FGC takes place in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, The Americas, Europe and within diaspora communities around the world.

Although global efforts to encourage communities to abandon FGC are making strong progress, population growth means the number of girls at risk of being cut continues to increase.

An urgent human rights issue



1 in 3 girls worldwide will be born in the 30 countries where FGC is concentrated by 2030.



22 of the 30 countries that report national data on FGC prevalence have the lowest socioeconomic development indicators.

68 million

68 million girls are at risk of being cut between 2015 and 2030 unless efforts to end the practice are accelerated.



+200 million women and girls are impacted by FGC

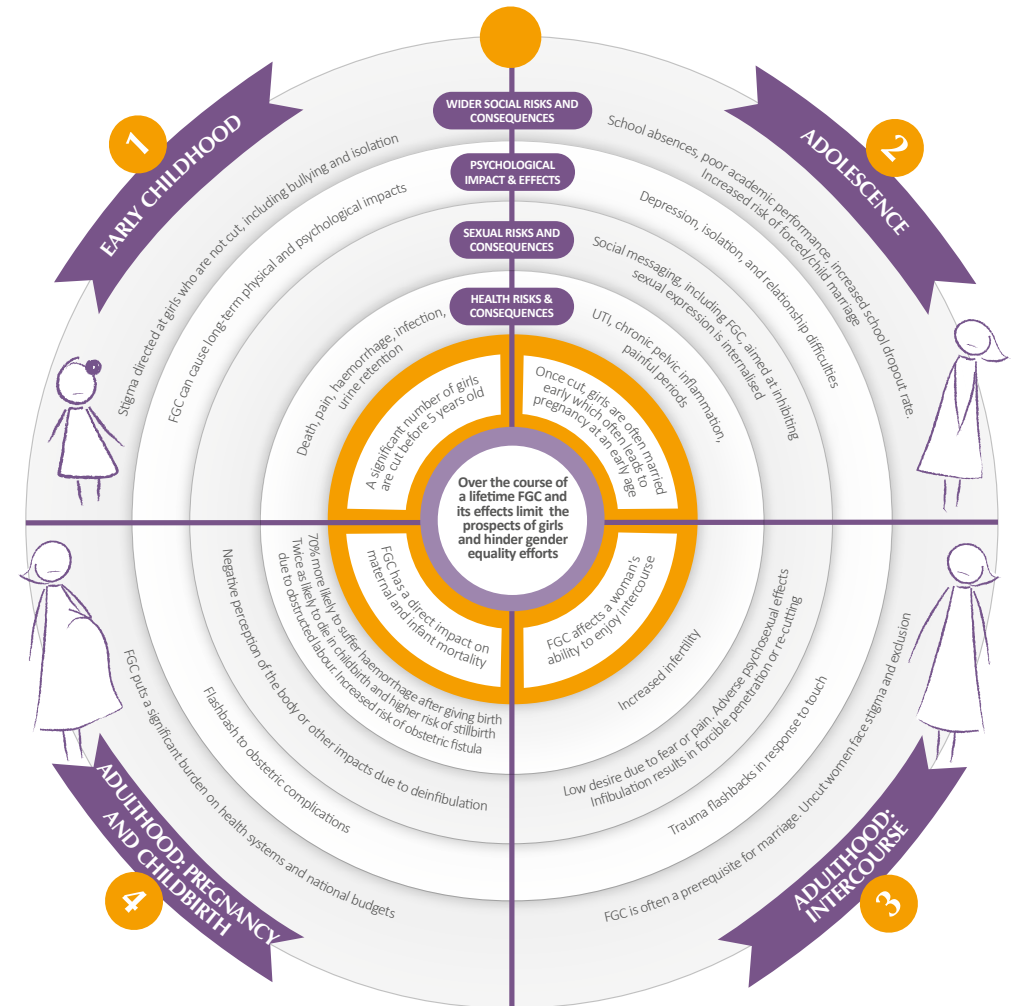


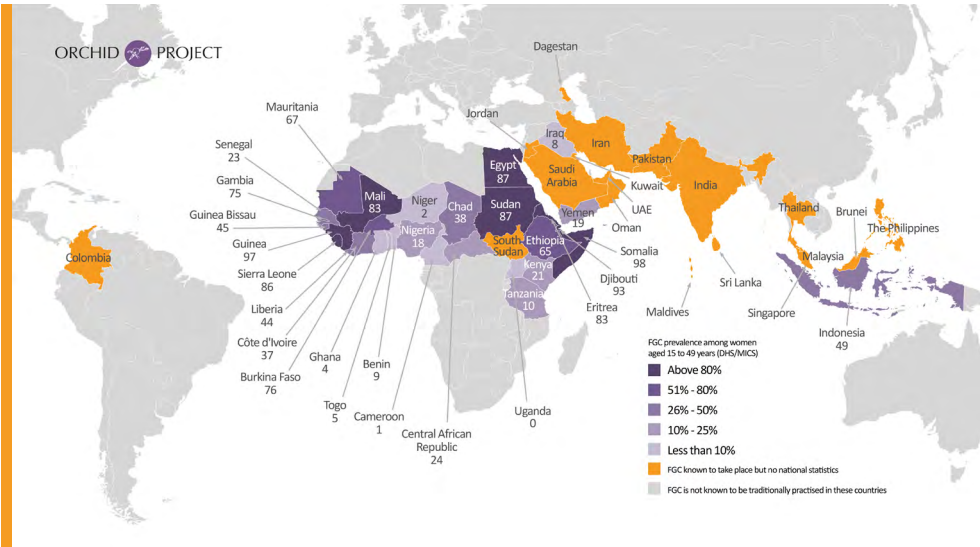
FGC occurs in over **90 countries** globally

4.1 million

girls are at risk every year

What are the impacts of Female Genital Cutting?





About Orchid Project

Orchid Project is a UK-based NGO that is catalysing the global movement to end female genital cutting (FGC).

Through four main areas of work:

1. Partnering

Orchid Project partners with trailblazing grassroots organisations that are supporting abandonment of female genital cutting (FGC) within communities around the world. Together with our partners in Kenya, Ethiopia and Asia, we recognise FGC as a social norm, which is held in place by an entire community. One of the most effective ways to support sustainable abandonment of FGC is through non-judgemental, human rights-led education, allowing communities to choose to end the practice by themselves.

2. Sharing

We share and amplify knowledge to accelerate the global movement to end FGC. The work of our grassroots partners has shown that when communities are empowered to drive change, sustainable abandonment of cutting is possible. Orchid Project connects organisations and activists with the most up-to-date information, research and best or pioneering practices to catalyse efforts to end cutting around the world; from global actors to community-based organisations working at the grassroots level.

3. Advocacy & Campaigns

Female genital cutting is a global issue that requires a global response. At Orchid Project, we believe in a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to ending the practice that recognises everyone has a role to play. We work collaboratively and in partnership – at community, national, regional and global levels – to achieve this.

4. Research:

Orchid Project has recently joined forces with FGM/C-research organisation, 28 Too Many, to deliver and share the most up to date research on cutting, trends and laws. Orchid Project will use research to guide its programmes, inform its advocacy and share data across its knowledge sharing networks.

We believe that together, we can create a world free from FGC.



Asenath Mwithigah
Orchid Project CEO

In 2022, Orchid Project welcomed Asenath Mwithigah as its new CEO. Asenath will be leading the team from its office in Nairobi, Kenya, joining the existing Kenyan team whilst working closely with Orchid Project's UK team.



Partnering with grassroots organisations: Ending FGC in the community

Kenya

In 2020, we embarked on an ambitious three-year project to see an end to cutting in Kenyan Maasai and Samburu communities, where the prevalence rates of female genital cutting are over 79%. This year we have continued to work with Kenyan partners to deliver COVID-19-proof community dialogue forums, after school clubs, performance tours, radio shows and county lobbying for FGC prioritisation. As a result, we have seen extremely positive signs of real attitudinal change with over 60% of targeted community members supporting moves towards FGC abandonment. Our efforts will now focus on both maintaining and increasing these levels, as well as converting this attitude change into behaviour change that sees cutting end.

As part of the Kenya programme, a mid-project study was successfully carried out in Narok and Samburu counties, to measure the impact of the project through analysing the attitudinal shift towards cutting. It showed that our programme has had notable achievements and is surpassing its objectives and targets. Despite the difficulties in measuring prevalence among younger age

groups, we estimate that there has been a substantial decline in the rate of FGC among 0-14 year old girls in Narok and Samburu which could be as high as 20% in some communities, going beyond the set target of 10-19%. This measured prevalence drop is supported by focus group discussion results which indicate that community members are noticing a decline in prevalence themselves. Community members discussed being comfortable to openly discuss FGC as a violation of human rights, linking FGC with health effects, identifying alternative options, associating FGC with illegality, and noting the need for abandonment of FGC due to the intervention.

We are also starting to see some changes in social attitudes towards girls' engagement in society. The report indicates there is increasing support for girls' education, which we believe reflects a wider change in views of the community that invests more in the potential of girls. This attitude change is also bolstered by seeing increasingly more women holding leadership positions in the community in both Narok and Samburu counties.

Ethiopia

In 2021, Orchid Project embarked on a bold pilot project in Ethiopia focused on Oromia, where FGC prevalence is 76%. Due to the large population of 35 million, more girls will be cut here than anywhere else in the country. However, there is appetite for change with over 70% of people there wanting to see the practice end. This is also complemented by strong political will at the highest level.

In this project our partners trained community activists and key influencers, providing them with the tools to mobilise community members to engage with dialogue forums. This work has been supported by training facilitators from the target communities to lead said forums. Our grassroots partners worked on youth campaigns and leadership training to mobilise the leaders of tomorrow in supporting the abandonment of FGC. We also carried out a baseline to measure the impact of our intervention and created a handbook for main streaming FGC into social development programmes.

United Kingdom

In the UK with the support from the Bain Capital Children's Fund Europe we worked with four grassroots activists who delivered projects across the UK and with diaspora communities.

Jay Kamara Frederick and Hoda Ali organised a retreat programme reflection and training workshop for activists working to end violence against women and girls. This workshop was a space for reflection, sharing and learning and also an opportunity for activists to develop their plans together.

Sarian Kamara, through her organisation Keep the Drums Lose the Knife worked closely with a group of ex-cutters in Sierra Leone, documenting their journey and experience towards abandoning the practice. Stories were filmed and shared at an event organised with the diaspora community in the UK, in South London and online.

Bethel Tadesse, through her organisation, Hidden Scars, focused on supporting the process of reconciliation between different groups. She facilitated and filmed a conversation between a survivor of FGC and an ex-cutter in a well-captured film on intergenerational dialogue and forgiveness. The aim was to create a space for survivors and families who chose to practice FGC to build shared understanding and unity.





Sharing: Knowledge Sharing Workshops

With COVID-19 limiting in-person events last year, Orchid Project pioneered a Virtual Knowledge Sharing Workshop (vKSW), so learnings and best practices could continue to be shared during the course of the pandemic. The virtual event was a resounding success, convening 35 participants from six countries across Africa, to explore Unicef’s six elements of abandonment of female genital cutting approach and gender transformative approaches, using participatory activities. This galvanised other organisations to deliver more effective programming, accelerating an end to cutting.

Although the virtual knowledge sharing workshop was an astounding success, partners called for in-person workshops too, to support a deeper dive on the issue. Therefore, as part of our role in supporting the Africa-led Movement (ALM, funded by FCDO) to end FGC, Orchid Project held in-person Knowledge Sharing Workshops in Narok and Isiolo counties, Kenya.

Facilitated over five days for each location, the workshop covered themes on: medicalisation, Alternative Rites of Passage, legislation, gender norms and equality, and education. A total of 25 people attended.

With support from Mannion Daniels we continued to work closely with grassroots organisations across Kenya, Somaliland, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Mali and Cote d’Ivoire to deliver a series of knowledge sharing and capacity building workshops for grassroots organisations. These workshops were designed to provide the organisations with opportunities to engage in relevant global or regional FGM/C events and campaigns, build their knowledge and capacity in social and gender norms, advocacy and communications skills, and provide a space for organisations to learn from each other.

In December 2021, we organised a 3-day virtual capacity building workshop on Advocacy and Communications for 13 organisations from seven countries. The workshop was framed around the stages of developing an advocacy strategy- from problem analysis and goal setting through to measuring impact. We also organised for the first time a half day condensed session with the Francophone grantees. The training covered elements of social norms theory and gender norms.

Lastly, in February and March of this year, Orchid Project held two webinars with the same group; one on gender norms and another on influencing decision-makers.



Advocacy & Campaigns

Our brilliant Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns team has been working hard to make FGC everyone’s issue, pushing it up the agenda for governments, leaders and funders. This year, we championed the issue and placed ourselves as thought-leaders in the field.

International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGC

Orchid Project marked Zero Tolerance Day to FGC (6th February 2022), by launching the **#whatsthegap** campaign - Accelerating Investment to end Female Genital Mutilation. This global call for increased funding to step-up efforts to eliminate FGC by 2030, emphasized our community-based organisation partners’ needs. Via social media we asked our grassroots and community partners to record one minute videos on their phones saying what increased funding could do to strengthen their work to end FGC. Videos came in from Senegal, Somaliland, Gambia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and the UK. We then created a three minute video in which all our voices came together to ask for greater funding for the sector. The video was shared on website, social media, email, WhatsApp and partnership groups on the 6th February on Zero Tolerance Day. It was then shared by all participants in their own networks and communities. We showed the video in Orchid’s Knowledge Sharing Workshops

and our Advocacy and Communications training days. The video was viewed over 1,000 times. We also released a French subtitled version for our Francophone partners.

Orchid are continuing with the ‘What’s the Funding Gap’ campaign and making a dynamic, interactive programme which will include videos from donors speaking about why funding work to end FGC is a priority, as well as animation, audio of case-studies and links to reports.



International Women's Day

Orchid Project and Human Dignity Foundation were able to celebrate International Women's Day (March 8th) together in Oldkeresi, Kenya, at an event organised by grassroots partner **SAFE Kenya**. There, performances with messages and speeches from project teams SAFE Maa and SAFE Moran accompanied the voices of young women, who spoke about their hopes for further education, greater equality and increased prospects - including an end to FGC. Isabel Opondo, Programme Officer for SAFE Kenya, spoke powerfully about their commitment to continue working with the community to end female genital cutting and empower women and girls there.

Female village elders also spoke of their experiences when they underwent the cut and their messages to the young women and girls attending the event called to end this harmful practice.

Gender Transformative approach to ending female genital cutting

Orchid Project has cemented its role as a thought leader in the sector by producing a paper on **Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) to ending FGC**. With the progress to end FGC slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the target of ending cutting by 2030 coming up fast, an alternative to the 'business as usual' approach to ending cutting is urgently needed. So, a GTA paper was created to better understand whether gender transformative approaches, which have been successful in other sectors, could be the way forward for a sustainable end to FGC.

The paper centralised the voices of grassroots organisations and front-line activists from Africa and Asia. To increase accessibility of the paper, a brief **film** introducing the concept of GTA within

the context of ending female genital cutting was developed and shared across our channels.

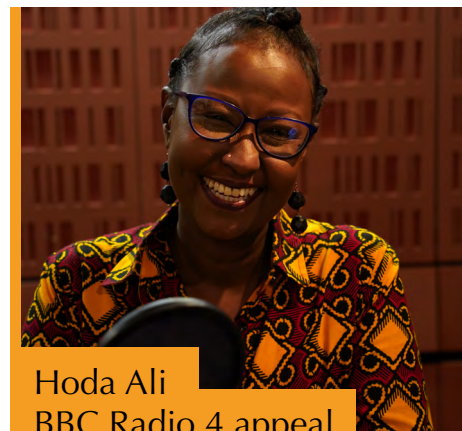
In October 2021, the paper was launched at a virtual event hosted by Orchid and featured a powerhouse panel including representatives from UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, 'Keep the Drums, Lose the Knife' community organisation, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 'We Speak Out' and SAFE Maa Kenya. A total of 105 participants joined, and we received very positive feedback from participants and panellists.



Global Events

Commission on the Status of Women 66: To further our work on medicalisation and the Gender Transformative Approach, on the 21st March 2022, The Asia Network To End FGM/C hosted, in partnership with **Orchid Project**, a **Commission on the Status of Women 66** side event panel discussion. Dr Wisal Ahmed (**WHO**), Insia Dariwala (**Sahiyo**) Wairimu Munyinyi-Wahome, (**COVAW**) Kenya, and Dr Ajay Rane (**FIGO**) were gathered together under the moderation of Divya Srinivasan (**Equality Now**) to discuss the medicalisation of female genital cutting in Asia and Africa. It was a stimulating discussion with the expertise of the panellists making for a very thought-provoking event. You can watch the recording of the event **here** (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1177514319683484&ref=sharing>).

BBC Radio 4



Hoda Ali
BBC Radio 4 appeal

In January 2022, Orchid Project delivered an appeal on BBC Radio 4, asking supporters to donate to our work ending FGC. The appeal featured the incredible activist-survivor Hoda Ali (**@HodoMALi**) who shared her own experiences with FGC and the work of Orchid Project's grassroots partners to call listeners to action. Through this ask, we raised over £35,000 from just under 500 individuals, raising both funds and awareness of our work. You can still listen to the powerful appeal **here** (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0013qwk>).

The Asia Network to end FGM/C

There is not enough acknowledgement that cutting is rife throughout Asia, with half of all girl's who undergo FGC globally occurring in the region. Since 2019, Orchid Project has partnered with Malaysia-based sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) organisation, ARROW, to co-lead The Asia Network to End FGM/C, so that the issue in Asia receives the attention it deserves. In August 2021, Orchid Project began a series of online capacity building sessions for Asia Network members. This began with an *Introduction to Social Norms* followed by a *tackling Gender Norms* session in November 2021.

Throughout 2021 Orchid Project, ARROW and The Asia Network to end FGM/C have also embarked on research to explore the growing trend towards medicalisation in Malaysia. This has involved a series of stakeholder dialogues, literature reviews, identifying research gaps, and the development of an advocacy roadmap for organisations working to end FGC. We hope that the research will serve as a blueprint for further action against medicalisation and cutting overall in the region.

On the next page there is a map showing where FGC is practiced in Asia'

FGC

IN ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Female genital cutting (FGC) affects over 200 million women and girls worldwide. National prevalence data on FGC exists for 30 countries, 27 in Africa and only 3 in the Middle East and Asia - Iraq, Yemen and Indonesia. FGC happens elsewhere in the Middle East and Asia, see map below.

Reasons for the continuation of FGC are varied; drivers include tradition, culture and social pressure. In some places FGC is believed to be an Islamic imperative although the practice is not endorsed by any religion. FGC is not mentioned in the Koran and is not practised by the majority of Muslims worldwide.



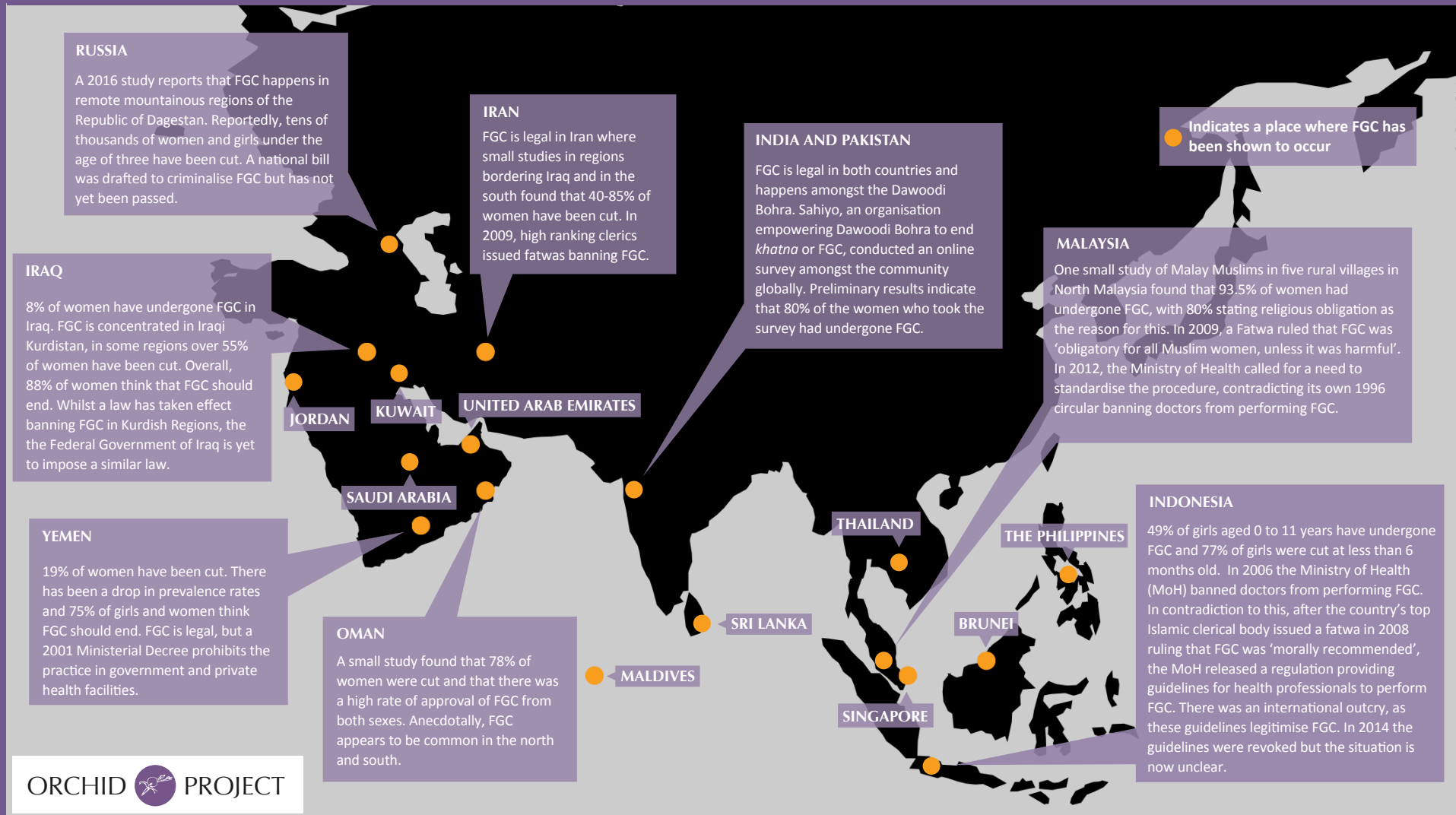
Medicalisation is on the rise; in Indonesia over 50% of girls aged 0-11 years old were cut by a trained medical professional



85% of girls in Yemen are cut within their first week of life



FGC is sometimes offered as part of a birth package in Indonesian hospitals, alongside vaccinations and ear piercing





Research: 28 Too Many and Orchid Project join forces to end FGM/C

Orchid Project is delighted that 28 Too Many, a leading organisation that has driven policy reform and evidence-based research and knowledge to end female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), joined the Orchid Project team and will strengthen its ability to achieve its vision of a world free from FGM/C.

28 Too Many was established in 2010 by Dr. Ann-Marie Wilson to undertake research and provide knowledge and tools to those working to end FGM/C in the countries in Africa where it is practised and across the diaspora worldwide. 28 Too Many affected change by collating and interpreting data, influencing leaders (e.g. UN bodies), and equipping local organisations with advocacy and training tools to strengthen their on-the-ground work.

28 Too Many will bring to Orchid Project a wealth of experience in evidence-based research, which has received wide recognition over the years, including its 2018 **Law and FGM report** receiving the Thomson Reuters Foundation TrustLaw Collaboration Award and its #NoFGM Ribbon campaign which received over 11 awards at the

Dubai Lynx Awards in 2019. 28 Too Many's work in generating high-quality research and advocacy tools has influenced policy reforms, including the criminalisation of FGM/C in Nigeria and Sudan, and the organisation has been invited, as the FGM expert, to advise multinational agencies including the United Nations, Population Council, governments, and the World Bank.

28 Too Many joining Orchid Project will provide an opportunity to draw on the unique strengths and experiences of both organisations, ultimately enhancing the movement to end FGM/C.

"We are delighted to welcome 28 Too Many and look forward to the next chapter for Orchid Project," said Delphine Rive, interim-CEO of Orchid Project. "Our decision to join forces is driven by a shared vision of ending female genital mutilation (FGM) through community-led change and we are confident that with our combined expertise and networks, we will be better positioned to positively impact the lives of girls and women by enabling evidence creation and its effective use to accelerate an end to FGM/C."

Looking Ahead – 2022/23

Our work this year has facilitated an accelerated end to female genital cutting, but there is still so much more to do.

Over the following 12 months:

Orchid Project will continue its work with the **#whatsthegap** campaign, following the traction gained in February. We are looking forward to engaging new funders who currently do not fund the issue, through sharing the voices of our partners and donors and highlighting the differences in funding for other sectors.

The Asia Network to end FGM/C will continue to grow. We plan to hold **regional convening and policy dialogues** as well as developing regional advocacy plans. Operationally, we plan to make the Network more sustainable by supporting members to further determine its direction and leadership. It also plans to build networks globally, specifically with the African movement to end FGC.

We will be **Sharing the Kenya Mid-Term review data** with our partners and community members to help us adapt programmes and strengthen initiatives to end cutting in the region.

We have welcomed and continue to onboard new **Kenya-based CEO**, Asenath Mwithigah, to lead Orchid Project to a new, more locally-owned direction, that will see us reach new heights accelerating an end to FGC in Africa and globally.

We will **continue our work in Kenya** and complete the final year of our three-year intervention in Narok and Samburu Communities. We look forward to delivering an Endline Evaluation to measure the impact of our and our partners' work.

We hope to continue our work in **Oromia, Ethiopia**, supporting our partners to work with local communities in a region which has the highest FGC prevalence rate in the country.

For the first time we shall be organising a Knowledge Sharing Workshop that will **bring young people together** from all the 22 hotspot counties where FGC has high prevalence in Kenya.

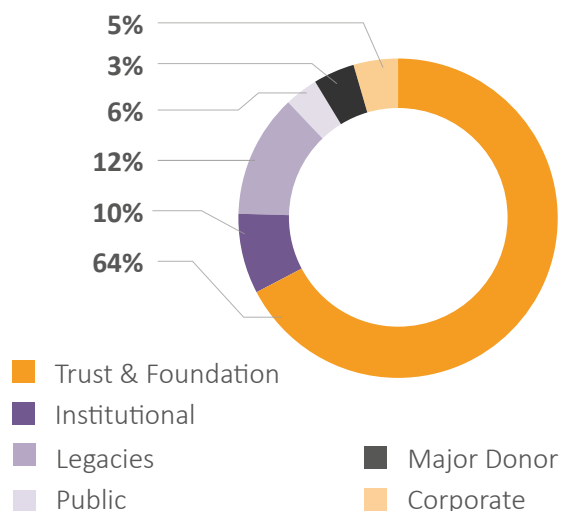
We plan to be **developing, publishing and sharing research** through our new research arm with 28TooMany. Reports will cover legislation, trends and rates of FGC in countries around the world, with a report on Mali to be published imminently. This will inform our programmes and global advocacy work.

Knowledge sharing workshops will be delivered both virtually to build capacity of partner organisations and in person to share our Kenyan programme learnings with others working to end FGC.

We look forward to delivering a **research project in Somalia and Somaliland**, working with local researchers and community-based organisations, to deliver informative data on causes for changing trends in the region. This research will inform programmatic work in Somaliland, Kenya, Ethiopia and across Asia.

Financial Information

The past financial year presented many challenges due to the Covid pandemic, curtailing some planned activities as causing budget cuts on some funders. Nonetheless, Orchid Project managed to increase funds raised and meet its set fundraising target for the year. With better planning and efficiency, we managed to carry out the majority of the planned activities very cost effectively, increasing our cash reserves to a level well above the Organisation’s Reserve Policy.



INCOME	2021/22	2020/21
Restricted Funds	£919,500	£462,405
Unrestricted Funds	£508,737	£360,019
TOTAL INCOME	£1,428,237	£822,424

EXPENDITURE	2021/22	2020/21
Charitable Activities	£919,500	£462,405
Governance & Support Costs	£285,907	£445,498
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE	£1,205,407	£907,903



Thank you to our Donors

- Human Dignity Foundation
- UBS Optimus
- UKAid
- Mannion Daniels
- Bain Capital Children’s Fund Europe
- Dr. Andreas E. Zielke
- Lef-Pillon Trust
- Wallace Global Fund
- Roger Ross
- The Boda Charitable Star Trust
- Ennismore Foundation
- Staples Trust
- Those who wish to remain Anonymous



August 2022

ORCHID  PROJECT

The logo consists of a white circle containing a stylized orchid flower with two leaves.

WORKING TOGETHER TO END
FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING

orchidproject.org

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