

Sexual Health Rights And Responsibilities

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Objectives

- To explore the concepts of Sexual and Reproductive Health.
- To enumerate basic Sexual Health Rights and Responsibilities.
- To address the issue of consent and choice
- To provide a clear exploration of contemporary issues in relation to sexual rights and responsibilities among ethnic minorities in the UK.

Sexual Health

- Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity.
- It requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.
- The sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled to attain and maintain sexual health.

(W.H.O, 2002.)

Sexuality

Sexuality is a key piece of human nature.

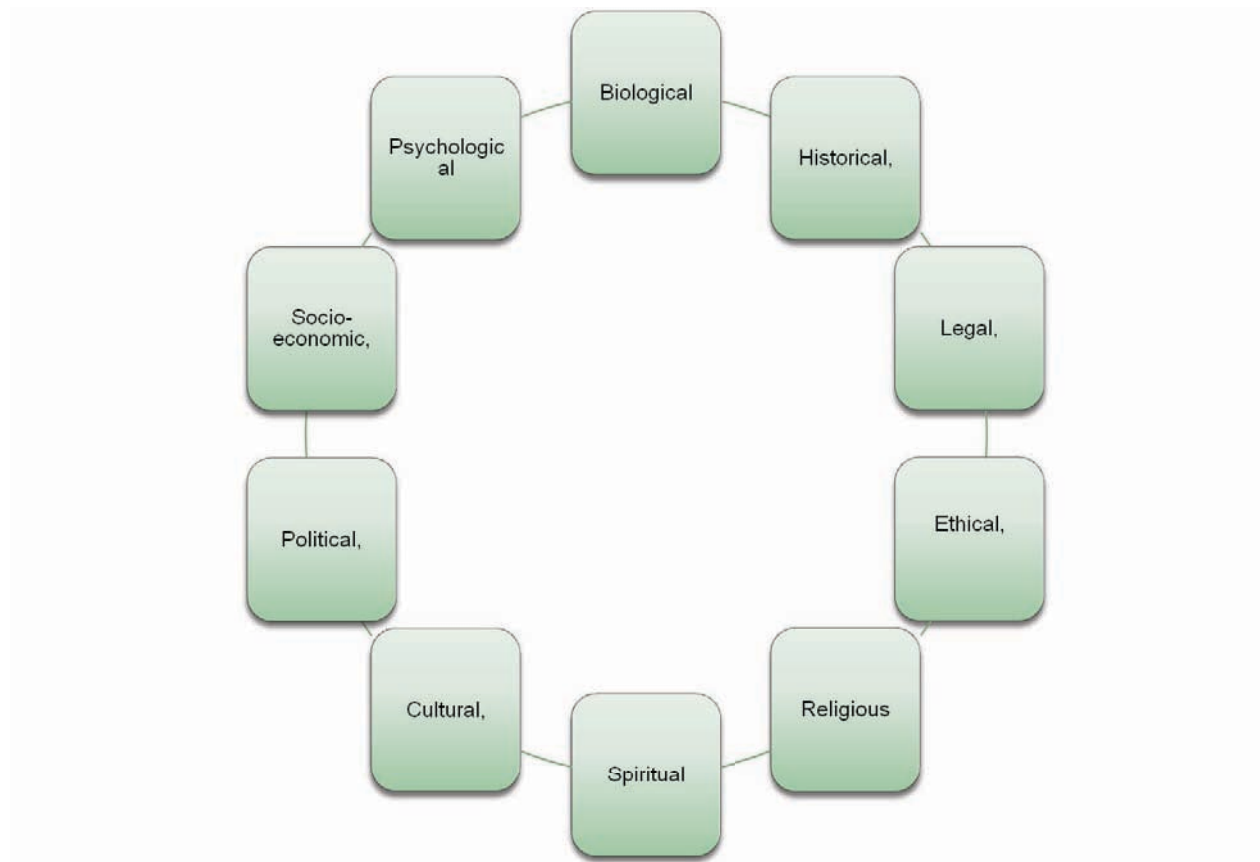
It comprises an individual's

- Sex,
 - Gender Identity and Roles,
 - Sexual Orientation,
 - Eroticism, pleasure & intimacy
 - Reproductive Capacities.
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- The sum of a person's sexual behaviours and tendencies, and the strength of such tendencies.
 - The quality of having sexual functions or implications.

Stedman's Medical Dictionary

- Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. However, not all of them are expressed.

Factors Influencing Sexuality



Sexual Health Indicators

- Unwanted pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted Infections
- Abuse
- Coersion and exploitation
- Fistula,lacerations,cancer,infertility and FGM
- Death

Sexual rights and Responsibilities

Freedom

Justice

Choice

Autonomy

FREEWILL

Sexual Health Rights

- Sexual health rights are basic human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus statements.
- To the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive services;
- To decide to be sexually active;
- To choose their partner;
- To engage in consensual sexual relations;

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Safeguarding rights & dignity

Sexual Health Rights

- To engage in consensual marriage;
- To seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality;
- To sexuality education;
- To respect for bodily integrity;

Consent and Choice

Consent

- A voluntary agreement free of coercion and an action proposed plan with a person of a sufficient mental capacity.

Choice

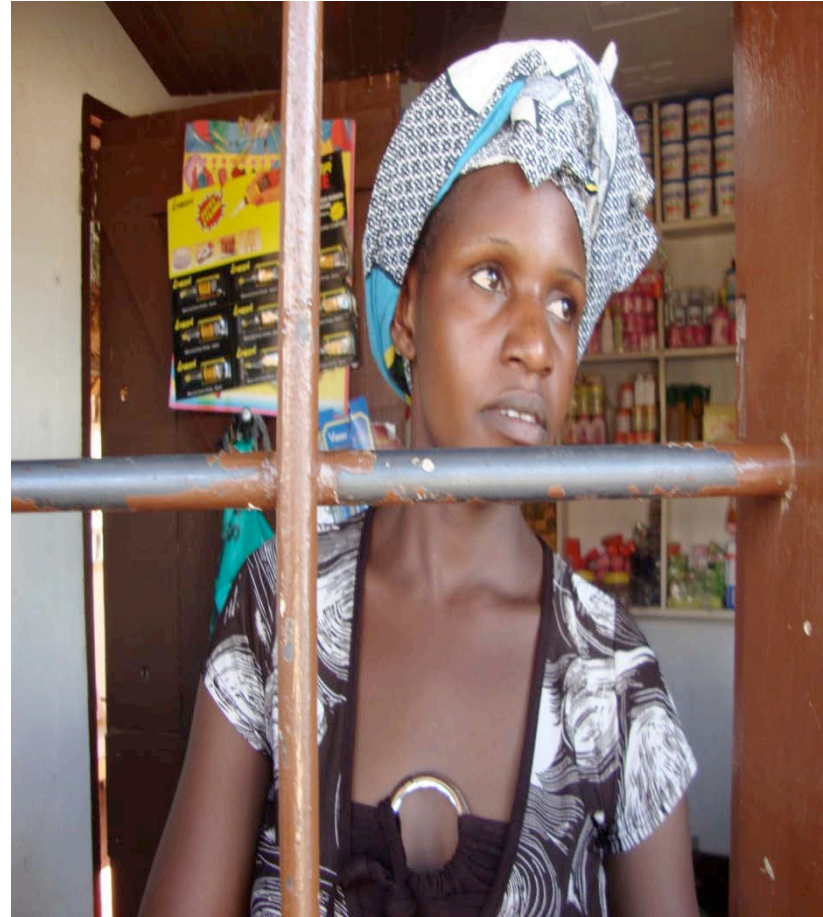
- Involves decision based on the individual's own rules having clear information and options

Socio-cultural context of FGM

- **Cultural identity**
- **Tradition** – ‘that is what we ..do’
- **Religion** – viewed as religious obligation
- **Marriage**-Control of sexuality
- **Family honour**
- **Purity, chastity,**
- **Aesthetics and hygiene**
- **Gender identity**

FGM is a social norm that..

- Guarantees
 - Status and acceptance
 - Approval, pride
 - Rewards and benefits
 - Public recognition
- Non conformity means
 - Isolation/ exclusion
 - Shame/ ridicule
 - Ostracism, rejection
 - stigma



“FGM is with us every day!”

- All the women voiced the pain they felt, starting from the day they were cut
- Many felt that no one cared about their pain & that they suffered alone
- FGM & sexual feelings were viewed as taboo

“You have the feeling that you have not been allowed to have something you should have by nature. It is something to do with pleasure... you hear about this pleasure, but you have never felt it, you don’t know what it is, how would you know?”

Woman in London

- *“Saynab attended one of the FORWARD youth programme session for three times and left. After a year she approached the community outreach worker that she wanted advice. She was referred to the FGM specialist clinic who asked her to go to her GP. Her GP referred her to a surgeon who recommended that for an operation to remove a cyst she has had for over 10 years. Her real concern was how to let her family know since if she got opened she will not be accepted.”*

FGM –who decides?

- Mothers under huge pressure from older female relatives ‘back home’ and some older women in the UK
- Women fear female relatives will circumcise daughters against their will ‘back home’ – daughters require close supervision
- Mothers have to be highly motivated and assertive to resist ongoing pressure
- Seen to be ‘women’s business’ – father escapes pressure to circumcise daughter
- Women who decide not to circumcise their daughters face ongoing doubts – especially if return to original country
- Families may ‘fake’ daughter’s circumcision to avoid pressure

“

“Fatou’s mother in- law is coming from Africa to visit. She knows she will comment on how the children are brought up especially her young girl”.

Exercise

- Based on the issues indicated what are the individuals choice /consent on FGM?
- What influences individuals ability to have choice or give consent in Africa as compared to Europe?
- What can be done to change those issues?

FGM is a human right violation

- FGM violates human rights principles, norms and standards, including equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
- The right to life; the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- Interferes with healthy genital tissue leading to severe consequences in a young woman's physical & mental health
- It interferes also with the right to attain the highest standard of health especially for a child without no formal judgement , choice and consent.

Limitations with the FGM law

- No offence committed if medical personnel performs for the girls physical or mental wellbeing i.e sexual confidence, body image and self –esteem (but not on grounds of custom or ritual)
- In order for an offence on FGM to be brought to court it is important that:
 - The offence be deemed punishable by law.
 - The case must be reported.
 - An investigation must be initiated.
 - Evidence should be found.

Practice tips

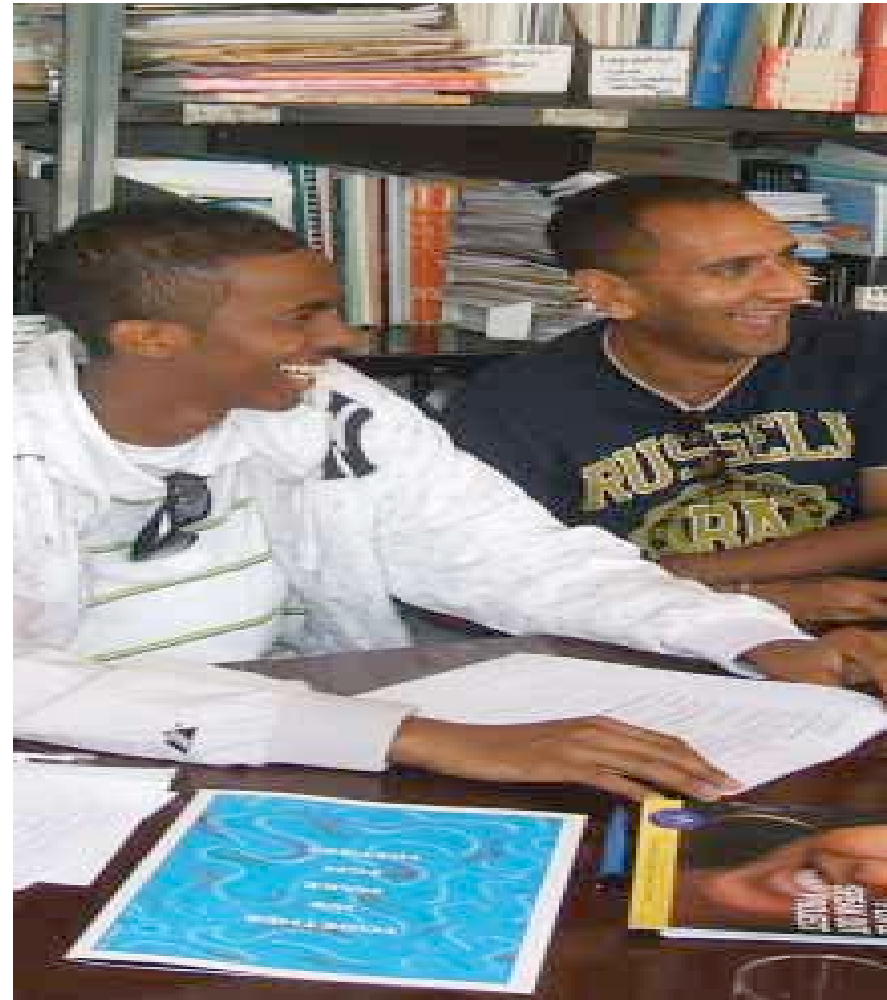
- Be familiar with your safeguarding procedures
- Important to use professional female interpreter
- Confidentiality is critical and essential
- Be sensitive about terminology to use
- Explain the law often you may be the first person to mention FGM to them
- Young girls may still be at risk of FGM
- Provision of information should be part of general information on health
- Women may not be aware that FGM is an issue

Engaging communities on FGM through cultural competency



Men play a key role in ending FGM

- *“The first time that I came to the training I didn’t want to talk about it [FGM], I just wanted to listen but when I found out the information I found more confidence to go out there and tell people.”*
- *Somali boy, 19 - Bristol*



Summary

- Sexual health rights should apply to men and women equally. Women are often unequally represented in choice and consensus in relationships either due to age, culture, religious or political factors.
- Gender inequality, violence, poverty and lack of access to information, treatment and screening add to this burden.
- Health care interventions (advocacy, awareness, empowerment) must continue to ensure that appropriate policies and measures are put in place to empower people to exercise their sexual rights in a responsible way.

Food For Thought

- Consider the limitations placed on a woman's ability to make fully informed choices, as well as her ability to protect herself against sexual exploitation, abuse or infection by socio-economic, cultural or religious inequalities.
- Spare a thought for the millions of women forced into coercive or unhealthy relationships due to their fear of persecution.

Write your local MP asking about action at local level on FGM

Lobby your MEP for the government to ratify COE Convention on VAW

What can you do?

Do advocacy within your own organisation

Share the FGM resources with your colleagues

Become a member of FORWARD receive campaign & events updates and resources

Organize a campaign, event, or training-eg. **Zero Tolerance Day 6 February**

Collaborate with other agencies within your city to work on FGM

Find out affected youth & community networks that you can engage on FGM

F:WARD
Safeguarding rights & dignity

www.forwarduk.org.uk

References

- WHO 2002 Gender and human reproductive and sexual health.
- International Planned Parenthood Federation 2008 on line.
- WHO 2006, defining sexual health report of technical consultation on sexual health.

Resources

- www.fco.gov.uk/fgm
- www.forwarduk.org.uk
- www.londonscb.gov.uk/fgm
- www.kidstaskforce.com

E-mail: forward@forwarduk.org.uk

Tel: 0208 960 4000

Web: www.forwarduk.org.uk

Thank you all!!!!!!