

Welsh charity funding announced on International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

The funding announcement marks International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation which raises awareness of FGM – a human rights violation and crime.

In Africa, more than three million girls are estimated to be at risk from FGM each year and around 200 million women and girls worldwide are living with the consequences of genital mutilation.

It is estimated 137,000 women and girls in the UK are living with FGM.

On Monday, FGM experts warned the BBC's Victoria Derbyshire show that FGM is increasingly being performed on babies and infants in the UK. The claim comes just days after the UK saw its first conviction for FGM.

Complications from the procedure can be life-altering, including; sepsis, infertility and the need for further surgery to enable childbirth.

The funding from the Welsh Government's Wales for Africa scheme has been awarded to Hayaat Women Trust who work to support and empower less advantaged people in Welsh communities and in Somaliland.

The project aims to amplify the actions of 21 trained young female activists in Somaliland. Through social action they'll work towards a nation-wide anti-FGM campaign advocating for the abandonment and criminalisation of FGM in Somaliland.

In a statement to the Welsh Assembly today (Wednesday 6th) the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt, called on Assembly Members to affirm that Wales will not stand by.

She said:

“Female Genital Mutilation is a form of abuse, inflicted upon children who cannot say no. Justification of FGM needs to be challenged and this can only be done through policy and societal change – which this project will push for.

“It's warming to see local Welsh charities being able to significantly benefit others who are at serious risk of harm, whilst enhancing themselves and our communities in the process.

“Our national strategy for violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence commits the Welsh Government to challenging cultural attitudes which can underpin traditional yet harmful

practices like FGM. We are doing this by working with specialist BME services, and through our communications campaigns.”

Fowzia Ali from Hayaat Women Trust said:

“About 98% women in Somaliland have undergone Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting – one of the highest rates in the world.

“FGM is an extreme form of discrimination against women and girls – an enduring form of gender-based violence fuelled by social norms and misinterpretation of religious teachings.

“The practice puts millions of girls and women at risk of uterine infections and HIV transmission on a mega scale whilst imprisoning its survivors to lifelong psychological trauma, untold suffering and is the main culprit for the staggeringly high maternal and intrapartum mortality rate.

“Our project TuWezeshe Akina Dada: Wales is a youth-led awareness raising campaign amplifying the voices of young women in Wales and many regions of Somaliland against FGM. We’ll work via an Africa-UK young women’s leadership movement which aims to empower a generation of African and African diaspora young women to become effective leaders against sexual and gender based violence.”

Announcing the grant awardees, the Minister for International Relations, Eluned Morgan, said:

“The Wales for Africa programme has gone from strength to strength, especially with small grants like the one we are announcing today, transforming lives.

“I’m proud that through projects like these we can continue to build relationships between Wales and Africa, not only improving lives in Africa, but also bringing benefits to Wales by allowing volunteers to exchange skills and have life-changing experiences.”

The Wales for Africa Small Grants scheme is a flagship initiative enabling organisations across Wales to access funding for projects which contribute to Wales’ delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.