



## SUCCESS STORY

# Stopping Female Genital Cutting

### Community development outreach workers and teachers help educate parents on dangers of female genital cutting

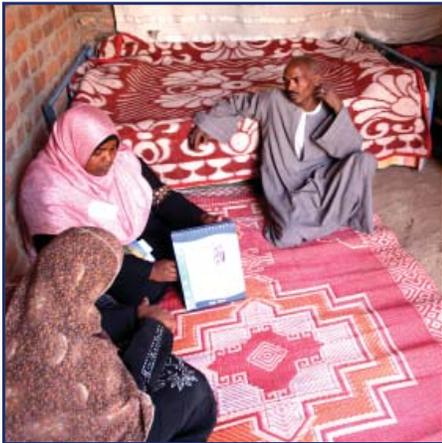


Photo: Takamol Project

A female outreach worker provides parents with health information regarding the dangers of female genital cutting.

***“Circumcision is a custom not a religious obligation,” said Marwa an outreach worker in Luxor City, Egypt.***

The USAID-funded Integrated Reproductive Health Services Project conducts community-level training to increase knowledge of, and change attitudes towards, specific health practices in Egypt. Included in community training programs are male and female religious leaders, literacy facilitators, Ministry of Health and community development association outreach workers, and agricultural extension workers. These trainings not only empower individuals to function as agents of change, but also ensure that community members hear consistent health messages from various sources. One of the messages the USAID training is working to reinforce is that female genital cutting is not safe nor is it necessary.

During a home visit, Sabreen El Teiri told an outreach worker of her plans to circumcise her youngest daughter as soon as she could afford the cost of the procedure. Because of the USAID training, the outreach worker knew female circumcision came with many complications. The outreach worker did not immediately comment, but went to see Iman Metwally, El Teiri’s literacy class facilitator, to discuss ways to change El Teiri’s mind.

Metwally raised the subject of female circumcision or female genital cutting during class and explained the hazards associated with the practice. She also gave the students examples of 13-year-old girls who are uncircumcised and are healthy without excessive “sexual desire.” Metwally told the class, “It is the mind that controls our desires and if we raise our daughters properly, they will grow up normal.”

Metwally then visited El Teiri at home to discuss the dangers of female genital cutting, relaying the story of a girl who almost bled to death during the procedure. The outreach worker also revisited El Teiri and brought her posters and photos of the female genital cutting process.

Finally, El Teiri was convinced and managed to persuade her husband. The decision against circumcision was supported by the local religious leader as well as the local doctor who stated that circumcision is not a religious obligation and has many associated psychological, health and social complications.

The USAID training is planting the seeds of knowledge in Egyptian communities that are helping to prevent female genital cutting.