

# Evaluation Report

## END FGM Campaign 2009-2013

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Context

This report represents an evaluation of the work undertaken by the END FGM Campaign over four years from 2009 to 2013, led by Amnesty International (AI) in partnership with 15 national organisations across 13 EU member states, and funded by the Human Dignity Foundation.

The campaign aimed to put FGM high on the EU agenda with a view to ensuring the EU takes practical measures to end this practice and provide protection to women and girls who flee their countries because of it. It had five primary objectives:

- Building awareness of FGM across all relevant EU institutions and European Parliament members.
- Existing asylum legislation and institutions to refer to FGM as gender and child specific asylum claim.
- Delivery of an EU strategy on FGM.
- Legislation secured at EU level to prohibit FGM.
- Strengthen NGOs in FGM sector in Europe.

The purpose of this report is to document the impact and effectiveness of the campaign, and draw out lessons for future work.

## Findings

The END FGM was an extremely effective campaign in terms of the impact achieved.

- It has very successfully raised awareness of FGM at the EU institutional level and amongst MEPs, an important building block to achieving the other campaign objectives.
- It was successful in ensuring FGM was reflected in two new EU asylum directives on procedure and reception conditions.
- It helped to ensure gender mainstreaming in the structure and work plans of the new EU asylum agency, the European Asylum Support Office. This resulted in the creation of a gender focussed role within the agency.
- Although no EU strategy on FGM was achieved by the end of the campaign, the campaign has achieved or contributed to a variety of relevant commitments and gains. These are concrete steps towards achieving such a strategy and have made its achievement more likely. These include:
  - building NGO support for and action on obtaining an EU strategy on FGM;
  - building public demand, via the campaign's public rose petal petition, for an EU strategy on FGM;
  - mainstreaming the issue of violence against women and FGM in other EU initiatives such as the Victims Rights Directive;
  - successfully campaigning for the creation of an evidence base on FGM in Europe;
  - strengthening the work of the EU's external dimension on FGM; and

- raising awareness and building skills around the impact of FGM through the e-learning tool for asylum and health professionals supported by the campaign via its END FGM fund and developed by a group of campaign partners.
- Although no legislation to prohibit FGM was secured, the campaign has worked towards gaining greater support for this demand through a focus on increasing support for the Council of Europe Convention dealing with violence against women (known as The Istanbul Convention). This includes campaigning for the EU's accession to the treaty.
- The capacity of NGOs in the FGM sector in Europe has been strengthened by the campaign, in particular, through the development of the campaign's partnership with 15 NGOs across 13 EU member states. This includes increasing expertise on the issue of FGM, increasing campaigning skills at national and EU level and developing the skills needed to co-ordinate around a common agenda on FGM.
- The campaign has achieved objectives that were not necessarily envisaged at the start of the campaign. This has included:
  - building public consciousness of FGM, not least through the remarkable success of the rose petal petition which gained over 42,000 signatures; and
  - impacts achieved at national level in some of those countries where partner organisations are located.
- Some capacity for sustainability of the gains made in the context of the campaign has been developed. However sustainability is not assured, not least because of the changing political environment, the absence of an organisation in a position to lead the next phase of the campaign, and potential loss of the expertise and leadership provided by the campaign team.
- The human rights framework has been instrumental in providing a context for the campaign. This has enabled the issue of FGM to be dealt with head on as a breach of numerous fundamental rights, which cannot be dismissed as a cultural or religious issue and is empowering for those who have been directly affected by FGM.
- The campaign has used a highly effective mix of strategies and methods by which to advance the campaign's demands, namely: lobbying and advocacy, partnership working and active participation, empowerment and involvement of rights holders, media and communications and public campaigns. These strategies were used in parallel throughout the campaign requiring high levels of skill, flexibility and strategic know-how on the part of the campaign team.
- The campaign was highly responsive to the ever changing environment in which it was operating. It was effective in discussing new challenges openly with its partners and the campaign's funder and in a way that fostered joint decision making around appropriate responses.

A full set of conclusions appears at the end of this report.

# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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This report represents an evaluation of the work undertaken by the END FGM Campaign over four years from 2009 to 2013, led by Amnesty International (AI) in partnership with 15 national organisations across 13 EU member states, and funded by the Human Dignity Foundation. Although originally awarded a 3 year grant, AI was able to make adjustments so that the grant supported the campaign over 4.5 years.

The campaign aimed to put FGM high on the EU agenda with a view to ensuring the EU takes practical measures to end this practice and provide protection to women and girls who flee their countries because of it.

The purpose of this report is to address twelve evaluation questions (set out in Appendix 1) agreed with AI. In general terms these cover the impact and effectiveness of the campaign, and seek to draw out lessons for future work, not just in the area of FGM, but more broadly. Rather than answer each evaluation question in turn, they have been taken into account in the way the report has been structured. The report does not seek to chart in depth the work of the campaign over the four year period it has been in operation.

The remainder of this section provides a brief overview of the approach and methodology used in the evaluation, the context within which the campaign took place and it concludes with a brief description of the campaign over the last 4 years.

## 1.2 EVALUATION PROCESS

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### 1.2.1 Approach

The overall approach to the evaluation was developed to:

- meet AI's interest in strategic learning with respect to the out-working of the campaign in relation to FGM but also more broadly on other campaigning issues;
- to enable AI and the campaign partner organisations to understand and demonstrate the impact of its campaign; and
- to give an indication of the efficacy of the campaign methodologies and strategies.

The measurement of the impact of advocacy and campaigning focussed on legal and policy change presents a wide range of challenges. Demonstrating the relationship between the actions of a specific advocacy organisation and legal or policy change is difficult since this typically occurs over the long term and is stimulated by a range of, ever changing, emerging and often unpredictable, factors and actors. The END FGM campaign's contribution has therefore been assessed in this context.

In developing an overall approach to the evaluation, the evaluators sought to take account of the challenges of evaluating complex advocacy campaign efforts while at the same time being able to address the campaign's priority of identifying the impact and effectiveness of the campaign.

## 1.2.2 Methodology and Analysis of Materials

In preparation of this evaluation report, the main review methods used by the evaluators were desk top research and consultation with a range of internal and external stakeholders. This included:

- a number of meetings with the Campaign Director by telephone;
- a review of AI monitoring and other reports and published documents relevant to the campaign including:
  - AI's own internal evaluation reports – including those covering the campaign as a whole, various events, and communications;
  - END FGM campaign submissions, reports and other public documents;
  - a range of internal reports including reports to the Board of AI Ireland and AI's European Directors Forum;
  - documents about the campaign objectives and strategies;
  - campaign work and advocacy plans and notes of internal meetings;
  - reports to the Human Dignity Foundation;
  - external documentation – including reports, statements, resolutions;
  - documentation for/relating to the national partner organisations, including contract of engagement, reporting arrangements, various templates, some internal evaluations completed by partners;
  - Memorandum of Understanding with AI national sections and the END FGM campaign;
  - documentation and reports relating to the END FGM Fund;
- a consultation towards the end of the campaign with 28 stakeholders; and
- a consultation towards the end of the campaign with all 3 AI campaign staff.

Stakeholders asked to take part in the consultation were drawn from a list of participants suggested by AI representing the campaign partner organisations, the campaign's Strong Voices (people who have direct experience of FGM), the campaign's main targets including decision makers and key influencers, and those organisations and people with whom the campaign had a close strategic working relationship. For ease of reference in the remainder of the report the campaign partners will be referred to as such, people with direct experience of FGM as Strong Voices (or on occasion rights holders) and all others as 'external stakeholders'.

An overview of stakeholders consulted is outlined in Table 1 below. A full list of is contained in Appendix 2.

**Table 1 Categories of stakeholders consulted**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number consulted</b>
Representatives from partner organisations	12
Strong voices	2
Decision Makers/Influencers	7
Intergovernmental, non-governmental and academic organisations	4
Representative from funding body	1
Journalist	1
Artist	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

The interviews took place on a non-attributable basis and each person was interviewed according to a template of agreed questions chosen to feed into the twelve core evaluation questions.

Those interviewed had varying degrees of knowledge about and contact with the campaign. As such not all participants were able to express a view on all of the questions asked. In addressing the evaluation questions in this report, we have based our assessment on our review of documents, consultation with AI staff and partners organisations together with the views expressed by external stakeholders. Where it is meaningful, number of interviewees who gave a particular response has been inserted into the text as a number in brackets and illustrative quotes are italicised.

## **1.3 CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW**

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### **1.3.1 Context around development of the campaign**

The impetus for the establishment of the END FGM campaign came from the Human Dignity Foundation (HDF), a funding organisation, which has a particular focus on the reduction of violence against women and children including tackling harmful traditional practices. HDF had been supporting work on FGM in Sierra Leone and saw the need for more co-ordinated action at the European level. With an operational office in Dublin, it began discussions with AI Ireland about its possible involvement.

As a practice that raises a multiplicity of human rights issues, the global AI movement has had an active interest in FGM since the early 1980s and has undertaken work, both centrally through its International Section (IS) and nationally through some national sections, for over thirty years. In the absence of any emerging other actor to be in a position to co-ordinate a Europe wide campaign, AI Ireland was successful in gaining HDF's support to establish the campaign in 2009.

The first year of the grant, 2009, was focussed on the set up and ramping up of the campaign. The primary set up tasks included:

- recruitment of staff – a Director, Advocacy Officer, Media and Network Officer and later an Administration Officer (part-time);
- obtaining office space within the European Institution Office (EIO) of Amnesty International in Brussels;
- identifying and establishing a network of national partner organisations;
- working with partners to establish the name and branding of the campaign;
- developing documents and templates to support the partner organisations;
- drawing up documents clarifying the role of/agreement with the partners and Strong Voices;
- drafting a memorandum of understanding to clarify the working relationships with partners and AI national sections;
- drafting a document, setting out a detailed policy position, to clarify how the campaign fitted within the AI movement; and
- establishing an Advisory Committee of experts on FGM.

Simultaneously, the campaign team started developing and working on the substance of the campaign (see section 2 below).

### 1.3.2 Campaign Objectives/Outcomes

In its first year the campaign set itself 5 objectives which it would seek to achieve by the end of the campaign. These were:

- i. building awareness of FGM across all relevant EU institutions and European Parliament members;
- ii. existing asylum legislation and institutions to refer to FGM as gender and child specific asylum claim;
- iii. delivery of an EU strategy on FGM;
- iv. legislation at EU level to prohibit FGM; and
- v. strengthen NGOs in FGM sector in Europe.

As outline in Section 3.3 below, at particular moments during the campaign these objectives were reviewed and reassessed in light of changing external factors. Where it became clear a particular objective was not going to be achieved within the lifetime of the campaign thought was given as to how to work towards creating conditions where the outcome sought could be more easily achieved in the future, albeit outside the 4 year window of the campaign. The campaign objectives were therefore not allowed to limit the campaign's direction of travel towards achieving its overall aim but rather provided important focus for developing and honing on-going advocacy and campaigning strategies.

### 1.3.3 External Factors

External factors exerted a significant influence on the campaign. Most notable has been the wide-spread socio-economic crisis in the EU and the consequent budget cuts driven by fiscal consolidation and austerity measures.

This has inevitably meant a contraction of funding available for NGOs at national and EU level at a time when there is, precisely because of the crisis, a degree of erosion of social cohesion meaning NGOs have increased work to do at the domestic level. This has impacted on the capacity of NGOs considerably with many seeing reductions in overall budgets and staffing numbers and, for some, undermining their overall financial stability and possibly viability. In this context, NGOs are likely to feel they have to prioritise issues which they feel, or are seen by their constituency, to be



their 'core business' and less likely to dedicate time to an issue perceived to be as falling outside this remit. This has in some cases led to NGOs adopting a shorter term vision with a view to attracting an ever diminishing pool of funds rather than working towards a longer term vision or goal. There is a tendency for advocacy and lobbying to be the first casualty of diminishing funds within NGOs as this sort of work is harder to get funding for.

However the crisis is not limited to the fields of employment or economic policies. A number of EU member states have witnessed social unrest, public protest, anti-migrant initiatives by political parties, decreasing trust in government or neighbouring states or the violent expression of extremist ideology. Some extremist ideology has gained a greater foothold in EU member states with some elements of the political rhetoric and policy positions advocated by parties and groups adhering to such ideologies gaining more widespread acceptance. To counter the rise of parties with anti-immigration and anti-foreigner stances some traditional parties have adopted tougher stances on issues relating to security, migration, integration, social welfare or the accommodation of religious practices.<sup>1</sup> This shift in political discourse means that issues around FGM have at times fed into or become entwined with the anti-foreigner dimension of the debate, which leads more readily to solutions which centre around criminalisation – also perceived to be a quick fix, low cost solution – rather than looking more broadly at issues of prevention and provision of services to those affected by the practice.

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion see Fundamental Rights Agency (2013), Fundamental Rights: Challenges and Achievements in 2012, particularly the Focus Section on the impact of the crisis on fundamental rights in the EU.

## 2. IMPACT OF THE CAMPAIGN

### 2.1 HAVE THE GOALS OF THE FGM CAMPAIGN BEEN ACHIEVED?

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#### 2.1.1 Building Awareness of FGM across all relevant EU Institutions and European Parliament Members

##### Position at the start of the campaign

As the campaign started in 2009, FGM did not have much prominence as a topic at EU level. It was seen primarily as an issue for the external dimension of the EU with EU involvement in the 2003 and 2008 Cairo High Level Meetings on FGM.<sup>2</sup> The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly had passed a resolution in 2001 calling on member states of the Council of Europe to take action at national level.<sup>3</sup> In 2001 the European Parliament adopted a resolution which was already calling on the Commission to draft a strategy.<sup>4</sup> Just as the campaign started its work, the European Parliament passed a second Resolution in 2009, calling for action on FGM within the EU.<sup>5</sup>

At the start of the campaign in 2009, the main role the EU saw for itself in relation to FGM was via funding initiatives. Externally this was via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights – to promote democracy and human rights in non EU countries. Internally via the DAPHNE programme which aims to contribute to the protection of children, young people and women against all forms of violence and attain a high level of health protection, well-being and social cohesion.

##### Impact Achieved

Building awareness is an important building block to achieving all the other campaign objectives. Raising levels of awareness – politically and publicly – creates conditions more likely to favour action on FGM. So it is fair to say that work on this objective is relevant to and, to some extent, overlaps with all the other campaign objectives, and vice versa.

The building of awareness at EU level is partly illustrated by a multiplicity of gains over the 4 years of the campaign. The campaign's language is reflected in a number of official documents. Also external stakeholders have stated the work of the campaign had a bearing on or contributed to particular outcomes with relevance to FGM. In many cases this reflected the campaign's holistic approach encompassing prevention of the practice, protection of women and girls and provision of services, as well as criminalisation.

- The first ever reference to violence against women including FGM in the Stockholm Program on Justice and Home Affairs.
- The European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy adopted in Sept 2010, reiterated commitments of the Stockholm Action Plan for a European strategy

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<sup>2</sup> Cairo Conference "Afro-Arab Expert Consultation on Legal Tools for Prevention of FGM" High Level Meeting, June 2003 and Cairo Declaration FGM + 5, High Level Meeting, December 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution 1247 (2001).

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament resolution on female genital mutilation (2001/2035(INI))  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P5-TA-2001-0476+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

<sup>5</sup> EP Res 24/03/2009 on Combating FGM in EU (2008/2071(INI))

on violence against women and FGM and reflected some of the campaign demands. The action plan for the strategy also reflected the campaign demands on gender mainstreaming in health and international protection policies.

- Commitments of all EU institutions, pushed for by the campaign, to adopt a strategy on FGM - albeit the Commission has yet to adopt such a strategy.
- Joint resolution adopted by the European Parliament in June 2012 on ending FGM, which it was acknowledged in external stakeholder interviews the campaign had a direct influence on in terms of the language used and the levels of support gained from MEPs.
- A Joint statement by 6 EU Commissioners reflecting the campaign's approach and calls for focus on prevention of FGM.
- Launch of an open consultation on future EU actions on FGM, which will result in a communication in November 2013.

An increase in levels of awareness is also evidenced through the interviews with external stakeholders and campaign partners.

There was unanimous agreement among the external stakeholders that awareness levels at the EU level had increased over the 4 years of the campaign (14/14). Some felt (3/12) it had increased a little or had only increased for those MEPs or others who were already responsive to the issue but the majority (9/12) felt awareness across the EU institutions had been raised significantly:

*"Four years ago FGM was a subject that was difficult to talk about but now it is completely acceptable as an appropriate topic – there is a big difference in terms of awareness of the issue and ease of addressing the issue...politically the issue within the EU is more mainstreamed."*

*"Over the four years FGM has been put on the EU agenda."*

*"Awareness has been hugely raised over the last four years – there has been a massive step forwards."*

*"There is a real change, some key MEPs are more aware, officials and desk officers in the Commission are more aware, and there is a real growing awareness amongst decision makers within the EU institutions."*

Many external stakeholders felt that this aspect of the campaign was one of its main achievements. What follows is a sample of responses when asked the question 'what was the main achievement of the campaign':

- *"Making the Commissioner do something on FGM – they [the campaign] have been very insistent, precise, consistent."*
- *"[The campaign] has done a lot of activities, particularly the public actions involving the rose petals and art works, which has generated awareness and interest at EU level."*
- *"[The campaign]...created the debate and played a persuasive role in getting MEPs to sign up to their demands...it's impressive that they got everyone on the same page."*

- *“Getting the EU to focus on the issue and shaping the debate at EU level.”*
- *“Putting FGM on the agenda at a policy level in the EU.”*

The partner organisations nearly all (11/12) and one Strong Voice (1/2), without prompting, also cited increasing awareness at EU level as one of the primary achievements of the campaign.

The success of the campaign’s public mobilisation and campaigning work has also impacted on raising levels of awareness at national level. Notable campaign activities in this regard included the Five Stops of End FGM tour, where the strategy document agreed by the campaign partners was launched in five member states, the rose petal petition which has to date gained over 42,000 signatures and the Art for Action tour (public campaigns are discussed at 3.2.5 below). However, some external stakeholders (3/12) working within EU institutions questioned how the petition itself would impact on getting policy or legal change:

*“Petitions are effective to raise public awareness but have little if any impact in getting changes to legislation. They don’t have much impact within the institutions of the EU.”*

However two external stakeholders working within EU institutions saw the public actions as effective steps along the way to achieving change, saying:

*“The rose petals made a good connection to the issue for MEPs – it was memorable.”*

*“It helped [x] remember the issue.”*

A number of external stakeholders talked about the powerful image and impression made by the art pieces, created out of the rose petal petitions, and felt they were a good way of raising awareness:

*“The art work made it memorable. So many events merge into one another so it’s important to do something that people will remember. If they remember the event they are more likely to remember the issue.”*

There is clear evidence that this campaign objective has been met and the campaign has successfully through steady and consistent deployment of various strategies/methods (see section 3) raised awareness of FGM across the EU.

## 2.1.2 Existing Asylum Legislation and Institutions to Refer to FGM as Gender and Child Specific Asylum Claim

### Position at the start of the campaign

At the start of the campaign there was very little guidance around FGM and asylum, although the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had clarified that the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees is applicable to cases of gender-related persecution, including FGM. In May 2009 UNHCR produced detailed guidelines on how to treat claims for refugee status relating specifically to FGM.

Over the period of the campaign the EU began and completed, in June 2013, its work on the Common European Asylum System, revising and streamlining the qualification, reception and procedures of asylum seekers across Europe.

## Impact Achieved

The campaign has been very active in the area of asylum. It was a strategic issue to target as the EU has clear competence in this area, giving more opportunity for leverage and impact.

In 2010 the EU started work on establishing the Common European Asylum System. The campaign worked hard to influence the new directives emanating out of this process on qualification, reception and procedure resulting in the first two of these referencing gender, age and FGM, despite some resistance from the European Council which proved difficult to convince of the need to specifically make reference to FGM. The Qualification Directive adopted in late 2011 mentions FGM in the preamble making it clear that it falls within the scope of the Directive. The Reception Conditions Directive endorsed by the European Council in October 2012 states those suffering from the consequences of FGM should receive appropriate health care services during the asylum process.

The campaign responded to the establishment of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) – a new EU agency on asylum – by working to ensure gender mainstreaming in its structure and work plans. A digest on “*En-gendering the EASO*” was developed in collaboration with two allies, the European Woman’s Lobby and ILGA- Europe (the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association). Meetings were held with the EASO’s Director and staff and the campaign ensured regular questions on FGM and gender were put to the Director when before the European Parliament. It was reported in interviews with external stakeholders that this work of the campaign resulted in the creation of a gender focussed role within the EASO and has led to the development of a module on gender in asylum (including FGM) for the European Asylum Curriculum (EAC), both of which were key campaign demands.<sup>6</sup> One external stakeholder referred to this as a “*huge achievement*” of the campaign.

The campaign partners from Cyprus, the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS), in partnership with Family Planning Association Portugal (APF), the Italian Association for Women in Development (AIDOS) and Akina Dada Wa Africa (AKIDWA) in Ireland, developed a free E-learning tool for health, asylum and social work professionals “*United to End FGM*” formally launched in March 2013. This was funded by the campaign’s END FGM fund (discussed below) and had endorsement from UNHCR – a key strategic ally for the campaign in its work on asylum. Having this endorsement brings a particular stamp of credibility and broader potential reach of the tool. An evaluation of the piloting phase of the tool, by way of an online questionnaire, was conducted from March – July 2013. It showed a good spread of participants from across the globe (90 countries) and from a spread of professional backgrounds had used the tool, ranging across the health sector, education, community based services, national government institutions, international institutions, and EU institutions. Participants provided positive feedback on issues such gaining **new** information about FGM which they will be **able to apply directly** in the course of their employment.

The campaign objectives relating to asylum were met and the campaign responded appropriately and proactively to new opportunities and levers as they arose in this field.

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<sup>6</sup> The EAC is an EU Member State initiative intending to enhance the capacity and quality of the European asylum process as well as to strengthen practical cooperation among the European asylum/immigration systems. It will provide common vocational training for employees of the Immigration and Asylum Services in Europe.

## 2.1.3 Delivery of an EU strategy on FGM

### Position at the start of the campaign

As explained more fully above (see section 2.1.1 above) at the start of the campaign, FGM did not have much prominence as a topic at EU level. It was seen primarily as an issue for the external dimension of the EU and relevant to EU funding initiatives. There were resolutions of the European Parliament in 2001 and 2009 calling for EU action on FGM and one resolution of the Council of Europe called on member states of the Council of Europe to take action on FGM.

### Impact achieved

The work undertaken under this objective has been multifaceted and has involved a wide range of activities and employed all the campaign strategies and methods discussed below.

Initially it involved the development, in conjunction with partner organisations, of five agreed key areas of activity, encompassed in the FGM strategy, to guide the work of partners and Strong Voices. This strategy was widely disseminated with a formal launch at EU and national level in the Five Stops to END FGM tour. The five key dimensions of the strategy are:

- i. data collection;
- ii. health;
- iii. violence against women and children;
- iv. asylum; and
- v. EU development co-operation.

Early in the campaign there were positive indications, with good reflection of campaign demands in some key texts, that progress would be made in relation to obtaining an EU strategy on FGM. The Stockholm Programme Action Plan of 2009 included provisions to fight FGM among its initiatives on the issue of gender-based violence. In September 2010 the proposal of the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men recognised the need for a strategy to combat FGM. On International Women's Day 2010 each Commissioner pledged their support to the Women's Charter, committing strengthened action against FGM.

The European Parliament has also been active on the issue of the adoption of an EU strategy on FGM. As a result of the campaign's activities, 150 MEP candidates – 50 of whom were elected – signed a Declaration of Intent committing to prioritise ending FGM if they were elected in 2009. FGM has been highlighted yearly in the Parliament's Human Rights in the World Reports since 2009. Perhaps most significantly, the European Parliament, with intensive involvement from the campaign, passed a resolution in June 2012 calling for an end to FGM in Europe and abroad through prevention, protection measures and legislation and reminded the Commission of its commitment to develop a strategy to combat violence against women including FGM.

The campaign team undertook a number of activities aimed at raising awareness of the need for this strategy, including it within its 'Sign A Rose Petal' action.

However, by late 2010 it became clear that the European Commission was reluctant to adopt a strategy on Violence against Women and FGM after publication of a paper

which raised doubts about the legal basis for a Directive on Violence Against Women and Children. The Commission stated that the main action in this area would be the Victim's Rights Directive. While the campaign continued to call for a strategy and action plan on violence against women and FGM, it also undertook concerted work on the Victim's Rights Directive.

The campaign team had a direct impact on the Victim's Rights Directive adopted in October 2012, working closely with MEPs on amendments, so that it obliges states to provide support service to victims of violence, including those of FGM.

The campaign steadily built commitment for data collection work on FGM to be undertaken by the European Institute for Gender Equality working closely with both the Institute and the Commission's Vice President, Viviane Reding, at whose request the study was undertaken. When this was commissioned, the campaign was represented on the advisory committee, and influenced the content and recommendations of the report published in March 2013.<sup>7</sup>

The campaign also worked to ensure that the EU uses its influence in external relations to advocate for ending FGM across the globe, by including FGM in an resolution of the European Parliament on Human Rights in the World, ensuring that gender is highlighted in the EU torture guidelines and is included in training provided by the European External Action Service.

In the last year of the campaign, the European Commission became more active in its approach to FGM. On 6 February 2013 six EU Commissioners confirmed the EU's commitment to end FGM. On 6 March 2013 a high level round table on FGM was organised by the European Commission where the END FGM campaign's demand for EU action was supported. On that day, the Commission launched a consultation with civil society on combatting FGM in the EU, to which AI had submitted a response. The Communication on FGM resulting from this process is expected in November 2013.

In summary the primary impacts of work under this objective include:

- building co-ordinated, NGO and UN agencies support for and action on obtaining an EU strategy on FGM;
- flushing out the blockages to the development of an EU strategy to enable them to be more easily addressed;
- building public demand and create a base of online supporters, via the Rose Petal Campaign, for an EU strategy on FGM;
- mainstreaming the issue of violence against women and FGM in other EU initiatives such as the Victim's Rights Directive;
- campaigning for, and bringing about, the development of an evidence base on FGM in Europe; and
- strengthening the work of the EU's external dimension on FGM.

While the objective has not been fully met within the lifetime of the campaign, a huge amount of work has been undertaken and progress made representing crucial steps along the path to achieving the sought for outcome of an EU strategy on FGM.

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<sup>7</sup> European Institute of Gender Equality (March 2013), "*Study to Map the Current Situation and trends of female genital mutilation in 27 EU Member States and Croatia*".

## 2.1.4 Legislation to prohibit FGM

### Position at the start of the campaign

While most member states have some measure of legislation dealing with FGM, there is no legislation at EU level. It was felt that getting such a Directive, which focussed not just on criminalisation of the practice but also dealt with issues of prevention and protection of those at risk, would be an important tool for sustaining the achievements of the campaign. It would not only be legally binding on member states but would also clearly place the issue on the EU agenda and be embedded in its legal system. It would have an impact on the resources available at EU level for work in FGM.

### Impact Achieved

In 2010 the campaign was successful in gaining political commitment for a Directive on FGM. Following lobbying from the campaign, Commission's Vice-President Viviane Reding called for legislation on FGM during a European Parliament hearing and a letter from her in 2011 announced that a Green Paper on elimination of FGM – the first step in the process – would be published. The campaign team emphasised the importance of any such instrument avoiding a limited focus on criminalisation of the practice and the necessity for it to include concrete measures for prevention of the practice and protection for those at risk. The campaign took the view that an approach limited to criminalisation could contribute to the stigmatisation of migrant communities and would in any event have limited results in tackling such a strong social convention.

However by 2011 there appeared to be a reluctance to deliver on this commitment. Those within the European Commission reported some doubt about the legal basis for such a Directive. However there was also political resistance. There was an increasing focus at EU and member state level on the financial crisis and a reticence to get involved in any action with a cost implication. As charted above (see section 1.3.3), there was also a rise in anti-migrant discourse, and a general lack of support for or focus on robust human rights mechanisms.

In this context, the campaign entered a period of internal reflection and considered how it should best respond to the fast changing external environment. A number of options were considered, and it was decided to focus on a call on the EU and member states to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combatting Violence Against Women – the Istanbul Convention – which opened for signature in May 2011. The campaign felt this would be a strong basis from which to demand the EU adopt a strategy on FGM or VAW and to ensure that resources are dedicated to the issue.

The campaign used a number of strategies – media, public campaigns, advocacy and lobbying – to encourage states to sign and ratify the Istanbul Convention. The campaign team worked closely with Council of Europe officials to reinforce the effectiveness of its lobbying effort to get states and the EU to sign up. It is very difficult to measure the impact of the campaign's work, but AI reported there had been a good rate of signatures, albeit slower numbers of ratifications, of member states. The position of the EU is awaited but there has been some activity initiated by the campaign raising awareness of the issue in several European Parliament resolutions and the accession of the EU is supported publicly by some MEPs.

The adoption of an EU Directive is a long term endeavour – longer than the timeframe of this campaign – which, as the campaign experienced, is both highly



technical and highly political. The rapidly changing external environment in Europe meant that progress in getting a Directive on FGM stalled, with attention being drawn away to the financial crisis. It also opened up a risk that proposed legislation just focussing on criminalisation could feed into the rising anti-migrant sentiment across Europe. The campaign made an appropriate decision, in this context, to change tack and look at alternative ways of creating conditions whereby positive gains at EU level on FGM would be more likely in the future.

## 2.1.5 Strengthen NGOs in FGM sector in Europe

### Position at the start of the campaign

At the start of the campaign, while there were in some member states organisations with considerable expertise on FGM which had been working on this issue for some time, this was not true in the majority of cases. In some member states there was no organisation working actively on FGM, and in others the relevant organisation had minimal knowledge or awareness and/or did not see it as an issue that merited focus given the multiplicity of issues facing many organisations.

The only opportunity for pan European co-ordination and work on FGM for NGOs was via the European Network for The Prevention of FGM (EuroNet-FGM). Thanks to Daphne funds, it conducted a successful piece of work on developing National Action Plans in some EU member States in 2008-2009. However, from 2010, this network started facing internal challenges and became, in effect, dormant.

Therefore at the start of the campaign there was minimal pan European work on FGM amongst NGOs and no clear leadership driving a common agenda or plan of action for NGOs at EU level.

### Impact Achieved

The campaign gave a real focus to strengthening and building the capacity of NGOs in the FGM sector in Europe to work in a co-ordinated and coherent way towards agreed common aims. Its main actions included:

- establishing a partnership of 15 organisations across 13 member states;
- Involving 5 Strong Voices – people with direct experience of FGM – over the lifetime of the campaign, integrating them into the partner meetings as the campaign progressed;
- providing funding to the partners - €5000 per year for first 3 years to support their work and development of organisational work plans;
- developing and administering the END FGM fund – providing project funding – to strengthen cross partnership/cross national working on FGM;
- facilitating the development of an END FGM strategy around which partners focussed their work on the campaign – launched by partners in 5 member states;
- involving the partnership in significant public campaigns – rose petal action petition and Art of Action tour;
- providing access to decision makers and involvement in high level meetings for partners and Strong Voices where appropriate;
- training provided to partners – proactively and reactively;
- developing tools and providing technical/practical assistance to partners in their work on FGM;
- facilitating partners applying for EU funding;
- promoting evaluation of interactions with partners and meetings for partners;

- facilitating exchange of good practice, information, expertise amongst partners; and
- developing tools to aid collective decision making including on the future of the campaign from 2014 onwards.

While the effectiveness of the partnership working of the campaign will be considered below as a major strategy/method of campaign, the impacts of this work is summarised below:

- Significant strengthening of awareness, knowledge and expertise of NGOs on FGM – particularly as regards those whose knowledge base was at a low level at the start of the campaign. For all NGOs a sharing of experience and best practice has been particularly enriching and helpful.
- A strengthening for some NGOs in their skills around strategies and methods used in such a campaign, in particular media and communications work and lobbying and advocacy both nationally and at EU level.
- An increased awareness on the importance and potential impact of EU action on FGM.
- An increased understanding of the effectiveness of working in a co-ordinated, transnational, strategic way around common goals.
- An increase in organisations working on transnational joint projects – particularly by the introduction of the END FGM fund.

The campaign team made efforts to address the issue of sustainability throughout the lifetime of the campaign. This has included consideration of different models of how the campaign might continue and the establishment of a working group to take that work forward. However, although there is sustainability in relation to some aspects of the work, there appears to be a gap in relation to partner organisations committing to lead the next phase of the campaign. This leadership will be important to ensure the achievements made can be capitalised on fully from 2014 onwards. It is unclear why this is the case, although the decreasing resources available to national NGOs, leading to a tendency to focus on NGO's 'core business' together with uncertainty around funding for the next phase of the campaign, has most likely had a significant impact on their ability to take on the leadership of the campaign (see section 1.3.3 above).

## **2.2 HAVE THERE BEEN ANY UNINTENDED/UNFORESEEN IMPACTS?**

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There are indications that there have been broader or possibly unforeseen impacts and implications of the work of the campaign. These include:

### **Raising Public Consciousness**

The campaign has contributed, in some areas and to some degree, to a broader level of awareness raising than originally planned for therefore having an impact beyond the specific campaign objective in this area which focussed on the EU institutions and MEPs.

One area where this has been observed is in the context of the rose petal petition. This exceeded all expectations in gaining over 42,000 signatures – engaging therefore a significant number of individuals in the issue across Europe. Some the

partners, notably AIDOS, made a very significant contribution to the volume of signatures secured. It made a particular effort to engage grass roots and migrant community organisations to sign the petition and facilitated this by using the paper rose petal petitions, as these groups were less inclined to sign up online. Awareness therefore has been raised on the part of those who signed the petition.

More evidence of the reach of the campaign's awareness raising can be found in the spread of people who registered to use the e-learning module, when this was piloted for three months. Participants, who reported learning new information about FGM, came from 90 countries across 5 continents.

The campaign's reaction to new opportunities to raise awareness also reached a broad audience. The campaign successfully placed a question on violence against women (only one of 6 selected) to European Commission President Barroso on Euronews, reaching 350,000 viewers across Europe.

Also, one external stakeholder reported that there was significant coverage of the issue of FGM in the media in her home country of Brazil on account of her involvement as an art activist in the campaign. There was also reported to be coverage of violence against women and FGM in Somalia when one of the campaign's Strong Voices interviewed the Somali President.

#### Impact nationally in partner Member States

There is evidence that although not an objective of the campaign as such, there was impact in getting measures (or movement towards these by raising the profile of the issue) at a national level as a result of the FGM campaign. This is discussed more fully in the context of partnership working in section 3.2.2 below.

#### The Potential Far Reaching Implications of Building an Evidence Base

One external stakeholder reported that the campaign's lobbying which directly resulted in the commissioning of the mapping study on FGM in Europe, has been an important factor in the decision to preserve the DAPHNE III funding on violence against women rather than collapse it, and therefore reduce it, into a more general pot of money. This stakeholder said this was crucial as DAPHNE III funding will be instrumental in getting NGOs to work together on FGM in the future.

#### Providing an impetus for other initiatives on FGM

One external stakeholder reported that the work of the campaign had been an important trigger and inspiration for UNHCR developing a report on FGM and asylum in the EU. The report, *Too Much Pain: Female Genital Mutilation and Asylum in the EU*, published in March 2013, provides a statistical overview of different aspects of FGM and asylum in EU member states. The aim of the report is to support on-going advocacy with the EU and the Council of Europe on sexual and gender-based violence in general and FGM in particular with regards to the asylum system. It is, therefore, an important bolster to the campaign's objective on asylum.

## **2.3 ARE THE ACHIEVEMENTS SUSTAINABLE?**

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Some capacity for the achievements of the END FGM campaign to endure has been achieved. This is because of:

- the success of the campaign in achieving concrete gains by way of documents, texts and resolutions at EU level that iterate and embed a commitment for action on FGM;
- the capacity of the NGO campaign partners has been developed through the campaign, so that some have been empowered to lobby at EU level for action on FGM;
- the capacity of NGO campaign partners to work on FGM in their own countries has been enhanced, leading to an increase in pressure from national governments at EU level on the issue of FGM;
- a small group of Strong Voices, people who have been empowered to speak about their direct experience of FGM, has been developed partly through the support and assistance of the campaign. They are now committed activists in their own right who will continue to work towards action on FGM at national and EU level;
- an effective and mature partnership of national NGOs working on FGM has been established across 15 EU member states. This is working in a coherent way to a common agenda on action on FGM at the EU level;
- joint working between NGOs within the END FGM campaign partnership has been fostered through involvement in that partnership and particularly those projects funded by the END FGM fund, with the result that new projects by partnership organisations on FGM in Europe have been developed and are seeking funding;
- the value of the EU funding projects on FGM has been proved by the campaign, through its successfully lobbying for the data survey on FGM in Europe. This has helped to show the continued need for the DAPHNE III programme funding; and
- as a result of the lobbying of the campaign, an evidence base has been created on FGM in Europe, clearly demonstrating the on-going need for action on FGM at EU level.

However, sustainability of these gains, and translating them into meaningful action at EU level, is not assured. This is because:

- the political landscape is about to change with European Parliamentary elections and change in European Commission due in 2014. Significant work will be required to garner the necessary level of support from the new actors in that landscape, to get the necessary political buy-in to translate gains made into action;
- a dedicated, Brussels based campaign team was key to the success of the campaign. It is unclear at this point whether partner organisations will be able to commit to leading the next phase of the campaign given competing priorities and uncertainty about possible funding arrangements for the next phase of work.
- if the hub of expertise which resides in the END FGM campaign team is no longer available this will impact significantly on the campaign's ability to work strategically, in a concentrated way, for actions on FGM at the EU level,

including addressing the changed political landscape which will be the reality in 2014.

### 3. EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGIES AND METHODS USED IN THE CAMPAIGN

#### 3.1 CONSEQUENCES OF LOCATING END FGM CAMPAIGN IN A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

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The importance of locating the campaign in a human rights framework was highlighted by all interviewees who expressed a view, across external stakeholders, partners and Strong Voices.

Interviewees expressed its helpfulness in moving away from the perception of FGM as a cultural or religious issue, which people might have some reticence about questioning, and seeing it as a violation of fundamental human rights including:

- the right to physical and mental integrity;
- freedom from violence;
- the right to the highest attainable standard of health;
- freedom from discrimination on the basis of gender;
- freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments; and
- the right to life (when the procedure results in death).

These standards are reflected in a multiplicity of human rights treaties and declarations at international and regional levels.

Comments on framing the campaign within the human rights paradigm included:

*“[Human rights] is a perspective that everyone can share.”*

*“[Putting it in a human rights context] reminds people of the gravity of the issue. Calls it what it is.”*

*“It moves people on who are stuck on seeing it as a cultural or religious issue.”*

*“It has to be the starting point of the campaign – it’s how you engage the decision makers. It’s how you explain its importance.”*

*“Locating it in this way is important for the empowerment of rights holders.”*

Comments from one Strong Voice included:

*“It’s essential to put it in a human rights framework as that is what it is. For years no one would put it in that context. People hear it in a different way when you talk about it as a human rights issue. It cannot then be said any more to be an issue of culture.”*

#### 3.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DIFFERENT STRATEGIES/METHODS

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This section provides a high level overview of the effectiveness of the strategies used in the campaign highlighting what worked well and where the challenges lay. The five main influencing strategies or methods used were:

- lobbying and advocacy;

- partnership working and active participation;
- empowerment and involvement of rights holders;
- media and communications; and
- public campaigning.

A review of the effectiveness of each of the strategies used is set out below. It is, however, important to highlight that all these ways of working were complementary and were used across all of the main objectives.

These strategies were used in parallel throughout the campaign requiring high levels of skill, flexibility and strategic know-how on the part of the campaign team.

### 3.2.1 Lobbying and Advocacy

Lobbying key decision makers is a tried and tested methodology for Amnesty International, which was driving the lobbying and advocacy work at EU level from the campaign office in Brussels. It was a key strategy by which the campaign sought to achieve its objectives throughout the life of the campaign.

Lobbying work started immediately the campaign began in the context of the June 2009 European Parliament elections. The campaign worked with candidates to get a declaration of intent on FGM, subsequently feeding questions to MEPs to question the Commission and the Council and generally garnering support in the parliament for the campaign demands. This included intensive engagement around positively influencing resolutions and legislative processes on FGM, and Violence Against Women, Asylum, Victim's Rights, and on Human Rights in the World Reports. Good engagement with the Commission's Vice-President Viviane Reding, was also established early in the campaign and she indicated strong support for the campaign demands. Relationships were established with key influencers within the Commission, including officials and desk officers.

Support was also secured from the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, Catherine Ashton, and with key targets within the External Action Service (EEAS), the EU's diplomatic corps, which have accepted the need for concerted action on FGM in the EU's external role.

In fact good engagement was achieved with a range of the Commissioners as evidenced by the six who came behind the campaign demand in issuing a joint statement in February 2013 with a focus on prevention and an emphasis on the need for internal and external action from the EU.

EU agencies such as the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Institute for Gender and the European Asylum Support Office, were also appropriately targeted to further particular campaign demands.

The campaign also established good relationships with key stakeholders and mechanisms who could influence particular key areas including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (on asylum), the Council of Europe (on the Istanbul Convention) and other NGOs working at the EU level such as the European Women's Lobby and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association who were key allies of the campaign, particularly in relation to work on gender mainstreaming in the EASO.

The campaign engaged with each of the EU presidencies, crafting demands to the particular context of each presidency and their published priorities. Engagements were therefore different for each presidency but the campaign demands were placed

in AI's memorandum for each new presidency, meetings were held with Permanent Representatives and Ministers, and the campaign took part in relevant presidency led events. The lobbying in many cases took place via the relevant AI national section and/or with the campaign's partner organisation. Both the Belgium and Cypriot presidencies addressed FGM while others focussed on broader issues of gender equality. Despite much work having been undertaken by the campaign and AI Ireland to lobby the Irish presidency there was in effect no outcome, which was disappointing.

The campaign also undertook targeted lobbying at an international level. This was useful not only in the outcome of that work at UN level, but also, according to one external stakeholder, in bringing the relevance of that work directly back to the EU level and leveraging it to gather momentum on the issue. The campaign worked on UN initiatives in a number of areas, including the UN Summit on the review of the Millennium Development Goals, interaction with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and on the first ever UN resolution on FGM adopted in December 2012 which reflected the holistic, broad based, approach of the campaign.

Where appropriate, Strong Voices and partner organisation were involved in lobbying efforts, particularly at high level meetings and conferences involving MEPs and Commissioners, rather than in those meeting which were more technical in nature or aimed at information gathering. However, as noted above, the driver of the advocacy activity was the campaign team based, importantly, in Brussels with close geographical proximity to targets.

Where possible the campaign team would also make use of the opportunity of being in the country of a particular partner to support them in lobbying efforts domestically.

An important element of the campaign's lobbying and advocacy work were its reports and submissions, readily available on the END FGM website.

It is very clear that the campaign undertook highly effective lobbying and advocacy actions. Key elements of this which appeared to work particularly well are outlined below.

#### What worked well?

##### ***'Smart', tailored approach to advocacy***

Many external stakeholders (8/14) particularly highlighted the campaign's lobbying and advocacy as one of its most effective way of working. In particular it was noted that they understood the EU system well and tailored their approach according to what was needed by each part. A number of external stakeholders (3/14) emphasised the appropriateness of locating the campaign within a broader context of gender based violence, heading off the notion that the issue is too specific or narrow to merit particular attention.

Typical comments include:

*"They are very good influencers. They made their contacts well, they know the right people."*

*"They have really good insights in the EU system which is reflected in their submissions and lobbying – they know all the places in the EU system where FGM might be relevant."*



*“They are effective and efficient in knowing what an MEP’s office needs. They crafted their lobbying to the system. They would give me the information in the form I needed.”*

*“The campaign was smart – they lobbied me as they knew I had an interest, but they came knowing where I was coming from. They had done their homework.”*

*“Their frequency of contact is appropriate – many lobbyists are too pushy and you end up ignoring them. AI managed this very well and got the balance right – which is not easy to do.”*

### **Proactive/strategic lobbying**

A number of stakeholders noted that the campaign was particularly proactive in its advocacy and lobbying efforts, responding quickly to new opportunities or points of potential leverage as they emerged:

*“They created the debate – they made FGM a concrete topic of discussion [in context of Victim’s Rights Directive].”*

*“What was really needed was an evidence base. The campaign was instrumental in getting this [the report of the EIGE on FGM in Europe] – they saw the gap and responded to it.”*

*“They know the points of leverage well.”*

### **Levels of expertise and credibility on the issue**

The campaign was respected for its levels of expertise and was a trusted interlocutor on the issue of FGM. A large number of external stakeholders (10/14), unprompted mentioned the expertise of the campaign and its core staff team as a notable strength of the campaign.

*“They have huge credibility. They had expertise we did not have, and we knew we could trust them and rely on their information.”*

*“They have great expertise. They really know what they are talking about.”*

*“[The campaign] is a crucial repository of knowledge on FGM.”*

### **Constructive nature of relationships with targets**

A notable part of the lobbying and advocacy strategy was the quality of the relationships which developed between the staff team and stakeholders. Relationships with key targets appeared to be constructive with the campaign offering expertise, assistance and information at key moments all of which helped develop trust and respect. The campaign team was skilled at maximising the impact of constructive, supportive relationships, to bring influence to bear where a blockage was identified. For example, its relationship with Commission’s Vice-President Reding was critical in getting the mapping study on FGM in Europe commissioned by the European Institute for Gender Equality, as this was done so at her request after being lobbied by the campaign.

### **Quality of underpinning reports and submissions**

The campaign produced a large number of documents, reports and submissions to support its lobbying and advocacy efforts over the lifetime of the campaign. These were a good reflection of the campaign's technical expertise, but were also well and clearly presented. Typical comments from external stakeholders included:

*"Documents are high quality and useful to me."*

*"The campaign's materials are very good."*

*"The documents and publications are good. They produce a broad range of products for different types of people and actors, which is great."*

*"The submission of the campaign was spot on – well in tune with what is possible in the EU system."*

### **High Quality Well Timed Events**

A number of external stakeholders talked about the campaign's various events in particular conferences, high level meetings, Art for Action tour events, and strategy launch events, as an effective part of the campaign's lobbying and advocacy strategy. It was seen to be a good way to engage and target stakeholders and the Art for Action event in Brussels in February 2013 was considered by some key targets to have made an impression as it was 'outside the box' and helped them remember the issue. Comments included:

*"Their conferences are good. Always well organised with good speakers."*

*"Their events are excellent."*

*"They hold excellent events, but in particular they hold them at the right moment as part of a coherent influencing strategy such as running the high level round table in early 2013 in the context of the Commission's consultation on FGM."*

*"[The Art for Action Event in Brussels] was very effective at raising the profile of the issue for the many people who attended, including many from across the EU institutions. It was really memorable."*

### **AI brand/Brussels Base**

The importance of the campaign's location in Brussels is very clear. The ability to have direct access in person to the various parts of and actors in the EU system has been crucial to the campaign's success and this was specifically pointed out by a number of external stakeholders (4/14).

Two external stakeholders also spoke about the benefits of the campaign being located in the AI Europe Office, with a good framework in terms of administration and access routes to targets already in place. The same stakeholders also noted the credibility brought by association with the AI brand – which they felt brings credibility and gravitas.

### **The main challenges**

#### **Perceived Narrowness of the issue of FGM**

A number of external stakeholders (3/14) pointed out that an issue as specific as FGM is difficult to get people to focus on and highlighted how important it was to set it in the broader context of gender based violence. Comments included:

*“One weakness is that the topic is a very specific one. This makes it less likely that people will go for it. It might have been worth presenting the issue within a broader context right from the start- I feel they [the campaign] did this more as time went on.”*

### ***Lobbying of the Irish Presidency***

The campaign worked hard to influence the presidency countries as described above. Trying to influence the Irish presidency was particularly challenging as, despite intensive work in collaboration with AI Ireland which involved identifying and utilising a number of leverage points and opportunities, there was no impact and no gain made in placing FGM and violence against women on the agenda of the Irish presidency. This illustrates how even well planned, strategic lobbying can still have little or no impact, as, in the context of the EU Presidency, the particular state holding the Presidency has ultimate power to decide what it places on the EU agenda.

However, subsequently, the Irish Government has declared it will support EU level action, in response to AI Ireland making their lack of commitment in the context of their EU presidency public. So a lever for future work has been created that the team can use when engaging national governments.

### ***Changing political landscape***

Perhaps the biggest challenge is the upcoming European Parliament elections and change in Commission in 2014. This means that mid 2014 the political landscape, and actors within it, primarily MEPs and Commissioners, will change. The campaign's lobbying and advocacy strategy has inevitably focussed in large part on those actors currently in power and positions of influence. This means a concerted new effort will be needed in 2014 to engage and influence the new actors in relation to FGM if advances made over the last 4 years are not to be lost.

## **3.2.2 Partnership Working and Active Participation**

Capacity building was an objective of the campaign as discussed in section 2.1.5 above, which has been shown to have been successfully undertaken, with the result that capacity of the NGO sector working on FGM has grown over the course of the campaign. Partnership working was also a way of working that was mainstreamed across the whole campaign and its effectiveness is now considered.

Partners were selected after a call for applications which were judged against established selection criteria. The partner organisations were a mix of women's and/or migrant women's grassroots and national organisations with varied experience in the areas of advocacy, provision of health services and advice, research or strategic litigation. Although the partner organisation were very different from each other most are run by or are working with rights holders, that is, communities and individuals affected by FGM.

Contracts were signed with each partner organisations (renewable annually for no more than a total of 3 years) setting out the expectations of the role, and agreeing to pay the partner €5000 a year.

After three years the END FGM fund was established to fund joint work by partner organisations. This was set up following a consultation process with partners which included discussion to identify needs, gaps and existing projects, a written consultation questionnaire for partners' completion and the establishment a process for submitting an expression of interest in leading a project. Projects were chosen by a selection committee using a list of agreed criteria towards the end of 2011 with work commencing in January 2012. The criteria included the transnational nature of the project, the need to advance the five key areas set out in the campaign strategy, levels of intended impact and sustainability.

Two projects were funded (i) an e-learning tool on FGM for health and asylum professionals and (ii) establishing an EU framework on Engaging Communities to end FGM. The first project was delivered in mid- 2013 and its impact has been assessed above (see section 2.1.2). It was an impressive, effective piece of work. The second project has yet to be delivered, having been significantly delayed, with reporting deadlines missed. Its impact cannot therefore be assessed in this evaluation.

The International Secretariat of AI is working towards a common understanding of active participation, and has come up with a useful working definition: 'an empowering and enabling process through which rights holders participate in and influence the processes and decisions which affect their lives in order to gain recognition and attainment of their human rights'. A graph of levels of rights holder participation (also in the internal IS paper on the working definition of active participation), indicating the threshold for active participation, is set out in Annex 3. The model describes a range of levels of participation ranging from unilateral action (with no involvement or consultation of rights holders) to rights holder control (supporting rights holders to work independently, in a position to self mobilize and initiate change).

The campaign sought to achieve active participation through its involvement of partner organisations as well as Strong Voices, people with direct experience of FGM (discussed in section 3.2.3 below).

### What worked well?

#### ***Impact on campaign objectives of raising awareness and getting action at EU level***

The importance of working at national level was highlighted by external stakeholders (9/14) as essential in any EU focussed campaign. It was therefore a particularly important part of the END FGM campaign which was undertaken via the partner organisations. Without the commitment of national governments to an issue, little gain will be made at the EU level. It also brings a level of depth and credibility to the campaign's work.

*"In my view all Brussels based campaigns should have a national aspect to them. It's essential to have a national push if you want to get the European Council to approve things."*

*"Really key to the credibility and effectiveness of the campaign was this unique bridging, through the national partners, of grass root, community based organisations to institutions at the EU level."*

#### ***Impact at national level***

All partner organisations reported there was some impact at national level as a result of involvement in the END FGM campaign. The situation in each member state in relation to FGM is very different, and therefore the impacts were also different. In some cases the campaign had a direct impact, in some cases indirect, in initiating a chain of positive action. Some partners mentioned the campaign team's responsiveness in adapting their advice, approach and support to their particular national context.

Impacts mentioned by partners included:

- raising awareness was mentioned most often both in countries where FGM was very little known about (Hungary, Cyprus, Lithuania) and in those where it was already had some visibility such as in Italy, UK and Belgium: in Italy action around getting huge numbers of signatures for the rose petal petition had a significant impact on raising awareness, particularly amongst migrant communities;
- assisting in getting legislation on FGM enacted in Ireland and Germany;
- assisting in the implementation of the first government programme of action on FGM in Portugal by the END FGM partner sitting on the relevant working group and feeding in the thinking and documents from the campaign;
- becoming a focal point for expertise on FGM as a result of involvement with the campaign, reported to be the case Cyprus and Lithuania; and
- assistance in building a national network in Germany of organisations working on FGM and thereby increasing national lobbying on the issue.

### ***The creation of a learning environment - rich exchange of information, best practice and experience***

Many partners highlighted that the sharing of information, experience and best practice through bi-annual partner meetings was a particularly important aspect of their involvement in the campaign.

*“there was a good sharing of the European and national challenges at partner meetings.”*

*“the most important part of the campaign was sharing experiences and learning from each other.”*

### ***Excellent facilitation from the campaign team a crucial element to effectiveness***

All the campaign partners spoke in very positive terms about the support and facilitation role played by the campaign team in relation to the partner organisations. They felt partners meetings were well managed and strategic and maximised the potential of these meetings.

*“Excellent facilitation role provided to partners by the campaign team”*

*“The meetings were very good, well planned, well led, lots covered in a short time.”*

### ***Training and other supports***

Many partners highlighted the excellent training provided by the campaign team to partners. The team carefully assessed training needs and developed training to meet these. One training session was developed in collaboration with a partner organisation (AIDOS). This was an organic process that worked well, although one representative who started from a low knowledge base felt that they would have liked even more training.

Templates produced by the campaign team to support actions and media engagement were reported to be very useful, particularly by those organisations which were new to the field of FGM. But they were also used, with some adaptations to reflect the national context, by other, more experienced partners.

The expertise of the campaign team was reported by partners to be excellent, and that this was generously shared in meetings, other communications and information flows. Also the web based resource tool was regularly used by some partners.

*“The campaign team gave us resources and encouragement when we lacked confidence working on the issue”*

### ***Effectiveness of the END FGM Fund in the development of cross partner, transnational action***

A number of partners said that as the partnership developed, and good working relationships emerged between partners based on respect and trust, the momentum and effectiveness of the partnership also grew. This was further assisted with the introduction of the END FGM fund which fostered the first proper joint transnational work on projects between partners. This was a good investment of funds in successfully enabling engagement from partner organisations. This was reported to be a positive experience and has encouraged other joint work, or applications for funding for joint work, between partners outside the formal parameters of the campaign.

### ***Active Participation Achieved***

Most partners were happy with the decision making processes within the partnership reporting it to be joint decision making, with care taken by the campaign team to offer option papers and discussion on major strategic decisions that needed to be made: for example, the campaign's response to blockages in achieving legislation on FGM at EU level. A typical comment from this group was:

*“The campaign team involved partners well in all major decisions, for example, in developing the strategy, in deciding what areas to work on, on the launch of the strategy.”*

However some (3/12) felt that it was not as participatory as they would have liked with the campaign team making some key decisions in which they would have liked more involvement.

In general, the level of participation of the partners in decisions varied, with a need to strike an appropriate balance between engagement and efficiency of the campaign. Participatory decision making about all aspects of the campaign's work could have resulted in the work grinding to a halt.

In relation to the bigger decisions affecting the future or strategic direction of the campaign, it appears that joint decision making<sup>8</sup> took place, at the higher end of the scale of active participation. Where decisions were less important it appears to have been more like legitimate consultation<sup>9</sup>, at a slightly lower level of the scale of active participation.

Using the IS working definition for active participation, it seems that this was achieved, with steps taken to make decisions with partners and to overcome the influence of power imbalances in the group. However, it did not reach the highest level of active participation, as the partners did not control the process nor did they share responsibility and leadership for the designing or achieving of campaign goals.

### The main challenges

#### ***Complexity/ resource intensive***

Facilitating a large number of partners across Europe, at significant geographical distance from one another and the campaign team, who had little prior experience of working towards a common agenda at EU level, or in some cases of the EU at all, was complex for the campaign team to manage and was very resource intensive.

This complexity was increased by the very different nature of the partner organisations involved in the campaign – some were already expert on the issue others had virtually no knowledge of it at all, some were working at a national policy/legal level, others were working at grass roots level, some were large well established NGOs and others were much smaller. Many were not well resourced. While this proved a challenge for the campaign team, trying to give such different levels of support and bring organisations with many different priorities around a common agenda, the sheer diversity of experiences and backgrounds also proved to be a strength. It meant the partnership collectively, and uniquely, represented a real depth and breadth of experience across Europe thereby contributing to the joint learning of the whole enterprise.

It was difficult for the campaign team to devise a structure for the administering of the small grants which supported partners using the grant in ways that maximised impact of the investment. Although over time the campaign team changed the way partners were asked to report on funding, to try and direct more strategic use of grants, this was not wholly successful. There were also problems with some partners not meeting deadlines for reports on funding which required considerable resource on the part of the campaign team in pursuing.

#### ***Level of funding and reporting requirements***

Half the partners (6/12) said they felt that the level of funding available for involvement in the campaign was too low. This impacted in some cases in not gaining senior buy in from the partner organisation until later in the process when the campaign had proved itself. It is likely that this also affected the timeliness with which partners submitting their reports to the campaign team.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Joint decision making' in the IS Working Paper on Active Participation of September 2010 is defined as 'processes are designed and decisions made together with rights holders and steps are taken to overcome the influence of power imbalance.'

<sup>9</sup> 'Legitimate consultation' in the IS Working Paper on Active Participation of September 2010 is defined as 'prior to making a decision or designing a process rights holders are offered options and then enabled to assert their views in order that their views inform and influence the direction of the work.'

Although the END FGM fund allowed partners to bid for projects – thereby giving more scope to devise work that could fit within the available budget – the lack of funds continued to be a theme, albeit a minor one, in the two projects supported by the END FGM fund.

In light of the perceived low level of funds available, some partners felt that the reporting requirements required by the campaign to be too onerous. The worsening external funding environment, particularly for NGOs working on these issues, made this problem more acute. However, there was a need for partner organisations to be accountable for the funding received and this needed to entail an appropriate level of reporting.

The establishment of the funder/grantee relationship within the partnership by AI administering and being responsible for, and accountable to the funder for, funds, changed the dynamic of the relationship between AI and partners in a way that did not foster a sense of equality amongst the partner organisations. This was true both in AI's management of the €5000 grants made to partner organisations for the first 3 years of the campaign, and in relation to the END FGM fund.

It might have been worth considering other ways in which the financial support of partner organisations could have been managed, for example, through the services of a third party.

### ***Perceived compromise of visibility of partners***

While not an issue for most partners, one participant reported that the visibility of their organisation was sometimes eclipsed by that of Amnesty International and the END FGM campaign, with the result that they did not get the credit for the work they undertook in the name of the campaign in the website and in some communication materials.

The campaign worked hard to address the question of visibility, developing a separate brand for the campaign, designing the website to include partner logos, and devising guidelines about use of brand, while also acknowledging that the campaign was led by and located within AI. It is also relevant to note that some key external stakeholders, as noted above, said that the AI brand did bring credibility and gravitas to the campaign.

This was a very difficult balance to achieve, and was probably impossible to get right for each partner in each national context given the hugely different environments in which partners were operating. However, the question of visibility was well considered by the campaign and when looked at it the round, it did all that could be reasonably expected to reach the right compromise.

### ***Sustainability of the partnership***

A number of partners (3/12) stated that there was an over-reliance by partners on the campaign team with high levels of contact between the campaign team and partners, and rather less between partners. One noted that the structure of the campaign – with a highly dedicated, expert central team – meant that partners did not assume responsibility to push the campaign forward, partly because many lacked the capacity to do so, but also:

*“it proved too tempting to rely on the professionalism of the campaign team”.*



This partner went on to say that this means that the input of a central team, at this stage, is still needed to carry the work forwards and maximise its potential.

Joint work between partners was certainly fostered by the END FGM fund, with many partners saying this was the real impetus for partners to start working together and many reporting positive experience of doing so.

While ownership of the campaign has been achieved to some extent, with good ownership, nurtured by the campaign team, of the campaign's achievements, it has not yet been achieved as regards taking up the responsibilities and uncertainties of leadership into the next phase of work required in 2014 and beyond.

### ***Relationships with AI national sections***

The campaign team worked hard to try and ensure a smooth engagement between the partners and their relevant AI national sections, drawing up a memorandum of understanding for AI national sections on how to work with campaign partners. The campaign team, being a project of AI Ireland and not a project of the global AI movement, had somewhat limited leverage with national sections.

This relationship between the partners and national AI sections was a mixed bag. In some cases there was no national section, in some the national section was not prioritising work on FGM, in some the working styles of, or working relationships between, the partners and AI national section did not work well or in a way that was conducive to joint working. In some cases the interaction did work very well, either because working relationships were already well established or because this developed over the course of the campaign.

### **3.2.3 Empowerment and Involvement of Strong Voices**

The campaign was crucially supported throughout its lifetime by the involvement of five Strong Voices, four women and one man, people who have been directly subjected to FGM or are indirectly affected through their family and are ready to speak out about their personal experience.

The Strong Voices were identified by partner organisations. They were involved in many aspects of the campaign, in particular acting as its public face in media interviews, and speaking at high level events, meetings and conferences. They were supported by the campaign team on an on-going basis by training and provision of advice around specific events. It was also envisaged that Strong Voices would also be supported in other ways by partner organisations.

#### **What worked well?**

#### ***Powerful element of the campaign which helped create impact across all objectives***

Of the external stakeholders who were aware of the Strong Voices engagement with the campaign (11/14) nearly all (10/11) said their contribution was powerful and effective. Comments included:

*“The issue has a higher profile because of [the Strong Voices].”*

*“Involvement of people with direct experience is essential...they have particular credibility...its means the press picks up the issue and helps get it to a wider audience.”*

*“The events that have involved the Strong Voices have stood out for me.”*

*“Strong Voices had a dual role (i) they are excellent role models able to connect with their own communities and (ii) they are effective in meeting and influencing politicians and making the issue real.”*

The one external stakeholder not in this number said that while personal testimonials are good at attracting media attention and getting public support they are not so effective at influencing politicians *“in my world people get very used to personal testimonies”*.

### ***Growing involvement with the campaign/empowerment***

At the start of the campaign the Strong Voices acted as ambassadors for the campaign’s key demands rather than as partners in it. However, as certain Strong Voices became more empowered there was a natural movement in them becoming more involved with the campaign – moving from ambassadors to active agents – as evidenced by their engagement in partner meetings in the last 2 years of the campaign. The level of engagement of Strong Voices therefore moved towards the active participation end of the spectrum of rights holder participation as the campaign progressed.

One Strong Voice spoke about the increased empowerment she felt when she started attending the partner meetings – before she described being *“in listening mode”* but later she felt it was a two way exchange of information and experience. She said *“I really feel that my voice is listened to and respected”*.

### ***Support from campaign team***

Those Strong Voices interviewed (2/2) both said they felt very supported by the campaign team when it came to the work they were doing for the campaign, such as public speaking and engagement with the media:

*“The team is always really supportive when I do a media interview.”*

*“They ensure I have the right information.”*

The campaign team engaged in a detailed process of offering support in relation to each media interview and public speaking engagements, helping the Strong Voices to assess the impact of their involvement.

The campaign team have also worked effectively to secure new opportunities for Strong Voices and supported them in accessing these.

### ***Embedded within AI global policy on rights holder engagement***

Engagement with rights holders is complex and raises a multitude of ethical issues. AI IS has established a tool on informed consent, to help establish the relationship between AI and an individual as a victim, witness or survivor. This covers the four elements of disclosure (about the nature of AI’s work), voluntariness, comprehension and competence. It was a significant benefit to the campaign to be able to locate its engagement with rights holders within the context of such a policy. The campaign

team has also been able to share its experiences of involving rights holders in the campaign with the Active Participation team in AI IS, thereby contributing to overall learning about rights holder engagement generally.

### The main challenges

#### ***Identifying Strong Voices***

It was difficult for campaign partners to identify people who were able and willing to act as Strong Voices for the campaign. This means the pool of Strong Voices was small and there was a natural attrition in the numbers of Strong Voices – with the campaign losing contact with one and a divergence of approach emerging with another. A number of partners (3/12) said a larger pool would have been preferable as it would have represented better how widespread the practice is, and more personal testimony would gain more media interest.

#### ***Levels of support***

It had been intended that the Strong Voices would be primarily supported by the national partner organisations in the country where they resided. However, although some level of support was forthcoming, it was not as comprehensive as the campaign team had anticipated. The reasons for this varied in each country but it appears that as Strong Voices gained more visibility and became more empowered through their involvement with the campaign, tension was created with partner organisations in some cases. This was exacerbated in the context of an environment where already limited funding for NGOs working on the issue of FGM and violence against women is decreasing. This had two consequences:

(i) the campaign team took on provision of more support than they had originally envisaged, particularly around media work and preparation for public speaking engagements which required intensive staff resource that had not been planned for; and

(ii) the levels of support were at a lower level than was desirable – with little support readily available in relation to any psychological issues that the Strong Voices might face as a result of talking about traumatic experiences publicly, or to address security concerns, when speaking publicly about FGM raised the prospect of reprisals. However the campaign team did take some steps to try and facilitate such support. Although they were not able to provide it themselves the campaign team encouraged the Strong Voices use those supports that they had identified as available, including developing a relationship with local police. The campaign team did however face real challenges in this regard being a significant distance from, and located in a different country to, the Strong Voices. The campaign team did approach AI IS to ask about how to facilitate this sort of support but it appeared that AI did not have a system in place to be able to address this. AI IS's policy on informed consent referred to above does not deal with the psychological support which might be needed if victims, witnesses or survivors are reliving traumatic events. Also it does not address the security issues for people who may, by engagement with AI, be at risk of reprisals.

#### ***Issues around payment***

There were agreed Guidelines for Strong Voices which dealt clearly with the issue of payment. The campaign's advertising material used to attract Strong Voices also made it clear that while it was not, and could not be, a paid position, there were other benefits for Strong Voices in being involved in the campaign. These included

capacity building, training, provision of a platform to speak about the issue of FGM, payment of expenses and support from the campaign team.

Despite these efforts, the issue of payment for Strong Voices seemed to remain an unresolved issue for some Strong Voices and partner organisations. Some of those interviewed appeared not to understand why it was felt appropriate not to pay for the time given by Strong Voices in engaging with the campaign. While the evaluators understand very clearly why this was the case – not least because it would undermine the credibility of their testimony – there still appeared to be a gap in understanding on the part of some Strong Voices and partners in this regard.

### 3.2.4 Media and Communications

The communications strategy of the campaign had three objectives, based around a theory of change that increased awareness about FGM will increase pressure on politicians and decision makers to drive reform. These were:

- create the necessary political and public environment to achieve political change at EU level;
- build a supporter base; and
- offer tools to national partner organisations to build the profile of their work and the issue of FGM in the national media.

Communications regularly used personal testimony, via the campaign's Strong Voices. The Strong Voices were provided with media training and support in their interactions with the media by the campaign team.

The campaign developed, in close co-operation with its partner organisations, its own distinctive brand – a stitched rose – to reflect its own unique nature, being backed by AI but representing a network of national organisations. Guidelines were developed to assist partners in using the logo along with their own logos to help promote partner visibility alongside that of the campaign.

The campaign also offered support to national partner organisations in media work, providing press release templates, training and advice as required.

The primary channels of communication used by the campaign were:

- **Press releases/Opinion Pieces**  
Press releases were used around key dates for FGM, important advocacy moments and in connection with particular campaign events. Opinion pieces were used to build a more detailed case for support or action. The campaign team reported that the Opinion desks of the European Voice and New Europe were favourable to opinion pieces from the campaign and on occasion requested a piece from the campaign.
- **Newsletters**  
Two thousand subscribers received the campaign's bi-monthly newsletter to keep interested individuals updated on the work of the campaign, developments at EU level and aware of future events/dates relevant to the issue of FGM.
- **Website**  
The campaign developed its own website which was launched in September 2009. It received in the region of 64,000 visits in 2010 with a particular increase noted around the Sign A Rose Petal Campaign. In 2012 the campaign

developed a unique resources section to the website, offering a considerable body of information on FGM to support advocacy efforts. It is clear this has become a resource for a wide number of people and institutions with an interest in FGM.

- Social Media

The campaign developed its facebook and twitter profile, using its presence to attract people to the campaign website. The campaign has had some success in accessing journalists and decision makers on Twitter, including UK Minister Lynn Featherstone. The campaign has used live-tweeting in some main events in order to engage global audiences.

- Videos

Videos have been a useful tool for the campaign. Three videos have been released by the campaign (i) *End Female Genital Mutilation: Is Europe Watching?* was launched in February 2012. It was made to reflect the campaign's main messages. It was watched over 10,000 times in the first few weeks (now standing at 17,000); (ii) *It's time to End Female Genital Mutilation – Amnesty International* was launched in February 2013 as a teaser video promoting the Art for Action finale on 27 February 2013. It has been viewed over 4,000 times; (iii) *Art for Action to End Female Genital Mutilation* was launched in April 2013 to showcase the Art for Action finale and has been viewed over 1,500 times.

#### What worked well?

The communications strategy worked well to support lobbying and advocacy across all objectives and fed directly into raising awareness of FGM at EU level, noted to be a major achievement of the campaign. The targeting of media work around particular key dates and events – such as the FIVE STOPS TO END FGM tour and the Art for Action Finale in Brussels – was the most effective way of achieving coverage.

The communications aspect of the campaign was noted by some key external stakeholders, who were campaign targets, to be one of the main strengths of the campaign.

*“The campaign brought media interest to a topic which often gets ignored.”*

*“Their media and communications work was excellent. All channels of communication were excellent.”*

*“Communications was a real strength of the campaign.”*

The use of personal testimony via the involvement of Strong Voices was a particularly strong element of the communications strategy.

*“To have the human story is really important – this really engages people.”*

*“The issue has a much higher profile in the media because of the involvement of the Strong Voices.”*

The branding of the campaign was seen as effective by most of the external stakeholders who expressed a view on the topic (6/7) with the potential to endure beyond this phase of the campaign, although one external stakeholder said they did not like the logo. Comments included:

*“I can picture the rose – its stays in the mind.”*

*“It’s a very strong brand. A pure symbol that everyone can relate to.”*

*“I like the rose – it’s a very positive symbol and it’s good the campaign use this sort of positive messaging.”*

The web based resource was highlighted as a unique and useful tool by a number of external stakeholders, who said they used it regularly as a reliable ‘one stop shop’ for all information on FGM. Also, public reports and statements of some of the campaigns targets show that they have used campaign website as a primary tool.

*“The campaign’s website is an important repository of knowledge – I use it regularly.”*

The campaign made innovative responses to a challenging media environment including (i) creative use of videos to attract people to the campaign; and (ii) effective use of unusual or ‘one off’ opportunities such as being selected to put a question the European Commission President on Euronews. The campaign successfully placed a question to him on violence against women, thereby reaching a large multinational audience who may not engage in gender issues on a regular basis or at all.

### The main challenges

Much of the media at EU level is focussed in the European Commission rather than the European Parliament. As much of the campaign’s early work was focussed at the Parliament it was difficult to get coverage of the campaign’s press releases in the early stages of the campaign. However as the campaign rolled out, and Commissioner Reding became more vocal in support of the campaign demands, more media opportunities opened up.

However, the media environment in which the campaign had to operate is complex and crowded space which poses real challenges to obtaining coverage for an issue as specific as FGM. One external stakeholder put it thus:

*“it is a really difficult issue to get media coverage of. No one wants to pick up the issue – it’s very frustrating and a very difficult environment.”*

Over the lifetime of the campaign there has been a concentrated focus on the financial crisis and its implications, detracting attention away from all other issues and further shutting down what small space there was for an issue such as FGM. However, the campaign responded well to these challenges by ensuring media work was focussed around appropriate hooks, increasingly concentrating on placing opinion pieces and building an appetite for such pieces, and developing new channels of communication such as use of videos and social media.

### 3.2.5 Public Campaigning

The END FGM campaign adopted a public campaigning element to their work as an important way to build awareness of FGM thereby primarily supporting the first objective of the campaign. The theory of change was that the building of public pressure would be an import step in getting politicians and decision makers to take concrete action at EU level on the issue. There were two key public campaigning moments in the campaign which are discussed below. The campaign also took part in a 2012 summer action by the Amnesty European Institutions Offices with a view to

pressing Commissioner Reding to take action on human rights in the EU, including on the strategy on VAW and FGM.

**Case Study: Sign a Rose Petal Campaign**

In October 2010 the campaign developed a public action to 'sign a rose petal' in support of European action against FGM designed around the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women. The aim was to raise at least 8000 signatures, on line and on the ground, across the countries of the EU during the 16 days of activism against gender based violence from 25 November to 10 December 2010.

The target number of signatures was hugely exceeded, with the total gained standing at over 42,000. The campaign partners and some AI national sections were very engaged with this action and in particular, AIDOS, the partner from Italy gained excellent media coverage and collected around half the total signatures. Key figures in the EU institutions signed the petition including the President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek, Commission Vice President Viviane Reding and Representative of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Joelle Milquet.

This was then used by the campaign to successfully lobby for a joint statement made by The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, Catherine Ashton, and European Commission Vice President Vivian Reding reiterating commitments to work towards the elimination of FGM in the EU and the World.

The campaign, keen to communicate the holistic, broad based, nature of its demands, wrote a letter to the editor of the European Voice (a weekly publication subscribed to by all EU institutions) in December 2010, during the time of the signature action, to avoid fuelling discourse focussing on criminalisation alone.<sup>10</sup>

What worked well about this public action was:

- a high number of signatures were secured, aided by an extension of the action into 2011, which one partner said gave sufficient time for proper reach out to migrant community groups using paper, rather than online, petitions;
- the action therefore successfully raised awareness across a broad spectrum of people, including those in migrant communities and EU politicians;
- good press coverage of the action was reported nationally (which had been the desired target of the communications strategy around this public action), particularly in Italy and Portugal, and in EU wide publications, including an opinion piece in 'New Europe', and coverage in the EU chronicle news website;
- the action has been leveraged throughout the campaign effectively, to gain maximum impact. It was used to get commitments made for action at EU level reiterated, and has fed into the next public action very effectively – keeping people involved over time; and
- linking the action to the rose – the symbol of the campaign – was good at increasing brand and issue recognition.

The challenge was that the action was very resource intensive, with its timing coinciding with a very active lobbying phase of the campaign, which was challenging for the staff team.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/plans-to-deal-with-mutilation-may-make-the-situation-worse/69609.aspx>

Some external stakeholders (3/14) expressed scepticism in general terms about petitions and their ability to have impact on policy or legislation. However this public action was about awareness raising – a building block towards achieving concrete change – and bringing a public voice behind the campaign demands. This it did effectively. It was also an opportunity to empower rights holders which was well leveraged by the campaign and its national partners.

### ***Case Study: Art for Action Tour***

In the context of a political climate in the EU, where issues not relating to the economic crisis were deprioritised and human rights were not being promoted, the campaign wanted to try and gather some momentum on the issue of FGM nationally – to build a coalition of member states willing to push for action. Its response was to launch an Art for Action tour in 2012.

The campaign worked with four international artists and designers to create and exhibit four art pieces from 8,000 signed rose petals of the 42,000 signatures achieved from the rose petal petition. The aim was to create a positive vision and a new way of representing FGM and those affected by it.

The tour stops included:

- Nicosia, Cyprus – launch at Cypriot Parliament on 5 March 2012 by artist Nayia Evangelou. Her sculpture is an "armour" representing the need to protect the women and girls at risk of FGM.

This was an important stop given the impending Cypriot presidency of the EU. This was also an effective hook which meant there was good media coverage of the event. The campaign partner, MIGS, was very active and organised a hearing on FGM with the Human Rights Committee of the national parliament, which made a number of commitments on FGM.

- Lisbon, Portugal – launch at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (and later exhibited in the Parliament) on 23 April 2012 by Brazilian 'activist' Adriana Bertini. Her art piece is adult-child dresses to represent the importance of the link between mothers and daughters to end FGM.

This stop aimed to build on the government's engagement on their second plan of action on FGM. There was active engagement with campaign partner, APF, and key stakeholders attended the launch event including the Portuguese Secretary of State for Equal Opportunities. The dresses were then exhibited in the Parliament building where a book of signatures was also created for parliamentarians to put their commitments on paper. This was handed over to the European Parliament.

- Rome, Italy – launch/seminar at the Italian senate on 18 October 2012 by Italian designer, Ilaria Venturini Fendi. She created a bag featuring the rose petals.

The Italian Parliamentary Working Group on Global Health and Women's Rights organised a discussion on ending FGM and the role of Italy at the local, regional and international level, hosted by the Italian senate. There was active involvement of the campaign's partner, AIDOS, AI's Italian section and high level engagement from key Italian officials. The senate had put forward a resolution the day before to support the signature of the Istanbul Convention by Italy and a UN resolution on FGM. There was good media coverage of the event and government representatives confirmed their commitment to continue to fund the work of regional authorities to ensure training of health professionals and support cultural mediators.



- Brussels, Belgium – seminar and gala launch event held at the Bozar on 27 February 2013 to launch a walking lips sculpture by artist Walter Van Beirendonck intending to promote an open and creative dialogue towards an end to FGM.

The finale of the tour brought all the art pieces together in Brussels to be seen by national and EU level stakeholders and decision makers.

During the day a seminar under the theme ‘Towards European action to end female genital mutilation’ was hosted by the Vice President of the European Parliament. It brought together representatives of national and EU institutions, civil society organisations and representatives from affected communities. Key EU institutions reaffirmed their commitments on FGM and good practice across member states was shared.

The gala evening event was held at the Bozar, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels and invited all partners, artists, Strong Voices as well as other key stakeholders to celebrate and support the campaign. The Malian musician Rokia Traore sang at the gala. Many contributors spoke at the event.

#### What worked well?

A number of external stakeholders (6/14) and partners (3/12) specifically raised the art works as having been an innovative aspect of the campaign. Use of the rose petals in this way brought a unique visual continuity to the public element of the campaign.

Comments from external stakeholders included:

*“It was very out of the box – it felt creative and innovative – and that made it memorable.”*

*“The Art work made the event memorable – this makes the issue memorable.”*

One of the Strong Voices said:

*“The art pieces really gave the issue a voice I was struggling to find. It felt like my experience was in a picture frame and I thought ‘This is what I have been trying to say.’”*

The finale event, on 27 February 2013, which engaged a wide range of stakeholders including some key targets, was an excellent way of drawing the momentum gained at national level through the petition and other art for action tour events, back to the EU level. It is noted that it came before a number of important statements at EU level in the early part of 2013 which have been charted above. While it is difficult to be precise about the impact of such an event, it can be said that it was an important part of the context in which these statements were made.

Media coverage of all the Art for Action stops was strong in most of those countries which hosted a tour stop particularly in Italy and Belgium, notably in the Flemish press. There was also particularly good pick up by outlets such as ZDF and Reuters of the gala event in Brussels assisted by the involvement of famous designers which broadened the potential for pick up, for example, by Elle Belgique.

This was undoubtedly high level awareness raising that connected with a wide range of actors that stands out as an example of excellent practice.

### The main challenges

The main challenge of this work was its sheer complexity. It therefore placed high demands on staff time to co-ordinate a complex series of events around this action. One partner felt that the partner organisations could have been more involved in decisions and in particular would like to have had an opportunity to influence the choice of artists to include one from Africa. However the campaign team did ask partner organisations to identify artists a number of times and indeed two of the four artists were identified by partners who continue to hold the direct relationship with the artist.

## **3.3 THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE CAMPAIGN**

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The campaign was very responsive to the changing environment in which it found itself to be operating. The changes occurred at many levels and presented both challenges and opportunities for the campaign.

There was significant change in the macro environmental factors as outlined above in section 1.3.3. The campaign became established just as the scale of the global economic crisis was becoming apparent. Its ramifications, and the deepening nature of the crisis at EU level, created an environment which was challenging for the campaign. The campaign team identified this would very likely impact on achievement of its campaign objectives. At the same time, uncertainty emanating from the Commission about the legal basis of any EU action on FGM, became a relevant factor. The campaign responded by strategizing with its partners about how to respond to the decreasingly likelihood of obtaining legislation on FGM during the lifetime of the campaign. It presented options for consideration, focussing on achieving steps along the way to achieving the desired outcome over a longer term period. This process was well managed. It was participative, strategic, and importantly, engaged the funder of the campaign who also showed insightful flexibility in coming behind the campaign's change of approach.

This change in approach by the campaign was also an appropriate shift in terms of responding to another outworking of the economic crisis in Europe, namely the rise of the anti-migrant sentiment and the mainstreaming of that sentiment to some extent in wider political discourse. Pushing for legislation on FGM in such an environment was more likely to result in an exclusive focus on criminalisation rather than one that reflect a more holistic approach, as being sought by the campaign, reflecting also the need for prevention and protection measures. The campaign adopting a more 'light touch' approach to the question of legislation was an appropriate response to this change in context.

The change in the broader environment also impacted on the campaign in terms of how it used its strategies and methods of working. As attention was diverted to all things crisis related in terms of media coverage, this meant that a subject already difficult to get profile for, in an already crowded media space, became harder again. The campaign dealt with this well, by using an effective blend of a wide range of communication channels, including use of video to gather interest behind the campaign at particular moments such as the Art for Action tour.

There were also unexpected developments that occurred through the life of the campaign, providing a lever or opportunity to gain ground in relation to FGM. One

such example was the establishment of a new EU agency on asylum, the European Asylum Support Office. The campaign grasped this opportunity very effectively to further its impact in relation to establishing a system of asylum in the EU that takes account of FGM.

The campaign's responsiveness was also demonstrated in its internal workings. This was illustrated by its willingness to change the way funding was provided to partner organisations from a yearly grant, to project funding provided by the END FGM fund. This change increased effectiveness of the partnerships contribution to the campaign by encouraging and developing joint transnational working, an important component in building the capacity and sustainability of the campaign.

## 4. INTERNAL ISSUES

### 4.1 DID THE CAMPAIGN ADOPT A HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH?

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The campaign based itself on the principle of a human rights based approach. This approach has five principles:

- express linkage to human rights;
- empowerment;
- participation;
- non Discrimination and Equality; and
- accountability

The approach was clearly adhered to throughout the work of the campaign. It framed FGM as a violation of human rights. The campaign worked to empower rights holders both through its engagement with partner organisations many of whom are run by or work with rights holders and with Strong Voices, people directly affected by the practice of FGM. The campaign's work was underpinned by the principle of non-discrimination and prioritisation of groups at risk of human rights violations. Finally, the campaign had, and respected, many lines of accountability – to its partner organisations and rights holders, within the AI structure (to AI Ireland, AI European Office and AI's International Secretariat) and to the funder of the campaign.

### 4.2 HOW DID THE CAMPAIGN WORK WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE AI MOVEMENT?

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The END FGM campaign has a unique position within the AI global movement. It did not come into existence in the usual way, which would have involved adoption by the international general assembly of AI and some mention of it in the AI's agreed priorities. Neither of these things happened. In addition there was concern from some parts of the movement about its potential to feed into anti-migrant discourse on the rise in Europe, the lack of a robust evidence base and uncertainty about the EU focus of the campaign.

This meant significant staff time from within the END FGM campaign was required in the early stages of its development to establish the campaign's place within the global AI movement. Welcome clarity to the standing of the campaign was brought at the end of 2009 by the endorsement by AI's International Secretariat and its adoption as an Amnesty International campaign. The integration of the campaign into AI's European Regional Space in 2010 also strengthened its position.

Initial confusion about the standing of the campaign did not hinder the development over time of a very beneficial exchange of expertise, resource, and information between the END FGM campaign and other parts of the global AI movement.

The END FGM campaign has been able to contribute the following expertise to AI globally through a variety of different mechanisms, internal and external:

- all aspects of FGM;

- gender expertise;
- gender mainstreaming;
- gender and migration;
- sexual orientation;
- asylum;
- violence against women and the Istanbul Convention;
- victim's rights;
- active participation;
- partnership working

The contribution of AI to the END FGM campaign included:

- weight, access and credibility of AI brand;
- assistance of Art for Amnesty team based in AI UK;
- access to AI volunteers providing a wide range of supports;
- support of some national AI sections to partner organisations;
- provision of intelligence from AI colleagues;
- integration of END FGM campaign demands into other AI work, for example in media work in the memo to the EU presidency; and
- advancing campaign demands through national sections and European Institutions Office.

The campaign is perceived to have been successful by the AI movement.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 1) The End FGM Campaign, a partnership of an AI team based in Brussels and 15 NGOs based in 13 EU member states, has very successfully raised awareness of FGM at the EU institutional level and amongst MEPs, an important building block to achieving the other campaign objectives.
- 2) The campaign was successful in ensuring FGM was reflected in two new EU asylum directives on procedure and reception conditions.
- 3) The campaign worked in partnership with two international NGOs, the European's Women's Lobby and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, to ensure gender mainstreaming in the structure and work plans of the new EU asylum agency, The European Asylum Support Office. This resulted in the creation of a gender focussed role within the agency.
- 4) Although no EU strategy was achieved by the end of the campaign, the campaign has achieved or contributed to a variety of relevant commitments and gains. These are concrete steps towards achieving such a strategy and have made its achievement more likely. These include:
  - building NGO support for and action on obtaining an EU strategy on FGM;
  - building public demand, via the rose petal petition, for an EU strategy on FGM;
  - mainstreaming the issue of violence against women and FGM in other EU initiatives such as the Stockholm Program on Justice and Home Affairs and the Victims' Rights Directive;
  - successfully campaigning for the creation of an evidence base on FGM in Europe;
  - strengthening the work of the EU's external dimension on FGM; and
  - raising awareness and building skills around the impact of FGM through the e-learning tool supported by the campaign via its END FGM fund and developed by a group of campaign partners.
- 5) Although no legislation to prohibit FGM was secured, the campaign has worked towards gaining greater support for this demand through a focus on increasing support for the Council of Europe Convention dealing with violence against women (known as The Istanbul Convention). This includes campaigning for the EU's accession to the treaty.
- 6) The capacity of NGOs in the FGM sector in Europe has been strengthened by the campaign. This includes for some NGOs:
  - strengthening awareness, knowledge and expertise on the substantive issues relevant to FGM;
  - strengthening of campaigning skills, including media and communications and lobbying and advocacy both nationally and at EU level;
  - increased awareness of the importance and potential impact of EU action on FGM;
  - increased understanding and know-how around working in a co-ordinated, transnational, strategic way around a common agenda; and
  - an increase in NGOs working on transnational projects.

- 7) The campaign has achieved objectives that were not necessarily envisaged at the start of the campaign. This has included:
  - building public consciousness of FGM, not least through the remarkable success of the rose petal petition which gained over 42,000 signatures;
  - impacts nationally in some of those countries where partner organisations are located;
  - the building of an evidence base on FGM in Europe underpinning the case for the provision of EU funding on FGM; and
  - impetus for others to work proactively on FGM.
- 8) Some capacity for sustainability of the gains made in the context of the campaign has been developed. However sustainability is not assured, not least because of the changing political environment, low levels of capacity in the partner organisations around leadership of the campaign and potential loss of the expertise and leadership provided by the campaign team.
- 9) The human rights framework has been instrumental in providing a context for the campaign. This has enabled the issue of FGM to be dealt with head on as a breach of numerous fundamental rights, which cannot be dismissed as a cultural or religious issue and is empowering for those who have been directly affected by FGM.
- 10) The campaign has used a highly effective mix of strategies and methods by which to advance the campaign's demands:
  - **Lobbying and advocacy** work has been undertaken extremely effectively and was a 'stand-out' strength of the campaign. It was appropriately tailored to have maximum impact on targets, strategic and proactive in using new levers and opportunities as they emerged and reflected the high levels of expertise of the campaign team resulting in high levels of credibility for the campaign. The strategy was crucially underpinned and augmented by high quality reports and submissions and high quality, well timed events.
  - **Partnership working** and active participation of rights holders through this, was a high effective way of working. Assisted by high levels of support, facilitation and training provided by the campaign team, it created a rich learning environment, which enabled the partners to have impact nationally, as well as at the EU level. It has resulted in positive cross partner, transnational working which was well facilitated by the END FGM fund.

There were, however, challenges in the levels of support the partnership required from the campaign team to develop and sustain and in developing the partnership sufficiently for it to be in a position to take over the leadership of the campaign from 2014.

Challenges were also posed by the low level of funds available to partners for engagement with the campaign and with AI's role in 'funding' partners through the yearly €5000 grant for the first 3 years, and then in the context of the END FGM fund. It might in future be advisable to risk assess the impact of managing internal funds on partnership working. In

particular consideration could be given to subcontracting the management of funding arrangements to a third party, sitting outside the partnership.

- **Active participation through working directly with rights holders**, 'Strong Voices', was a powerful element of the campaign which helped create impact across all the campaign objectives. This work was well supported by an AI wide policy on informed consent in relation to the engagement of rights holders. Some of this group became more empowered through the lifetime of the campaign and developed to become active agents in it. Although the campaign offered Strong Voices excellent support in a number of areas, there was a gap in relation to facilitation of psychological and security support should this have been needed.
  - **Media and Communications work** was a strong aspect of the campaign, particularly given the challenging media environment it faced. It supported the lobbying and advocacy strategy across all objectives, most notably the awareness raising of FGM at EU level. It made creative use of different channels of communication including a clear and well used website and a strong social media presence. Good use of videos was made to generate interest.
  - **Public campaigns** – the Rose Petal Action and the Art for Action Tour – were a notable success of the campaign. They were run in such a way as to maximise impact and were effective in raising awareness of FGM not just at EU level but more broadly. In the Rose Petal Action, the level of signatures gained was a significant achievement. In the Art for Action tour, the creativity and novelty of the art pieces had a powerful effect in making the issue of FGM memorable for campaign targets and others.
- 11) The campaign was highly responsive to the ever changing environment in which it was operating. It was effective in discussing new challenges openly with its partners and the campaign's funder and in a way that fostered joint decision making around appropriate responses.
- 12) The campaign successfully adopted a human rights based approach in its own work.
- 13) The campaign team worked effectively to find its place within the global AI movement, so it was able to maximise the benefit brought by being located within AI and establish a beneficial exchange of intelligence, information and expertise and itself become a valuable resource for the AI movement.
- 14) This has been a very successful campaign, which has complex features, being run centrally at EU level, and also through a partnership of national organisations, with active participation of rights holders. Consideration should be given to using/adapting this model of working for other campaigns with an EU focus.



## **Appendices**

## Evaluation Questions

### Evaluation Questions on END FGM Campaign

#### ***Questions on impact***

1. Have the goals of the END FGM campaign been achieved?
2. Have there been any unintended /unforeseen impacts?
3. Are the achievements sustainable? What has contributed to sustainability and what have been the challenges

#### ***Questions on effectiveness***

4. How effective have the different strategies been, in particular lobbying and advocacy, capacity building and empowerment, media work and campaigning?
5. How effective have the major public actions been in raising awareness?
6. How effective has the re-granting been in pursuing the goals of the campaign
7. What has been the consequence of locating the END FGM campaign in a human rights framework?
8. Has the right balance been struck in the END FGM campaign between pursuing planned for outcomes and allowing space for flexibility to react to changing external factors and to foster innovation and creativity?

#### ***Questions on internal process***

9. What have been the strengths and challenges of AI's approach of working in partnership with other complex organisations to agree, and then implement, a common strategy/agenda?
10. How well did AI adopt a human rights based approach in its own work under the END FGM campaign?

#### ***Questions on learning***

11. What is the learning to emerge from the END FGM campaign (i) for Amnesty International (ii) organisations aiming to campaign in partnership with other organisations?
12. Recommendations arising out of the evaluation including areas to review, improving process and next steps.

Stakeholders Consulted<sup>11</sup>

Strong Voices		
Name	Country	
Ifrah AHMED	Ireland	
Leyla HUSSEIN	UK	
Campaign Partners		
Name	Country	Organisation
Fabienne RICHARD	Belgium	Group Pour L’Abolition Des Mutilations Sexuelles (GAMS)
Christine FLAMAND	Belgium	INTACT
Christina KAILI	Cyprus	Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS)
Virginia WAGARE GREINER	Germany	MAIHSa
Lidia BABOGH	Hungary	Foundation for the Women of Hungary (MONA)
Saloma MBUGUE	Ireland	Akina Dada wa Africa (AkiDwA)
Daniela COLOMBO	Italy	AIDOS – Italian Association for Women in Development
Cristiana SCOPPA	Italy	AIDOS – Italian Association for Women in Development
Dovile RUKAITE	Lithuania	Women’s Issues Information Centre
Zahra NALEIE	Netherlands	Federation of Somali Associations (FSAN)
Yasmin GONCALVES	Portugal	Associação para o Planeamento da Família (APF)
Naana OTOO-OYORTEY	UK	Foundation for Women’s Health, Research and Development (FORWARD)
External Stakeholders		
Name	Organisation/Role (where relevant)	
Valentine AUDATE	Belgium National Asylum Office	
Veronique ARNAULT	European External Action Service, Head of Unit	
Adriana BERTINI	Artist	
Emer COSTELLO	MEP	
Maria DELFINA	Assistant to Raul I Romeva MEP	
Niki DHEEDENE	Advisor to Belgium Minister for Equality	
Anne GALLAND	European Commission, DG Justice, Gender Equality Unit	
Mary HEALY	Human Dignity Foundation, Executive Director	
Joel LE DEROFF	ILGA-Europe	
Els LEYE	Ghent University	
Etienne MAURY	Assistant to Antonia Parvanova MEP	
Fadela NOVAK-IRONS	UNHCR Brussels, Policy and Legal Support Unit	
Reza OPDEBEECK	Assistant to Isabelle Durant MEP	
Teri SCHULZ	Freelance Journalist	

<sup>11</sup> This list reflects roles people had at the time they engaged with the campaign. Some people are now in new roles or new organisations.

Taken from an internal AI IS paper on developing a working definition of Active Participation (Sept 2010)

### Levels of Rights Holder Participation

