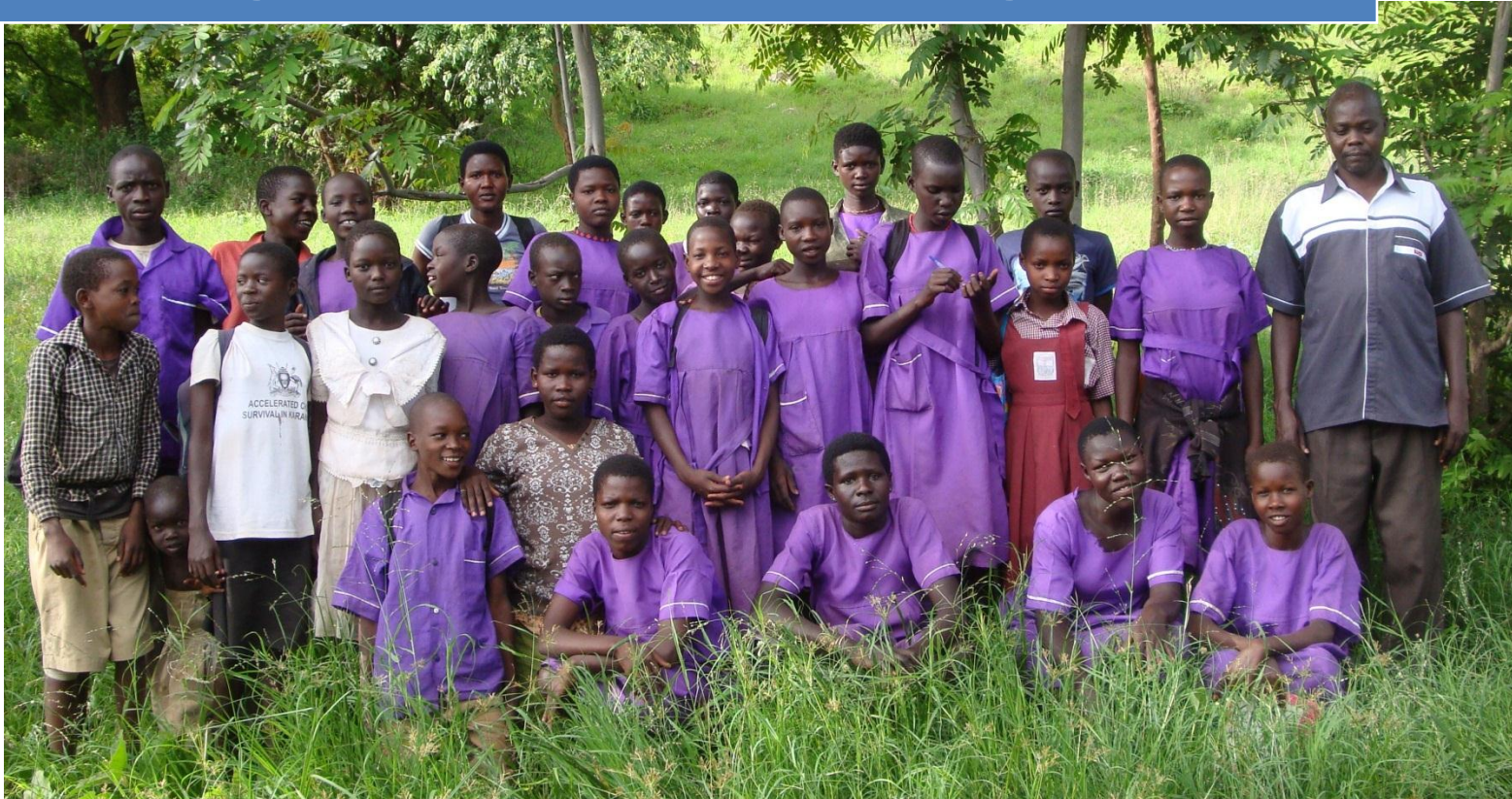


# Good Practice

## Video Shows on Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting in Schools and Learning Centers



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## Description & Context

In 2010 Uganda adopted a national law against Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C). Acceleration of the implementation for this law is much needed, since several communities in Eastern Uganda still practice FGM/C. Within the polygamous *Tepeth* community in Moroto district in Eastern Uganda girls between the ages of 11-14 are being cut. Mutilators have a high status within the *Tepeth* community and benefit directly from large payments by the parents during the cutting season as well as tokens of appreciations by the community throughout the year. The cutting takes place just after the harvest. After being mutilated in groups the girls stay in a recovery shelter up in the mountain for three months. During this healing time the mutilator is the only one allowed to see the girls. Additional ceremonies are being done during this period to prepare the girls for marriage and to have children. The end of the healing period is marked by another ceremony after which the girls are reunited with their families. At this time the girls are officially women and available for marriage offers, including so-called bride prices often in the form of a large number of cows for the family of the girl. FGM/C contributes to high illiteracy and school dropout rates, since girls that undergo FGM/C drop out of school and get married after being cut.

**“Most of the children were only informed about the positive side of FGM/C, and parents hid away the fact that the practice is illegal, painful and belittling to the life of a girl child”**

Peter Obonyo Omwony, MAZIDEP

## Objectives

The objective of the video show project of MAZIDEP, supported by the UNFPA/UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM/C, is to increase the knowledge and awareness on the dangers of FGM/C among primary school pupils and students of informal learning centres. In addition the purpose is to use the students who want to abandon FGM/C as peer educators in their respective communities, hereby contributing to the acceleration of FGM/C abandonment in Eastern Uganda.

## Strategies and Implementation

A study conducted by MAZIDEP showed that out of the ten primary schools in the sub counties where FGM/C is still being practiced in Moroto District (*Tapac* and *Katikekile*) only two had adequate knowledge on the dangers of FGM/C. As stated by Peter Obonyo Omwony from MAZIDEP “ *Most of the children were only informed about the positive side of FGM/C, and parents hid away the fact that the practice is illegal, painful and belittling to the life of a girl child*”. MAZIDEP chose to implement the video show project because it appealed most to the youth and it is easy to capture the attention of youth since they are attracted by video shows. The target group of this intervention is primary school aged children, since that is the age whereby girls undergo FGM/C. The documentary video was developed in English by a partner organisation in Kenya. Simultaneous translation into the local language was conducted during the video shows in Moroto. The documentary shows the negative effects of FGM/C, including, as stated by primary school children: “*Children who suffered from FGM/C and HIV/Aids, lots of bleeding and pain, death, difficulties in child delivery, school dropout, loss of sexual feeling, body paralysis, limping, STDs, early marriage and waste of resources*”. After the video show the MAZIDEP facilitator interacted with the pupils about what they had seen and asked the youth to propose ways to abandon FGM/C. In total 10 sessions were conducted in primary schools and 10 in informal learning centers reaching altogether 1000 children of primary school age in Moroto District.



## Key challenges

Key challenges during the implementation of this project included natural hazards, such as bad roads, rains and inaccessibility of some areas. In addition Moroto District has a history of being dependent on food support by the World Food Programme. After the facing out and withdrawal of food support to schools by WFP the number of children in school was negatively impacted in some cases. In addition some of the sub counties in Moroto do not have a primary school. Finally, delays in release of funds created some obstacles in planning, due to schools approaching their exams and closure time.



Primary school class in Moroto District discussing the advantages and disadvantages of FGM/C in their community

## Progress and Results

Primary school pupils stated that before watching the video shows they were only informed about the advantages of FGM/C, including the celebration and gifts during the ceremonies and marriages and associated status for the young women after being cut. For example in one of the primary schools, after the video show, during the post discussion, one of the pupils noted that her parents told her that she can only get a man if she is cut, but never mentioned that she would bleed, feel pain, and also have pain during delivery if she ever gets pregnant. According to MAZIDEP, out of the targeted ten primary schools, pre and post video show discussions showed that before watching the video 20% of the pupils had a comprehensive knowledge about the dangers and negative effects of FGM/C and after watching the video this increased to an average of 70%.

After watching the video in primary school pupils suggested that they should be protected against FGM/C in the schools. Some boys stated that after watching the video they now feel comfortable marrying an uncut girl in the future, especially since it is easier for uncut girls to give birth. After watching the video show pupils talked about the dangers of FGM/C and the anti FGM/C law in Uganda to their parents and peers in the community and asked them not to practise FGM/C. One girl told her parents *“If you do this [FGM/C] I will take you to court!”*. It gave girls the confidence to speak and to say *“we cannot tolerate this practice anymore”*.

The video shows also helped to bring youth from different backgrounds together, to share ideas and to create opportunities to work with them in other projects. Pupils expressed the wish to form drama groups and anti FGM/C clubs to help spread the message on FGM/C abandonment. Teachers have also supported the promotion of FGM/C abandonment by talking to the parents and local leaders. One primary school headmaster proudly announced that in the last year none of the pupils had to undergo FGM/C.

In addition, the video has been shown to some of the elders in the *Tepeth* community. *“They were so shocked, because especially the men had no knowledge on what FGM/C exactly implied since that information was kept from them and they were not allowed to be present during that part of the ceremony”*, stated David Korryang acting team leader of MAZIDEP. As a result of the video show, the community members increased their awareness on the FGM/C law and suggested massive sensitisation on the law and urged responsible persons to come up with alternative sources of livelihood for the mutilators.

### Conclusion and Lessons Learned

The video shows have been an effective tool in increasing the knowledge and awareness on the negative consequences of FGM/C and the 2010 national anti FGM/C law amongst primary school aged children, their peers and the communities. One of the key lessons learned has been that education is crucial; by supporting education you support FGM/C abandonment since education increases knowledge and awareness among youth and empowers them to speak out against the practice. At the same time by abandoning FGM/C girls will stay in school longer instead of dropping out around the age of 11-14 to undergo FGM/C and to get married afterwards. It is however necessary to extend the project to remote communities in rural areas where FGM/C is still being practiced and there are not necessary primary schools. Therefor innovative strategies are needed, such as the use of laptops, to also reach these communities with the same video messages on FGM/C abandonment.

**“We have to create awareness and teach the people who practice it that FGM/C is bad!”**

Primary school pupil, age 12

### Recommendations and Next Steps

MAZIDEP plans to translate the video in the local language and to explore alternative media options to send out the message, such as radio listening clubs and using pre-recordings to be broadcasted on local radio stations. In addition ten child rights clubs will be formed within the primary schools to strengthen peer education. Furthermore plans are being made to form anti FGM/C associations at the parish level to continue FGM/C abandonment. Communities suggested that more efforts are needed to sensitize parents on the importance of keeping children in school. Furthermore advocacy is being done by local teachers, communities and civil society organizations to convince local authorities to open a special boarding school for those girls who come from far and remote areas. Lastly primary schools pupils advocated for the extension of the project into the mountainous areas where FGM/C is still being practiced and peer to peer activities between urban and rural youth.

## Sources and Contact Persons

### Primary sources

- Documented good practice by MAZIDEP March 2012
- Interview David Korryang, Acting team leader MAZIDEP on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2012
- Focus Group Discussion with 23 primary school students in Moroto

### Contact persons

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