

‘One hand can’t clap by itself’:  
Engagement of boys and men in KMG’s intervention to eliminate FGM-C in Kembatta Zone Ethiopia



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**SVRI Conference**  
**September 16 2015**



# + Background

- Involve men and women to shift social norms for abandoning female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM-C)
- Men influential as fathers, husbands, community leaders etc.
- Limited research exploring how and why men engage in abandonment
- Relates to shifts in gender relations within private and public spaces

# + Ethiopia Context

- 74% of women in Ethiopia undergone FGM-C (UNICEF 2013)
- Public support for FGM ↓ (esp. among younger generation) (UNICEF 2010)
- Taboos of uncircumcised women: prone to break household goods, promiscuity (UNICEF 2010)
- FGM-C violation in Ethiopia's constitution
- Charities & Societies Proclamation (2009) prohibits human rights NGOs receiving > 10% of funding from international donors

# + KMG's Intervention

- KMG Ethiopia “women of Kembatta working together” challenged social acceptance of and ↓ prevalence of FGM-C (UNICEF 2008)
- Values: listen to communities and learn from local experience and wisdom
- Gender transformative approach around inequalities and norms condoning FGM-C
- No study specifically assessed how KMG successfully engaged men

# + Overarching Questions

- Key drivers and barriers to men and boy's engagement in KMG's FGM-C abandonment? Public and private?
- How does FGM-C abandonment relate to processes of gender equality?
- Most effective strategies and factors?



## EMERGE: Engendering Men Evidence on Routes to Gender Equality



- EMERGE learning objective to assess how interventions support long-term attitude and behaviour change
- EMERGE Evidence Review noted evaluations of programmes with men neglect influence on men's identities, gender equitable attitudes, behaviours

[menandboys.ids.ac.uk](http://menandboys.ids.ac.uk)





# Methodology

- 4 villages, 2 districts in Kembatta Zone:
  - 21 interviews with KMG staff, male and female beneficiaries, women's group association members, youth group members, *idir*, religious, district leaders
  - ▶ 3 interviews with KMG staff in Sidama zone & Addis Ababa
- Most significant change stories (MSC) collected
  - In Kembatta language with direct translation
  - Recruited by KMG staff; may bias responses
- Thematic analysis
- Informed consent collected

# + Kembatta Zone, Ethiopia





# + Why work with men?

- “One hand can’t clap by itself:” men have access to/are influential community and religious leaders & can engage other men
- Influences women’s attitudes and behaviours since FGM-C related to marriageability of girls
- Could unintentionally reinforce patriarchal norms/institutions i.e. “*men’s voices are heard more*”

# + How to work with men?

- Monitor FGM-C and implement sanctions i.e. expulsion from *idirs* or religious groups
- Part of IGAs and structural development
- Participatory groups of 25 women & 25 men: meet 2 x month over 1.5 years: educated about negative effects of FGM-C, government policy and take collective action
- Supported as community activists
- Awareness raising activities including women's rights

# + What has changed?

- ↓ practice of FGM-C/harmful practices including bride abduction, widow inheritance, & IPV
- ↑ support for women's access to property inheritance, political participation, positive sexuality, household decision making and ↓ women's domestic burden
- Boys and men ↑ prefer to marry uncut girls and women
- Men's participation more gender transformative in interpersonal domains than in public spaces



*“In my home there is equal rights of decision making with my wife”*



- A KMG leader sits in front of his house, which he talked about as a space for his own change towards greater equality with his wife



A beneficiary of KMG, chairperson of the uncut girls club, and mother, holds her baby proudly. She had a safe delivery, which she attributed to not being circumcised.

*[The men do not want to waste money on medical complications of delivery if they marry a cut girl, so he prefers to marry an uncut girl. Now we marry more for love. So if he loves me, why would he need to lose me because of FGM? On sexual intercourse, it creates fun for both of us if I am uncut. It is also a sign of modernization not being circumcised (KMG programme participant)]*





# Lessons Learnt

- **Participatory approach for reflection and change**
- **Gender synchronous approach**
- **Use of community activists**
- **Involve variety of stakeholders**
- **Address wider environment**
- **Partner with government and in policy context**
- **Work at level of social norms**





# Conclusion

- Gender transformative reflection & awareness raising with community activism & economic empowerment –combatted FGM *AND* shifted gender relations
- Limited impact transforming men’s attitudes and behaviours in relation to privilege in public spaces
- *how* interventions can support men as change agents to not reinforce dominance/control over women
- Understand relations between shifts in men’s roles and attitudes in private and public spaces

# + Acknowledgments

- KMG particularly the director, Boge Gebre
- The participants who were willing to share their intimate stories
- EMERGE Project and Partners: Institute of Development Studies at University of Sussex, Instituto Promundo, Sonke Gender Justice
- Sonke Gender Justice for supporting my attendance at the SVRI

