



## WINNER SILVER AWARD

Burkina Faso's Law Prohibiting  
Female Genital Mutilation  
(Law No. 43/96/ADP), 1996

In 1996, the Government of Burkina Faso amended its Penal Code to include the prohibition of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and its punishment with sentences of imprisonment and fines. Whereas similar legal provisions exist in a number of countries, the implementation of the law in Burkina Faso is exemplary. As an outcome of long term advocacy by women's rights activists and backed by high level political support, the law in Burkina Faso is accompanied by National Action Plans and Strategies that lay out a range of measures to effectively fight FGM/C, including in the field of social policy, education and public health. A "National Committee to Fight the

Practice of Excision" (CNLPE), which was set up in 1990 and strengthened through a Permanent Secretariat in 1997, oversees their implementation. It brings together 13 ministries, women's rights and other nongovernmental organisations, religious and community leaders, law enforcement officials and the judiciary.

The law and the government's approach to its implementation have enabled significant progress in the fight against FGM/C in Burkina Faso. Surveys confirm a significant decrease in the proportion of younger women who have undergone FGM/C. Between 2006 and 2010, the percentage of girls aged 0 to 14 having undergone FGM/C has nearly halved. The number of arrests and sentences for practitioners of FGM/C and parents has increased.





National strategies aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour complement the law's implementation. Measures provided by the government include the setting up of an emergency hotline, training for all relevant professional groups, awareness-raising and advocacy (including among community leaders), information campaigns in local languages, the integration of information on FGM/C in school curricula, and comprehensive reproductive health care.

FGM/C is officially considered a public health and social policy issue, framed in a human rights, gender equality and reproductive health context. Burkina Faso does not rely entirely on donor funding for the implementation of the measures to end FGM/C: since 2000, the national budget provides funding for the work of the Permanent Secretariat of CNLPE.

Despite many advances over the past decades, some challenges remain on the journey towards a complete eradication of FGM/C in Burkina Faso. Parents who are still in favour of the practice use loopholes, for instance taking their daughters to neighbouring countries where FGM/C is not prosecuted. An effective protection from FGM/C will therefore depend on whether other countries in the region will follow the exemplary legal and policy approach that Burkina Faso has been



Peer educators run community discussions on female genital mutilation in Burkina Faso.

Above: Fatmata, 13, and her parents. After attending peer education discussions in their village, Fatmata's parents decided that their daughter would not be cut.

taking. The law would also have more powerful impact within a legal framework that does not only address FGM/C but all forms of violence against women and girls, including intimate partner violence.