



family  
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Sexual & Reproductive Health  
Care. Education. Advocacy.

**FARREP**  
quarterly

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## Message from our CEO

At Family Planning Victoria (FPV), our vision is sexual and reproductive health for Victorians. To achieve this goal, we provide leadership in public policy, advocacy, education and clinical care in sexual and reproductive health.

As the World Health Organization states, sexual and reproductive health encompasses problems such as HIV, sexually transmissible infections, blood borne viruses, unintended pregnancy,

infertility, contraception, sexual dysfunction, as well as the ability to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life, maintain respectful relationships and be free to exercise one's reproductive rights.<sup>1</sup>

The practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is one factor in the broad area of sexual and reproductive health which affects the health and rights of girls and women.

Our oversight of FARREP is part of our commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of those affected by FGM by collaborating with key agencies and organisations working with affected communities.

As well as detailing important initiatives in this work, this newsletter profiles three women who have dedicated almost 11 years to FARREP work in Victoria. Their experience and knowledge enables them to support women affected by FGM and build the capacity of health professionals to work with affected communities.

We look forward to working with you to advance these and other activities to prevent FGM.

**Lynne Jordan**  
CEO

1. McMichael 2008 World Health Organisation, Department of Reproductive Health and Research



## FARREP Facilitator's column

Three significant initiatives have commenced since our last newsletter: the development of the FARREP Integrated Health Promotion plan and training calendar, as well as discussions on the evidence base needed to inform FARREP activities.

Work on the 2010-2012 FARREP Integrated Health Promotion plan commenced after the November consultation and planning forum with FARREP state-wide service providers and the Department of Health.

The four key priority areas which emerged from these consultations were: access and service delivery, workforce development, capacity building and research and evaluation. This plan will enable a more strategic approach to these key health promotion activities

among FARREP services. The plan will be distributed to FARREP service providers in May.

Planning for the 2010 FARREP training calendar is also well underway. This capacity building program will give FARREP workers the opportunity to advance their skills and facilitate their work with FGM affected communities.

It will include short courses and workshops in health promotion, Pap screening, community education as well as mental, sexual and reproductive health delivered in collaboration with Victorian health service providers. The program has been finalised after consultation with FARREP workers.

The FARREP Research and Evaluation Steering Committee (FRESC) has now commenced discussions on the evidence

base needed to inform and improve FARREP in matters related to FGM.

FRESC represents an important component of our work with FARREP, as it provides a forum for stakeholders to develop their understanding of the implementation and evaluation of FGM prevention strategies in Victoria within a sexual and reproductive health promotion framework.

These ongoing discussions will highlight how best to engage FARREP service providers, community members, academics and other key agencies in relation to FGM service delivery.

I look forward to updating you on the outcomes of these discussions and activities over the coming months.

**Claire Naffah**

FARREP Facilitator

## FARREP worker profiles

### **Wemi Oyekanmi, Mercy Hospital for Women**

Wemi Oyekanmi has been a FARREP and African liaison worker at Mercy Hospital since the program's inception in 1997.

Delivering regular FGM education sessions for health professionals, including monthly sessions for graduate midwives, Wemi provides support and information on accessing health services to African women, particularly those from FGM affected communities.

'I encourage women to be informed and to participate fully in decisions regarding their health care. I work closely with other services at the hospital to ensure that women receive necessary care in a culturally appropriate manner,' Wemi said.

This work has enabled women from FGM affected communities to become more empowered to make decisions for themselves and to negotiate with their partners about the cessation of FGM.

### **Wudad Salim, Southern Health**

Wudad Salim, a FARREP worker since 2000, has worked with key health organisations and communities on a range of sexual and reproductive health projects.

'Recently, I collaborated with the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre to empower FARREP clients by providing information about support services available for them,' Wudad said.

In 2004, Wudad liaised with FPV to

provide training and resources in sexual and reproductive health to meet the needs of the affected communities in which she worked.

Wudad has also worked with the Victorian Deafness Foundation in the Rubella Education Program and with PapScreen Victoria on community education projects to the benefit of FGM affected communities.

'I was lucky to have the opportunity to work with professional people who support community projects,' she said.

In so doing, Wudad has contributed to building the capacity of health professionals to provide health services which meet the specific needs of FGM affected communities.

## FARREP worker profiles continued

### Nabiha Ibrahim, Southern Health

FARREP worker Nabiha Ibrahim works with FGM affected communities through the Multicultural Women's Group.

In addition to health promotion activities, Nabiha works in partnership with Women's Health in the South East, the Migrant Resource Centre and other key organisations to address factors affecting

women's participation in society.

'I empower the women to become independent by encouraging them to enter the Australian educational system and the workforce. As a result of facilitating the groups, the women have undertaken courses in information technology, childcare and community development,' Nabiha said.

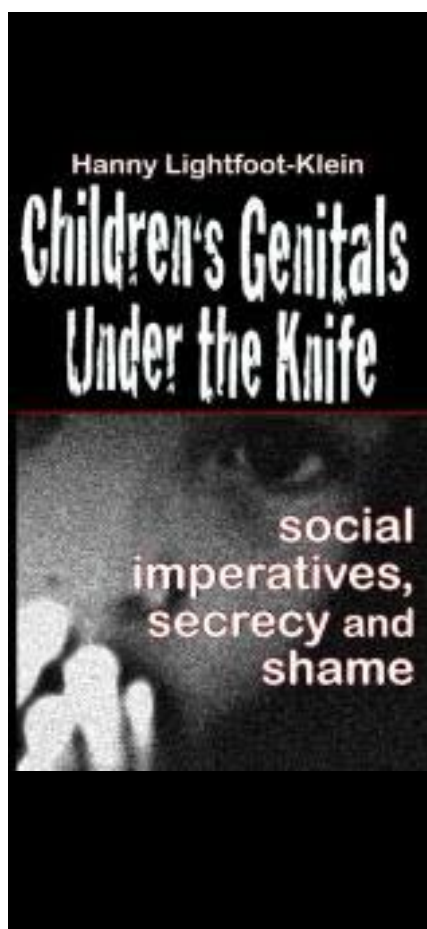
## Recommended reading

*Children's Genitals Under the Knife: Social Imperatives, Secrecy and Shame* by Hanny Lightfoot-Klein (2008 Nunzio Press)

*Children's Genitals Under the Knife* gives voice to the many individuals who had genital surgery when they were non-consenting children. Making the connection between childhood genital surgery and the subsequent diminution in quality of life, Lightfoot-Klein demystifies the practice, weighing intended consequences against actual consequences in the lives of affected children.

As she explains: 'It is our honest intent to question contemporary relevance of the various genital alterations, to enlighten and to empower, in hopes that our number will grow and that our combined efforts will cause those procedures that are found to be damaging rather than beneficial to be at long last abandoned.'

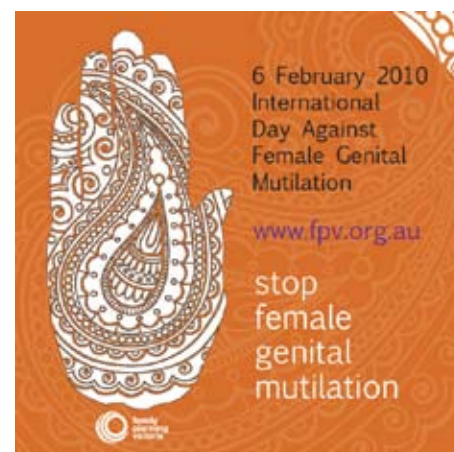
*Children's Genitals Under the Knife* is available for loan to members of our Resource Centre. Membership is open to all organisations. Please call our Resource Centre for more information: P/ 03 9257 0146.



## In brief

### Interactive seminar

On 4 February, Southern Health FARREP workers successfully hosted and facilitated an interactive seminar for people from FGM affected communities, including members of the Somalian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Sudanese and Kenya communities. FARREP workers answered questions, discussed the myths and facts surrounding FGM and provided participants with information on accessing health services. Feedback from the day indicated attitudes supporting the prevention of FGM were changing within African communities.



### International Day Against FGM

On 6 February, FPV and the FARREP service providers supported International Day Against Female Genital Mutilation with a range of awareness raising initiatives, including a FARREP FAQ kit, a 'stop female genital mutilation' poster and an interview with SBS radio's Arabic program. To access this material, [visit our website](http://www.fpv.org.au).



## Upcoming events

### 25 May and 1 June Family Planning Victoria is pleased to host **Story Dialogue Method workshops with FARREP workers**

The Story Dialogue workshops will be used to gather practice wisdom about undertaking FARREP activities in Victoria.

This reporting will occur once a year and inform a mid-cycle review of activities.

**Venue:** The Action Centre, Level 2, 94 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne

**Time:** 10.30 am – 1.00 pm

**Dates:** Tuesday 25 May and Tuesday 1 June 2010

**RSVP:** Claire Naffah: [cnaffah@fpv.org.au](mailto:cnaffah@fpv.org.au)

### 18-21 May 2010 **6th Australian Women's Health Conference**

Hobart Tasmania

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/awhn2010/>

### 30 May-2 June **Walking the Talk: Partnerships for Health Promotion**

Hosted by Australian Health Promotion Association. Citigate Sebel, Albert Park, Melbourne. [Read more](#)

### 7-9 June **Diversity in Health**

Hosted by Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH). Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. [Read more](#)

## Web resources

*For Kurdish girls: A painful ancient ritual*  
Paley AR, 2008, The Washington Post, viewed April 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/28/AR2008122802005.html>

*Orgasm in ritually circumcised African women*

Lightfoot Klein H, 1991, 1st International Conference on Orgasm, viewed April 2010, <http://www.lightfoot-klein.com/orgasm.html>

## Contact us

For reader submissions and enquiries, contact Claire Naffah at:

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