



Ireland's national network for migrant women

For immediate release

October 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

**AkiDwA Conference on Female Genital Mutilation seeks to build community dialogue by exposing the myths that still surround FGM**

**Save the Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019**  
**Community Dialogue: Debunking the myths about FGM**  
**This conference will take place from 10 am to 3.30 pm on Tuesday October 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission, Green Street, Dublin 7**

**AkiDwA, Ireland's network for migrant women is holding a conference in Dublin this month to raise awareness of FGM as a serious issue for girls living in Ireland and to discuss the most effective strategies for engaging with communities to end the practice.**

FGM was banned in Ireland seven years ago, when the 2012 Criminal Justice Bill was passed after a decade of campaigning by AkiDwA. However the number of women and girls in Ireland at risk of FGM continues to increase. AkiDwA's latest estimates suggest that 5,795 women and girls living here have to deal with the consequences of FGM.

AkiDwA has been working with Irish authorities at local and national level to end FGM for almost two decades. AkiDwA has produced some of the materials currently included in Gardaí diversity training. Through these and other interactions, AkiDwA has realised that there are still issues with how professionals in Ireland communicate about FGM with people from migrant communities.

This conference will provide a platform for AkiDwA to address the challenges in communicating about FGM and allow us to highlight some of the most effective strategies that we can employ to encourage migrant communities in Ireland to abandon it.

The European Union estimates that around 500,000 girls and women in Europe are living with life-long consequences of FGM and that every year a further 180,000 children are put at risk from this harmful traditional practice. AkiDwA delivers training on how to sensitively talk with people affected by FGM to Gardaí, healthcare professionals and to frontline staff like social workers and psychologists.

**Misunderstandings in communications about FGM pose a very serious risk to women and girls in communities at risk of FGM, as they can affect their ability to integrate into wider Irish society and they can even prevent them from seeking help when they really need it**

**Community Dialogue: Debunking the myths about FGM AkiDwA Conference at the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission, Green Street, Dublin 7 on October 22**

Miscommunication when talking about FGM can lead to misunderstandings that can intensify feelings of alienation and mistrust, and combined with the many unhelpful myths and the secrecy that already surround FGM, this can put women and girls at even greater risk. Judgemental communications about this very sensitive cultural issue can result in girls and young women feeling judged, alienated and unsure who they can turn to for help.



This Conference will also be an opportunity for AkiDwa staff to share early findings of new research into how FGM affects teenagers. This conference will be of interest to youth workers, medical professionals, social workers, sexual and reproductive health specialists and development practitioners. It is free to attend and will be useful for academics, researchers, students and anyone who is interested in championing the rights of women and girls.

**Please use this Eventbrite link to reserve your place today.**

<https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/community-dialogue-debunking-the-myths-about-female-genital-mutilation-tickets>

#### **About Akidwa**

**AkiDwa** is a charity formally known as **Akina Dada Wa Africa** (Swahili for sisterhood). Established in Dublin in 2001, **AkiDwa** has been representing migrant women in Ireland for almost two decades by providing policymakers with the unique perspective of a migrant-led national women's organisation. AkiDwa takes a holistic approach to integration that involves promoting both a migrant and a gender-specific approach to public services and by encouraging migrant women to access mainstream services and initiatives. We promote equality and justice for all migrant women in Ireland by ensuring equal opportunities and equal access to resources for all.

**AkiDwa is based at Unit 2, Killarney Court, Buckingham Street, Dublin 1 Registered Charity Number 20063641  
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