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Training CHANGE Champions

How to address resistance

Federatie Somalische Associaties in Nederland
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Objectives

- ▶ Understanding why people are resistant to change
- ▶ Become aware of people's resistance to change
- ▶ Be prepared to face resistance from the community
- ▶ Learning to deal with resistance
- ▶ Learning to use understanding and communication strategies in order to reduce the level of resistance

People resist to change

- ▶ Goal of the CHANGE Plus project: to help bringing a change in the tradition FGM
- ▶ People are resistant to change. They are resistant to:
 1. The change (they do not want to change FGM)
 2. The bringer of change (anyone who is against FGM)



Why are people resistant to change?

- ▶ Change is related to the 'unknown'
- ▶ Change brings confrontation
- ▶ Change affects your identity



Change is related to the unknown

- ▶ Change is related to the ‘unknown’ and the unknown is “the oldest and strongest kind of fear” (Lovecraft 1920).
- ▶ For its practitioners FGM is ‘normal’ and ‘certain’. People say: “We have always done it, why should we change it now?”
- ▶ Change is scary because nobody knows with certainty what it will happen after that change is implemented: Shall my girl lose her virginity? Shall my daughter go with all the boys around? Shall my daughter not being able to find a husband? Shall my daughter be dirty?

Change brings confrontation

- ▶ People do not like to be confronted, especially when this confrontation raises personal conflicts or conflict within the community
- ▶ It is difficult to go against your family, clan and community. People who are confronted with change may think: What will they say? What will they think about me? Will they reject me? Will I lose my position in the community? Will they still respect me?

Change affects your identity

- ▶ FGM, as any other cultural tradition, strongly defines your identity
- ▶ People tend to reinforce their cultural traditions when they feel their identity is threatened: A FGM practitioner who is moving to a new town or country where FGM is not practiced may feel their identity at risk. They do not want to become like ‘all the others’, they do not want to lose their cultural specificity, they want to make it clear that they are different. This is why sometimes people tend to practice their traditions abroad even more than at home.
- ▶ Statements as :“We do not want to give up our traditions!” or “We do not want to be Westernized”, are form of resistance to change and they all have to do with people’s cultural identity. “People do not resist to change. They resist being changed!” Peter Senge

Exercise:

Write down a list of things or traditions that make you feel “.....” (fill in your nationality or ethnicity).

Then imagine someone telling you to change some of these things. How would you feel? What would you think? How would you react? Discuss with the group.

Dealing with Resistance

- ▶ Familiarity
- ▶ Information (including storytelling and emphasizing the need of change)
- ▶ Involvement
- ▶ Create small wins
- ▶ Communication skills



Exercise

Two volunteers make a short act. The one represents a FGM practitioner who shows resistance to change. The other is the Champion who is bringing his/her message of change. Then discuss together: What did the Champion do very well? What he/she needs to improve? Did he/she show understanding and empathy? Was he convincing? Did he/she use correct and positive information including storytelling and emphasizing the need of change?

Resistance and Communication skills

- ▶ As bringers of change, you, as anyone who wants to stop FGM, may experience opposition from the family, clan and community. Critic, offence and social exclusion are some forms of resistance you may experience.
- ▶ Being blamed to be ‘the shame of the family’, ‘an enemy of the Islam’, ‘a betrayal of the community’; or being laughed because as a man ‘you should not interfere with a female topic’, are some examples of resistance to the bringers of change.
- ▶ Understanding, empathy and communication skills are some of the ingredients in order to face this resistance, without being judgmental or fighting against one another.

► **Verbal skills:**

1. Convincing (good arguments)
2. Clear voice (i.e. not mumbling)
3. Speaking volume (not too soft, not too loud)
4. Speaking fluency (not too many silences, or “uh’s”)
5. Speaking rate (neither too slow nor too fast)
6. Vocal confidence (neither insecure tone nor dominant tone)

► **Non verbal skills:**

1. Body movements (e.g. not too nervous, but walking and stay calm)
2. Appearance (e.g. not too closed/formal)
3. Gestures (e.g. emphasizing speech)
4. Facial expression
5. Use of eye contact

Exercise

Working in two, prepare a presentation against FGM. Now go in front of the group and pretend you are doing a presentation at an information meeting. Record yourself in order to evaluate your verbal skills. Discuss at the end with the group: How was the presentation? Was it clear what it was all about? How was her/his verbal and not-verbal skills? What would you advice?

Thank you for your attention!