

# \* Unicef: How to spare girls from the cruel cut \*

## INTERVENTION

programmes to end female genital mutilation can only succeed if they address the needs and wishes of the community, a report says.

UN children's organisation Unicef is releasing a report on the practice and ways in which communities can

be encouraged to end it. It looks at five African nations and at the prevalence of mutilation elsewhere.

Unicef regards female genital mutilation (FGM) as a major human rights violation.

Girls who suffer it endure pain and, often, years of ill health. An estimated three

million girls and women in Africa are at risk each year — but interventions from Western aid agencies motivated by outrage are unlikely to succeed, the Unicef report says.

Communities which practise FGM often believe they are doing the best for their daughters. Parents

fear their daughters will be ostracised, or remain unmarried.

In the five African countries surveyed — Egypt, Senegal, Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia — the most successful projects aimed at ending FGM built up local trust by reinforcing positive aspects of local culture.