



## Desert Flower Foundation

Founded by Waris Dirie

In 2002, human rights activist and supermodel Waris Dirie founded the "Waris Dirie Foundation" in Vienna, Austria, which was renamed the "Desert Flower Foundation" in 2010. The organisation fights against the widespread practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). Today more than 250 million girls and women worldwide are affected by FGM, and up to 3.5 million new victims are added every year. Every 11 seconds, a little girl somewhere in the world is genital mutilated against her will.

**CAMPAIGNS.** Right from the start, the Foundation made headlines with undercover research in African communities in London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Madrid, Amsterdam, Brussels, Stockholm, Vienna and Lisbon. The campaign's final report was 4,000 pages long and brought to light what hardly anyone knew before: FGM also takes place in the middle of Europe, on our doorstep. In 2006, the Desert Flower Foundation presented the results to the Council of Ministers of the European Union (EU). Almost all European countries passed laws against FGM.

In 2009, the first social media campaign against FGM was developed together with the German agency Heymann Brandt de Gelmini. 400 million people could already be reached in the first year and the Desert Flower Foundation was awarded the Social Media Award 2010 for the best "NGO campaign of the year" by the German Federal Government. Many other campaigns followed.

**SPONSORSHIPS.** The Desert Flower Foundation not only provides worldwide education about this torture of little girls, but also protects them from FGM through sponsorship projects. Contracts between the Foundation and parents guarantee the integrity of the girls. In return, the families receive financial support. The integrity of the girls is checked twice a year by a local paediatrician. The well-known sponsorship project "Save A Little Desert Flower" was launched in 2014.

**DESERT FLOWER CENTER.** In 2013, the Desert Flower Foundation set another milestone with the opening of the first Desert Flower Center in Berlin. In cooperation with the Waldfriede Hospital, the world's first holistic care centre for FGM victims was opened. The Desert Flower Center offers back operations after FGM mutilations, gynaecological, urological and psychological care. In cooperation with the Karolinska Clinic in Stockholm and the Hôpital Delafontaine in Paris, further Desert Flower Centers were opened. In Amsterdam, the Desert Flower Surgical Center was established in 2014, a training center for surgeons, gynaecologists and urologists specializing in FGM cases.

**EDUCATION INITIATIVE.** In 2016, the Desert Flower Foundation decides to make education in Africa the focus of its work. In Sierra Leone (West Africa), where 94 percent of all girls are still circumcised, the first three "Desert Flower Schools" for 1200 children are currently being built with donations. The opening of the first school is scheduled for end of September 2019. Founder Waris Dirie: "Education is the only way to stop female genital mutilation in a sustainable way!"

All campaigns, projects and activities of the Desert Flower Foundation are financed by private donations!

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