

# A few words from our FGM Appeal Chair - Anita Goyal

Anita Goyal

**Director and trustee of the Hemraj  
Goyal Foundation**



Developing excellence  
in response to FGM and  
other harmful practices



## Anita Goyal

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Anita Goyal is currently the Director and trustee of The Hemraj Goyal Foundation. She is the honorary chair of the Barnardo's FGM Appeal and an award winning philanthropist. Anita was an outstanding teacher of science for 20 years.

She is the co-founder of Ultimate You where she designs educational seminars for all communities. She is committed to making a difference and believes in doing everything with passion and purpose.



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# *When did you first hear about Female Genital Mutilation?*

My career started as a secondary school teacher of Science in Stratford (East London) and later I progressed to Head of Science and Assistant headteacher in Romford.

It was only ten years ago when I learnt about FGM from a book called Desert Flower by Waris Dirie. This was my first experience of learning about a practice that was non-existent in my world. I cannot even begin to imagine the human pain that these young girls experience when undergoing FGM. We now see FGM in the news; splashed across the media in bite size chunks that campaigners hope will motivate people to take a stand to end FGM. But it is in the education system that we need to see change, and it was a real pleasure at our second annual FGM Conference this year to hear from pupils at Norbury School who are now learning about FGM as part of their curriculum.

I was honoured to be asked, back in February, to visit the school where I taught, to speak with the pupils about the work of our family foundation - [The Hemraj Goal Foundation](#). When I was a teacher, we had no training in FGM and I'm saddened by the truth of how many girls that may have gone through the system unrecognised, having suffered this unimaginable practice. However, it's encouraging to see how the systems in schools and colleges have progressed through safeguarding ALL children.



## *When did you first get involved with the National FGM Centre?*

Helping women and children has always been at the heart of the mission statement of the Hemraj Goyal Foundation, and my work with Barnardo's began a few years ago in supporting their project against child sexual exploitation. This naturally developed into widening our support to include the FGM Appeal, which is led by the National FGM Centre in partnership with the Local Government Association and Barnardo's, and in 2017, I was asked to be the honorary chair of the FGM Appeal for Barnardo's which I was delighted to accept.

As a Foundation there is a common misconception that we simply donate money towards the causes we support, and leave it at that; but that is not what the Hemraj Goyal Foundation is about.

I am fully committed to getting as actively involved in each and every project as I can, and our partnership with the National FGM Centre has opened my eyes to the facts, figures and challenges that the Centre faces every day. For example, while one cannot argue with the presence of FGM as an issue in our worldwide society today, there are those who show resistance to some of the education that we are striving to share, particularly with regards to FGM being a problem in the UK.



Anita and Avnish with Leethen (Head of Centre), Sonita (National Lead for Learning and Practice Development and Maggie O'Kane (Part of the Production Team of Jaha's Promise)

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**I am proud to be playing a key part in spearheading the End FGM campaign, not just in helping to end new cases of FGM but in I was asked to be the honorary chair of the FGM Appeal for Barnardo's which I was delighted to accept.**

## *What work have you been doing with the National FGM Centre?*

Since becoming Honorary Chair of the FGM Appeal we have hosted several events together, and it is testament to the hard work of the whole team that each of these events has been bigger than the last. We have recently completed a series of six End FGM events, raising awareness of the Appeal through education, empowerment and engaging others to join our appeal.

In 2017 our first FGM conference introduced 40 guests to FGM. We then hosted a dinner at the University Women's Club where a fantastic £112, 500 was raised. Awareness has grown in the year since the first conference however, and so this year we had to take a step back and review how society's views and knowledge of FGM has changed and evolved.

This year we hosted a private screening of Jaha's promise- a documentary depicting one woman's courageous journey to end FGM in her native country The Gambia. In July 2018 we held an educational conference at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, targeted at social workers, teachers, doctors, nurses and other leading practitioners to engage further with the appeal. I was pleased to interview a panel of experts from a range of professional backgrounds relating to FGM at the conference in an effort to share with our

audience what they can do to protect potential and existing survivors. This month, one of our next generation philanthropist Simran Sehmi hosted a successful event called 'Beauty in Bloom' where awareness was raised about FGM and other issues affecting women, whilst also learning tips from make up artists. We then staged a charity fashion show to raise funds, showcase the work of the charity and end the year with a celebration of women's empowerment. Again this was attended by over 200 people.



*The fantastic 'Fashion Show' event, raising awareness around FGM and Period Dignity..*

A blend of events – from fundraising at the UWC for the FGM appeal, for which we are grateful to the donors that have supported this new area of work with Barnardo's, to raising awareness though a variety of events, has helped to engage and encourage people to collaborate to help end this traditional harmful practice with British girls.