

Warriors

Director: Barney Douglas. Certificate: 12A.
Running time: 87 minutes. UK release date:
13 November 2015

Warriors is a documentary film that follows a group of young Masai men who take up cricket. They train tirelessly at the sole cricket ground levelled by the British Army having heard of the team's endeavours. The Warriors team enjoys local fame for their dedication to a foreign sport, and widespread notoriety for playing in traditional Masai costume. The Warriors are invited to play their first ever match in the amateur Last Man Stands World Championships in London. Following a disappointing start to the competition, their game improves and they begin to win matches, but will it be enough for them to realise their dream of playing in the finals at Lord's Cricket Ground?

On returning to Kenya the Warriors use their new-found respect and celebrity to tackle some age-old traditions that they believe to be intolerable in the modern world. The Masai are a male-dominated tribe in which women have few rights. For generations, girls as young as 6 years old have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), thought to be a necessary symbolisation of adulthood and the readiness for marriage. Worldwide an estimated 125 million women and girls have undergone FGM. These practices are implicated in the spread of HIV/AIDS through inadequate sterilisation of equipment, and there is concern for the long-term survival of the Masai. Most of the Warriors have witnessed their sisters being removed from education, taken away to be 'cut' and married off

into distant villages, and they talk of the pain of their loss. We hear the harrowing stories of young women who have run away from home to avoid FGM, and the remorse of a father whose daughter returned home to die of HIV/AIDS.

Their success in London gives the Warriors the courage to challenge their elders on the practice of FGM. They recognise their potential role in the emancipation of Masai women, and as a catalyst to change harmful traditional practices. When each Masai cricketer refuses to marry women who have been 'cut', the elders agree put a stop to FGM.

This film depicts the contrasting gender roles in Masai culture. The women are largely silent during the film while the men's voices dominate. The women work while the men talk. As well as hard-hitting messages and beautiful imagery, this film has warmth, humour and excitement – forgive me cricket fans, but never before have I cared about the outcome of a cricket match.

Warriors highlights the commonplace occurrence of FGM in many cultures. As a result of migration there has been a significant increase in the number of women and girls living with FGM in the Western world, and it is estimated that 137 000 victims are living in the UK alone.¹ Girls are often taken to their country of origin to undergo FGM, but it is also thought that some practices continue to take place in the UK.

In recognition of the high prevalence of FGM among women living in the UK, the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists published updated guidance on *Female Genital Mutilation and its Management*² in July 2015. The UK Government introduced mandatory reporting of FGM in under-18s by

health/social care professionals in October 2015, with a commitment to end FGM practices in the UK within a generation. The Department of Health, working alongside the National Health Service, the Royal Colleges and survivors of FGM, have produced a package of support materials³ to empower health care professionals and support them in strengthening their response to girls who are at risk of, or who have undergone, FGM, and in providing better care for those surviving with FGM in the UK.

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- 1 Macfarlane A, Dorkenoo E. *Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales. Updated Statistical Estimates of the Numbers of Affected Women Living in England and Wales and Girls at Risk. Interim Report on Provisional Estimates*. 21 July 2014. <http://www.equalitynow.org/sites/default/files/FGM%20EN%20City%20Estimates.pdf> [accessed 28 January 2016].
- 2 Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists. *Female Genital Mutilation and its Management* (Green-top Guideline No. 53). July 2015. <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/gtg53/> [accessed 28 January 2016].
- 3 Department of Health. *FGM: Mandatory Reporting in Healthcare*. 30 October 2015. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fgm-mandatory-reporting-in-healthcare> [accessed 28 January 2016].

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