



International Day of Zero Tolerance For Female Genital Mutilation - February 6

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), also known as Female Genital Cutting, is recognized internationally as a violation of human rights, health, and the integrity of girls and women. This practice comprises all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. Globally, it is estimated that between 100 - 140 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). In Africa, more than 3 million girls are at risk of the practice annually. As many countries are still battling the coronavirus pandemic, violence against vulnerable populations is likely to increase. Among the 32 countries where FGM is most prevalent, Ghana is ranked 27th, with the overall prevalence of FGM among girls and women aged 15-49 years approximately 4 percent. Although the practice has been around for more than a thousand years and is tied to cultural beliefs of femininity, it is not impossible to end this horrendous practice in a single generation.

It is paramount that we educate ourselves about the progress of eliminating FGM, as recognized within Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is dedicated to achieving gender equality. Ghana is one of the countries that has made progress in the fight against FGM and this is a step towards eliminating this harmful practice in the country.

Ghana's fight against Female Genital Mutilation:

- Ghana is classified as a low prevalence country due to the collaborative efforts of the government. In 1989, the Late Ft. Lt J.J Rawlings established a declaration against FGM and other harmful traditional practices.
- In 1994, the Ghanaian government outlawed female circumcision. According to this law, circumcisers can be sentenced to up to 3 years of imprisonment (Criminal code Amendment Bill; Ghana, 1994). The percentage of the Ghanaian female population affected by this practice fell from 15 percent to 10 percent by 1996.
- However, this traditional practice is still going on among some predominant ethnic groups of the Upper East region. As of 2018, studies have shown that the overall prevalence in the Upper East Region is 38 percent, with Bawku municipality recording the highest at 82 percent.
- Studies have shown that three-quarters of Ghanaian women think FGM could be stopped through health education. This is important to note because 95 percent of women who practice FGM have no formal or primary education.
- In spite of the fact that Ghana has achieved some successes, that is not enough. The government must continue to enforce laws prohibiting FGM, strengthen institutions responsible for child protection, and ensure that services are available to the most vulnerable people in most remote communities to help eliminate FGM.

What other countries are doing to combat FGM:

- How to break the silence on FGM in Somalia: ([Watch here](#))
- [Watch](#) how Raymond Ukwa, a Nigerian, is protecting young girls in Nigeria from FGM.
- What the United Kingdom, Egypt, and Kenya are doing to end Genital Mutilation and Cutting: [Watch here](#)