



Female genital mutilation.

It is estimated that more than 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation in the countries where the practice is concentrated. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a traditional harmful practice that involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM has no health benefits and its practised based on superstitious beliefs. FGM has exposed more than 200 million girls and women to reproductive health complications as well as physical, mental and sexual health challenges. Despite the international recognition of FGM as a violation of human rights of girls and women and a form of extreme gender discrimination, every year, an estimated 3 million girls are at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation, the majority of whom are cut before they turn 15 years old. Treatment of health complications of FGM in 27 high prevalence countries costs 1.4 billion USD per year. This amount is expected to rise to 2.3 billion USD in 30 years (2047) if FGM prevalence remains the same. This corresponds to a 68% increase in the costs of inaction. However, if countries abandon FGM, these costs would decrease by 60% over the next 30 years (WHO). FGM widens the gender inequalities in attaining the SDGs. The health complications that arise after FGM, also limits women and children's access to education, decent work and quality sexual reproduction regarding their health and wellbeing.

Challenges being faced to curb FGM.

Despite the health and human rights challenges experienced under the practice of FGM over decades, research has shown that its eradication globally has been gradual. This is because FGM is seen as a cultural identity in most tribes. In such societies, FGM is considered a ritual which initiates a young girl into womanhood and this is linked to the cultural ideals of femininity and modesty. This is also evident in the superstitious beliefs that FGM protects the female from the temptation of being immoral, protects the female's virginity, provides better prospects for marriage and the joy of greater pleasure during sex.

There is also the challenge with the implementation of recommendations and legal frameworks. Some countries have criminalized the act through the legislature, however the practice still continues. The training of medical personnel to carry out the circumcision in clinics and hospitals to reduce the harm and damage associated with the practice also limits the eradication of FGM. The WHO reported that currently, in many settings where FGM is prevalent, health care providers perform FGM due to the belief that the procedure is safer when done by a health worker. However, WHO strongly urges health care providers not to perform FGM. As part of the Sustainable Development Goals, the global community has set a target to eliminate female genital mutilation by the year 2030.

A call to action:

- End female genital mutilation zero tolerance for FGM: ([Watch now](#))
- Kenyan Girls Use Technology to Combat Genital Cutting (iCut): ([Watch now](#))
- Survivor: Leyla Hussein's Story - ([Watch now](#))
- The village that's eradicated FGM - BBC News: ([Watch now](#))
- Garissa women form group to help eradicate FGM: ([Watch now](#))
- Ifrah Ahmed calls for an end to female genital mutilation | UNFPA: ([Watch now](#))