

BIGMUN 2024
ECOSOC 3: Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Research Report

Topic 1: Working towards abolishing genital mutilation practices amongst developing countries.



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Introduction

Across the globe, more than 200 million girls and women suffer from the consequences of female genital mutilation, and it is estimated that around 4 million will continue to be subjected each year¹. Today’s girls are one-third less likely to be victims of female genital mutilation than 30 years ago; however, is it possible to reach complete abolishment of female genital mutilation by 2030? ¹. Female genital mutilation is considered a breach of human rights; however, it is still being heavily practised in certain developing countries.¹

Definition of Key Terms

Female genital mutilation (FGM): *“Female genital mutilation is a practice that involves altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. Internationally recognised as a human rights violation.”*²

Developing country: *“A country which, relative to other countries, has a lower average standard of living.”*³

Abolish: *“The act of formally ending something (such as a system, law, or practice).”*

¹ UN, UNICEF. “Female genital mutilation.” UNICEF, Jan. 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>

² UN, UNFPA. “Female Genital Mutilation.” United Nations Population Fund, 18 Jan. 2023. <https://www.unfpa.org/female-genital-mutilation#:~:text=Female%20genital%20mutilation%20is%20a,form%20of%20female%20genital%20mutilation.>

³ Kulik M. Rebecca. “Developing Country” Encyclopaedia Britannica, Britannica Money, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/money/developing-country>

Background Information

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been around for centuries, being estimated to originate all the way back to Ancient Egypt and Sudan or Ancient Rome, stating that it was implemented on female slaves to prevent pregnancy and sexual relations⁴. However, FGM is still being practised and each year 4 million girls and women are being exposed to dangerous procedures that are life altering and death inducing¹. It is estimated that 44,320 deaths per year are indirectly or directly caused by FGM in FGM practicing countries⁵. These countries include: Egypt, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, among other countries spread across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.^{6 7}

Each country has their reasons to deem FGM necessary; however, the most common one includes FGM as a necessity in raising a young girl, to prepare her for adulthood and marriage, this would include promoting premarital virginity and marital fidelity⁶. There is also a certain societal convention and pressure on the individuals which could lead to a feeling of exclusion and rejection by the community if one did not undergo FGM.⁶

Ifrah Ahmed is a proud activist and founder of the Ifrah Foundation, which works with women in order to train them to advocate against the taboo topic of FGM and its practice⁸. In 1977, WHO classified FGM into four different types: varying between health risk and tissue removal⁹. In 2012, the UN banned FGM which was an important step towards advancing women's rights¹⁰. Furthermore, the UN declared the 6th of February as the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.⁴

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

WHO

An organisation that has shown continuing support towards prevention and abolishment of any and all FGM practices.

⁴ World Vision. "Facts, History, FAQs, what you need to know about FGM." World Vision, 17 Aug. 2022.

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/facts-history-faqs-what-you-need-know-about-fgm#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20exact%20established,prevent%20pregnancy%20and%20sexual%20relations>

⁵ Ghosh A., Flowe H. & Rockey J. "Estimating excess mortality due to female genital mutilation." Scientific Reports 13 13328, Nature, 16 Aug. 2023. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-023-38276-6>

⁶ WHO. "Female Genital Mutilation." WHO, 2021. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>

⁷ UN, UNICEF. "UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation." UNICEF, July 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/unfpa-unicef-joint-programme-eliminating-fgm>

⁸ Johnson S. "'On a rampage': the African women fighting to end FGM.", The Guardian, 9 Jun. 2011.

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/08/on-a-rampage-the-african-women-fighting-to-end-fgm>

⁹ WHO, SRH. "Types of female genital mutilation." WHO 2021. [https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research-\(srh\)/areas-of-work/female-genital-mutilation/types-of-female-genital-mutilation](https://www.who.int/teams/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-research-(srh)/areas-of-work/female-genital-mutilation/types-of-female-genital-mutilation)

¹⁰ UN, UN Women. "United Nations bans female genital mutilation." UN Women, 20 Dec. 2012.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/12/united-nations-bans-female-genital-mutilation#:~:text=The%20FGM%20resolution%20urges%20countries,from%20this%20form%20of%20violence>

WHA

The decision-making department of WHO¹¹. In 2008 WHA passed resolution WHA61.16 to abolish FGM, emphasising the need for: “*concerted action in all sectors: health, education, finance, justice and women’s affairs.*”⁶

UNICEF

Supports the development of policies and laws focusing on ensuring the abolishment of FGM and works to ensure these policies are being implemented². They also provide girls at risk among survivors with access to suitable care.²

UNFPA

Has helped strengthen health services to prevent FGM and treat survivors². They also work with civil society organisations to help educate the population, along with media coverage on FGM and leading dialogue sessions on the health and human rights aspects regarding FGM practices². Furthermore, they work with religious and traditional leaders to remove the connotation of FGM from religion.²

Relevant UN Resolutions

[A/RES/217, Article 5](#)

*“No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”*¹²

[A/RES/56/128](#)

Traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls.¹³

[A/RES/68/146](#)

The girl child.¹⁴

[A/RES/73/149](#)

Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation.¹⁵

¹¹ WHO, WHA. “World Health Assembly.” WHO, 2021. <https://www.who.int/about/accountability/governance/world-health-assembly>

¹² UN, General Assembly. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” United Nations, 10 Dec. 1948.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights#:~:text=Article%205,or%20degrading%20treatment%20or%20punishment>.

¹³ UN, General Assembly. “Traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls.” A/RES/56/128, 19 Dec. 2001. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/482/85/PDF/N0148285.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁴ UN, General Assembly. “The girl child.” A/RES/68/146, 18 Dec. 2013.

https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_68_146.pdf

¹⁵ UN, General Assembly. “Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation.” A/RES/73/149, 17 Dec. 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/445/93/PDF/N1844593.pdf?OpenElement>

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

UNFPA and UNICEF Joint Programme of the Elimination of FGM

Since 2008 they have worked collaboratively with one another by establishing a joint programme towards the elimination of FGM that aims to end all FGM practices by 2030.⁷

UN resolutions

A/RES/56/128, A/RES/68/146, and A/RES/73/149.

Other organisations

E.g. Population Reference Bureau and Donor Working Group are also working towards preventing FGM from being practiced.

Possible Solutions

Legislation: Working on national and international levels towards ending FGM by applying further legislation. Creating specific laws against the practice of FGM. As well, as making these laws more punishable towards the offenders.

Education: Educating the countries where FGM is being practised as well as other countries to ensure optimal awareness and assistance on the topic.

Monitoring: Monitoring the practice by data collecting such as surveys to ensure that the FGM practices are decreasing.

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