



Over four million girls still at risk of female genital mutilation: UN leaders call for sustained commitment and investment to end FGM

Joint Statement by the UNFPA Executive Director, UNICEF Executive Director, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Women Executive Director, WHO Director-General, and UNESCO Director-General on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

NEW YORK, 6 February 2026 – In 2026 alone, an estimated 4.5 million girls—many under the age of five—are at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation. Currently, more than 230 million girls and women are living with its consequences.

Today, on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, we reaffirm our commitment to end female genital mutilation for every girl and every woman at risk, and to continue working to ensure those subjected to this harmful practice have access to quality and appropriate services.

Female genital mutilation is a violation of human rights and cannot be justified on any grounds. It compromises girls' and women's physical and mental health and can lead to serious, lifelong complications, with treatment costs estimated at about USD 1.4 billion every year.

Interventions aimed at ending female genital mutilation over the last three decades are having an impact, with nearly two-thirds of the population in countries where it is prevalent expressing support for its elimination. After decades of slow change, progress against female genital mutilation is accelerating: half of all gains since 1990 were achieved in the past decade reducing the number of girls subjected to FGM from one in two to one in three. We need to build on this momentum and speed up progress to meet the Sustainable Development Goal target of ending female genital mutilation by 2030.

We know what works. Health education, engaging religious and community leaders, parents and health workers and the use of traditional and social media are effective strategies to end the practice. We must invest in community-led movements—including grassroots and youth networks—and strengthen education through both formal and community-based approaches. We need to amplify prevention messages by involving trusted opinion leaders, including health



workers. And we must support survivors by ensuring they have access to comprehensive, context-tailored health care, psychosocial support, and legal assistance.

Every dollar invested in ending female genital mutilation yields a tenfold return. An investment of USD 2.8 billion can prevent 20 million cases and generate USD 28 billion in investment returns.

As we approach 2030, gains achieved over decades are at risk as global investment and support wane. Funding cuts and declining international investment in health, education, and child protection programmes are already constraining efforts to prevent female genital mutilation and support survivors. Further, the growing systematic pushback on efforts to end female genital mutilation, compounded by dangerous arguments that it is acceptable when carried out by doctors or health workers, adds more hurdles to elimination efforts. Without adequate and predictable financing, community outreach programmes risk being scaled back, frontline services weakened, and progress reversed—placing millions more girls at risk at a critical moment in the push to meet the 2030 target.

Today we reaffirm our commitment and efforts with local and global public and private partners, including survivors, to end female genital mutilation once and for all.

For more information

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