TACKLING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION
IN THE 21st CENTURY

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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World Health Organization definition

- FGM is the practice comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

- It has no health benefits and has several immediate and long-term consequences for the girls and women affected. It harms girls and women in many ways physical and psychological and even can cause death.
A VIOLATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

-Recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.

-An extreme form of discrimination against women.

-A violation of the rights of children.

-Also violates a person’s right to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.
KEY FACTS

- More than 200 million girls and women alive today have been subjected to the practice.

- More than half live in just three countries: Indonesia, Egypt and Ethiopia.

- Concentrated in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East (Iraq, Yemen) and Asia (as Indonesia) as well as among migrants from these areas.

- 44 million are girls below age 15.

- More than 3 million girls are estimated to be at risk for FGM annually.

Source: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A global concern UNICEF 2016
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAUSES

-A social convention. The social pressure is a strong motivation to perpetuate the practice.

-A necessary part of raising a girl, and a way to prepare her for adulthood and marriage

-Linked to “premarital virginity and marital fidelity”.

-Linked to the idea that it preserves chastity, cleanliness, family honour and a girl for marriage.
GENDER EQUALITY IS KEY

-Therefore, the practice is based in a **deep inequality** between sexes.

-**Gender equality** is key in the promotion of the abandonment of FGM.
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE IN THE LAST 20 YEARS

-In 1997 World Health Organization together with UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) issued a joint statement against the practice of FGM.

-In 2008 UNFPA and UNICEF initiated the Joint Programme on FGM to accelerate the abandonment of the practice.

-December 2012 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) unanimously passed a milestone resolution banning the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (Resolution A/RES/67/146).

-December 2014 UNGA unanimously passed a new resolution (A/RES/69/150) aiming to intensify global efforts for the elimination of FGM.

-Sustainable Development Goals including a specific target calling for an end to FGM by 2030.
SOME PROGRESS BUT NOT ENOUGH

-revised legal frameworks and growing political support to end FGM:

-a law against it in 26 countries in Africa and the Middle East, as well as in 33 other countries with migrant populations from FGM practicing countries. Five of the countries with the highest FGM percentage in the world has already banned it (Kenya, Uganda, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Gambia).

-the prevalence of FGM has decreased in most countries and an increasing number of women and men in practicing communities support endings its practice.

-wider international support to end FGM
THE BEST PRACTICES AND THE GOOD RESULTS

-research shows that if *practicing communities themselves decide to abandon FGM*, the practice can be eliminated very rapidly.

-A *combination of community activism and legislation* is key to end FGM.
THERE IS STILL A LOT TO DO

-As UNICEF points out, **current progress is insufficient to keep up with increasing population growth.** If trends continue, the number of girls and women undergoing FGM **will rise significantly over the next 15 years.** 15 million additional girls between ages 15 and 19 be subjected to it by 2030.

-Attitudes are changing but there **is still a strong social pressure.**

-Law banning FGM is needed and a first step but is not enough.

-The prevalence of FGM varies greatly across countries.
FUTURE AGENDA: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and empower all Women and girls

The new Sustainable Development Goals contain a specific target calling for and end to FGM by the year 2030:

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
WHAT TO DO TO CONTRIBUTE TO END FGM (I)

- generating knowledge about the causes and consequences of the practice

- engage whole communities

- focus on human rights and gender equality

- combining national policy and community-level awareness raising
WHAT TO DO TO CONTRIBUTE TO END FGM (II)

- encouraging debate around FGM

- addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls

- addressing the deep-rooted cultural issues that are causing it

- programmes focusing in community conversations and education about human rights and fundamental values with adults, adolescents and religious leaders

- Debating today in Sevilla
MANY THANKS

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