

The Hidden Toll: A Girl Dies Every 12 Minutes as a Result of FGM/C

Reframing FGM/C as a Public Health Emergency

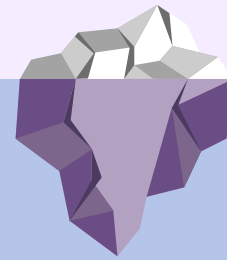
44,320 girls and young women die each year from FGM/C-related complications, according to research by Ghosh, Flowe, and Rockey¹. This analysed data from 15 African countries over three decades (1990-2020).

This positions Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) as the 4th leading cause of death among girls and young women in these countries, exceeded only by enteric infections, respiratory infections, and malaria. Yet, unlike these diseases, FGM/C is intentional and preventable.

What we knew

4.3 million girls are at risk of FGM/C every year

Over 230 million survivors



What was hidden

44,320 deaths annually

4th leading cause of death among women and girls

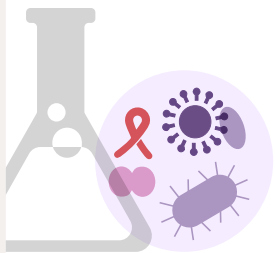


Despite decades of advocacy and increased awareness, over 230 million women and girls worldwide have been subjected to FGM/C, with Africa (144 million), Asia (80 million), and the Middle East (6 million) bearing the largest burdens².

While survivors represent the visible face of FGM/C, this new research reveals the hidden toll of those who do not survive, and offers evidence linking FGM/C to mortality. The mortality as a result of FGM/C rate surpasses deaths from HIV/AIDS, measles, or meningitis in practising countries, yet the cause of these deaths has remained largely invisible in global health statistics.

The implications of this new data are profound, calling for a fundamental shift in how we understand and address FGM/C.

It necessitates reframing FGM/C from a harmful traditional practice to a pandemic of violence and a critical public health emergency.



\$2.75 billion

\$300 million

The evidence demands a global shift in responding to FGM/C. UNFPA (2022) estimates \$2.75 billion is needed to end the practice in 31 high prevalence countries by 2030 yet only \$300 million has been allocated^{3,4}. With a girl dying every 12 minutes from FGM/C related complications, the issue needs to be pushed to the forefront of the global agenda demanding stronger commitment to eliminate FGM/C and an urgent increase in interventions and funding.

A case study from Liberia exemplifies the devastating impact of FGM/C. Nehlor was seven years old when she was meant to undergo FGM/C alongside her two friends. Both of her friends suffered haemorrhage and died, the reason for their deaths was never acknowledged - attributed instead to witchcraft. Their deaths are not isolated incidents, FGM/C-related deaths are often concealed and misattributed. This research provides a robust foundation to support the harrowing anecdotal accounts from activists and survivors.

¹Ghosh, A., Flowe, H. & Rockey, J. Estimating excess mortality due to female genital mutilation. Sci Rep 13, 13328 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-38276-6>

²UNICEF. (2024 Update). Female Genital Mutilation: A global concern. Available at <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation/>

³UNFPA. (2022). Investing in Three Transformative Results: Realising Powerful Returns. Available at https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Investment_report_8%20Nov_FINAL.pdf

⁴UNFPA. (2020). Costing the Three Transformative Results. Available at https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Transformative_results_journal_23-online.pdf