

UN calls for an end to female genital mutilation in Ethiopia

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Poster on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). | Photo: Twitter/ @WHO

United Nations, February 7 (RHC)-- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have called for a renewed commitment to end female genital mutilation in Ethiopia.

The UNFPA and UNICEF made the joint call in line with the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which is annually commemorated on February 6th. This year's event was commemorated under the theme "Partnering with Men and Boys to Transform Social and Gender Norms to End FGM."

The two UN agencies called for a sustainable partnership and engagement with men and boys of Ethiopia to enforce the actions against FGM and transform the deeply rooted social and gender norm, and allow girls and women to fully realize their rights and potential.

Ethiopia has made remarkable progress in the last decade in the reduction of FGM prevalence among girls and women aged 15-49 from 74 percent in 2005 to 65 percent in 2016. However, Ethiopia is still

home to 25 million circumcised women and girls.

"I would like to congratulate the Ethiopian government for the progress made so far and for their commitment to ending FGM," the statement quoted UNICEF Representative in Ethiopia Aboubacar Kampo as saying. "Girls are subjected to FGM without a choice, and it is a clear violation of their protection rights."

"We must collectively redouble our efforts to end this harmful practice including scaling up our engagement with men and boys to change attitudes so that the next generation of girls can live healthier lives," Kampo said.

In Ethiopia, the most common rationale for the practice of FGM on girls and women is meeting societal expectations including traditions, culture, and norms exerting control over women's sexuality, and preserving women's virginity until marriage and family honor.

This reasoning is claims founded on false beliefs and culture and is passed on from one generation to another over time until they are believed to be true, the statement said, adding that partnering and engaging men and boys are critical steps in communicating the facts about FGM and its inherent risks.

According to the two UN agencies, Ethiopia has been making progress in attitude change towards FGM with 86.7 percent of boys and men, and 79.3 percent of girls and women aged 15-49 believing that FGM should not continue as a practice.

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