

laws, case studies, and best practices to foster a holistic and inclusive legal framework.

These two informative new resources are helpful tools for government officials, lawmakers, healthcare professionals, FGM/C survivors, activists, and advocates.

The aim is to foster effective legislation against FGM/C in every state, with comprehensive, holistic laws that prioritize the views and needs of survivors and promote prevention without further marginalizing vulnerable communities.

The map and manual are being launched by the U.S. End FGM/C Network and Equality Now at a high-profile event they are co-hosting in New York City at the start of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 78).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5.3

UNGA brings together world leaders, and high on the agenda will be discussions about what progress has been made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including target 5.3, which requires every government to take action to “eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.”

Eradicating FGM/C worldwide by 2030 is one of the commitments that all 193 UN member states agreed to when they signed onto the SDGs in 2015. Eight years on and many countries, including



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END FGM/C U.S. NETWORK

DID YOU KNOW?

Only 5 of the 41 state laws prohibiting FGM/C in the US protect adult women as well as minors

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#EndFGM



the US, are still not doing enough to protect women and girls.

Caitlin LeMay, Executive Director of U.S. End FGM/C Network, explains, "It is imperative that FGM/C is framed as a global issue, and for that to happen, we need to acknowledge that FGM/C happens here in the United States, too.

"One way that we can acknowledge that FGM/C is a problem in the US that is worthy of visibility and resources, is by ensuring that we have comprehensive laws in all 50 states and the District of Columbia that will promote the prevention of FGM/C as well as providing the necessary support to survivors."

LAWS AGAINST FGM/C ARE NEEDED AT A STATE LEVEL

Legislation at the state level and its effective implementation are crucial to preventing FGM/C in the US because states have a more direct impact on the lives of people in their jurisdiction, and have a significantly greater capacity to reach the women and girls at risk than at the federal level. States govern the activities of state-run institutions, including law enforcement and courts, healthcare, social services, and other programs, making them the best fit to provide protection.

In New York State alone, over 48,000 women and girls live with or are at risk of undergoing FGM/C – demonstrating the dire need for collective, immediate action. While it is acknowledged that FGM/C happens in some diaspora communities, there is far less awareness about cases of FGM/C being done in [predominately white, Christian communities](#) in the US.

It is essential to correct the misconception that FGM/C only happens within immigrant communities and elsewhere in the world. This requires public awareness raising and better collection and aggregation of statistical data on FGM/C at a state and national level. Information needs to be gathered and made publically available as it is central to motivating authorities to take comprehensive action, and it provides a baseline from which the scale and effectiveness of interventions can be measured.

Jill Thompson, Equality Now's Regional Representative of North America and the Global Lead on Adolescent Girls, says, "The United States government recognizes FGM/C as a grave human rights abuse and a form of violence against women internationally but has not done enough to address this issue in the United States itself.

"Eradication of FGM/C requires a comprehensive, survivor-centered approach, including a strong legal framework, public education, community outreach, stakeholder training, law enforcement, and health services for women and girls living with FGM/C. Eliminating it is a critical component of SDG 5 - achieving gender equality. But we can't expect other countries to end FGM/C if we aren't making every effort to end it within the United States as well."

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Founded in 1992, Equality Now is an international human rights organization that works to protect and promote the rights of all women and girls around the world. Our campaigns are centered on four program areas: Legal Equality, End Sexual Violence, End Harmful Practices, and End Sexual Exploitation, with a cross-cutting focus on the unique needs of adolescent girls. Equality Now combines grassroots activism with international, regional, and national legal advocacy to achieve legal and systemic change to benefit all women and girls and works to ensure that governments enact and enforce laws and policies that uphold their rights.

The U.S. End FGM/C Network (“the Network”) is a collaborative group of over 200 survivors, civil society organizations, foundations, activists, policymakers, researchers, healthcare providers, and others committed to promoting the abandonment of female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) in the U.S. and around the world.

The Network’s mission is to eliminate FGM/C by connecting, supporting, elevating, and advocating on behalf of and with diverse U.S. stakeholders engaged in prevention, education, and care. The U.S. End FGM/C Network serves as the main source for information and the lead advocacy voice on ending this harmful practice in the United States and around the world.

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