

Defence for Children International (DCI) statement before the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council

High-level panel discussion on the multisectoral prevention of and response to female genital mutilation

Thank you, Madam President.

This statement is delivered by Defence for Children International.

We welcome this high-level panel discussion, as we believe that elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM) contributes to achieving gender equality. We also strongly welcome [Human Rights Council resolution 44/16](#), which prioritises the issue of FGM, in order to increase mobilisation and cooperation on this global problem.

FGM is a form of violence against girls and a gendered form of child abuse with lifelong consequences for survivors.

It is already clear that like humanitarian crises, pandemics disproportionately affect girls. Covid has given the opportunity to some perpetrators to go back and practise again. Unfortunately, that is the reality of gender-based violence increasing in a lot of countries.

Female genital mutilation has revived under Covid but children human rights defenders are pushing hard to save girls at risk. For us to address FGM, it requires to have a holistic approach and have interventions at different levels that are context specific.

In Liberia with support from the EU Spotlight Initiative and UNICEF, DCI trained 300 Girl Clubs members in Montserrado and Grand Cape Mount Counties from 20 communities on the prevention and response to harmful practices.

In 2018, the executive order that banned FGM to be performed on girls younger than 18 years old did little to address the part community leaders play in perpetrating this crime. Currently, there is no law that expressly criminalises the practice in Liberia.

More than 50% of girls and women in Liberia have been mutilated, but no perpetrator has ever been prosecuted for inflicting female genital mutilation on girls and women.

Therefore, we urge the government of Liberia to:

1. Develop a legal framework in the Penal Code that explicitly criminalises the practice of FGM including specific penalties;
2. Prioritise the Strategy for the Protection of Girls against Child Marriage (2016) in conformity with the 2063 Agenda of the African Union and criminalize FGM;
3. Intensify efforts to prevent and respond to SGBV to reach SDG target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and FGM;
4. Support practice change within communities by reaching out to local chiefs;
5. Submit 'overdue' State Party reports for the CRC and CEDAW Committees.

I thank you.