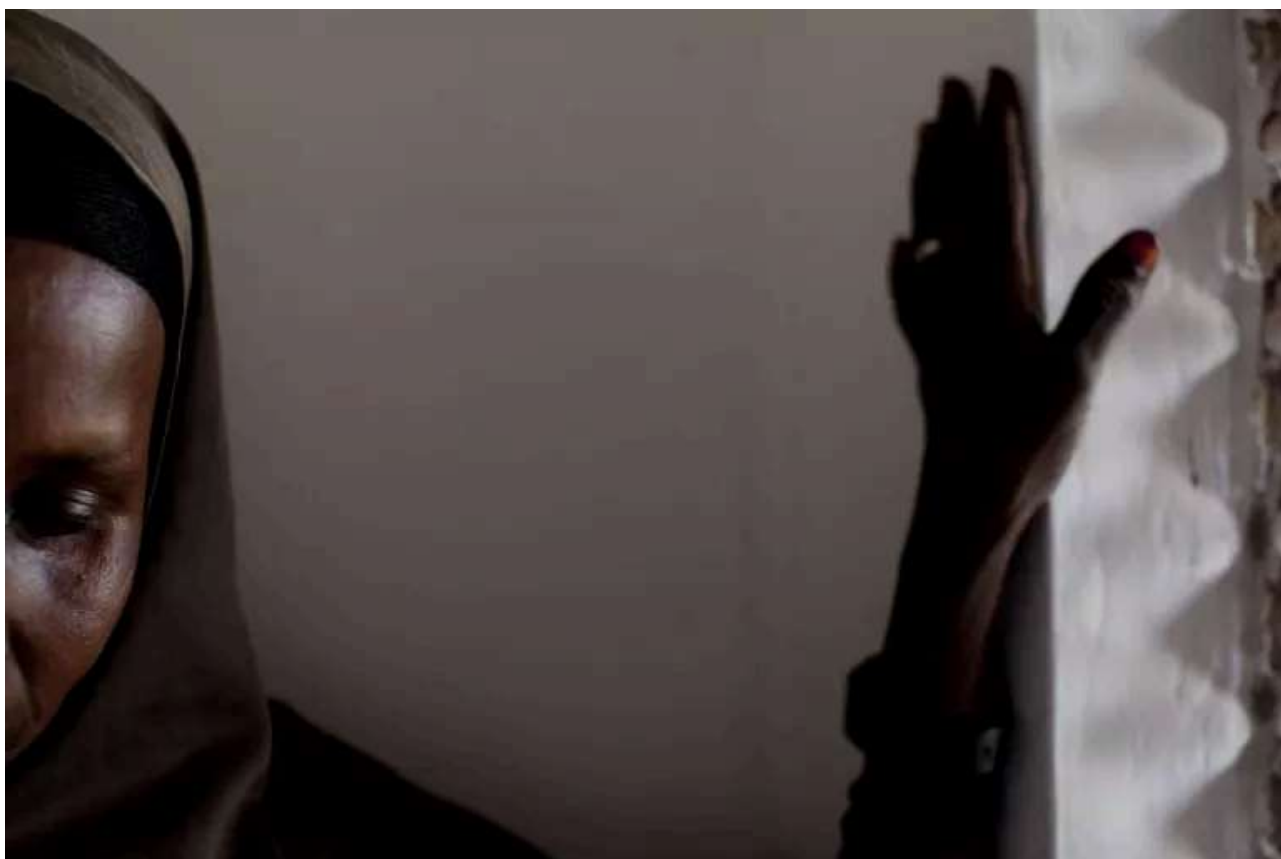


Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1157
Land:	Somalia
Kilde:	UNICEF
Titel:	Breaking the silence: Somalia's legislative journey to end female genital mutilation
Udgivet:	3. juni 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	12. juni 2026

Breaking the silence: Somalia's legislative journey to end female genital mutilation

The rise of legal and social reform to end FGM in Somalia



Mogadishu, 3 June 2025: In Somalia, the issue of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is more than just a health concern; it is a cultural norm deeply embedded in society. With nearly 99% of Somali women and girls aged 15 to 49 having undergone some form of FGM, the issue is not just a health crisis; it is a deeply rooted cultural and human rights challenge. Recent legal milestones, however, show promising progress, but challenges remain. Understanding Somalia's journey against FGM reveals a story of resilience, tradition and hope.

The historical and cultural context of FGM in Somalia

FGM in Somalia is tied to cultural ideas about purity, marriage, and social acceptance. Girls are typically cut before puberty, in a ceremony that often involves community elders or traditional practitioners. Many believe FGM ensures a girl's chastity and marriage prospects. These beliefs keep the practice alive, even as awareness grows about its dangers. The Somali Health and Demographic Survey (2018–2019) revealed that while 19% of women believe the practice should end, 72% still view it as a religious requirement. This belief, reinforced by social pressure and the fear of community ostracization, ensures that the cycle of harm continues.

Impact on women and girls

Health effects from FGM can be severe. Girls face pain, infections, and long-term health issues like childbirth complications. Psychologically, many experience anxiety, depression, and trauma. Beyond health, FGM fuels gender inequality. Women who undergo it often face social pressure to conform, limiting their choices and freedoms.

A fragmented legal landscape

While Somalia's 2024 constitutional review reaffirmed a prohibition on FGM, the country still lacks a comprehensive national law to enforce this ban. In Somalia's federal system, where governance varies by region, this legal vacuum has led to inconsistent protection for girls and women across the country.

Even in areas with political will, definitional disagreements often stall progress. Some advocates push for partial bans that exclude less severe forms of cutting, undermining the goal of zero tolerance. Without a unified and comprehensive legal approach, the practice persists under different names and justifications.

Somaliland: Building political commitment

Somaliland has emerged as a frontrunner in policy development. In 2024, it adopted a national Anti-FGM policy that integrates health and education efforts. A high-level convention in Hargeisa brought together more than 300 stakeholders, including religious leaders, government officials, and youth advocates. Religious leaders, including the Djibouti Fatwa Chair, unequivocally stated that FGM has no basis in Islam, a turning point in breaking religious misconceptions.

Galmudug: A legal milestone

Galmudug made history in 2024 by becoming the first federal member state to criminalize FGM. This legislation was the result of tireless work by local women's organizations, UN partners, and community-based advocacy campaigns. The law now serves as a blueprint for other regions, showing that legal reform is achievable within Somalia's unique political context.

Jubaland: A voice from the grassroots

In April 2025, Jubaland followed suit. Its anti-FGM law was built on a foundation of extensive community consultation and advocacy, particularly from survivors who shared their stories. Religious councils issued declarations affirming that FGM lacks Islamic legitimacy, helping to cement community consensus and reduce backlash.

What works: Lessons learnt

The success stories from Somaliland, Galmudug, and Jubaland highlight several critical lessons in the fight against FGM. Community-first approaches have proven effective, with legislative progress often rooted in grassroots advocacy and meaningful community engagement.

Religious leaders play a vital role as allies, with their public denunciations of FGM helping to dispel religious justifications and ease societal resistance. Additionally, youth

involvement and the use of digital platforms have been instrumental in amplifying change, as young advocates and online campaigns continue to shift public opinion and build momentum for reform.

Equally important are the voices of survivors, whose personal testimonies bring the issue into sharp focus and powerfully shape policy discussions.

UNICEF and UNFPA, through their Joint Global Programme on FGM elimination, have been instrumental in supporting these approaches by working with governments, communities, and religious institutions to create sustainable change. As part of the broader Joint Program on Human Rights, UNICEF has also helped regional governments strengthen child protection laws and integrate FGM advocacy into broader human rights frameworks.

The road ahead

The fight to end FGM in Somalia is ongoing, with the enactment of a comprehensive national law remaining a vital goal. However, momentum is growing, and efforts are steadily advancing.

Looking ahead, UNICEF and UNFPA will prioritize expanding support for both federal and regional legal frameworks, addressing the medicalization of FGM through stronger engagement with the health sector, and enhancing referral systems to ensure survivors can access the protection and care they need.

Ending FGM goes beyond legal reform; it is also a cultural and generational transformation. Although the journey is challenging, Somalia is making courageous strides to confront the issue and create a future where every girl is safe from harm. The shift has begun; change isn't just possible, it is already underway.

UNICEF is grateful for donors like the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Germany and the USA, who support the fight against FGM and assist in making child protection programmes stronger.

