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Intensifying global efforts and sharing good practices to eliminate female genital mutilations

Introduction

The World Health Organization defines Female Genital Mutilations as “the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.” An incredibly dangerous practice, this procedure has no health benefits for women, and can actually cause severe bleeding, urinating problems, cysts, and birth complications. Each year, there are around 4 million women worldwide at the risk of cuts, with a large amount being under the age of 15.¹ This practice violates children’s rights as defined in the Convention on Rights of the Child. “The Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child has said that States party to the Convention have an obligation ‘to protect adolescents from all harmful traditional practices, such as early marriages, honor killings and Female Genital Mutilation.’”²

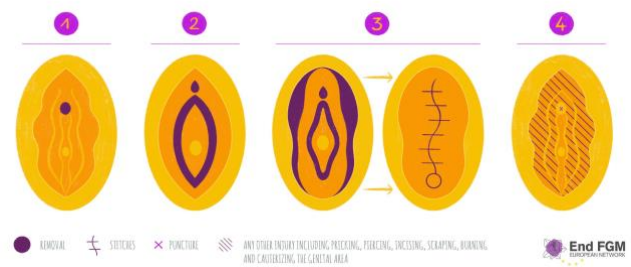
Communities that continue to practice Female Genital Mutilation and cutting often state religious and cultural reasons for doing so. However, it continues to highlight a sexism internalized in many societies, resulting in the harm of women. WHO estimates that around 100 to 140 million girls and women around the world have been the victim of at least one of the three types of Female Genital

Mutilation, defined below. The majority of these cases have occurred in Africa (28 cases), Asia, and the Middle East. Some have been reported in Central and South America as well.³

This practice has evolved to where it is now being undertaken in some countries by trained health care professionals, yet this does not make the practice any safer. Furthermore, in other countries, the practice is undertaken in secrecy.

Several governments have made laws against this practice, complementing them with culturally sensitive education and public awareness programs.

It is important to think of solutions to Female Genital Mutilation while keeping in mind the countries that continue the practice, and the significance of the practice in those countries.



¹ “What Is Female Genital Mutilation? 7 Questions Answered.” UNICEF, March 4, 2019. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.unicef.org/stories/what-you-need-know-about-female-genital-mutilation>.

² “7 Ways to End FGM.” Plan International. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://plan-international.org/sexual-health/7-ways-to-end-fgm-for-good>.

³ OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO. Accessed June 30, 2021. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Inte

agency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf. “Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation.” World Health Organization, 2008. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Inte agency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf.



Definition of Key Terms

Female Genital Mutilation

“Type I: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and/or

the prepuce (clitoridectomy).

Type II: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and

the labia minora, with or without excision of the

labia majora (excision).

Type III: Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with

creation of a covering seal by cutting and

appositioning the labia minora and/or the labia

majora, with or without excision of the clitoris

(infibulation).

Type IV: All other harmful procedures to the

female genitalia for non-medical purposes, for

example: pricking, piercing, incision.”⁴

Convention of the Rights of the Child

The guiding principle for the care and support a child requires because of their vulnerability. This principle refers to the right of a child to make decisions on issues that affect them. There are four core principles, including non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right of survival and

development, and the views of a child. According to the U.N. Committee on CRC, “discrimination against girl children is a serious violation of rights, affecting their survival and all areas of their young lives as well as restricting their capacity to contribute positively to society” (2005).⁵

Background Information

Cultural background

The practice of Female Genital Mutilation goes back thousands of years, with evidence from mummies in Egypt that show that it was a routine practice. There is even evidence that the practice even goes back to the time of Pharaohs, and suggests that it existed among “animists, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Protestants, and those without religious beliefs”.⁶ There are many communities that uphold the practice of Female Genital Mutilation because of beliefs associated with religion, even though the practice is not described in any holy texts, such as the Quran or the Bible. Accounts of the practice pre-date Christianity and Islam. In the United Kingdom, there has been evidence of clitoridectomy as used to manage masturbation, epilepsy, and sterility, even as recently as the 19th century.

The role which religious leaders play can vary. Supporters consider it a religious act and find efforts to eliminate the practice threatening. Female genital mutilation is often upheld by power structures and authority, like religious leaders, elders, and medical personnel. Furthermore, older women who have undergone the practice often see the need to maintain the identity of women and girls and promote the continuation of the practice.

⁴ OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO. Accessed June 30, 2021. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Interagency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf. “Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation.” World Health Organization, 2008. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Interagency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf.

⁵ “What Is FGM?” End FGM. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.endfgm.eu/female-genital-mutilation/what-is-fgm/>.

⁶ “Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Human Rights-Based Approaches of Legislation, Education, and Community Empowerment.” Health and Human Rights Journal, August 14, 2018. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2018/08/eradicating-female-genital-mutilation-cutting-human-rights-based-approaches-of-legislation-education-and-community-empowerment/>.

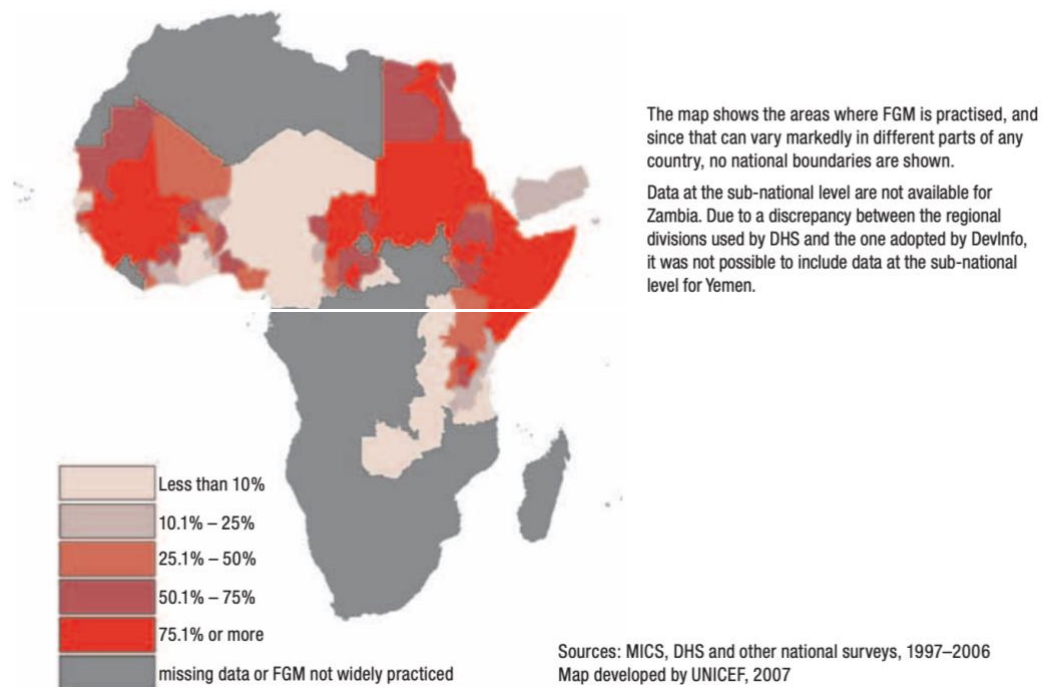


In cultures where it is widely practiced, this procedure is seen as an important part of identity formation and can also impart a sense of pride. It is seen as a milestone, a rite of passage for women to ensure purity and marriageability. Rationalizations for the continuation of the practice are derived from strong sociocultural and ancestral roots, based in maintaining ethnic and gender identity, femininity, female sexual “purity,” and honor for the family. It is believed that clitoris is associated with maleness and the prepuce of the penis is associated with femaleness, which is why many religions often go through the procedure of removing both, a ritual that is required before the person is accepted as an adult.

Proposed purposes for Female Genital Mutilation

Scholars have proposed three functions for the practice. The first draws from the concept that women are only good for marriage, emphasizing ideologies such as purity, virginity, and sexual restraint. Some societies believe that by reducing a woman’s sexual pleasure, the procedure protects a woman’s morality and purity. The second idea is thought of being born anew or entering adulthood. There are many contexts and cultures where social acceptance is the primary and only reason for continuing the practice. And the third is the

possibility of protecting the health of the woman and the fetus. This includes ensuring fidelity after marriage, a method of preventing rape, a source of income for those who perform the practice, as well as an augmentation in aesthetic appeal.⁷ There are some cultures that believe that FGM will improve hygiene as well as augment the probability of conception during intercourse. Some cultures believe that the clitoris is “toxic” as it is the main source of pleasure for a woman, and that if a fetus



comes in contact with it during childbirth, this can be fatal.⁸

Female genital mutilation is found in both Christian and Muslim communities, although not mentioned in the Quoran or the Bible, and some indigenous religions. It is, in some cultures, “mistakenly thought to increase fertility and make childbirth

⁷ “Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Human Rights-Based Approaches of Legislation, Education, and Community Empowerment.” Health and Human Rights Journal, August 14, 2018. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2018/08/eradicating-female-genital-mutilation-cutting-human-rights-based-approaches-of-legislation-education-and-community-empowerment/>.

⁸ Wahba, Yasmine. “LEGISLATIVE REFORM TO SUPPORT THE ABANDONMENT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING.” UNICEF, August 2010. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Legislative%20Reform%20to%20Support%20the%20Abandonment%20of%20Female%20Genital%20Mutilation%20and%20Cutting.pdf>.



easier for the baby.”⁹ It is important to keep in mind that most practitioners of Female Genital Mutilations wholeheartedly believe in the necessity for its continuation. It is an essential tradition, one that is often required for marriage is men will refuse to marry uncut women. In some settings and cultures, intact women are the equivalent of prostitutes. Furthermore, it is claimed that female genitalia are often perceived as dirty and ugly.¹⁰

Major Countries and Organizations

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a prime example of a country that not only introduced legislation banning Female Genital Mutilation, but also promoted a culture of “not cutting” through comprehensive reforms. There were many key components. One was the political will and desire to end Female Genital Mutilation, as well as to uphold the rights of women and girls. Another was an education campaign geared towards raising awareness about the law and the harmful effects of FGM/C. Also was the establishment of necessary services, including rehabilitation services, as well as a hotline for reporting and education. Furthermore, the country included a generous number of stakeholders in this concerted effort, including lawyers, judges, law enforcement, etc. Moreover, the country undertook much research, and then shared that with the community, gaining a better understanding of the root causes of the practice and its continuation. Finally, a Presidential Decree established the

⁹ ———. “What Is Female Genital Mutilation? Where Does It Happen?” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, January 30, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-fgm-conference-factbox/what-is-female-genital-mutilation-where-does-it-happen-idUSKBN15E0KH>.

¹⁰ “The Reasons given for Fgm: Culture and Tradition.” Women’s Health Newsletter. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12222527/>.

¹¹ Wahba, Yasmine. “LEGISLATIVE REFORM TO SUPPORT THE ABANDONMENT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING.” UNICEF, August 2010. Accessed June 30, 2021.

National Committee Against the Practice of Excision (CNLPE), a formal institution with the sole purpose of monitoring the implementation of the law and serving as an entity of intervention in the case of violations of the new legislation.¹¹

Egypt

Egypt has been transitioning away from a society that holds Female Genital Mutilation as one of its core values. The process of amending both the Child Law and the Penal Code was an effort “led by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM).”¹² This working group was composed of United Nations agencies, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, public figures, and other experts in the consultation of the creation of this law. The purpose was to gauge the acceptance of the new law, and was accomplished by holding workshops with lawmakers, the media, and religious leaders. The abundance of information available to the public along with an education campaign that came before the legislative change led to a national consensus in favor of the reform.¹³

UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNICEF and the UNFPA both lead the largest international program to end Female Genital Mutilation, which entails supporting zero tolerance laws and police, as well as working with health workers to both eliminate Female Genital Mutilation and give care to women who have undergone the procedure. Since being established

<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Legislative%20Reform%20to%20Support%20the%20Abandonment%20of%20Female%20Genital%20Mutilation%20and%20Cutting.pdf>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “As More Families REPORT FGM Incidents in Egypt, Advocacy Intensifies, and a New Bill Seeks to Increase Penalties.” U.N. Women. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/2/feature--families-report-fgm-in-egypt-and-advocacy-intensifies>.



in 2008, 13 countries have passed legislation banning the procedure. Just in 2018, almost seven million people in 19 countries took part in discussions and education about eliminating Female Genital Mutilation.

Table 1. Female Genital Mutilation Prevalence among Girls 0 to 14 Years of Age⁷

Country	Prevalence (%)
Gambia	56
Mauritania	54
Indonesia	49
Guinea	46
Eritrea	33
Sudan	32
Guinea-Bissau	30
Ethiopia	24
Nigeria	17
Egypt	14
Burkina Faso	13
Senegal	13
Côte d'Ivoire	10
Kenya	3
Central African Republic	1
Ghana	1
Uganda	1
Togo	0.3
Benin	0.2

Table SEQ Table * ARABIC 1: The countries with the most prevalent Female Genital Mutilations are listed in the table.

Somalia

Somalia is the country that performs the most Female Genital Mutilations, with 98 percent of women undergoing the practice.¹⁴

Kenya

Female Genital Mutilation is practiced nowadays in areas where premarital intercourse is allowed, including the Rendille women of Kenya. Here, the

practice is meant to solidify a “cultural identity” and transition a woman into an adult. After circumcision, one is thought to be “reborn,” so the name Kipsigis of Kenya translates to “we the circumcised.”¹⁵

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
2008	The Egyptian Parliament illegalized Female Genital Mutilation through an amendment of the country’s Penal Code and the Child Law. The Penal Code now included articles regarding deliberate bodily injury, and the amendment to the Child Law supported the Penal Code “by establishing decentralized Child Protection Committees at governorate and district levels” that are responsible for monitoring the enforcement of the new laws. ¹⁶
1997	The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) along with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), issued a statement on Female Genital Mutilation detailing how the practice affected human rights and public health as well as declaring support for the abandonment of FGM.

¹⁴ “Women in Somalia Warn against the Dangers of Female Genital MUTILATION/CUTTING.” Islamic Relief Worldwide. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.islamic-relief.org/women-in-somalia-warn-against-the-dangers-of-female-genital-mutilation-cutting/>.

¹⁵ Llamas <https://med.virginia.edu/family-medicine/wp-content/uploads/sites/285/2017/01/Llamas-Paper.pdf>, Jewel. “Female Circumcision: The History, the Current Prevalence and the Approach to a Patient,” April 2017. Accessed June 30, 2021.

<https://med.virginia.edu/family-medicine/wp-content/uploads/sites/285/2017/01/Llamas-Paper.pdf>.

¹⁶ Wahba, Yasmine. “LEGISLATIVE REFORM TO SUPPORT THE ABANDONMENT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING.” UNICEF, August 2010. Accessed June 30, 2021.

<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Legislative%20Reform%20to%20Support%20the%20Abandonment%20of%20Female%20Genital%20Mutilation%20and%20Cutting.pdf>



1996	Burkina Faso illegalized Female Genital Mutilation.
1994	The International Federation of Gynecologists and Obstetrics passed a resolution at its General Assembly that opposed Female Genital Mutilation.
1990	“The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women issued its General Recommendation on Female Circumcision (General Recommendation No 14) that calls upon states to take appropriate and effective measures with a view to eradicating the practice and requests them to provide information about measures being taken to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation in their reports to the Committee.” ¹⁷
Post-1960s	American obstetrician Sarah Rodriguez concluded that Western practices of Female Genital Mutilation were based upon the need to control female sexuality.
1920s	First known campaign denouncing Female Genital Mutilation occurred in Egypt ¹⁸
Late 19th Century	Western Cultures designated its primary function as being a means of regulating sexual practices such as female masturbation, “hysteria,” and lesbianism.

Fifth Century BC While the exact origin of Female Genital Mutilation remains unclear, some scholars have proposed ancient Egypt (what is now Sudan and Egypt) as a possible site of origin and have noted the discovery of circumcised mummies. Other theories are that it spread across the routes of the slave trade.

Relevant U.N. Treaties and Events

- United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Commission on the Status of Women. Resolution on Ending Female Genital Mutilation. E/CN.6/2007/L.3/Rev.1.
- “In its General Comment 4, the Committee on the Rights of the Child notes the duty of States parties to fulfil their obligation to protect adolescents from all harmful practices, such as FGM/C, within the broader context of States parties’ obligations with respect to the life, health and development of adolescents”.¹⁹
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

¹⁷ OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO. Accessed June 30, 2021. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Inteagency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf. “Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation.” World Health Organization, 2008. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Inteagency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf.

¹⁸ “As More Families REPORT FGM Incidents in Egypt, Advocacy Intensifies, and a New Bill Seeks to Increase Penalties.” U.N. Women. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/2/feature--families-report-fgm-in-egypt-and-advocacy-intensifies>.

¹⁹ Ibid.



- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950)
- American Convention on Human Rights (1978)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) (1981)
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)
- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- General Recommendations: 14 (1990), 19 (1992), 24 (1999) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comments 14 and 16 Human Rights Committee General Comment 28 Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comments 4, 5
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)
- General Assembly Resolutions: 56/128 of 2002, 61/143 of 2006, 62/133 of 2007, 63/155 of 2009²⁰

Main Issues

Effects on women's health and human rights

Human rights include civil, economic, political, and social, and these rights are delineated in several

²⁰ Wahba, Yasmine. "LEGISLATIVE REFORM TO SUPPORT THE ABANDONMENT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING." UNICEF, August 2010. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Legislative%20Reform%20to%20Support%20the%20Abandonment%20of%20Female%20Genital%20Mutilation%20and%20Cutting.pdf>

regional and international treaties. Female Genital Mutilations violate the basic concept of equality, non-discrimination based on sex, the right to life, and freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment. Female Genital Mutilation is a violation of a woman's physical and mental health, as it interferes with healthy genital tissue without a medical necessity. This procedure is rooted in gender inequalities and the power imbalance between man and woman.

Female Genital Mutilation takes away the right of women and girls to make an independent decision about a procedure that will leave a lasting effect on their bodies and deprives them of autonomy over their lives. All types of Female Genital Mutilation are irreversible and can lead to much physical and psychological damage. During the procedure itself, girls are often held down. Immediate consequences can mean pain, bleeding, and infection. Long-term, this can mean decreased sexual enjoyment and post-traumatic stress disorder.²¹

The state of the practice today

Today, over 125 million women and girls have undergone some form of Female Genital Mutilation. Young girls usually undergo the procedure before puberty, somewhere between six and 12 years of age, however, which of the different types of Female Genital Mutilation performed varies geographically. Type I is practiced in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya. Type II is mostly practiced in Benin, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Guinea of West Africa. Type III is practiced in Somalia, Northern Sudan, eastern Chad, southern Egypt, and Djibouti, and Type IV in Northern Nigeria. Female genital mutilation is also practiced in Yemen, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Indonesia. It is important to remember that Female Genital

²¹ "Female Genital Mutilation." World Health Organization. World Health Organization. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>.



Mutilation still practiced in more industrialized countries among immigrant populations.²²

The term “Female Genital Mutilation” arose in the 1970s, and quickly proved to be problematic, with parents resenting the suggestion that the practice was mutilation of their daughters. It has different names and terminology depending on the country. Traditional names include *halalays* and *quodin*, as used in Somalia, *kutairi*, as used in Kenya, *megrez* as used in Ethiopia, *niaka*, as used in Gambia, *thara*, as used in Egypt, and *sunna*, as used in Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The term “cutting,” used in reference to Female Genital Mutilation, has since been adopted in the acronym FGM/C, as a means of avoiding alienating certain communities and cultures.²³



The countries where the practice is universal or nearly universal are Egypt, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Guinea, Djibouti, and Mali.²⁴ In some countries, like Indonesia and Egypt, there is an increasing trend to perform Female Genital Mutilation in clinics or hospitals. However, advocacy efforts within these countries have increased profusely.

²² “Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C).” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, May 11, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/womensrh/female-genital-mutilation.html>.

²³ “Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Human Rights-Based Approaches of Legislation, Education, and Community Empowerment.” Health and Human Rights Journal, August 14, 2018. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2018/08/eradicating-female-genital-mutilation-cutting-human-rights-based-approaches-of-legislation-education-and-community-empowerment/>.

There seem to be four key factors that are leading to the demise of Female Genital Mutilation. The health consequences, the fact that it is not a religious requirement as it is not detailed in any religious text, how it is becoming illegal in many nations, and how it is heavily frowned upon by the general society. The multitude of countries that continue to practice Female Genital Mutilation contain communities with varying levels of transitioning away from Female Genital Mutilation. Even within a country, it is important to keep in mind that within that state are whole communities with different traditions and values, and that a one size fits all solution will not work in this committee. For example, while Somalia remains the country with highest desire to preserve the practice, with a 98% prevalence of cutting, in Egypt, about a quarter of women wish to abandon Female Genital Mutilation. In Nigeria, the population is nearly split between the two options. This demonstrates the differences that must be considered while writing your research paper and developing resolutions in committee.²⁵

This is an issue that must be approached with the utmost respect and seriousness. Female Genital Mutilation, while through a Western perspective is seen as cruel and heinous, is an essential part of many non-Western cultures. One must completely understand the cultural history that precedes and follows this practice.

²⁴ _____. “What Is Female Genital Mutilation? Where Does It Happen?” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, January 30, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-fgm-conference-factbox/what-is-female-genital-mutilation-where-does-it-happen-idUSKBN15E0KH>.

²⁵ E.; Berg RC; Denison. “A Tradition in Transition: Factors Perpetuating and Hindering the Continuance of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (Fgm/c) Summarized in a Systematic Review.” Health care for women international. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23489149/>.



Previous Solutions

U.N. denouncing of the practice

Recent advances in medicine have disapproved of the ideas in which the practice is rooted, and many cultures are now denouncing the procedure because of the advancement in women's rights. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a ban of Female Genital Mutilation in December of 2012. However, the practice remains in 29 countries spanning Africa, parts of the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

The U.N. General Assembly chose and designated February 6th as the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, hoping to amplify awareness against this practice. The U.N. launched the theme "No Time for Global Inaction, Unite, Fund, and Act to End Female Genital Mutilation."

Various inter agencies of the United Nations, including OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, and WHO, have issued statements in support of eradicating Female Genital Mutilation.²⁶

The United Nations strives to fully eradicate this practice by 2030 in the name of Sustainable Development Goal 5. UNFPA with UNICEF lead the largest international program to accelerate the elimination of this practice. This initiative has seen many achievements, for example, "more than 2.8 million people participated in public declarations of FGM elimination, and the number of communities establishing surveillance structures to track girls

²⁶ OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO. Accessed June 30, 2021. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Intagency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf. "Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation." World Health Organization, 2008. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/statements_missions/Intagency_Statement_on_Eliminating_FGM.pdf.

²⁷ "International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/female-genital-mutilation-day>.

doubled and protected 213,774 girls from undergoing the practice."²⁷

Illegalizing the practice

While FGM has been banned in 22 of the 28 African countries affected by the practice and industrialized countries, the enforcement of that law is usually weak, making prosecutions very rare. Furthermore, in Mali, Liberia, Sudan, Somalia, Chad, and Sierra Leone, the practice continues to be very much legal, but all of these countries have drafted legislation or expressed an intent to outlaw the practice, apart from Sierra Leone.²⁸

The legislation is different depending on where the law was passed. In some countries, it is banned in hospitals and from being undertaken by health practitioners, leading the practice to be done illicitly. In other nations, it is only banned from being done on minors. Not only may the practitioners be fined, but also any witnesses who did not report about it. It may also be considered a crime to take the female to another county to undergo the cutting.²⁹

Illegalizing the practice has led to high tensions in those countries, as communities that value its continuation often have to choose between their traditions and the law. Hesitancy to comply with laws that ban Female Genital Mutilation can be as simple as refusing to report a family member, neighbor, or friend. However, as the example in Burkina Faso demonstrated, when the people are involved in the creation of legislation banning a practice so ingrained in their culture, it makes the response less negative. The success of legislative reform is dependent on the willingness of the

²⁸ Batha, Emma. "Factbox: Female Genital Mutilation Around the World: A FINE, Jail or No Crime?" Reuters. Thomson Reuters, September 13, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-fgm-lawmaking-factbox/factbox-female-genital-mutilation-around-the-world-a-fine-jail-or-no-crime-idUSKCNILT2OS>.

²⁹ E., Berg RC;Denison. "A Tradition in Transition: Factors Perpetuating and Hindering the Continuance of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (Fgm/c) Summarized in a Systematic Review." Health care for women international. U.S. National Library of Medicine. Accessed August 10, 2021. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23489149/>.



community to accept the transition away from Female Genital Mutilation as the new norm. Laws are a necessary step in the eradication of the practice, but illegalization alone is not enough.

Possible Solutions

Human rights-based approach

Bringing an end to Female Genital Mutilations requires a long, concerted effort on an international, regional, and national scale. With the persistence of international migration, awareness of Female Genital Mutilations outside the silos of its practice is integral to stopping this practice globally. This goes beyond just implementing international law, but also launching initiatives that express the concerns existing within societies and global consensus necessary to protect the human rights of women and girls. Since 1965, there have been 24 out of the 29 countries with the highest prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation which have taken a more human rights-based approach when passing legislation that outlaws the practice.³⁰ Some penalties range from 3 months to even life imprisonment, with some countries imposing monetary fines.

The proposed legislative reform that takes reverence for human life and human rights into account has a couple components that have been successful in countries in the past and can serve as a good framework for this committee's solution. This first is prevention, which is comprised of providing information and dialogue for community members to reach a decision regarding Female Genital Mutilation. The second is support for the victim or right holder. Assistance can be in the form

³⁰ "Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Human Rights-Based Approaches of Legislation, Education, and Community Empowerment." *Health and Human Rights Journal*, August 14, 2018. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2018/08/eradicating-female-genital-mutilation-cutting-human-rights-based-approaches-of-legislation-education-and-community-empowerment/>.

of services and programs for women who have been cut. The third part, punishment, is for perpetrators of the cut, to ensure that the law holds those



accountable. The fourth, is the actual implementation and continued evaluation of the law. All of these factors are necessary in a human rights-based solution that will actually mean the end of Female Genital Mutilation.³¹

A human rights-based approach consisting of community dialogue. Burkina Faso, which took a legislative approach accompanied by a human rights approach, had a decline of the practice in the country. Integral to the process of taking this approach is understanding power structures and relations. In order for communities to make this choice, "existing norms and rules that are unfavorable to women and girls are challenged."³²

Delegates must consider adopting programs that enable people to recognize and reclaim their rights, such as empowering citizens to articulate their priorities. Delegates can create a fixed model of national legislation with international standards from harmonizing laws on children, but due to

³¹ Wahba, Yasmine. "LEGISLATIVE REFORM TO SUPPORT THE ABANDONMENT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING." UNICEF, August 2010. Accessed June 30, 2021.

<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Legislative%20Reform%20to%20Support%20the%20Abandonment%20of%20Female%20Genital%20Mutilation%20and%20Cutting.pdf>.

³² Ibid.



many different legal systems, this approach can be difficult if not paired with a human rights advocacy effort.³³

Regional education campaign

Clinging to a tradition is often the result of not knowing of the consequences of what is occurring. No child is informed enough to stand up for themselves when it comes to this practice. Human rights-based approaches to ending this practice include education programs that focus on empowering women, as well as informing communities of the malpractice.³⁴

Fighting feminine genital mutilation cannot exist in a silo. Intervention must include health care, justice systems, and individual societies. This can include large-scale education campaigns, economic empowerment programming, and community mobilizations. These efforts are meant to trump some of the biggest attitudes and norms that are the root of violence against women. Any legislative effort to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation must be accompanied by attempts to provide legitimacy to new behaviors--the condemnation of the practice and the transition away from it. This means a global education campaign with intentional efforts to influence traditions and expectations rooted in culture.³⁵

The U.N. and the European Union have launched “The Spotlight Initiative,” a multiyear initiative aimed at combating all forms of violence against women. It focuses on all forms of female violence, particularly on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence and other

harmful practices, femicide, human trafficking, and economic and sexual exploitation.³⁶

A global education campaign is the favored approach, as it is seen as less oppressive and stifling as laws that outright ban the practice. However, as you have read throughout this Background Guide, though hard legislation is necessary, the truth is that this leads the practice to be increasingly conducted unhygienically, illegally, and underground, additionally on younger daughters, when families can make sure that they have not fallen prey to anti-cutting propaganda.

While educational campaigns are a possible solution, attempts in the past have not always worked. These types of interventions can often be seen by communities as condescending, an unsolicited attempt to undermine a culture. Delegates must formulate a solution that includes actively working with communities before the implementation of any educational efforts, to ensure that they are well received by the intended audience.

Delegates should focus on a multilateral, education campaign regarding the harmful effects of Female Genital Mutilation, as well as on the broader empowerment of women. While legislation is necessary, working in tandem with educational efforts increases the likelihood of transitioning mindsets and societies away from the practice. Because it is ultimately the woman, their families, and their communities that must abandon Female Genital Mutilation.

³³ “7 Ways to End FGM.” Plan International. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://plan-international.org/sexual-health/7-ways-to-end-fgm-for-good>.

³⁴ “Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Human Rights-Based Approaches of Legislation, Education, and Community Empowerment.” Health and Human Rights Journal, August 14, 2018. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2018/08/eradicating-female-genital-mutilation-cutting-human-rights-based-approaches-of-legislation-education-and-community-empowerment/>.

³⁵ Batha, Emma. “Factbox: Female Genital Mutilation Around the World: A FINE, Jail or No Crime?” Reuters. Thomson Reuters, September 13, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-fgm-lawmaking-factbox/factbox-female-genital-mutilation-around-the-world-a-fine-jail-or-no-crime-idUSKCN1LT2OS>.

³⁶ “International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/female-genital-mutilation-day>.



Appendix

Appendix A

1. Female Genital Mutilation is often abbreviated as FGM or FGM/C
2. Three more General Assembly resolutions are also relevant: Resolutions 61/143 (2006)⁴³, 62/133 (2007)⁴⁴ and 63/155 (2008)⁴⁵, which focus on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.
3. International treaties
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Convention on the Rights of the Child
Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees

Regional treaties

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Banjul Charter) and its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
Consensus documents

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women

General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity



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“What Is Female Genital Mutilation? 7 Questions Answered.” UNICEF, March 4, 2019. Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://www.unicef.org/stories/what-you-need-know-about-female-genital-mutilation>.

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Measures to protect threatened World Heritage Sites

Introduction

On the 16th of November 1972, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) penned *The Convention* and created World Heritage Sites. World Heritage Sites are sites which are defined by UNESCO to be “of outstanding universal value to humanity, and as such have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.”³⁷ This list of 1154 sites includes cultural, natural, and mixed sites.³⁸ Cultural heritage sites are generally man made and can be categorized into monuments, groups of buildings, and sites. Examples include the Pyramids of Egypt or the Taj Mahal. Natural heritage sites are found in nature and can be categorized into natural features, geological and physiographical formations (essentially habitats, usually those home to rare, endangered, or scientifically essential species), and natural sites. Examples include the Great Barrier Reef and the Grand Canyon.³⁹ Mixed sites hold both natural and cultural significance, such as the Ahwar of Southern Iraq which is both a refuge of biodiversity and contains the relict landscape of the Mesopotamian Cities.

Of these sites 52 are currently classified as in danger. In order for a World Heritage Site to be classified as in ascertained or potential danger, the site must meet one of the following criteria.

For cultural sites to be classified as in ascertained danger, there must either be serious deterioration of materials, serious deterioration of structure and/or ornamental features, serious deterioration of architectural or town-planning coherence, serious deterioration of urban or rural space or the natural environment, significant loss of historical authenticity, or important loss of cultural significance. For cultural sites to be classified as in potential danger, there is generally a policy action which threatens the site, such as the modification of juridical status of the property diminishing the degree of its protection, lack of conservation policy, threatening effects of regional planning projects, threatening effects of town planning, outbreak or threat of armed conflict, or threatening impacts of climatic geological or other environmental factors.

For natural sites to be classified as in ascertained danger, there must be either a serious decline in the population of the endangered species or another species of Outstanding Universal Value for which the property was legally established to protect, severe deterioration of the natural beauty or scientific value of the property, or human encroachment on boundaries or in upstream areas which threaten the integrity of the property. For a natural site to be in potential danger it, similarly to a cultural site, is usually the result of policy, such as a modification of the legal protective status of the area, planned resettlement or development projects within the property or so situated that the impacts threaten the

³⁷ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “What Is World Heritage? - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/faq/19>

³⁸ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “World Heritage List.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed

September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

³⁹ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>



property, outbreak or threat of armed conflict, the management plan or management system is lacking or inadequate, or threatening impacts of climatic, geological, or other environmental factors.⁴⁰

This list is managed by an intergovernmental committee for the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value, called the World Heritage Committee, which was developed at the same time as the list in *The Convention*. This committee has access to a fund set aside to protect World Heritage Sites classified as in danger.

Definition of Key Terms

Outstanding universal value

For a site to be on the World Heritage List it must be considered to have outstanding universal value. Outstanding universal value is defined by UNESCO as “cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity”.

Delegates should keep this principle of universal value in mind when crafting solutions and ensure that through their solutions these sites are not only preserved but maintain their cultural value in a way that can be properly assessed and appreciated by all humanity, as was the original purpose of World Heritage Sites.

Ascertained and potential danger

World Heritage Sites can be declared in either ascertained or potential danger. A certain danger is

when the site is actively in danger and has been damaged in some ways, whereas potential danger is when local policies have shifted in a way which pose a theoretical danger to a site. By putting a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger, one allows the World Heritage Committee to access funds from the World Heritage Fund to save the site. It also alerts the international community in hopes of eliciting their help.

It is important to know that only some countries will apply for the inscription of their sites onto this list. Certain countries perceive being on this list as a source of dishonor which impedes their ability to access aid.

One example of a site that was aided after being placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger was the Historic Town of Zabid in Yemen. In this town, much of the historical heritage was deteriorating and 40% of the original homes had been replaced by concrete buildings. The way UNESCO helped in this case was by helping local authorities develop a conservation plan.⁴¹

Background Information

Establishment of the IUCN and the Protected Areas List

In 1948, around the time the United Nations was created, the IUCN (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature), was established as the first global environmental union. It includes thousands of members from government agencies to NGOs to international experts. It is now the world’s largest and most diverse environmental network.⁴²

⁴⁰ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “World Heritage in Danger.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>

⁴¹ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “World Heritage in Danger.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>

⁴² “A Brief History.” IUCN, February 19, 2020. <https://www.iucn.org/about/iucn-a-brief-history>



The reason the IUCN is relevant to this topic is that it is responsible for the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, a list whose creation was assisted by UNESCO and the UNEP. Protected areas are “clearly defined geographical spaces, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.”⁴³ There are 265,544 protected areas in 244 countries. They are one of the most successful ways we conserve nature and the food, water, medicines, and various protections it provides for us. For example, protected areas are responsible for storing 15% of terrestrial carbon, which helps decrease the rate of accumulated anthropogenic CO₂ in the atmosphere.⁴⁴



They are distinct from World Heritage Sites in that their purpose is ecological preservation over and above cultural preservation. Another difference is that nations need to apply to the World Heritage Site List but not to the Protected Areas list. Nevertheless, there is some overlap between these different kinds of sites and mechanisms for preserving protected sites may also be useful for preserving World Heritage Sites.

⁴³ “About.” IUCN, April 14, 2020. <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about>

⁴⁴ “About.” IUCN, April 14, 2020. <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about>

Legal protections

It is important to understand that there are no legal structures set up to enforce the protection of World Heritage Sites. The priority of the U.N. in this case is to respect the individual sovereignty of all nations while encouraging the preservation of culture and heritage. There is also a general commitment by states to not damage the cultural or heritage in other states’ territories. This in no way prevents invading nations, regimes, terrorist groups, or even tourists from damaging these World Heritage Sites with impunity.⁴⁵

Major Countries and Organizations

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Heritage Committee

UNESCO is the U.N. body which initially proposed *The Convention*, and as such the World Heritage Committee is part of UNESCO. It is composed of 15 state parties selected during the ordinary session of the General Assembly. The World Heritage Committee monitors the list of World Heritage Sites and regulates what sites are on the list (based on applications). They also have access to the World Heritage Fund which exists to protect the World Heritage Sites which have been deemed in danger.⁴⁶

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The IUCN keeps track of areas that need to be protected in the interest of conserving nature. They work with various U.N. bodies such as the UNEP and UNESCO as well as certain states and NGOs. The

⁴⁵ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

⁴⁶ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>



IUCN makes site-specific recommendations to nations and is a good source of information on areas in need of protection.

for a global convention designed to protect global cultural and natural heritage.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of Event
2020	There are 1,154 World Heritage Sites. ⁴⁷
1993	Convention on Biological Diversity. Since then, Member States have doubled the size of their protected areas. This marks a collective global increase in conservation efforts. ⁴⁸
November 16, 1972	UNESCO developed a convention to protect World Heritage Sites. Nations have gradually added World Heritage Sites to this list over the past five decades. ⁴⁹
1959	Ramses II temple at Abu Simbel was threatened during the building of the Aswan Dam in Egypt. This site possessed such an outstanding cultural value that UNESCO stepped in to save the site. This triggered the need

⁴⁷ “The History of World Heritage List.” Norges verdensarv. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://www.norgesverdensarv.no/history.137034.en.html>

⁴⁸ “Protected Areas: The Past, Present, and Future of Conservation: Earth.org - Past: Present: Future.” Earth.Org - Past | Present | Future, October 12, 2020. <https://earth.org/protected-areas-the-past-present-and-future-of-conservation/>

⁴⁹ “The History of World Heritage List.” Norges verdensarv. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://www.norgesverdensarv.no/history.137034.en.html>

⁵⁰ “UNTC.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://treaties.un.org/pages/showdetails.aspx?objid=08000002802198d9>

⁵¹ “Action Plan to Preserve Heritage Sites during Conflict Peacekeeping.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed September 24, 2021.

Relevant U.N. Treaties and Events

- The World Heritage Site List was developed in 1972 through the establishment of “*The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*”.
- Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (UNESCO) (2001)⁵⁰
- U.N. Security Council resolution 2347 (2017)⁵¹
- 2016 World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate Report which documents climate impacts on World Heritage sites.⁵²
- “World Heritage in the High Seas: An Idea Whose Time Has Come” report⁵³

Main Issues

Armed conflict and war

Many World Heritage Sites happen to be in areas of conflict which puts them in danger of quite a few issues. Simply by being located near a war zone, sites can be damaged by things such as explosives and stray artillery. Sometimes terrorist groups or invading nations will intentionally destroy sites with cultural

<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-plan-to-preserve-heritage-sites-during-conflict>

⁵² “World Heritage Sites at Risk from Climate Change – Joint U.N. Report – United Nations Sustainable Development.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/05/world-heritage-sites-at-risk-from-climate-change-joint-un-report/>

⁵³ “UNESCO Explores Ways to APPLY World Heritage Convention To 'Wonders' of Open Ocean.” United Nations. United Nations. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/unesco-explores-ways-apply-world-heritage-convention-wonders-open-ocean>



value in order to break the spirits of their enemy or even attempt to rewrite a nation's history. In addition to this however, conflict zones are often more vulnerable to their cultural sites being raided by opportunists. This can manifest in the theft of art, statues, and many other pieces of cultural relevance.

Natural disasters

Earthquakes specifically pose a major danger to World Heritage Sites. They can damage infrastructure and even reduce ancient sites to ruins. Additionally, earthquakes can cause tsunamis, landslides, and ground fractures which can damage historical sites. Volcanic eruptions, fires, storms, and other natural disasters have similar potentials for destruction.⁵⁴ World Heritage Sites damaged by natural disasters are often expensive and difficult to repair while maintaining cultural accuracy. Ironically many natural World Heritage Sites are crucial in helping prevent natural disasters such as floods or landslides.

Pollution

Pollution, specifically air pollution, is known to degrade the surfaces of historical buildings and monuments. Air pollution can also cause corrosion and soiling which can impede the ability of tourists to enjoy these historical sites. This can lead to economic losses in the form of lost tourism. The effects of atmospheric pollution are more intense on certain materials like limestone and in certain climates such as the Mediterranean.⁵⁵

The human element: poaching, urbanization, and tours

Humans pose major threats to World Heritage Sites, especially natural sites. One way that humans pose a

threat is poaching. Trophy hunters and poachers will often travel to locations where they will track down relatively rare, often endangered species such as tigers. They will not only kill these creatures with the purpose of either sport or sale, but they will irreparably damage habitats in the process. Urbanization is also a threat to World Heritage Sites. As people encroach upon natural sites, many species are endangered whether because of invasive species, increased pollution, decreased space, or countless other potential issues. Tourism on the other hand can be a bit of a double-edged sword. Tourism is key to providing funding for the maintenance of World Heritage Sites and the goal of World Heritage Sites is to preserve and share culture with humanity, but tourists can also damage World Heritage Sites. Tourists can poach, log, mine, overfish, and exploit resources in World Heritage Sites. In fact, 114 out of 229 of UNESCO's natural World Heritage Sites are threatened by these destructive activities. The region most threatened by these practices is Sub-Saharan Africa.⁵⁶

The state element: bad policies

Another major issue with preserving World Heritage Sites is simply the policies of the nations they are located in. The U.N. has no power to choose how these sites are regulated or preserved so when states do not allocate enough funding to their heritage sites (whether due to lack of funds or lack of concern) this puts sites in danger. The same is true of policies which allow sites to be exploited whether it's the creation of palm oil plantations or neglecting necessary restorations. In the end, it is up to states to preserve the sites within their jurisdiction unless they actively seek help from the international community.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ "Heritage at Risk:Natural Disasters- Earthquakes." CyArk. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://cyark.org/news/heritage-at-risknatural-disasters-earthquakes>

⁵⁵ "Dirty Air ENDANGERS UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Produces High Costs." UNECE, May 10, 2020. <https://unece.org/environment/press/dirty-air-endangers-unesco-world-heritage-sites-and-produces-high-costs>

⁵⁶ "One Half of UNESCO World Heritage Sites under Threat." News | Global Conservation. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://globalconservation.org/news/one-half-unesco-world-heritage-sites-under-threat/>

⁵⁷ Centre, UNESCO World Heritage. "World Heritage in Danger." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 24, 2021. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/158/>



Previous Solutions

U.N. Peacekeeping Forces in Syria

One of the more active measures taken by the U.N. to protect World Heritage sites was the move to send U.N. Peacekeepers into the active warzone of 2015 in Syria to protect World Heritage Sites. Italy proposed that peacekeepers move in to protect various World Heritage Sites in Syria from the Islamic State, inspired to act by the previous destruction of sites such as an ancient Roman temple in Palmyra. UNESCO also decided to use satellites to monitor historical sites in Syria they felt were threatened by the Islamic State.⁵⁸ The success of these measures is somewhat unclear, however, and today all 6 of Syria's World Heritage Sites are considered in danger.

Chilean Patagonia model

One important example of a well-managed natural site is the Chilean Patagonia model. Patagonia is a large minimally populated region between Chile and Argentina which holds a strong potential for conservation. These nations worked together to address concerns they had regarding preserving this region and they set up the "Route of Parks: Protecting Patagonia Forever" Fund. This provides essential funds to the region for park infrastructure, trails, long term conservation, and even the economic development of gateway communities. This is a great example of a model of sustained funding with active government support. This Park now has a key political and economic support system which will allow it to account for maintenance and preservation as well as be more accessible to the public. This will ensure that the culture is not only protected but shared as was the original intention of the World Heritage Sites.⁵⁹

⁵⁸“U.N. to Deploy Peacekeepers to Protect World Heritage Sites.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, October 17, 2015.

Possible Solutions

Protect endangered flora and fauna

Natural sites are unique in that they tend to hold living heritage in the form of rare or endangered species of flora and fauna. So long as these sites are in danger, so are these species. One possible solution would be to create wildlife sanctuaries in certain regions, where a few members of each of these species could reside, be bred, and then be released back into the wild (while always ensuring a few were safe at the facility). This will ensure the preservation of species and if successful even work to remove certain species from the endangered species list. These species are key to maintaining biodiversity and stability within these natural sites. It is however crucial that sanctuaries not become the primary habitat for these endangered species as this would not be maintaining the cultural heritage of the ecosystems they come from.

Reducing agricultural land use

One of the reasons humans encroach on heritage sites is to gain more land for agricultural practices. As such, one possible solution might be to reduce the need for large swatches of farmland. There are many ways to do this. One beneficial way to limit agricultural land use is to implement modern farming techniques such as aquaponics. Aquaponics use water instead of soil to grow crops and as such they can be designed in ways that require significantly less land. The use of community gardens can also be encouraged in order to increase the consumption of local crops and decrease the need for large scale farming meant to maintain larger parts of the nation. It should also be acknowledged that most farmland goes towards either housing or feeding livestock.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/17/un-peacekeepers-protect-world-heritage-sites-isis>

⁵⁹<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/giant-step-forward-conservation-chilean-patagonia>



Reducing meat intake in favor of plant-based proteins can be beneficial in preserving land.

It should however be acknowledged that the bigger problem is factory farms, plantations, and large-scale deforestation with the purpose of agriculture. These are actions usually taken by corporations and policy changes may be more helpful in preventing the destruction of land.

Appendix

Appendix A

This link is to a brief animated video made by UNESCO explaining the importance of World Heritage. <https://youtu.be/IOzxUVCCSug>



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