Don't relent on FGM fight

February 6 was International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This year"s theme "No end to FGM without commitment and sustainable investments" resonates deeply. For the many girls and women who've faced the cut or are at risk, this is a call to action.

In Uganda, FGM prevalence has declined to 0.3 percent (2016), thanks to efforts like the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, which carries a 15-year jail term for perpetrators. Despite this progress, FGM persists, especially in Karamoja and Sebei sub-regions.

So, what can be done differently? Amref Health Africa's approach in Kenya offers valuable lessons. They're using the "Right of Passage" approach, transforming traditional initiation rituals into positive, empowering experiences that don't involve cutting. The Nice Foundation is another example, working with medical teams to shun FGM medicalization and promote alternative rites of passage.

Community gatekeepers – elders, leaders, and influencers – play a crucial role in abandoning FGM. By engaging them, we can shift social norms and protect girls. However, cross-border FGM is emerging as a new challenge, with some communities seeking cut services in neighboring countries.

To avoid losing gains, Uganda must intensify efforts:

- Strengthen law enforcement and support survivors
- Scale up community-led initiatives and alternative rites of passage
- Engage medical professionals to reject FGM medicalization
- Address cross-border FGM through regional cooperation

FGM is a human rights violation with devastating consequences. Let's commit to sustained investments and collective action to protect girls and women. The time is now – let's work together to end FGM in Uganda and beyond.

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