Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a human rights issue that affects girls and women worldwide.

As such, its elimination is a global concern. In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a milestone resolution calling on the international community to intensify efforts to end the practice. More recently, in September 2015, the global community agreed to a new set of development goals – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which include a target under Goal 5 to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and FGM/C, by the year 2030. Both the resolution and the SDG framework signify the political will of the international community and national partners to work together to accelerate action towards a total, and final, end to the practice in all continents of the world.

More and better data are needed to measure progress towards this common goal.
In most of the countries where FGM/C is practiced, little is known about the extent of the practice among boys and men. While in nearly all countries boys and men are more likely than girls and women to be exposed to media information about FGM/C, many are not able to access information about the risks of the practice and how to change the practice. In a 2013 global survey of young people conducted in 59 countries, 75% of boys and men reported that they had heard about FGM/C, compared with 63% of girls and women. While awareness is higher among girls and women of reproductive age, knowledge is higher among boys and men. It is generally the case that there is a higher level of knowledge about FGM/C among those who have undergone the practice. This is especially true in countries where the practice is more common, such as Guinea and Senegal. In these countries, boys and men are more likely to oppose the practice than girls and women, and they are more likely to support prevention measures. Therefore, it is important to target interventions at boys and men in order to change the practice and reduce the prevalence of FGM/C.

In summary, more data collection in countries where no such data currently exist is needed in order to present a more reliable and complete picture of the extent of FGM/C. More data collection in countries where data currently exist, such as in countries in West and Central Africa, is needed in order to document the geographical and demographic patterns of the practice and track changes over time. The practice is often a cultural norm and it is important to consider the role of culture in understanding the practice and designing effective interventions. It is important to consider the role of culture in understanding the practice and designing effective interventions. It is important to consider the role of culture in understanding the practice and designing effective interventions. It is important to consider the role of culture in understanding the practice and designing effective interventions. It is important to consider the role of culture in understanding the practice and designing effective interventions.