Memorandum

To: [Redacted]
From: Avon Global Center for Women and Justice at Cornell Law School
Date: October 22, 2010
Re: Resources Relating to FGM

This Memorandum and the accompanying documents respond to your request for assistance from the Avon Global Center for Women and Justice. You have requested articles and Internet resources on female genital mutilation (FGM).

We have surveyed various fee-based and freely available databases and legal resources, and have selected the below as most responsive to your request. For your convenience, we have drafted short summaries of the selected articles and resources and, where possible, have included links to the original document online. We have also included pdf files of those documents that are not freely available online.

We hope that you find the below and attached useful. Further legal resources on a broad range of topics relating to gender-based violence are available at our website: www.womenandjustice.org.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have further questions or requests: womenandjustice@lawschool.cornell.edu

FACT SHEETS:

World Health Organization, Female Genital Mutilation,
http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/ (last visited Oct. 21, 2010). The World Health Organization factsheet provides an overview of the practice of FGM. The factsheet includes a description of FGM procedures, the negative impact on the woman’s sexual and reproductive health and other harmful effects of FGM such as pain, infection, and possible need for future surgeries. The website also outlines the social, cultural and religious beliefs that give rise to FGM and provides information about who is most at risk of FGM.

Amnesty International, Women’s Rights: Female Genital Mutilation,
http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/female-genital-mutilation--fgm/page.do?id=1108439 (last visited Oct. 21, 2010). The Amnesty International factsheet presents an overview of FGM within the context of international human rights law and also notes the efforts taken by Non-Governmental
Organizations to combat female genital mutilation.

UNFPA, Gender Equality: Calling for an End to Female Genital Mutilation, http://www.unfpa.org/gender/practices1.htm (last visited Oct. 21, 2010).
The United Nations Population Fund factsheet presents a clear overview of the harmful physical and psychological effects of FGM.

The UNICEF factsheet presents FGM in the context of children’s human rights as FGM is usually practiced on children and adolescents between the ages of four and fourteen.

ARTICLES and REPORTS:

This article provides an overview of the practice of female genital mutilation, its prevalence and the underlying social and cultural traditions that give rise to this practice. The article outlines the negative physical, mental and social consequences of FGM.

This report focuses on the practice of female genital mutilation in Iraqi Kurdistan, but includes sections that provide concise overviews of FGM generally. Section IV of this report provides an overview of female genital mutilation around the world. The report describes the types of FGM, occurrence and prevalence of FGM in different parts of the world, the social, cultural and religious background of FGM and the health consequences that women and girls face as a result of FGM. Section VI analyzes female genital mutilation as a human rights issue in the context of international human rights law.

Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Cultural practices in the family that are violent towards women, E/CN.4/2002/83 (2002) [attached as PDF].
The Special Rapporteur’s report includes a section on FGM, which includes descriptions of the different types of FGM, where FGM is most prevalent, and the social, cultural and religious beliefs underlying this practice. The report notes that despite the justifications provided by those who practice female genital mutilation, FGM has many negative and harmful consequences. The report also provides an overview of the historical movements to curb FGM and their success in different parts of the world.

OTHER RESOURCES:
In its General Recommendation No. 14, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women has identified female circumcision, or female genital mutilation, as a “traditional practice harmful to the health of women” and has recommended that States Parties should work to eradicate the practice.

In its General Recommendation No. 19, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women has stated that female circumcision, or FGM, is a form of gender-based violence, which helps “to maintain women in subordinate roles and contribute[s] to the low level of political participation and to their lower level of education, skills and work opportunities.” The Committee has recognized FGM as a harmful traditional practice.