

**JOINT EVALUATION
UNFPA-UNICEF JOINT PROGRAMME ON
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING:
ACCELERATING CHANGE
2008-2012
COUNTRY CASE STUDY:
SUDAN**



In 2012/2013, in its fifth year of implementation, an evaluation of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) joint programme entitled "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): Accelerating Change" was undertaken. This evaluation was conducted by Universalia under the supervision and guidance of a joint evaluation management group composed of members of the evaluation offices of UNFPA and UNICEF.

Purpose of the evaluation and the country case study

In 2012/2013, in its fifth year of implementation, an evaluation of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) joint programme entitled "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): Accelerating Change" is being undertaken. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which and under what circumstances (e.g. specific country contexts) the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme has accelerated the abandonment of FGM/C in programme countries during the period 2008-2012.

The evaluation includes a total of four country case studies conducted in Kenya, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Sudan. The purpose of the country case studies is to explore and illustrate key issues, while taking into account specific national and local contexts in which the joint programme was implemented. Each country case study is intended both as a stand-alone document, and as a contribution to the final evaluation report. Criteria for selecting Sudan as a case study country included: it is one of the eight initial countries in which the joint programme was implemented in 2008; it provides an example of a national context influenced by Islamic and Arab cultures and Anglophone heritage; it is representative of the Eastern African sub-region; and several geographic areas in which the joint programme had worked in were accessible at the time of the evaluation.

Methodology

The case study employs mixed methods of data collection, emphasizing participatory approaches. Key sources of data and methods of data collection used for the case study were: review of programme and related documents including global and country annual and mid-term reports, global and country annual work plans, communication materials, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) documents and tools; consultations with stakeholders at national and community levels (key informant interviews and community-level group discussions); and observations at the community level.

In total, 391 individuals were consulted for the country case study.

Institutions	People consulted
UNPFA/UNICEF	18
Central government	26
District	56
Civil society organizations	25
Faith-based organizations	14
Final beneficiaries	252
Total	391

Key methods of data analysis were descriptive, content and contribution analysis.



The case study involved three stages: i) preparation and planning, including document review; ii) data collection in Sudan from January 20-31, 2013, as well as a separate data collection visit to the Blue Nile State from February 15-17, 2013, and iii) data analysis and writing of the country case study report.

Findings

The joint programme has been relevant in view of national commitments and priorities, as well as in relation to various international commitments of the government of Sudan. Its objectives and activities have been aligned with the respective country programmes of both UNICEF and UNFPA, as well as with the 2009-2012 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The design of the joint programme in Sudan has been appropriate in view of the specific needs and characteristics of the particular context(s) that it has been located in. The only design weakness relates to the extent to which the joint programme made provisions for the systematic monitoring and analysis of progress and influencing factors over time.

The joint programme has made significant contributions to strengthening the national environment for the abandonment of FGM/C in Sudan. In particular, it has contributed to strengthening coordination among national and international actors working towards the abandonment of FGM/C in Sudan; to strengthening the legal and policy framework; and to enhancing awareness, commitment and ownership by key national actors in efforts to abandon all forms of FGM/C.

The joint programme has been successful in fostering and strengthening local-level commitment to FGM/C abandonment. While many community-level achievements recorded in joint programme

reports for Sudan focus on completed activities, evidence suggests that the joint programme has contributed to progress towards results. Consulted stakeholders widely agreed that the additional resources and enhanced coordination of actors brought in by the joint programme helped to accelerate changes in FGM/C-related attitudes and an increase in advocacy efforts by community members. Also, initiatives supported by the joint programme were seen to have contributed to breaking the silence surrounding the issue – a key condition for sustainably influencing the social norms underlying the practice.

The coordination between UNFPA and UNICEF and the chosen approaches to managing the joint programme have contributed to the adequate use of available resources. Other factors that supported the implementation of the joint programme in Sudan include partnerships with religious leaders, commitment from the government of Sudan to ending FGM/C, and effective use of media. A challenge that UNICEF and UNFPA faced in view of ensuring the effective and efficient use of resources derived from its annual funding and reporting cycle. Challenges were also posed by persistent reluctance to change in some communities, and by poverty and social displacement due to conflict.

The joint programme helped create a number of favourable conditions likely to support the sustainability of both national and local level achievements made to date. It did this by helping to strengthen national ownership of efforts to abandon FGM/C, as well as by enhancing partnerships and collaboration among key actors at national, state and community levels. The joint programme also contributed to leveraging additional donor funds for FGM/C work in Sudan. Continued efforts by national and international actors are, however, required to continue and expand achievements made to date and keep up the momentum for change.

The cross-cutting issues of gender equality, human rights, cultural sensitivity, and equity focus were strongly reflected in the design and implementation of the joint programme. At the same time, existing progress reports provide only limited, if any, explicit reflection on these issues.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The joint programme has been highly relevant given the existing commitments and priorities of the Government of Sudan, and considering previous gaps in efforts to abandon FGM/C. The joint programme has helped accelerate existing change processes in social norms relating to FGM/C at national, state and community levels.

The joint programme has made important contributions to strengthening legal and policy commitments to ending FGM/C, e.g. in supporting the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) in intensifying its efforts on the training of midwives. The joint programme played a pivotal role in helping national and state-level actors maintain momentum for legal reforms after the removal of Article 13 of the Child Act, and channel energies into constructive alternatives leading to the enactment of five state-level laws on FGM/C abandonment.

Conclusion 2: The sustainability and longer-term impact of achievements to which the joint programme has contributed depend on the extent to which national and international actors in Sudan can maintain and expand the momentum for change created at national, state and local levels.

The joint programme has helped create several favourable conditions likely to support the sustainability of achievements. Nevertheless, continued efforts are required in relation to formulating and/or implementing FGM/C legislation at national and state levels, and in view of solidifying the position of the Task Force on FGM/C to ensure continued, effective coordination of actors. At the local level, opportunities arising from community dialogue or public pledges need to be fol-

lowed up in order to translate general commitments and willingness of actors into action and maintain the momentum for change.

Conclusion 3: The joint programme has supported the implementation and expansion of promising approaches to addressing FGM/C. More systematic and longer-term monitoring, in-depth evaluation and research are required, however, to produce evidence-based information on what factors foster or hinder success in different contexts.

The Saleema initiative is the most distinct approach to addressing FGM/C that has been supported by the joint programme in Sudan. Its approach of reframing the public discourse around uncut girls has the potential to address and influence the social norms underlying FGM/C. Other promising approaches are the integration of FGM/C education in maternal mortality reduction programmes, as well as engagement with religious leaders and the Ministry of Guidance and Endowments.

Currently available data do not permit making an informed assessment of longer-term results deriving from these approaches, and on the specific factors influencing success. This is partly due to the fact that the mechanisms and approaches for data collection, analysis and reporting used by joint programme implementing partners were not always systematic or coordinated.

Conclusion 4: Coordination efforts by UNICEF and UNFPA, and the management of the joint programme have been largely appropriate and contributed to the effective and efficient implementation of the programme in Sudan. The annual planning and budgeting cycle was, however, a limitation to effective management.

The joint programme benefited from the complementary strengths of UNFPA and UNICEF, as well as from their established field presence and networks. The collaboration of the two partners created synergies that enhanced the visibility and perceived relevance of the joint programme. At the same time, the



work of some implementing partners (e.g. their ability to engage in consistent and longer-term monitoring of their initiatives) was limited or even hindered by the annual planning and budgeting cycle of the joint programme.

Conclusion 5: In Sudan, the design and implementation of the joint programme reflected the key theoretical foundations underlying the overall joint programme and contributed to validating some of them.

Based on the conceptualization of FGM/C as a social norm, the joint programme reflected and validated the assumption that efforts for ending FGM/C need to focus on influencing collective rather than individual change. It demonstrated the benefits of working at national, state and community levels simultaneously, and of linking these levels, for example, in its work with religious leaders and their organisations and networks. UNFPA, UNICEF and their implementing partners conceptualized FGM/C as a violation of human rights, but used this understanding in culturally appropriate ways.

While the main theory of change assumptions underlying the joint programme are convincing, available data do not yet permit validation of all steps in the assumed change process. In particular there is a gap as regards evidence on the link between short-term programming successes and longer-term changes in behaviours and, ultimately, in FGM/C prevalence.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: UNFPA and UNICEF should explore how to support the national Task Force on FGM/C in fulfilling its mandate of coordinating national and state-level efforts effectively and in a sustainable way.

The creation of the Task Force on FGM/C and the fact that the body is headed by a senior FMoH officer are widely considered a major achievement in strengthen-

ing the institutional framework for working towards the abandonment of the practice in Sudan. At the same time, the effectiveness of the relatively new body is still unproven. Continued technical and financial support from actors such as UNFPA and UNICEF can contribute to continuing the momentum created by the establishment of the Task Force.

Recommendation 2: UNFPA and UNICEF should continue to support national actors in efforts to strengthen the national legal frameworks to prohibit all forms of FGM/C. Also, both agencies should shape FGM/C programming to support the operationalization and implementation of existing FGM/C legislation at the state level.

The evaluation highlighted the important role of the joint programme in view of developing the proposed Article 13 of the Child Act, and in view of “rekindling” the momentum among national actors after the removal of this Article. In their future work, UNFPA and UNICEF should continue their efforts to support the pursuit of strengthening the national legal framework for FGM/C abandonment. In doing so, the agencies should capture and build upon lessons learned from the experience around Article 13, and on lessons derived from legislative processes in other relevant countries such as Kenya.

The agencies should also explore how their future work can support the operationalization, implementation and harmonization of existing legislation on FGM/C in different states of Sudan.

Recommendation 3: To sustain and expand the existing momentum for change, UNFPA and UNICEF should make efforts to support their national partners to systematically collect and analyse information on the results, strengths and gaps of promising approaches to addressing FGM/C at national, state and community levels.

The Saleema initiative has generated considerable interest from actors in other countries intending to

replicate it or parts thereof. Limited data is, however, available on the specific mid- to longer-term results of this and other promising approaches. This makes it difficult to develop replicable approaches based on evidence. UNFPA and UNICEF should therefore review their internal approaches to and capacity for systematic, longer-term monitoring of results, and for targeted research to capture specific combinations of factors influencing success or failure in different contexts. UNFPA and UNICEF should also explore how to further strengthen the capacity of their implementing partners to systematically apply some agreed upon indicators and align their respective mechanisms for monitoring and reporting.

Recommendation 4: UNICEF, in consultation with UNFPA and its national partners, should make efforts to further strengthen the linkages between the Saleema initiative and other efforts to end FGM/C in Sudan.

To expand the reach and enhance the likely sustainability of different efforts, UNICEF and its partners should strive to establish further systematic linkages between the Saleema initiative and other ongoing efforts to end FGM/C in Sudan within the frameworks of maternal health, women's empowerment, and the rights of the girl child. This can include formalizing linkages between the Saleema initiative and the training of midwives and other healthcare professionals, as well as establishing systematic connections

with actors such as educators relevant for ensuring the rights of the girl child.

Building on the strong foundations already established, UNICEF and UNFPA should also aim to further expand the reach of the Saleema initiative and of other promising approaches. This could include developing targeted materials appropriate for children and youth.

Recommendation 5: UNFPA and UNICEF should continue and expand their efforts to engage leaders from a variety of religious groups in discussions on the well-being of women and girls, in order to sustain the momentum of the FGM/C abandonment movement.

UNFPA and UNICEF should maintain and continuously broaden their existing efforts to systematically engage religious leaders in discussions not only on FGM/C but also on broader issues of the well-being of women and girls. If financially feasible, such dialogue could include religious authorities from other, non-circumcising Muslim countries.

This approach appears to be the most promising to ensure that like-minded (progressive) religious groups find confirmation and support from each other in the process of abandoning FGM/C. It also allows to increasingly minimize the influence of those religious groups who persistently resist social change when it comes to FGM/C.



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The country case study report is available on the Evaluation Offices webpages of:
UNFPA - <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about/Evaluation/EBIER> and
UNICEF - http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_70518.html