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# Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase I and Phase II (2008-2017)

Evaluation conclusions and recommendations

Evaluation Offices of UNICEF and UNFPA

2019



Brief overview of the evaluation approach

Key Conclusions and Recommendations

Presentation of the Management response

Discussion

Group work: options for the implementation of the recommendations

Next steps

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UN Report of the Secretary General: Intensifying Global Efforts for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. New York: UN, 2018

## FGM is

...a harmful practice

...a form of violence against women and girls

...inherently linked to deep-rooted negative norms, stereotypes, perceptions and customs

...negatively impacts physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health

...negatively impacts women and girls' human rights



# Key statistics

- Estimated **200 million girls and women** affected by FGM
- Estimated **3.9 million girls** at risk of being subject to FGM
- Predicted to rise to **4.6 million girls** at risk per year by 2030 given high population growth rates in countries where there is high prevalence

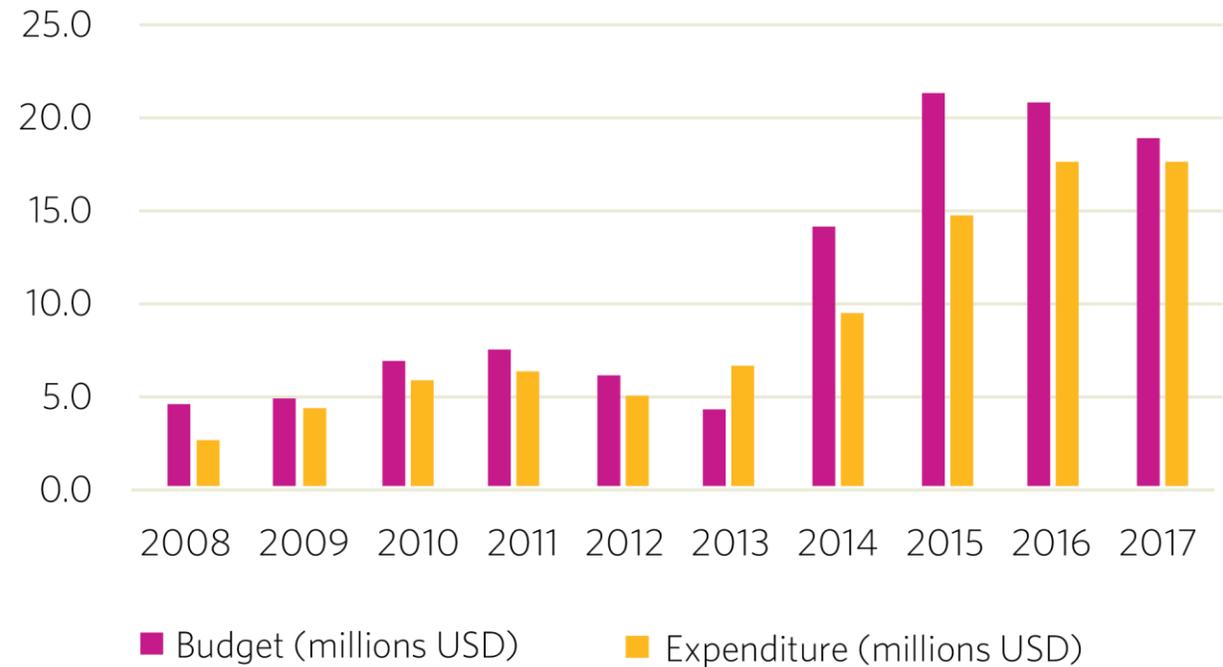




# Brief overview of the evaluation approach

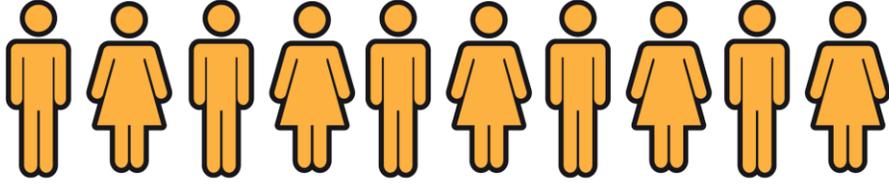
# Ten years of the Joint Programme

- 17** Programme countries
- 12** donors
- 2** UN agencies
- 200+** implementing partners
- \$109m** USD budget
- global** advocacy, mobilizing political support & resources
- regional** advocacy, knowledge sharing; cross-border and inter-regional
- national** policy and legislation, service delivery and community work



Source: Atlas





**1,436 people** (60% women) consulted through in depth interviews and community level focus group discussions



Extended desk review, including remote interviews in  
**12 countries**



**500+**  
documents reviewed



**Global and regional interviews** with key stakeholders



In country case studies in  
**4 countries**



**Global survey** of 113 representatives from joint programme implementing partners



**Analysis** of financial and programme monitoring data

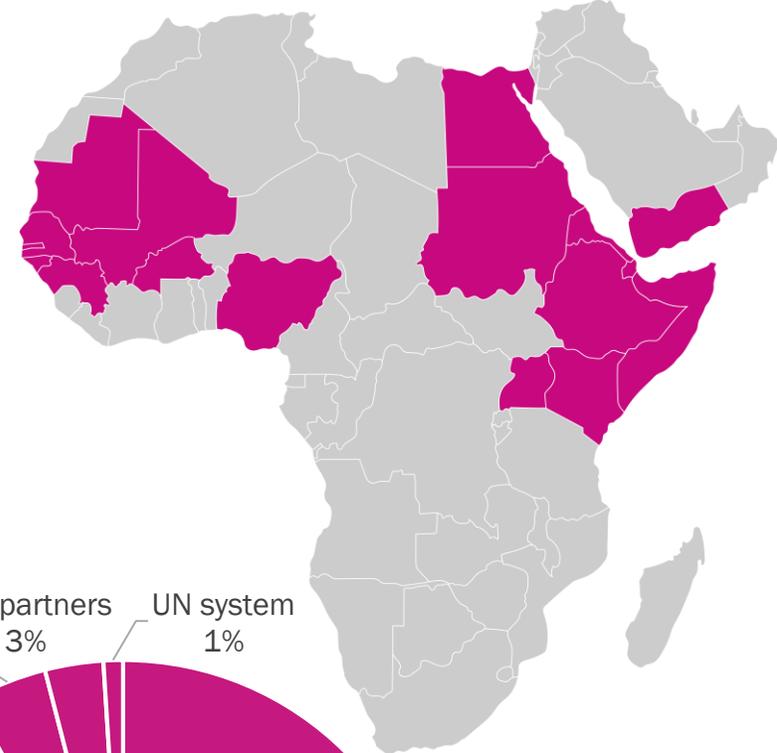
# Evaluation purpose and scope

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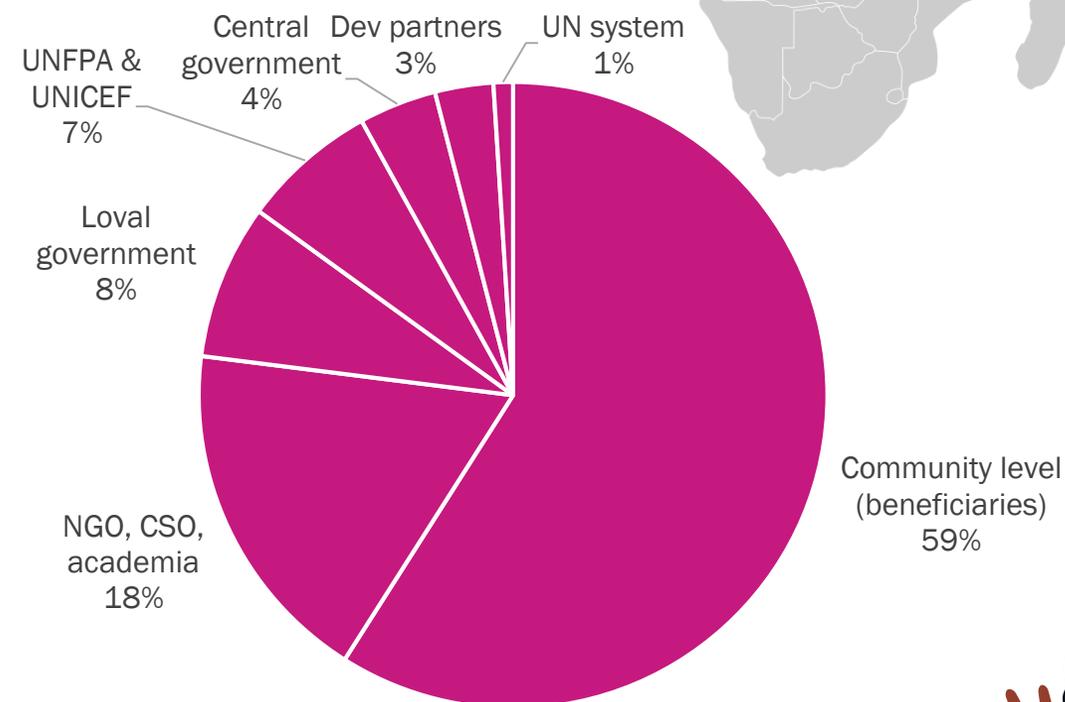
- Assess the extent to which, and under what circumstances, the Joint Programme has contributed to accelerating the abandonment of FGM over the last 10 years
- Inform the implementation of phase III, and UNFPA and UNICEF support beyond 2021
- Expanded scope 2008 - January 2019, with particular emphasis on Phase II



# Stakeholders consulted



Stakeholder	F	M	N/D	Total
Community members	570	276	0	846
Joint Programme agencies	59	46	0	105
Civil society, NGO, academia	116	134	6	256
Central government	35	24	1	60
Local government	31	76	0	107
United Nations	13	1	0	14
Development partners	37	11	0	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1,436</b>



The 'not declared' stakeholders come from field visits, where participants were given the option of recording themselves as either a binary gender, as other, or withholding their gender.

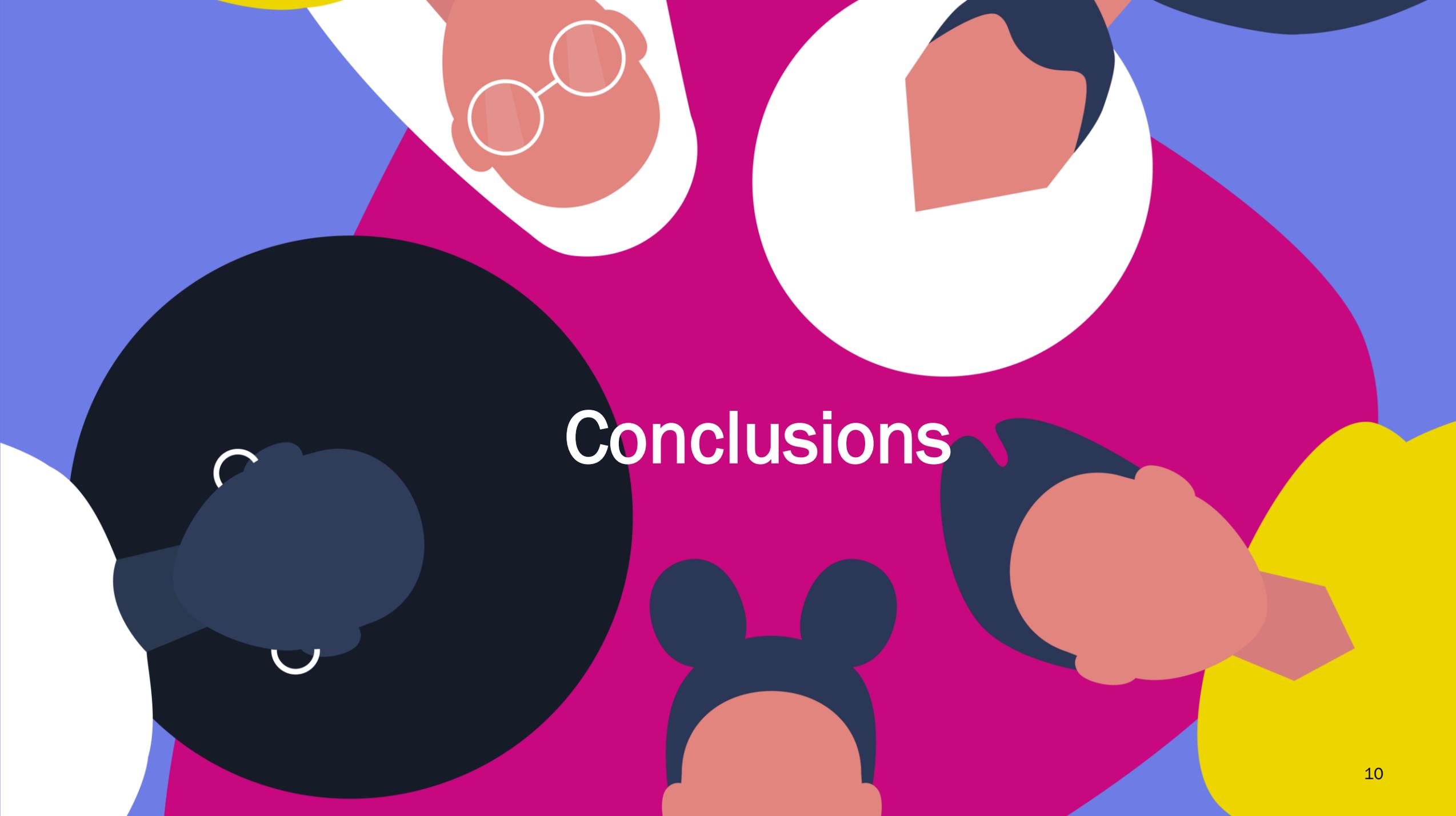


# 48 findings

## Covering the following themes

- Alignment with global, national and sub-national priorities/needs
- Evidence based analysis
- Legal and policy frameworks for eliminating FGM
- Quality health service provision to girls and women
- Changing Social Norms
- Management arrangements and coordination
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Strengthening the response to end FGM
- Financial systems and structures
- Monitoring, reporting and evidence-gathering systems
- National ownership of efforts to eradicate FGM
- Visibility, sustainable funding and long-term efforts



A stylized illustration of a group of people's heads arranged in a circle. The heads are rendered in various colors and styles, including a man with glasses, a woman with dark hair, a woman with a bun, a woman with a headband, and a woman with a yellow top. The background is a mix of blue, pink, and yellow. The word "Conclusions" is written in white text in the center of the circle.

# Conclusions

# Conclusion 1

## Contribution of the Joint Programme

The Joint Programme has made notable contributions towards accelerating the elimination of FGM at the global, national and sub-national levels

- Raised the profile of FGM at all levels; galvanized support and cultivated emerging actors
- Strengthened national legal and policy frameworks; improved co-ordination among national and sub-national actors
- Significant contributions to changes in discourse, taboo breaks and abandonment by meaningful proportion of communities
- The holistic approach has enabled the Programme to achieve greater results:
  - ✓ Across multiple levels
  - ✓ Across sectors (e.g. health, justice, education)

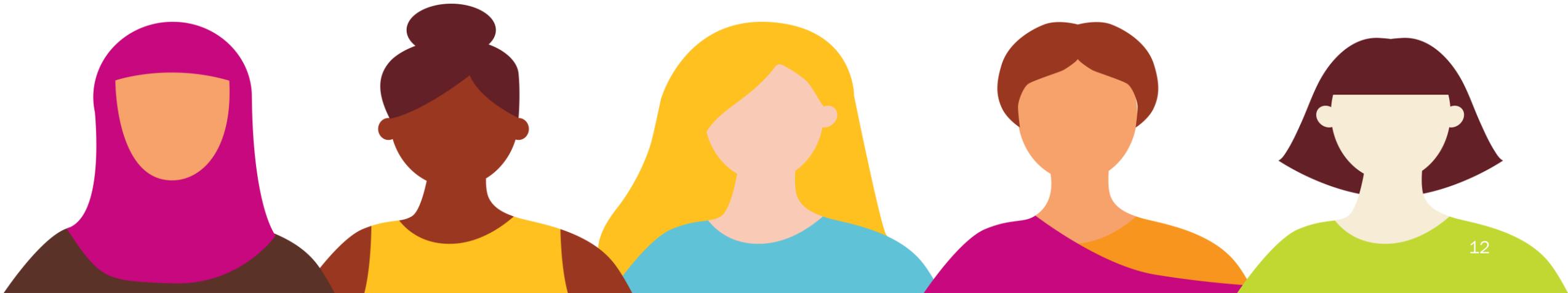


# Conclusion 2

## Commitment to social norms in programme systems

The Joint Programme's sustained commitment to social norms change around FGM abandonment is appropriate, given the long-term investment required. However, expectations, results targets and budgeting cycle are not compatible with long-term change

- The aspirational goals set unrealistic expectations around what can be achieved within a relatively short timeframe
- Current results targets do not adequately capture important intermediate progress towards full abandonment. This leads to gaps in capturing results and may risk undermining achievements.
- The one-year budget cycle inhibits ability to plan long-term



# Conclusion 3

## Making strategic choices

The Programme has made a concerted effort at drawing on its comparative strengths, particularly its strategic role as a convenor of key FGM actors at the grassroots, national, regional, and global levels.

- appropriate given the magnitude and complexities of the problem and the need for collective action among FGM actors to address it

... However, some elements of its current programming (such as care for FGM survivors) are less clearly aligned with the Joint Programme preventative change logic (and within a limited resources panorama).



# Conclusion 4

## Gender transformation

The Joint Programme is placing a stronger emphasis in Phase III on explicitly situating its FGM work within a gender equality perspective. However, the boundaries and scope of this work have not yet been operationally defined

- While investments on Phase II in raising the awareness of all youth and empowering girls as agents of social change offer significant potential for change it is not clearly informed by a gender specific approach reflecting existing research on addressing girls right and needs.
- Combination of community conversations addressing gender together with clinic-based couples consultations holds potential for strengthening household communication around decisions to cut and a platform for broader efforts

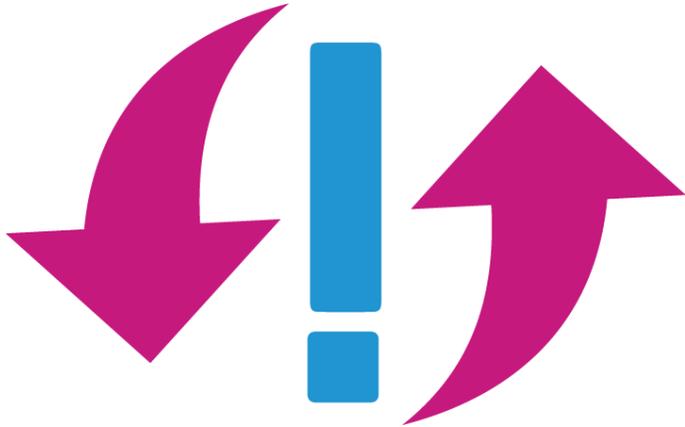


# Conclusion 5

## Challenges around changing practices

Changes in practices surrounding FGM (for example, executing FGM in secret, changes in forms of practice, cross-border evasion of the law, medicalization, etc.) present unexpected and evolving challenges for the Joint Programme.

- While these challenges have for the most part been acknowledged by the joint programme, evidence is lacking to fully understand their characteristics, the magnitude of the problem and potential consequences
- Limited strategies to proactively address the changes in practice:
  - Insufficient investment in systematic inventory and learning from IPs' experience on scale, implications, and adaptations



# Conclusion 6

## Evidence gaps and harnessing existing knowledge

The Joint Programme has supported important research on FGM (primarily at the country level). However, **partnerships with research bodies have not been sufficiently institutionalized or capitalised upon.**

- Weak mechanisms to gather, share and apply information from operational experiences contribute towards a lack of evidence on which to base strategic planning
- Implementing partners wealth of knowledge (for example on: causes of FGM, drivers of change, changing practices). is not systematically captured, analyzed or shared through a formal mechanism or process



# Conclusion 7

## Communications and messaging



The Joint Programme has made a concerted effort to use a diverse set of communication channels to raise awareness around the harmful effects of FGM. However, messaging is not always evidence-based, and requires amplification and scale-up

- Communications have not been guided by a formal communications for development strategy: insufficient targeting to intended audiences and link to programme outcomes
- Joint Programme advocacy messaging has been particularly successful at the global level. However there are further opportunities for linking to gender equality and gender transformation to continue to generating interest around FGM.



# Conclusion 8

## Synergies across Joint Programme levels

The Joint Programme's reach from the global level to the subnational community level is a key strength. This holistic approach across levels provides the Joint Programme with additional credibility, linking grassroots interventions to global advocacy.

Regional level has been strengthened since Phase I evaluation, and scope to develop further :

- Vertical intermediary role: regional level not fully integrated in strategic planning. Roles and means of communicating are not clearly defined and effectively supported
- Supporting horizontal co-operation: potential for regional staff to facilitate cross-regional (e.g. Arab-west-east) sharing and learning, critical for addressing cross border issues



# Conclusion 9

## Coordination and 'jointness'

The Joint Programme structure is fit for purpose and has brought important benefits to the larger effort to eliminate FGM as well as to the work of both UNFPA and UNICEF

- Complementary comparative strengths: intentional cooperation, uniformed position, and power of a shared message championed by two UN entities. Limiting to two entities is appropriate
- Steering committee: strong governance and value added linkages; uncoordinated requests
- Global level: strong technical management but limited by small team capacities in Phase I and II
- Regional and country: significant improvements, but in a small number of countries, coordination is sub-optimal, with limited joint planning, monitoring and reporting

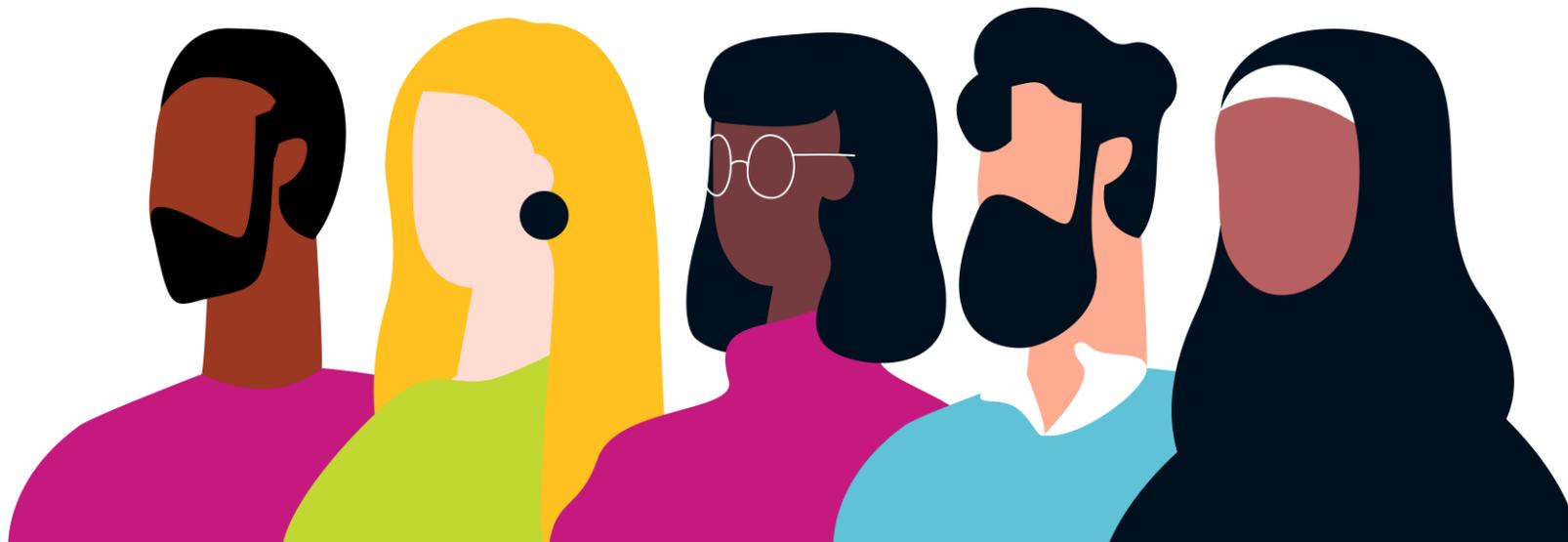


# Conclusion 10

## Moving forward: sustaining momentum

The Joint Programme design includes some elements that encourage sustainability such as systems strengthening, supporting national ownership, and working with youth. These are promising practices to encourage the sustainability of results

- Lack of multi-sectoral and cross-agency approach to support governments and IPs in holistic programming to effectively address FGM
- Post phase III – lack of handover strategies



A stylized illustration of a group of people's heads arranged in a circle. The heads are rendered in various colors (red, white, black, blue, yellow) and are simplified, focusing on hair and facial features. The background is a mix of blue, pink, and yellow shapes.

# Recommendations

for Joint Programme Phase III  
implementation and beyond

# Recommendation 1

## Taking the Joint Programme further

Directed to: Senior Management at UNFPA and UNICEF

Continued engagement by UNFPA and UNICEF to further sustain and intensify the existing positive momentum for change towards FGM abandonment within a long-term vision, given that actual behaviour change may take one or two generations

### Operational actions

- Maintain the thematic focus on FGM to ensure that the complex multi-country initiative is able to maintain sufficient levels of financial resources and technical support.
- Investments should be tailored to leverage the JP's comparative advantages vis-a-vis other initiatives (including the substantial programmatic and technical expertise evident across the diverse portfolios of UNICEF and UNFPA)
- Priority should be given to sharing the wealth of knowledge in programming around FGM and its implementing partners within both global and regional fora
- Partner with relevant actors including donors as to how to proceed further investing on the FGM abandonment beyond phase III



# Recommendation 2

## Addressing evidence gaps

Directed to: Joint Programme at all levels

**Enhance** learning to contribute towards reducing evidence gaps in key areas pertaining to FGM. The Joint Programme is encouraged to harness the knowledge from within the programme as well as explore innovative research solutions through the establishment and/or institutionalization of existing strategic partnerships.

### Operational actions

- Lead a mapping exercise of the Programme's current research inventory
- Develop formalized mechanisms to capture knowledge from implementing partners
- Establish formal partnerships, with research organisations focusing on action research; strengthen collaboration with Pop Council
- Continue to commission research at the regional and country levels including:
  - intervention-based research to explore different programming strategies; and
  - operations research to monitor the effectiveness of chosen strategies and to track changes in practice or behaviour resulting from interventions;
  - exploratory research around the causes of FGM and the drivers of change



# Recommendation 3

## Making strategic choices

Directed to: Joint Programme at headquarters (with support from the regional and country levels)

Further refine the Programme strategic focus, drawing on its comparative strengths. The development of specific programming strategies will be needed to maximize the Programme contributions towards FGM abandonment

### Operational actions

- Conduct a strategic review to identify any areas where the Joint Programme is currently operating that are not directly aligned with its strategic focus
- Optimize the Joint Programme's convening role
  - mapping exercise of actors working on FGM across Africa and other regions
  - development of formalized partnership strategies linking practitioner, research and advocacy at regional and national levels.
- Opportunity to ask strategic questions:
  - Strategic value in expanding the Joint Programme operational work beyond the African continent
  - Under what conditions could the Joint Programme consider withdrawing from certain activities



# Recommendation 4

## Focusing on gender

Directed to: Joint Programme at the HQ, regional, and country levels

The Joint Programme should clearly define its strategic placement within a gender equality framework, drawing on its comparative advantages. This would entail establishing clearly marked boundaries and strategic entry points

### Operational actions

- Establish boundaries - define what gender equality elements will lie outside of the Joint Programme work
- Gather evidence at the community level around how women's empowerment and community dialogues improve relationships between women and men. Analyse effects on gender equality issues, including FGM, other harmful practices
- Strategically position FGM within a gender equality narrative at the global level to mobilize additional financial resources demarcated for gender equality



# Recommendation 5

## Communication and messaging

Directed to: Joint Programme HQ (in consultation with the regional and country levels)

The Joint Programme should develop a formal Communications Strategy that intentionally places behaviour change messaging targeted at practicing individuals and communities within a C4D framework. Advocacy messaging should be more explicitly framed within a gender equality narrative.

### Operational actions

- Develop a comprehensive overarching communications strategy with a results framework that links activities and outputs to outcome-level results; and national level communication strategies that feed in.
- Harness the C4D capacities within UNICEF to ensure that behaviour change messaging is grounded within a C4D framework
- Engage youth in designing behaviour change and advocacy messaging



# Recommendation 6

## Coordination

Directed to: Joint Programme HQ (in consultation with the regional and country levels)

To further strengthen horizontal synergies between the two agencies and across different levels

### Operational actions

- Develop an internal policy defining roles and responsibilities and information flows between the different levels and agencies and where synergies are expected.
- Develop a communications procedure for how requests for information from Steering Committee members will be made and responded to
- Expand the role of the regional level to:
  - commission research on evidence gaps
  - facilitate knowledge exchange
  - further convene actors (especially civil society) at the regional level
  - support HQ with the development of strategic plans to address current complex challenges facing the JP
- Document how the Joint Programme is drawing on the comparative strengths of each organisation, and 'jointness'



# Recommendation 7

## Programming systems for social norms change

Directed to: Joint Programme HQ (in consultation with the regional and country levels)

The Joint Programme should place, in the current cycle, a stronger focus on using results targets and indicators that capture important intermediate progress towards full FGM abandonment.

### Operational actions

- Revise the Phase III results framework to include more results targets and indicators that measure intermediate progress, drawing on insights from the development of the ACT Framework
- Continue to advocate for the need for longer-term financial commitments and funding stability from donors to support social norms change
- Work with UNFPA, UNICEF and donors to continue exploring ways to achieve multi-year financial planning and to roll over funds from year to year



# Recommendation 8

## Sustainability and national ownership

Directed to: Joint Programme HQ, regional offices and country offices

The Joint Programme should continue to use a systems-strengthening approach to encourage long-term change and national ownership, focusing on effective law enforcement, service provision, educational awareness and data collection

### Operational actions

- Develop a sustainability plan that clearly articulates its systems strengthening approach and that identifies the interventions in Phase III that will promote the sustainability of benefits upon completion of that phase
- Systems strengthening approach to prioritise : Capacity development of Health Ministries; Mainstreaming of FGM materials school curriculums and activities; operational tools to effectively implement laws prohibiting FGM
- Advocate and lobby national governments to increase budget lines
- Develop a roadmap to clearly outline how a multi-sectoral cross agency approach should be operationalized within a strong Human Rights context



# Thank you

For more information on the evaluation go to:  
[www.unfpa.org/evaluation](http://www.unfpa.org/evaluation)

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