

JOINT EVALUATION

UNFPA-UNICEF JOINT PROGRAMME ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING: ACCELERATING CHANGE 2008-2012



In 2012/2013, in its fifth year of implementation, an evaluation of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the 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 and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which and under what circumstances the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme has accelerated the abandonment of FGM/C in programme countries over the last five years.

Besides serving as an accountability tool for programme countries, donors and other stakeholders, the evaluation is also envisaged as a learning opportunity. As such, it is intended to inform future UNFPA and UNICEF work on FGM/C.

The evaluation covers the period from 2008 to 2012 but also, when relevant, includes information relating to the first quarter of 2013. It addresses all four programme levels (global, national, regional and community) and their interconnections.

Evaluation background

In 2007, UNFPA and UNICEF launched the joint programme with the objective of helping to reduce the practice of FGM/C among girls aged zero -15 years by 40 per cent, and eliminating FGM/C in at least one country by 2012. The UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme was established as the main UN instrument to promote the acceleration of FGM/C abandonment.

The duration of the joint programme was originally planned to be five years (2008-2012) but, in 2011, the programme was extended until 2013. While the budget originally estimated for the joint programme (in the 2007 funding proposal) was 44 million dollars (US\$), the most current estimated budget



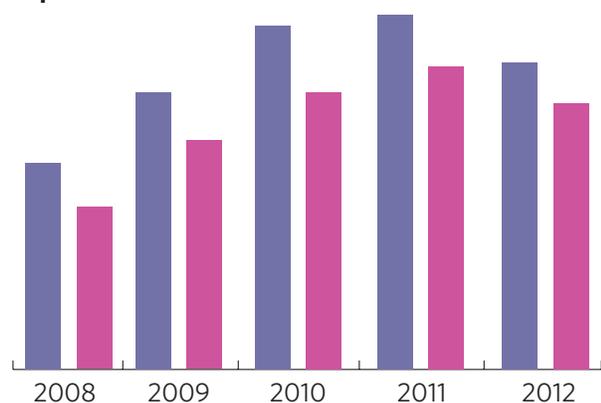
for the six-year period is approximately 37 million dollars (US\$) (as of June 2013). This budget shortfall meant that only 15 countries participated in the joint programme, instead of the originally envisaged 17 countries.

Start date	Countries
2008	Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Senegal and Sudan
2009	Burkina Faso, Gambia, Uganda and Somalia
2011	Eritrea, Mali and Mauritania

Annual joint programme budgets and expenditures for the period 2008-2012 are detailed below.

Year	Budget (US\$)	Expenditure (US\$)
2008	3,692,497	2,436,875
2009	5,565,974	4,209,029
2010	7,322,679	5,559,831
2011	7,631,055	6,233,475
2012	6,351,131	5,220,715
Total	30,563,336	23,659,925

Annual joint programme budgets and expenditures 2008-2012



Evaluation process and methodology

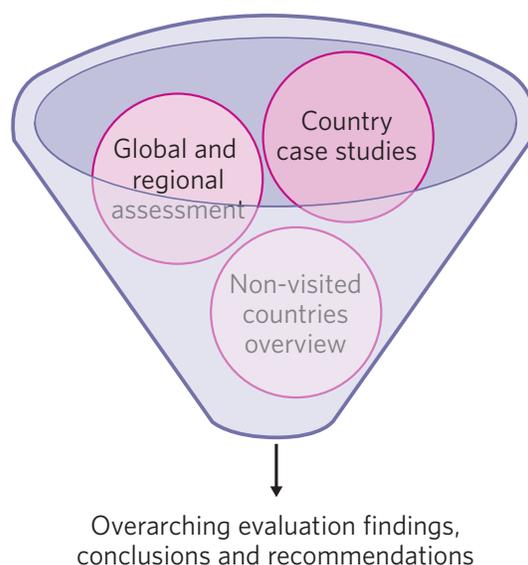
The overall approach to the evaluation was utilization-focused, gender and human-rights-responsive, and culturally sensitive. The evaluation used a mix of methods for data collection and analysis.

Based on the evaluation terms of reference, the evaluation team developed a set of seven evaluation questions to guide data collection, data analysis and report writing. These questions covered five evaluation criteria: relevance and programme design, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, coordination between UNFPA and UNICEF (including joint programme management). For each question, a number of sub-questions were identified and related indicators developed.

The evaluation had **three components**, as shown in the diagram below, which jointly provided data for the final evaluation report: a **global and regional assessment** focusing on the over-arching programme relevance, design and coordination, and on achievements at global and regional levels; **four country case studies** (in Kenya, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Sudan) providing in-depth information on the effects of the joint programme at country level; and an **overview of the 11 non-visited countries** in which data was collected and analysed focusing on common trends, themes and issues.

Key **sources of data** for the evaluation were documents (primary and secondary joint programme documents, and relevant literature); non-participant observations during the four field visits; as well as consultations with a broad variety of stakeholders at global, regional, and country levels.

Methods of data collection included: document, file and literature review; key informant interviews; community-level group discussions and focus groups; a web-based survey addressing the joint programme focal points; and virtual focus groups with UNICEF and UNFPA joint programme focal points and partners from the 11 non-visited countries. In total, the evaluation team consulted with 1472 people.



Data analysis and synthesis were guided by the evaluation matrix and included descriptive, content, comparative, and quantitative analysis. Each evaluation component was used to inform findings at specific levels, while also contributing to the overarching evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. To assess the extent to which the joint programme contributed to expected results, the evaluation team used two complementary types of analysis: results-focused progress analysis aiming to assess progress towards planned results as measured by the indicators identified in the joint programme logframe, and elements of contribution analysis using a theory of change-based approach.

Institutions	People consulted
UNFPA/UNICEF (Headquarters (HQ), regional offices, country offices)	106
Other UN agencies and donors (HQ and country levels)	22
Global experts/academics	4
International non-governmental organisations/other global partners	8
National government representatives	62
Sub-national government representatives	86
Civil society and faith-based organizations	168
Beneficiaries (community)	1016
Total	1,472

The evaluation team used data and methodological triangulation to ensure the reliability of the information and data, as well as to increase the quality and credibility of the findings and conclusions of this evaluation.

Findings

The joint programme has been aligned with existing national and international commitments for the abandonment of FGM/C made by national governments in the programme countries, as well as, to varying degrees, with the country programmes of UNFPA and UNICEF, and with the priorities of other development partners.

The design of the joint programme showed significant strengths, including its emphasis on pursuing a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to addressing FGM/C, and its emphasis on addressing global, national, and local levels simultaneously. However, the overall objective of eliminating FGM/C in at least one country by 2012, and contributing to a 40 per cent reduction in prevalence among girls aged zero to 15 years over a five-year period, was not realistic. In addition, UNICEF and UNFPA did not fully operationalize the envisaged regional dimension of the joint programme.

The horizontal issues of human rights, gender equality, cultural sensitivity, and equity, were reflected in the design and implementation of the joint programme but were less apparent in its monitoring and reporting tools and products.

Available evidence supports several of the key assumptions shaping the underlying theory of change of the joint programme. However, available data do not allow the validation of all steps in the assumed progression-of-change processes included in this theory of change. This relates, in particular, to the assumed transition from changes in FGM/C-related social norms to visible changes in individual and collective behaviours and, eventually, changes in FGM/C prevalence.

Overall, joint programme contributions to its envisaged results are positive. Progress has been made, albeit to varying degrees, towards the achievement of the outputs formulated in the joint programme logframe; in all programme countries, the joint programme made contributions to reinforcing the respective national environment for FGM/C abandonment, in particular by helping to enhance relevant legal and policy frameworks at national and sub-national levels, and by strengthening the capacity of key actors e.g. in view of coordinating their efforts.

The joint programme contributed to strengthening local-level commitment to ending the practice of FGM/C, as evidenced by an increase in the public commitment of community leaders and members to FGM/C abandonment, as well as by (self-reported) changes in individual behaviours. At the same time, the joint programme has not contributed significantly to strengthening regional dynamics for ending FGM/C, and has made only limited contributions to strengthening the production and use of reliable data at the country level.

Through its achievements at the output level, the joint programme has contributed significantly to progress towards both of its envisaged

outcomes: (ongoing) changes in social norms towards FGM/C abandonment at national and community levels (outcome 1) are indicated by the fact that, in all programme countries, the joint programme has contributed to changes in the public discourse regarding the practice; and a positive change in the global movement towards the abandonment of FGM/C (outcome 2) has been evidenced by, amongst others, the 2012 UN Resolution on FGM/C, to which the joint programme contributed through evidence-based advocacy, policy dialogue, and technical assistance.

While the joint programme did not reach its ambitious overall objective, evaluation data indicate that it has contributed positively to change processes at global, national, and community levels.

In all programme countries, interventions reflected the core principles characterizing the overall joint programme approach. In operationalizing this approach, both agencies and their partners used similar strategies across all countries, but tailored their specific approach according to the requirements of the respective national and/or community contexts. However, data generated by the joint programme to date provide only limited information on the specific factors that influence whether and how specific (combinations of) strategies facilitate changes in behaviours. Also, available data do not permit systematic comparison of different strategies, including their cost-effectiveness.

The joint programme helped create a number of favourable conditions likely to support the sustainability of achievements at global and, in particular, national and community levels. These include strengthened national ownership for the abandonment of FGM/C; improved coordination among national and community-level actors; and integration of the joint programme approach and strategies into national initiatives. At the same time, the sustainability of many results is threatened by the lack of financial and technical resources among many national and community-level actors, and the influence (which is growing in some countries) from conservative groups advocating for the continuation of FGM/C.

The joint programme made successful efforts to use the available human and financial resources efficiently and strategically. However, the lack of predictability of available resources resulted in fewer countries than originally anticipated being included in the joint programme. It also limited the work of the joint programme and its partners (e.g. in view of engaging in consistent and longer-term implementation), and negatively affected clarity on budget allocations as perceived by UNFPA and UNICEF staff and partners. The evaluation also found that some frustrations arose among UNFPA and UNICEF staff and their national partners due to the fact that the budget expectations were sometimes oriented towards the ambitious overall objective of the joint programme, rather than towards its intended catalytic nature.

Its joint structure allowed the joint programme to draw upon the complementary strengths, reputations, and networks of both agencies. While noting some areas for improvement, the evaluation found that coordination between UNFPA and UNICEF was adequate at the global level, as well as at the country level (albeit to varying degrees).

The management of the joint programme by UNFPA and UNICEF, including joint and separate aspects, at both headquarters and country levels contributed to the effective and strategic use of available resources. The coordination team at headquarters provided valuable support and guidance to the countries, including in view of continuously strengthening joint programme monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Although informed on activities and progress, UNFPA and UNICEF regional offices did not play an active role in its management.

Conclusions

The joint programme has been pursued in line with the national and international commitments on FGM/C and priorities of the national governments. In addition, the programme responded to

existing needs at country level as well as to the priorities of UNFPA and UNICEF and those of other development partners at global and country levels. While its overall approach and strategies were appropriate in view of the types of changes that the joint programme was aiming to support, its time-bound overall objective was overly ambitious.

The joint programme has helped expand or accelerate existing change processes towards FGM/C abandonment at national, sub-national and community levels, and has contributed to strengthening the momentum for change at the global level. Some achievements, (such as: legal frameworks, coordination mechanisms and access to services) that the joint programme has contributed to are likely to be sustained without further support, but further efforts are needed, especially at the national and community levels, to turn potential into actual changes in behaviours and (collective) practices.

The implementation of the joint programme reflected the theoretical assumptions on which it was based; however, a knowledge and evidence gap remains as regards the transition from changes in social norms to visible changes in individual and collective behaviours and, in the long-term, a decrease in FGM/C prevalence. Additional and longer-term data collection and analysis are also required to provide solid evidence of the various factors determining the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different strategies and combinations thereof.

The financial and human resources made available for the joint programme were adequate for its envisaged catalytic nature, but were insufficient for the needs and related expectations of its partners. At the same time, the effective and efficient use of these resources was negatively affected by the continued unpredictability of available funding.

The coordination of efforts between UNFPA and UNICEF contributed to the successful implementation of the joint programme. While coordination

mechanisms have associated transaction costs, these were outweighed by the benefits and added value of the joint programme structure.

The management of the joint programme at both headquarters and country levels was appropriate and contributed to the adequate use of available resources. However, the annual planning, budgeting and reporting cycle limited the potential for using available resources effectively and efficiently.

Experiences deriving from the joint programme have the potential to inform future FGM/C-related programming by UNICEF and UNFPA, including operational lessons learned from jointly implementing a multi-country initiative, as well as insights, questions, and noted gaps in available data and knowledge for applying a social norm perspective to FGM/C programming.

Recommendations

To sustain the momentum for change towards FGM/C abandonment that the joint programme has contributed to, UNFPA and UNICEF should pursue a second phase of the joint programme. This phase should entail a set of realistic overall objectives, outcomes and outputs, preserve the thematic focus on FGM/C to ensure the existence of sufficient levels of resources at country level, and develop a set of specific criteria for the selection of participant countries.

UNFPA and UNICEF, in collaboration with their partners, should continue to help strengthen the commitment and capacity of duty bearers at central and decentralised levels, and support the strengthening of government systems for FGM/C abandonment. In addition, both agencies should maintain their support for and collaboration with non-governmental agents and opinion leaders at all levels.

To ensure sustainability of results and efficient use of resources, UNFPA and UNICEF should maintain the catalytic nature of the joint programme in

a second phase. In selecting implementing partners, both agencies should balance the benefits of working with established and larger organizations with the potential for innovation and diversification inherent in engaging with emerging or smaller actors.

Both agencies should clearly communicate to country level staff and to partners the implications of the catalytic nature of the joint programme for programme resources, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

In order to validate the programme assumptions related to the benefits of cross-community and cross-border dynamics for change, UNFPA and UNICEF should operationalize and test those assumptions, develop explicit and appropriately-resourced strategies for operationalizing cross-community and regional dimensions, and define how UNFPA and UNICEF regional offices can support the regional dimensions of the joint programme.

UNFPA and UNICEF should ensure that the FGM/C-related components of their regular country programmes reflect the existing global consensus on the use of a holistic and culturally sensitive approach to FGM/C abandonment, as used by the joint programme. A holistic approach implies the need for simultaneous efforts at different levels, from different angles, and through multiple channels. It is unlikely that UNFPA and UNICEF would be involved in every dimension deemed relevant for facilitating sustainable social change as regards FGM/C. However, in each country context, they should contribute to ensuring that all of these dimensions are being addressed by partners. UNFPA and UNICEF should also continue to support national actors in creating and/or sustaining formal as well as informal mechanisms for coordinating their FGM/C-related work.

In light of the negative effects of the annual budgeting cycle on longer-term strategic and operational planning, as well as on the clear understanding of decision-making processes, UNFPA and UNICEF

should encourage existing or potential donors interested in contributing to FGM/C-abandonment work to commit to predictable, longer-term financing. Both agencies should explore whether and how multi-year funding can be reflected in the reporting cycle. Financial reporting could continue on a semi-annual basis, while reporting on progress against results should shift to an annual cycle. This would enable staff and partner capacities to be dedicated to more systematic data collection and analysis, and would be appropriate given the long-term behaviour nature of the changes that the programming is aiming to effect.

The evaluation noted several areas for improvement with regard to the systems and tools, capacities, and resources available for monitoring and reporting on progress towards results. Related aspects should be taken into consideration in a potential second phase of the joint programme as well as, where applicable, other FGM/C-related programmatic interventions of both agencies. This should include: (i) developing and using a limited set of clear, relevant, and specific indicators to measure and report on progress towards results; (ii) strengthening the capacity of country-level staff of both agencies and implementing partners in results-oriented monitoring and reporting; (iii) ensuring staff members have sufficient time to engage in data collection and in regular analysis and synthesis of information; (iv) supporting national systems for more systematic and longer-term monitoring and reporting on results, and on factors affecting progress towards FGM/C abandonment.

UNFPA and UNICEF should further improve their coordination efforts as regards their work on FGM/C, in particular by making explicit the anticipated added value of working together. At the global level, they should clarify how each agency is expected to contribute to resource mobilization, and identify ways to ensure the reliable aggregation of financial information deriving from UNFPA and UNICEF systems respectively. At the country level, UNFPA and UNICEF should explore how they can further institutionalize their partnership to make it

less vulnerable to staff turnover, e.g. by routinely involving senior country programme managers in communication and planning for FGM/C-related programming, or by developing a brief set of explicit, country-specific principles and priorities for collaboration in this thematic area. A clear framework for collaboration between UNFPA and UNICEF M&E officers in programme countries should also be created, which can include clarifying expectations for data collection and reporting procedures, as well as for further mutualisation of tasks such as capacity development of partners and monitoring visits. At the regional level, what specific role(s) UNFPA and UNICEF regional offices can and are expected to play in view of supporting the implementation of FGM/C-related efforts across countries should be clarified.

Given that related insights would be valuable in view of future FGM/C-related work, UNFPA and UNICEF should invest in more in-depth research on social norms change and its linkages to changes in individual and collective behaviours. Both agencies should also build on and expand their existing partnerships with other actors at global and regional levels to encourage them to invest in research on social norms change; and continue their efforts to enhance existing country systems in order to become more suitable for measuring changes in FGM/C prevalence and factors affecting these changes.



Evaluation Office



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The report is available at:

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about/Evaluation/EBIER/TE/pid/10103>

http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_70518.html