

JOINT EVALUATION

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

2008 - 2012

COUNTRY CASE STUDY: SENEGAL

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 by members of the evaluation offices of UNFPA and UNICEF.

Executive Summary

Purpose of the evaluation and the country case study

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 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 an input to the evaluation report.

Senegal was selected as a country case study as it is a francophone country in West Africa which has participated in the joint programme since the start in 2008. The national context for the joint programme in Senegal has been shaped by the work of the non-governmental organization Tostan, whose strategy for the abandonment of FGM/C through community development inspired the overall design of the joint programme, and has been used as a model in several participating countries.

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; consultations with stakeholders at national and community levels; and observations at the community level.

Types of respondents	People consulted
UNFPA/UNICEF	12
Central government	7
Decentralized government	6
Civil society organizations/ faith-based organizations	10
Implementing partners	17
Final beneficiaries	367
Total	419

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

The case study involved three stages. i) preparation and planning, including logistical preparations for the country visit and document review; ii) data collection in Senegal and iii) data analysis and writing of the country case study report.

Findings

The joint programme has been highly relevant to existing needs, priorities, and commitments in Senegal. At the government level, the joint programme responded to strong political will and a corresponding legal framework for FGM/C abandonment. At the local level, it has been part of an established movement led by the NGO Tostan. Joint programme interventions have been aligned with and integrated into the respective mandates of UNFPA and UNICEF in terms of reproductive health, child protection and gender equality, and are consistent with the work of other development partners engaged in the fight against female circumcision in Senegal.

The design of the joint programme in Senegal was appropriate and reflected the key principles outlined for the overall (global) joint programme. It conceptualized FGM/C as a social norm, and took a holistic, human rights-based, and culturally-sensitive approach. While it was strategic and catalytic, the joint programme did not sufficiently explore and harness the diversity of potential implementing partners in Senegal. By using almost exclusively the community-based approach introduced by Tostan, the joint programme has risked missing opportunities for innovation at the community level.

The joint programme has made significant contributions to strengthening the national environment for the abandonment of FGM/C. In particular, it has contributed to: i) strengthening the institutional and policy frameworks through the development of the second National Action Plan for the abandonment of FGM/C in 2010, and the establishment of the National Technical Committee; ii) consolidating the coordination of actors at the national level by encouraging the involvement of various government entities in efforts to abandon FGM/C; iii) disseminating the law, No. 99-05 (29 January 1999), prohibiting the practice of FGM/C; and iv) strengthening the involvement of the Senegalese Ministry of Health in the movement towards FGM/C abandonment. The joint programme also contributed to the establishment of monitoring committees at regional and departmental levels, although these had limited results.

The joint programme contributed to accelerating and expanding the existing activities undertaken by local actors, in particular the Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) implemented by Tostan. The joint programme also supported the

involvement of religious (in particular Muslim) leaders in the movement to abandon FGM/C and the involvement of local media and production of materials in local languages. It contributed to the wide dissemination of knowledge about the negative effects of FGM/C, to breaking the former taboo surrounding discussion of the practice, and to accelerating the dynamics for FGM/C abandonment through the spread of public declarations and other initiatives linked to sharing knowledge between practicing communities. However, how to measure, document, and monitor resulting changes on the ground remains a key issue.

Despite positive factors likely to support the **sustainability of results** that the joint programme has contributed to - including the increased awareness of many actors about the issue, a favourable political climate, and the existing institutional framework for the abandonment of FGM/C - many challenges remain. In particular, sustainability of results is linked to the need for monitoring the implementation of commitments made by practising communities, continued support to local actors, and mobilisation of resources to allow for the continuation and expansion of the existing dynamics for change. In addition, areas of resistance remain in Senegal and backlash against FGM/C abandonment remains a risk, for example as in Dakar between 2005 and 2010.

In Senegal, UNFPA and UNICEF have made efficient use of available resources by catalytically building upon existing efforts, and by seeking synergies with the country programmes of both agencies. However, the evaluation also found some inefficiencies. Shortcomings were noted in relation to the annual planning cycle, which caused delays in the allocation of funds and uncertainty for implementing partners due to a lack of predictability of funding.

Management of the joint programme in Senegal was appropriate and effective, with some limitations. At the global level, the technical support provided by the coordination team and the annual meetings of focal points were highly valued by consulted national stakeholders. The only noted limitation relates to the extent to which national partners were involved in cross-border coordination and exchange. At the country level, joint programme systems and approaches to planning and reporting were appropriate. However, the evaluation found that the strong focus on only one implementing partner limited the ability of the joint programme to

strengthen the role of other (potential) actors. Weaknesses were also noted in relation to monitoring of the joint programme.

Coordination between UNFPA and UNICEF has been a weakness of the joint programme in Senegal. In particular, strategic exchange between country offices, especially as regards political dialogue with the government and key partners, has been insufficient. This has impacted negatively on the planning of interventions, as well as joint programme implementation and reporting. The noted weaknesses in the coordination between the two agencies also limited the potential value-added of the partnership.

To a limited extent, the joint programme has helped to strengthen regional dynamics for FGM/C abandonment, for example through regional exchange workshops on the theme, the production of research studies, and support for cross-border sensitization initiatives.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The joint programme has contributed to accelerating the abandonment of FGM/C in Senegal by helping to enhance the political and institutional positioning of the issue, and by strengthening the dynamics for change at the community level.

In alignment with the original design of the joint programme, the joint programme in Senegal focused on accelerating existing efforts towards the abandonment of FGM/C by supporting government and non-governmental actors already working on the issue. At the national level, the joint programme contributed to the development of the second National Action Plan to accelerate the abandonment of FGM/C (2010-2015), and the establishment of the National Technical Committee in charge of monitoring and coordination. This prompted more government actors to become involved in the movement to end FGM/C, thereby making it an issue relevant across the whole government. At the community level, joint programme support allowed its main implementing partner, Tostan, to reach a larger number of communities. Tostan's work has contributed to raising community members' knowledge and awareness about FGM/C and the rights of women and girls, challenged the taboo status of the issue, and strengthened community

engagement and commitment for change, as evidenced by the growing number of public declarations of FGM/C abandonment.

Conclusion 2: The joint nature of the programme added value as it allowed the joint programme to build on the respective complementary approaches and areas of expertise of the two agencies involved in the partnership. This was mitigated, however, by challenges in the coordination between the two agencies, and differences in their respective approaches to programme implementation.

UNICEF had considerable experience in relation to social norms, while UNFPA has expertise in the area of public health, with particular emphasis on the rights of women and girls. Working together, both agencies contributed to the implementation of the holistic approach adopted by the joint programme to address the issue of FGM/C. However, a number of challenges related to coordination and joint management limited the potential value added by the joint nature of the programme. Once the annual workplan was finalized, both agencies tended to work independently, without engaging in shared strategic thinking. This sometimes led to inefficiencies, as well as to instances of one partner taking actions that contradicted the methods and/or recommendations championed by the other, thereby limiting joint programme cohesion.

Conclusion 3: The emphasis placed by the joint programme on the approach derived from the experience of Tostan provided certain advantages, but limited innovation and diversification of approach.

In addition to the Ministry of Women, Children, and Women's Entrepreneurship, the main implementing partner of the joint programme in Senegal was the NGO, Tostan. The Tostan Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) has had considerable success in increasing FGM/C-related knowledge amongst targeted populations, changing community attitudes towards FGM/C, and facilitating public declarations of abandonment. The proven successes (as well as its dissemination and application to other countries) resulted in the almost exclusive use of this model by the joint programme in Senegal. This meant that the joint programme favoured one implementing partner and approach and did not allow for testing the validity and effectiveness of alternative models.

Conclusion 4: The joint programme, through its implementing partners, has made clear contributions to the abandonment of FGM/C in Senegal. However, the sustainability of results is uncertain.

In recent years, Senegal has made concrete progress towards the abandonment of FGM/C. The increasing number of public declarations by communities across the country suggests that Senegal could be free from the practice in the near future. However, several concerns regarding the sustainability of achievements remain. In terms of government commitment, challenges exist with regard to the continuation of political will, and the mobilization of the financial and human resources required for the implementation of the National Action Plan on FGM/C. At the community level, key concerns include the monitoring of initiatives such as public declarations, and the establishment of community management committees. Another key issue is the availability of reliable and objectively verifiable data, especially as FGM/C is becoming an increasingly clandestine practice. Finally, it is also important not to underestimate the existing pockets of resistance to change, particularly those influenced by religious and traditional leaders; and the possibility that some communities may seek a return to traditional values such as the practice of FGM/C in light of social change and economic difficulties.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The coordination mechanisms between UNFPA and UNICEF, and with Senegalese authorities and implementing partners, should be strengthened.

This should be addressed at three levels:

Between UNFPA and UNICEF: Strengthening the system of cooperation between the two agencies could allow for more coordinated implementation of field activities, and help to ensure more cohesive messages about FGM/C. This would avoid confusion and misunderstandings among implementing partners. To support these efforts, UNFPA and UNICEF should consider developing common monitoring and evaluation activities.

Between the two agencies and their implementing partners: Further enhancing interaction between all joint programme stakeholders would allow for better use of good practices and lessons learned emerging from the implementation of activities. Building the

capacity of weaker partners who have the potential to introduce new approaches should also be considered.

Between the two agencies and the government of Senegal: Joint programme support for institutional mechanisms for the abandonment of FGM/C within the government of Senegal should continue. Concerns were identified about the financial and technical capacities of the Family Directorate to implement the National Action Plan. This indicates the need for either support for strengthening the capacity of the Directorate, or for consolidating partnerships with other entities, for example with the Ministry of Justice, which could assume a more important role in the national movement for the abandonment of FGM/C.

Recommendation 2: To enhance the sustainability of joint programme achievements, it is necessary to improve monitoring at the community level, strengthen coordination mechanisms, and support or create strategic alliances.

The sustainability of joint programme achievements in Senegal faces several challenges. There is a need to improve information and documentation about the results at the community level in order to obtain a better understanding of what has been achieved, and what remains to be done. The joint programme should be aware of and seek to establish whether the practice of FGM/C is becoming more secretive. Work also needs to be done at the community level to ensure greater ownership, thereby contributing to lasting changes in social norms. The existing community management committees require sustained support over time, including for the mobilization of resources. Mobilization of (ideally increased levels of) resources is also essential at the government level in order to maintain existing structures, including the National Technical Committee, as well as regional committees. Furthermore, continued support is required to provide strategic thinking and innovative solutions for fighting the remaining pockets of resistance to the abandonment of FGM/C.

Recommendation 3: The joint programme should analyze the potential benefits of further diversifying the approaches used and actors involved in working towards the abandonment of FGM/C in Senegal.

The implementation of the joint programme in Senegal has been characterized by the predominance of one implementing partner, Tostan. Tostan's work

had also inspired the overall design of the joint programme at the global level. It may be beneficial to consider the use of additional strategies that involve new actors in order to identify innovative ways of achieving results in relation to FGM/C-related behaviour changes. In particular, it would be valuable to explore innovative ways of addressing the pockets of resistance that exist due to religion, the influence of emigrants, and the persistence of individual opponents to change. This could be achieved by further consolidating partnerships with traditional and religious leaders, and also with public and private national media. It would also be appropriate to

consider the development of an implementation model that can incorporate a cross-border strategy, either as part of the work of Tostan, or as a separate model. Furthermore, consideration should be given to establishing a framework for reflection and consultation with relevant actors from the four neighbouring countries (Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Mauritania) with a view to cross-border coordination and synergies. Finally, integrating the perspectives of other agencies working on FGM/C, in particular WHO and UN Women, could also be given stronger consideration.



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Any enquiries about this report should be addressed to: Evaluation Office, UNFPA, E-mail: evb@unfpa.org or UNICEF Evaluation Office, E-mail: evalhelp@unicef.org

The full country case study report can be obtained from the Evaluation Office of UNFPA webpage at: <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about/Evaluation/EBIER> or from the Evaluation Office of UNICEF webpage at: http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/index_69673.html