



Rome, Italy • 22-25 October 2013

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATIONS

## CONCEPT NOTE

### 1 | BACKGROUND ON RECENT PROGRESS

On 20 December 2012, following sustained leadership from the African Union Member States, the 67th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 67/146 *"Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations,"* which provides a clear political call to action to strengthen efforts aimed at the elimination of female genital mutilations. The UNGA Resolution calls upon Member States to ensure effective implementation of international and regional instruments protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls and to take all necessary measures, including enacting and enforcing legislation to prohibit female genital mutilations. It also urges Member States to pursue a common, coordinated approach that promotes positive social change at the community, national, regional, continental and international levels. Further, the UNGA Resolution calls for the international community to increase the financial resources and technical assistance aimed at supporting women and girls at risk of or subjected to female genital mutilations, including through strong support for a second phase of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

Italy and Burkina Faso will convene a High-Level Ministerial Working Meeting during the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2013 to discuss measures Member States are taking to respond to the UNGA Resolution and to outline future plans.

Following decades of national and international advocacy campaigns, in March of 2007, the 51st session of the Commission on the Status of Women provided the foundation for the UNGA Resolution with the adoption of CSW Resolution 51/2 *"Ending Female Genital Mutilation."* The subsequent process leading to UNGA Resolution 67/146 benefitted from partnership of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme with Member States, as well as support from civil society and the contribution of NGO partners of the BanFGM Coalition.

The adoption of CSW Resolution 51/2 also led a select number of countries to begin the implementation of activities to accelerate the abandonment of female genital mutilations using a human rights-based and culturally-sensitive approach to address the social and cultural norms that hold the practice in place, with financial and technical support from the newly-established UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme which aimed also to expand support to the new countries.

The development of this approach was informed by 20 years of on-the-ground programming experience and research. Over the past five years of programming, with implementation in 15 African countries, the approach has been further refined. Fruitful collaboration between Governments, regional and continental bodies,

academic institutions and civil society organizations yielded results that have contributed to a dynamic global movement to end female genital mutilations and to progress toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In the 15 implementing countries<sup>1</sup>, about 10,000 communities representing approximately 8 million people have publicly declared their commitment to abandon female genital mutilation/cutting. National policy and legislation has grown in breadth and depth, including the passage of legislation banning female genital mutilation. A strengthened coordination of interventions by Governments has led to a more efficient and effective use of resources<sup>2</sup>.

Preliminary findings of an external joint UNFPA and UNICEF evaluation of activities in the 15 implementing countries have shown significant contributions to accelerating changes in social and cultural norms and in strengthening legal/policy frameworks necessary for the elimination of female genital mutilation/cutting<sup>3</sup>. The complete findings of the joint evaluation will be available by the end of the summer and will provide evidence valuable for strengthening programmes. Additional insights for programming are also available in a new data-driven report that analyses all available national household survey data across 29 countries where the practice is concentrated<sup>4</sup>.

## 2 | INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: RATIONALE AND SCOPE

During the five years of implementation, the Joint Programme held annual consultations in Africa with Government representatives and Joint Programme focal points from UNFPA and UNICEF country offices, regional offices and headquarters. The consultations served as a forum for peer-review and technical updates as well as for “south-south cooperation”, exchanges of lessons learned, good practices and overall knowledge management and capacity strengthening. Lessons and experiences were incorporated into the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of activities with Government and civil society organizations. The consultations provided an opportunity to integrate global efforts with regional and country level activities.

In line with UNGA Resolution 67/146, UNFPA and UNICEF will begin a second phase of implementation in January 2014. As countries transition from Phase I into Phase II, the 2013 annual consultation requires a greater scope. The organization of an International Conference, with the support of the Joint Programme, including the addition of a high-level political component, will provide a forum to fully engage with the opportunities summarized below:

- the adoption of UNGA Resolution 67/146 and the agreed conclusions of the United Nation’s 57th Commission on the Status of Women on ending violence against girls and women, including harmful practices<sup>5</sup>;
- the completion of the external evaluation of Phase I of the Joint Programme<sup>6</sup>;

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1. Includes Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda

2. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/12684>

3. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/12684>

4. [http://www.childinfo.org/files/FGCM\\_Lo\\_res.pdf](http://www.childinfo.org/files/FGCM_Lo_res.pdf)

5. [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57\\_Agreed\\_Conclusions\\_\(CSW\\_report\\_excerpt\).pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57_Agreed_Conclusions_(CSW_report_excerpt).pdf)

6. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/12684>

- the new data-driven report *Female genital mutilation/cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change* showing prevalence and trends in the practice<sup>7</sup>;
- the celebration of the 2013 Day of the African Child (DAC) on the theme of “*Eliminating Harmful Social and Cultural Practices Affecting Children: Our Collective Responsibility*”, which featured high-level support from Member States, the African Union Commission and AU partners<sup>8</sup>;
- the additional global attention on ending violence against girls and women including child marriage as a part of the Post-2015 Global Development Framework<sup>9</sup>.

The International Conference is an opportunity to bring all the main stakeholders of the past five years together to consolidate further political and financial commitment, galvanize national action, and plan future strategies for the next five years, in line with the UNGA Resolution. With technical inputs coordinated by UNFPA and UNICEF headquarters in collaboration with agency regional offices, countries (including Government representatives and NGO representatives) will have the opportunity to discuss the Phase II framework and incorporate technical inputs from the evaluation and the statistical overview into their future work plans and national strategies and Plans of Action.

The International Conference will leverage existing partnerships including the “Collaboration Strategy on the Elimination of Harmful Traditional Practices” between the African Union (AU), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices (IAC), UNICEF and UNFPA Liaison Offices, as well as the European Union and the Donors’ Working Group on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting to attract high-level participation from a broad range of leaders and actors in the movement to end harmful practices.

### 3 | OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE & EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

The overall International Conference Objective is to “Consolidate global high-level political commitment, galvanize national action, and plan specific strategies to reinforce the broad-based movement to end female genital mutilations and related discriminatory practices in the next generation”. The recommendations to Governments and to UN partners identified in the UNGA Resolution 67/146 will serve as the structural framework for the International Conference.

The International Conference will have two components and is expected to lead to a number of outcomes as follows:

#### **Day 1 (22nd October 2013), international political component:**

1. A Conference Statement reaffirming commitments and agenda for action by national, regional, continental and UN representatives to eliminate female genital mutilations in line with the UNGA Resolution, including by endorsing the second phase of the Joint Programme;

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7. [http://www.childinfo.org/files/FGCM\\_Lo\\_res.pdf](http://www.childinfo.org/files/FGCM_Lo_res.pdf)

8. <http://www.au.int/en/content/commemoration-day-african-child>

9. <http://www.un.org/sg/management/beyond2015.shtml>

#### **Days 2 to 4 (23rd to 25th October 2013), technical component:**

1. The documentation of accomplishments by Governments and civil society organizations and of their commitment to and investment in the elimination of female genital mutilations;
2. The review of the findings and the conclusions of the evaluation of Phase 1 and of the programmatic recommendations made in the data-driven report on female genital mutilation/cutting;
3. The adoption of a common, revised strategy and framework for action that will serve as the basis for Phase II annual work plans and for refinement of national action plans with national and regional and Africa-wide focal points and government and regional or continental body representatives.

## **4 | INVITED PARTICIPANTS**

On Day 1, expected participants will be in the range of 100-120, while Days 2-4 will be devoted to technical issues with about 50-60 participants:

- High-level national Government representatives, including First Ladies
- High-level United Nations representatives (Secretariat, UN agencies, UNECA)
- High-level representatives of regional/continental bodies (African Union, ACERWC, European Union, Organization of the Islamic Conference, League of Arab States, African Development Bank, etc.)
- Members of the Steering Committee of the Joint Programme
- Members of the Donors' Working Group on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
- Goodwill Ambassador(s)
- Ministerial representatives from Joint Programme countries (technical)
- UNFPA and UNICEF Regional, Country and New York staff
- International, regional and national NGOs

## **5 | VENUE AND DATE**

Rome, Italy on 22-25 October 2013

Fondazione Musica per Roma, Auditorium Parco della Musica

Viale Pietro de Coubertin, 10 00196 Roma

Day 1: 22 October - Conference Centre Auditorium

Days 2-4: 23-25 October - Working Meeting Rooms - Conference Centre

*Rome and New York, 20 September 2013*