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## **Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase III (2018-2021)**

**Evaluation Offices of UNICEF and UNFPA**

**2021**



# Scope and evidence

- Covers the implementation and results of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme support during Phase III (2018 - April 2021)
- Forward-looking and strategic in nature. The emphasis of this formative evaluation is on learning
- Information generated through this evaluation will be used to support evidence-based decision-making and to inform UNFPA and UNICEF work beyond 2021



# Data collection and data sources



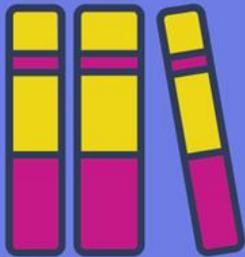
**196**  
documents  
reviewed



**211**  
key informant  
interviews  
(140 women)



**20,000**  
**U-Reporters**  
(young people engaged)



**3**  
thematic  
cases

**17**  
country  
cases

**6**  
deep dive  
country cases



**17,205**  
Social media posts  
harvested and analysed



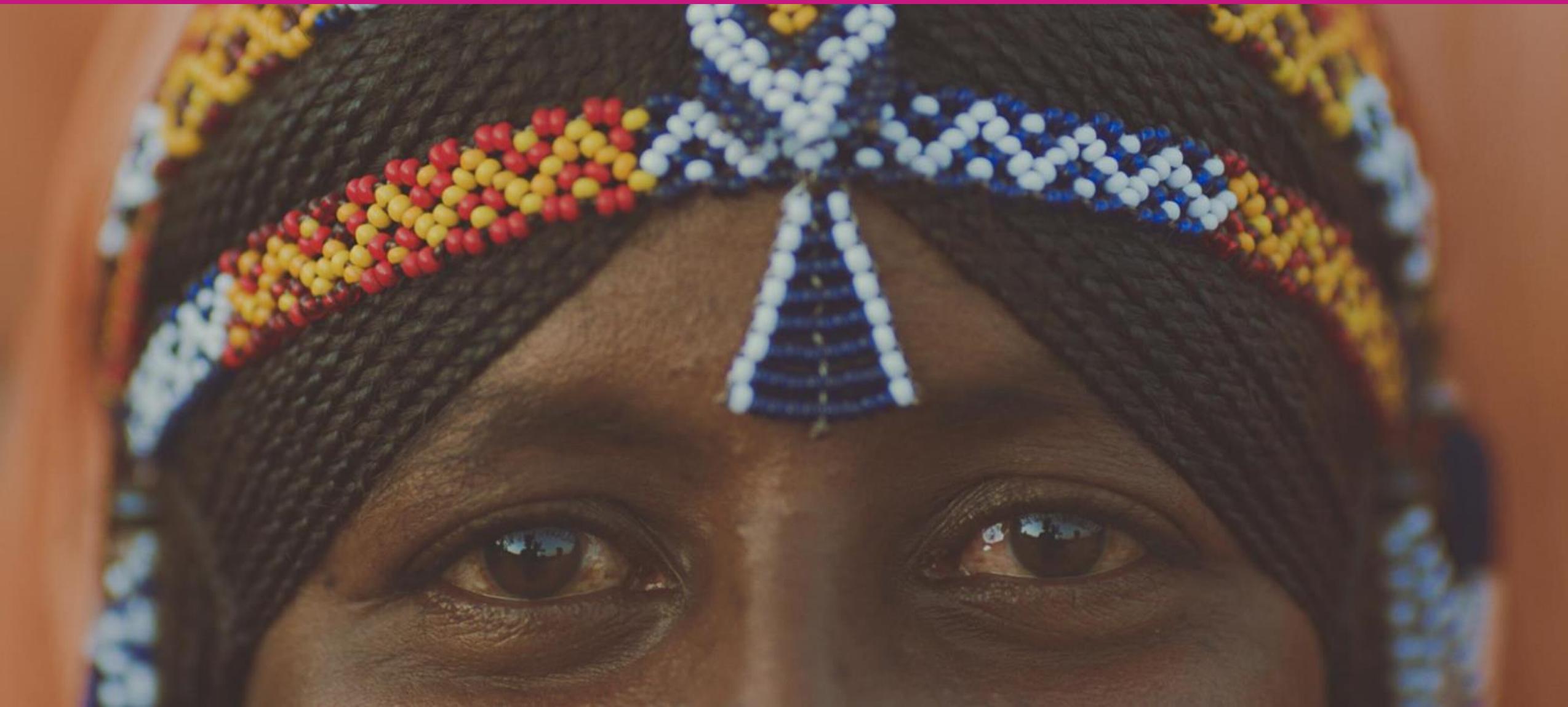
**Web-based survey**

**32**  
staff  
respondents

**138**  
implementing partner  
respondents



# Conclusions



# Conclusion 1: The Joint Programme is a strategic and relevant response to the global issue of FGM



- The geographical scale of implementation across 17 countries is significant and already ambitious by programming standards
- The prevalence of FGM beyond the 17 countries has led to commendable efforts to reach non-Joint Programme countries
- The global advocacy and convening roles of the Joint Programme becomes even more crucial given growing awareness of how widespread FGM is



# Conclusion 2: Phase III design appropriately recognized the importance of positioning FGM on the political agenda of regional entities and supporting accountability systems

- There has been significant engagement with the African Union which has contributed to enhanced and visible political commitment
- Engagement with other regional and subregional entities has been more limited, and has been lacking a programme strategy as to how and where to prioritize efforts
- The programme has contributed to enhanced national government accountability to global treaties in some countries, although this could be more consistent. The role of human rights institutions to complement the monitoring/accountability function has been recognized and guidance developed, but is yet to be optimized in the programme
- The role of civil society to hold government to account has been enhanced, although there has been limited engagement with governments to facilitate consultative processes
- There is insufficient clarity across the Joint Programme about what accountability means in practice, and the Joint Programme's role in facilitating accountability frameworks at different levels



### **Conclusion 3:** During Phase III, the Joint Programme has advanced its work to support national legal and policy environments, responsive to the situation in each country



- There has been progress in the development of both costed national action plans and monitoring functions, although lower than planned. The programme has appropriately recognized the need for dedicated budgets and advocated as such
- Law enforcement remains a major gap, and there has been limited attention to the potentially perverse effects of law enforcement



### **Conclusion 4:** The Joint Programme design recognises the importance of working on complex issues, that reflect modification of FGM practice, in particular medicalisation and cross-border FGM

- The Programme has continued to adapt its programming as regards medicalization by addressing both supply and demand sides, and has contributed to increased awareness and knowledge of health-care providers and communities, although changes in attitudes and behaviour remain a challenge
- Within cross-border work, the programme has contributed to important progress within the establishment of cross-border commitment and communication in one region, whilst other regions are yet to progress beyond data generation and utilization



**Conclusion 5:** The Joint Programme has contributed to the enhanced quality and availability of FGM services in intervention areas, and enhanced capacity in both prevention and care, although high staff turnover is a challenge



- The strategy of enhancing access and linkages towards a more systemic approach has yielded positive results



**Conclusion 6:** The Joint Programme development of a measurement framework and indicators on social norms represents a potentially significant contribution to the programme going forward, and more broadly the development community



- Only recently finalized, the ACT framework has not yet generated social norms data for the programme, and its comprehensive and lengthy nature may require accompanied capacity support for efficient and feasible application

### **Conclusion 7:** The Joint Programme design is firmly gender responsive and this is reflected in much, but not all, operational work

- There is also clear aspiration for a gender transformative approach, tackling the underlying drivers of gender inequality, but there is yet to be a clear understanding of what a gender transformative approach actually means at the country level and how it translates into social norm change
- The Joint Programme has continued to support the engagement of women and the empowerment of girls to make them agents of change
- There has been more focus on male engagement strategies in Phase III, but care needs to be taken that these do not reinforce traditional male roles



**Conclusion 8:** The Joint Programme has adapted effectively to COVID-19 within programming and contributed to global understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted FGM, albeit based upon certain assumptions at the time



- The agility with which the Joint Programme has responded provides lessons for adapting to, and understanding of FGM within humanitarian settings
- Currently FGM receives insufficient consideration in humanitarian systems and programming, with limited access to services for FGM survivors in humanitarian settings

**Conclusion 9:** At the national and subnational levels, FGM linkages tend to reflect local realities, although these intersectoral links become less intuitive and coordinated at the regional and global levels of programming



- There is a lack of more comprehensive frameworks and systematic programming in particular for education, health and gender
- There is variable co-ordination of FGM and child marriage programming, and widespread recognition of the need for greater coherence yet reflective of the linkages in practice in different contexts

# Proposed recommendations



## Recommendation 1 : Strengthen global policy and advocacy strategies

Recognizing the need to accelerate efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goal target to end FGM by 2030, it is recommended that the Joint Programme prioritize its global policy and advocacy work to reinforce the urgent need to intensify efforts to tackle FGM

- Create a clear resource mobilization strategy post-2021 and continue to advocate for the need for financial commitments to support efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goal target of 2030
- Strengthen the evidence base on the geographical scale of the issue worldwide
- Optimize the global advocacy role of the Joint Programme on issues that require a global or multi-country response e.g., development of a strategy for global-level action for positioning the abandonment of FGM within humanitarian action, or mainstreaming FGM prevention within other sectors
- The JP should continue and strengthen its 'outward looking' nature within its programming beyond the 17 countries where possible and appropriate, for example at the regional level placing greater emphasis on engaging with non-JP countries
- Conceptualisation of post-2021 programming could consider a long-term vision of 2030 aligned to the SDG target, with 2-3 planning phases within that period

**Urgency: High**      **Impact: High**

**Directed to: Joint Programme HQ**

## Recommendation 2 : Strategically strengthen and support implementation of accountability systems

It is recommended that the Joint Programme develops a comprehensive strategy that maps out the different accountability systems at the global, regional and national levels. The strategy should articulate the Joint Programme's roles in strengthening and supporting the implementation of accountability systems

- Continue to build on and expand upon the work achieved during Phase III with the African Union in conjunction with the Spotlight Initiative, and use it as an opportunity for learning across the Joint Programme
- Conduct a cross-regional mapping exercise of other regional institutions and expand/intensify engagements with regional entities as appropriate
- At the national level, expand upon the national and subnational efforts, to strengthen political commitment. Engage and support human rights institutions to carry out monitoring and accountability functions
- Continue to support CSOs to hold governments to account, advocate for governments to hold consultative processes

**Urgency: High**      **Impact: High**

**Directed to:** Joint Programme HQ and regional offices

**Recommendation 3 : Advocate for fully funded national, legal and policy frameworks, including to address complex situations such as medicalization and cross-border FGM**

Continue to support countries to develop a conducive legal and policy framework by advocating for anti-FGM laws and costed national plans for the abandonment of FGM, as well as advocating for the allocation of resources to those plans.

**The Joint Programme’s support to national governments to tackle complex issues around FGM should be enhanced**

- In those countries that already have an anti-FGM law in place at the national level, consider working more closely with states to help them translate the national law into state laws to give it effectiveness
- Accompany governments in developing and implementing effective strategies to enforcing the law on FGM. Conduct formative research to analyze country-specific impediments to law enforcement and to identify good practices of law enforcement. Ensure attention is given to the potentially perverse effects that law enforcement could have
- To tackle medicalization place greater emphasis on changing health-care providers' behaviour (beyond their knowledge and attitudes)
- To counteract cross-border FGM, build on and learn from the positive achievements in East Africa, and regional offices should play a leading role in convening key actors and in facilitating dialogue and agreements. Increased attention should also be given to emerging issues including “internal cross-border” movements to practice FGM

**Urgency: High      Impact: High**

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

**Recommendation 4: Strengthen linkages with other workstreams towards enhanced access to quality services for FGM prevention, protection and care**

Continue to improve the access and linkages to services for FGM prevention, protection and care, as well as the quality of services. At the same time, continue to invest in raising women and girls' awareness on the availability of services, to help them break the silence and look for support

- Strengthen linkages and synergies with other harmful practices in particular child marriage, enhancing the opportunity to work on the shared drivers of both harmful practices
- Develop specific programming strategies to maximize the contribution of different streams of work towards the abandonment of FGM (including education, health, child protection, youth and others)
- Continue to enhance the Joint Programme's protection and care service provision through partnerships and linkages with other organizations and services providers
- Develop a minimum standard guidance for FGM prevention and care services

**Urgency: Medium**

**Impact: Medium**

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

## **Recommendation 5: Accelerate usage of the ACT Framework to generate data on social norm change**

The Joint Programme should now focus on utilizing the ACT framework to generate data on social norm change, accompanied by capacity support as needed, and a reflection and learning process. A medium-long term strategy for the application of the ACT Framework and/or other tools available to measure social norm change should be developed

- Develop a medium-to-longer term timeframe for application of the ACT framework in line with the SDG Target for 2030, to reflect the long-term nature of social norm change. Accompany the implementation of the ACT framework to measure social norm change by ongoing reflection and learning
- Ensure sufficient streamlining and clarity within post-2021 programming and corresponding results framework as to how the ACT framework/ compendium of indicators/ other tools could be utilized

**Urgency: Medium**

**Impact: Medium**

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

## **Recommendation 6: Build the post-Phase III Joint Programme to be gender transformative**

The post-Phase III Joint Programme should clearly articulate and agree that FGM programming aspires to be gender-transformative and recognize that this is aligned with the approaches and comparative strengths of both agencies

- Design a capacity development plan to ensure a clear understanding across all levels of the programme, including implementing partners, as to what the difference is between gender responsive and gender transformative programming
- Develop a living library of concrete, real-life FGM examples of gender-transformative, gender-responsive, gender-neutral, and gender-harmful activities
- Add gender-scale reporting to the results framework and annual reporting templates for a post-Phase III Joint Programme, where countries rank their activities across the gender scale
- Consider creating a working group comprised of HQ JP staff, HQ UNFPA and UNICEF gender specialists, and (perhaps rotating on an annual basis) select regional and country level gender specialists from both UNFPA and UNICEF to monitor and support this

**Urgency: High      Impact: High**

**Directed to: Joint Programme HQ**

**Recommendation 7: The Joint Programme should continue to use public declarations of abandonment as an indicator of progress, but with consideration of some adjustments**

In the future, the use of public declarations of abandonment should be both strengthened and clearly presented as a step in the process of change rather than the end goal of the process, which needs to be a sustained/permanent change in behaviour

These adjustments should include:

- Ensure all Joint Programme countries apply the more rigorous criteria used in some countries
- Consider a longer-term indicator, such as PDA+5 or PDA+10, which are used to measure how long after a public declaration of abandonment a community has measurably stayed FGM-free
- Scale out the programme in order to reach more communities/people and reduce the risk of continuation of the practice (and avoid internal cross-border FGM)

**Urgency: Medium**

**Impact: Low**

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

## **Recommendation 8: Incorporate a humanitarian approach within the post-Phase III Joint Programme design**

**Internally:** The post-Phase III Joint Programme should develop a specific humanitarian approach within the design

**Externally:** The post-Phase III Joint Programme should include, within an advocacy strategy for broader reach, a component of working with and influencing the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) to include FGM more visibly within global GBV in emergencies guidelines and minimum standards

Internally:

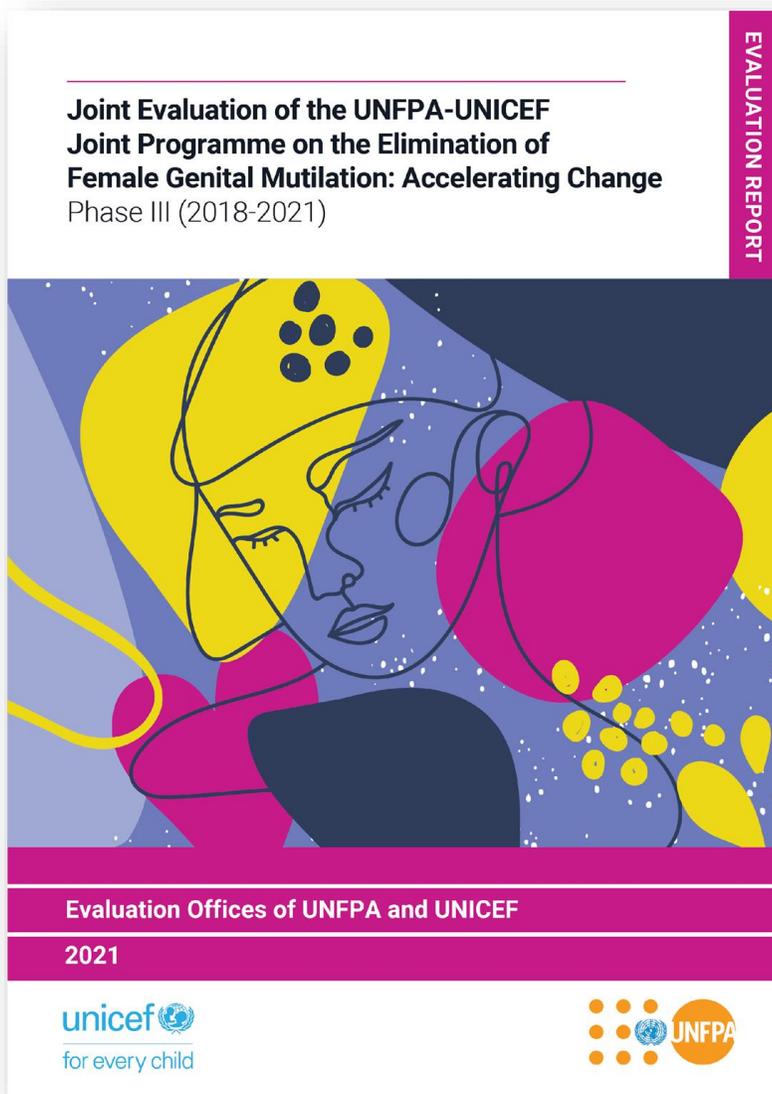
- Review and map COVID-19 adaptations to programming (starting with examples provided in this evaluation report within the humanitarian thematic brief in Volume III)
- Reflect on the solid work undertaken to understand the impact of COVID-19 on FGM practices
- Seek to extend that evidence collection more broadly to other humanitarian settings and crisis situations

Externally, engagement with the GBV AoR should include:

- Provide the COVID-19-related evidence of impact on FGM prevalence rates as an ongoing conversation, and providing any further evidence collected of the impact of other humanitarian crises on FGM prevalence rates

**Urgency:** High (internally), Medium (externally)    **Impact:** High, Medium

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



# Thank you

The evaluation will be available at [unfpa.org/evaluation](https://unfpa.org/evaluation)

## Evaluation materials

- Evaluation report
- Evaluation brief (EN, FR, SP, AR, PT)
- 3 thematic notes (Gender responsive and/or transformative approaches, Adapting programming to humanitarian situations, FGM within complex situations).
- Short video

For any questions on the evaluation, please contact [chambel@unfpa.org](mailto:chambel@unfpa.org) and/or [mfetouh@unicef.org](mailto:mfetouh@unicef.org)

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