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## Evidence to end FGM/C: Research to help girls and women thrive

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# FACT SHEET

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Lead Institution  
Population Council

Key Partners  
Africa Coordination  
Centre for  
Abandonment of  
Female Genital  
Mutilation/Cutting,  
Kenya

Gender and  
Reproductive Health  
& Rights Resource  
Centre, Sudan

Global Research and  
Advocacy Group,  
Senegal

MannionDaniels Ltd.

Population  
Reference Bureau

University of  
Washington (Prof.  
Bettina Shell-Duncan)

University of  
California, San Diego  
(Dr. Gerry Mackie)

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# Evidence to End FGM/C



Research to Help Girls and Women Thrive

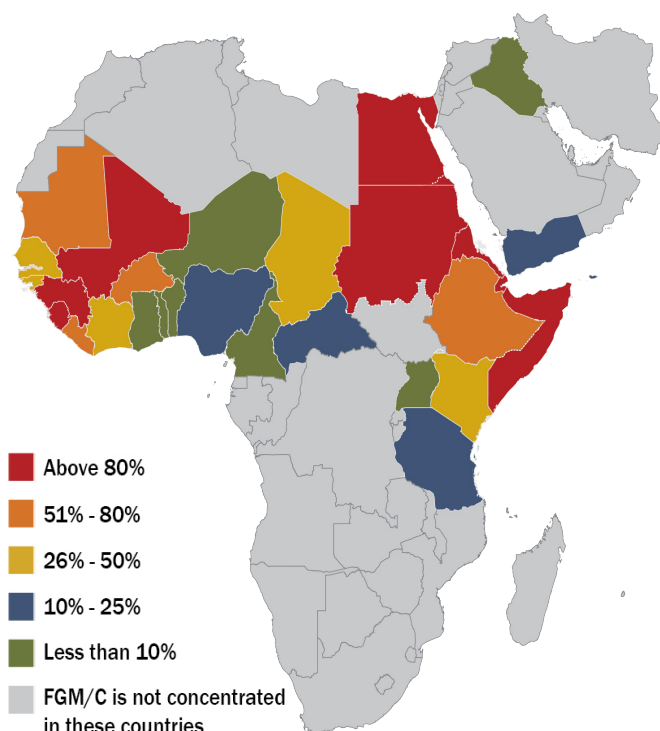
**A new Population Council-led research programme, funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), will join the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM/C: Accelerating Change and the Girl Generation in the Campaign to End Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) within One Generation.**

## BACKGROUND

FGM/C is a harmful practice involving cutting, removing, and sometimes sewing up external female genitalia for nonmedical reasons. More than 130 million girls and women have undergone FGM/C in 29 of the highest prevalence countries where it is practiced today, and 30 million girls under the age of 15 are at risk over the next decade. Yet we need much more evidence on the best strategies for ending FGM/C, including:

- knowledge of the drivers and consequences of FGM/C in specific contexts, to build a detailed understanding that also enables generalizations;
- the impacts of FGM/C interventions, which requires strengthened monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems;
- increased work on research methods for strengthening available data;
- more attention given to theory-based intervention and evaluation designs; and
- improved coordination efforts ensuring greater research utilisation for meaningful policy and programme changes.

Percentage of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years who have undergone FGM/C



Source: UNICEF global databases, 2014, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys, 2004-2013.

Resolutions by the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2010, the African Union and European Union in 2011–12, and most importantly the 2012 UN General Assembly have all called for intensified global efforts to end FGM/C within one generation.

## THE RESPONSE

The FGM/C Research Programme will generate high-quality evidence to influence strategic investment, policy and programming to end FGM/C. This five-year programme will work in 6-9 sub-Saharan African countries to dramatically expand the body of evidence on the most effective approaches to ending FGM/C. The research programme will be organized around four themes:

- Building the picture of where, when, and why FGM/C is practiced through a series of explanatory analyses of existing survey datasets and qualitative studies among various populations at different stages of abandoning the practice.
- Assessing a range of programmed interventions around FGM/C abandonment that utilize a blend of retrospective evaluations, case studies of on-going interventions, prospective implementation research, impact evaluations and cost analyses. Multi-site implementation studies will help generalize findings.
- Understanding the wider impacts of FGM/C on the lives of girls, women, and their families, and the implications of abandoning the practice—as well as other harmful practices such as early marriage and gender-based violence—on gender norms and relations.
- Improving research into FGM/C by addressing the challenges of ethically and accurately measuring prevalence and FGM/C status; improving designs to evaluate complex interventions commonly used for FGM/C abandonment; enhancing the application of theory of change to research on FGM/C abandonment; improving definition and measurement of social norms and norms changes; and increasing the rigor, relevance and utility of scientific descriptions of FGM/C interventions and their evaluation.

## THE APPROACH

An African led research consortium that will work alongside other programmes in a global campaign to end FGM/C. The consortium is guided by 3 principles: do no harm, get behind and support an African-led movement to end FGM/C, and understand FGM/C within the wider context of violence and discrimination against women.

The research programme will simultaneously implement five inter-related elements to ensure the evidence base will influence strategic investment, policies and programmes to end FGM/C. We will:

- Engage stakeholders continuously and use tailored strategies that recognise the differences in types of decisions and evidence needs, communications channels, and capacity to use research-based evidence.
- Generate high-quality evidence through appropriately designed research, rigorously and ethically implemented.
- Work with stakeholders to determine the decisions for which they need evidence, for example: investment, policy, or programming decisions, and the appropriate communications mechanisms to reach them.
- Conduct capacity-building activities to ensure researchers have the necessary orientation and skills to undertake research to the highest quality and ethical standards, competencies to translate research findings and ability to provide firm recommendations to inform decision-making by national and global stakeholders.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate activities that include stakeholder engagement, generation of high quality evidence and its communication, and capacity building to ensure achievement of the FGM/C programme's targets.

This programme will advance the ambitious goal of ending FGM/C within a generation and reducing the practice by 30 percent in at least 10 countries over the next 5 years.

*Please address any inquiries about the Evidence to end FGM/C research programme to the Project Director, Dr. Jacinta Muteshi: [jmuteshi@popcouncil.org](mailto:jmuteshi@popcouncil.org).*

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