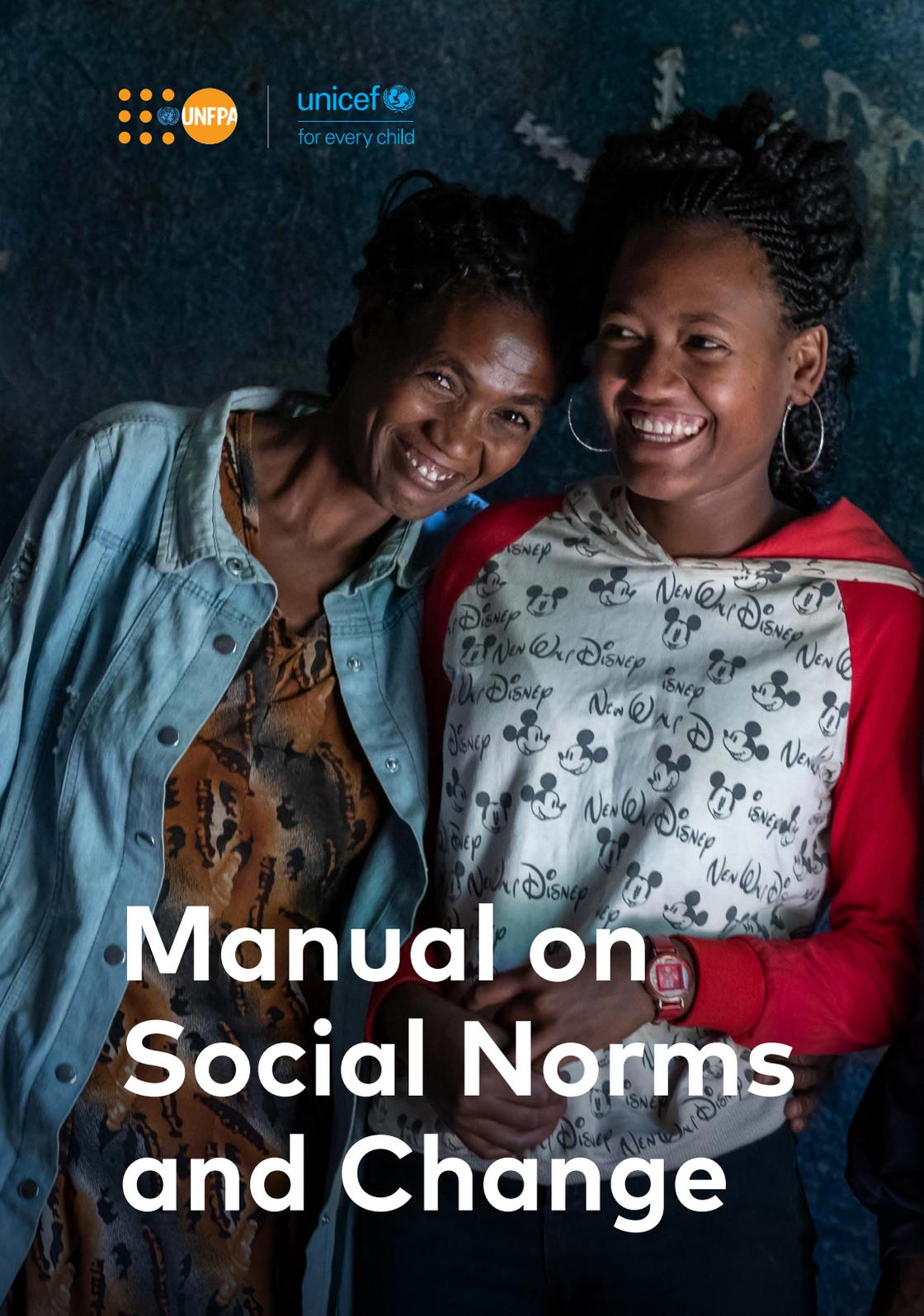




unicef 
for every child

A photograph of two Black women smiling warmly at each other. The woman on the left is wearing a light blue denim jacket over a patterned top. The woman on the right is wearing a white hoodie with red sleeves and a repeating pattern of Mickey Mouse heads and the text 'New Disney'. She is also wearing a red watch. The background is a dark, textured wall.

Manual on Social Norms and Change

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The manual draws on a social norms perspective. It uses the definition articulated by the social scientist Cristina Bicchieri, and applies the concepts of social expectations, empirical and normative, to determine whether or not female genital mutilation (FGM) is a social norm in a specific context. The manual also uses and adapts some of the outcomes of the Penn-UNICEF Course

on *Advances in Social Norms, 2010-2016*, co-chaired by Cristina Bicchieri and Gerry Mackie at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Module 2 of the manual was partially adapted from Session 3, "Power and Control", and Session 4, "FGM as a Form of Violence Against Women", in *The Training Manual on Gender and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting* developed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

The manual is a continuation of previous work by UNFPA and UNICEF. These include "Changing a Harmful Social Convention: Female genital mutilation/cutting" in the UNICEF *Innocenti Digest* (2005), the UNICEF "Coordinated Strategy to Abandon Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in One Generation" (2007), and UNICEF's "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of the Dynamics of Change" (2013). All of these were informed by collaboration with social scientist Gerry Mackie, and a multitude of academic and development partners.

The UNFPA-UNICEF publication *How Changing Social Norms Is Crucial in Achieving Gender Equality* (2020) summarizes the manual's main concepts, and includes insights and comments from some participants in the UNFPA meeting on Gender-biased Harmful Practices held in Brussels in 2016. The UNFPA-UNICEF

Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change, Programme Document for Phase 3 (2017) and the UNFPA-UNICEF *Metrics of Progress, Moments of Change: 2015 Annual Report* provide important insights.

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01 — INTRODUCTION

This manual is meant for training programme managers to promote the abandonment of female genital mutilation (FGM). It has been designed under a joint programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change applies an innovative approach to FGM abandonment, using a social norms perspective to guide the selection of an appropriate mix of strategies and activities most conducive to self-sustained social change. This innovative approach can be adapted and applied to other maladaptive norms.

The programme seeks to contribute to the overall goal set by the 2008 Interagency Statement on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, reaffirmed by the 2012 United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/146, to support governments, communities, and girls and women in abandoning FGM. The programme also supports progress on target 5.3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which stipulates eliminating all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and FGM by 2030.

A social norms perspective sheds light on issues that seem complex and sometimes intractable, and offers insights that put attitudinal and collective behavioural change at the forefront of positive social change. Recognizing FGM as a social norm entails working through multiple channels to create a social movement, and mobilizing people among practising groups as well as other individuals who are influential and make decisions.

The number of people involved may be small at first, but will slowly expand to large-scale coalitions and networks backing a new norm of no longer cutting girls. Implementation of this strategy involves a wide range of stakeholders (governmental, civil society and individuals) from across a variety of sectors, including health, education, child protection, communications and media, and business. The partnerships they form can disseminate

acquired knowledge, and foster a shift in social conventions and norms around FGM that leads to collective social change and the improved well-being of girls and women.

Through the Joint Programme, there are growing opportunities to use the social norms approach to address other harmful practices that, like FGM, are rooted in gender discriminatory norms. In particular, where FGM and child marriage coexist, they are typically linked and perceived as necessary for social acceptance and inclusion. Phase I of the Joint Programme addressed FGM alongside issues related to sexual and reproductive health. The issue of child marriage was raised in various countries. Many communities have organized public declarations on abandoning both FGM and child marriage.

The Training Manual on Gender and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting developed by UN Women complements this revised manual. The former approaches FGM from a gender perspective in order to increase participants' understanding of the practice as an expression of gender inequality and a form of violence against women and girls.

02 — THE 2030 AGENDA AND SDG TARGET 5.3

It is increasingly clear that accelerating the abandonment of gender-biased harmful practices will be a major contribution towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda provides a significant opportunity for advances, with many countries developing national strategies to accomplish the SDGs along with systems to measure progress. Target 5.3, under SDG 5 on gender equality, is to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Harmful practices are relevant for many other goals as well, including SDG 1 to end poverty, SDG 2 to end hunger, SDG 3 to ensure healthy lives, SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and SDG 8 to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and decent work. Gender-biased harmful practices cannot be fully eliminated without reaching these objectives, but at the same time, eliminating such practices can help in realizing the goals. SDG 17 is also important, calling for strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development .

Through the Joint Programme, UNFPA and UNICEF work with many partners to bridge academic theory with realities on the ground, towards influencing policies and programming approaches aimed at the abandonment of gender-biased harmful practices when deep-seated social norms, such as those underpinning FGM, are at stake. Collaboration with academics and development experts in the area of social norms is part of efforts to link theory and practice. It is proving particularly important to draw attention to interdependent actions and behaviours in the design of policies and programmes backing positive social change for girls and women.

03

PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual provides practical examples and theoretical concepts for understanding processes related to attitudinal and collective behavioural change. It includes the following topics to be covered in a five-day workshop:

- A conceptual framework underlying the *strategies* for FGM abandonment, based on a social norms perspective and theory, and a human rights-based approach to development programming;
- The need to address FGM as a gender inequality and human rights issue, and the application of a social norms perspective to gender issues;
- The need to address FGM and other gender-biased harmful practices as a form of violence against girls and women, taking into consideration that some of these practices are perpetrated *without the intention of violence*;
- The importance of legislation for social change, and of the interaction between legislative reforms, and moral and social norms;
- The importance of social networks of *important others* to diffuse and develop strategies for abandonment;
- A shift in communication approaches towards appreciation, inclusion and participation, and the importance of trust and argumentation in changing people's beliefs and expectations;
- The importance of recategorization of FGM-related mental scripts, linking FGM to positive beliefs and values;¹ and

Seven transformative elements for changing beliefs and expectations, and collective and social behaviours harmful to children and women.

In designing this manual, there was an implicit assumption that continuous developments from the social sciences and field experiences would, over time, influence the content. Each of the 6 modules can be easily revised and updated to reflect the evolution of terms and concepts.²

04 — OVERALL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Apply a social norms perspective in order to facilitate change or abandonment of collectively endorsed harmful social norms, including by engaging men and boys;
2. Use collective strategies to set up strong incentives and group pressure for individuals, including men and boys, to adhere to new, more positive norms and behaviours;
3. Strengthen the human rights-based approach to development programming through social norms and change;
4. Analyse the root causes of FGM and other gender-biased harmful practices that condone or even uphold the use of violence to ensure gender norms, in terms of gender inequality, discrimination, and harmful gender stereotypes and norms; and
5. Define how FGM and other gender-biased harmful practices are forms of violence against women and children and violations of human rights.

05 — THE WORKSHOP APPROACH

The manual provides training materials for a five-day residential workshop led by facilitators/resource persons. The number of facilitators/resource persons can vary but two is suggested as a minimum. They should be fully conversant with a social norms perspective and approach.

A participatory approach is used through small group discussions, case studies appropriate for each module, videos and role-play. The aim is to give trainees opportunities to analyse and reflect on what they are learning, and to compare, share and learn from their own experiences.

The workshop applies the principles of adult experiential learning, where adults learn more when they are actively involved in training activities that respond to their needs and interests, and can resolve concrete problems. They attach greater value to practical training than to lectures. Each module of the manual has been designed according to the Kolb Adult Experiential Approach to Learning, a four-stage cycle described in the Notes to Facilitators in Module 0, Step 5.

06

MODULE LAYOUT

Each module comes with:

→ A **FACILITATOR'S GUIDE**, divided into three sections:

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Procedures
- ▶ Notes to facilitators

→ **HANDOUTS** complementing the facilitator's guide

→ **RESOURCES** that include:

- ▶ PowerPoint presentations, with comments in the section Notes to Facilitators of the Facilitator's Guide
- ▶ Some interactive role-play skits
- ▶ Readings

Each facilitator's guide includes:

→ An **overview** of the main elements;



Learning objectives: a series of "can do" statements for participants



Times: time-setting for running each module's steps



Main elements: a list of session parts and times



Key messages: a summary of the main contents covered in the session



Equipment and materials: a list of visual aids needed for the facilitator's preparation



Handouts: a list of titles for referencing the handouts



Presentations: a list of PowerPoint presentations



Readings: a list of readings when appropriate

- **PROCEDURES** with step-by step guidance for what the facilitator does and what the participants do. These are written as a set of instructions, with time allocated for each step, and where relevant, key inputs in information boxes.
- In line with each step in the procedures and the specific tasks in the handouts, **NOTES FOR FACILITATORS** provide the rationale for tasks, background information, explanations of key concepts, suggested answer keys, comments on presentation slides and feedback ideas for participant output.
- **HANDOUTS** : Because this is an adult experiential learning course, the handouts present **case studies** specifically chosen to illustrate concepts and issues discussed in the modules.

The handouts also contain tasks and activities that systematically build understanding, analysis and action related to each topic. Tasks and activities correspond to **case studies**.

Collectively, the facilitator's guides, handouts and resources form a workbook for facilitators and participants.

Modules build on each other, but any module can be used in a standalone session, depending on the knowledge, experiences and needs of the audience. All modules should be tailored to the learning needs of participants and the context of the country in which they operate

07 — TARGET GROUPS

The training targets programme managers who have to address abandonment of harmful practices as part of attitudinal and collective behavioural change, and have a variety of different educational and experiential backgrounds. It may be necessary to adapt unfamiliar concepts so that they become easily understandable and can readily be applied to programmes.

Examples of likely participants include managers of programmes to stop FGM and gender-biased harmful practices from UN organizations, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and government ministries. They will be selected based on commitment to the further training of community facilitators involved in programmes aimed at the abandonment of FGM and other gender-biased harmful practices.

Ideally, to allow a dynamic interaction and exchange of experiences, the size of the workshop should be limited to no more than 32 participants. The methodology systematically implies four working groups of eight. To ensure the workshop has an impact, and to build committed teams of trained participants for each attending organization, it is best to invite two members of each organization, plus two collaborative partners fully involved in programmes for abandoning FGM and other gender-biased harmful practices.

08

PLANNING FOR THE WORKSHOP

To better plan the workshop, it is crucial to know the specific needs of the participants and their expectations in advance.

One month beforehand, a pre-questionnaire should be sent to participants. The results should help facilitators and resource persons to design and fine-tune the workshop plan. The pre-questionnaire provides basic insights into the capacities of participants, and encourages them to engage even before they arrive at the workshop and prepare to contribute once the workshop begins.

09

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

Before the workshop, participants should:

- Review Module 1 **HANDOUTS**, "**Social norms definition**", and in particular the case study, "**A mother's story, challenges faced by those who begin the process of change**".
- Complete **HANDOUT 3.1**, Module 3, "**Describing the national legal framework in which actions to promote FGM abandonment will be situated**".
- Reflect on social norms, the roles they play in maintaining cultural practices and the dynamics of change.
- *Participants, individually or in groups,³ also need to begin work on a draft action plan that will be developed during the workshop. They should send the organizers a brief draft outline 15 days in advance.*

10 — AT THE WORKSHOP

At the workshop, participants will work on their **individual** draft action plans or a **country team** action plan as part of the workshop agenda. This includes two hours per day in the afternoon on days 1 to 4, and in the evening. Participants should have the opportunity to interact with the facilitators and resource persons to discuss concepts, brainstorm on their projects, and work on them individually or as a country team.

By the end of the course, they should be able to better analyse their draft action plans and related problem statements, and, if relevant, redesign them from a social norms perspective. They will present the final versions of each action plan and prepare an executive summary. The revised action plans will in part serve as a mechanism to assess learning and the course itself. Some action plans will be selected as examples for distribution to field workers and community organizations, and used in future workshops.

For the workshop as a whole, participants need to regularly attend the sessions and dedicate time in the evenings to review readings and handouts, as the facilitators will regularly refer to these. Participants may also want to prepare questions, observations or counter-arguments to discuss in forthcoming sessions.

11 — THE FACILITATION TEAM

The facilitation team can comprise a varying number of facilitators, possibly four, and two at a minimum. They should be fully conversant with a social norms perspective and approach, social change, gender inequality and the human rights-based approach to development programming, and be experienced in FGM abandonment. They may be supported by resource persons with similar knowledge. The latter are meant to assist the discussion of case studies, clarify concepts and help improve individual or country team draft action plans.

This manual should enable many institutions to strengthen actions to accelerate the abandonment of FGM and other harmful practices rooted in gender inequality and discrimination.

12 — OUTLINES OF MODULES

This manual provides a broad introduction to the topic of social norms and change, especially in relation to applying a social norms perspective in creating positive social change. It explores the main challenges of hidden gender and power dynamics, and the obstacles these present for girls and women to acquire capabilities and exercise agency. Specifically:

0

Module 0 offers an introduction to the workshop and explains the learning methodology, the Kolb Adult Experiential Learning Cycle.

1

Module 1, "**Dynamics of a Social Norm: Female Genital Mutilation**", explains what social norms are and how they affect human behaviour. Social norms are rules of behaviour for relevant populations. When a social norm exists, individuals see others conform to it. They feel a social obligation to conform, and believe they will be subject to a form of social punishment if they do not (Bicchieri, 2010). A case study in Module 1, Handout 1.1, "A mother's story: challenges faced by those who begin the process of change", features the dilemma of a Sudanese mother vis-à-vis her young daughter and the community pressure to cut her. Khadija's words – "*If I don't cut her there won't be anyone to marry her. I wish I didn't have daughters, because I am so worried about them*" – are meant to resonate in the minds of workshop participants.

2

Module 2, "**From Gender Inequality to Shared Positive Social Norms**", introduces various concepts and exercises on gender power and control and violence against women, and the implications of gender disparities at all levels. Harmful practices like FGM allow the control of women and girls by reducing their autonomy or desire for sex. Other practices such as child marriage very much reduce their access to opportunities (in addition to autonomy).

Any shifts in beliefs and expectations about being cut or not cut can only come about if gender inequality as a root cause of FGM is addressed. For many women, the social approval FGM brings may outweigh its negative consequences, and so mothers (and fathers) continue to cut their daughters. Mothers (and fathers) become socialized in the system, and, knowingly but often unintentionally or unknowingly, uphold FGM expectations, attitudes and behaviours. As a result, the power dynamics of FGM are complex; women as well as men are involved in maintaining the status quo. Gender-sensitive programming is needed to address this complexity. *Module 2 introduces the notion that acts of violence against women often stem from, and are maintained by, social practices that **prescribe** severe sanctions against women and girls to enforce gender norms.*

3

Module 3, "**Effective Legislative Reforms in Situations Calling for Social Change**", introduces the role of laws in situations calling for social change. Laws are not only an indication of punishment in case of infraction. Laws may have an expressive function, where they make a statement as opposed to controlling behaviour directly. As a consequence, legal statements may be designed to change social norms (Sunstein, 1996).

4

Module 4, "**Seven Common Patterns and Transformative Elements for Change**", builds on the first three modules by mapping seven common patterns and transformative elements of the social dynamics of social change. Insights from social norms theory correspond with lessons learned from field experiences, and suggest that the seven patterns can help transform the social norm of cutting girls and encourage accelerated abandonment. There is also evidence that motivating a small number of people to influence a larger number can generate spontaneous and natural scaling up, once a critical mass and tipping point are reached.

Module 4 presents some of the most promising strategies for changing social norms and achieving gender equality. For example, it provides a schematic process (actually a skeleton outline process) for social transformation. Two possible overlapping processes for change are identified for the abandonment of a maladaptive norm: (1) through argumentation and value deliberations, collective behavioural change and creation of a new norm (often the original's contrary, for example, cutting/not cutting); and (2) depiction of a new model of behaviour, further or concurrent destabilization of the original discriminatory norm, collective behavioural change and adoption of the new norm. The "Social Norms Change Programme Design Framework" and the process of a community social norms shift illustrate the process of change and coordinated adoption of a new norm. Between these two options, diverse alternatives can be considered. Module 4 provides practical tools and offers several powerful examples of change in different settings.

5

Module 5, "**Putting It All Together**", provides guidance for individuals or country teams to organize and present their projects. It guides an evaluation of workshop outcomes.

13 — TENTATIVE AGENDA

The workshop agenda should reflect the participants' needs both in terms of content and time constraints. The following timetable offers a general and adaptable approach for a full workshop agenda (five-day agenda).

The workshop agenda should reflect the learning methodology and a need for interactive participation. Therefore, enough time should be allowed for crucial presentations illustrating new concepts, such as *basic concepts in social norms*, and for discussions during working groups.

Day 1

AM **Module 0:** "Workshop Overview and Introduction"

Module 1: "Dynamics of a Social Norm: Female Genital Mutilation"

PM **Module 1:** continued

Working groups on individual or country team action plan development

Day 2

AM **Module 1:** continued

PM **Module 2:** "From Gender Inequality to Shared Positive Social Norms"

Day 3

AM **Module 3:** "Effective Legislative Reforms in Situations Calling for Social Change"

PM **Module 4:** "Seven Common Patterns and Transformative Elements for Change"

Working groups on individual or country team action plans

Day 4

AM **Module 4:** continued

PM **Module 4:** continued

Working groups on individual or country team action plans

Day 5

AM **Module 5:** "Putting It All Together"

Presentations of individual or country team action plans

PM **Presentations** of individual or country team action plans continued

Closing

Pre-workshop communication with participants informs them about core requirements. Because the training is innovative in many respects, advance preparation is necessary.

Participants are requested to complete a brief **pre-workshop questionnaire** (Part 1 below) and send it back to the workshop organizers at least two weeks in advance of the workshop. The aim is to have a better understanding of their general competencies, level of knowledge on gender issues and use of a social norms perspective, interest, learning expectations and hopes for the workshop.

The workshop will be adjusted based on what participants expect from the application of a social norms perspective to their own field experience, and specifically to programmes for the abandonment of FGM and/or other harmful practices.

In preparing for the workshop, participants, or groups of participants organized by country team, are requested to develop a brief **draft action plan** (Part II) based on their programme experience and practical challenges. The action plan will be further developed and revised during the workshop.

Further, before coming to the workshop, participants should complete a **handout on their national legal framework** (Part III), and carefully study the handouts for Module 3.

PART I: PRE-WORKSHOP QUESTIONNAIRE

This pre-workshop questionnaire aims at defining the specific needs of participants and their expectations from the workshop. It should be sent to each participant one month before the workshop.

Name:

Organization:

Title:

- 1. What are your responsibilities in the programme/ project you are working on?**
- 2. Have you already been involved in a programme using a social norms perspective and human rights-based approach to development programming? Are you familiar with concepts such as rights-holders and which rights they can claim, and duty-bearers and their obligations?**
- 3. Have you already been involved in a programme addressing collective behavioural changes? Addressing harmful practices? Fostering community empowerment?**
- 4. Have you already applied a social norms perspective? Are you familiar with gender inequality. Have you been involved in designing and planning the programme you are responsible for?**
- 5. What practical challenges are you encountering in achieving your programme objectives?**
- 6. What strategies have you developed? Where have you seen progress? What are the obstacles?**

- 7. What are your learning expectations from this workshop?**
- 8. What concepts do you want to develop to increase your knowledge and understanding around the abandonment of harmful practices? What practical skills do you want to develop?**

PART II: DRAFT ACTION PLAN PREPARATION

At least two weeks before the workshop, participants or groups of participants by country (country teams) should send an approximately three- to four-page draft action plan to the organizers. The action plan should be relevant to the main topic of the workshop: social norms and change, gender inequality, and FGM or other harmful practices. The organizers will inform participants in a timely fashion on whether the action plan should be a draft country action plan, requiring team work, or an individual action plan.

The draft should describe a practical challenge and evaluate strategies for addressing it. It will be revised during the workshop using the theoretical and practical tools discussed there. On the last day, individual participants or country teams are expected to present their action plans and revisions based on what they have learned. Below is a rough outline of what is expected:

10. Describe the challenge you are encountering in your project:

- Highlights of situation analysis, including cultural attitudes favouring harmful practices and their basic causes, and local cultural values that might favour positive social change and consistency with gender equality and universal human rights principles.
- Specify overall long-term goals over one generation⁴ and mid-term objectives over a five-year term.
- Define target populations, including the characteristics of local groups and those covered by/involved in the project/programme, and a "basic unit" for project/programme implementation (families? communities characterized by shared values? social reference networks characterized by similar beliefs or shared values?).

11. Critical evaluation of your work so far:

- Main strategy/ies guiding the project/programme and secondary strategies. Has a social norms perspective already been considered or implemented? Have collective behavioural changes already been addressed? What about gender issues?
- Compare the issues you are addressing with other issues you have worked on in the past.

12. Changes in practices:

- Describe at least one modified strategy for addressing your challenges that's been suggested by issues encountered in your field practice or suggested by local communities.

13. Diagnosing social norms:

- How do you assess whether or not social norms are at play? Provide at least one tool for diagnosing a social norm, as distinct from other types of interdependent collective behavior.

PART III: COMPLETING A HANDOUT ON THE NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Before the workshop, complete “**Describing the national legal framework in which actions to promote FGM abandonment will be situated**” (Module 3, Handout 3.1).

A

Answer the following questions to describe the national legal framework (and when appropriate the state framework) in which actions to promote the abandonment of FGM will eventually be situated:

- a. Has your country ratified the:**
- i. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?
 - ii. Convention against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT)?
 - iii. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)?
 - iv. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)?
 - v. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)?
 - vi. African Charter on Human and People's Rights?
 - vii. African Charter on the Rights of the Child?
 - viii. Protocol to the African Charter of Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa?

- b. Does your country have a constitutional provision ensuring women' equal rights?
- c. Does the constitution say anything more explicit about FGM?
- d. Does a national reproductive health law condemn FGM?
- e. Is there a criminal law (included in the penal code) prohibiting FGM?
- f. If yes, has this law been enforced?
- g. Is there a criminal law prohibiting assault or abuse of minors?
- h. Is there a criminal law prohibiting violence against women?
- i. Has any judge ever issued an order preventing a girl from undergoing FGM? Or requiring an FGM practitioner to pay compensation to a girl upon whom FGM was performed?
- j. Are medical providers prohibited from performing FGM by specific regulations?
- k. Are there any child protection laws that allow state authorities to intervene for the abandonment of FGM?

B

Given the legal situation above, explain what lines of actions you would take in programme activities at the local level to use the existing legal environment or legal provisions for accelerating FGM abandonment.

15

RESOURCES

The following readings are important resources for facilitators to better understanding the workshop topics and the social norms perspective and related concepts.

- UNFPA, 2021, Technical Brief on How Changing Social Norms is Crucial in Achieving Gender Equality, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Social_Norms_UNFPA_style_II.pdf
- UNFPA, 2020, *How Changing Social Norms Is Crucial in Achieving Gender Equality*, <https://www.unfpa.org/social-norms-change>
- *Norms in the Wild: How to diagnose, measure and change social norms*, Chapter 1, "Diagnosing norms" (Bicchieri, 2014, see https://sites.sas.upenn.edu/penn-unicef-summer/files/norms_in_the_wild_1_2014.pdf)

How Changing Social Norms Is Crucial In Achieving Gender Equality should be sent to participants before the workshop. This reading is important for fully understanding the social norms perspective and related concepts.

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Endnotes

- 1 Recategorizing: Facing a certain situation, in particular when social norms are at stake, we activate a comparison process and may act unintentionally and automatically according to predefined schemas and scripts characterizing the situation. It is important to create alternatives and/or new meanings that are part of FGM-related scripts (such as in the Saleema example in Sudan): Language is key.
- 2 For example, previous publications and working documents refer to FGM as a self-enforcing social convention, while more recent documents refer to FGM as a social norm. This is the result of a process of thinking and further revision during recent years, where social norms theory has been introduced as a refinement of social convention theory. Social convention theory helps us to see that our choices are often interdependent. It reveals that, for social change to work, we often have to coordinate our change with other people. Social norms theory allows us to better understand the nature of this interdependence.
- 3 Participants from a given country may decide to work together as a country team to prepare a “draft country project” centred on FGM or any other gender-biased harmful practice prevalent in their own country. Should the participants be grouped by country teams for writing draft country action plans, the organizers may choose to set up working groups corresponding to the country teams.
- 4 “One generation” is generally considered to be a 25-year time period.

