



# FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN SUDAN

## Factsheet

### What is Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)?

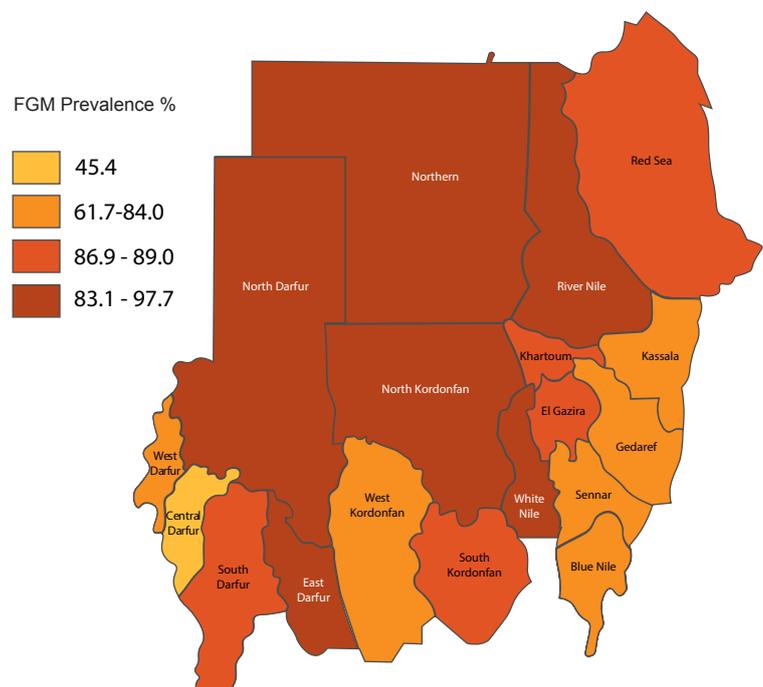
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is described as ‘all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.’
- FGM is a fundamental violation of human rights. It is considered gender-based violence and a negative social norm.
- At least 200 million girls and women alive today living in 31 countries have undergone FGM.
- In communities where it is practiced, women often cite cleanliness (purity), social acceptance, better marriage prospects, chastity, and sexual attraction to male partners as justifications for continuing practicing FGM.

### What is the current situation?

With an 86.6 per cent prevalence rate, FGM is widely practiced in all regions of Sudan, often in its most severe form. There are, however, variations in prevalence, types and associated customs across regional and ethnic lines. Girls are usually subjected to FGM between the ages of 5 and 9. More than half of all girls aged 0-14 years are subjected to FGM before age 15 in 16 states out of 18.

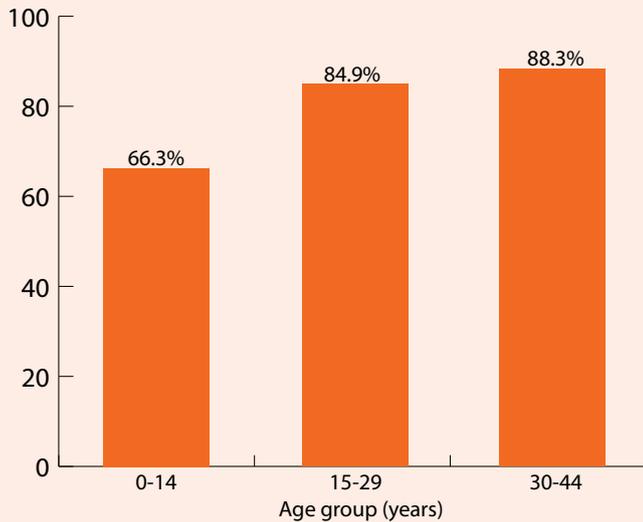
Still, data indicates a slight decline in FGM prevalence among females aged 15-49 years since 1990 and attitudes towards FGM are changing and support for harmful practice is on the decline.

Chart 2: Prevalence rate among women aged 15-49 by state in 2014 (Sudan 2014 MICS)



## SITUATION IN NUMBER

Chart 1: Prevalence rate of FGM among age groups



**86.6%** of women in Sudan have undergone FGM.



**87.2%** women in rural areas while **85.5%** in urban areas practice FGM.



FGM prevalence among females aged 15-49 years decline from 89% to **86.6%** since 2010 and those aged 0-14 years decline from 37% to **31.5%** from 2010 to 2014.



**40.9%** of women aged 15-49 years believed that the practice should continue, compared to 79% in 1990.

## What are the national efforts to abandon FGM?

- The National Council for Child Welfare (NCCW) has been working with partners like United Nations and the civil society to realize implement the National Strategy to Abandon FGM within a Generation (2008-2018). A national action plan is endorsed for the period of 2020- 2030
- Positive results have been achieved, including more than 1,000 communities declaring collective abandonment.
- Advocacy efforts for a national law were successful. In July 2020, the government criminalized FGM in Sudan with a punishment of a three-year imprisonment.
- Article 141 is in line with the amendments proposed by NCCW and UNICEF's vision to promote child rights.
- Before the enactment of Article 141, six states had legislation that prohibited the practice. These are South Kordofan, Gedaref, South Darfur, Northern State, Blue Nile and North Kordofan.
- Legal reform is only halfway to our goal of abandonment. UNICEF continues advocating for the enforcement of the law and raising awareness among community members, parents and youth.
- Saleema initiative was launched to support the protection of girls from FGM, particularly in the context of efforts to promote collective abandonment of the practice in communities. It aims to change the way people talk about FGM and promote a positive terminology to describe natural bodies of girls and women.

## What are the remaining agenda?

- Sudan has made a clear position towards ending FGM since the passing of Article 141, allows public discussions on FGM and supports the Saleema initiative and gather support for its abandonment.
- The African Union has launched Saleema as a continental initiative for countries where FGM remains prevalent.
- New scripts need to be developed by religious leaders supporting arguments of collective abandonment of FGM.
- Advocacy messages need to shift from addressing hazards and negative implications of FGM to focusing on the health, hygiene and other benefits of abandoning the practice.
- Experiences and lessons learnt need to be shared with other countries to promote discussions that inspire others.
- The law should be considered as a protective mechanism rather than punitive measure to avoid drawing the practice underground.
- The law should be disseminated to health workers, the justice sector and to different communities to facilitate its enforcement.

## The way forward

- While Sudan rises to becoming a role model in Africa and the world, there is a need for concerted commitment from all actors: ministries, community leaders, journalists, media influencers, NGOs, UN agencies and most importantly, from mothers who care for their daughters, if FGM is to be wiped out.
- Young people have the potential to create sustainable change and should engage in activities that support every girl and women's right to be 'Saleema'.



Girls wearing "Saleema" scarf to support the protection of girls from FGM in North Kordofan, Sudan.



**United Nations Children's Fund  
Sudan Country Office**

PO Box 1358  
Gerief west [Manshiya],  
First District H, Plot 6/3

Telephone: +249 (0) 156 553 670

[www.unicef.org/sudan](http://www.unicef.org/sudan)  
© United Nations Children's Fund  
(UNICEF)