



Orchid Project

www.orchidproject.org

Anush Aghabalyan, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Orchid Project

Chapeau

(Add your concise, concrete, and action-oriented language for the Chapeau)

Orchid Project is an international NGO with offices in the UK and Kenya. Our organisation is a catalyst to action in the global movement to end Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) globally. Orchid Project is the co-host of the Asia Network to end FGM/C, and the technical secretariat of the newly founded End FGM/C Africa Network. It is also the founding member of the Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C and a consortium member of the Girl Generation: Support to Africa-led programme.

As the world leaders come together for the Summit of the Future to accelerate efforts to meet the existing international commitments, they must prioritise action to end FGM/C and take concrete steps to do it. The negotiated Pact of the Future must move from rhetoric to practice and prioritise urgent action and investment towards end FGM/C efforts.

According to the UN Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM, an estimated 200 million girls and women alive today have experienced FGM/C and an estimated 68 million will have been cut between 2015 and 2030, in the absence of concerted action to end the practice. FGM/C is a violation of the human rights of women and girls and a form of gender-based violence, with lifelong physical, mental, social and economic consequences. In July 2023, hundreds of activists, grassroots organisations, international NGOs and academics gathered in Kigali and signed the Kigali Declaration to end FGM/C¹. The Declaration lays out five clear priorities for concerted global action on FGM/C, which are essential for progress against SDG target 5.3.2. Draft zero of the Pact for the future must include them as follows:

1. Working with communities to challenge and shift detrimental social and gender norms
2. Strengthening the evidence base on FGM/C through critical research
3. Investing in adequate support services for survivors of FGM/C
4. Adopting an integrated approach to responding to new trends on the practice (medicalization, cross-border practices and lowering the age at which the practice is carried out)
5. Increasing resources to fill the global funding gap, in order to meet global goals on ending the practice

¹ <https://actiontoendfgmc.org/2023-kigali-declaration/>

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 1)

Gender-based violence is one of the worst forms of discrimination and remains the most widespread and pervasive human rights violation in the world. Concerted action by public and private sector actors, civil society, and intergovernmental and international organisations is critical for better outcomes in the journey towards gender equality. The UNFPA estimated the cost and impacts of programmes to end FGM/C to calculate costs for scaling up prevention in 31 countries with high rates of the practice². From 2022 to 2030, it is estimated that these countries will need to spend an additional \$2.751 billion to end FGM, while about \$300 million is available.

This is in effect a funding gap, which requires collaboration from all those with the power to make a difference, from multilateral institutions to bilateral donors, philanthropic foundations, non-profit and private sectors and national governments in practicing countries.

We therefore call on all stakeholders to significantly increase funding towards the end FGM/C sector and prioritise allocating resources towards grassroots and community-led programmes. This will require remodelling traditional funding practices and ensuring that funds are flexible, sustainable and accessible for communities and grassroots. Capacity building should be offered, in addition to networks and all other necessary forms of support. Investment is needed in better research into successful and promising approaches to end FGM/C. This research needs to be participatory and involve all relevant stakeholders, in addition to being made available and accessible. Funding for ending FGM/C should be also prioritised in national budgets through direct budget allocations and integration of FGM/C into other budgets, such as healthcare, education, etc.

Draft zero of the Pact for the Future should clearly delineate tangible ways in which funding needs can be met and investment can be deployed for impact.

Chapter II. International peace and security

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 2)

Women and girls experience the negative impacts of security and humanitarian crises disproportionately compared to men and boys, bearing the brunt of associated increases in all forms of violence, in particular gender-based violence. The increase of sexual violence and rape in security crises can have a particularly devastating impact on girls and women who have undergone FGM/C.

In humanitarian settings, particularly when populations are displaced, FGM/C can become a matter of identity and social belonging, especially as regards concerns around marriageability and anxiety caused by interaction with other perspectives, or the illegality of the practice in some host countries. Some research shows that connecting with a sense of national, religious or gender identity can seem helpful to individuals in dealing with the burden of marginalization as a result of displacement³.

It is imperative that humanitarian crisis interventions make adequate provisions to foresee and mitigate the risks and impact of FGM/C within displaced populations among which the practice is prevalent. For this

² https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Investment_report_8%20Nov_FINAL.pdf

³ <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-022-00479-5>

to happen, it is necessary to integrate FGM/C in Climate Change and Disaster Preparedness, Resilience and Response Plans. ADD Covid

Draft zero of the Pact for the Future must explicitly lay out this requirement.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 3)

Overall, rural women are at a higher risk of undergoing FGM/C than their urban counterparts. For example, in Senegal, variations in FGM/C prevalence among Mandingue women depend on where they live, with 56% in urban versus 79% in rural areas⁴.

Women and girls are underrepresented in the digital space, particularly in rural settings, where access, cost, and other socio-cultural factors limit their ability to engage with new technologies. With few exceptions, efforts remain insufficient in terms of response to the needs and priorities of people living in rural communities; and as a result, rural women are even less likely than their urban counterparts to engage with ICT solutions designed with them in mind.

Harnessing technology to disseminate information, track, and aid in the reporting of FGM/C cases is an important tool towards ending the practice. Africa is scaling up the use of digital applications, reporting toolkits, online campaigns and e-learning tools. For example, in Nigeria the U-Report, a free open-source mobile messaging programme, gives the youth a voice on issues they care about and facilitates youth mobilisation campaigns through #endcuttinggirls to support social media advocacy to end FGM/C. During its first phase, the Girl Generation programme launched the "I will END FGM" campaign across youth networks inviting young people to share videos on how they would end FGM/C.

Draft zero of the Pact for the Future must call for investment in innovation and digital technology infrastructure to promote gender equality and support efforts to end FGM/C.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 4)

Harnessing the power of youth and the role of formal and informal education are widely recognized as important elements of efforts towards ending FGM/C. The Kigali declaration outlines ways in which this can be achieved. Investing in leadership training, peer-to-peer learning forums and educational and vocational initiatives can help address gender inequity and empower girls and women to become financially independent. Useful tools include mentorship for young people by civil society organisations and other stakeholders. Providing funding for such programmes will allow for safe and transformative conversations about FGM/C with impacted communities, survivors and young people. Prioritizing mental health approaches and programs is important to support survivors and create safe spaces to explore the traumatic impact of FGM/C across generations.

Interventions must promote intergenerational dialogue and collaboration between established NGOs and youth-led initiatives. Effective intergenerational cooperation can be increased by identifying the hallmarks and shortcomings of each generation, as well as promoting flexibility and adaptability within established NGOs to recognize the need to change methodologies to meet changing times. Such efforts must also encourage youth to innovate and contribute to the anti-FGM/C dialogue and global effort.

⁴ <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions>

Draft zero of the Pact for the Future must recognise the need and lay out pathways for such inter-generational initiatives to be embedded into future policy and programming.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 5)

Global governance, comprising institutions, policies, frameworks, instruments and investment, must offer an enabling environment for progress towards a world free from FGM/C. Existing programmes and initiatives (UN Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM, bilateral donor programmes, donor working groups, regional and international coalitions) must serve as adequately funded, dependable forms of support for relevant actors pushing for an end to FGM/C in practicing countries.

Draft zero of the Pact for the Future must explicitly lay out this requirement, while also recognising the need to be adaptive and responsive to new data and research on FGM/C, and ensuring that funding streams are shifted when needed to respond quickly to emerging trends. It must reference the need to fund research to understand the impact of climate change, cross-border FGM/C and other intersecting issues on the perpetuation and practice of FGM/C. It must also explicitly underline the need for long-term, big picture thinking that can help prevent siloed funding approaches. Effectively addressing new trends such as the increasing medicalization of FGM/C will also require the funding of projects aimed at addressing the root causes of FGM/C, including gender inequality and viewing the issue as a form of gender-based violence, irrespectively of the setting where it occurs.