



## UNFPA FGM Incubator: Call for Innovation Ideas and Solutions

### Background

[Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#) is a human rights violation which has impacted the lives of millions of women and girls around the world, and especially on the African continent. Globally, an estimated 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone some form of FGM, and if present trends continue, another 68 million women and girls will be cut by 2030.

A deeply entrenched social and cultural norm in many places, FGM has serious implications for the sexual and reproductive health of girls and women, such as hemorrhage and infection, fistula and complications during childbirth. Very recent estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank reveal that most of the high-FGM-prevalence countries also have high maternal mortality ratios and high numbers of maternal death. The psychological effect of FGM and other harmful practices against women and girls cannot be over emphasized. The dignity and self-worth of survivors of these practices remain long term.

Ending the practice by 2030 – the target set out in the Sustainable Development Goals – would require redoubling evidence-based efforts and innovation. The UN Secretary General recently indicated, “...Be bold, be revolutionary.... and disrupt... because without innovation, there is no way we can overcome the challenges of our times...we can do things differently, and do different things ... Now is the time to make innovative thinking the new normal”. This guiding principle forms the basis for innovative thinking to catalyze our efforts towards achieving zero forms of violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

### Call for Innovation

UNFPA has taken the eradication of FGM and other harmful practices seriously and has led a number of interventions to prevent its occurrence. The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is the largest global programme to accelerate the abandonment of this harmful traditional practice and thereby advance the rights, health and well-being of women and girls. The programme has catalyzed a global movement to eliminate FGM and has shown an unparalleled ability to effect change also at the regional, subregional, national and community levels.

Through the financial support of the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme (SIARP), the UNFPA is calling **young people, especially adolescents and girls**, to submit **innovation ideas and solutions** which will **halt and prevent FGM in the communities and/or across Africa**. We encourage you to share with us **bold and scalable ideas** including potentially commercially viable ideas that can really help achieve the goal of zero GBV and FGM within communities. We welcome ideas and solutions in the following areas:

- **Increasing skills and capabilities of girls and communities to lead the change**
  - Empower girls to take leadership in the fight against FGM
  - Develop girls and young women’s digital skills and literacy
  - Utilize the power of storytelling (all forms including digital media) to prevent and respond to FGM and empower young women and girls



- **Changing Social, Cultural & Gender Norms that encourage FGM**

- Improve family decision making for girls' empowerment.
- Engage men and boys in the eradication of FGM
- Increase community engagement and religious leaders' involvement in the eradication of FGM
- Increase youth and women's organizations involvement and collaboration in the eradication of FGM
- Empower FGM survivors to rehabilitate and use their experience to lead and inform the advocacy to change harmful social norms
- Meaningful engagement of cultural leaders and elders on Alternative Rites of Passages (ARP)
- Intensify multi-media campaigns (including emerging media) on social norms in targeted communities to end FGM
- Reward system for communities that combat FGM

- **Improving access to health services (health, social, legal) for victims of FGM**

- Use technology solutions (mobile apps) in sharing information and accessing services
- Improve 'survivor centered' health care services to respond to the needs of women and girls to eliminate FGM:
  - a. Quality referrals and linkages between services, health, education, police, justice, social services, shelters, psycho-social support.
  - b. Service Quality/Readiness - to prevent, respond to, and mitigate the consequences of FGM (address medicalization of FGM)
- Integrate Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and other services into response plans (ex. response to the effect of COVID 19 on FGM prevention efforts in communities).

- **Improve Data collection, analysis, coordination and dissemination systems (use of technology is encouraged)**

- Facilitate coordination of FGM data collection and sharing among different actors (health facility, social services, police) for improved service delivery
- Use technology to create a comprehensive data collection, processing and dissemination. Real time data platform to inform FGM preventive and response interventions.
- Use emerging digital technology to map and/or geolocate prevention and care service delivery points and providers, declared public abandoned FGM communities
- Build adaptive (contextual, community issues) systems to evaluate the impact of FGM to communities and economies.
- Inclusion of FGM indicators in National Health Management Information System (NHMIS), to institutionalize the collection of FGM data by health workers at the primary health care facilities.
- Capacity building of Health workers as surveillance teams to monitor and track pregnant women and girls at risk of FGM.
- Establish local surveillance systems, after public declarations of abandonment of FGM, to sustain collective commitment to abandonment



- **Prevention of cross border FGM (where caregivers move girls across the border to countries with less/no punitive laws - especially in border communities in endemic areas).**
  - Enhance FGM prevention and response services within government departments/institutions in collaboration with different Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Women Rights Organisations (WROs) and other FGM practicing communities.
  - Improve inter-country partnership and collaboration especially among key government and law enforcement agencies
- **Improve the legal environment (Law & Policy) to support the fight against FGM**
  - Foster collaboration amongst government agencies & awareness among target communities (education, health, judiciary, law enforcement etc) to prevent and protect girls from FGM
  - Awareness building about existing policies, laws and institutions available to support the prevention of FGM especially within the FGM practicing communities include cross border FGM
- **Nexus Approach (Click link for more details)**
  - Build capacity of development partner in the fight against
  - Ensure visibility of the impact of FGM in humanitarian and fragile settings.
  - Integrate FGM prevention and response services as part of the SRHR -GBV response in humanitarian and fragile settings. Ensure quality FGM referral pathways in fragile/ humanitarian context.
  - Enhance capacity of humanitarian actors / services providers on FGM

### **Where do you come in?**

10 teams of innovators will be selected to participate in a tailor-made, **week-long bootcamp (Oct-Nov 2021)**. 2 of the teams' solutions will be selected following a 'solution pitch event'. The 2 teams will have access to **seed funding (up to \$50,000 combined)** to design, rapidly prototype, and test their proposed solution's potential over a **6-month incubation period** led by a credible and recognized African innovation hub.

Selected innovators are expected to complete all phases of the program which will include a bootcamp, virtual pitch events, live pitch at an identified international SRHR event, and 6-month incubation.

Innovators will be required to submit an application through a dedicated link [HERE](#). This call for applications is open until **31 September 2021**.

During incubation, the selected innovators will be able to access coaching from subject matter specialists and industry experts in innovation, design thinking, lean startup methodologies, business development, frontier technology, supply chain and logistics, and other relevant areas to complement and expand their work's potential.



### How do you qualify?

- Ideas must be new, innovative and respond to any of the priority areas identified above.
- Ideas can be from individuals (young people) representing social enterprises and not-for-profit organizations including academic and research institutions.
- Be based in a UNFPA programme country in [West and Central Africa](#), [East and Southern Africa](#), [Egypt](#), [Sudan](#), [Djibouti](#), [Somalia](#) and/or [FGM endemic countries](#).
- Innovators must be 35 years or younger (African Union definition for youth). Women and girls are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Innovation teams cannot be represented by more than 3 members. We expect the represented team members will transfer knowledge to other team members.
- Innovation teams must demonstrate an agile growth and learning mindset, including a willingness to pivot and adapt. Refer to the [UN principles for innovation](#)
- Teams must be able to commit to at least 6 months to the incubation stage, facilitated by a partner identified by the UNFPA and partners
- Teams must be willing to adjust their solution with other innovators if advised by the business advisory partners
- Willing to showcase your business through communication platforms to be determined by UNFPA

### How to apply

Qualifying innovators should submit their innovative solution using this [LINK](#) Please keep your responses clear, concise (adhering to character limits), and in English, French and/or Portuguese. The deadline for submission is **31 September 2021**

UNFPA ESARO will organize a series of webinars to provide additional information to interested innovators. Follow our social media platforms for details. You can also submit questions to: [esaro.innovation@unfpa.org](mailto:esaro.innovation@unfpa.org) up to 10 days after this call is published.