

Please note that this is a **living document** to facilitate discussion and exchange knowledge on the impact of Covid-19 on our efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). This document will be **updated after each webinar**.

## 1. OUR INITIATIVE

The Covid-19 pandemic will have enormous impact on our efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). However, data and research on the impact of Covid-19 and FGM is currently very limited. Therefore, we took the initiative to collect data from the field as it very important to have evidence-based information to make the right strategic decisions and response plans in the upcoming weeks, months and years.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2020, [webinar #1](#) took place and focused on the situation in Tanzania. Among others, Rhobi Samwelly, director of two safe houses shared with the audience how Covid-19 was impacting her work on ending FGM. The recording is available [here](#). During the webinar, we invited all participants (+/- 130 people) to share with me how Covid-19 is impacting your work by providing their answers to 4 questions:

1. Which **potential risks** do you see?
  - For girls at risk for FGM
  - For girls who underwent FGM
2. Which **opportunities** do you see?
3. What are the **challenges** you are currently facing due to COVID-19?
4. What are possible **solutions** for these challenges?

The 7<sup>th</sup> of May, [webinar #2](#) took place. Among others, Margaret Oyugi of the COVAW shared with the audience how they developed new ways of advocacy and campaigning (for example by using the radio) on ending FGM in times when community outreach is impossible. I also presented the first results of our research related to the four questions posed above. The recording of webinar #2 is [here](#).

The next webinar will take place the 26<sup>th</sup> of May and will focus on the situation in Asia. Speakers from Indonesia, India and Thailand will be invited to share with us their important experiences related to how Covid-19 is impacting their work in relation to ending FGM. We will talk about the possible delay of cutting ceremonies, the development of new apps that might help campaigners in the fight against FGM during times of social-distancing and isolation and the potential backlash that Covid-19 might cause in this region. You can register for this event here: <https://www.eventbrite.nl/e/tickets-webinar-3-on-impact-of-covid-19-on-ending-fgm-in-asia-104959929976>.

## 2. FIRST FINDINGS

### 2.1 Increased risk of FGM

The [UNFPA Technical Note](#) of 27 April 2020 indicates that UNFPA anticipates a 1/3 reduction in the progress towards ending FGM by 2030, which means that “2 million FGM cases could occur over the next decade that would otherwise have been averted.”

From various African countries (including Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria), we received evidence that Covid-19 has indeed increased the number of girls undergoing FGM. Local newspapers also confirm that this is the case. A [Kenyan newspaper](#) reported for example that “Parents are taking advantage of the restriction to organize for the cut.” Furthermore, the quotes below confirm this trend as well.

“Covid-19 has increased the number of girls cut in many rural communities in Enugu State Nigeria.”

*Participant of the webinar from Nigeria*



FGM cases rise as schools remain closed : The Standard  
One in five women and girls aged between 15 and 49 in Kenya have undergone the procedure, either partial or total removal of the female...  
[standardmedia.co.ke](#)

<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001370359/fgm-cases-rise-as-schools-remain-closed>

 **PC Kemei** @PCKemei · 6 u  
We have info that 3 girls were subjected to FGM yesterday in Chepstram, West Pokot County. No arrests made so far. Fellow Kenyans, as we [#StayAtHome](#) to [#StopTheSpread](#) of [#COVID19](#), many girls are being mutilated with no help. [#StopCoronaFGMCases](#) [#StopFGMDuringCOVID19](#) @DCL\_Kenya



#MenEndFGM en 9 anderen



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<https://twitter.com/PCKemei/status/1255804703977418753>

“We have an increased number of girls reaching the safe houses at the moment, due to a longer cutting season here in Tanzania”

*Participant of the webinar from Tanzania*

### 2.2 Less attention for FGM

In addition, there tends to be less attention for FGM during Covid-19, while there is a lot of attention for VAW and specifically domestic violence. However, we believe that addressing FGM must be at the center of all plans on COVID-19 response. The webinar of the [donor working group](#) also highlighted this.

## 2.3 Risks, opportunities, challenges & solutions

We invited all participants (+/- 130 people participated live + 150 online views) to answer the question: “How is Covid-19 impacting your work on ending FGM?” In addition, we also conducted face-to-face interviews via Zoom the past two weeks with civil society organizations to get more detailed feedback. Below you'll find the preliminary research results (which will be updated after the next webinar). This is work in progress.

# 1. RISKS

## FOR GIRLS AT RISK:

- **Schools are closed** and girls are staying at home
  - Girls are often cut during the school holidays
  - Cutting seasons are extended
- Social distancing requirements / **curfews**
  - Restricting a girl's mobility
  - Increasing girls' social isolation
  - Loss / weakening social support and protection networks (such as communities, schools, churches, etc).

## FOR GIRLS WHO UNDERWENT FGM:

- Restricted **access to health** (and SRHR) **services**

# 2. OPPORTUNITIES

- **Cutting ceremonies** postponed
- FGM could be included in broader **Covid-19 messaging**
- Potential **lessons learned from Ebola**: Disruption of FGM during Ebola might provide window of opportunity during Covid-19

# 3. CHALLENGES

- **NGOs and campaigners are disrupted** from their work
  - Community-based activities cannot be organized, including Alternative Rites of Passage (ARPs)
- No / Limited **law enforcement**
  - Institutions (including courts) are closed, child protection officers are not at work and therefore unable to protect girls at risk
- **Loss of livelihood** (businesses / markets are closed)
  - Parents facing economic difficulties and are marrying off their daughters
  - Re-educated cutters who had their own small business might return to cutting
- Drop in **funding**
  - Many civil society organizations face problems in terms of lack of resources and funding (for example due to lack of tourists)
- **Safe houses** are closed (Kenya)

# 4. SOLUTIONS

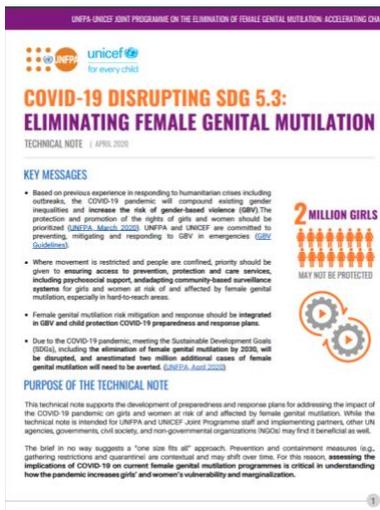
- Providing a **hotline** for those who or their children are at risk
- Community outreach via **radio / social media / TV** campaigns
- **Extra resources and funding** for civil society organizations

### 3. RESOURCES ON COVID-19

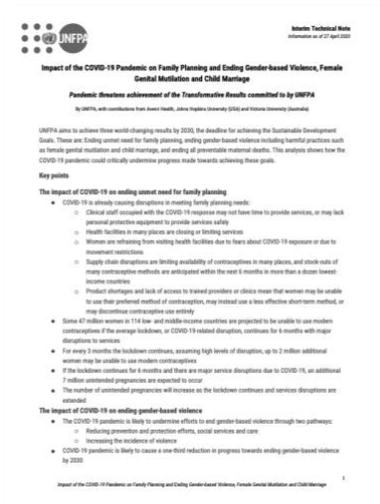
Below you'll find a list of resources on Covid-19 and FGM specifically (para. 3.1) and VAW (para. 3.2), in a chronological order (newest on top). We will continue to update this list as this is a living document.

#### 3.1 Resources on FGM and Covid-19

- UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme, *COVID-19 Disrupting SDG 5.3: Eliminating female genital mutilation*, **30 April 2020**, available at <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/covid-19-disrupting-sdg-53-eliminating-female-genital-mutilation>.



- UNFPA, *Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage*, **27 April 2020**, available at <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/impact-covid-19-pandemic-family-planning-and-ending-gender-based-violence-female-genital>.

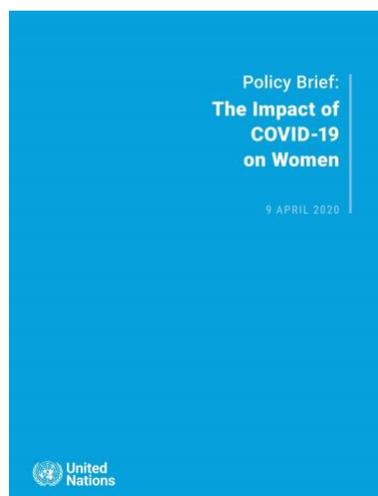


- UNICEF, Technical Note on Covid-19 and harmful practices, **17 April 2020**, available at <https://www.unicef.org/media/67506/file/TechnicalNote-COVID-19-and-HarmfulPractices-April%202020.pdf>.

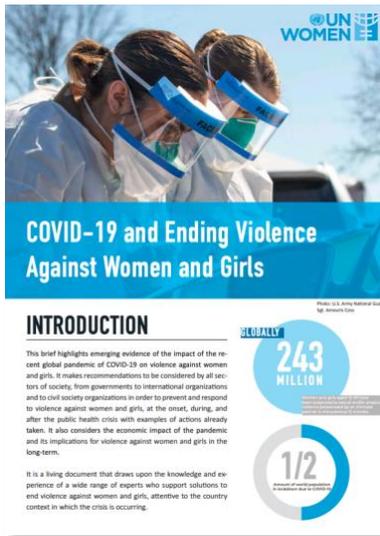


### 3.2 Resources on VAW and Covid-19

- UN Women, Policy Brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women, **9 April 2020**, available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>



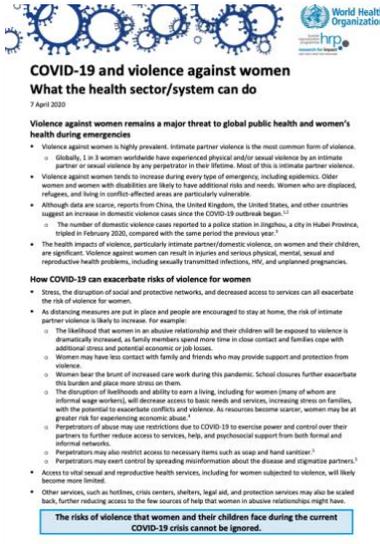
- UN Women, *Covid-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*, 6 April 2020, available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>.



- Center for Global Development, *Pandemics and Violence Against Women and Children*, April 2020, available at <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/pandemics-and-vawg-april2.pdf>



- WHO, *Covid-19 and Ending Violence Against Women: What the health sector can do*, 26 March 2020, available at <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/emergencies/COVID-19-VAW-full-text.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1qx0iRa2hVudlWFS7gX-OeSiPrn4FmnlxL6Gw6J54tfNkrQsyOfnRcc8>.



- UNFPA, *Gender Equality and Addressing Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Prevention, Protection and Response*, 23 March 2020, available at <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/gender-equality-and-addressing-gender-based-violence-gbv-and-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>.



#### 4. CONTACT INFORMATION

We look forward to receiving your contributions!



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