

Briefing – female genital cutting and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Briefing summary

- The global indicator on FGM/C was excluded from the First Proposed Priority Indicator list prepared by the UN Statistical Division with input from leading agencies for discussion at the first IAEG-SDG meeting. This is now being revised, presenting the vital opportunity to ensure the inclusion of FGM/C.
- Member states have previously agreed action to end both CEFM and FGM/C: to only measure CEFM would contravene this agreement
- The global indicator 41 on FGM/C is necessary if there are to be any serious global efforts to end the practice
- If it is excluded from the list of *global indicators* and instead becomes a *national indicator* then the opportunity for maintaining global momentum for action and obtaining critical worldwide data would be lost. Discussions on the indicators are currently ongoing. **States should make the case for the indicator on FGM/C to be secured as a matter of urgency.**

June Negotiations

Documentation prepared in advance of negotiations

The Inter-Agency Expert Group on the SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) was established by the Statistical Commission to develop an indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda. The group consists of 28 representatives of national statistical offices and includes, as observers, representatives of regional commissions and regional and international agencies.¹ The first meeting was on the 1st and 2nd June and aimed to set up the process for the development of the indicator framework, working methods of the group and to discuss technical issues.

In preparation for the first meeting of the IAEG-SDGs on 1-2 June 2015, the UN Statistics Division (UNSD) requested that UN Agencies provide input on the indicators for global monitoring, designating their priority indicator under each target and providing additional information. From this, the UNSD published a list of suggested priority indicators² which will be further revised based on the June IAEG-SDGs discussion and during later consultations.

Prior to the UNSD publishing their paper, the proposed indicators under 5.3 (“*eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations*”³) were:

‘Percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 18 (i.e. child marriage)’ and ‘Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM/C, by age group (for relevant countries only)’.

The global indicator on FGM/C was **excluded from this list** – the ‘First Proposed Priority Indicator list’ – by the UNSD.

In the UNSD’s list of proposals⁴, the following additional information was provided for the ‘child marriage’ indicator: “UNICEF maintains a global database on the issue since 2003. Fully comparable data are available for

¹ Participants: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVRnFwV3pPYKJCTDg/view>

² <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVZ3JibUQ4QlFWYjQ/view>

³ <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/150320-SDSN-Indicator-Report.pdf> p.42

⁴ <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B8n3WhOaTbGVbEIZOHhIamxSZ3M/view>

some 117 low- and middle-income countries. UNICEF is also the agency responsible for reporting on this indicator as part of the UN expert group on gender indicators.”

The following additional information was provided for the ‘FGM/C’ indicator: *“UNICEF maintains a global database on the issue since 2004. Data are available for some 29 low- and middle-income countries where the practice is concentrated. UNICEF is also the agency responsible for reporting on this indicator as part of the UN expert group on gender indicators.”*

The agencies consulted in the process for determining the priority indicator were UNICEF, UN Women and the World Bank. UNICEF gave the ‘child marriage’ indicator a priority of 1 and the ‘FGM/C’ indicator a priority of 2. UN Women gave each indicator an equal priority⁵. The World Bank highlighted only the ‘child marriage’ indicator, noting that there was DHS data for 90 countries.

Removing FGM/C as an indicator does not reflect the global political will that has been demonstrated to work towards ending this issue. Member states have previously agreed action to end both CEFM and FGM/C and to only measure CEFM goes against the existing political consensus. **Without the inclusion of FGM/C as a global indicator, the opportunity for maintaining global momentum for action and obtaining critical data on this worldwide issue will be lost.**

Results of discussions at the IAEG meeting on June 1 and 2

The UNSD and others recommended that there be only one indicator per target; however there was substantial dissatisfaction with this during the June negotiations and it was decided that the UNSD will produce a new document, which is expected to include a broader range of indicators than those present in the original paper.

The IAEG-SDGs was stated to be composed of representatives from national statistical offices. However, in the meeting, a number of countries were represented by their missions, rather than statistical experts. The IAEG-SDG process, whilst technical, is embedded within a highly political process. It was agreed that the 28 member states on the group will make recommendations to the statistical commission, to be ready for mid-July in advance of the second set of IGNs.

The recommendations from the intergovernmental negotiations (IGN) were noted: every target should be monitored with at least one indicator (though some targets may be monitored by the same one) and some indicators may need more than one in order to be true to the targets as established.

UN agencies requested that the indicator be reinstated. **During the meeting, UNFPA made a formal statement stating that target 5.3 requires indicators on both practices in order to be true to the target as established.** UNICEF and UN Women also made reference to that in their respective interventions. At the end of the two-day meeting, **the Secretariat acknowledged that given the nature of some targets, they may need to be supported by two indicators.**

The UNSD document which is currently in development will be used as the basis of discussions moving forward and it is not expected that specific indicators will be discussed until August/September. The group will next meet in person in mid-October, working electronically in the meantime and producing documents for September and producing a final proposal on the global indicator framework ready by February 2016 so it can be presented to the Statistical Commission in March.

Whilst the priority indicator paper has weight as a proposal for reducing the number of indicators to one per target, it appears that there is scope for two separate indicators on FGM/C and child marriage. **Orchid Project recommends that member states push for the inclusion of two indicators under target 5.3.**

⁵ UN Women also suggested the following revised formation: Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM/C, disaggregated by age group with a particular focus on 15-19.