ENDING HARMFUL PRACTICES

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

MAY 2023

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE AFRICAN UNION CAMPAIGNS ON THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

BACKGROUND

The State of Child Marriage in Africa

In sub-Saharan Africa, 40 percent of girls marry before age 18, and African countries account for 15 of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage. 3

For example, 77 percent of girls in Niger,4 and over 60 percent of girls in Central African Republic and Chad, marry before they turn 18.5 Without progress to prevent child marriage, the number of girls married as children will double by 2050, and Africa will surpass South Asia as the region with the highest number of child brides in the world.

Evidence suggests that the practice of child marriage is closely associated with lower educational attainment, early pregnancies, intimate partner violence, maternal and child mortality, increased rates of sexually transmitted infections, intergenerational poverty, and the disempowerment of married girls. In committing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international community has vowed to end the practice of child marriage by 2030.

The State of Female Genital Mutilations in Africa

More than 50 million girls in Africa under the age of 15 years are at risk of being subjected to female genital mutilation by 2030 if concerted action is not taken now.

Female Genital Mutilation is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia that causes irreparable and irreversible harm, as well as lifelong health and psychological complications. In Africa, more girls are cut between 0 and 14 years of age than any other age bracket. Prevalence rates range from 15% to over 95% for girls and women aged 15 to 49 years, with select countries in the Central and Western Africa regions accounting for a large part of the figures. About 1 in 5 girls who have undergone FGM were subjected to the procedure by a trained medical professional. In some countries, this number is as high as 3 in 4 girls. However, FGM is still predominantly performed by traditional excissors or cutters.

Complications resulting from FGM can include excessive bleeding, severe pain and infection. The harmful practice of female genital mutilation also contributes to negative maternal health outcomes, including obstetric fistula, as well as negatively impacting child health and contributing to child mortality.

The African Union Commission campaigns on Ending Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation in Africa

To fast track member state and continental level actions towards eliminating these harmful traditional practices. the African Union together with its partners and member states in 2014 launched the AU campaign on ending child marriage and in 2019 the Saleema Initiative to end Female Genital Mutilation which was both endorsed by all 55 member states and has currently been adopted by more than 30 member states.

Both these campaigns are focused on the accelerated investment in girls and women which is a central part of Africa's Transformative Agenda 2063, which, under Aspiration 6, calls for ending all forms of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation.

About the Spotlight Initiative

The United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) signed the three-year Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme on 27 April. The Initiative will work towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage.

Funded by the EU, the programme will focus on the strengthening of AU member state legislation and policy processes in the specified areas, the generation of quality and reliable data and support to women's movements and relevant civil society organisations. The design and implementation of the programme is guided by the AU's Agenda 2063, the priorities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the Maputo Plan of Action for the operationalisation of the continental policy framework for sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as other key regional instruments.

Knowledge Management under the Spotlight Initiative

Knowledge management (KM) refers to processes for purposefully creating, gathering, synthesizing, sharing, and using specific insights and experiences to improve work. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organizational processes or practices.

KM provides a way for multiple stakeholders (AU, EU, UN, Member states and their partners) under the two campaigns to draw on all levels of experience to take performance and output to new levels. In the context of the EU, AU, UN and member state-led Spotlight Initiative African Regional Programme (SIARP) , knowledge management is a key strategy for fostering "evidence-based Harmful Traditional Practices Reduction Strategies " by putting in place efficient processes for making available learning about what does and does not work to make child protection better, connecting member state and regional partner teams to generate and efficiently spread that learning within the improvement effort, and generating knowledge in formats that can be spread to the larger African Child Protection system.

Scaling up child protection efforts requires that we have systems for capturing learning and transferring that learning across multiple member states or in-country sectors. Incorporating knowledge management principles and approaches in child protection work enhances its impact by more efficiently and effectively collecting and sharing knowledge about what changes and practices result in improved child protection practices and service delivery against Harmful Traditional Practices- particularly in the context of the SIARP.

The Knowledge management strategy seeks to enhance the learning and transfer of information from the two African Union campaigns to End child marriages and Female Genital Mutilation under the SIARP.

Knowledge Management Principles that Guide the African Union Ending Harmful Practices Strategy

The Knowledge Management component will be guided by the following principles:

Knowledge is created through conversation

Humans process the lessons from their own experiences and derive insights about that experiences through conversation with others. AU will utilise techniques such as storytelling and webinars that respond to the question *"What have we learned in addressing Harmful Traditional Practices?"* as part of learning sessions that result in more effective stakeholder engagement and new insights about which strategies resulted in improvement.

Leverage learning on African Union's strong engagement with member states through face-to-face and virtual meetings.

AU has a long-standing experience in designing formal events that "harvest" the key lessons from member states harmful traditional practice reduction interventions. The KM strategy under the campaigns will leverage on these multiple activities to strategically develop specific knowledge products that convey multi-stakeholder learning for scale-up. Such meetings will also benefit from deliberate KM techniques to structure the synthesis process, which will inform the generation of detailed 'how-to- guides' aimed at child protection leaders and implementers that explain how to implement specific changes.

Create Knowledge Products that Convey Advice to Others

Compilations of lessons learned, emerging and good practices are useful reference documents. Still, increasingly we recognise that additional guidance products are needed to effectively convey what we have learned about how to improve child protection services in specific.

Knowledge products are most effective when tailored to the specific interests and needs of the intended recipients. The design of knowledge products under the AU campaigns will involve conversations with intended users to identify the specific information that interests them, including pre-testing or validating products with the intended audiences to ensure they are well understood and provide useful information.

Create Communication and advocacy Products that Provide Examples and Stories of What Is Possible in eliminating Harmful Traditional Practices.

In addition to products that convey key learning from the child protection processes and investments at the member state level. The AU recognises the value of communication products that can help to persuade or convince others to adopt new practices. Such communication products include case studies, advocacy pieces and personal interest stories on how different stakeholders accelerated the elimination of harmful traditional practices in their domain. These stories, video testimonials, and action photos may be considered testimonials of how eliminating child marriages and female genital mutilation is possible.

Organise Knowledge, Make It Readily Available and Connect It to Users Through Social Media and online platforms.

The AU website, the AU Campaign portals for FGM and Ending Child Marriages, and corresponding social media channels will be convenient platforms for organising and providing ready access to knowledge and communication products on ending child marriages and Female Genital Mutilation in Africa.

One effective strategy that will be used to stimulate the uptake of knowledge products posted on AU web pages will be through social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, which are used extensively by Child Protection Advocates and stakeholders in Africa for professional communication.

Objectives of the KM strategy for the Campaigns to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation in Africa

Effective knowledge management, exchange, and learning is essential in ensuring effective implementation and proper monitoring and evaluation of the African Union's Strategies to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation in Africa.

Identification and dissemination of emerging, promising and good practices, lessons learned, and key information that could support and inform programmes and policies in AUC member state implementing the campaigns, particularly on "who does what, and where", will go a long way in reducing duplication of child protection interventions both at the continental level and across the different partners, therefore, promoting value for money using only proven approaches.

Therefore, this strategy aims to operationalise the priority areas of the African Union's knowledge management framework for the periods of the two Ending Harmful Practices campaigns until 2025.

The strategy stipulates the knowledge management and documentation activities, processes, products and platforms that will be implemented to achieve the documentation outputs required by the African Union Commission, more specifically to contribute to achieving the Ending Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation's strategies' objectives in Africa.

Knowledge management results from implementing this strategy will also aim to improve the African Union Commission's internal and external (global) visibility, strengthen the engagement of local and global communities for advocacy, support experience sharing and multi-country learning, and guide the replicability of intersectoral interventions.

More specifically, this knowledge management strategy will aim at achieving the following objectives:

1. **To guide the establishment of an AU Ending Child Marriage and Ending FGM campaigns knowledge repository** which provides access to relevant information and promotes evidence-based policies and practices knowledge repository to store and share relevant research, studies, and best practices related to child marriage and female genital mutilation in Africa. This repository should be accessible to stakeholders across different sectors, including governments, NGOs, and civil society organisations

2. **To support capacity-building and learning on Ending Harmful practices in Africa**: Strengthen the capacity of the African Union Commission and its member states to achieve effective knowledge management through training programs and capacity-building initiatives for stakeholders, including policymakers, practitioners, and community members. These programs should focus on building knowledge and skills for preventing child marriage and female genital mutilation and providing support to survivors.

3. **To facilitate and enhance knowledge Sharing**: Facilitate sharing and collaboration among stakeholders by creating platforms for discussion, networking, and exchanging ideas. This can include organising workshops, conferences, and webinars, as well as establishing online communities of practice.

These objectives will be achieved using the following modalities:

- **Targeted documentation** of relevant information from each of the implementation processes and from the implementation of sectoral programme interventions, key results of bottleneck analyses and equity assessments, relevant contextual factors, and even process and management information.
- **Process documentation**: member states will be supported to document results and outcomes from implementing the ending harmful practices strategies through the African Union Commission's touch points, including country focal points, local NGOs and CSOs etc. Much of the information to be documented will come from a range of reporting tools commonly used by the member states and its partners but with the addition of the prescribed African Union templates for documentation. To facilitate this knowledge capture, member states will receive recommendations from the AUC to include sections on lessons learned, emerging, promising and good practices, and the next steps in all existing reporting tools.
- **Capacity building of partners, member states representatives and other stakeholders on knowledge management**: the African Union will take deliberate steps to continuously strengthen the knowledge management capacity of its key stakeholders and systematically incorporate it into capacity development sessions for existing staff; at least one training session on knowledge management will be organised annually.
- **Development of member state short case studies** highlighting key lessons learned from the Ending Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation Campaign's implementation. Member states and their partners will identify cases and jointly document and peer review at the AUC HQ.
- **Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing** and support activities will be led by the AUC HQ and conducted at the member state level with the support of partners. All sections and regions.
- **Cross-learning of the intervention** will also take place with AUC counterparts and government partners through electronic and physical interfaces. HHSD's Ending Harmful Practices Unit will lead and facilitate these learning interactions every quarter.
- The most frequent and common mechanism for internal knowledge exchange will be through the **monthly and bi-monthly calls of the Ending Harmful Practices Unit Technical Working Group**. Debriefing and reflection meetings, webinars and learning sessions, as well as digital and print media will allow program learners to see, touch and feel the campaign activities.

Key stakeholders of the African Union who will benefit from the Knowledge Management Strategy for the Campaigns to End Harmful Practices: Ending Child Marriage and Ending Female Genital Mutilation

Targeted audiences for the African Union Campaigns to End Child Marriage and FGM knowledge management products

Category and Contribution to Results	Audience	Appropriate Knowledge Products	Knowledge exchange platforms/activities
	AU HSSD	Brochures Datasheets	Yammer

Internal			Case Studies SUCCESS STORIES Best Practice Guides Practical guides Activity reports Quarterly Newsletters Infographics Presentations Summary Newspaper article etc.	SharePoint
	AU Youth and Women Division			Bi lateral & Stocktaking meetings
				Share Fairs
	AU CIEFFA			Webinars
				Peer to Peer learning sessions
				The joint community of Practice
				Exchange visits
	External	Central and local governments of all 33 member states implementing the Campaigns	Brochures Datasheets Presentations Computer graphics Presentations Newspaper articles	Yammer
		UN agencies UNICEF, UNDP, UN Women, UN		Webinars
		EU, USAID, Canada funds, SWEDD		
		Global donors		Symposium
		RECs		Knowledge fairs
		Partner organisations: Save the Children, World Vision, Child Fund, Child Helpline		Conferences

Definitions of knowledge products under the African Union Commission Knowledge Management Strategy for the Campaigns to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation:

Product	Quick product definitions	Audience / Platforms
Brochure / Briefs / Fact Sheets	A brief coloured summary of the interventions. It includes the targets and objectives of the intervention, where it is implemented, the approach used and the rapid results.	Internal and external, including countries interested in expansion.

	This will provide rapid information on the AU Campaigns to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation.	
Datasheets / Practical guides	These documents will describe the key processes in implementing the intervention and emerging products and results. It may be a summary of a much larger document. Its purpose is to guide adaptation, generate technical interest and provide evidence for proof of concept for the two AU campaigns.	Internal and external, including governments seeking an approach to strengthening social systems.
Case Studies/ Best Practice Guides	A technical summary of how the intervention addresses child deprivation, who was involved, and what the results, lessons learned, and recommendations are.	Internal and external, including governments.
Country Profile	The focus will be on the level of child marriage and female genital mutilation in the member states, progress in implementation, current results and next steps. They will support geographical profiling and contextualisation of member states.	Internal and external: can be introduced to new audiences and donor representatives.
Success Stories	A compelling narrative of communities is supported through the two campaigns, where a child's life is transformed. They will bring a human face to the interventions.	Internal and external: donor reports, social media pages
Activity reports	Periodic technical summaries reflect the activities implemented, the results achieved and their contribution to Ending Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation results and objectives. They are intended for strategic-level information and intervention direction.	Internal and external: donor reports, social media pages
Quarterly Newsletters	A quick summary of the implementation status in each country, with snapshots of service delivery improvements and upcoming events and activities.	Internal and external: donor reports, social media pages
Infographics	Colourful graphic representation of key information and data on the AU campaigns. It's important for presenting critical information for strategic and high-level audiences.	Internal and external: donor reports, meetings, social media pages.

Presentations	Standardised slides will present the AU campaigns objectives, implementation approach and scope, country-specific experiences and results.	Internal and external: donor reports, meetings, social media pages.
Abstract/journal article	Scientific documentation of quantitative or qualitative evidence emerging from implementing AU's campaigns.	
Lessons Learned	Lessons learned can be identified through the regular annual programming and planning processes to which a national (or regional) office is subject, such as annual reviews, mid-term reviews, programme reviews, programme reviews, donor reports, after-action reviews, programme monitoring, and field visits. It is also important to note that this process of identifying lessons learned must include partners so that the process is participatory and allows for broader validation, capacity building, greater ownership of lessons learned and the development of a more effective strategy.	

Monitoring Knowledge management for the African Union Campaigns to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation

Knowledge Management - Products and Timelines	Frequency of product generation
Blogs	2 per section each year
Case Studies	1 per section each year
Technical file	1 per section each year
Short videos	2 per section each year
Success Stories	1 per section per quarter
Newsletter	1 general each year
Summary	1 per section each year
Newspaper article	1 general each year
Comparative Study/Prospective Cohort Studies	1 per section each year
Webinar series	1 general each quarter

Infographic	1	per section each year
In-depth technical guide	1 per section each year	
National and regional profiles	1 general each year	

ENDING HARMFUL PRACTICES

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

recorded humanitarian crises such as armed conflict, floods and droughts all of which have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of women and girls

2.0 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Specific Objectives of the End Child Marriage Campaign and Ending Female Genital Mutilation Community of Practice

1. To provide an interactive physical and virtual space that fully engages member states and partners to share experiences, practices, and knowledge and utilise evidence from programmes to end child marriage.
2. To provide a platform for country technical assistance including capacity building to guide the end child marriage campaign in 30-member states.
3. To create an opportunity for follow-up of country action plans to unlock critical bottlenecks in the country implementation of the ECM & FGM campaigns
4. Create an interactive platform for young people to actively lead and champion efforts and initiatives to end child marriage
5. To share professional development opportunities and relevant contemporary research and reports with members of the Community of Practice

2.1 EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE END CHILD MARRIAGE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

1. The generation of evidence, lessons learned, data and good practices from partners and members states which will guide knowledge sharing and strengthened multi-sector coordination and accelerated actions and implementation of the End Child Marriage Campaign across the African Union, member state governments, development partners, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, and youth, women-led and girl-focused organizations;
2. The identification, adaptation, replicable implementation and scale-up of best practices by all actors, that can FastTrack the continent's achievement of SDG goal 5.3 which seeks to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations in Africa by 2030.
3. Capacity of all actors built on current laws and policy reforms data trends and their role in leading and supporting the implementation of good practices towards ending child marriages.

3.0 DELIVERY MECHANISMS FOR THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

To achieve its objectives, the ECM Community of Practice will adopt various innovative methods and interactive and participatory channels.

a) **Conduct a series of monthly online webinars, which will focus on selected thematic areas, topics**
b) **Post learnings, best practices, and programme documentation on the African Union-hosted End Child Marriage Campaign website from member states.**
c) **Sharing of progress reports, case studies, data analytics, guidance documents and multimedia for both reference and for scale-up support for the campaign countries**
d) Knowledge exchange activities and products available through the Ending Child Marriage Campaign Community of Practice

e) Moderated e discussions on the ECM community of Practice portal on the website on key learnings identified during the End Child Marriage Campaign implementation

f) Open e-discussions, allowing community members to ask and respond to questions and share resources and knowledge relating to the campaign

g) A document and multimedia library will be hosted on the AU ECM website capturing a range of topics on the campaign and web links for reference and external resources.

h) Online and in-person capacity-building sessions to enhance the capacity of member state and partner stakeholders in specific technical areas of the campaign

i) An annual physical share fair that brings together all ECM campaign stakeholders to learn from each other and identify innovations for scale-up in the specific context of different countries.

4.0 TARGETED MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The ECM and FGM COP will unite various stakeholders actively engaged in ending child marriage interventions at the national and continental levels. These will be drawn from the priority member states implementing the campaign to end child marriage, AU departments focusing on children, civil society, academia, traditional and religious institutions, and international and UN agencies. Below is a summary of the proposed members of the ECM community of practice

- **All African Union Departments**
- **Member states (Including but not limited to:**
  - o Ministries of Gender Family Promotion and Children, Health, Education, Finance and Planning representatives
  - o Human Rights Commissions
  - o Civil Society Organization representatives
  - o Faith-Based Organizations
  - o Traditional Leaders
  - **o** Girls, Women and Youth representatives and leaders
- **United Nations Organisations : UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP, UNAIDS**
- **Continental and Regional Child Protection and Advocacy Agencies: Plan, World Vision, Save the Children, Child Fund,**
- **Donor Agencies: USAID, UK AID, European Union, Swedish Aid, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Muskoka, DFID, NORAD, Private sector**
- **Foreign Missions: French, German, Italian, US, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Canada, Netherlands e.t.c**
- **Academia**
- **Traditional and religious leaders**

5.0 ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

a) Hosting Rights: The ECM and FGM COP shall be hosted by the African Union Commission Harmful Practices Unit, Department of Health, Humanitarian, Affairs and Social Development (DHHSD) under the overall leadership of the unit Coordinator

Community Manager and Conveners: The community of practice shall be convened and managed by both the AUCEM campaign Knowledge Management officer and the Campaign Technical officer. These will work in close collaboration with other staff from the Harmful practices unit focusing on ending child marriage. The community managers and conveners will support in developing and identifying the content to be delivered to the community of practice, managing the schedules, and providing the necessary technical support for their mobilization, organization, execution and documentation. This will also require updating the AUCEM website with the necessary community of practice resources and key implementation progress content.

The AUC ECM and FGM Team will review all products to be posted on the ECM & FGM Community of Practice and webinar themes including speakers in order to validate all of them before webinars and posting on the AU ECM website.

Assistant community manager (2): to enhance ownership and full engagement of partners, two personnel from their staff will be nominated by them to provide an assistive role to the community manager. These persons will support the smooth running of planned community activities and also support the update of the website with a community of practice information.

Partner Agencies and Member States:

● Attend and participate in a both virtual and physical community of practice activities where they will share their progress on programming leading strategies and implementation best practices of the ECM campaign which is relevant to the Community of Practice
● Lead and facilitate topical webinars that capture emerging and good practices, data, evidence and new learning on the status of child marriages in supported countries or in their own context.
● Nominate and facilitate the attendance of experts leading key strategies in the ending child marriage campaign as a means of providing capacity building and scale-up guidance for members of the community of practice.
● Provide technical documents and multimedia that back up evidence of key achievements in reducing child marriages, which will be hosted on the AUCEM campaign website for further reference.

6.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE ECM & FGM COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE Membership of the CoP is voluntary. The African Union Campaign is required to maintain an attendance register for each webinar/Share fair identifying the service name, service location and organisation and provide this to the department within 14 days of each event with a general description of the key topic discussed.

   I.   Practitioners wishing to participate are asked to give permission for their contact details to be shared with other members.
  II.   Materials (hard copy or electronic), not in the public domain, that are shared with members, remain the property of the originating member/organisation.
 III.   These shared materials are not to be: a. *used without appropriate acknowledgement of the originating member/ organisation* b. *altered without seeking permission from the originating member/ organisation*.
 IV.   Materials shared may be used in the normal way for publication, with appropriate referencing.