

# Mauritania

In 2022, 880,000 people faced food insecurity, and about 80,227 children were affected by acute malnutrition in Mauritania.<sup>103</sup> Climate change is expected to increase the risks and severity of natural disasters, and the country's vulnerability is exacerbated by high levels of poverty and dependence on climate change-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, mining and livestock.<sup>104</sup>

## FGM PROFILE

Among girls aged 15 to 19, FGM prevalence **decreased from 63 per cent in 2015 to 56 per cent in 2021.**<sup>105</sup>

Almost **58 per cent of women reported experiencing FGM before age 5**; 40 per cent of girls aged 0 to 14 had undergone FGM before age 1; 41 per cent of women did not know at what age they had undergone FGM.<sup>106</sup>

**FGM is mostly performed by traditional practitioners.**<sup>107</sup>

There has been a **significant decline in FGM between younger and older generations** of girls and women, with 71 per cent of women aged 40 to 49 having undergone the practice compared to 56 per cent among those aged 15 to 19 years.<sup>108</sup>

In 59 per cent of FGM cases, the mother makes the decision to have girls undergo it; the grandmother decides in 27 per cent of cases. Across sociodemographic attributes, **mothers are the key decision-makers.**<sup>109</sup>

Protective factors against FGM include residence in urban areas, with 51 per cent of girls and women aged 15 to 49 experiencing it in urban areas compared to 77 per cent in rural areas. Maternal **education reduces the likelihood of girls undergoing FGM**; among 54.4 per cent of girls aged 0 to 14 who have experienced FGM, 54.4 per cent of their mothers had no education compared to 18.9 per cent whose mothers had a secondary education.<sup>110</sup>

The last three MICS show a marked decrease in FGM among girls and women aged 15 to 49, from 72 per cent in 2007 to 69.4 per cent in 2011 to 66.6 per cent in 2015. The 2021 DHS showed a further decline in FGM among girls and women between 15 and 49 years, at 63 per cent. The prevalence rate is also dropping among younger cohorts. In 2021, 44.5 per cent of girls under age 15 had undergone FGM compared to 53.2 per cent in 2015. For girls under age 5, 37 per cent had undergone FGM in 2021 compared to 45 per cent in 2015.



Thirty-five per cent of women and 44 per cent of men aged 15 to 49 **think that FGM is a religious requirement.**<sup>111</sup>

Mauritania developed a national strategy to end FGM in 2007. It was updated in 2015 and again in 2022 to correspond to SDG target 5.3, the elimination of FGM by 2030.

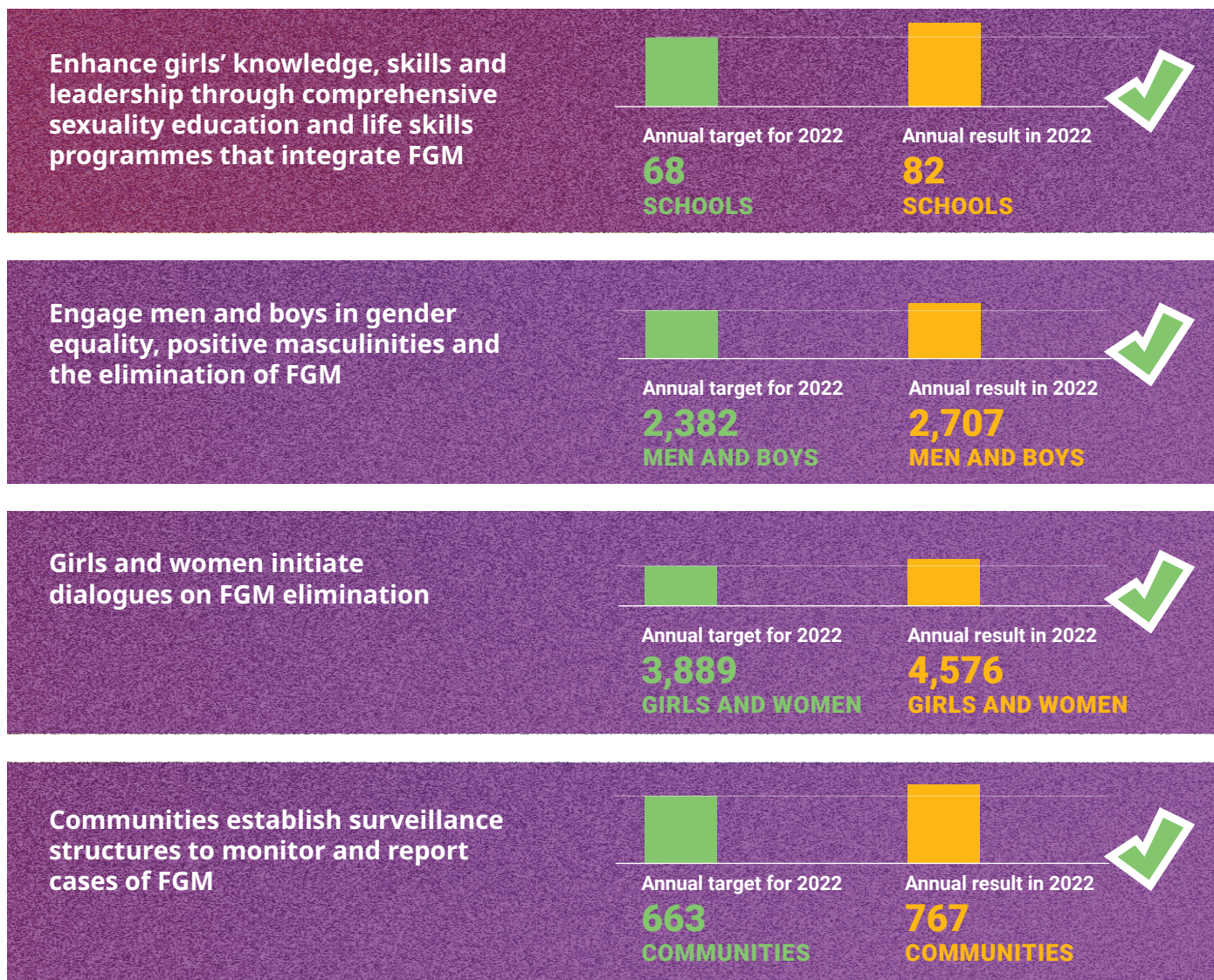
## JOINT PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS TO FGM ELIMINATION

**Young people opposed to FGM:** According to a [survey](#) on FGM conducted by UNICEF's U-Report in 2022, 71 per cent of respondents support stopping the practice (see [findings](#)).

**National strategy:** The Ministry of Social Action, Children and the Family launched Mauritania's [national strategy against FGM](#) (2022-2030).

**National data:** The National Agency for Statistics, Demographic and Economic Analysis, in partnership with UNICEF, launched a [national data platform on child protection](#) that includes the most recent data on FGM.

## KEY PROGRAMME RESULTS



## BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

**Targeting mothers as key decision-makers:** The Infant and Young Child Feeding Best Practice Monitoring and Learning Groups in Mauritania include FGM as part of the “first 1,000 days” between a woman’s pregnancy and her child’s second birthday. Addressing FGM through the groups presents a unique and critical window of opportunity to support a child’s health and development, as mothers are the key decision-makers on FGM and most girls undergo the practice before age 5. Using a participatory approach, the groups empower community members through learning, dialogue and collective action to identify community challenges and develop practical solutions. They also build community resilience and reinforce social cohesion. In 2022, the groups targeted 3,017 women, and through follow-up support for mothers with daughters aged 0 to 5, they prevented 429 girls from undergoing the practice.

103 UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund), 2023. “Mauritania Appeal: Humanitarian Action for Children.” Website: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/mauritania>.

104 World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal, n.d. “Mauritania.” Website: <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/mauritania/vulnerability>.

105 MICS 2015 and DHS 2019-2021.

106 Ibid.

107 UNICEF (United Nations Children’s Fund), 2020. “Female Genital Mutilation Country Profiles.” Website: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/fgm-country-profiles/>.

108 DHS 2019-2021.

109 DHS 2019-2021.

110 Ibid.

111 DHS 2019-2021.