

sahiyo
United Against Female Genital Cutting

PROGRAMS OVERVIEW
2016 - 2023

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Introduction

Since 2016, Sahiyo has been steadfast in its commitment to hold a multitude of impactful programs to address female genital cutting (FGC). As we mark seven years of being operational, and five years of providing dedicated services, our team has engaged in an examination of our major programs, ensuring their alignment with our mission and goals. This extensive review has yielded the creation of concise 2-3 page documents for each program, providing a clear, high-level synopsis of their inception, goals, activities, impact, and our future vision for each project. These documents have been thoughtfully crafted to enhance accessibility and transparency for our stakeholders, encapsulating the vital components of each program, outlining our objectives, and underscoring the transformative impact we aspire to bring to the communities we serve. In this collective effort, we have combined these documents to present a comprehensive, high-level overview of all of Sahiyo's programs.

VOICES TO END FGM/C PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2018 - 2023

Needs Statement

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of many communities, and openly questioning or opposing it can lead to ostracism and isolation. People from practicing communities have feared being marginalized by their own communities, thus perpetuating a culture of acceptance and silence surrounding FGM/C. Additionally, the fear of straining relationships with loved ones involved in the practice has been a powerful deterrent. FGM/C often spans generations within families, creating a painful dilemma for those torn between ending a harmful tradition and preserving their connections with their family members. Consequently, when survivors of FGM/C do decide to openly share their experiences, they often encounter stigma or well-intentioned but unwanted pity. This victim labeling can inadvertently undermine the sense of agency and resilience they have developed in overcoming adversity.

Breaking this silence and fostering open discussions about FGM/C is imperative to challenge and shift these deeply ingrained social norms, particularly given the covert nature of the practice. Furthermore, it is crucial to address the issue of agency when survivors are asked to share their stories publicly. Many survivors lack control over how their narratives are portrayed, leading to potential retraumatization and the spread of misinformation or misrepresentation.

Real people's stories can have greater reach and impact when they are shared widely, both in local community settings and through social media. Studies in [communications research](#) underscore the transformative power of convening small groups, where individuals come together to share and bear witness to each other's stories. This collaborative process not only elevates individual well-being but also fosters crucial support networks and forges stronger relationships. Most notably, it serves as a catalyst for increased engagement in the realm of social justice advocacy. Therefore, creating safe and secure opportunities for survivors to raise awareness of the topic by sharing their stories has the potential to contribute to the prevention of FGM/C.

Program Goals

[Voices to End FGM/C](#) is a dynamic collaboration between Sahiyo and [Silence Speaks](#). Silence Speaks uses trauma-informed digital storytelling methods to address gender-based violence and other human rights concerns. The primary goal of the Voices program is to mobilize a critical mass of storytellers and advocates from across the globe by bringing them together to share and heal from FGM/C, connect and grow as leaders, and create short videos calling for an end to this harmful practice.

The goals of Voices to End FGM/C are as follows:

- Create 2-3 minute videos of personal narratives related to FGM/C.
- Develop skills in personal storytelling, photography, video editing, and advocacy.
- Establish a meaningful and lasting peer support network.

Program Impact

An [evaluation](#) conducted in 2020, involving 15 participants from past Voices to End FGM/C workshops, revealed several long-term benefits:

- Voices stories as powerful counter-narratives: The authenticity and candor with which participants share their stories, employing their own words, visuals, and video footage effectively challenged the prevailing silence and hesitancy in speaking out against FGM/C. These digital stories have emerged as courageous counter-narratives against the dominant discourse that supports the practice within their respective communities. Additionally, they served as a powerful contrast to the sensationalist media, which often dilutes the intention of survivors who choose to speak out.
- Solidarity through storytelling: The digital storytelling workshop space not only empowered storytellers but also fostered deep connections among participants. This sense of community, built through the process of crafting their stories and sustained by subsequent follow-up activities, has emerged as a remedy to the oppressive silence that often surrounds FGM/C.
- The courage to become an advocate: Survivors willing to break the silence must navigate complex conflicts within both their families and communities. Collectively, their narratives offer a multifaceted and nuanced perspective on FGM/C, igniting a rich dialogue between individuals and communities. As storytellers, they continue to influence and encourage each other in their advocacy efforts, demonstrating immense courage and resilience.

Program Activities

Workshop Program Activities

All Voices to End FGM/C digital storytelling workshops, whether online, in-person, or a combination of the two, include the following elements:

- Introduction to Personal Storytelling Techniques
- Story Circle
- Scriptwriting and Recording
- Photography and Videography 101
- Learning and Practice in Digital Video Editing
- Internal Screening of the Produced Videos

Following each workshop, the Sahiyo team works to create a distribution strategy for the videos, crafted in the form of a social media toolkit. This toolkit serves as a structured guide, outlining a schedule for releasing the stories and hosting story screenings. Additionally, the storytellers are encouraged to delve into their storytelling journeys by writing reflection blogs, a key element of the toolkit.

Alumni Program Activities

To facilitate further connection amongst Voices Alumni, all participants are part of a Voices Alumni email Listserv. This platform ensures they remain up-to-date on potential opportunities to participate in events related to their digital stories, as well as facilitate regular communication to foster a sense of continuous connection and support within the Voices Community. Alumni members are also encouraged to make this platform a space to connect, learn, and grow together, and can include participant-led initiatives and activities (i.e., storytelling game nights).

Additionally, recognizing the profound sensitivity and vulnerability inherent in sharing personal stories, AWS, a San Francisco-based domestic violence organization deeply committed to ensuring every individual's right to live in a violence-free home, joined hands with Sahiyo to establish the Voices Healing Circle. This initiative is designed to serve as an alumni support network encompassing all participants who have engaged in the Voices workshops over the years. Through virtual gatherings, this safe and supportive space has been created for participants to share their experiences, foster a sense of camaraderie, and engage in open discussion of any challenges they may have encountered since their involvement with the workshops.

Program Impact by the Numbers

2017-2023

8

workshops hosted

73

participants

75

Voices videos

19+

**countries represented
by participants**

99,000+

**views of videos across
multiple social media
platforms**

13+

**public online and in-
person Voices video
screenings**

2

**Alumni events
and activités**

1

Alumni Listserv

Looking Forward

Sahiyo U.S. and SilenceSpeaks are looking to expand the scope of the Voices program in the following ways:

- Host additional workshops in the U.S. and globally
- Support survivors before, during, and after the story creation process and their continued growth as leaders and advocates
- Consider how to encourage more participation from men and boys in the Voices program.
- Build out the Voices Alumni Network, to host reunions, alumni activities and other support groups as needed
- Provide additional resources to storytellers on addressing backlash after sharing a story, hosting story screenings, and more
- Expand mediums used for voices workshops, including the creation of podcasts to reach varying audiences and produce content on different platforms
- Collaborate with media outlets to feature Voices stories and raise awareness about FGM/C (i.e., podcasts, newspapers, magazines, websites, etc.)

ACTIVISTS RETREATS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2018 - 2023

Needs Statement

Female genital cutting (FGC) or khatna as it is known in the Bohra community, a South Asian Muslim community, is practiced discreetly; and speaking about it in public – particularly expressing dissent against it – is widely considered a taboo in the Bohra community and other FGC practicing communities, and can result in communal ostracism. People fear the stigmatization of their families, as well as the loss of social and professional bonds and/or access to religious privileges. For some, these potential social repercussions prevent them from speaking out against FGC.

Advocates who do speak out against FGC often work in isolation from one another. Though well-intentioned, a lack of knowledge or misinformation on FGC and a lack of understanding of how to work nonjudgmentally with the community, can result in activists' efforts proving more harmful than helpful in bringing an end to FGC.

We know that the more people who speak out against the practice, the increased likelihood of FGC being abandoned. Finding methods to support advocates is vital to our work of ending FGC.

Program Goals

The primary aim of the Activists Retreat is to bring together 'activists' speaking out against FGC, people who work either publicly or privately (anonymously) to raise community awareness about the need to end this harmful practice.

The goals of the Activist Retreat are as follows:

- Build a network of Bohra activists empowered to advocate for the end of FGC
- Create a support system among Bohra activists working to empower their community to abandon FGC
- Develop a safe space for individuals to learn more about the issue of FGC
- Build individuals' overall capacity to engage in activism, including sharing knowledge, resources, and networks
- Sustain post-retreat continued engagement to end FGC

Program Activities

Pre-Event

Planning for a retreat begins six months before the start of the retreat itself. Since 2018, Sahiyo has assembled planning committees to ensure the agenda of the retreats meets the needs of participants. Committee members consist of former Sahiyo program participants who volunteer and commit to 5 to 10 hours a month. Planning involves the following:

- Outreach to potential participants
- Coordinate facilitators and guest speakers
- Coordinate logistics for where and when to host the retreat
- Creating tools and resources to provide participants

Event

Each retreat follows this structure:

DAY 1

Community Building

DAY 2

**Conversations around FGC,
activism and self-care**

DAY 3

**Action planning to achieve
personal and community goals
related to FGC activism**

Content can come in formats such as workshops, information sessions, reflection periods, group discussions, networking opportunities, and action planning

Program Impact

The Activists Retreat program serves to strengthen connections and foster networks among survivors and affected community members, even when they are geographically dispersed. This initiative not only facilitates the sharing of best practices and tools during the retreat but also sustains this exchange throughout the year. Consequently, FGC survivors and affected community members have reported significant improvements in their mental health and overall well-being. Participants have also seen a notable increase in their advocacy skills, enabling them to effectively raise awareness about FGC within their communities. They have gone on to organize and host workshops on FGC, actively participate in outreach campaigns in impacted communities, provide valuable testimonies at policy briefings regarding FGC in various states, and engage in other impactful activities.

Program Impact by the Numbers

2018-2023

87

activists from across the
U.S., Canada, and
England

6

retreats hosted

64%

of past participants
stayed engaged in anti-
FGC advocacy

33

blogs written by retreat
attendees

4

alumni supported the
launch of the Bhaiyo
program

13

attendees also took part
in the Voices to End
FGM/C project

Looking Forward

Sahiyo U.S. hopes to expand the scope of Activists Retreat program as follows:

- Increase the number of retreats (virtual and in-person) hosted annually
- Expand in-person retreats outside of the United States
- Provide long-term support throughout the year to attend the Activists Retreats
- Create additional tools/resources based on the needs of attendees
- Include additional API (Asian and Pacific Islander) and SWANA (South West Asian and North African) FGC-impacted populations outside the Bohra community
- Invite additional non-U.S.-based attendees to participate in virtual retreats
- Customize retreats to be in-person and/or hybrid virtual/in-person formats, to provide higher quality support and relationship-building
- Strengthen the alumni network of retreat participants by building out the program to include additional events and activities post-Activists Retreat

Disclaimer

This product was funded by Grant Number 90EV0054-01-00 from the Department of Health and Human services (DHHS); Administration for Children and Families (ACF); Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF); Family Youth Services Bureau (FYSB); Family Violence Division. The viewpoints contained in this product are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views or policies of the Administration for Children and Families.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EDUCATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2016 - 2023

Needs Statement

Globally, the number of women and girls reported to have undergone female genital cutting (FGC) is 200 million. However, this figure significantly underrepresents the true number of those impacted by FGC, as it is solely based on data collected by UNICEF in 32 countries, mostly in Africa and the Middle East. Sahiyo recognizes that FGC has been reported in at least [92 countries](#) around the globe, including the U.S., and encompasses survivors who do not identify as cisgender women. This gap highlights that FGC is misunderstood in terms of who it occurs to and how prevalent it is. Such misconceptions, in addition to other common misunderstandings, lead to the minimization of the issue globally.

Educational initiatives can dispel misconceptions and increase global awareness of FGC across FGC-impacted communities, frontline service providers (i.e. healthcare, law enforcement, education, mental health, social service, media, government agencies, etc.), and the broader public.

FGC is viewed as a social norm within FGC-practicing communities and is often performed in secret. By bringing the topic to the public's awareness through trainings and presentations, community education can remove the shame and stigma associated with discussing the topic. Shedding light on such issues is the first step toward fostering social change and ultimately working towards the abandonment of FGC.

Program Goals

- Raise greater awareness of FGC and associated harms among the broader public.
- Increase knowledge about FGC amongst frontline service providers to provide culturally appropriate services to survivors FGC.
- Encourage communities to shift social norms around FGC to ultimately abandon the practice.
- Ensure that outreach and education efforts prioritize survivor and community-centered approaches to discuss what FGC is and its impact (i.e. using sensitive terminology, centering survivors' voices, and engaging communities in non-judgemental discussions).
- Empower survivors by aiding access to resources and opportunities to become involved in activism to prevent FGC for future generations.

Program Activities

- Organizing and hosting webinars and community discussions.
- Providing training and technical assistance to other organizations or institutions.
- Creating and implementing public awareness campaigns.
- Facilitating virtual community spaces (i.e., WhatsApp group for Sahiyo volunteers).
- Writing blog posts.
- Designing resources such as toolkits, guides, reports, and videos to build greater knowledge of the topic.

Program Impact by the Numbers

2016-2023

79

presentations hosted
or co-hosted

222,986

people engaged via social
media

787

blogs published

667,146

blog views

9

major social media
campaigns

44

policy briefings with
legislators on FGC

4,667

activists, community
members, frontline
professionals, and others
engaged in trainings

2

websites created:
sahiyo.org and
voicestoendfgmc.org

Looking Forward

Sahiyo hopes to grow the Community Outreach & Education program by:

- Holding additional public webinars and community discussions.
- Increasing training and technical assistance to organizations and institutions, specifically frontline professionals who work with FGC-impacted communities.
- Creating additional public awareness campaigns.
- Engaging a wider breadth of communities and stakeholders.
- Continuing to build safe spaces where individuals feel supported in sharing their experiences with FGC.
- Collaborating with other related organizations in the creation of culturally sensitive methods of supporting survivors.
- Implementing new outreach strategies that target marginalized voices in the movement to end FGC (i.e. males and nonbinary survivors of FGC).
- Allowing space for a diverse range of voices to be heard through Sahiyo's blog.
- Creating more educational resources for survivors, communities, and stakeholders.



BHAIYO: MALE ALLIES PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2021 - 2023

Needs Statement

Many communities impacted by female genital cutting (FGC) uphold patriarchal structures in which men exert great influence on the women in their lives. A [study](#) in central and southern Senegal, where FGC is practiced, found that husbands were classified as decision-makers rather than influencers in support networks. Husbands also had the greatest reported levels of influence, followed by other male relatives such as sons, brothers, uncles, and brothers-in-law. As a result, if men are knowledgeable of the practice and able to speak on it, they may have the opportunity in their social networks to change whether or not FGC continues.

Men influence the continuation of FGC in a variety of ways. For example, in some communities, men may intentionally or unintentionally uphold widespread misconceptions that an uncut girl is promiscuous, impure, or less fertile than a girl who has undergone FGC, which causes uncut girls to be regarded as undesirable for marriage.

In the Dawoodi Bohra community, a South Asian Muslim community with origins in India and a big diaspora in the U.S., it is common to hear that men are not aware of FGC as it is often relegated to a woman's issue or private matter. Thus, men's role as main decision-makers in these families often influences whether women continue the practice. Community-rooted social sanctions can be changed if men help counter the traditional gender norms that they uphold, in this case, continuing the practice of FGC.

[Bhaiyo](#), which is Sahiyo's male allyship program, was launched on International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGC in February 2021. Meaning 'male friends' or 'brothers' in Bohra Gujarati, Bhaiyo is both a resource and an avenue for men to become involved in raising awareness of FGC. This program grew organically from male allies interested in creating a space to discuss male engagement on the issue of FGC.

Program Goals

- To build a community that engages male-identifying individuals to have a role in the work to end FGC.
- To educate male-identifying individuals so they have the skills to provide love, support, and understanding to FGC survivors and impacted communities.
- To generate resources that male-identifying individuals can use to raise awareness of FGC and conduct anti-FGC advocacy work.

Program Activities

Bhaiyo aims to educate and engage men utilizing a variety of strategies:

- Educational webinars
- Public outreach campaigns
- Blog writing
- Creation of male-focused content
- Volunteer study circles
- Community member meetings

Program Impact

This program further enables the creation of various virtual platforms, such as blogs, webinars, and private group chats for male allies to share stories, resulting in an increased knowledge base of male engagement work in the movement to end FGC. As a result, male allies have increased opportunities to meet one another, form a community of allies, and work collectively to address FGC in their respective communities.

These platforms also help to uplift the voices of active male allies in the public arena. This works to create a space for male voices in the anti-FGC sphere and allows other male-identified individuals to recognize the need for their voices in the work to end FGC.

Program Impact by the Numbers

2020-2023

18

men became members of
the Bhaiyo program

13,247

people engaged with our
public awareness campaigns

36

people participated in our
public awareness campaigns

28

blog posts written to uplift
the voices of male activists

176

people attended Bhaiyo
male-engagement webinars

81.3%

of members have joined additional
anti-FGC programming efforts
after joining Bhaiyo

Looking Forward

Sahiyo will continue to expand the scope and capacity of our Bhaiyo program in the following ways:

- Create programming to support involvement in anti-FGC education and prevention work, both men from FGC-practicing communities and men from non-FGC-practicing communities.
- Create thriving spaces for male allies to gather, connect, and support one another in their emotional needs as they engage and respond to advocacy work to end FGC.
- Increase the number of males in FGC-practicing communities and allied communities who are informed, educated, and engaged in the movement to end FGC.
- Create educational events and resources that uplift and support the need for male engagement programming in the field of FGC prevention.
- Train Bhaiyo members on how to host educational workshops so they can provide education to men on the topic of FGC.
- Foster leadership development amongst existing Bhaiyo male allies, allowing them to take more proactive roles in organizing and planning Bhaiyo public awareness campaigns for further engaging men to end FGC.
- Create a survey to (1) understand awareness among men in FGC as well as non-FGC practicing communities, (2) understand what their views are and the support they require for work towards ending the practice.
- Create informative brochures in Hindi and Gujarati on the Bhaiyo program to make the programming and information more accessible.

POLICY OUTREACH, EDUCATION, & ADVOCACY PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2015 - 2023

Needs Statement

Female genital cutting (FGC) is considered a social norm in practicing communities, and [laws against FGC may help to prevent the practice](#) by acting as a mechanism to shape a community or individual's behavior. Laws can be a catalyst for changing social norms and, in particular, harmful social norms like FGC. With the help of laws, communities can recognize that harmful practices, even those rooted in culture and/or religion, should not be continued. Policies can be educational tools, deterrents, influencers for social and behavioral change, and prevention mechanisms. [Research](#) indicates that to be more effective in achieving FGC abandonment, policies should adopt a comprehensive approach. This entails incorporating elements such as community education and outreach initiatives, as well as civil remedies for survivors rather than only including criminal sanctions.

Program Goals

- Educate frontline professionals (i.e. healthcare providers, social workers, child care professionals, etc.), lawmakers, and constituents, engaging them to support policies addressing FGC.
- Unite diverse stakeholders and establish shared concerns and connections related to FGC, fostering a collective impact and the creation of state-level coalitions dedicated to advocating for policy-level changes to address FGC.
- Uplift and include the voices of survivors in educating policy-makers.
- Increase individual civic engagement in the policy process and ensure that impacted communities have a voice in the creation of policies to prevent and support survivors.

Program Activities

Building Coalitions

- engaging a variety of stakeholders (including survivors, impacted communities, civil society organizations, government, cultural organizations, frontline professionals, and grassroots representatives, among others) to collaborate and inform policy solutions on FGC through coalition meetings, roundtables, trainings, listening sessions, and more.

Encouraging Education and Outreach

- providing information on FGC to inform constituents and build support for systemic change through legislative solutions.

Empowering Survivor Voices

- empowering community members through learning to navigate the policy-making system and have a voice in the legislative process via providing testimony, meeting with legislators and state bodies, and organizing and facilitating legislative advocacy efforts.
- Providing Resources - drafting and disseminating petitions, creating educational resources and factsheets, and drafting language for bills and policies.

At the global level, communities are in different stages of abandonment or continuation of the practice; yet collaborative work can help build momentum to end FGC. The [Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C](#), of which Sahiyo is a founding member, is a consortium of civil society organizations, champions, survivors, and grassroots representatives united in a singular mission: to advocate and support policies and collaborations that encourage the abandonment and prevention of FGC.

At the national level, Sahiyo has supported advocacy in the U.S. and other countries, including India. Sahiyo also makes space for FGC-impacted communities to reflect on the political situations surrounding FGC laws and/or lack of laws in specific country contexts. Building spaces collectively that are safe to engage in these topics can provide community-wide healing for those impacted by FGC, and can also be vital to continuing civil advocacy on such topics.

Within the U.S., 41 states have some form of legislation against FGC as of November 2023. Yet, many states focus solely on making FGC illegal by criminalizing the act, without recognizing the need for education and outreach to FGC-impacted communities (holistic legislation). Additionally, the creation of state-level legislation on FGC must address training gaps in education, law enforcement systems, and other state-level systems.

State-specific activities are below. Additional information can be found on [Sahiyo's website](#):

New York City

After a citywide ordinance on FGC passed in 2022, an advisory council was created to provide recommendations on how to move forward and support efforts to end FGC. Sahiyo's co-founder, Mariya Taher, is a member of this council.

Washington

In 2023, Sahiyo supported the formation of the Washington Coalition to End FGM/C. The Coalition consists of survivors, advocates, and community-based organizations in the state and across the U.S., and is headed by [Voices to End FGM/C](#) program participant, Absa Samba. Sahiyo led the development of a public webinar in partnership with the Coalition, The U.S. End FGM/C Network, Children's Alliance, and Mother Africa to educate constituents and stakeholders about the proposed legislation. The holistic legislation on FGC, of which the Coalition was a fundamental actor, was passed on April 20, 2023.

Connecticut

Sahiyo initiated the [Connecticut Coalition to End FGM/C in 2020](#). In September 2022, Sahiyo hosted a webinar with this Coalition and The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity to garner public support for legislation on FGC. Sahiyo also assisted in educational outreach presentations for the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights, Connecticut Women's Consortium, and others. The [Connecticut Governor and Lieutenant Governor officially recognize International Day of Zero Tolerance of FGM/C](#).

Massachusetts

Sahiyo worked for five years to help Massachusetts pass a law on FGC, [which it finally did in August 2020](#). During that time, Sahiyo's activities to help move this legislation forward consisted of the following: hosting a roundtable, educational outreach presentations, a Voices to End FGM/C screening, a Change.org petition delivery event, and various other advocacy events. Sahiyo currently is working towards ensuring the implementation of the law, including the implementation of public education and outreach to impacted communities within the state.

Michigan

Sahiyo collaborated with the Michigan Department of Children and Families after a doctor was charged with performing FGC in 2018. [A roundtable event](#) to gather state officials was organized to determine policies, including how to work with FGC-impacted families.

Program Impact by the Numbers

2016-2023

3

state coalitions were formed

58

educational meetings with legislators were held

2

states passed new legislation on FGC

1

website was created for the Connecticut Coalition to End FGM/C

19

educational outreach webinars were hosted

2

Facebook pages were created for Washington Coalition & Connecticut Coalition

42

policy blogs were published

2

action alerts created in partnership with **UNICEF USA & Equality Now**

In addition to the aforementioned data points, Sahiyo also created original educational resources such as fact sheets, brochures, and letters of support.

Looking Forward

Sahiyo will continue to participate in policy education and outreach through advocacy in the years to come and hopes to expand our policy-building in a variety of ways, including:

- Working towards creating comprehensive legislation addressing FGC across all states, prioritizing survivor support, cultural sensitivity, and community education, as well as reporting mechanisms for those at risk.
- Increasing opportunities for survivors to access federal and state-based victims' services and compensation (i.e. civil remedies).
- Supporting federal and state-level systems to become more culturally inclusive and sensitive to efforts to end FGC through education and outreach.
- Increasing opportunities for citizens to learn about FGC legislation in their area and providing them with resources to contact their legislators.
- Supporting international efforts to educate policymakers about FGC, encouraging favorable support for legislation against FGC.
- Continuing to work as a member of The Global Platform to End FGM/C and put forth international advocacy efforts towards increasing funding, programming, and action on FGC at both private and public levels.
- Creating advocacy opportunities at high-level events with a call to action to UNICEF-UNFPA and other international bodies to invest further in anti-FGC efforts globally beyond the 32 restricted countries currently in UNICEF's data collection.
- Expanding our Policy Internship program to increase the capacity for our work in this programmatic area.

RESEARCH PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2016 - 2023

Needs Statement

Female genital cutting (FGC) is a global issue that is [reported to have occurred in 92 countries](#); this updated data comes after the United Nations (UN) claimed that 200 million girls and women had undergone [FGC in 32 countries](#) throughout Africa and the Middle East. In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates over half a million women and girls are at risk of or living with the effects of FGC. However, this CDC data has not been updated in over ten years and is an estimate based on indirect immigration data from the 32 (mostly Sub-Saharan African) countries. The statistics do not include women from other regions of the world where FGC is reported, including most countries in Asia or Latin America such as India and Columbia. Gaps in the data also include individuals born in the U.S., second and third-generation Americans, and survivors who don't identify as cisgender women.

The lack of accurate research and data can lead to negative consequences: an incomplete picture of who is impacted by FGC and a resulting lack of prevention and support resources for these survivors. Therefore, funding opportunities related to FGC research, prevention work, and/or survivor support resources are few, or nonexistent in some parts of the world, but very necessary. The creation of public policy often relies on data and needs representative and accurate findings to address issues. Service providers who believe FGC is not relevant to their work must also understand the scope of this issue to inspire opportunities for training on best practices to support survivors.

To address the absence of relevant data, Sahiyo's research program utilizes a community-focused and community-driven approach that centers on the voices and experiences of FGC-impacted communities. As such, the research conducted aims to be inclusive of the diverse experiences of survivors and community members, and the research itself has been initiated by survivors and activists in the field.

Program Goals

- Address current gaps in research on FGC (i.e. research into FGC in the Bohra community).
- Produce research that is community-centered and driven.
- Amplify the voices of survivors.
- Support emerging researchers (community-based, student researchers, etc.) to grow and contribute to the knowledge base on FGC.

Program Activities

- Conducting original research; which involves recruiting participants, creating interview/survey materials, administering interviews/surveys, coding qualitative data, analyzing quantitative data, discussing findings, and more.
- Disseminating research findings, including outreach to media, partners, and other influential figures as well as directly to participants and communities that practice FGC who can benefit from the findings.
- Collaborating with student researchers/organizations/individuals on their FGC-related research by providing technical assistance and helping them build skills across the scope of research.

Program Impact by the Numbers 2016-2023

3

**original and Sahiyo-led
research projects**

21

**collaborations with student
researchers from 17
universities**

Program Impact

Thus far, Sahiyo's research program has involved several projects:

1. In 2016, Sahiyo published the first-ever global study on FGC in the Dawoodi Bohra community, which surveyed over 384 Bohra women. It found that 80% of women had been cut and that 81% did not want FGC to continue to the next generation.
2. In 2017, Sahiyo investigated and revealed that FGC is practiced in parts of Kerala, India. This countered the previous assumption that in India, FGC is practiced only by Bohras.
3. In 2019, Sahiyo conducted a Needs Assessment survey among Bohra community activists on how to better support them and their advocacy efforts.
4. Since 2021, Sahiyo has been undergoing a research project titled, "Examining Intersections Between FGM/C and Other Social Oppressions Research Project," which seeks to explore the intersection between FGC and other forms of oppression. (i.e. racism, Islamophobia, transphobia, and other forms of inequity).

Additionally, Sahiyo provides ongoing support to students working on their capstone projects, theses, and dissertations on topics related to FGC, such as psycho-sexual health and healing, raising awareness in education institutions, and the importance of engaging male allies.

Looking Forward

As Sahiyo grows, we aim to expand our research program in the following ways:

- Create a dedicated staff position for managing research-related projects.
- Conduct original research every 2 to 4 years.
- Create dissemination strategies that help to make research initiatives more inclusive and allow from FGC-impacted communities to utilize the results themselves to create social change.
- Enhance support and structure for student researchers by expanding supervision capacities to ensure the delivery of high-quality work.
- Build relationships with universities, institutions, and professional researchers.
- Equip student researchers with valuable skills such as coding, proficiency in conducting in-depth interviews, and adept report writing.
- Evaluate the post-research experience of student researchers to understand how Sahiyo assisted in their professional development.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2016 - 2023

Needs Statement

Since Sahiyo's inception in 2015, the Internship Program has hosted interns in the following disciplines: development, events & programs, policy, editorial, Bhaiyo (male engagement programming), research, social media, and communications. As a small grassroots organization, the Internship Program allows Sahiyo to build increased organizational capacity to meet [our mission](#) and fulfill our programmatic needs. This Internship Program also provides opportunities for individuals who want to gain experience and skills working in non-profit, humanitarian, and gender-based violence (GBV) work. Finally, once the internship is completed, interns have the option to keep working with the organization as volunteers or activists which builds Sahiyo's network.

Program Goals

- Increase Sahiyo's organizational capacity to meet our mission.
- Enhance the skill sets of future leaders in the field of non-profit, humanitarian, and gender-based violence work, in addition to enhancing their professional skills, such as communication, project management, leadership, time management, team building, technology, cultural sensitivity, content writing, translation, social media outreach, and public speaking.
- Support interns in building domestic and global networks to support their own development and growth in the non-profit and humanitarian professional space.
- Build on our relationship with interns so that they continue to support Sahiyo as volunteers after their internship term has ended.

Program Activities

Outreach & Recruitment

In order to recruit interns, Sahiyo advertises internship positions on college and job boards. All potential interns apply to available positions by submitting their resume and cover letter, along with specific requirements for various internships (i.e. writing samples for the Editorial Team). Applicants invited to the next stage will interview with the Sahiyo team member who correlates with their department of choice.

Onboarding

Interns go through an onboarding process where they learn more about the organization, FGC, best practices, role expectations, and more. Each intern is connected with the department lead to help them schedule tasks and provide resources.

Assignments

Interns are assigned specific tasks and are expected to complete a monthly report outlining their activities, as well as lead weekly or biweekly meetings to update their supervisor on projects and collaborate as a team.

Exiting

After the completion of the internship, interns participate in an exit interview with a Sahiyo staff member from a different department. This process enables the organization to get honest feedback from the intern about the program.

Program Impact by the Numbers

27

interns from July '22-
November '23

3,188

hours of work completed
for Sahiyo by interns
(2021-2023)

6

departments at Sahiyo
currently have interns

Program Impact

Across the different departments that offer internships at Sahiyo, interns are expected to complete specific tasks.

- Bhaiyo Interns: organize Bhaiyo meetings, help recruit new members, and work to expand the program.
- Development Interns: help with grant research, writing, and management tasks as well as developing fundraising events.
- Editorial Interns: write blogs, edit content written by other Sahiyo staff and volunteers, and contribute to the monthly newsletter.
- Events & Programs Interns: are expected to plan a webinar which includes researching a topic, coordinating speakers, learning how to use digital event management platforms, and creating materials to promote the event.
- Policy Interns: attend coalition meetings, coordinate legislative meetings, and organize policy advocacy events.
- Social Media and Communications Interns: create social media content, as well as plan and execute public awareness campaigns.

Additionally, the Internship Program can cultivate future staff who will possess a strong foundation in Sahiyo's mission, morals, values, and organizational structure as a result of their internship experience.

Looking Forward

Sahiyo hopes to grow the Internship Program by:

- Increasing the number of interns working with our organization at any given time.
- Creating paid internship positions to compensate for the work our interns do for our organization.
- Creating a Volunteer and Intern Coordinator position.
- Building out new internships that we have (i.e. Policy and Bhaiyo).
- Hosting a monthly Zoom call for interns across all disciplines.
- Conducting student outreach and recruitment, including Sahiyo presentations hosted by interns at current interns' respective universities.
- Developing the Internship Program to include students whose master's courses require a full-time three-month internship.
- Conducting outreach activities, including having interns network in their home country and co-host events with NGOs working in the area of GBV or women's rights.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2016 - 2023

Needs Statement

As a small organization, Sahiyo often lacks the staff capacity to meet the growing demands of our work. Our Volunteer Program allows us to connect with individuals who are interested in learning more about female genital cutting (FGC) and garner assistance in different areas of our organization, including administration, development, programming, social media, and more. The Volunteer Program enables us to expand our capacity while working to incorporate diverse voices from all backgrounds into the movement to end FGC. The Volunteer Program also serves to support those who may be interested in joining the work to end FGC, but who may not be aware of opportunities to engage in such work. The program also supports individuals who may not have the time to dedicate themselves to full-time activism against FGC, or who may prefer to engage in more private activism to learn more about FGC before jumping into larger-scale public advocacy.

Volunteers who participate in Sahiyo's work come away with increased professional skills in non-profit, humanitarian, and gender-based violence work. This program allows volunteers to network with leaders in the field of FGC prevention, as well as other volunteers and activists working to end FGC around the world. As a result, more people are aware of ongoing educational opportunities around FGC and continue to stay engaged with Sahiyo in a variety of ways.

Program Goals

- Increase Sahiyo's organizational capacity to meet our mission.
- Further Sahiyo's operations by tapping into the volunteer's skills.
- Build a volunteer community of individuals who act as ambassadors of Sahiyo's work.

Program Activities

Volunteers assist with a host of various programs, events, and organizational operation tasks. These activities are tailored to individual volunteer needs expertise, and desires, including, but not limited to:

- Providing presentations on FGC to build awareness in the broader public as well as more specific communities.
- Maintaining and enhancing our communications platforms (i.e. social media, websites, etc.).
- Translating materials from English into Gujarati, Hindi, and other languages.
- Proofreading Sahiyo materials.
- Researching and writing blog posts on FGC interventions, practices, personal experiences, and other related content.
- Participating in research projects.
- Organizing, planning, and creating educational outreach events on FGC.

Maintaining a robust volunteer program involves the following organizational tasks:

Outreach & Recruitment

In order to advertise the Volunteer Program, we share our [volunteer position description](#) on sites such as LinkedIn, various social media channels, and more. Potential volunteers begin by first applying to the position, which includes filling out an interest form. They are then invited to interview with a member of the Sahiyo team so that we may learn more about their skills and what areas they are interested in volunteering.

Onboarding

Volunteers go through an onboarding process where they learn more about the organization, FGC, best practices, role expectations, and more. They are expected to review Sahiyo's Introduction Guidebook, complete the Feedback Form, and sign a confidentiality agreement.

Assignments

Volunteers receive their assignments on an ad hoc basis. Sahiyo currently operates a volunteer Listserv, where potential opportunities are emailed to volunteers who can then choose to participate in that project. Sahiyo also facilitates a WhatsApp group chat for sharing volunteer opportunities, upcoming events, and announcements, and allows volunteers to network with one another.

Program Impact by the Numbers

2016-2023

259

volunteer applications
since 2016

21

student volunteers who
work with Sahiyo to
complete projects for
school, such as thesis,
capstone, research, and
more

18

outreach and education
volunteers

12

volunteers supporting
Sahiyo's research

69

active volunteers as of
2023

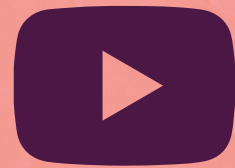
Looking Forward

Sahiyo is looking to expand the scope and capacity of our Volunteer Program by:

- Hiring a Volunteer Coordinator.
- Increasing the number of volunteers working with Sahiyo.
- Training more volunteers in outreach and education, development, research projects, and creating the monthly newsletter.
- Building more relationship-based activities with volunteers to support continued engagement with Sahiyo.

sahiyo

United Against Female Genital Cutting



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