

# THE GUIDE TO DIGITAL ACTIVISM

The image features a bright yellow background with the title 'THE GUIDE TO DIGITAL ACTIVISM' in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. The text is arranged in five lines. Several social media icons are integrated into the design: an Instagram camera icon in a white circle to the left of the word 'THE'; a lowercase 'f' in a white circle to the right of 'THE'; a Twitter bird icon in a white circle to the right of the word 'TO'; and a person climbing a rope icon positioned between the 'O' in 'TO' and the 'I' in 'DIGITAL'. Additionally, there are two black silhouettes of people: one running to the right, positioned between the Instagram icon and the word 'GUIDE', and another standing with arms raised, positioned between the 'f' icon and the word 'GUIDE'.

**A guide for those who want to engage in creating  
dialogue against Female Genital Cutting  
(also known as Female Genital Mutilation)  
through digital and social media.**

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## WHAT IS DIGITAL ACTIVISM?

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Digital activism is the use of digital tools such as the internet, mobile phones, and social media to bring about social and/or political change.

As the digital activism researcher Mary Joyce explains, digital activism is  
*"the way that citizens use digital technology to make  
social and political change."*

This digital activism then can involve a range of activities, including those that raise online awareness, such as Facebook Live discussions, Twitter chats, and creating and promoting petitions, or organizing offline events, such as creating Facebook groups to provide planning and details for a meet-up, walk/run, or protest that raises awareness of the issue.

The

# #MeToo

movement is a great example of digital activism creating ripples in today's times.

It is a hashtag-driven movement that has brought out stories of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and harassment occurring globally, while simultaneously working to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Social media has been **key** in facilitating the #MeToo movement. The sheer number of women who have shared their stories publicly via social media suggests that change can occur if conversation on an issue is created.

Social media networks such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, and WhatsApp are powerful tools that can be harnessed to create and drive social movements.

*In this resource guide*, we acknowledge and elaborate on how social media and digital tools such as blogs and films can be deployed to drive change and create conversation against Female Genital Cutting (FGC).

If you have spoken about FGC on social media (e.g., through tweets, blogs, or Facebook posts), made any contribution to the subject through films, or are interested in doing so in the future, this guide will help you understand the best practices for engagement and enable you to have a firmer grasp on the nuances of communication surrounding Female Genital Cutting.

We will also look at the challenges of advocating on FGC in the online sphere.

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**This guide will help show that it is possible to mobilise opinion on the subject through digital and online tools.**

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However, it is important to note that the responsibility rests on you — the **writer/ creator/ maker** — to use this power in the best possible way, keeping positive outcomes in mind.

We hope you take ideas from this resource guide as a starting point towards creating the change you want to see with your digital activism!

*To start with, let's look at some of the most successful contemporary examples of online activism to better understand where we stand today.*

# WHERE DO WE STAND TODAY?

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In less than a decade's time, the world has seen massive success stories of online tools shaping ideas about social behavior, acceptability, political thought, and entertainment as we do today.

We can better understand this concept by examining the idea of 'affordance,' as pointed out in the study [\*'The Influence of Social Media on Collective Action in the Context of Digital Activism'\*](#).<sup>1</sup>

## 'AFFORDANCE' IS WHAT AN ENVIRONMENT OFFERS AN INDIVIDUAL

The Internet has become a very important environment in our lives, as a place for self-expression. **Furthermore, by the very nature of its design, the internet offers us a tremendous potential to generate opinions.** For example, social media statuses and tweets allow us to share our own opinions and observations.

## THE IMAGE OF AN ACTIVIST IS CHANGING.

**An activist is no longer just a person who holds protests and marches, but can also be someone who utilizes a plethora of digital tools to advocate for a cause. By putting out your own thoughts in an online space, you can mobilize other people and shape their actions.**

Let us look at some successful examples that emphasize that the power rests on you, the individual who is now capable of creating change through a digital device!

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<sup>1</sup> The Influence of Social Media on Collective Action in the Context of Digital Activism: An Affordance Approach

# THE MOVEMENT AGAINST FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING AS SHAPED BY DIGITAL ACTIVISM

Even though FGC is a taboo topic, online spaces have created an environment that allows dialogue on the issue, breaks barriers of anonymity and shame, and touches upon what was considered a highly guarded secret for many communities.

There is a massive difference in how conversation on FGC was perceived decades ago and how it is perceived today. About 30 years ago, books on FGC were a rarity, as was any form of written research. Even established authors met harsh criticism when they wrote about FGC, as Alice Walker did in her book *Possessing the Secret of Joy*.<sup>2</sup>

Today, there has been a significant leap in both the number of conversations on FGC taking place and the number of people taking part in them.

Social media and other online tools have afforded us a space to publish research, testimonies, and stories, forming a wave of micro-narratives that has normalized the discourse against FGC in the public sphere.

**sahiyo**  
INSIGHT

**81%**

of people surveyed did not want the practice to continue.

Sahiyo conducted a pioneering study of 385 participants through an online survey using Google Forms and published the first-ever all-online research on FGC in the Dawoodi Bohra community.

This research, available on the Sahiyo [website](#),<sup>3</sup> has been the stepping stone for our storytelling platform.

This finding suggests that we have the potential and scope to draw out narratives from within the community to counter opinion on the practice of FGC.

<sup>2</sup> From the book *Waging Empathy*, ed. Dr. Tobe von Levin Gleichen

<sup>3</sup> [www.sahiyo.com](http://www.sahiyo.com)

# DIGITAL OUTCOMES USED AS 'EVIDENCE'

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Testimonies by people worldwide serve as evidence of the prevalence of FGC.

Several studies have demonstrated how personal stories, told through media such as films, newspaper articles, and literature from NGOs, have been used to build concrete evidence of the prevalence of Female Genital Cutting. This information is especially crucial in countries where the knowledge of its existence is hidden and speaking about FGC is considered a taboo.

For example, '[A Pinch of Skin](#)' by Sahiyo co-founder Priya Goswami was quoted as evidence proving the prevalence of FGC in India to the Supreme Court of India.

## sahiyo INSIGHT

**Online sources like documentaries and media coverage can spark other people to speak out and become activists too!**

The FGC stories that have been shared on social media have been cathartic for survivors and has helped them feel less isolated. These stories also serve as inspiration and motivation for others to speak out and join the movement.

We found out through the [Sahiyo Needs Assessment Survey](#) that '..although each activist's story is unique..their activist journey typically started with a realization about the prevalence of the practice: whether this be through a family member speaking out, a documentary, or media coverage, the realization sparked further investigation.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [Sahiyo Needs Assessment Survey](#)



## SAHIYO D-I-Y (DO IT YOURSELF)

Think of three places where you first found information on FGC and list them here.

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Did something inspire you to take action against the practice? What was it?

DIGITAL

ACTIVISM

CASE

STUDIES

Studying other digital movements can help us to understand how to move forward in our own digital activism.



## IMPACT OF A HASHTAG: THE #METOO RIPPLE EFFECT

The #MeToo movement encouraged women to shed their silence around sexual assault and workplace harassment. As well-known women, including actors, Olympic athletes, and journalists, shared their stories, other women were encouraged to share as well.



A protester holding a placard in Tahrir Square referring to Facebook and Twitter, acknowledging the role played by social media during the Egyptian Revolution

## SOCIAL MEDIA MOBILIZES THE ARAB SPRING

As per a study conducted by Zeynep Tufekci and Christopher Wilson, '**Social Media and the Decision to Participate in Political Protest: Observations from Tahrir Square**', Facebook was instrumental in mobilizing people to join the protest against the regime.

*'Based on a survey of participants in Egypt's Tahrir Square protests, we demonstrate that social media in general, and Facebook in particular, provided new sources of information the regime could not easily control and were crucial in shaping how citizens made individual decisions about participating in protests, the logistics of protest, and the likelihood of success.'*

*We demonstrate that people learned about the protests primarily through interpersonal communication using Facebook, phone contact, or face-to-face conversation. '*

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Should you be sharing any sensitive content on social media, consider ensuring that is encrypted and sent through a safe channel.

Facebook has been used to mobilize people to join or communicate about political dissent.

That said, governments and corporate organizations all over the world collect our data through social media platforms such as Facebook.

## WEBSITES BIRTHING ANTI-WAR SENTIMENT: MOVEON.ORG

The website shares the thought behind its genesis:

*'When tech entrepreneurs Joan Blades and Wes Boyd created an online petition about the Clinton impeachment in 1998 and emailed it to friends, they were as surprised as everyone else when it went viral. Although neither had experience in politics, they shared deep frustration with the partisan warfare in Washington D.C. and the ridiculous waste of our nation's focus at the time of the Clinton impeachment mess. Within days, their petition to "Censure President Clinton and Move On to Pressing Issues Facing the Nation" had hundreds of thousands of signatures. For the first time in history, an online petition broke into and helped transform the national conversation.*

**Wes and Joan realized that their petition's success only hinted at the internet's potential to impact politics.'**

This site mobilized more than three million members in a campaign against the Iraq War using online media.



# MOVEON



## SUCCESSFUL CHANGE.ORG PETITION AGAINST FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING/MUTILATION IN INDIA:

The most pertinent example of digital activism surrounding Female Genital Cutting has been the success of Change.org which helped propel conversation on FGC globally.

The 2015 petition created significant media attention, garnering 196,908 signatures.



A still from We Speak Out on Change.org

A still from the success note of the 2014 Equality Now petition.

In the U.S., in 2014, anti-FGC activist Jaha Dukureh<sup>5</sup> started a petition to the then president, Barack Obama. The petition received over 220,000 signatures and was declared a success when Obama ordered the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to undertake an in-depth study on the number of women and girls in the U.S. affected by FGC. [The report of the study was released in 2017.](#)

### Victory

Jul 22, 2014 — Over the past few months, more than 220,000 of you have signed this petition, urging the American government to end the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the United States, and commission a prevalence report on FGM's impact on women and girls.

Because of your voice, the U.S. has acted.

At a summit on FGM and child marriage in London, the Obama administration announced it would conduct a major study into FGM to establish how many women are living with the consequences of FGM in the United States and how many girls are at risk. Not only that, but the administration said they would create a preliminary working group on FGM, with a mission of measuring the extent of FGM in the United States and coming up with concrete plans to tackle it.

This could not have happened without your support. Today, we stand more than 220,000 people strong from all over the globe. And we can say that our voices -- along with those at The Guardian and Equality Now -- helped compel the Obama administration to act.

<sup>5</sup> [End Female Genital Mutilation in the U.S.](#)

## SAHIYO D-I-Y

List three powerful online campaigns.

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What can you learn from them?



## WHY DO PEOPLE ENGAGE IN DIGITAL ACTIVISM?

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### PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

Sometimes, one may want to propel a movement for change due to deeply personal reasons. As the expression goes, *'The personal is political'*.

Many survivors have drawn strength from the mobilizing potential of social media and made their voices heard. In doing so, they have not only shed silence, but also have become a positive inspiration for other women, encouraging others to share their stories as well.

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INSIGHT



Sahiyo co-founders Aarefa Johari (left) and Mariya Taher (top) were among the first women from the Dawoodi Bohra community to share their stories while revealing their identities on social media, in films, and in written pieces.

This gave strength to individuals from within the community to come out as well and let their views against the practice be known. **By putting a face to the movement, a mobile phone photo has the power to shed stigma on a taboo subject.**

In the movement against FGC, many women have spearheaded change by making their voices public. In the book *"Female Genital Mutilation and Social Media"*, Christina Julios cites a few examples of survivor-activists who have taken charge of building the resistance.



## SAHIYO D-I-Y

List any powerful activists you can think of:

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What can you adopt from their style of advocacy for change?

# GROWING TOGETHER IN THE MOVEMENT

AS ACTIVISTS WORKING ON SENSITIVE SUBJECTS, OUR STRENGTH LIES IN THE STRENGTH OF OUR NETWORK.

As we share our opinions on social media, we organically form a filter amongst ourselves, gradually gravitating towards like-minded people with similar ideologies. As several theories suggest, we approach social media channels to grow connections.

Studies further connect activism with network building

*'[B]y allowing people to form online public spaces for extensive information sharing and deliberation, synthesis aims to aggregate diverse perspectives while coordinating and creating shared values to support social change.'*<sup>6</sup>

This synthesis is the basis of all social media-driven movement, within which like-minded people tend to seek out each other.



Source: Sahiyo supporters and activists participate in the "I am a Bohra" photo-campaign

<sup>6</sup> [The Influence of Social Media on Collective Action in the Context of Digital Activism: An Affordance Approach](#)

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We all challenge the harmful practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and recognize it to be a form of gender-based violence and harm to a child.

The Detroit News

OPINION

## Letters: Other views on FGM, schools

The Detroit News |  
Published 10:36 AM EST Dec 18, 2018

### Female genital mutilation is heinous

We are all survivors of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) who take issue with last week's letter ("Dawoodi Bohra women of Detroit speak up," Dec. 13). Some of us grew up in the Dawoodi Bohra tradition such as yourselves, others are from Christian communities, animist communities, and a variety of faiths. Some of us were born in the United States and others have migrated here from other countries, and now call the United States our home.

We all challenge the harmful practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and recognize it to be a form of gender-based violence and harm to a child. We understand

This still is from an article in the Detroit News.<sup>7</sup> This opinion piece has been collectively signed by nineteen activists, many of whom are from the Dawoodi Bohra community.

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### INSIGHT

**Once you have identified people with similar opinions, don't hesitate to reach out!**

It is important to recognise an individual's struggle when they become public in their activism against FGC. At the same time, remember we are stronger together. To build a movement, one needs the support of like-minded people.

It is easy to identify like-minded peer support through social media channels such as Facebook. They are the people who like and share your thoughts on the subject.

<sup>7</sup> [An article in the Detroit News on activists supporting anti-Khatna advocacy](#)

## SAHIYO D-I-Y

List people you have wanted to reach out to:

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Write a message to them and perhaps propose an idea to work together on!



## MIND THE GAP: CHALLENGES

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The internet is a vast, seamless space with unpredictability at its core. One hashtag can mobilize the whole world. At the same time, one tweet can lead to arrests. Between the intention and the desired impact of the action, it is crucial to consider the many invisible barriers. A few barriers connected to speaking on FGC are listed below.

# CAPTURING NUANCES OF THE HARMFUL TRADITION

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To achieve the end goal of spreading awareness against FGC, the nuances of why this tradition is considered important to the community must be understood. Moreover, no two communities practicing FGC have exactly the same cultural context, geography, or socioeconomic understanding of the world.

Even the term FGM is not seen as universally acceptable, with some cultures preferring to use FGC or another term that might be in their local language.

Some of the most crucial challenges connected to speaking about FGC are listed below:

## FGC IS CARRIED OUT BY VARIOUS COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE WORLD FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.

While the extent of FGC may not be easy to determine, being highly specific might be the best way to go forward. For example, Khatna, as FGC is called in India, is different from FGC in Egypt.

To speak about the movement against FGC, it is helpful to narrow the subject down to specific keywords regarding the community and FGC such as "Egypt" and "FGC or FGM" and then initiate an internet search on the subject.



A Still from "A Pinch of Skin",<sup>8</sup> a film by Sahiyo co-founder Priya Goswami

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### INSIGHT

**When using a picture in your advocacy work to depict the practice of Female Genital Cutting always make sure:**

The right community is represented. FGC is prevalent in different communities worldwide.

Always respect the privacy of people pictured.



**COMMONLY MADE MISTAKES WHILE DEPICTING FGC/M IN THE DAWOODI BOHRA COMMUNITY.**

#### **Mixing the type of FGC/M practised:**

Dawoodi Bohra community is known to practice Type 1 of FGM/C in India and worldwide. Using image which does not correspond to the community, sends mixed signals about the article.

Sahiyo has time and again come across community members who disregard a media article because it mixes the types of FGC/M practised; because it incorporates an image from Africa or other parts of Asia while speaking of Khatna amongst Bohras.

#### **Mixing the context:**

Putting a picture of FGC/M practised in Africa, in an article which is speaking about FGC/M in the Dawoodi Bohra community.

#### **Who has undergone:**

Using an image to show a 'victim' is (ethically) problematic, even more so when she is not from the community but of a different ethnicity.

Source: Sahiyo Media Resource Guide

<sup>8</sup> [A Pinch of Skin](#)

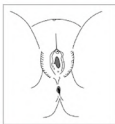


## MULTIPLE FORMS OF FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING

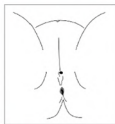
These are the various forms and extent of Female Genital Cutting practised across the world.



**TYPE I**  
A. Prepuce removal only or  
B. prepuce removal and  
partial or total removal  
of clitoris.



**TYPE II**  
Removal of the clitoris  
plus part or all of the  
labia minora.



**TYPE III**  
Removal of part or all  
of the labia minora, with  
the labia majora sewn  
together, covering the  
urethra and vagina and  
leaving a small hole for  
urine and menstrual fluid.

Source: [Sahiyo Media Resource Guide](#)<sup>9</sup>

## sahiyo INSIGHT

No two communities have the same reasoning for cutting, extent of cut, age of cut, etc.

Before speaking about a community practicing FGC, thoroughly research the facts.

Check out Sahiyo's [website](#)<sup>10</sup> as a starting point for resources on FGC around the world.

**THERE IS OFTEN A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE TYPE OF FGC BEING DISCUSSED AND THE IMAGE USED.**

<sup>9</sup> A Still from Sahiyo Media Resource guide, available for download at the Sahiyo website

<sup>10</sup> [www.sahiyo.com](http://www.sahiyo.com)



## DATA AVAILABLE ON THE SUBJECT MAY NOT BE THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH. EVEN RESEARCHERS FIND IT HARD TO ASCERTAIN THE FULL EXTENT OF THE PRACTICE.

Khatna, or Female Circumcision, is often classified by the World Health Organization as Type 1, which is broad in itself and includes the complete or partial removal of the clitoris.

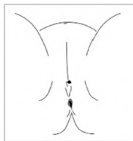
However, in many circumstances, the actual extent of the cut can remain undetermined. For instance, the cut could have been done for symbolic reasons and be just a prick. Or a more drastic cut could have been made because the child kicked and moved too much during the act.

Though Sahiyo purports that all forms of FGC are harmful, such variations can add complexity to the issue of FGC. One must always be mindful of subjectivity and different experiences while reporting on FGC, while recognizing that in addition to the physical invasiveness of the practice, emotional and psychological harm can also be done to the girl.



FGC/M MOST RELEVANT TO INDIA IS TYPE I AS PRACTISED AMONG DAWOODI BOHRA MUSLIMS IN INDIA

Source: [Sahiyo Media Resource Guide](#)



**Type III is the most extreme.**

It involves removal of the inner and/or outer labia, which may or may not include the clitoris and then sewing up the wound to leave just a small hole for urination and menstrual flow.

Complications as a result of the extreme forms; infibulation and excision results in developing of keloid scars, difficulties in childbirth and may even lead to death of both infant and mother.



**Type I is the most commonly heard about practice in India as practiced amongst the Dawoodi Bohras Muslims in India and other diaspora communities across the world.**

This form of Female Genital Cutting includes the removal of the clitoral hood, prepuce and the partial or total removal of the clitoris itself.

It is important to specify in any report that Khatna is not experienced in a uniform manner by all Bohras.

1 Because that is the truth

2 Because a misleading report will alienate any Bohra woman who experienced Khatna in a different, less traumatic manner.

Source: Sahiyo Media Resource Guide

It would be safe to say that no two women's experience can be compared, even if she has undergone Type 1, the seemingly least severe, but equally violating.

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**INSIGHT**

**Stay away from any preconceived notions or judgement.**

Through fact-checking, quoting sources, and maintaining a nonjudgmental stance, one can better reach out and connect to different communities practicing FGC, and uniquely position oneself within each case.

**NO TWO TYPES OF CUTTING CAN BE COMPARED OR GROUPED TOGETHER.**

## SAHIYO D-I-Y

Find a news article. Write down the keywords present in the piece. What would you do differently?

# THE REASONS BEHIND THE CONTINUATION OF FGC ARE VARIED.

The scattered expanse of the practice, varied nature and extent of the cut, and different reasons behind FGC pose some of the biggest challenges to communicate the adverse effects of the practice for anti-FGC advocates.

Although, social media channels are useful for starting dialogue on FGC, and the related knowledge dissemination and awareness creation, it is important to double check the information shared by others via posts, comments, and tweets, as social media, in and of itself, hardly guarantees authenticity.

Advocating against FGC is difficult not just because different women have been cut with different degrees of severity, but also because pro-FGC community members cite a variety of different reasons for perpetuating FGC. Within the Bohra community, some of the most common reasons are:

Source: Sahiyo Media Resource Guide



## REASONS FOR KHATNA

Multiple explanations were given as to why FGC/M continued in the community.

Participants were able to mark all of the explanations they had heard for the continuation of FGC/M.

### The most common answer was that FGC/M was continued for religious purposes.

Breakdown of percentages of survey participants marking each explanation listed below:

- 56% For religious purposes 🧑 222
- 45% To decrease sexual arousal 🧑 178
- 42% To maintain traditions and customs: 🧑 161
- 27% For reasons of physical hygiene and cleanliness 🧑 103
- 9% To gain respect from the community 🧑 32
- 9% As a necessary requirement for a good marriage 🧑 36
- 2% To increase sexual arousal 🧑 8

Those who marked "other" indicated that they had heard no explanation for FGC/M 🧑 12

### Some lesser quoted reasons are:

to ensure cleanliness and purity i.e. 'tahaarat', and to aid religious piety

to discourage promiscuity by reducing a woman's illicit desire for sexual intercourse, and thereby ensuring fidelity within the marriage

to discourage masturbation by clitoral stimulation

to enhance a woman's sexual pleasure and enjoyment within the context of marriage.

Source: Sahiyo Khatna survey 2015

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## INSIGHT

Hashtags are a great tool for leaving your online footprint. If you need outreach for your content, make sure that you use hashtags to connect with people outside your network.

Please be mindful that Female Genital Cutting and Female Genital Mutilation are not the only terminology used to describe the practice. For instance, in Bohra communities, FGC is known as 'khatna' or 'khafz,' or simply 'female circumcision.'

Being thoroughly aware of all the terminology helps in recognizing discourse on the subject while sifting through various related content.

Keeping an open mind might even enrich your research, as it might invite a contrary point of view, giving your output a more holistic dimension!



### THESE ARE NOT BOHRAS

Be aware that incorrect use of visuals can be misleading and end up implicating people from another community.

This portrays a victim in a highly vulnerable situation. It might trigger trauma for those who have undergone this.



Image Credit: unknown

This visual is a commonly used one, found in many reports and articles on FGC/M. This is not a picture of people from the Dawoodi Bohra community and its usage can be problematic. It depicts the victim in a highly vulnerable state.

Usage of this picture can be offensive to both, the community, and the person who is photographed; who is clearly not in a situation to give consent.

Source: Sahiyo Resource Guide

Whether your preferred medium is a tweet or a well-researched article, knowing the nuances of the practice, narrowing down your search to specifics, and keeping a nonjudgmental open mind will ensure effective output.

## **sahiyo** INSIGHT

**Beware of using the wrong picture or undocumented data.**

Many anti-FGC activists use stock photos to underscore their point, but end up using the wrong image. This is not only factually incorrect but can detract from anti-FGC advocacy.

# ACTIVISM VS SLACKTIVISM

As we speak of challenges pertaining to creating dialogue on FGC, the greatest challenge of all is one which is true for all forms of conversation online; being reduced to lip service, or mere post or hashtag.

As an activist or person interested in creating dialogue against any form of Gender-Based Violence, including FGC, try to go beyond a hashtag, status, or series of tweets.



## SAHIYO D-I-Y

Ask yourself, what more can be done to take part in the movement to end FGC? Below are some ideas. Suggest more.

Join the organization as a volunteer or online contributor!

Offer to write something

Make a small video clip on why speaking on FGC is necessary

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**GO THE DISTANCE!**  
**YOU WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU MADE A DIFFERENCE!**



# TROLLING

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One of the biggest challenges in the online world is trolling. Activists all over the world face it. Anyone can troll you if their opinions don't match yours. Although there are no simple solutions when one is attacked online, we suggest the following mantra:

## BE PREPARED

By being prepared for the possibility of being trolled online, you can be one step ahead if such an event occurs.

## BE CALM

Remember, the trolls want to bring the worst out in you. By being calm and not provoked by their responses, you will always be in the lead.

## BE POSITIVE

Lastly, it is important to remember that you are not alone. Every person online with an opinion can be trolled. This is a very common phenomenon.

**REMEMBER TO NOT TAKE IT PERSONALLY, AND, IF POSSIBLE, DO SHARE A GOOD LAUGH WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE!**



## THINGS TO CONSIDER AS A DIGITAL ACTIVIST

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### THE POWER IS IN YOUR HANDS!

To galvanize people of like-minded thought, we can start by checking who likes our statuses/opinions/tweets. As people wanting to create change, **it is good for us to be mindful of people who are likely to support the cause - because we need as much support as we can get.**

**Once you identify the people who can be your allies, believe that YOU have the power to create change. Always ask yourself how you can galvanize opinion.**

## **KEEP TRACK OF YOUR FOLLOWERS.**

There is great power in numbers. Even if you are supported by 20 people, those numbers are important. **Reach out and engage with them frequently.**

As noted earlier, online platforms are designed to propagate interconnectedness. Therefore, it is easy to find people interested in your line of thought by observing who engages with your content through likes, shares, and comments.

Once you have an idea of the people interested in your argument, get in touch! Don't hesitate!

## **BE CONSISTENT IN YOUR COMMUNICATION ABOUT THE SUBJECT. ESTABLISH A GOOD FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION.**

It is always useful to establish patterns of communication, so your followers will know what to expect. Be open and expressive.

## **BE CONSISTENT ABOUT YOUR PLATFORM. PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW WHERE TO FIND YOU.**

Whether you choose Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram, or starting a blog, consistency of content is the key.

## **KEEP YOURSELF INFORMED ON THE SUBJECT.** **CROSS-POST ARTICLES, NEWS, TWEETS,** **FILMS AND OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE** **ON YOUR SUBJECT.**

As we mentioned when discussing the nuances of FGC, keeping oneself updated is the best way to get ahead of people who are advocating in support of it.

**Remember, people who believe FGC should continue can appear large in number on social media. To dissuade them, one needs to be informed on new research, interventions, programs, laws, and individuals working to end it.**

## **BE ON THE LOOKOUT TO** **GROW YOUR NETWORK.**

Every person coming on board is a potential collaborator. Be on the lookout for what that person can bring to the movement. Teamwork is the best way forward!

## **ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE** **ON A POSITIVE NOTE.**

Avoid derogatory or negative comments, even if they are about people who have values you might not agree with.

## **LEAD WITH POSITIVITY.**

Practices such as FGC are a form of Gender-Based Violence. These subjects are heavy and emotionally exhausting. Leading with positivity and the right attitude can enable a constructive online environment wherein, irrespective of emotionally charged topics, people will be open to have a conversation.



**USING PHOTOS TO SUGGEST  
CHANGE AND POSITIVE IMPACT**



**SENSATIONAL IMAGES CAN TRIGGER STRONG  
EMOTIONS IN THE MINDS OF SURVIVORS**

Factually incorrect examples which can defer the justice to the survivors because it is 4 often used by pro-khatna supporters as a way to 'other'.

# HOW CAN YOU MAKE YOURSELF HEARD?

One of the main goals while speaking to a group with a different ideology from yours is to make yourself heard.

**IN ORDER TO DO SO, PREPARE TO LISTEN.**



It's not always easy to have a patient ear while listening to a group with an entirely different ideology from yours, especially during a conversation about issues such as feminism, politics, or FGC.

But even while speaking to someone who wholeheartedly believes in something that you stand against, remember to 'assume good intentions', as Digital Activism researcher Mary Joyce puts it.

As author Frances Lee writes in their book, "Toward an Ethics of Activism"

'As leftist activists, we have bulked up our muscles for critiquing and tearing down problematic behaviors, but are less practiced in reflection and turning towards one another.'

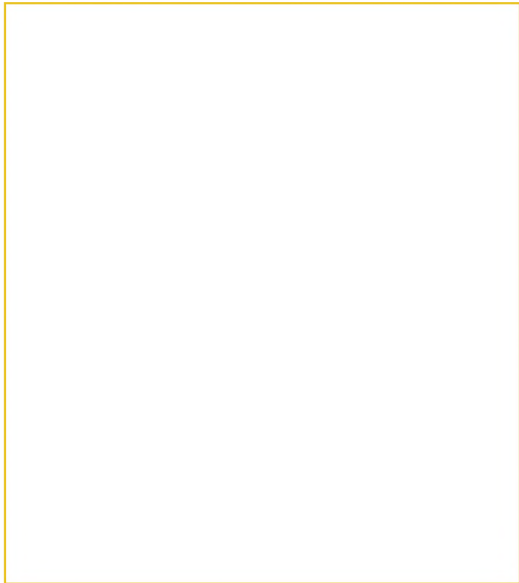
**In order to shed this habit, try having such a conversation in a safe space. Start with asking your friends why they think FGC continues. Remember to hold this conversation within a circle of people you trust.**

<sup>11</sup> [Unstoppables#17: Conflict Resolution in Activist Facebook Groups](#)

## SAHIYO D-I-Y

Divide yourselves into teams. Try to hold a discussion on FGC as two opposing sides.

What did you learn about the other side?



# sahiyo

## INSIGHT

Both newcomers to activism and long-time activists can be afraid to speak up, for fear of being ruthlessly called out or banished by fellow community members or friends and family.

Be mindful of everyone's constraints. You can read more about what we found through our [Sahiyo Activist Needs Assessment survey](#).<sup>12</sup>

	PUBLIC ACTIVISM	PRIVATE ACTIVISM
<b>Outlets for Activism</b>	 <p>Eponymous writing and social media presence, e.g. blogging</p>	 <p>Anonymous journalism and social media presence</p>
	 <p>Interactions in the media, e.g. interviews, documentary film-making</p>	 <p>One-to-one or whatsapp conversations with women from the community</p>
		 <p>Joining activist conglomerates</p>
		 <p>Additional support to organizations, e.g. proof-reading campaign materials or managing twitter handle</p>



# SAHIYO D-I-Y

Note what you have learnt in this guide

How the online/virtual discourse on FGC has affected change towards the abandonment of the practice?

How sharing can help?

How to make one's network grow

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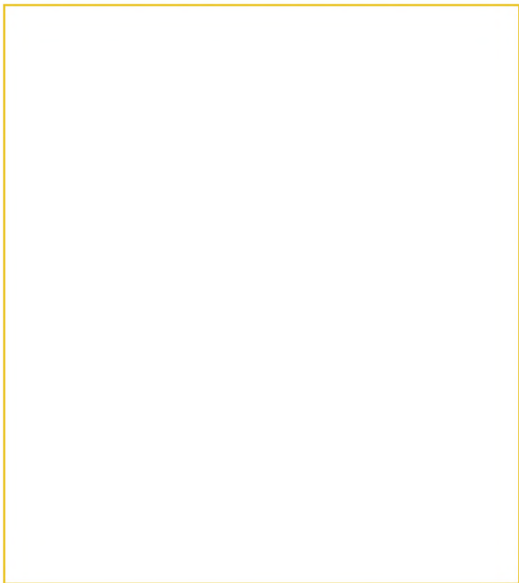
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How will your next steps in advocating against FGC employ what you've learned?

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# SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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