



**GENERATION**

AFRICA-LED MOVEMENT TO END FGM/C | MY POWER MY VOICE

# **GIRL-CENTERED FRAMEWORK A PRACTICAL GUIDELINE**

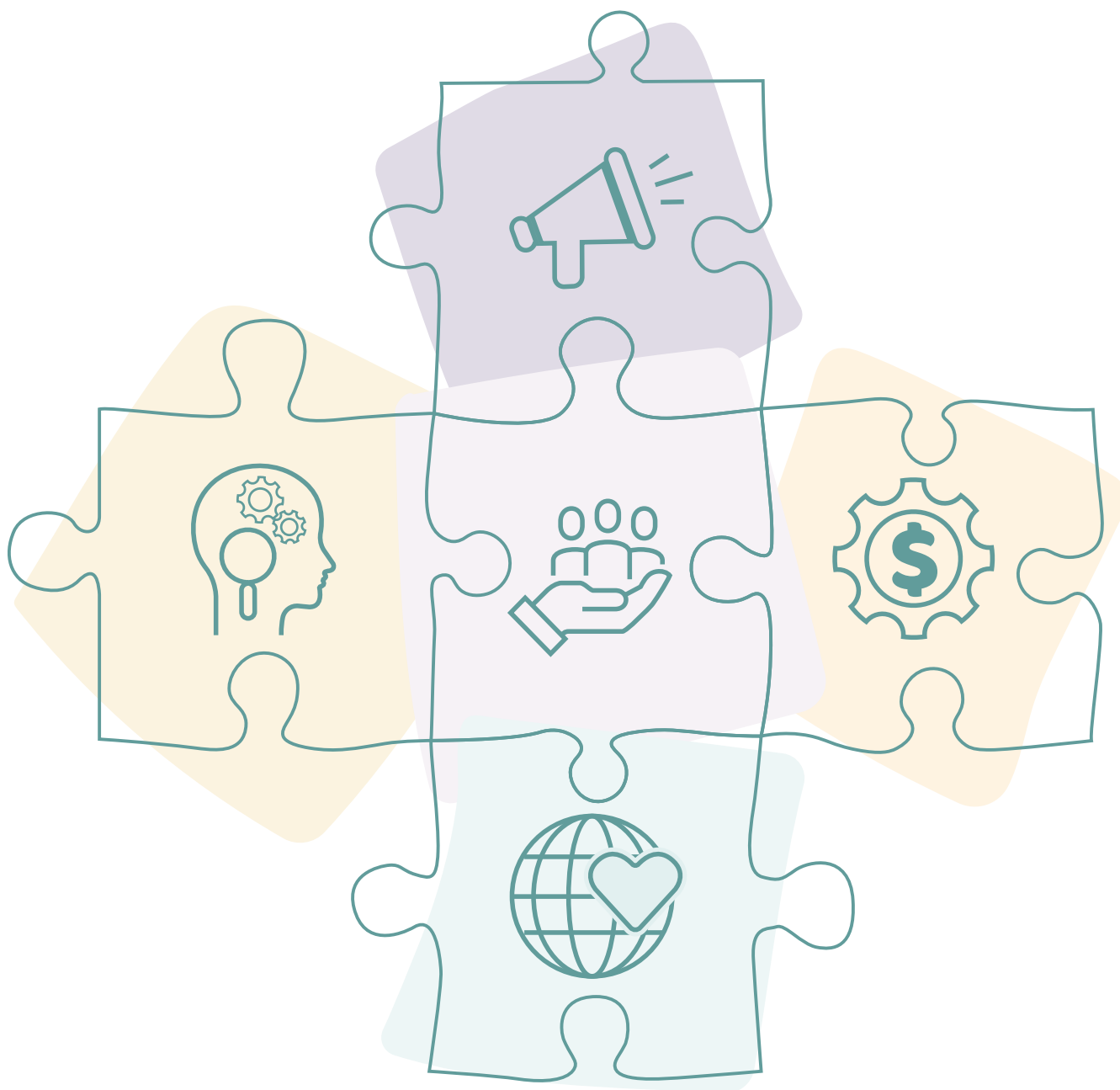
**A Practical Guide to a  
Girl-centred Approach  
to end Female Genital  
Mutilation / Cutting  
(FGM/C)**



# Introduction

The TGG-ALM programme works across 6 output areas – community implementation, small grants, integration, strategic media and campaigns, global advocacy and evidence and learning. For each of the output areas (except for integration which cuts across the other areas) this document provides suggestions on how to put the GCF into action. These are not meant to provide an exhaustive list of all girl-centred activities but rather to encourage programme staff to reflect on how to engage girls safely and meaningfully and give some ideas that can be adapted to the specific needs and context.

Suggestions on how to enhance the safeguarding and wellbeing of girls have also been added at the end of this guide, although this is not a stand-alone output area. Safeguarding is central to the implementation of the GCF, and concrete steps need to be taken to ensure that our interventions ‘do no harm’ and that girls wellbeing is actively promoted.





# 1. Community Implementation

The community engagement work stream is focused on mobilizing and partnering with communities to implement targeted community-based interventions aimed at accelerating positive changes in social attitudes towards ending FGM/C. Interventions in this work stream are aimed at strengthening girls' agency/voice/leadership and supporting regular, locally-led norm shifting community conversations and dialogues facilitated by trained community champions. To ensure these activities are girl-centered consider the following suggestions:

- **Co-design** programme activities and tools with girls: consult girls when developing curricula, tools, manuals, activities, strategies, IEC materials and advocacy messages.
- Ensure **girl's constraints, needs and safety concerns are understood/acted upon** by program staff. This would include;
  - Working with girls and young women to set appropriate time for meetings and community engagements.
  - Working with girls to ensure community engagements are held in formal or informal spaces where girls/young women feel physically and emotionally safe.
  - Ensuring the needs of girls or young women with children attending workshops are met. For example, providing appropriate baby food and sleeping rooms with facilities appropriate for babies (if meetings require accommodation). Where possible, child support services can be offered to ensure girls/young are comfortably able to attend sessions.
- Ensure mechanisms are available for girls to provide **feedback** to programme implementation and that their voices are heard, and the program is adapting based on their feedback (for example through the girls' councils).
- Build girls **confidence and skills** to increase their agency and their ability to engage with the wider community (through clubs, skills trainings, leadership trainings, etc).
- Provide **social networking and mentoring opportunities** for girls including supporting girls to participate in social movements and civic engagements.
- Ensure **communities are sensitized** around the programme activities and objectives to ensure buy in and reduce any possible backlash.
- Ensure **community members are engaged in programme activities**. Key gatekeepers such as fathers and mothers, religious leaders, elderly, young boys, etc need to be involved in the programme activities tailored to their role and relationships with girls and young women. All community members have a key role to play in shifting discriminatory and harmful practices.
- Ensure all **community trainings are gender sensitive** and include components of gender, power and the rights of girls/women in all their diversity ensuring that stereotypes that lead to gender -inequalities are not reinforced and that an enabling environment is created for girls to lead and thrive.
- Create opportunities for **girls and other community members** to meet and discuss issues relevant to the girls (I.e. community dialogues, intergenerational dialogues, outreach activities, mother-daughter forums etc.) and where possible encourage girls to lead these conversations.
- Raise awareness with girls and their communities around girls' rights and how to prevent, and respond to gender based violence (GBV).
- Conduct a thorough mapping of the **services and support available** for reporting, referral and response to cases of GBV including FGM, violence and harassment, in the programme target areas and create awareness to girls and communities on their availability.



## 2. Strategic Media and Campaign

TGG-ALM uses strategic communications to connect and inspire people to act, exchange information and ideas, and influence decision-makers. With communications integrated into programme design, the programme focuses on storytelling, media relations, digital communications, and indigenous communication innovations to communicate evidence-based impact. The programme is also responsive to FGM/C events and conversations, listening to, connecting, and empowering girls and youth we work with. To ensure these activities are girl-centered consider the following suggestions:

- Explicitly acknowledge **gender inequalities** and aim to promote inclusion and girls' rights in every communication and campaign. FGM is a manifestation of deeply entrenched gender inequalities therefore these inequalities need to be addressed for lasting change.
- Highlight the inequalities and both the emotional and physical consequences of FGM.
- Consider **intersectionality** when documenting stories. Some girls may face different forms of discrimination in addition to gender. These categories that create additional levels of discrimination or privilege include: Age, Race, Family (married, in a relationship, single, divorced), education or racial background, Ability/Disability etc. Ensure that girls from different backgrounds and characteristics have their voice heard.
- Celebrate and spotlight girls as **active protagonists and agents** of change in their communities.
- Amplify the first-person voices of girls and their allies and use positive images.
- Use **rights-based language** to discuss issues and call for change. FGM is a violation of human rights and should be considered as a form of gender-based violence.
- Don't use graphic, sensationalist or triggering descriptions of FGM or violence .
- Don't reinforce **stereotypes** based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation or any other aspect of identity ie. Re-framing FGM from a cultural / religions practice to a form of GBV and human rights violation.
- Don't place **blame** on girls themselves for situations of FGM, poverty, violence, and/or exploitation they may experience.
- Don't place all of the burden of change on girls' shoulders. Eradicating FGM requires a multi-dimensional approach that cuts across the individual, family, community and policy/legislation levels. I.e Highlighting what the role of different stakeholders in eradicating FGM.
- Avoid anything that defines affected girl's whole lives by FGM or child forced marriage as 'lives ruined', 'victims' etc and corresponding images: we must be careful not to undermine their power or dignity.
- Don't share the faces of girls who are undergoing difficult experiences.
- Engage girls while developing key messaging to end FGM, and IEC material in terms of colours, messaging, design etc.
- Create spaces in media strategies for real life stories of girls to be highlighted and projected.
- Share positive authentic stories of change and stories that position girls as leaders (rather than as victims)
- Promote role models and inspiring stories of girls and young women who have not undergone FGM in communities that practice FGM who are creating change in their communities.
- Ensure to get consent from all relevant stakeholders before highlighting stories that concern girls and young women.
- Ensure girls' identity is protected and their safety guaranteed. Do not share personal details and ensure women and girls are not identifiable through information and images.



## 3. Global Advocacy

TGG-ALM advocacy workstream aims to strengthen political commitments and/or action towards ending FGM/C and VAWG at sub-national, national, regional and global level. To ensure these activities are girl-centered consider the following suggestions:

### Co-creating advocacy asks and messages with girls

- Reach out and consult with a diverse range of girl-led advocacy groups (national, regional, global) working on the topic to gather diverse views and experiences to shape key global advocacy messages and asks.
- Utilize feedback from listening sessions with girls participating in the program at all levels (including safe spaces, girls' councils, STAGE, etc.) to formulate advocacy asks and messages
- Work to **establish and build a group of young advocates** beyond the 'usual suspects' (those already working in global advocacy processes) and ensure that they are representative of girls **in all their diversity** (include girls with disability, girls from different backgrounds, etc).

### Amplifying girls' voices

- Support girls in **building their confidence, their public speaking and their leadership skills** through trainings and life skills development programme, mentorships, and role modelling.
- Engage girls as keynote speakers, panelists, presenters or delegates in national, regional and global events.
- Strengthen collaboration with local girl-led organizations to actively contribute and lead the advocacy efforts to end FGM/C (when safe for them to do so).
- Create local gatherings (e.g regional forums) for girls and young women to come together, share their stories, and learn from one another.
- Encourage girls' active involvement in civic



engagements where the context allows, enabling them to influence change, occupy public spaces safely.

- Support girls in using MEL findings to advocate for their needs and rights within their communities and beyond. Encourage them to share data-driven stories that highlight their experiences and the impact of programs (when safe to do so).

### Putting girls' safety and well-being at the center

- Always make sure that **girls' safety** is at the center of any public engagement – develop risk assessments in consultation with girls, identify mitigation strategies, and ensure that the safeguarding framework is fully understood and implemented by all those involved.
- Ensure that **girls under 18** are always accompanied by a responsible adult during public engagements and relevant travels.
- Uplift girls' voices with integrity and empowerment, adhering to the 'Do No Harm' principles when quoting and depicting them.



## 4. Evidence and Learning

Evidence-based programming is important for improving outcomes and informing efficient use of available resources to achieve those outcomes. To make our approach to evidence and learning girl-centered consider the following suggestions:

### Engage girls in MEL activities

- **Use existing girl structures within the TGG-ALM program:** Work closely with relevant program staff and reach out to girls' structures (girl clubs, girls' councils, girl safe spaces, etc.) to involve them in MEL activities. Consult them to identify relevant indicators and outcomes that resonate with their experiences and aspirations. When girls are given the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of indicators, chances are, those indicators are more relevant and easier to document.
- **Disaggregate:** Track the number of girls reached by the programme activities and consistently disaggregate data to consider various intersecting identities such as disability, marriage status, and educational background based on programme priorities. Girls know their peers better and can help provide such information more easily.
- **Include storytelling:** Create empathy by documenting change and learnings on girl's agency, leadership skills and demonstrating positive changes in beliefs about FGM/C that support abandonment of the practice. By using story telling techniques, one can shift the audiences mood into empathy, cooperation and support for the cause.
- **Put safety front and center:** Prioritize the safety and well-being of girls throughout MEL activities by implementing robust safeguarding and ethical protocols.

### Empower girls as MEL (and research) partners

- **Involve girls in MEL processes:** Make MEL activities participatory and where possible an

opportunity to build girls' skills on MEL concepts, tools, and methodologies. Ensure they understand the importance of data collection techniques, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations, and how each of these can be carried out and produce different insights.

- **Engage girls as MEL partners, co-researchers or research assistants:** Girls can be engaged to set the research agenda, co-create research questions and influence how the research will be conducted. They can also support lead research in conducting interviews and facilitating conversations with their peers. Giving girls a role in leading the research is empowering for girls but also will help ensure that insights are more authentic and that power imbalances between researchers and local populations are reduced.
- **Encourage girls to actively participate in data collection:** Ensure data collection methods are age-appropriate and culturally sensitive. Use participatory approaches, like group discussions or storytelling, to engage girls in sharing their experiences and insights. During data collection methodologies are explained to the girls so they understand the process and can learn from the experience This will help ensure that insights are more authentic and that power dynamics between researchers and program participants are reduced.
- **Analyze and validate findings with girls:** Facilitate workshops where girls can contribute to analyzing collected data. This empowers them to interpret results and derive insights. Create a supportive environment for girls to express their perspectives and make sense of the data.
- **Partner with girls in disseminating findings:** Make research findings, including longitudinal studies accessible and understandable to girls by presenting them in user-friendly formats and languages to allow for feedback. Share these findings in exclusive girl-only spaces to enhance engagement and understanding.

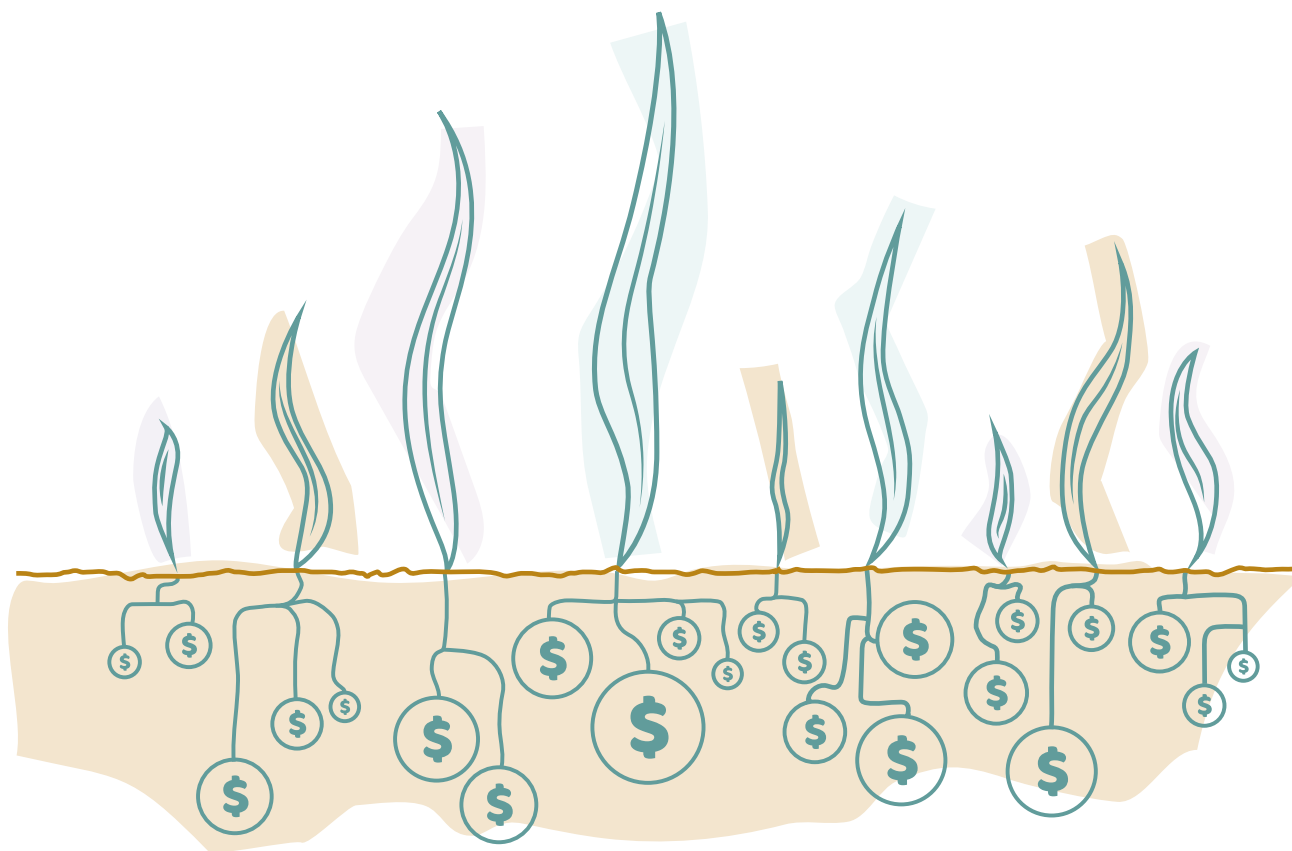


### Establish a continued learning and reflection cycle with girls

- Hold regular feedback sessions with girls:** Encourage girls to share their own observations and perspectives based on the data, to discuss findings and possible implications for the program. This will in turn contribute to collective learning.
- Establish feedback channels for girls:** ensure that girls are represented in MEL committees or advisory groups, allowing them to provide ongoing input into program adjustments and improvements. Maintain an ongoing relationship with girls beyond specific MEL activities. Keep them engaged in program discussions and decision-making processes.
- Acknowledge and appreciate girls' contributions:** recognize their efforts through certificates, awards, or public acknowledgments. By involving girls in MEL, we not only gather more comprehensive and accurate data but also empower them to play an active role in shaping the TGG-ALM programs.
- Renumerate girls for their efforts:** Build trust by showing that we value girls' important contributions. Giving them stipends for what they do shows we respect their time and ideas. The budget line could be given to individuals or to the collective if more appropriate. The arrangements for this should be context-specific and discussed with the relevant program staff.



## 5. Small Grants Mechanism



A small grant mechanism has been developed as part of the TGG-ALM programme to build the capacity and ability of grassroots women's and youth-led organisations and activists to lead change and hold governments to account. This mechanism is meant to be accessible to civil society, particularly in contexts where changing social and gender norms is proving challenging. With the small-grants mechanism, TGG-ALM is reaching the grass-roots African leaders and groups that have a powerful commitment to end FGM/C; and the innovative ideas, reach and influence in their communities to do so. To make this mechanism girl-centered consider the following suggestions:

- **Reach out to non-traditional organizations**, especially girl-led young feminist and youth led organizations.
- **Simplify the grants application and reporting processes** to make it accessible to girl led organization – providing options such as submitting applications via video or via oral interviews.
- Invite regular **feedback** from grantees (especially girl-led organizations) on how the grant making process is working for them and what can be improved.
- Implementation of activities using grants must put the girl at the center.
- Provide all grantees with **training and tools** on safeguarding and emotional well-being.
- Include **support of girl-led movement building** activities in fundable activities
- Use small grants to build links and collaboration between Africa-led and girl-led/young feminist organizations working to end FGM
- Promote **support/mentorship linkages** between small grassroots organizations and bigger/stronger feminist organizations (including creation of partnerships)



## SAFEGUARDING AND WELL BEING

FGM/C reinforces a patriarchal system and gendered social norms, and any threat to the status quo is at risk of backlash, including potential violence and reprisals. It's fundamental that FGM/C programmes are designed with awareness of this risk at its core and continually work with girls and other stakeholders to identify obstacles and risks and put in place context specific strategies to address or mitigate these. In all our work with girls, safeguarding and their wellbeing are essential elements to keep in mind. Across all our activities we need to ensure we protect girls from any harm. This section will give us some practical suggestions on how to protect and support girls throughout our work by highlight general principles of child safeguarding and then highlighting practical tips of ensuring girls safety and well-being.

### What is Child Safeguarding?

- Child safeguarding is about ensuring that appropriate actions are taken to promote the welfare of all children and protect them from harm by TGG-ALM staff/representatives or from unsafe programmes/ processes.
- Given the risks to children and their vulnerabilities, it is critical to embed child safeguarding measures into all programming work with them.
- This will help ensure that TGG-ALM challenges the current systems and structures that lead to children being harmed, and that we ensure our staff/representatives and programmes do not pose a risk to children in any way.

### Disability Inclusive Child Safeguarding

- Girls living with disabilities have the right to be safeguarded, to be heard and to be included in decisions that affect them.
- Girls living with disabilities are disadvantaged and at greater risk of sexual abuse and exploitation. We need to instill the message that child safeguarding means safeguarding all children, including children living with disabilities.
- Disability inclusive child safeguarding advocates for this recognition of the rights of children living

with disabilities and their inclusion.

- Disability inclusive safeguarding recognizes that children living with disability are not a homogenous group and as such disability inclusive child safeguarding puts this into consideration.
- [Disability Inclusive Child Safeguarding Guidelines available here: Able\\_Child\\_Africa\\_Save\\_The\\_Children\\_DiCS\\_Guidelines\\_Full.pdf \(ablechildafrica.org\)](https://www.ablechildafrica.org/child-safeguarding-guidelines)

### Principles of Safer Programming for children including girls

- Where children are rights-holders of programmes, during the set up or realigning of existing programmes we must consider children as active participants.
- Listen to and understand the key concerns of children involved before setting up or realigning programmes. Involvement of children reaffirms their human rights, builds trust and means we can identify and mitigate risks early.
- Recognise that sexual violence is gendered and affects boys and girls differently. Using survivor centred approaches, we will listen to complaints from all children without discrimination or bias and will be sensitive to other dynamics e.g racism, oppression of people with disabilities.

### Guidance for Safer Programming with children

- a. Sexual Harassment Exploitation and Abuse (SHEA) and Safeguarding policies including the Child Safeguarding Policy is translated into local policies using child friendly means/language.
- b. During inception and closing of programmes/ projects make sure the community has information on services and referral pathways such as where to access psychosocial support etc for children in need
- c. Ensure safer recruitment procedures are followed during the recruitment of staff who will be engaging with children. For example, carrying out background checks and vetting to avoid hiring individuals who may pose a risk to children.

- d. Carry out safeguarding risk assessments to identify risks of child abuse and exploitation – at the beginning, throughout the programme, and at the end for learning.
- e. Develop complaints mechanisms that are child friendly (e.g., create with children) so that they feel safe to report both child safeguarding and child protection concerns.

### Practical Application of girl-centered safeguarding:

- Ensure all **front-line staff are adequately trained, supported and prepared** to work with girls and FGM Survivors to reduce the risk of causing harm unintentionally and experiencing vicarious trauma.
- Activity design, risk assessments, monitoring and evaluation and referral mechanisms should ensure that participants are not exposed to harm, abuse or exploitation from third parties as a result of their participation. Girls and Survivors of FGM are included in the design and implementation of the programme.
- Engage girls in **safe spaces** in which they can bring their “full selves” and ensure mutual learning is possible and risk is mitigated. These spaces will be used to build girl’s life skills, agency, self-efficacy, leadership skills which are essential for girls’ ability to advocates for their own rights. These safe spaces will also offer knowledge on FGM, SRHR and GBV and raise awareness of available support services. Examples of safe spaces include: Existing or new girls clubs both in and out of school, girls council structures and the survivor leadership training (Refer to the TGG-ALM safe space checklist).
- Follow agreed methodologies in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that activities with participants do not lead to distress or emotional harm.
- Make regular use of the **emotional well-being toolkit**. This toolkit has been developed by TGG-ALM to provide emotional wellbeing and care for survivors of FGM.
- Commit a proportion of programme **budget** to the creation of safe and healing spaces, and wellbeing activities for girls and FGM survivors.
- Regularly conduct and review SHEA and Safeguarding **risk assessments** with girls around their participation in programme activities and put in place mitigation strategies.
  - Use available TGG-ALM safeguarding and risk assessment tool.
  - Plan to hold risk assessments and monitoring regularly, as needed, in case risks change.
  - Check the risks associated with the location of programme activities; are they safe and how will participants travel to these?
  - Are there other ways participants could be exposed to harm, abuse and exploitation?
- Identify **safeguarding focal points** within each Partner/project location. This focal point persons will support in ensuring the Do no Harm and Safeguarding Framework is implemented across all activities.

### Child Friendly Reporting Mechanisms: General Guidance

- Children participate in designing community reporting mechanisms in a safe and effective way.
- Diverse mechanisms are available, and are safe and sensitive to the needs of children
- Frontline staff are trained to receive complaints from children and recognise the particular risks children face.
- All mechanisms are inclusive and accessible to children with different needs and abilities.
- Children will be listened to and treated with dignity.
- Children should be made aware that necessary authorities will be alerted where there is the need to engage their services and support.

- Develop and share **communication** that explains to girls/women in an easy language (or through images for illiterate girls/women) their rights and how/where to report any safeguarding concerns. This should include accessible Complaints Mechanisms and reporting.
- Ensure utilization of the **TGG-ALM Do-no Harm Safeguarding and Emotional well-being Framework**. This framework outlines clear guidelines on how consortium members and implementing partners should respond to disclosure of abuse and safeguarding concerns from programme participants (Refer to TGG-ALM Safeguarding and Do-No-Harm policy). All disclosures should be received in a survivor-centred way.
- Ensure all front-line **staff are trained** in psychological first aid and principles of a survivor centred approach and are equipped to respond sensitively and safely to any disclosures of abuse. Psychosocial Support should also be available for frontline staff.
- Ensure partners have a contextualized **referral mechanism** for the TGG-ALM program in case of safeguarding concerns.



## Aknowledgements

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## Our partners



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