



GENERATION

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

A GUIDING FRAMEWORK FOR A GIRL-CENTERED APPROACH TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

It's **Girl** O'Clock.



avonaid

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Section 1: Introduction



1.0 Introduction to the Support to the Africa-led movement to end FGM/C

An estimated four (4) million girls living in 30 countries are at risk of undergoing FGM/C annually, while more than 200 million girls and women have experienced FGM/C. Despite significant commitments and investments, indications that the practice is declining in certain areas, and significant progress by women's and girls groups to build vibrant African movement(s) to end the practice, it still persists; often changing and adapting in response to changes in law, policy and social acceptance (for example through trends to cut girls at a younger age, the practice becoming increasingly medical or through cross-border movement to perform FGM). This, in part, is due to deep roots in entrenched patriarchal systems, and in social norms that mean girls have little meaningful control over their own lives and bodies.

The UK Government (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office - FCDO) has a vision of a world free from the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) by 2030, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The importance of eliminating FGM/C is reflected in Target 5.3 of the SDGs: "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation." A Programme has been established entitled 'Support to the Africa-led

movement (ALM) to end FGM/C' to contribute to global efforts to achieve that vision.

The Support to the ALM to end FGM/C Programme focusses on accelerating the pace of change and achieving results to contribute to the vision in the SDGs of a world free of FGM/C by 2030. More specifically, this Programme will support and build the capacity of the ALM to end FGM/C at multiple levels and at scale. The ALM is not working in isolation, but works in partnership with the rest of the end FGM/C community and movement at all levels complementing the work of UN agencies, other alliances and grassroots Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women's and girls' movements amongst others. The intended impact of this Programme is an accelerated reduction in the practice of FGM/C in focus countries/regions by 2025.

1.1 Overall strategic approach to end FGM/C

1. Girl-centred Programming

FGM/C is a practice that primarily impacts girls, so the centrality of their voice, participation and implementation at every stage of the Programme is critical.

2. Socio ecological model

A Political Economy Analysis (PEA) Ecology lens will be applied throughout the Programme. This model begins with understanding the girls' experiences,

vulnerabilities and capabilities; which are shaped by gendered dynamics existing at multiple levels, including: (extended) family, community, district, national, regional and global level.

3. Community-led approach

Social movements must be built from the ground up, community driven and rooted, and be fluid and dynamic. Grassroots organizations are in the best position to understand the dynamics of change around FGM/C decision-making, identify key influencers and how best to mitigate against backlash. This Programme will be led by their expertise in designing their projects' interventions in consultation with girls, women, young people, activists and communities.

4. Changing gender norms to end FGM/C

FGM/C is a manifestation of gender inequality and a human rights violation. The Programme aims to address the root causes of FGM/C by shifting gendered norms so that FGM/C is no longer considered necessary, and is subsequently abandoned. Fundamental to this, is a shift in power and gender relations and how women and girls are valued in their communities and societies and recognized as a constituent with rights.

5. Strategic communications

Strategic communications will be used to tell girls' stories of change, manage media for advocacy and campaigns and ensure the girl is at the center of the call to end FGM/C. These communications will focus on connecting and inspiring people to act, exchange information and ideas, and influence decision-makers. They will respond to the evolving FGM/C events, conversations, listening to, connecting, and empowering girls, women, activists, and youth we work with.

1.2 Girl-Centred Framework

The Programme is committed to putting African girls at the centre of its programmes activities. The Girl-Centred Framework (GCF) has been developed to support efforts to safely centre the voices, needs and priorities of girls in FGM/C Programmes. It outlines how the Programme can deliver on its commitment to 'girl-centred programming' and aims to create alignment between girls' priorities (based on their lived realities of FGM/C and gender

inequalities) and the planned Programme activities.

The GCF outlines four key steps to be followed in a girl-centred approach – find her, listen to her, co-create with her, learn with her (these build on from other girl-centred design models¹). These are then underpinned by the principles to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of girls and to use a power analysis (further in sections two and three).

The GCF recognizes that we have expertise and experience within the consortium and from other partners working to end FGM/C in Africa. It draws together the shared values and vision within the consortium, promising practices and thought leadership in this field, as well as tools already in use by consortium partners as critical reference materials. It has been developed through a consultative process with consortium partners, and it will be added to throughout the Programme lifetime as approaches and learnings about our work with girls continue to evolve and are collated.

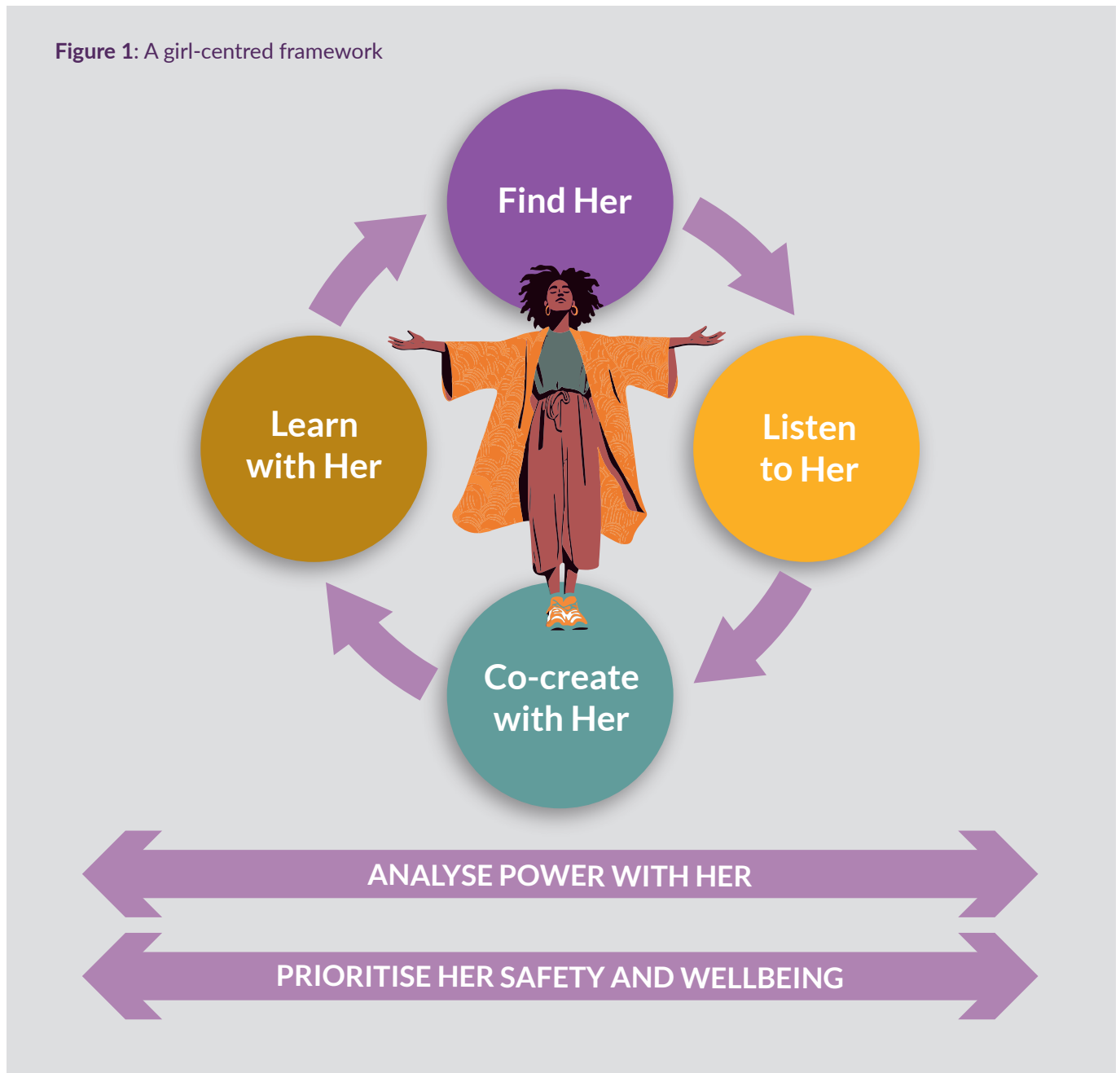
Partners will participate in review and accountability processes every six months (as part of our regular consortium learning sessions) to reflect on how the framework is being put into practice, to share data collected about our work with girls, and to discuss and be accountable to programming adaptations based on girls' lived experiences.

The GCF aims to:

- Deepen accountability to girls, their communities and their supporters
- Promote a common understanding and implementation of a girl-centred approach
- Provide guidance on how to adopt a girl-centred approach in programming
- Generate learning and evidence around how the use of a girl-centred approach can support progress on ending FGM/C



Figure 1: A girl-centred framework



Why is the Girl-Centred Framework important?

In the Kenyan Political Economy Analysis conducted by the programme consortium, it was identified that a girl-centred approach is still not the 'dominant lens' through which policies and interventions are implemented, but that there is an opportunity 'to create a holistic girl-centred approach to gender transformation that places the abandonment of FGM/C as a priority'. Girls' voices, experiences, and insights are key to the development of sustainable and effective Programmes. If SDG 5:3 on elimination of all harmful practices is to be achieved, there is need to trust, listen to, and partner with girls, and ensure they are leading the change. Using a whole-

community approach to address both social and gender norms that perpetuate FGM/C is fundamental – in particular working with the individuals and groups in each community that perpetuate/sustain the practice and the norm (which, depending on context, could include families, religious leaders, midwives and medical practitioners, men and boys etc.) But there is a real risk that programmes that do not also incorporate a girl-centred approach, end up prioritizing the needs and demands of 'power holders' over those of girls. As a result, programmes may have minimal impact on girls' everyday lives, or even perpetuate harm.

Section 2: Power and protection principles – shifting power to girls

Girls, and particularly the most marginalized girls, are often navigating a complex system of social norms, structural inequalities and barriers to meaningful participation, that limit their opportunities and shape their life trajectories. All too often they are at risk of violence and abuse.

Girls are also powerful – they are strategizing, organizing, employing creative strategies, and working together to challenge gendered norms in their communities and to respond to girls' needs. But this power is so often unacknowledged, or actively pushed back against.

Too often engagement with girls in development programmes is either viewed through a narrow lens of 'protection' or a conception of individual 'empowerment' – this often means that big assumptions are made about girls' needs and priorities and that the focus remains on individual actions rather than the structural inequalities that shape girls' lives.

Girls, are also in need of systems of support and protection – through formal (school, health, or police), and informal services and support (families, peers, mentors, community groups and networks). These support systems are particularly vital when faced with high levels of violence and harmful practices, including FGM/C.

So to be a girl, as Purposeful puts it so well, is to sit 'at the apex of power and vulnerability'² – the GCF emphasizes the need to work with both of these principles – programmes must actively think through how to 'do no harm', and to protect girls' safety and wellbeing, whilst actively working to shift power to girls, and to bring an analysis of how power impacts girls' everyday lives into all of our programming. These two principles underpin a programme cycle that involves girls at each stage, as depicted in the framework diagram in section 1.

Principle 1: Analyse Power with Her

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a common reality for women and girls across the

world. To end all forms of VAWG means addressing its root cause - gendered inequalities and power imbalances. Unjust power relations manifest themselves at every level - from the household to global. The Girl-Centred Approach explicitly seeks to unpack and challenge these power inequalities, and ultimately shift and transform power from traditional institutions, patriarchal systems, cultural and religious leaders, men and boys to girls. This is done through prioritising empowerment, solidarity and campaigning, in order to enable girls to take up formal and informal leadership roles, recognize and challenge forms of VAWG and other rights violations, and to build collective power with other girls and allies, to end FGM/C.

A power analysis for building power together with girls³ outlines four types of positive and negative power impacting the lives of girls in public and private spaces, and how these manifest in formal and informal rules of behaviours, institutions and relationships. It outlines how working towards power equalities can help move from a situation where girls are discounted or invisible, to one where their communities, families and other supporters are working towards building collective power. That is, a place where girls would have the ability to make meaningful, strategic choices about their lives, including being able to make decisions about their body autonomy and reject harmful practices like FGM/C.

Principle 2: Prioritize her safety and wellbeing

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.

Girls can also help FGM/C programming better understand the narratives and norms used to justify

Four types of power shape girls' lives:

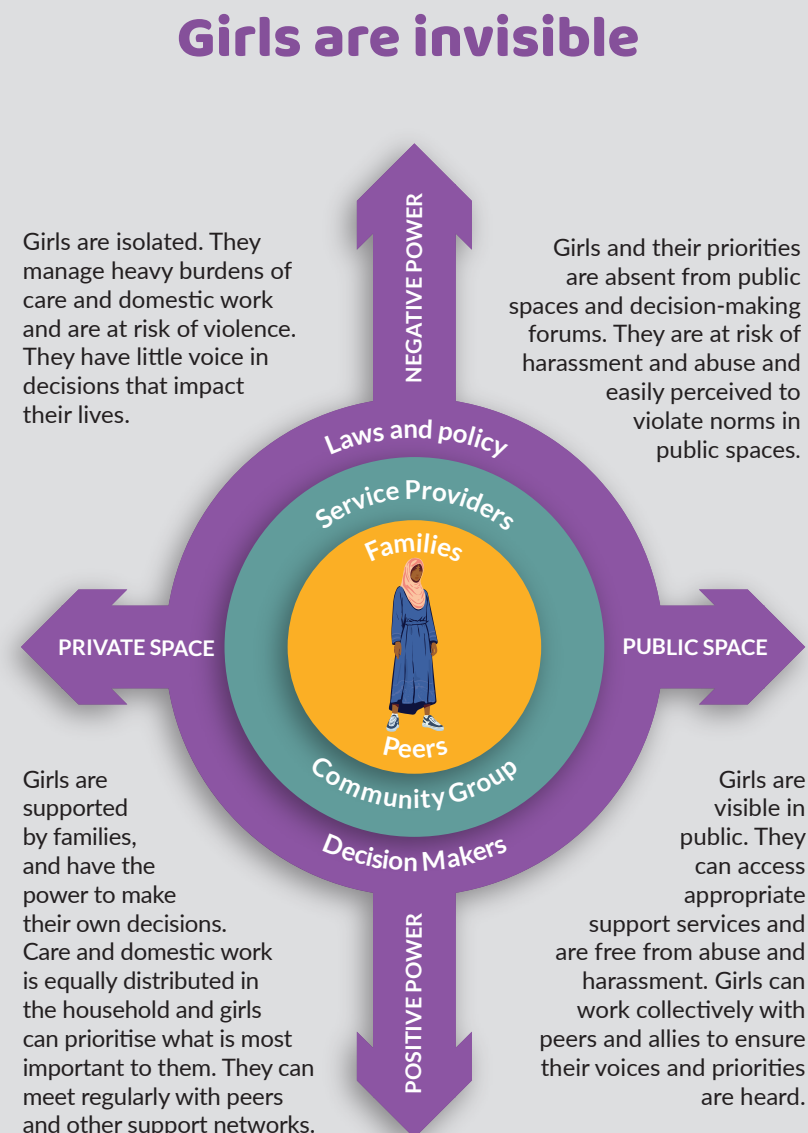
Power over – a negative type of power used to dominate, subordinate and control. Girls can't influence issues that impact them, can't control their bodies, their time and their life choices. They experience fundamental rights violations.

Power within – a positive type of power linked to a sense of self-worth, self-knowledge, and self-determination. Girls understand that they have value, know their rights, and feel a sense of possibility and choice about their own futures.

Power with – a positive type of power that involves building a sense of collective strength among peers and with other groups. Girls can meet together and with other allies to build friendships, understand their common and unique issues, and strategise on ways to support each other.

Power to – a positive type of power that refers to people's potential of every person to shape their life and world, and their ability to learn and to act towards meaningful change. Girls can speak out and influence the decisions that impact their lives in the home, community and decision-making forums.

Figure 2: A power framework for working with girls⁴



Building power together

them being cut. For instance, “Restrictions on girls, are often presented as something that is “protecting” them; even FGM/C is justified as a “protection” of a girl’s (and her family’s) decency and a precondition for a “reputable” marriage”⁵. Therefore, it is important to find ways to reconfigure this narrative, and transform the concept of protection of girls being about prioritizing safe access to services and opportunities, developing the skills needed for girls to have control of their bodily autonomy, economic futures and choice about their futures. That way protection¹⁶ does not become a tool to justify exclusion or control girls’ access to assets.

Putting safety and wellbeing into action:

Safe Spaces for girls

A safe space is a formal or informal place where women and girls feel physically and emotionally safe. The term ‘safe,’ in the present context, refers to the absence of trauma, excessive stress, violence (or fear of violence), or abuse. It is a space where women and girls feel comfortable and enjoy the freedom to express themselves without the fear of judgment or harm. The Programme will ensure that in all



communities where we are working with girls, safe spaces for girls are established and supported. They will be safe and accessible, prioritise the leadership of girls, involve girls in decisions about all aspects of the safe space (such as activities/curriculum, selection of mentors etc.), involve families and communities (as appropriate), work in a survivor-centred way and use appropriate referrals to other support services in the community.

Reporting and Accountability Mechanisms

Quality programming requires opening ourselves up to scrutiny and accountability, and actively seeking feedback on our Programmes. Working with the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) team and the Do No Harm framework, the consortium will ensure complaints and feedback mechanisms are in place to inform us if the Programme is meeting the needs and priorities of the girls and that any complaints or significant problems, are identified quickly and effectively addressed.

The Programme will consult with the girls and women in communities we work with to establish the most appropriate mechanisms. Aspects that need to be considered include:

- locally used languages
- levels of literacy and whether to prioritise oral over written procedures
- accessibility to those with diverse needs
- confidentiality and security of girls raising complaints
- complaints and feedback mechanisms should exist for the entire duration of the Programme in the communities where programming is taking place
- feedback approach to the girls, women, and community members on how issues have been addressed

- ways to appeal, if complainants are not satisfied with actions taken

Types of complaints and feedback mechanisms could include 'Talking boxes' for girls (boxes placed in safe spaces where girls can post messages and which are regularly monitored and responded to), community complaints and suggestions boxes; posters and information leaflets that outline what can be reported, and where to report; community grievance committees and complaints hotlines.

Emotional wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing emphasises self-care, collective care, peer-to-peer support, safe boundaries and safeguarding the mental health of all those involved in the Programme. We believe that a culture of safety and emotional wellbeing is essential for the movement to end FGM/C, and will help to ensure safe and sustainable activism. In all communities where programming takes place, and within other ALM activities, care will be taken to ensure the emotional wellbeing of participants, and will use the the emotional wellbeing tool and resources developed by the Girl Generation in safe spaces and other programme activities to support girls and survivors with practical emotional well-being tools and support, as well as ensuring appropriate access to psychosocial support.

Safeguarding and Referrals

Addressing VAWG and other harmful practices can often mean that disclosures will be made by girls and women and other community members about violence or harm they are facing, or have previously faced, in their own lives, and it is essential that anyone working within the Programme is able to appropriately respond to this.

Staff, partners and volunteers involved in Programme activities will receive comprehensive training on safeguarding and wellbeing. Potential risks and measures for mitigation will inform the design of all Programme activities; paying particular attention to risks of re-traumatizing survivors.

Up to date referral lists will be located in each community where programming takes place, and support services will be regularly evaluated on their accessibility for girls (including consulting with girls on the appropriateness of services).

Section 3: A Girl-centred programme cycle

Girl-centred approaches require a fundamental rethink in how we work with girls, and meaningfully engage them in all steps of the programme cycle. This requires attention and commitment to engaging with questions of power, intersectionality, and inclusion, and ensuring, as outlined in this blog by Stef Monaco that we ‘work with girls’ whole selves through methodologies that are action, play and arts-based, and reinforce core principles such as ‘do no harm’”

The ALM Programme’s GCF follows four steps in the programme cycle, and as explained in the previous section these steps must be underpinned by a commitment to always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of girls and to be guided at all times by an analysis of power as it applies to girls’ lived realities, as defined by the girls themselves.

- 1. Find her** - identifying and mapping the most marginalized girls
- 2. Listen to her** - Meaningful consultations with, and engagement, of diverse groups of girls
- 3. Co-create with her** - designing and implementing with girls
- 4. Learn with her** – working with girls to understand what is creating change, what is not working, and what is creating risk

1. Find her

When girls move into adolescence, the space they are able to occupy in the world and their community starts to shrink.⁷ There are parts of the communities they cannot access due to fear of harassment and violence, or are prohibited to do so. These ‘restrictions’ often happen at a time when they start taking on additional responsibilities at home. In the communities that the Programme works, adolescent girls may also undergo FGM/C, get married and become mothers; even when it is assumed that girls are safe at home.⁸ It’s these types of girls, at home, not attending school, or perhaps facing other barriers such as disability, that all too often excluded in programming. The Programme’s starting point needs to be a commitment to identify

Putting this into action

- Use tools such as the Girl Roster, or other house to house survey approaches to identify which girls are in the communities we are working in, and their potential barriers to participation
- Conduct participatory exercises (for example, community mapping)¹⁰ with diverse groups of girls to identify their walkable community, the services/ resources available to them within their community, and potential safety concerns
- Identify the times and days of the week the girls are available and for what duration, and where they feel safe and comfortable to meet
- Use the circles of influence exercise¹¹ (a participatory exercise where girls discuss who has influence in their lives across each part of the socio-ecological model) with girls to understand who has influence in their lives, and who needs to be engaged in efforts to end FGM/C
- Track the number of girls reached during the Programme and disaggregate this data as far as possible, including dimensions such as age, girls who are in school and out of school, young mothers, girls who are married, girls who are migrants/refugees and girls with disabilities amongst others.

the most marginalized girls, and those impacted by FGM/C, to identify, as Population Council terms it, the ‘full universe’⁹ of girls and then to meaningfully engage with that diverse group of girls across the lifetime of the Programme.



2. Listen To Her

In order to fully realise a 'girl-centred approach' a deep commitment to listening is fundamental, as well as creating appropriate and safe spaces for this listening to take place. This process ensures that girls and women impacted by the practice such as survivors of FGM/C, young women activists working to prevent and respond to FGM/C, girls, and women at risk of the practice, have an influential voice in the Programme.

Putting this into action

- Conduct regular participatory consultations with girls to inform key Programme decisions
- Invest in listening sessions that create safe environments for girls to explore the issues that impact their lives, and that contribute to building 'power with' other girls
- Develop creative strategies for capturing girls' voices and documenting their feedback – for example through the use of video, photography, or other art and storytelling projects
- Ensure that girls and young women are part of strategic decision-making processes (for example as part of the grants making panel, or on the strategic advisory board)
- Ask for feedback from the girls, to understand how best they feel listened to.

3. Co-Create With Her

Often, listening exercises can be conducted in isolation, or as a tick box exercise, without fully integrating girls' priorities into the Programme. Priorities identified in listening exercises will be at the core of the Programme's design and the design is iterative – with girls offering regular reflections/feedback on programme activities.

Putting this into action

- Use the results from regular listening exercises to feed into the design of the overall Programme design and key programme activities
- Co-design key curricula and activities with girls – for example by designing the curriculum for a girls' safe spaces Programme
- Invest in an iterative process where initial design ideas are tested with girls and adapted/improved upon based on their feedback. Conduct regular accountability sessions with girls to feedback how participatory consultation sessions have informed the Programme

4. Adapt And Learn With Her

The Programme will use a variety of approaches to ensure that we are learning with girls, and that their insights are informing the adaptive management cycle. Approaches will include Participatory review sessions, regular report back and accountability sessions, and using insights from girls who are participating as community narrators in the longitudinal study.

Putting this into action

- Conduct bi-annual participatory review sessions with girls using tools such as ActionAid's PRRP (Participatory Review and reflection Process)¹²
- Hold regular report back and accountability sessions where the Programme reports back to girls on whether/how feedback has been integrated into programming
- Use the longitudinal study, including insights from community narrators, to build a longer term picture of what is changing for girls, and use these insights/data to feed into the Programme's adaptive management cycle
- Include indicators that measure whether girls are experiencing positive change, feel that their feedback has been listened to and acted upon

Section 4: Practical application of the girl-centred framework

The Programme works across 6 output areas – community implementation, small grants, integration, strategic media and campaigns, global advocacy and evidence and learning. In this section we outline how each programme component can consider putting the principles and steps to a girl-centred approach into action. The table below provides suggestions for partners about how to put the girl-centred

framework into action, and does not provide an exhaustive list of all girl-centred activities. This table will continue to be added to and adapted as partners test activities through the programme, and this will be reviewed in the six monthly review and accountability sessions.

	Community implementation	Small grants	Strategic media and campaigns	Global Advocacy	Evidence and Learning
Girl-centred programme cycle					
Step 1: Find her	Use the girl roster tool (or similar) to identify girls	Reach out to non-traditional orgs, esp girl-led and young feminist Simplify the grants application and reporting process to make it accessible to girl led orgs – providing options such as submitting applications via video or via oral interviews		Work to establish and build a group of young advocates beyond the 'usual suspects'/those already working in global advocacy processes	Track number of girls reached, and disaggregate data across girls' intersecting identities
Step 2: Listen to her	Conduct community mapping with girls/ establish her 'walkable community' Conduct regular consultations with girls (including use of art and storytelling approaches)	Invite regular feedback from grantees (esp girl-led orgs) on how the grant making process is working for them and what can be improved	Establish feedback loops with girls on how their voices are being represented in media and comms	Use information from listening sessions with girls to inform key advocacy asks, and establish feedback loops with girls to validate these asks Annual regional exchanges to incorporate stories and voices across communities	Establish a girls cohort as part of the community narrators in the longitudinal study Align storytelling with documenting change and learnings.

	Community implementation	Small grants	Strategic media and campaigns	Global Advocacy	Evidence and Learning
Girl-centred programme cycle					
Step 3: Co-create with her	<p>Establish (or continue to support) girls' safe spaces in every community where FGM Programme takes place</p> <p>Work with girls to shape safe spaces/girls group curricula</p>	<p>Implementation of activities using grants putting the girl at the centre</p> <p>Ensuring a high prevalence of girls acquire the grants which aim at a high outreach to girls</p>	<p>Engage girls on developing key messaging to end FGM</p>	<p>Ensure the dissemination of learnings from girls are highlighted at national, regional and global forums for advocacy</p> <p>dissemination of learnings from girls are highlighted at national, regional and global forums for advocacy</p>	
Step 4: Adapt and learn with her	<p>Conduct Regular review and accountability sessions with girls</p>	<p>Conduct Regular review and accountability sessions with girl-led groups</p>	<p>Create spaces in media strategies for real life stories of girls to be highlighted and projected</p>	<p>Inclusion of indicators which track national, regional and global responses to ending FGM</p>	<p>Ensure a girls cohort of community narrators are part of the longitudinal study</p> <p>Inclusion of indicators that show how well girls and girl-led groups feel their feedback has been integrated</p>
Principles					
Prioritise her safety and wellbeing	<p>Commit x % of Programme budget to healing spaces/wellbeing activities for survivors</p> <p>Make regular use of the emotional well-being toolkit</p> <p>Establish comprehensive referral lists to support services that are girl friendly</p> <p>Conduct assessments of support services to establish how 'girl-friendly' services on the referral list are</p> <p>Establish safe spaces for girls in all programme communities</p>	<p>Provide all grantees with training and tools on safeguarding and emotional well-being</p>	<p>Share positive stories of change and stories that position girls as leaders (rather than as victims)</p>		<p>Ensure ethical protocols are in place that prioritise girls safety and well-being during all research/ evidence gathering</p>
Power analysis	<p>Use the circles of influence exercise with girls to map those who have power in girls lives and strategies to work with them</p> <p>Use safe spaces and girls clubs to integrate activities that build girls' self-confidence, health, wellbeing and bodily autonomy</p>	<p>Include support of movement building activities in fundable activities</p> <p>Use small grants to build links and collaboration between Africa-led and girl-led/young feminist orgs working to end FGM</p>	<p>Centre the stories of girls leading change</p>		



Key indicators/Impact measurement and adaptive programming

In order to ensure that we are implementing and learning from the girl-centred approach, it is critical to track some key indicators across the Programme. Some of these indicators also align with the Programme Results Framework – these ones are in

bold and marked by ** The data generated will support regular reflections and ongoing adaptations. The consortium will hold reflection and accountability sessions, where partners will share data and reflections, drawing from the following key indicators. These sessions will be conducted twice a year as part of the programme’s learning forums.

Impact measurement	Key indicators
Community implementation	<p>Number of girls reached by programme – disaggregated by age;(dis)ability; marriage status; in school/out of school; young mothers etc.</p> <p>% of girls participating in programme reporting increased sense of power/self-worth</p> <p>% of girls participating in programme reporting that they know where/how to get help and support if they are at risk of experiencing violence (incl FGM/C and EFCM)</p> <p>% of girls participating in programme reporting increased opportunities to build networks and circles of support with peers and mentors</p> <p>**Proportion of girls participating in feedback mechanisms within interventions who feel they have been meaningfully involved in the design, implementation and adaptation of interventions, including feedback being meaningfully taken on*</p>
Small grants	<p>% of grants going to girl/young women-led and/or young feminist organisations</p> <p>% of organisations working with girls’ benefitting from grants</p> <p>% of girl-led grantees reporting satisfaction with grants making process/(qualitative) Document feedback from girls groups on how supportive grants making process has been for their organisation</p>
Integration	#No. of consultations with girls that inform integration design
Strategic media and campaigns	<p>*** of these stories/campaigns led by/reflecting the voices of girls and girl/youth-led organisations*</p> <p>(qual) feedback from girls on key strategic media and campaigns</p> <p>(qual) feedback from girls, boys and family members on how strategic media and campaigns has influenced their understanding/view of FGM/C</p>
Global advocacy	<p>No. of advocacy actions developed that draw on content from listening sessions/ consultations with girls</p> <p>No. of girl and young women advocates attending national/global events for ALMFGM programme</p> <p>Disaggregation of young advocates characteristics (e.g. gender, age, in school/out of school, (dis)ability etc.)</p> <p>(qual) reports from girls and young advocates about perceived impact of advocacy initiatives</p>

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1. See for example MercyCorp's GirlSPARKS initiative <https://girlsparks.org/>, Population Council's Girl-centred programme design toolkit <https://www.popcouncil.org/research/girl-centered-program-design-a-toolkit-to-develop-strengthen-and-expand-ado> and Plan's explanation of girl-centred design principles <https://medium.com/innovationhub-planinternational/girl-centred-design-what-is-it-f805f5828ac7>
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10. See 'consortium resources' annex
11. See 'consortium resources' annex

Aknowledgements

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