



## **PRESS RELEASE**

*(For immediate release)*

**31st October 2024**

### **A Historic Breakthrough: Somaliland Signs National Anti-FGM Policy!**

After more than a decade of persistent advocacy, the Somaliland government took a historic step in the fight against female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C).

President H.E Muse Bihi Abdi formally approved the signing of the long-awaited Somaliland National Anti-FGM Policy by Hon. Ali Omar, the Minister of Employment, Social Affairs & Family (MESAF) on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024. This groundbreaking policy solidifies Somaliland's efforts towards a zero-tolerance stance on FGM/C, marking a significant victory for women's and girls' rights.

This was done during a two-day Linking and Learning Forum on September 17-18, which was hosted by the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs, and Family (MESAF), with support from The Girl Generation Programme and ActionAid International Somaliland. The event brought together civil society groups, NGOs, and leaders from Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti to unite efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) in Somaliland and across the region.

Muna Isse, Director of Gender at MESAF, shared her excitement: "It's been an honor working with The Girl Generation team to organize this high-level advocacy meeting. We are thrilled the policy has now been signed - this is a great milestone as we move from advocacy to action in ending FGM/C in Somaliland."

This achievement is the result of advocacy efforts by MESAF, in partnership with activists and organizations such as ActionAid International Somaliland, UNICEF, UNFPA, Plan International, NAFIS, civil society organizations (CSOs), and The Girl Generation Programme, which supports the Africa-led movement to end FGM/C (TGG-ALM).

"FGM is something that affects all of us whether in Somaliland, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and beyond. 18th September 2024, marked a great step forward and brought together countries, organizations, and partners who have all signed and pledged through a communique that we will join efforts to support the just signed Somaliland Anti-FGM Policy." Dr. Edna Aden Ismael- a nurse and activist based in Somaliland.

This success builds upon TGG-ALM's work in Kenya, including creating the first-ever End FGM/C CSOs Network, in partnership with Kenya's Anti-FGM Board. At the November 2023 Kenya Linking and Learning Forum, Somaliland representatives gained valuable insights from Kenya's approaches, leading to the strategy that has now resulted in the signing of this crucial policy.

Leaders and representatives from Kenya's parliament and Anti-FGM Board and Somaliland, Djibouti, and Ethiopia gathered to strategize and exchange valuable insights.

"The approval of an Anti-FGM/C policy offers a wide range of benefits including but not limited to strengthening advocacy efforts, protecting vulnerable girls, laying the foundation for a legal ban, and

encouraging a shift in cultural and social perceptions and behaviors around FGM/C.”, says Mohamed Sillah, Executive Director of ActionAid International Somaliland.

On behalf of The Girl Generation, Alice Ngari, the Movement Building Lead, emphasized the significance of this achievement and said, “This milestone is a huge step toward realizing our vision of a world where girls and women can exercise their power and rights, have expanded choice and agency, and be free from all forms of violence including FGM/C.”

This is a very important milestone, but so much more still needs to be done. We look forward to continuing to offer our support in raising awareness of this new policy and towards efforts to end FGM/C as well as early and forced marriages in Somaliland.

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### **About MESAF**

The Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs, and Family of the Republic of Somaliland (MESAF) is mandated to serve specific target groups of society, especially women, children, people with disabilities, and other socially disadvantaged groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs, returnees, and minorities, to ensure their rights of accessing basic services, fair employment opportunities, and protection support are ensured. <https://mesaf.govsomaliland.org/>

*For media inquiries, contact Muna Isse- [Gender.MESAF@Sldgov.org](mailto:Gender.MESAF@Sldgov.org)*

### **About ActionAid International Somaliland**

ActionAid is a global justice federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. ActionAid has been operating in Somalia and Somaliland for over 28 years, implementing integrated programmes on women’s rights, humanitarian response, resilience building, food security, and education. We work with communities, people’s organisations, women’s movements, groups and networks, social movements, and other allies to overcome the structural causes and consequences of poverty and injustice. We connect the work we do at community level with broader efforts and struggles for justice at every level to make the greatest contribution towards a just, equitable, and sustainable world. <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/about-us>

*For media inquiries, contact Nura Mohamed- [Nura.Mohamed@actionaid.org](mailto:Nura.Mohamed@actionaid.org)*

### **About The Girl Generation: Support to the Africa-led movement to end FGM/C**

The Girl Generation programme seeks to accelerate positive changes in social attitudes toward ending FGM/C, within a broader vision of a world where girls and women can exercise their power and rights, have expanded choice and agency, and be free from all forms of violence. The intended impact of this programme is an accelerated reduction in the practice of FGM/C in focus countries by 2027.

The Girl Generation: Support to the Africa-led Movement to End FGM/C Programme (TGG-ALM) is a consortium led by Options Consultancy Services and includes Amref Health Africa, ActionAid, Orchid Project, Africa Coordination Centre for Abandonment of FGM/C, and the University of Portsmouth. It works closely with the Population Council’s Data Hub, the programme’s data and measurement arm. [www.thegirlgeneration.org](http://www.thegirlgeneration.org)

*For media inquiries, contact Alice Ngari- [A.Ngari@options.co.uk](mailto:A.Ngari@options.co.uk)*