



**GENERATION**

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

# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT:

## YOUTH ADVOCACY & ACTIVISM TO END FGM



ORCHID  PROJECT

WORKING TOGETHER TO END  
FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING

# INTRODUCTION AND TOOLKIT BACKGROUND

This Youth Advocacy and Activism Toolkit to End FGM is designed for any youth advocates and activists working on ending FGM. It highlights the importance of youth leadership and involvement in ending FGM, and provides guidance on how to develop and implement an advocacy plan, including strategies, actions, and priorities for driving change.

This toolkit was developed by Orchid Project as a partner in The Girl Generation: Support to the Africa-led Movement to end FGM programme (TGG-ALM) led by Options, and written by consultants Katy Chadwick and Natalie Robi Tingo, with significant input from youth activists across Africa and Asia. Youth activists joined online advocacy sessions at the end of 2023, and as part of these sessions provided inputs about the key sections and priorities contained in the toolkit. Youth activists then came back together to review and validate the toolkit in 2024 before it was published. The toolkit also draws on the online youth forum, and the resulting [call to action](#), that was developed in 2022. The list of youth activists and other allies involved in developing the toolkit have been included as an annex to this toolkit.

It is hoped that by strengthening youth advocates' and activists' skills, sharing their stories of change, and highlighting key strategies for effective advocacy, this toolkit will contribute to strengthening the youth movement creating a world free from FGM, and all forms of violence against women and girls. We want to strengthen youth advocacy and activism, and encourage other young people to join the movement to end FGM. We believe that every action counts. Stand with us to end FGM and help build a future where women and girls can live free from all forms of violence and discrimination. Act now and be a part of the change!

## About The Girl Generation: Support to the Africa-led Movement to end FGM

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

TGG-ALM is building a combination of evidence of what works or what does not work to reduce or end FGM in affected communities.

TGG-ALM was established to contribute to global efforts to meet the UK Government's vision of a world free from FGM by 2030. Its vision is 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 is a reduction in FGM by 2027 in focal regions of Kenya, Somaliland, Senegal, and Ethiopia.

**ACT NOW  
AND BE  
PART OF THE  
CHANGE!**

## Scope of the toolkit and how to use it

The youth advocacy and activism toolkit is specifically designed by and for young people, offering actionable guidance, practical steps, and insights and examples from other activists to create a lasting impact on efforts to end FGM.

This toolkit is primarily intended for young people interested, or already engaged, in advocacy efforts to end FGM, whether they are working independently or as part of youth-led or youth-serving organisations and initiatives. It is also valuable for anyone committed to promoting meaningful youth participation and engagement in ending FGM. The toolkit covers a broad range of advocacy aspects, including problem analysis, communication, community mobilisation, growing movements and policy analysis. We encourage you to explore the various sections at your own pace, and use the toolkit in a way that best suits your needs. We hope the content will support you to reflect on your end FGM advocacy goals, and apply what you've learned to drive positive change.

## Feedback on Use

We encourage everyone who uses this toolkit to reach out and share their experiences with us. We're eager to understand how you're applying the toolkit, any adaptations you've made, and how it's working for you. Your feedback is valuable as we aim to track the use of these products and learn from your experiences and insights.



## Safeguarding

In this toolkit, Safeguarding means protecting a citizen's health, wellbeing, and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject included in the toolkit, harm may be inflicted on participants, knowingly or unknowingly. It will be important to analyse risks to minimise the harm. Therefore, before starting utilisation of this toolkit, please refer to the [Do No Harm, Safeguarding and Emotional well-being Framework for TGG-ALM Programme](#).

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## Relevant References

Please refer to TGG-ALM website for additional information on the programme, and additional resources generated as part of the programme: <https://thegirlgeneration.org/>

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This toolkit was designed, through a collaborative process with youth advocates, to provide a practical guide to support youth advocates' and activists' efforts to end FGM.

## CONTENTS AND TOOLKIT SUMMARY



**Section 1:** Sets out the current context, and highlights the transformative power of youth activism in ending FGM, and all forms of violence against women and girls,

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**Section 2:** Outlines four key steps in creating an advocacy plan

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**Section 3:** Looks at identifying tactics and strategies for influencing change.

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**In each section there are links to existing resources and tools, 'spotlight' sections, case studies and checklists.**

## THE CONTENTS FOR EACH SECTION INCLUDE:

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- \*Case study 4** - Building coalitions to pass the protection against domestic violence bill in Kenya - Virginia Ndute and Women's Empowerment Link (WEL)\*
- 3.4 **Strategy 4** - Supporting positive mental health and well-being
  - 3.5 **Strategy 5** - Engaging with regional and global policy events
- \*Case study 5** - Lessons from Loveness on changing National Law on child marriage in Zimbabwe! \*- Loveness Mudzuru\*

## 1.2 Glossary

<b>Advocacy</b>	The process of organising to influence change
<b>Advocacy strategy</b>	The plan for achieving the specific change(s) you are advocating for
<b>Advocacy tactics</b>	The specific actions or activities used to influence the achievement of your advocacy goal(s)
<b>Advocacy targets</b>	The person/people/groups/institutions with the power to respond to your advocacy goals and make changes, and/or move the political process, in relation to your issue
<b>Critical mass</b>	The size, point or amount large enough to produce a particular result - in social norms theory this is when the minority who are pushing for change reach a critical size and a cascade of behaviour change can occur, overturning a previous social norm.
<b>Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM)</b>	FGM is any procedure that involves the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs, for non-medical reasons
<b>Informed Consent</b>	Ensuring that before collecting personal information from people (including documenting stories of change to end FGM), you must clearly explain to the people involved what the project is about, what their participation will involve, and how their information will be used. They should understand the potential risks and benefits and agree to participate voluntarily. They can also withdraw their consent at any point during the process. This helps to ensure their rights and autonomy are respected, and that they feel safe and comfortable sharing their stories.
<b>Key Messages</b>	Concise and persuasive statements about what you want to achieve, the change(s) you want to see, and how this can be achieved.
<b>Lobbying</b>	The process of influencing specific policymakers' decisions in relation to your advocacy issue.
<b>Marginalised voices</b>	Refers to the perspectives and experiences of individuals or groups who are systematically excluded, ignored, or underrepresented in society due to various forms of discrimination and/or disadvantage. This might for example include survivors of FGM and GBV, Women and girls at risk of FGM, LGBTQI+ individuals, migrants and refugees, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities.

<b>Problem Statement</b>	A short and clear definition of an issue, what needs to change, and why.
<b>Social norms</b>	Social norms are the perceived, informal, and mostly unwritten, rules that define acceptable actions and behaviours within a specific group or community. They consist of what we do, what we believe others do, and what we believe others expect of us and approve of <sup>1</sup>
<b>Tipping point</b>	The point at which small changes or incidents become significant enough to cause larger, more significant, change.
<b>Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)</b>	Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM) is an example of violence against women and girls <sup>2</sup>





# SECTION 1:

# YOUTH ADVOCACY



## 1.1 What is advocacy, and how can young people participate?

Advocacy is a process of organising to influence change, and is a powerful tool for participation in the decision-making processes that shape our lives. When we participate in advocacy it is normally with the intention of changing the ways in which power, resources and ideas are created, used, or distributed. Advocacy can also open up new spaces for participation and dialogue - anywhere from local councils to global forums.

Your advocacy on ending FGM might have many different targets - anything from influencing a local primary school to integrate awareness about FGM into their lessons, working with religious leaders to promote messages on ending FGM, campaigning for local by-laws, lobbying your national government to put in place (or better implement) national legislation on ending FGM, or influencing the outcomes of international forums to set specific international commitments, targets, and resources, for ending FGM.

You might also use many different strategies and components for your advocacy work - working with the media, using social media campaigns, community organising and mobilisation, coalition building, lobbying, or education and information sharing with the general public.

It's important to be clear on who you need to influence, and what you want them to change (section 2). You then need to identify your tactics and strategies for influencing that change (section 3).

This advocacy toolkit provides a guide to get you started on designing your own advocacy plan. It also contains links to existing resources, and tips for further developing your strategies.

## 1.2 The power of youth activism to end FGM

Children and young people<sup>3</sup> are the most impacted by FGM as form of violence against women and girls, and to end it, their voices must be heard. Despite being directly affected, best understanding how FGM impacts their lives, and it being their right to participate in identifying solutions that work for them, youth often lack involvement in official decision-making mechanisms, limiting their opportunities to influence decisions on issues that affect their lives such as FGM. Youth also represent future policymakers, legislators, medical practitioners, community and religious leaders and parents - all critical stakeholders in ending FGM as form of violence against girls and women and child abuse.

Youth activism amplifies voices that might otherwise remain unheard, catalysing change within communities, national policies, and international forums. It is a transformative force, bringing fresh perspectives, energy, and innovative approaches, and invigorating the discourse on FGM elimination. It is a key element of [TGG-ALM's girl-centred approach](#) to bring the voices of girls to the centre of the end FGM movement.

At the grassroots, youth activists can lead community dialogues, awareness campaigns, and educational initiatives, and drive the conversations that challenge harmful norms and attitudes surrounding FGM. As part of TGG-ALM in Kenya, youth advocates have pioneered digital campaigns on social media to foster dialogues, challenge misconceptions, and mobilise communities to end FGM.

Recently young people, and youth-led movements, have played a key role in bringing about change in West Africa. In Sierra Leone they have been advocating for the [child marriage ban recently signed into law, and continue to advocate for lawmakers to go further and implement the more holistic child rights bill](#)<sup>4</sup> which also encompasses an FGM ban. In The Gambia, activists – the majority of whom are young people – have successfully pushed back against [an attempt to repeal the Gambia law banning FGM](#)<sup>5</sup>. At a global level, youth-led initiatives have collaborated across borders, fostering solidarity to address FGM, and influencing global forums to place the issue more firmly on the agenda. At the [Women Deliver 2023 conference](#), youth activists played a key role in highlighting the importance of closing the funding gap and taking action for ending FGM through the [Kigali Declaration](#).

### 1.3 FGM - where are we now?

FGM is a violation of human rights, an expression of gender inequality, a form of violence against women and girls, and child abuse. It results in significant impacts on people's mental and physical health - including but not limited to bleeding, infections, infertility, complications during childbirth, painful sexual intercourse (dyspareunia), post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression. There have also been cases documented where it has led to death<sup>6</sup>. A recent study by the University of Birmingham concluded that FGM is a leading cause of childhood death in the countries where it takes place, with at least an estimated 44, 320 girls and young women dying each year due to FGM<sup>7</sup>.

The age at which girls and women experience FGM varies across contexts, but it is most commonly carried out on young girls and adolescents before the start of puberty - from infancy and up to the age of 15<sup>8</sup>. There has been some recent research which suggests that the age at which girls and women undergo FGM has dropped in some countries<sup>9</sup>. Other common times when girls and women face FGM include at the time of marriage, during a woman's first pregnancy, or after the birth of her first child.<sup>10</sup>

Significant global progress has been made on ending FGM. Girls born today are about a third less likely to experience FGM than if they were born 30 years ago<sup>11</sup>. But no country in the world is currently on track to meet the [Sustainable Development Goal](#) of ending FGM by 2030.

Increasing population sizes, conflicts, and crises have all increased the absolute number of girls experiencing FGM as a form of violence against women and girls. UNICEF and UNFPA estimate that by 2030, nearly one in three girls globally will be born in the 31 countries where FGM is most prevalent, putting up to 68 million girls at risk of FGM. New challenges also arise from emerging trends of FGM including medicalisation, and the polycrisis of climate change, conflict, and the Covid pandemic.



currently have some form of legislation that prohibits FGM, although in many places, laws are poorly enforced<sup>12</sup>. In Asia there are currently no countries with specific legal prohibitions.<sup>13</sup>

## **SECTION 2:**

# **WHAT AND WHO ARE WE TRYING TO INFLUENCE?**



**KEY STEPS TO  
DEVELOP YOUR  
ADVOCACY PLAN**

An advocacy plan is like a **roadmap** or a **plan of action** that helps you achieve your goals. Below is a summary of key steps you will need to take to develop your advocacy plan.

 Step 1

## Identify the problem/gap and potential solutions

Identify the specific problems/gaps your advocacy will focus on, and the potential solutions. To do this you will need to get more information about the issue in your own context. This could include gathering information from different impacted groups about their understanding of the problem, and how it is impacting them, and looking for any existing data and research that will help you to further define and outline the issue in your context (see the spotlight box on sources of data below).

Use the information you have gathered to write a short problem statement - a problem statement is a short and clear description of the problem in a specific context, ideally backed up by evidence. The problem statement should include three levels, as depicted in the yellow boxes opposite.

### From problems → solutions

Once you have identified your problem statement (including the direct causes and root cause of the problem), you will need to think about solutions. In order to have a more sustainable impact, the solutions you propose should ideally address all three levels of problem statement - only when the root causes and the direct causes of a problem are addressed, will the solutions to the problem be effective and sustainable in time.

You could use tools like the problem tree - which is a process that identifies the core problem, and then analyses the causes and effects, and the solution tree - working from the problem tree, the core problem is reframed as the goal, the causes as the objectives, and the effects as the benefits. This [Toolkit](#) from Tax Justice Advocacy contains a useful guide and illustration for developing your own problem and solution trees.

#### Level one:

The broad problem that can be seen

**Example:** A high level of maternal deaths - women are dying in childbirth

**Level two:** The direct cause(s) of the identified problem

**Example:** There is a lack of access to, and/or women are not willing to use, trained midwives

**Level three:** The indirect or root cause

**Example:** A lack of government investment in healthcare has led to an acute shortage of midwives

**Example:** Women do not always have the freedom and decision-making power to decide when to seek support from a midwife



## Sources of data

### Sources of data on FGM, and violence against women and children:

The Demographic Health Survey (DHS) is conducted every few years in [93 countries globally](#), and provides [comprehensive data on rates of violence against women and girls, including the prevalence of FGM](#)

A growing number of countries are also conducting the [Violence against Children and Youth Survey \(VACS\)](#).

There are a number of databases, and research platforms that provide comprehensive data on FGM in different contexts - UNICEF has [large data sets on the situation of women and children that includes information on FGM](#), whilst [The FGM Research Initiative](#) (hosted by the Orchid Project) has country and regional profiles that give more detail about trends in prevalence and legislation, and links to more detailed reports.

**You might also want to reference issues that intersect with FGM - including child marriage and other key issues for adolescent girls. Sources of data and evidence on issues that intersect with FGM include:**

[The Girls not Brides CRANK platform](#)

[The Adolescent Girls Investment Plan](#)

[The Gender and Adolescence Global Evidence platform \(GAGE\)](#)



## Identify your key advocacy targets and how to approach them

The next step in your advocacy plan is to identify and understand your key advocacy targets. These are the people or groups that you want to talk to or convince to make a change or take action about your advocacy issue. In order to identify the right advocacy targets/decision-maker, you need to understand how decisions are made regarding your advocacy issue. They can be different depending on what you're trying to achieve and at what level. To do this you will need to conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise. [The Girls Not Brides Design for Success](#) tool is a great resource to start from – it includes guidance on stakeholder mapping at page 22. In the spotlight section below, you can find some key considerations for conducting your stakeholder mapping.



## Stakeholder mapping

### Identify Stakeholders

List potential stakeholders involved in decision-making around FGM-related issues including: policymakers, government bodies, international donors, non-government organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CSOs) community and religious leaders, health professionals, educators, young people, parents and guardians.

### Categorise Stakeholders

Segment (divide) stakeholders into primary (directly involved), secondary (indirectly involved), and tertiary (supporting actors) groups.

### Primary Stakeholders

**(Directly Involved):** These are the individuals or groups who are most affected by FGM and are directly engaged in the issue. They include survivors, those at risk, their families, and frontline workers like healthcare providers and educators who interact with affected individuals daily.

**Secondary Stakeholders (Indirectly Involved):** These stakeholders have an indirect connection to the issue. They might not be affected personally but have a role in addressing FGM. This group includes policymakers, community leaders, NGOs, and organisations that work on related issues like women's rights and health.

**Tertiary Stakeholders (Supporting Actors):** These are the individuals or groups that support the cause from a distance. They might not be involved in the day-to-day work but provide essential support, such as funding, research, or advocacy. Examples include international organisations, donors, researchers, and media outlets.

After conducting your stakeholders mapping and analysis you will need to: prioritise engagement of stakeholders based on their **relevance, influence, and potential** to effect change in your advocacy issue, and then focus advocacy efforts on those with the **greatest impact and receptiveness** to youth-led initiatives. It's also important to initiate dialogue and invest in building relationships with identified stakeholders, aiming to foster partnerships, garner support, and influence decision-making towards ending FGM.



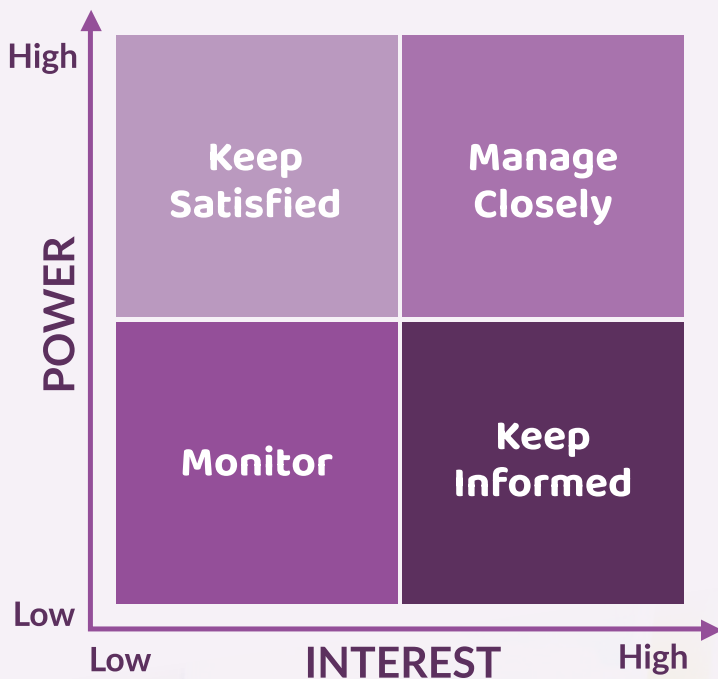
**Assess influence, importance and interest:**

Evaluate each stakeholder's level of influence, interest, and power in addressing FGM.

**Ask yourself questions such as:**

- ? Is this person able to influence decisions around ending FGM?
- ? At what level?
- ? How much power does this person have?
- ? Is this person interested in supporting young people in making a change?
- ? Why?

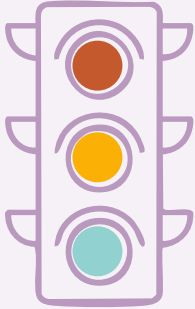
You can use the **Power /Interest Grid** table to populate the stakeholders.







## How to approach your advocacy targets/ decision makers based on their level of understanding and commitment.



### Uninformed about the issue:

Provide and share comprehensive information about the issue.

### Knowledgeable about the issue:

Strengthen their knowledge and encourage their will to act.

### Supportive and active on the issue:

Recognise their efforts and reinforce the action.



## Identify the key messages

Now that you have identified what the problem is, and who can help to create change, you need to finalise your key messages. These key messages should be relevant to the advocacy targets you have identified (using the right language and an engaging format), and should include the problem/gap, cite evidence on why this is important, and provide specific suggestions on what needs to change. It's critical to support your key messages/asks with a combination of:

- **Evidence:** Use facts and credible data. (Tip: Make sure to fact check that your data and facts have come from [credible sources](#))
- **Emotion:** Use of first-hand accounts from those who are directly impacted (tip: always consider the ethics and safety of sharing survivors' stories - see section 3.1 on using stories of change for more information!)
- **Ethics:** Use of rights-based approaches. i.e. Framing FGM as violence against women and girls and a violation of human rights.

In August 2022, TGG-ALM engaged more than 70 youth activists from across East, West and Southern Africa and Asia through an online youth forum to develop a [call to action](#) for governments, local leaders and other stakeholders. Below is a [summary](#) of six key themes/advocacy issues young people identified within the call to action to put an end to FGM by 2030. Your specific key messages might look a bit different, depending on your context, but you can use these priorities as a starting point to shape your own advocacy plan and key messages.



### Create space for young people's meaningful engagement

Young people need access to platforms and environments where they freely express themselves, contribute ideas, and actively participate in decision-making. Young people need to be valued as active contributors, involved in planning, implementing strategies, and evaluating initiatives for ending FGM.



### You might advocate for

- Increased youth participation in the run up to key local, national, regional and global policy events.
- Integration of youth expertise, perspectives and experiences in the design and implementation of programmes and interventions aimed at ending FGM, ensuring that initiatives resonate with and address the needs of younger generations.

### Increase the levels of funding and resourcing for the end FGM movement, especially for grassroots and youth-led solutions

Youth-led and grassroots groups often find it particularly challenging to access funding, and often have access only to very small grants, which can come with many reporting requirements and restrictions.



### You might advocate for:

- Increased international funding directed to local and youth-led groups committed to ending FGM
- Grant mechanisms that offer flexible, long-term funding to support ongoing programming and advocacy efforts.
- Participatory grant-making practices, and granting young people decision-making roles in funding allocation
- Better tracking and analysis of budget allocations at national and local levels to ensure adequate resources are available for translating policy commitments into tangible actions in ending FGM.

### Prioritise a holistic and intersectional approach

A holistic and intersectional approach recognises the interconnectedness of FGM with multiple issues impacting individuals and communities, addressing root causes of FGM and emerging trends, promoting comprehensive well-being, and recognising the multifaceted impacts on individuals and communities. See section 3 on tips and tools to learn about intersectionality.



### You might advocate for:

- Holistic initiatives covering prevention, response, education, economic empowerment, and legal support to address the multifaceted aspects of FGM.
- Interventions that empower communities by addressing underlying inequalities and fostering autonomy and agency among individuals.
- Inclusive awareness campaigns and educational programmes tailored to diverse cultural norms, languages, and perspectives within communities.
- Comprehensive access to health services encompassing mental health support, reproductive healthcare, and trauma-informed services for those affected by FGM.

### Strengthen the evidence base, and invest in diverse forms of research and knowledge production.

Access to good quality, disaggregated data and diverse forms of evidence are essential in tracking progress on meeting international and national commitments, and enabling governments, policy makers, activists, practitioners and funders to make informed decisions about what actions to prioritise, and how best to allocate resources to achieve the most impact.



#### You might advocate for:

- Support for girl, youth and community-led participatory approaches to end FGM research.
- Prioritising the gathering of data and evidence on the prevalence and root causes of FGM in countries and communities where there is currently a limited evidence base.
- Investing in disaggregated data that provides information on the dynamics of the practice in specific communities, especially areas that are identified as hot spots in national data.
- Research data that is shared back with communities in easily accessible formats and events.

### Strengthen Legislation and implement policy

Whilst legislation alone will not end FGM, the absence of strong legislation that prohibits FGM undermines efforts towards abandonment.



#### You might advocate for:

- The establishment of robust anti-FGM laws in regions lacking legislation, defining FGM, criminalising its performance, arranging/procuring, and involving medical professionals, also addressing cross-border FGM.
- Reviewing and closing loopholes in existing legislation, focusing on customary practices, emerging trends like medicalisation and cross-border FGM.
- Increased awareness among youth and the population regarding existing laws, using accessible language and communication materials.
- Holding governments accountable for implementing and enforcing existing laws and policies to end FGM.

### Invest in the mental health and well-being of survivors and activists

FGM has profound impacts on survivors' emotional and physical health and well-being. Activists, advocates, and practitioners working to end FGM can also often have limited support, face burn-out, re-traumatisation, and even threats to their safety in the course of their work and activism.



#### You might advocate for:

- Allocating specific budget lines to support mental health and well-being of survivors and activists in all funding mechanisms to end FGM.
- Integrating access to counselling, wellbeing, safe spaces, and other forms of psychosocial support into all FGM community programming.
- Strengthening the evidence base on the need for mental health and wellbeing support within the context of ending FGM.
- Conducting comprehensive risk assessments and seeking informed consent especially when dealing with children, youth and survivors, to ensure safety of engagement at community level, and that people are not put at further risk of backlash or re-traumatisation.



## Identify tactics to reach decision makers

Finally, once you have mapped out your advocacy goals, targets and key messages, you can decide on tactics for creating the change you want to see!

Tactics are specific actions or activities that mobilise a particular type and level of influence to achieve your advocacy goals and objectives— essentially, it's how you put your advocacy strategy into action. To choose effective tactics, it's crucial to have a clear understanding of your goals, audience, and available resources. Examples of tactics you might use include mobilising individuals, lobbying specific decision makers, building coalitions, conducting media campaigns, storytelling, creating petitions, memorandums, or charters, and organising a march or other public events.

In section 3 you will find some detailed examples of tactics, actions and priorities you can use to engage your advocacy targets, and to influence their actions and decisions. This isn't an exhaustive list, and there will be many more that you might want to consider including in your advocacy plan! Below you can find two case studies showing how youth advocates in Senegal and Kenya used the key advocacy steps outlined in section 2 to advocate for change.



### Representing young people in popularising Senegal's commitments to the Generation Equality Forum - Khadidiatou Diébaté

**Khadidiatou Diébaté is a youth activist from Senegal, aged 23. She is a trained lawyer, completed her studies at Dhakar University, and is passionate about advocating for women's rights and an end to FGM. Her activism is inspired by her experiences of growing up in Tambacounda, an area that has some of the highest rates of FGM in the country. In 2021, when the Generation Equality Forum was held in Paris, Khadidiatou was selected as a youth representative, and took on the role of reading the official declaration from the Senegal action coalitions to the forum. Here she shares a bit more about the process, the key messages, and what others can learn from her experiences.**

The Generation Equality Forum was a global event organised by UN Women to accelerate investment and implementation on gender equality. In the run up to the event, Generation Equality 'Action Coalitions' were convened on key themes in cities around the world. Khadidiatou participated in preparatory sessions organised to prepare the statements from the Senegalese Action Coalitions. A number of young people participated in these sessions alongside representatives from NGOs and other groups, and they provided recommendations around promoting the rights of young people. In the sessions Khadidiatou spoke out about the importance of menstrual health, ending FGM, and of participation of young people and women in political spaces and processes.

**Key messages shared by young people in Senegal across the action coalitions, and in the official statement, included:**

1. The popularisation of little-known texts on gender equality through their translations into local languages;
2. Capacity building for women.
3. The fight against stereotypes based on gender;
4. To undertake reforms in the law and economic justice coalition by the government;
5. Recognition of women's unpaid work;
6. Increase women's leadership and entrepreneurship through inclusive and innovative programmes by women-founded businesses;

After the forum, strategies and actions were taken in Dakar to popularise some of the key messages from the forum, and to spark reflections and discussions amongst young people on gender equality. Strategies included community citizen teas, and creative projects. At the community citizen teas, youth and women's organisations, the media, religious and community leaders, were invited to discuss the thematic areas. They learned more about what the Generation Equality forum means, as well as the commitments made by Senegal. A call for applications for a competition entitled "EXPRESS YOURSELF FOR GENDER EQUALITY" was also announced, and young people made artistic creations: including poems, works of art, etc., which were then judged by a jury.

Khadiyatou is still actively involved in national and international advocacy on ending FGM, and in 2023 attended the Women Deliver conference. She reflects that to promote the abandonment of FGM, it is necessary to integrate and invite community and religious leaders from the communities concerned so that we can think together about common actions to eradicate not only FGM, but all forms of gender-based violence.

**The tactics of the youth groups in Senegal demonstrate the importance of using a participatory process to create targeted key messages, using community mobilisation and creative approaches to involve other young people and the general public to support your advocacy goals, and targeting decision makers, as key tactics in advocacy efforts to end FGM.**





## Drafting of the Zero-Draft Policy on Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, Garissa County, Kenya – Yassir Mohammed

Yassir Mohammed is one of the co-founders of Silver Lining Kenya. It was formed in 2016 by a group of students, and began as a youth activist volunteer group working in schools to mentor girls and build awareness of their rights. They actively work with religious leaders, survivors, mothers, fathers, and community leadership to strengthen community awareness about the negative impacts of FGM, and recently have been working with the Garissa County government to draft and adopt a Garissa County Bill on the eradication of FGM. In this interview, Yassir Mohammed shared more about the key advocacy steps they followed to draft the anti-FGM bill.

**It starts with identification of the problem** - in the communities that Yassir and his team of youth activists work in, 83% of girls and women (ages 15-49) are impacted by FGM. It continues for multiple reasons, including harmful norms and beliefs that FGM ensures the 'purity' of women and girls and increases their chances of marriage.

**Identify solutions and an 'advocacy goal'** - in Garissa County there was no existing policy framework to protect girls and women from FGM, so they sought to work together with other civil society organisations, the Garissa County Government, and the County Assembly on the Zero-Draft Policy on the eradication of Female Genital Mutilation.

**Identify Key Advocacy Targets** – the group focused their efforts on working with religious leaders and community elders, as well as working with representatives of the County Government and Assembly to ensure there was buy-in.

**Identify Key Advocacy Messages** – for the anti-FGM policy these included:

- Reduction of the high FGM rates in Garissa
- Legal enforcement to prevent FGM in Garissa, and particularly to prevent the medicalization of FGM
- That ending FGM in Garissa County will: improve the overall health and well-being of the community, contribute to meeting the SDG 5 target of zero FGM and other forms of VAWG, protect human rights, and promote gender equality

**Identify your advocacy tactics and strategies** – the group worked closely with religious leaders, who they found were more supportive than community elders. They collaborated with nurses and doctors to address the increased medicalisation of FGM, and partnered with NGOs and community-based organisations to share anti-FGM policy messages in meetings, including those on conflict and climate change, due to limited funding for dedicated anti-FGM meetings. They then identified specific leaders who were open to engaging with drafting the anti-FGM policy, and used virtual meetings to organize policy conversations, ensuring broader participation and contribution.

Mohammed shared that there were a number of significant challenges and obstacles to overcome - including community backlash, limited resources, legal and political obstacles, and even threats and intimidation. However key outcomes of the advocacy work have included increased youth activists finding a voice in the movement, and increased collaboration among youth-led and other civil society organizations in the region, leading to the formation of the Gender Technical Working Group. Youth advocates and activists need to have knowledge of the local context, and to collaborate with the government and other civil society organisations, they also need to prepare for potential risks and create a safety plan - such as creating a support network for activists, and avoiding working alone. Celebrating and learning from their successes was also an important part of the journey for Yassir and his team.

## SECTION 3:

# STRATEGIES, ACTIONS AND PRIORITIES

A teal sign on a stick with decorative elements. The sign is rectangular with rounded corners and a white border. It is mounted on a teal stick. There are several decorative elements: a yellow spiral in the top right corner, a teal zigzag line on the left side, a yellow triangle at the bottom left, and a purple zigzag line at the bottom center.

FOR  
INFLUENCING  
CHANGE

In this section you'll find a list of potential advocacy strategies you may want to consider. Each strategy is accompanied by tips and tools, along with a checklist to guide you on when and how to implement it in your advocacy efforts. Additionally, case studies are provided to illustrate some of these strategies in action.

## 3.1 Using evidence and stories to advocate for change

**Summary:** A story of change can help to illustrate specific changes that took place, and how, from the perspective of people impacted by the change. You might, for example, collect specific stories of change from girls who were kept safe from FGM in communities with high prevalence, or from families who made the decision not to cut their daughters.

Evidence and stories of change can help to build a narrative around why change is needed, and how it can happen. These are usually stories that describe how change has happened and has affected (positively or negatively) people's lives. They are powerful as people can relate to them on both a rational and emotional level. They can demonstrate what the potential pathways for change are, and help to create positive aspirations for a future free of FGM. You can use evidence and stories of change to promote the change you want to see in your advocacy briefs, and in your engagement with different advocacy targets.



### Tips and Tools

#### Document your own work and stories of change

Hearing directly from those who are most impacted by FGM, often provides a more compelling call to action than statistics alone and supports the aim of centring the voices of those most impacted by the practice. You can capture stories by sharing your own experiences or inviting others (peers, friends, local youth organisations, project participants, etc.) to contribute through writing, interviews, videos, or other media. Creativity in storytelling is encouraged, but always ensure people's individual stories are used respectfully, safely, and with their full and informed consent.

Consider the safety of collecting data, and whether sharing someone's personal story could put them at any additional risk (for example, if someone is advocating for an end to FGM in their community where high percentages of girls and women still experience FGM, could sharing their story place them at additional risk of backlash?). Seek informed consent before documenting stories, and anonymise personal information if needed, follow up to share the draft and get their feedback before it is shared more widely, always avoid stereotypes, and focus on the agency of the person and what changed, rather than providing details about specific traumatic events.



This [guidance note on doing no harm](#) developed by TGG-ALM lays out some useful considerations, and the [spotlight guide](#) below provides more details about how to document a story of change.



## Use youth and girl-led and participatory approaches to capture the dynamics of change

Evidence is often understood as numbers and statistics, but it is also important to generate evidence on how and why change is happening, and what the most effective approaches are. Evidence that is generated by communities impacted, especially girls themselves, can be particularly impactful. [GAGE has a toolkit for conducting participatory research with young people](#). The ActionAid report [Building Power together - a girl-led research report](#), also documents the process of research designed and led by girls themselves, and you can also explore more ideas about girl-led projects and evaluations in [The Rejuvenate working paper on evidencing impact on Participation for, with and by Girls](#) and the [Guiding framework for a girl-centered approach to end female genital mutilation/cutting by TGG\\_ALM](#).



### Stories of change

#### Suggested structure for a story of change

- **Introduction/context:** Provide an overview of the situation and the context – you might want to include some statistics
- **Actions** – what actions were taken to create change?
- **Challenges** – were there any challenges or barriers to change? Was it possible to overcome these? How?
- **Impacts** – what specific changes did the action lead to? What benefits has the change had on people's lives?
- **Conclusions/recommendations** – how might others learn from this story? How might it influence ways we approach ending FGM?

#### Checklist:

- ✓ Build a compelling narrative using a mixture of statistics, stories and voices of those impacted by FGM
- ✓ Use people's stories in a respectful way – acknowledge their agency and power, don't sensationalise, or stereotype, and always ensure that you have informed consent
- ✓ Data by itself is not going to shift the narrative – use it to illustrate what change is needed, how it can happen, and to provide a clear call to action
- ✓ Use data and stories to get people engaged, thinking critically about the issue and to provide aspirations for the future
- ✓ Use youth-led and participatory research with impacted communities as an important tool for change – share your findings with the wider movement and with those you want to influence
- ✓ Tell stories that represent different people's perspectives, including girls, boys, older people, people with disability, etc

#### Tips

Use direct quotes and first-person narrative as much as possible

Be as specific as possible about what changes occurred

Don't over-attribute the change (for example by claiming that one action led to everyone abandoning FGM in a specific community)



### Dr Costly Aderibigbe-Saba and Value Female Africa Network

**Dr. Costly Aderibigbe-Saba is a medical doctor, the founder of Value Female Network Africa, a survivor of FGM, and an activist on eradicating it.**

**In this interview she shares her very personal journey to activism, and some of the lessons she has learnt – especially the power of hearing directly from girls and impacted communities, and giving girls a seat at the table!**

I first learnt about FGM in medical school – at the time I didn't imagine that it had also happened to me. I started leading campaigns and advocacy on ending FGM for the Nigerian Medical Students' Association. At an event I was told by a community leader that girls in my community are often mutilated at birth, and that they wouldn't be allowed to go to school if they hadn't been, so it has probably happened to me too – in fact he told me I should appreciate my parents for doing it, because it had enabled me to go to school and to study medicine! I met with my mum and grandma, and I found the courage to ask them – they were shocked I would ask such a direct question, but they confirmed that I had been mutilated. They said at the time they thought it was necessary, but that if they had more information then they wouldn't have done it. It was a very emotional moment for me.

I went back to that community to talk with community members and leaders – I wanted to tell them that girls being mutilated has nothing to do with prosperity or preventing promiscuity! (the belief was that girls needed to have FGM in order to be able to concentrate at school and not be promiscuous.) And then we kept going back – talking with women and girls. In fact, adolescent girls started leading the change – they were going door to door and talking with women who were pregnant – telling them that they FGM was not necessary. I am proud to say that FGM is no longer practised in that community.

'I founded a youth and survivor led organisation. We work with adolescent girls and children on SRHR information, and we also have an adolescent clinic where we provide advice and services.'

Recently we had a leadership change in my home state of Osun, and this was an opportunity to influence their approach to FGM. We wanted to emphasize that this was not just foreigners telling us to end FGM – it was coming from communities and from girls themselves. We thought 'what if adolescent girls and survivors spoke to them directly about what their priorities are?' We came up with the idea of the first Nigerian girls parliamentary day - it took a lot of hard work, persistence, and resilience to make it happen.

We identified key allies – people like the wife of the Governor, the Ministry of women and the Ministry for health. We also mapped the key power holders – we knew that the speaker held a lot of power, but it was also difficult to make contact with him. We kept being told that the message would be passed on, but it never was! So eventually we went to ask him directly ourselves at the tennis club that we knew he played at regularly - and he agreed to a meeting.

We spoke to him about the concept of the girls' parliamentary day, and the focus on ending FGM. He said that he didn't think his members would be open to talking about such a sensitive subject. We had to re-strategise so we came back with the idea of talking about sexual and reproductive

health rights for adolescents – he said that he didn't think members would be willing to talk about this either – that this was up to parents, not the government! We didn't want to divert from our focus, but we also needed to find an entry point – so we re-focused on girls' education, including the barriers to girls' education – and this one was accepted.

We decided to ask each representative to invite two girls from their own community, and we brought 60 girls from across the state together. We also made sure we were involved in arrangements for accommodation, and had our own representatives there so that we could ensure everyone was safe. In the training we spoke with them about FGM and interconnecting issues – we used a lot of storytelling, and then they had break out work on what individuals and the government can do to take action on key topics.

Girls then read out their recommendations in parliament - we had 5 girls speak, including one girl with disabilities – they expressed themselves eloquently and spoke about real life stories. There were so many things that afterwards parliamentarians said they were not aware of – for example that girls were using cloths in their menstrual cycle, that FGM was harmful, or that it was possible (and important) to integrate Comprehensive Sexuality Education into the curriculum!

The event was very powerful – but it's also equally important that we follow up and track the commitments that were made – we now have made a tracker with the commitments, and how/whether parliamentarians have taken action. We are hoping to roll this action out to other states, and then to host the first all Nigerian event at the National Assembly in Abuja on the international day of the girl.

**The advice I would have to other youth advocates is to be flexible, be ready to adjust and adapt, but also keep the focus – don't water down what you want to do to the point where you're not speaking directly to the issue! Advocates should not be discouraged, be ready to adapt your advocacy plan - go back to the drawing board!**



## 3.2 Mobilising communities

**Summary:** Community mobilisation is about engaging, empowering, and inspiring individuals within a community to take action. Effective mobilisation will involve building awareness, fostering dialogue, and creating sustainable change through collaboration and knowledge sharing. By using community mobilisation, you can influence powerful community members, such as community and religious leaders, and mobilise a collective to undertake direct changes and in turn will be able to advocate for further changes with policy makers. Mobilising communities builds confidence and brings individuals to engage in a common cause, and when communities start believing in themselves, they become inspired to act. It is essential to ensure intentionality in mobilising everyone, including marginalised groups, to ensure that all voices are heard and represented. Examples of marginalised groups include survivors, women and girls at risk of FGM, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+ individuals, migrants and refugees, and those living in poverty.



## Tips and Tools

### Use the Tipping Point Concept

A tipping point is the critical moment when a relatively small change or action results in a significant and irreversible shift in a social convention. Understanding and harnessing the tipping point to support your community mobilisation efforts could help accelerate your progress. UNICEF documents how this works in practice in the context of ending FGM in its [Changing a harmful Social Convention: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting report](#) - in the report it provides a metaphor of an audience attending a play or the cinema. In this particular community the social convention is to stand up at a performance - but this means that many people in the audience can't see properly! One day a new audience member attends who explains that in other communities they sit down so that everyone can see. If just this one audience member sits down it doesn't make much of a difference - people stay standing because they are worried their view will still be blocked! But once a critical mass of audience members make the decision to also sit down you see the ripple effect - the more people that sit, the more the view will be unobstructed, making it easier for others to sit too. This point where lots of people feel safer to sit down is the tipping point.

### Build reflection and action into your community mobilisation strategy

The [community action cycle](#) is a way of creating social change by bringing people together to talk about who they are, what they want, and how to achieve it. It's based on the idea that change is more lasting when the affected individuals and communities drive the process. The key principles are: Ownership and sustainability, empowering communication, community-led change, dialogue over persuasion and a focus on understanding social norms/conventions.

### Checklist:

- ✓ Before engaging with the community make sure you have a good understanding of the cultural, social, and religious aspects related to FGM in this community.
- ✓ Conduct a community mapping to understand who are the key stakeholders, who has decision-making power within the community, and what the other assets are that can be used within the community (for example community spaces where people can gather, important community groups and services etc).
- ✓ Develop an engagement plan to ensure different segments of the community, including youth (both girls and boys), influential leaders and those most marginalised groups are being involved.
- ✓ Make sure your community mobilisation activities create space for people to reflect on what positive change will look like, and to explore their own ideas for how to create that change.



You can read about this in more detail, and examples of how it applies to the social norm of FGM in 'chapter 3: the social dynamics of FGM pgs. 11 - 14.

## 3.3 Growing the Movement and building power together

**Summary:** The feminist activist and writer Srilata Batliwala describes social movements as forms of collective action that emerge in response to situations of inequality, oppression and/or unmet social, political, economic or cultural demands. They comprise an organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change over time.<sup>14</sup> Social movements are essential drivers of social change, and political and legal reform, and many of the most important changes over the last century have been driven by rights movements. You can build a social movement by bringing together other young people who share your views and aim for the same changes as you. Working together will strengthen your advocacy and increase its impact at all levels.



### Tips and Tools

#### Understand the importance of power in your movement building strategy

Understanding the diverse dimensions of power—'Power Over', 'Power Within', 'Power With', and 'Power To' (see spotlight section below) —empowers young people in their movement to end FGM. By recognising and challenging oppressive power structures of people that make decisions on their behalf, youth advocates can amplify voices, foster solidarity, and build alliances ('Power With') with like-minded individuals and organisations. This collaborative approach harnesses the strengths ('Power Within') of each member while leveraging collective strength and offering an opportunity for youth voices to be heard. Armed with knowledge, informed strategies, and a shared vision, they can drive meaningful change ('Power To'), shaping policies, challenging norms, and creating an inclusive environment where every girl has the opportunity to thrive, and live free from FGM as form of violence against women and girls.

#### Apply an Intersectionality lens

You can think about intersectionality like a puzzle, and everyone is made up of different pieces. Each piece represents parts of who we are, like our age, where we live, our family, our education, our ethnicity, and other things about us. Now, imagine these pieces also connect with how much power we have in different situations. Some people have more power because of certain pieces, while others might have less. When you use intersectionality in movement building, you will be paying attention to all these different pieces that make up people's lives. You will need to listen to everyone's stories and understand that some might face more challenges because of how these pieces fit together. By considering differences such as gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, race, class, ethnicity, etc, you can work together more effectively, making sure everyone's voice is heard and

Building a strong youth movement to end FGM involves understanding the injustices and power dynamics that shape the lives of girls and how those inform the continuity of FGM as a form of violence against women and girls, leveraging collective strengths, amplifying marginalised voices, and fostering inclusive partnerships.



everyone's needs are considered. This helps create a stronger movement where everyone's experiences and strengths are valued. To build your understanding on Intersectionality frameworks, check out The Girls Not Brides thematic brief on [The Intersectional approach to child marriage](#).

## Use the social movement scorecard to identify your movement's strengths and areas for improvement

TGG-ALM has adapted The Social Movement Scorecard (initially developed by the Global Fund for Women) to look at the different components of strong social movements. You can use the scorecard guide to assess where your movement for change currently is, how you are working together currently, and to identify any areas you might be able to strengthen. The social movement scorecard looks at public awareness; grassroots base; leadership; networks and alliances; collective vision; multiple strategies; infrastructure and youth engagement.

View the [scorecard guide here](#).



## Different Types of Power

**Power Over:** A negative type of power that is used to control, dominate, or abuse others.

**Power within:** A positive power that acknowledges the strength and resilience all individuals possess, and linked to a sense of self-worth and belief.

**Power with:** A collective power when people come together, collaborate, and support each other. It's about building alliances, networks, solidarity, and collective strength.

**Power To:** The power to create change, make choices, and take action. Individuals are able to influence their lives and communities positively, and to act towards meaningful change.

### Checklist

- ✓ **Identify diverse perspectives:** Consider different backgrounds, identities, and experiences within the communities affected by FGM and make sure they are represented within the movement.
- ✓ **Acknowledge privileges and disadvantages:** Recognise how various factors like gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, class, and more intersect to create different levels of power and access.
- ✓ **Assess power dynamics:** Explore who holds power in decision-making processes related to ending FGM, and understand the different types of power at play.
- ✓ **Use empowerment strategies** within your movement to foster self-confidence, autonomy, and collective strength among the most marginalised individuals and groups while considering changing social dynamics and intersectional challenges.
- ✓ **Identify ways in which to strengthen your movement:** use the **social movement scorecard** to identify ways in which to strengthen your movement and identify areas of strength and areas to improve'





## Building coalitions to pass the Protection against Domestic Violence Bill in Kenya

**Virginia Nduta is the Director of Women's Empowerment Link (WEL), in Kenya. WEL supported the establishment of the coalition that enabled the successful passing of the domestic violence bill in Kenya in 2015, after more than 40 years of advocacy from the women's rights movement. In our interview with Virginia, she shared reflections and key lessons learned on how to conduct effective advocacy through a coalition:**

**Build your coalition** - conduct stakeholder mapping, identify others who are interested to work on the issue, and work together.

**Do your research and learn from others** - understand how others have pushed for this issue - what has worked well and what have been the gaps? What has led to success in other places? Have champions - identify your key allies in parliament - this was often recently elected and young parliamentarians - they were quick to identify with the issue we were championing. Understand your negotiables and your red lines - there will need to be some flexibility, but you also need to know the thresholds and bare minimums.

**Build your evidence and use it to communicate effectively** - for example the coalition used testimony from the community in short videos. Frame the issue in a way that makes it relevant to everyone - domestic violence was understood as a women's issue. Whilst women are primarily the survivors, it was also important to show that it impacts the whole family and society at large - this helped the issue resonate with more members of parliament.

**Have talking points prepared** - provide members of parliament with a way of showcasing issues they care about, and coalition members with ways to talk about the issue if they are in the media etc.

**Involve the public!** - Make sure it is not just a CSO issue, and involve the public in helping to push the message through rallies, campaigns etc.

**Identify your strategies to keep motivation** - you might find your issue is not always prioritised within the political space - this can be demotivating - so find ways to keep your motivation, find others who are working on the same issue and support each other.

**Follow up with implementation** - even once a bill has been passed, research how it is being implemented in your county/area, and if it is not being implemented well, find out what the barriers are to implementation.

## 3.4 Supporting positive mental health and well-being of survivors, activists and advocates

**Summary:** Survivors, activists, advocates and practitioners working to end FGM face numerous challenges to their mental health and wellbeing. They can often face isolation, burnout, and threats to their safety, whilst trying to speak about ending FGM. Additionally, survivors may be dealing with both the physical and mental health impacts of FGM, and face issues of re-traumatisation - [the TGG-ALM guidelines on engaging survivors of FGM and Sexual Violence](#) has more information on ways to engage survivors in ways that are appropriate and trauma-informed.

It is essential in your advocacy work on FGM to ensure that your wellness and mental health is prioritised and that you support each other in your day to day work to achieve change.



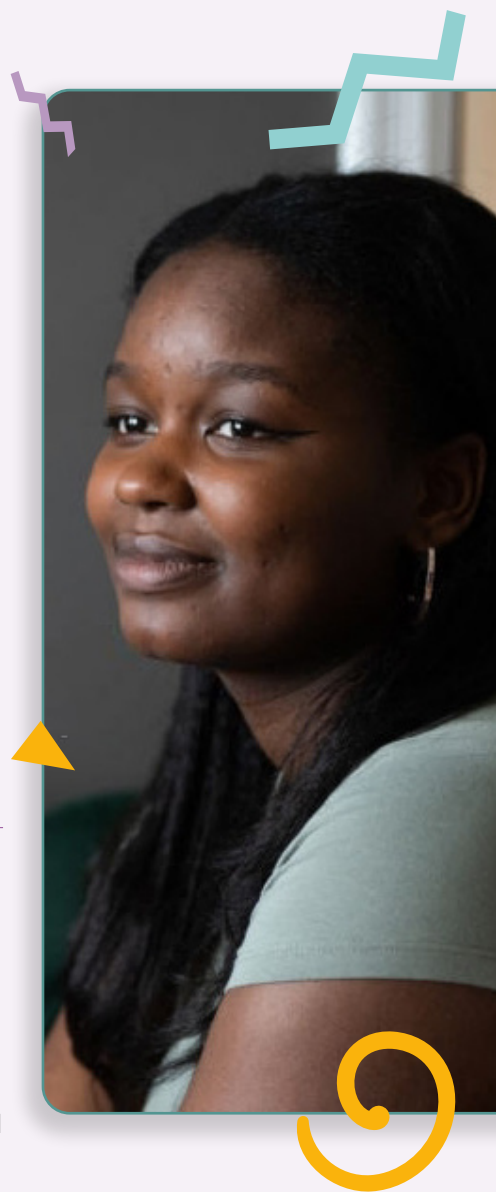
### Tips and Tools

#### Reflect on the difference between self and collective care

Prioritising mental health and wellness means addressing both self and collective care. Whilst self-care is important, and provides tools to resource and protect ourselves, it can also place the burden on the individual, and doesn't address, for example, how the wider culture or group may be contributing to stress, burnout, or trauma. Collective care on the other hand encourages everyone to consider care, kindness and wellness as central to the work we do together. [Read this blog from SVRI on reclaiming the need for collective care.](#)

#### Create safer, trauma-informed, survivor-led spaces

When you set up spaces to talk about FGM, it is important to acknowledge that for some people, you may be discussing lived experience, and to consider how you can make that a safer space for discussing those experiences. Safe spaces need to pay attention to physical, emotional and political safety, to build trust and support within the group, and to set up the conditions for open conversation, reflective dialogue, and mutual learning. Read this [poem on brave spaces](#) by Mickey Scottbey Jones, and this guide on the [tools for creating safe spaces](#) from JASS Associates and [TGG-ALM girl only safe space checklist](#). You can also find out more about TGG-ALM's [Survivor leadership Initiative](#), and its approach to support survivors to become leaders within the movement.





## Integrate well-being practices for self and collective care

Integrating simple practices into our activism work, and providing time for wellbeing practices in our meetings, workshops and other activities can support everyone to prioritise their wellness, and give people simple tools to integrate into their daily lives to help manage stress. This can be as simple as taking the time to 'check in' and 'check out' at the start and end of meetings, or incorporating simple breathing or mindfulness practices.

### Checklist

- ✓ Create an approach for setting up safer spaces for sensitive conversations - taking care of people's physical, emotional and political safety, and always listen to, and prioritise, the voices of survivors
- ✓ Recognise the need for collective care - considering care, kindness and wellness as central to the work of preventing all types of violence, including FGM
- ✓ Set realistic goals - in your advocacy work it's important to have bold visions, but it's also important to set realistic goals and deadlines to minimise the risk of fatigue and burnout
- ✓ Prioritise rest - check in with each other, and support each other to take time out when it is needed
- ✓ Create community, provide each other with support, positive feedback and affirmations - working on ending FGM is a long process, and there can be disappointments and setbacks along the way, having a strong community will help to resource you through difficult moments
- ✓ Integrate simple well-being practices into meetings, workshops, and other advocacy activities within the movement

[Read this tipsheet on amplifying self and collective care practices during times of crisis](#) from [Raising Voices](#), and check out this [toolkit from Capacitar](#) with practices for wellbeing.



## 3.5 Engaging with regional and global policy events

**Summary:** Policies play a key role in providing legal frameworks, resources, ensuring sustained efforts, and the support systems necessary to effectively address FGM. These are discussed, developed, and agreed in regional or global events that are attended by a range of different stakeholders, including youth advocates.

As a youth advocate you have a significant role in driving policy change and shaping the future by advocating for laws, regulations, and initiatives that protect the rights and well-being of girls, young people and communities.

TGG-ALM, through its partner Orchid Project, will be supporting youth advocates to attend the key global and regional policy forums in 2024 and 2025 - the relevant events are highlighted in a spotlight box below.



## Tips and Tools

### Understand the policy landscape

Engaging with policy may seem daunting, however, understanding which policies exist and which affect ending FGM improve your advocacy. There are many policies that already exist on ending FGM at local, national, regional and global levels - finding and reading these policies will ensure you are informed. See the spotlight box below for some examples that you can start with. Before attending a policy event, make a list of the relevant policies, and highlight anything within the policy that is particularly relevant to your advocacy agenda. If you find the policies difficult to understand, don't hesitate to ask for help from experts who can explain the key points and implications.

### Develop Policy Briefs and Recommendations

Develop concise [policy briefs](#) for the event - these should have your key messages, supporting evidence, recommendations, and any examples of good practice. Make sure that your brief focuses on clear, actionable points, emphasises the impact of proposed changes on communities affected by FGM, and that points are relevant to the event you are attending. Keep your policy brief to no more than 1 page, and ensure the language is accessible to policymakers - this increases the likelihood of policymakers considering and implementing proposed changes. You can refer to the Population Reference Bureau YouTube video for tips on the [principles of policy writing and writing a policy brief](#).

### Connect with key decision makers

Before attending the event, find out who will be there and map the different stakeholders you would like to connect with. Where possible, contact key decision makers in advance - introduce yourself, what you will be doing at the event, and say something about why you are a youth advocate working to end FGM. Share your policy brief with them and ask if they would have time to meet with you whilst at the event. It may not be possible to make contact with everyone before the event. If there are people you have been unable to contact, make a plan for how you might find them at an event - for example perhaps you can attend an event they are speaking at, and then try to speak with them afterwards, or ask them a question during the event Q&A! Always have your policy brief with you to share with them in case you meet them at an unexpected moment!

### Make a timetable

Policy events are often very busy spaces, and can sometimes get overwhelming. Plan your time in advance - look at the agenda and think about which meetings and events it would be useful to attend, and what you want to achieve from each event and meeting -it might be to learn more about an issue that interests you, or to connect with others working on similar issues. At other events you might see an opportunity to ask a question or contribute to a discussion that will further your own advocacy agenda. Make a timetable for each day you will be there, and don't forget to schedule time to rest and recharge, as well as enough time to get between different meeting venues!

**UNDERSTANDING  
POLICIES  
IMPROVES  
YOUR ADVOCACY**

## Follow up

Attending events is an important part of advocacy efforts - but in order to ensure policy commitments translate into tangible change it is essential to follow up. You could track the policy commitments made at the events you attend, and what action is taken to implement them afterwards. The event might also provide an important place to meet with other advocates and activists - follow up with these contacts after the event, and plan together for continuing to engage on the topic, and hold decision makers to account.

### Checklist:

- ✓ Understand existing policies around ending FGM.
- ✓ Identify policy goals for the event: Define your specific policy objectives and the changes needed at different levels (community, national, regional, and international).
- ✓ Stakeholder mapping: Identify the key stakeholders and decision-makers relevant to each level of policy change who will be at the event, and try to arrange to meet with them in advance.
- ✓ Ensure you are up to date with the relevant policies and outcome documents for the event, and make a note of any useful agreed language to include in your policy brief.
- ✓ Design a relevant policy brief: focus on clear, actionable points. Keep it relevant to the event, and no longer than 1 page.
- ✓ Make a timetable - be realistic about your time and what it will be possible to achieve whilst there.
- ✓ Document, evaluate results, and make follow-ups with decision makers.



## Policies and Declarations on ending FGM

Finding existing 'agreed language' and policies that support abandonment of FGM can help you to provide examples to policy makers of what to include in new policies and legislation. It can also help you push for action with politicians and other stakeholders for implementation of already agreed policies. Here are a few examples of where ending FGM is included in global and regional policies, and declarations. These are just a few examples, and there will be many more relevant to your own context.

[Sustainable development goal 5.3 calls for the elimination of all harmful practices, such as early, forced and child marriage and female genital mutilation](#)

A resolution on the [elimination of FGM was adopted by consensus at the 50th Human Rights Council in 2022.](#)



The Maputo protocol to the [African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Rights of Women in Africa](#) was adopted as an additional protocol by the African Union in 2003. It has been signed by 53 African countries and ratified by 28. FGM is listed as a harmful practice in the protocol, and it calls for provision of targeted services and creation of public awareness campaigns.

The [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence](#) (better known as the Istanbul convention) is a legally binding treaty in Europe that criminalises multiple forms of violence, including FGM. It was adopted in 2011, and to date has been signed by 45 states and ratified by 37.

The African committee of experts on the rights and welfare of the child, and the African commission on human and people's rights, recently launched [a joint general comment on female genital mutilation \(2023\)](#).

Activists, grassroots organisations, NGOs and academics who gathered at Women Deliver 2023 came together to call for more comprehensive action and funding on ending FGM, and wrote the [Kigali declaration](#).

### Key regional and global forums for youth advocates in 2024 and 2025

#### 2024

2024 February  
ICPD Global Youth Dialogues  
March CSW 2024  
April ECOSOC Youth Forum  
September Summit of the Future

#### 2025

March CSW 2025





### Lessons from Loveness on changing National Law in Zimbabwe!

**Loveness Mudzuru is a youth activist on ending child marriage in Zimbabwe, and has been a key part of successful advocacy efforts to pass the marriage act and the age of consent act in 2022. In an interview with her she shared parts of her journey, and key lessons she has learned about successful advocacy efforts:**

- Leverage your voice and that of other young people: The journey to activism often starts from home - when your own experience of injustice compels you to act! It is powerful to speak from experience! Highlight the perspectives and experiences of young people affected by FGM.
- Build strong arguments - understand the details of the law and policies, look at the gaps and discrepancies. Loveness identified the lack of criminal laws that protected girls from getting married, and the discriminatory gap between the different ages of boys and girls for sexual consent.
- Develop clear messaging backed by data and evidence, and specific asks - consider what needs to change to address the gaps?
- Build alliances with others - activism involves many different people, organisations, activists.
- It takes time - from the start of Loveness' journey in 2012, the marriage act and age of consent acts were finally passed in 2022!
- Understand that it's not just an individual problem - it is a failure of the system! - 'There were certain things I could have blamed myself for, but there are also things that I blame the system for!'
- Believe in the power of young people, and the importance of listening to their experiences, as Loveness explains 'Listen, listen carefully, and listen with a passionate heart!'



## Remember!

At different stages during your advocacy journey, you may encounter moments of being stuck, uncertain, or lacking motivation. However, it is important not to lose hope. These feelings are a common aspect of the process, and frequently, they serve as opportunities for learning and growth. Keep in mind that whilst progress can sometimes feel slow, your efforts and activism are contributing to a bigger global movement to end FGM, and all forms of violence against women and girls! Thank you for everything you do!

## Annex:

Thank you to all of the youth activists and advocates, and the allies of youth advocates Global Advocacy Toolkit: Youth Advocacy & Activism to end FGM from movements to end FGM and all forms of VAWG, who helped to shape this resource.

The following list includes the names of people who participated in online sessions to shape the resource; provided detailed feedback on the drafts; or who contributed their experience to one of the case studies. We have only named those who provided their consent to be included here, and we acknowledge that many others have also contributed their time and expertise - gratitude and thanks to everyone who has been part of this process for your vital contributions. Elizabeth Abang; Costly Aderibige-Saba; Christine Alfons; Maman Daouda Boukary; Olga de Biaggio; Brenda Dora; Leyla Hussein; Keegan Kagwe; Catherine Mukoya; Thato Mphuthi; Loveness Mudzuru; Virginia Nduta; Kirigo Njenga.

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<sup>2</sup> WHO, [Violence against Women](#)

<sup>3</sup> The UN defines children as those below 18 years, and young people as those aged between 15 - 24.

<sup>4</sup> Josephine Kamara [Sierra Leone has banned child marriage, to truly set women free it must end FGM](#), The Guardian, July 2024

<sup>5</sup> Matida Kebbeh, [Resist regressive attempts to repeal Gambia law against FGM](#), African feminisms, October 2023, and Eromo Egbejule, MPs in the Gambia vote to uphold ban on female genital mutilation, July 2024

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