



bhaiyo
MEN AGAINST FGC

Bhaiyo:
**A MALE ALLY INITIATIVE
TO SUPPORT ENDING
FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING**

**PROGRAM
IMPACT REPORT**

FEBRUARY 2021-
DECEMBER 2022

sahiyo
United Against Female Genital Cutting

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INTRODUCTION





ABOUT SAHIYO

Sahiyo was formed in 2015 as an advocacy collective of South Asian and other survivors of female genital cutting (FGC), also known as female genital mutilation, to address the lack of acknowledgment around FGC as a global form of gender-based violence and child abuse. We utilize collaborative grassroots campaigns and storytelling techniques to train members of FGC-practicing communities in leading the demand for widespread abandonment; work with frontline professionals (i.e. healthcare providers) to create culturally-sensitive systems of care for survivors; and partner with

government officials to address policy-level change. Originally one entity, Sahiyo split into two legal entities in 2019: Sahiyo U.S. and Sahiyo India. Both entities continue to empower communities left out of the discourse on FGC to create systemic change and abandon this centuries-long practice.

Sahiyo's mission is to empower Asian and other communities to end FGC and create positive social change through dialogue, education, and collaboration based on community involvement.

The following report depicts the work of Sahiyo U.S., unless otherwise noted.

ABOUT BHAIYO

Bhaiyo, meaning 'male friends' or 'brothers' in Bohra Gujarati, was launched on February 6, 2021, *International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation*. This program aims to create a space where male allies can come together to collaborate, spark dialogue,

and spread information about the harms of FGC. In particular, Bhaiyo participants work by engaging communities at the grassroots level to address and build awareness of the cultural, economic, and emotional consequences of this practice.

Sahiyo Presents... Bhaiyo: Men Against FGC



Murtaza Kapasi announces the public launch of Bhaiyo

"Bhaiyo allows men to have open and honest conversations about a topic they may or may not know but should be important to them. As brothers, it's our collective responsibility to leave the world safer than we found it for those that we love. Bhaiyo aims to raise awareness to help advocates and survivors working to end FGC today."

MURTAZA KAPASI

BHAIYO MEMBER



BHAIYO HISTORY

Sahiyo has recognized the need for male allies in the movement to end FGC since our organization's formation. One of the first examples includes a three-part blog series written by [Koen Van den Brande](#) that highlights his experience with the Suleimani Bohra community. As someone who married into this community, he used his voice to call attention to FGC happening amongst Suleimani Bohras too.

Throughout the years, we have also invited men to take part in our various communication activities.

In 2019, Sahiyo released its first male-focused outreach initiative, the [Male Ally Campaign](#). During this initial campaign, Sahiyo asked men to submit short videos, audio files, quotations, or blogs

that highlighted one goal: taking a stand against the practice of FGC. Dozens of men across the globe, from North America to Asia and Africa, responded to our call. Many shared personal experiences with FGC, involving their wives, daughters, sisters, or friends being cut. Others described why FGC needs to end and how harmful it is. By sharing these videos across our social media platforms, this campaign reached over 1,000 people.



#MenToEndFGC

During this campaign, Sahiyo also promoted blog posts on FGC uplifting male engagement, including:

- A powerful letter from an anonymous father to his daughter asking for forgiveness: [Dear daughter, I am sorry you were circumcised](#) (published 2016)
- A recollection by Yusuf on the powerlessness he felt against the religious authorities who dictated FGC be done to his daughter: [Bohra men must speak up to save their daughters from female circumcision](#) (published 2016).
- A piece by Priya Ahluwalia sharing her research on FGC and the hesitance she felt by men in FGC-impacted communities to take a stance against FGC: [Why men too must speak out against Khatna](#) (published 2018).



The idea for Bhaiyo, however, wasn't sparked until 2020 during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During Sahiyo's fourth annual [*Activists Retreat*](#), which was virtual for the first time, male members of the Dawoodi Bohra community were invited to join in as participants. The Dawoodi Bohras are a South Asian Muslim community with origins in India that has historically continued the cultural practice of FGC. This annual retreat is a space for Dawoodi Bohras to come together and discuss the impact of FGC in the community's lives without fear of judgment or backlash, a common outcome of speaking on a topic often considered too taboo to discuss.

During this 2020 retreat, as male participants joined in, they also voiced an interest in creating a platform focused on encouraging men to become allies in the work to end FGC and giving them the tools to do so.

After weeks of discussion, their interest led to the formation of Bhaiyo in the Fall of 2020 with the official launch occurring on February 6th, 2021.

Including men in conversations about FGC is vital for a variety of reasons. In many FGC-practicing communities,

Male Engagement in Sahiyo India Programs

In 2017, Sahiyo hosted its [*third Thaal Pe Charcha*](#) (TPC), loosely translated as 'discussions over food.' TPC events bring Bohra people together in an informal, private space so they can bond over traditional Bohra cuisine while discussing FGC. While Sahiyo India's first two TPC events were open only to female participants, this third event included 3 Bohra men from Mumbai amongst its 22 participants. By listening to the stories and concerns of the women in attendance, the men were able to get a deeper understanding of the practice's harmful impacts. Participants then came together to discuss ways in which they could all work at the grassroots level to end FGC. In 2018, Sahiyo India also included men in its first ever Activists Retreat. Since then, the male participants have continued to spread awareness of FGC by initiating conversation on FGC within their families and community circles.

From 2017 to 2020, Sahiyo India has had 11 men take part in their TPC events and 9 men in their Activists Retreats.



men exert great influence on the women around them, due to the patriarchal structure in which societies are often shaped. A [study](#) in Central and South Senegal where FGC is practiced found that husbands were classified as decision-makers rather than influences in support networks. Additionally,

husbands had the greatest reported levels of influence, followed by other male relatives such as sons, brothers, and brothers-in-law. As a result, men may have the final say over the women in their social networks when it comes to whether the family will choose to continue or end the practice of FGC.

“Notably, even though FGM/C has been traditionally organized and carried out by women, men, as husbands and fathers, often expressed a vested interest in whether the practice of FGM/C will be perpetuated, and were found to influence decisions regarding excision either directly or indirectly.”

SHELL-DUNCAN ET AL, 2021¹

Patriarchal influence over FGC can be varied and men influence the continuation of the practice in many ways. For example, men can uphold [widespread misconception](#) that an uncut girl is promiscuous, impure, or less fertile than a girl who has undergone FGC, which causes uncut girls to be regarded as undesirable for marriage.

In other communities, such as the Dawoodi Bohra community, FGC was kept silent and secret from men, and continued by women in-line with the

idea that women were not allowed to be sexual.



A study of the Dawoodi Bohra women by Sahiyo in 2017 showed that 39% of survey respondents were unsure if men were told of the practice when it occurred to a female relative, and 34% believed that men were not told when it occurred to a female relative.

¹ Bettina Shell-Duncan, Amadou Moreau, Sarah Smith & Holly Shakya (2021) Women's business? A social network study of the influence of men on decision-making regarding female genital mutilation/cutting in Senegal, *Global Public Health*, 16:6, 856-869, DOI: 10.1080/17441692.2020.1826996



IS LOOKING FOR MALE ALLIES!

Even in communities where FGC is not discussed amongst men, or it is common to hear that men are not aware of FGC (as it is often regulated as a woman's issue or a private matter), men could have an impact on whether or not FGC is continued within the role of decision-maker if the topic of FGC is made public and aware to them.

Men are an important part of ending FGC because community-rooted social sanctions can be changed when men help counter the traditional gender norms that they culturally uphold.

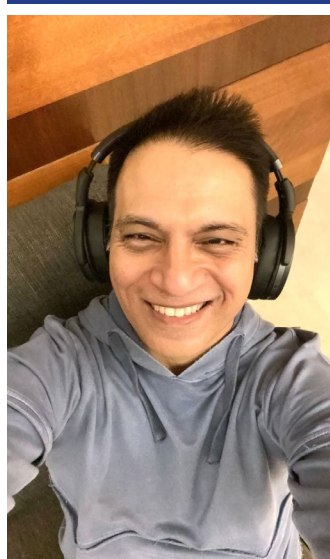
Bhaiyo grew organically from community recognition of the need to foster male engagement for the prevention of FGC amongst future generations in FGC-impacted communities. This unique and gender-responsive program allows Sahiyo to address and target patriarchal systems at play so that FGC activists and survivors can work in tandem with male allies to change communal social norms.



Mbekure Metemi



Nishikant Mendhapurkar



Ashraf Engineer



Vysak Beena Keraleeyan

Participants for Each One, Reach Bhaiyo campaign

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES





PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



Tobi Olanipekun speaks on male allyship during Bhaiyo Father's Day campaign

The original program objectives of the Bhaiyo program use a three-pronged approach to engage men as anti-FGC activists:

- 1. To build a community that engages male-identifying individuals to have a role in the work to end FGC.**
- 2. To educate male-identifying individuals so they have the skills to provide love, support,**
- and understanding to FGC-impacted communities and FGC survivors.**
- 3. To generate resources that male-identifying individuals can use to raise awareness of FGC and conduct anti-FGC advocacy work.**

WHO ARE BHAIYOS?





BHAIYO MEMBERSHIP

ELIGIBILITY:

Bhaiyo membership is open to anyone who is male-identifying and has a passion for ending FGC. Sahiyo accepts men from all backgrounds to participate, and recognizes that everyone is in a different place in their activism journey. Some Bhaiyos have been working on this issue for years, and others are just coming to learn about the practice in their community.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

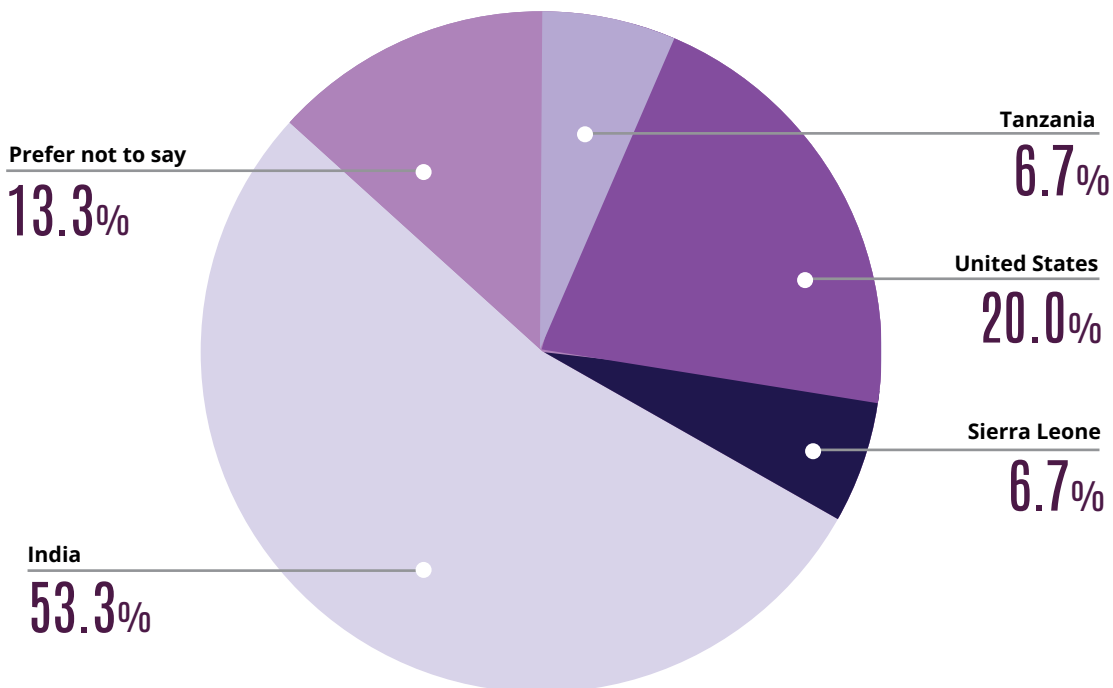
Those interested in joining Bhaiyo can fill out this application form. They are then interviewed by Sahiyo staff and/or volunteers.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS:

Bhaiyo’s current membership comprises of 15 men from various countries as depicted in the chart below.

15 MEN

BHAIYO MEMBERSHIP BY COUNTRY:



BHAIYO PROGRAM STRUCTURE





STAYING ENGAGED

BHAIYO COMMUNICATIONS:

Once accepted, Bhaiyo members are onboarded to our Bhaiyo communication platforms, including a Bhaiyo-specific WhatsApp group and Google Group listserv. These communication platforms allow Bhaiyos to remain connected and provide quick communications on news, campaigns, and events relevant to FGC and the male engagement program. The WhatsApp group in particular helps to virtually foster discourse and support between meetings and events. Sahiyo also hosts meet-ups and check-in video calls throughout the year to create opportunities for Bhaiyos to get to know one another.

BHAIYO PROGRAM PLANNING:

Members are invited to be involved in the development of Bhaiyo activities, contributing their thoughts and ideas to our programmatic strategies and helping to shape the design of campaigns and webinars

#SahiyoMaleAllies

BHAIYO INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:

Our internship gives individuals the opportunity to work specifically towards continuing education for men on FGC and coordinating programs that further the mission to include men in anti-FGC work.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN BHAIYO PROGRAMS:

Bhaiyo programs are open to public involvement, which encourages non-Bhaiyo members to become more involved in the work to end FGC. For example, we encourage the public to take part in our social media campaigns, and all are welcome to attend Bhaiyo-organized webinars.





"I am a 38 year old man married to a 33 year old woman who has undergone FGC in her childhood due to religious reasons, to curb her sexual desire. I oppose FGC as the prime motive of it is to reduce sex drive before marriage."

- ANONYMOUS, MUMBAI, INDIA

#SahiyoMaleAllies
#MenToEndFGC

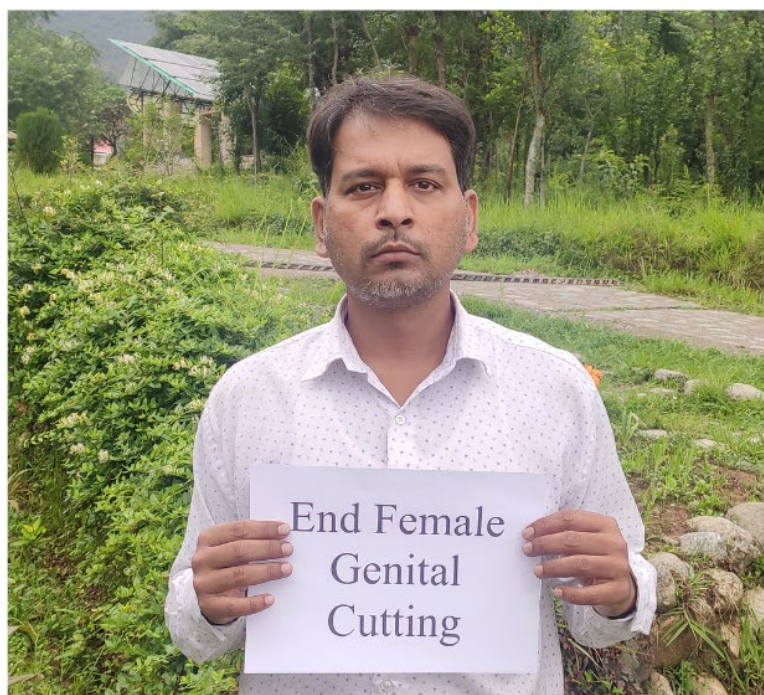
Quotes taken from Sahiyo's 2019 Male Ally Campaign

"Female Genital Mutilation serves no religious purpose whatsoever. It is not merely physical harm but in many cases the woman who undergoes it can face psychological harm as well. FGM must end.. In every probability sense FGM can not be religious because FGM is not mentioned in the Holy Koran and I believe the Prophet Mohammed was a far more reasonable saint who would not have condoned this harm."

- GIRISH, PUNE, INDIA

#SahiyoMaleAllies
#MenToEndFGC

Quotes taken from Sahiyo's 2019 Male Ally Campaign



*-Mohammad Chappalwala,
Member of the Bohra Community*

Mohammad Chappalwala, Bhaiyo Member

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS





IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS

BHAIYO MEMBER MEETINGS:

Since Bhaiyo's founding, four Bhaiyo member meet-ups have occurred. These meetings provide a safe space for members to discuss their feelings about FGC, the program, their activism, and foster community-building.

VOLUNTEER STUDY CIRCLE:

On August 4th, 2021, Sahiyo hosted a study circle with our organization's volunteers and focused on raising awareness about the Bhaiyo program and male activism in general. Sahiyo's study circles emphasize the need to come together and address the issue of FGC's root cause, and the importance of youth and generational learning when it comes to anti-FGC activism.

MALE-FOCUSED CONTENT:

The Bhaiyo program has generated a range of male-focused content ranging from blogs, videos, comic strips, and more.

BLOGS:

Sahiyo's blog has seen tremendous growth over the years and we reach

over 100,000 views per year. Our blog offers space for male allies to talk about their conversations and activism on FGC. A full list of published content related to male activism or written by male-identifying individuals can be found in the ***Appendix***.

COMIC STRIP:

This comic strip details a scenario where a brother found out his sister had undergone FGC as a child, and the conversation that ensued between the two siblings. This story shares a way in which communication and discussion on FGC can be healing. Amplifying these scenarios is a form of activism that inspires change and compassion. ***See next page 19 for comic strip.***

WEBINARS AND PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGNS:

From the onset of Bhaiyo through December 2022, Sahiyo has implemented two educational webinars and two Bhaiyo public outreach campaigns. ***See pages 20 through 29 for webinars and campaigns.***



SCENARIOS

by sahiyo

Zoeb and Zara



Zoeb and Zara were very close as children and constantly played together. They especially loved to paint, creating stories and illustrating them with imaginary characters.



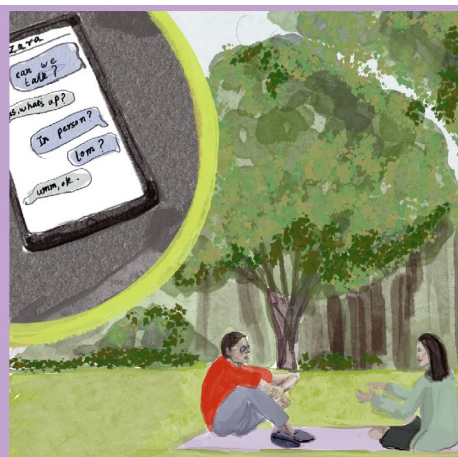
As the older brother, Zoeb was very protective of Zara, always looking out for her and leading the way. He took great pride when his mother made it clear that he was responsible for her, and though Zara was a curious child, often wanting to do things she shouldn't, her brother never got angry and was always very patient.



Inevitably, as the siblings grew up, they grew apart until they were practically strangers. This was partly due to Zoeb leaving for university, and his visits home became less frequent.

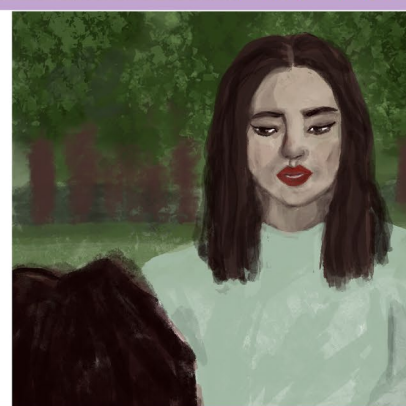


Zoeb ends up studying in Kenya and after learning that female genital cutting (FGC) occurred there, he starts researching the practice in preparation for a school fellowship. He is shocked when he discovers that it happens in his own community back home. He wonders if this has happened to Zara but is too scared to broach the subject.



Finally, just before he's due to travel home, Zoeb decides to reach out to his sister and ask her. They agree to meet in person. Zara, nervously but determinedly, confirms what her brother has suspected.

She tells him that when they were children she was taken by an aunt to undergo FGC, and was told to never talk about it. Her memory is hazy and it was an event that was shrouded in secrecy, but Zara remembers the pain and betrayal she felt. She tries to explain to her brother how the taboo surrounding the practice creates a culture of shame where no one wants to openly discuss or admit to the issues FGC causes.



Zoeb is at a loss for words. He feels like he has failed her as a big brother, that when Zara needed him most, he wasn't there for her. He hadn't been able to protect her.

He realises that this is still a problem occurring today, with men and boys not realising FGC is occurring, and doing little to stop it when they do. He resolutely decides that from now on, he will always speak out against the practice and the harm it causes.

Though it was a difficult conversation to have, the honesty and understanding between brother and sister ultimately brings them back together again.

Zoeb and Zara: An original Sahiyo comic



Everyone's Responsibility: Discussing The Role Male Allies Play in Preventing FGC Webinar

Date: February 23, 2021

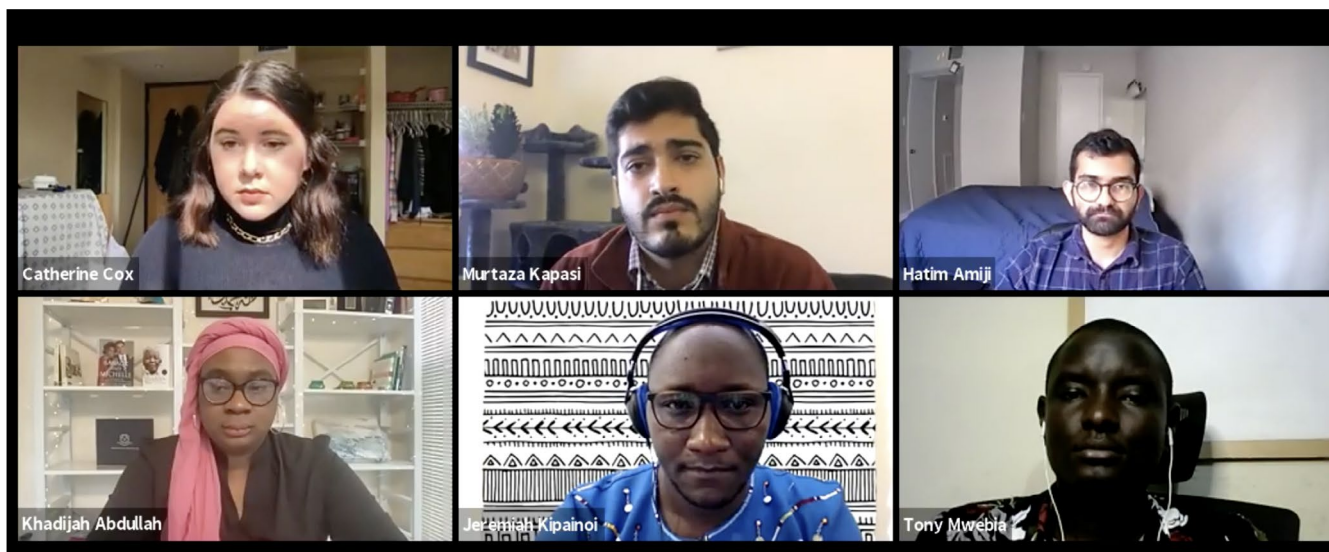
Registrants: 78

Live Attendees: 59

Everyone's Responsibility: Discussing The Role Male Allies Play in Preventing FGC featured panelists Jeremiah Kipainoi, Khadijah Abdullah, Tony Mwebia, Hatim Amiji, and moderator Murtaza Kapasi. As said by Murtaza, the goal of the webinar was to answer the question, *"what are we [as male allies] missing and how can we help each other as well as join together in allyship?"* The panelists discussed why men should, and must be, involved in efforts to end FGC, as well as their struggles as male activists



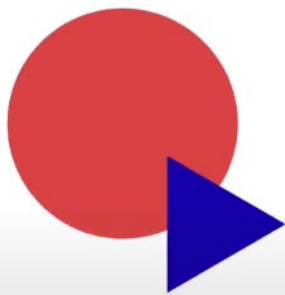
and the lessons they have learned in their activist journeys. Finally, the conversation ended with the panelists sharing how the audience could get involved and support their work as Bhaiyos. ***Read a blog post about the event [here](#).***



From Top Left: Catherine Cox, Murtaza Kapasi, Hatim Amiji, Khadijah Abdullah, Jeremiah Kipainoi, and Tony Mwebia

“By this, I mean, yes, they [men] have an idea about FGM, it’s a cultural issue for them, they say it’s a right of passage, they understand it’s something valuable as from the cultural perspective. But they have no idea of what is cut, what kind of harm is done to the women and girls, what happens in terms of their psychological effect, health effects, physically, and everything. So once we are able to have a conversation with them, then we are able to see a real transformation in the sense that they are able to join in; we say we live in patriarchal society so we are able to use the power that they have in that society to ensure that we use it positively in the fight against FGM.”

TONY MWEBIA, WEBINAR PANELIST



EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY WEBINAR

Discussing the role male allies
play in preventing FGC.

Webinar “Everyone’s Responsibility”



FATHER'S DAY PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

Date: June 2021

Participants: 17

9
QUOTES

7
VIDEOS

1
AUDIO RECORDING

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
747 people
ENGAGED VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Our Father's Day campaign highlighted the role of men in ending FGC and how they can empower their communities. Specifically, this campaign focused on the experiences and roles of fathers, future fathers, and brothers, and aimed to garner support for Bhaiyo, encourage men to participate in the organization, and normalize conversations concerning FGC and male allyship. Before the

launch, Bhaiyo members were asked to send in videos or photos answering questions about the role men play in FGC advocacy. Sahiyo also highlighted our social media blog posts and articles on male engagement and fatherhood from past campaigns.

On July 20th, Sahiyo culminated this campaign in a meet and greet in which *7 participants* had the opportunity to talk about their experiences. The event inspired community between male allies, the sharing of resources, and keeping each other motivated in their crucial work. Additionally, male allies provided suggestions for future Bhaiyo programs, including: creating a toolkit or pamphlet on male engagement; guidance on how to talk to other men about allyship; and hosting a workshop for men on best practices for engagement and allyship.

Father's Day Campaign



FATHER'S DAY CAMPAIGN PARTICIPANTS

"To all the fathers I just want to ask, if dress codes can change, if food habits can evolve if Namaz (prayers) can be altered, if additional religious taxes can be levied... then why can't a small ritual be banned and abandoned?"

MURTAZA ASGARALI, BHAIYO MEMBER

sahiyo
United Against Female Genital Cutting



ASHRAF ENGINEER, BHAIYO MEMBER

sahiyo
United Against Female Genital Cutting



SAIFI AKBARAL, BHAIYO MEMBER



JAMES COX, FATHER'S DAY PARTICIPANT BHAIYO MEMBER

From Left: Ashraf Engineer, Saifi Akbaral, and James Cox speak about the importance of male allyship



EACH ONE, REACH BHAIYO PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

Date: March 8–March 29, 2022

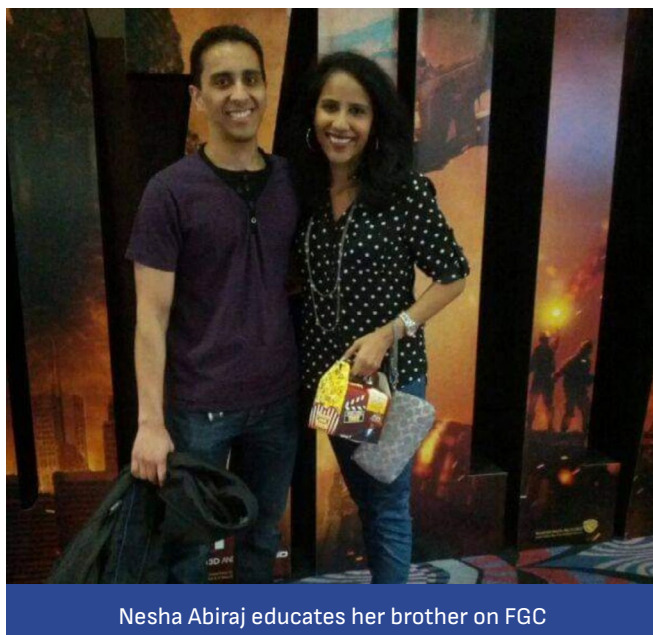
Participants: 19 people reached out to men in their lives, and 23 men were educated on FGC

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
12,500 people
ENGAGED VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

[Each One, Reach Bhaiyo](#) launched on International Women’s Day to encourage the general public to speak with one or more male-identifying people in their life and educate them about the topic of FGC.



Lara Kingstone, Campaign participant



Nesha Abiraj educates her brother on FGC

Leading up to the [campaign](#), Sahiyo shared conversational materials that had previously been created to encourage dialogue and support participants in meaningful and effective conversations about FGC with men. These materials included the [Effective Conversation Guide](#), which was created to help those participating in the campaign explore various facets of conversation, from the power of listening and the method of storytelling, to the challenges of acknowledging nuance and understanding the importance of continued dialogue.



After participants held conversations with the male-identifying people in their lives, they were invited to send in photos of themselves holding a sign saying:

“For International Women’s Day, I educated [insert number] men to end female genital cutting.”

These photos were then shared on Sahiyo’s social media platforms to encourage more conversation and participation in the campaign.

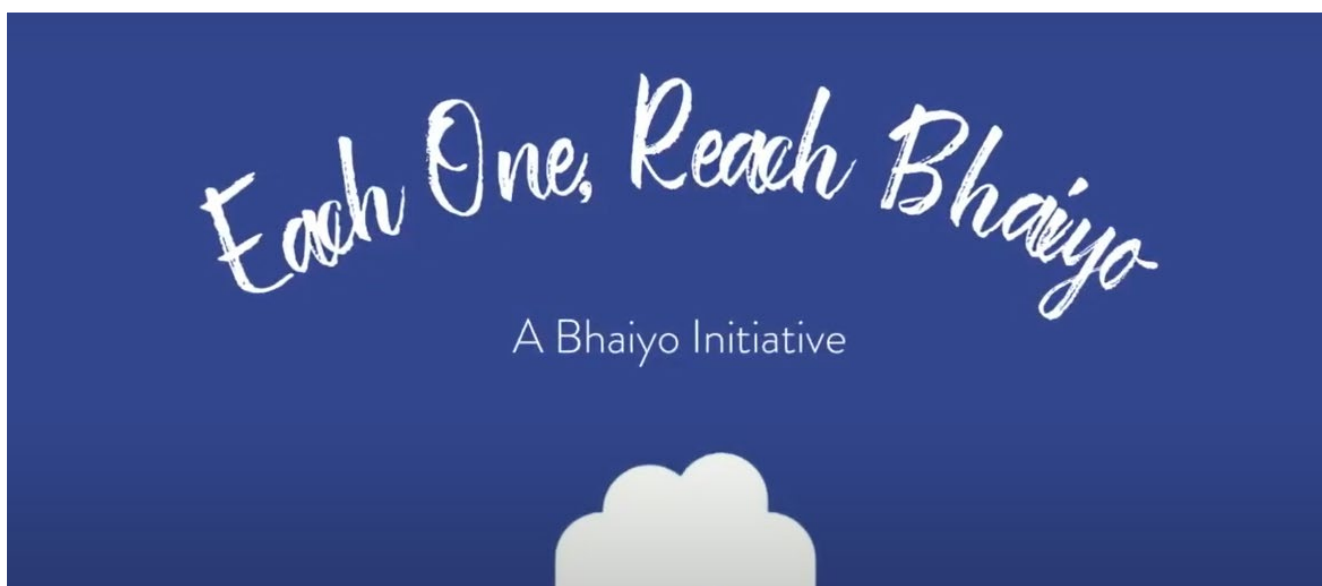
Additionally, three questions were made available for participants who wished to write a blog post about their conversations:

1. *Why did you want to reach out to another man in your life to discuss female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)?*

2. *What was his reaction? Was he aware of FGM/C?*
3. *What advice would you give to others trying to reach out to the men in their lives?*

Three blogs published during this campaign include:

- [Sahiyo - United Against Female Genital Cutting - How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning male lawyers into Bhaiyos](#)
- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning neighbors, friends, and community members into Bhaiyos](#)
- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning my older brothers into Bhaiyos](#)



Watch the introduction video for Bhaiyo’s Each One, Reach Bhaiyo campaign here!

"I have been speaking to Bohra family and friends about khatna for a few years now, but in the past 18 days, having khatna conversations as part of the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo campaign has been a very different, heart-warming, emotional experience."

AAREFA JOHARI, EACH ONE, REACH BHAIYO PARTICIPANT

"My eldest brother shared with me the next day a recollection that a female co-worker had confided in him several years ago about being subjected to such a practice when she was just a child. At the time he had not connected the dots and recognized it as being FGM/C or had the terminology to call it such, and only made the connection after I had spoken to him about it."

NESHA ABIRAJ, EACH ONE, REACH BHAIYO PARTICIPANT

"When I spoke with one of my neighbors, Kinjalbhai, that in some Muslim sects, women are 'circumcised,' he said he did not know what this 'circumcision' meant and had never heard about it! Similarly, when I informed my friend Sandeepbhai Salikia, he too became speechless! I tried to have a conversation with 15 men who are not from my community. Surprisingly, I found out that none of these men knew such a harmful practice continues to happen even in today's age."

HAKIM RANGWALA, BHAIYO MEMBER



ENGAGING MEN TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING WEBINAR

Date: March 14, 2022

Registrants: 361

Live Attendees: 117

in efforts to end FGC globally, and what the movement is doing to expand male participation. In a fireside chat during the event, Sahiyo's Program Coordinator, Catherine Cox, and Executive Director, Mariya Taher, had the opportunity to share the history of



[*The Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C*](#), of which Sahiyo is a member organization, hosted a parallel event during the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, [*'Engaging Men to End Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.'*](#) This webinar explored how boys and men are involved

Bhaiyo, its successes and challenges, as well as provide an overview of the Bhaiyo campaigns and its impact. Other speakers included Mireille Tushiminina, Rodrigue Nkwayaya, Fatima Sy, and Dame Ndiaye; the event was moderated by Carol Jenkins.

“In my job working with men there is opportunity and there are challenges... We see FGM as taboo... to talk about FGM in my job we have to use tools – the reflection and action methodology... We know that FGM is against human rights and culture... we must take care and talk about it with susceptible and respectful people, and the community will practice [speaking] without judging [survivors].”

RODRIGUE NKWAYAYA, WEBINAR PANELIST AND END FGM
EUROPEAN NETWORK MEMBER

ENGAGING MEN TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

Discussing ways to incorporate men in programming to end
FGM/C.

March 14th, 2022

GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR
ACTION TO END FGM/C

“Engaging Men to End FGM/C,” hosted by the Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C

PROGRAM OUTCOMES





Throughout the development of the Bhaiyo program, 81.3% of members have joined additional programming efforts

- 15 men joined the Bhaiyo program
- 13,247 people engaged with our public awareness campaigns
- 36 people participated in our public awareness campaigns
- 176 people attended Bhaiyo male-engagement webinars
- 28 blog posts written to uplift the voices of male activists
- 81.3% of members have joined additional programming efforts after joining Bhaiyo

Overall, the Bhaiyo program has led to the following outcomes:

1) To build a community that empowers male-identifying advocates to have a role in the work to end FGC.

Over the years, Sahiyo has created a thriving space for male allies to come together, connect, and support one another in their work to end FGC through our Bhaiyo program. We have seen great success in fostering personal connections and networks between our male allies through social media and communication platforms like our Google Group listserv and WhatsApp. Using these communication platforms in tandem with hosting meet-ups for Bhaiyo members gave members opportunities to connect, collaborate,

and provide feedback on current Bhaiyo programs and input into all of our future Bhaiyo educational campaigns. Finally, through these communication platforms, we've increased the knowledge base of male engagement work in the movement to end FGC.

"AFTER RETURNING FROM THE SAHIYO RETREAT, I MET WITH MANY PEOPLE PARTICULARLY BOHRA MUSLIMS, MALE AND FEMALE, TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEIR VIEWS ARE REGARDING KHAFZ. I WAS SURPRISED TO NOTE THAT MANY BELIEVED IT TO BE A RELIGIOUS ACT THOUGH KHAFZ OR FGM/FGC HAS NO RELATION WITH ISLAM. NO PARENT WOULD WANT THEIR CHILD TO PASS THROUGH THIS HARMFUL PROCESS ONCE THEY UNDERSTAND THE FACT THAT IT IS NOT A RELIGIOUS ACT."

-Shabbir, Udaipur, India

#SahiyoMaleAllies

#MenToEndFGC

A quote by Shabbir submitted for Sahiyo's 2019 Male Ally Campaign



2) To educate male-identifying advocates so they can have the skills to provide love, support, and promote community building to FGC-impacted communities and FGC survivors.

Bhaiyo has seen an increase in the number of male-identifying activists in FGC-practicing and impacted communities who are informed, educated, and engaged in the movement to end FGC. This is represented in the increase from initial 3 to 15 current Bhaiyo members.

Through our public awareness campaigns, Bhaiyo members leveraged community ties to encourage others to join the conversation around FGC and male engagement. In total, **Bhaiyo's public awareness campaigns saw the participation of 36 individuals who contributed to the campaign by submitting videos, blogs, and pictures about their experiences with educating men on FGC.**

Specifically for the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo campaign, 63% of the participants who submitted materials identified as male. Furthermore, **13 out of 19 or over 60% of the participants were not Bhaiyo members during the time of participation.**

A BHAIYO STORY: CONNECTING OVER WHATSAPP TO EMPOWER A FATHER TO SAY NO TO FGC

Sahiyo interviewed Mohammad Chappalwala about his anti-FGC activism, and created a blog post: ['Conversation with a Bhaiyo: Advising a concerned father.'](#) This story details Mohammad helping a fellow father, Mr. N, ensure his daughter would not be cut. The two fathers were connected through the Bhaiyo program's WhatsApp group. With Mohammad's help, Mr. N was able to reach his goal of speaking to his ex-wife about FGC, and keep his daughter safe from harm. The scenario exemplifies how including men in campaigns to end FGC, and giving them the space and resources to be advocates in their community, can make a difference in protecting future generations from FGC.

In 2022 Mohammad Chappalwala was [awarded the Donald A. Strong Man of The Year Award](#) from [the Global Women P.E.A.C.E. Foundation.](#)



sahiyo
United Against Female Genital Cutting

bhaiyo

For International Women's Day I Educated ___ Men to End Female Genital Cutting

#EachOneReachBhaiyo



This means that over half of the individuals who took part in this campaign interacted with Bhaiyo for the first time, expressing a growing interest in the topic of male engagement.

These individuals' voices, when shared, encouraged others to learn more about FGC. Overall, **13,247 people engaged in both the campaigns via Sahiyo's social media feeds**. This significant reach highlights how community-based conversations can lead toward changing the social norm of practicing FGC.

3) To generate resources that male-identifying advocates can use to raise awareness of FGC.

The **Bhaiyo program has generated 28 articles, either on the topic of male allyship or written by male allies**. These blog posts help male allies become more visible within the FGC movement and teach others about the importance of male allyship, mobilizing men to join, and increasing the knowledge base of male allies as a whole.

Sahiyo's educational webinars have created space for male FGC activists to share lessons learned through their experiences with education and outreach initiatives to end FGC. **Our webinars have had high attendance rates - with 439 registrants and 176 people attending live.**

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS





Bhaiyo, though successful, has had growing pains and faced challenges during its implementation. These ‘lessons learned’ offer insights into what works well and what can be done to strengthen programming in male engagement work to end FGC.

MEMBERSHIP

Challenge

Since its launch in 2021, *Bhaiyo’s membership has grown significantly.*

However, the program has faced challenges in recruiting male-identifying volunteers. In conversations with current Bhaiyo members around engagement challenges, participants have noted that men might feel their voices can’t be impactful in encouraging their communities to end FGC and/or struggle to find a place or space from which to advocate on FGC when it is considered a “woman’s issue.”

Takeaway

Conducting male engagement work means allowing for all levels of activism and welcoming people in varying places along their learning journey. Bhaiyo has taught us that activism to end FGC is a path of learning, understanding, and acting. Men who feel they do not have a place to speak on a “woman’s issue,” or simply don’t have enough information

about FGC, often fail to recognize that their voice is needed in the movement to end FGC. Programming that recognizes this learning journey and meets potential male allies “where they are at,” whether that is learning more about FGC through educational events, taking part (either anonymously or not) in anti-FGC prevention programs, and leading anti-FGC campaigns, is necessary and important in ensuring future generations don’t undergo this harm.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Challenge

Our Bhaiyo program formed organically from interest and leadership around men’s roles in ending FGC. And while many of our male allies are passionate about ending FGC, the program has struggled to sustain and develop new leadership amongst Sahiyo’s male-identifying volunteers.

This could be due to two key factors:

1. Volunteers feel they do not have the capacity to take on a leadership role in developing new programs and
2. Men hesitate to step into leadership roles on a “woman’s issue” for fear they have no place in the movement.



Takeaway

Conducting male engagement work means allowing for all levels of activism and welcoming people in varying places along their learning journey. Bhaiyo has taught us that activism to end FGC is a path of learning, understanding, and acting. Men who feel they do not have a place to speak on a “woman’s issue,” or simply don’t have enough information about FGC, often fail to recognize that their voice is needed in the movement to end FGC. Programming that recognizes this learning journey and meets potential male allies “where they are at,” whether that is learning more about FGC through educational events, taking part (either anonymously or not) in anti-FGC prevention programs, and leading anti-FGC campaigns, is necessary and important in ensuring future generations don’t undergo this harm.



**IS LOOKING FOR MALE
ALLIES!**

SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

Challenge

Bhaiyo has seen great involvement and participation from members during Sahiyo’s events and campaigns. However, engagement between and amongst Bhaiyo members lessens in between those events and campaigns.

Takeaway

Thinking about ways to sustain male engagement throughout the year, in between events and campaigns, can involve small actions. Some of these actions include creating social media campaigns that require submitting less time-consuming items, like a quote or picture that highlights their anti-FGC work. Informal network-building gatherings such as check-ins with no formal agenda can also be helpful, as they require less complex forms of involvement.

Another way to increase engagement is by creating campaigns that encourage women and other individuals to engage with the men in their lives and leverage familial ties to facilitate men joining the movement.



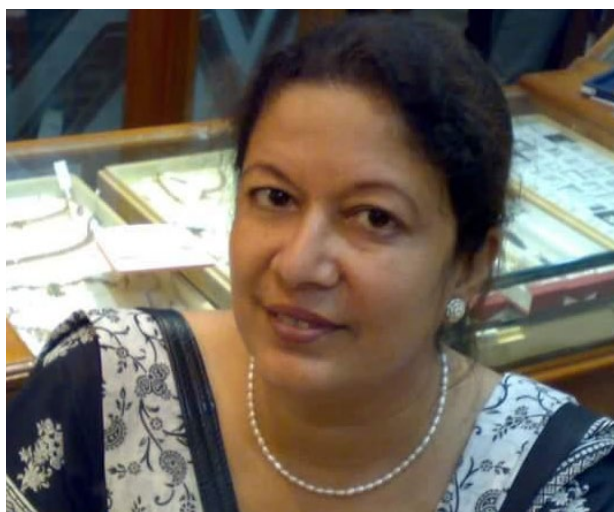
INVOLVING WOMEN

Challenge

Bhaiyo has recognized that many FGC-practicing communities also reaffirm patriarchal structures wherein women are subjected to a lesser role or do not stand on equal footing as men. As a result, some communities may place higher value on what a man says, and/or fall in line with men's leadership to the detriment of the overall movement to end FGC.

Takeaway

Allying with women working to end FGC (survivors, female-led organizations, etc.) can ensure that male ally engagement programs to end FGC continue to be survivor-centered, instead of falling into a trap of reaffirming patriarchal power dynamics. Creating planning committees that involve all genders can support a male engagement program to ensure that no element of a particular campaign or event is discriminatory or offensive to women.



From top: Eliza Kapadia, Mariya Taher, and Nevin Sulthan submit photos for Bhaiyo's Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign

FUTURE PROGRAM EXPANSION





FUTURE PROGRAM EXPANSION

Our Bhaiyo program is still in its infancy; there is much still to learn in terms of how best to engage male allies in the work to end FGC. Yet, if nothing else, the past two years have shown us that to ensure FGC is thought of as a community public health issue, we must engage all genders in this work.

As Sahiyo increases our organizational capacity, we hope to expand the Bhaiyo program and create more inclusive networks for male activists. We aim to increase the Bhaiyo program in the following ways:

- Support both men from FGC-practicing communities and men from non-FGC practicing communities to get involved in anti-FGC education and prevention work.
- Create thriving spaces for male allies to gather, connect, and support one another in their emotional needs as they engage and respond to advocacy work to end FGC.
- Increase the number of males in FGC-practicing communities and allied communities who are informed, educated, and engaged in the movement to end FGC. This can be done through men joining Bhaiyo, public awareness campaigns, and hiring Bhaiyo program-specific interns and staff.
- Create educational events and resources that uplift and support the need for male engagement programming in the field of FGC prevention. These events can include public outreach campaigns, educational webinars, conversational toolkits, and volunteer study circles.
- Create virtual public platforms for male allies to share their stories, thereby increasing the knowledge base of male engagement work in the movement to end FGC. This virtual public space can consist of websites, blog posts, podcasts, and social media campaigns.
- Train Bhaiyo members on how to host educational workshops so they can provide teaching events for men who are less educated on the topic of FGC. This will allow Bhaiyo members to become more directly involved in anti-FGC advocacy work.
- Foster leadership development amongst existing Bhaiyo male allies that allow them to take more proactive roles in organizing and planning Bhaiyo public awareness campaigns to further engage men to end FGC.



APPENDIX PUBLISHED BLOGS



Blogs published prior to the launch of Bhaiyo (before February 2021):

- [Khatna among Suleimanis, from the perspective of an ‘outsider’](#)
- [The Role of Men in Ending FGM in the Bohra Community](#)
- [FGM before the Indian Supreme Court](#)
- [Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Work of the devil?](#)
- [A letter on khatna by a young Bohra man](#)
- [Why the khatna conversation needs men’s voices too](#)
- [A conversation on Khatna with Suleimani Bohras](#)
- [Bohra men must speak up to save their daughters from female circumcision](#)
- [My daughter is the joy of my life. There was no way I could have her cut](#)
- [Why this Bohra father is guilty about his daughter’s Khatna](#)
- [At Sahiyo’s third Thaal Pe Charcha, Bohra men attended too](#)

Bhaiyo (general):

- [Mutilation or enhancement: A researcher’s argument for respectful terminology on genital cutting](#)
- [PRESS RELEASE: Launching Sahiyo’s Newest Program: Bhaiyo: Male Allies United in Ending Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting](#)
- [Bhaiyo Spotlight: Honoring Donald Strong](#)
- [Bhaiyo Mohammad Chappalwala to be awarded Donald A. Strong Man of The Year Award](#)
- [Conversation with a Bhaiyo: Advising a concerned father](#)

Each One, Reach Bhaiyo campaign:

- [Each One, Reach Bhaiyo](#)
- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning my Dad into a Bhaiyo](#)
- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning my father and law colleagues into Bhaiyos](#)
- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: My experience with different Bhaiyos](#)
- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning male lawyers into Bhaiyos](#)



- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning my older brothers into Bhaiyos](#)
- [How I took part in the Each One, Reach Bhaiyo Campaign: Turning neighbors, friends, and community members into Bhaiyos](#)

Bhaiyo Public Outreach campaigns:

- [Bhaiyo engages male allies to empower communities to end female genital cutting during June campaign](#)
- [Sahiyo's male ally campaign: We need your voice!](#)
- [#MenToEndFGC: Sahiyo's Male Ally Campaign Launches](#)

Bhaiyo Educational webinars:

- [Everyone's Responsibility: Discussing the Role Male Allies Play In Preventing Female Genital Cutting](#)
- [CSW Virtual Parallel Event – "Engaging Men to End Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting"](#)

DONALD STRONG DEDICATION PAGE



This report is dedicated to the late Donald Strong. As Director of Research Coordination and a Practicum Director in the Department of Prevention and Community Health at The George Washington University, Mr. Strong was a true male ally in the work to end FGC. He worked closely with nonprofit organizations, health departments, and healthcare providers who serve African immigrant communities in the greater Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area. His energetic advocacy also propelled the federal **Stop FGM Act of 2020** into law.

In the words of his colleague and friend, Karen McDonnell: *“Don Strong, a connector, a cheerleader, a community activist, and confidant. When he walked into any meeting, within five minutes, he made sure everyone knew one another and how we were all connected. I remember we were giving a presentation at the United Nations about FGC, and the storytelling we were engaging in was getting emotionally heavy. Don, sensing the tension, stood up and started engaging with the room. The participants didn’t know one another when they entered the room, but Don was connecting people, connecting lives, and within minutes had the entire room, standing up and sharing their stories... Don, my friend, I’m going to miss you. May you rest in peace and may your power be instilled in each of us to continue your mission.”*

You can read more about Donald Strong and his work [here](#).



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