

Annual Report SAHIYO U.S.

JULY 1, 2023 TO JUNE 30, 2024



sahiyo
United Against Female Genital Cutting

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WELCOME FROM SAHIYO U.S. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Sahiyo,

Another year has passed, opening a new chapter in Sahiyo U.S.' ongoing mission to strengthen support for survivors and work toward ending female genital cutting (FGC) for future generations. As we conclude the eighth full fiscal year since our founding in December 2015, we're taking a moment to celebrate milestones and reflect on our journey.

In July 2023, Sahiyo participated in [Women Deliver 2023](#) – the world's largest conference on gender equality – which drew over 6,000 attendees. The event was held in Kigali, Rwanda. As one of the founding members of the [Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C](#), Sahiyo co-coordinated a day-long preconference titled "[Catalyzing Global Action to End FGM/C](#)." Over 100 advocates from around the world attended the preconference, which promoted global cooperation, knowledge exchange among the activists coming from different regions, and aimed to drive collective action and structural change. The day culminated in the creation of the [Kigali Declaration](#), which calls for increased investments in the FGC movement sphere.

Over the past year, Sahiyo has significantly expanded its training and technical assistance (TTA) programs. In October 2023, Sahiyo received a grant from the [Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women \(OVW\)](#) to provide TTA on FGC for existing OVW grantees working in the fields of domestic violence and sexual assault. Additionally, in January 2024, Sahiyo was awarded a grant from the [Washington State Department of Health](#) to enhance efforts to prevent and respond to FGC across the state.

On February 6th, 2024, International Day of Zero

Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, Sahiyo released the second report of our survivor and advocate led [Critical Intersections Research Project](#), titled [Examining Intersections Between Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Social Oppressions: A Mixed Methods Study](#). We've also begun to support organizations in implementing recommendations from our findings from this project.

In celebration of International Women's Day in March 2024, Sahiyo hosted its [second annual comedy show and auction](#), made possible by the generous support of our donors and community. The event raised over \$13K to support our mission. Our five-day celebration of women's voices started March 6th, with a vibrant auction and social media highlights of talented women, continuing with a lively comedy show on March 8th that drew enthusiastic community support.

This year, we also celebrated the growth of our team, welcoming more staff members who bring fresh perspectives and dedicated expertise to our work. I take great pride in our team and all that we have accomplished together. Our consistent dedication to elevating survivors' voices through storytelling initiatives has only grown stronger.

With this in mind, I'm pleased to deliver our Annual Report for the fiscal year July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024. As we look to the future with anticipation and hope, we thank you for your continued support in helping us meet our mission.

In solidarity,

Mariya Taher, MSW, MFA

U.S. Executive Director

Sahiyo - United Against Female Genital Cutting

ABOUT SAHIYO

Sahiyo, derived from the Bohra Gujarati word ‘saheliyo’ meaning female friends, embodies **our mission to empower Asian and other communities to end female genital cutting (FGC) and create positive social change through dialogue, education, and collaboration based on community involvement.**

The World Health Organization defines FGC as “all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.” FGC can have lifelong physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual impacts.

Sahiyo envisions a world without FGC (also known as female genital mutilation or female circumcision), an internationally recognized human rights violation.

We strive to create a culture where women’s and girl’s bodies and sexuality are not feared or suppressed, but embraced as normal. We recognize and emphasize the values of consent and the right for women and children to have autonomy over their own bodies.

Today, Sahiyo operates as two distinct legal entities: Sahiyo U.S. and Sahiyo India. Sahiyo U.S. conducts transnational programs, primarily focusing on initiatives within the U.S. We work with survivors, their families, and the broader religious and ethnic communities where FGC continues as a social norm. In 2018, the Population Reference Bureau recognized Sahiyo as one of six inspiring organizations dedicated to ending FGC. Sahiyo U.S. is a fiscally sponsored project of Empowerment WORKS, Inc.

THIS ANNUAL REPORT FOCUSES SPECIFICALLY ON THE WORK OF Sahiyo U.S.



MEET THE TEAM



MARIYA TAHER

(she/her)

U.S. Executive Director

mariya@sahiyo.org

U.S. Executive Director Mariya Taher has worked in the gender-based violence field for nearly 15 years in the areas of teaching, research, policy, program development, and direct service. In 2018, Mariya received the Human Rights Storytellers Award from the Muslim American Leadership Alliance. In 2020, she was recognized as one of the six inaugural grant recipients for the Crave Foundation for Women. After starting a Change.org petition and gathering over 400,000 signatures, Mariya helped Massachusetts become the 39th state to pass legislation on FGC. Subsequently, she supported other states to pass such laws including Washington state. She also sits on the steering committee for the U.S. End FGM/C Network.

As of 2021, Mariya serves as an expert consultant for the U.S. Department of Justice's Training and Technical Assistance For Addressing FGM/C Program. In 2023, she became a Valor LEAP Fellow and that same year, Mariya was honored as one of ten recipients in the L'Oréal Paris Women of Worth program, which recognizes nonprofit leaders across the U.S. at the forefront of their fields. Prior to founding Sahiyo, Mariya held positions at Saheli; Support and Friendship for South Asian Women & Families; W.O.M.A.N., Inc.; Asian Women's Shelter; San Francisco Department on the Status of Women; and she was a 2014 Women's Policy Institute Fellow through the Women's Foundation of California.

Additionally, Mariya is an extensive writer and has contributed pieces to NPR, HuffPost, The Fair Observer, Brown Girl Magazine, Solstice Literary Magazine, The Express Tribune, The San Francisco Examiner, and more. She graduated with her MFA in Creative Writing from Lesley University. She also holds a Master's in Social Work from San Francisco State University and a BA from UC Santa Barbara in Religious Studies.



ASHLEY HARLESS

(she/her)

Bookkeeper

ashley@sahiyo.org

Ashley is a highly motivated and results-oriented accounting and finance professional with 20 years of experience in a wide portfolio of companies and industries. She has a proven track record of success in financial reporting, budgeting, and analysis. Adept at collaborating with cross-functional teams to achieve financial goals, Ashley is eager to contribute her expertise and leadership to Sahiyo's mission. She received her BS in Accounting from George Mason University and her MBA from Maryland University.



SAMMAN MASUD

(she/her)

Community Engagement
Coordinator

samman@sahiyo.org

Samman Masud received a Bachelor's in International Relations and her Master's in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus in Human Rights and Women & Gender Studies from George Mason University. Her graduate research explored the intersection of human rights advocacy and social media platforms in light of the #MeToo movement and the possibilities of transnational feminist solidarity in the digital media age. She has been affiliated with Amnesty International USA, supporting campaigns on violence against women, migrant and refugee rights, death penalty and other human rights violations in the U.S. and abroad.



KRISTEL MENDOZA CASTILLO

(she/her)

Communications Coordinator

kristel@sahiyo.org

Kristel Mendoza Castillo completed her Bachelor's degree in Communications at the University of Connecticut. Driven by a deep belief in Sahiyo's mission, Kristel seeks to use her knowledge in social media, marketing, and communications to raise awareness and drive change. She recognizes the importance of ending female genital cutting and empowering survivors globally and aims to amplify Sahiyo's message, ensuring it reaches a wider audience and inspires action.



ARIES NUÑO

(she/her)

*Training and Technical Assistance
Coordinator*

aries@sahiyo.org

Aries Nuño received her Master of Science in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. In her public health career, she has contributed to diverse projects involving human-centered design to address FGC in Ebonyi, Nigeria, and expanding web-based access to self-administered STI and HIV testing for Indigenous populations across the U.S. She now joins the team as Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator, developing and leading training initiatives and organizing webinars and events that foster meaningful conversations about FGC.



ZIMING RAO

(she/her)

Accountant

ziming@sahiyo.org

Ming has accumulated two decades of experience in diverse finance and accounting roles within Fortune 500 companies and NFPs. Her expertise lies in implementing accounting systems and designing financial reports. Ming donates her accounting and finance services to USAID. She has journeyed to Africa and Central Asia as a volunteer accounting consultant to collaborate with local NFPs, establish robust accounting systems, enhance financial access, and engineer innovative pathways to mobilize capital. Ming has been teaching accounting and finance courses at the undergraduate level since 2017.



MEGAN SEAVER

(she/her)

Editorial Assistant

megan@sahiyo.org

Megan Seaver completed her bachelor's degree in Writing, Editing, and Publishing at Emmanuel College, as well as minors in political science and gender studies. Throughout college she has been a part of student organizations, Her Campus and WGS, that help women to speak their truth and to support one another. She believes that being open to hearing the stories and experiences of all women will make it easier to create a safer and more accepting world for all people.



MICHELLE TAYLOR

(she/her)

Development Director

michelle@sahiyo.org

Michelle Taylor comes to Sahiyo with over a decade of nonprofit development experience. Michelle earned a BS in Business Administration from CSU, Long Beach and a MS in International Affairs from Marquette University. Michelle is excited to bring her vast knowledge of finance, marketing, event management, and passion for her greater community to help advance Sahiyo's mission to end FGC and create positive social change.



SHEENA VASANI

(she/her)

Editorial Coordinator

sheena@sahiyo.org

Sheena Vasani is a writer with a decade of experience working for major media outlets, startups, and charities. A strong believer in the power of the written word to enact social change and healing, she has gone viral multiple times for her work on South Asian women's rights and mental health issues. She graduated from UC Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. Sheena is beyond excited to join Sahiyo in its mission to end female genital cutting and empower survivors.



RACHEL WINE

(she/her)

Research Coordinator

rachel@sahiyo.org

Rachel Wine served as Sahiyo's Editorial Coordinator for two years before transitioning into the role of Research Coordinator. Her background is in public health, with an MSc from Georgetown University and a BSPH from Tulane University. Participation on Sahiyo's Critical Intersections Research Project team reinforced Rachel's belief that research can be a bridge between theory and action, and she is excited to help expand Sahiyo's capacity for original research, research partnerships, and technical assistance provision.

MEET THE U.S. ADVISORY BOARD



ZEHRA PATWA

(she/her)

Sahiyo U.S. Advisory Board Chair

zehra.patwa@gmail.com

Zehra Patwa is the Co-Founder and U.S. Lead of [WeSpeakOut](#), an organization striving to work for equal rights for Bohra women, specifically, on FGM/C (khafz). Educated at the University of Bradford Management Centre in the UK and the Université de Montpellier in France, Zehra serves on several Boards, including Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), and Hopkins School in New Haven. Discovering well into adulthood that khafz (type 1 FGM/C) was practiced in her community, and that she had been subjected to it also, she has worked with WeSpeakOut to expose the practice within, and outside, the community. Zehra is working to bring about an anti-FGM/C law in CT. She works in Digital Customer Delivery for the Knights of Columbus in New Haven, CT.



SAKINA SHARP

(she/her)

Sahiyo U.S. Advisory Board Vice Chair

sakinasharp@gmail.com

Sakina has advocated against gender-based violence for over two decades. In 2011, she co-founded [Awaaz](#), a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization to help survivors of domestic violence. She led it in an executive leadership and board capacity for 7 years. With a passion to give voice to the issue of female genital cutting, she currently coordinates Sahiyo’s newsletter and drafts the legislative updates. Sakina is a legal and compliance leader with 15+ years of experience in a broad range of enterprise legal issues, including insurance regulatory and privacy law, in large financial services organizations. She has led large business operations teams as well as multiple legal teams. She received her J.D. from Brooklyn Law School and her B.A. from New York University.

ADDITIONAL SAHIYO U.S. ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

-  NESHA ABIRAJ

-  RENEE BERGSTROM

-  AREFA CASSOOBHOY

-  INSIA DARIWALA

-  JOANNE GOLDEN

-  DENA IGUSTI

-  AAREFA JOHARI

-  JO KEOGH

-  KANEEZ MADRASWALLA

-  ZAHRA QAIYUMI

-  JOANNA VERGOTH

-  KRISTEN ZALESKI

Thank you to our former advisory board members: [PRIYA GOSWAMI](#) and [NAZNEEN VASI](#) for their invaluable guidance and support. Though both transitioned to new opportunities this past year, they remain connected to Sahiyo U.S., and their insights have been instrumental in shaping our organization’s journey.



THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL INTERNS AND FELLOWS:

Events and Programs Interns support education and outreach efforts by planning and coordinating virtual events such as our webinar on male ally engagement on preventing FGC or virtual screening of the Voices to End FGM/C digital stories. Interns included: **Hannah Manucal, Derrick Simiyu, Tanya Samyak, Sophia Jones, Maeve Monger, and Sharlon Bolos.**

Bhaiyo Interns support recruiting new volunteers, helping implement and design Bhaiyo programming, and promoting communications on male engagement for Sahiyo's various communication platforms. Intern included: **Ian Makale.**

U.S. Policy Interns support policy work to address FGC, they attend meetings with advocates, organizations, and legislators as needed. Interns included: **Delia Donovan, Azaliah Erawoc, and Juliet Shires.**

Development Interns and Fellows assist in ensuring the organization's financial stability. They do this by researching and securing funds from grant-making

organizations, launching fundraising campaigns to sustain programming, and contributing to the overall development of the organization. Interns included: **Abigail Cervantes, Lauren Gabbe, Sarah Rundle, and Aariana Saunders.** Fellows included: **Camillah Canty and Sarah Rennie.**

Editorial Interns assist with blog development, creation of the monthly newsletter, and copyediting for Sahiyo's website. Interns included: **Cecilia Mwakenya and Megan Seaver (now staff).**

Social Media & Communications Interns support providing content for our social media channels, and strategizing around digital campaigns to engage and educate survivors, advocates, and the broader community. Interns included: **Xinge Lei and Faizneen Bharmal.**

THEORY OF CHANGE

I would say that even if you don't know a lot about FGC, but you feel empowered to help the movement, the best way to learn is by jumping in feet first. Sahiyo is an incredibly supportive and welcoming environment, and hosts numerous programs and training about FGC trauma and care throughout the year.

- Megan Seaver, Sahiyo Editorial Assistant

Based on external research on female genital cutting (FGC) and independent research Sahiyo conducted with over 400 women from FGC practicing communities, we developed a theory of change that leads to two primary outcomes:

1

Increased abandonment of FGC amongst future generations

2

A strong network of community advocates raising awareness of FGC within their communities will lead to the social norm change of abandoning FGC.

Our Theory of Change was developed with the Social Norm Approach in mind, which [UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation](#) recommends.

FGC continues because it is a deeply embedded social norm, justified by cultural or religious beliefs, or the perceived need to control a woman's sexuality.

According to social norm theory, the fear of social rejection is very real if an individual makes different choices from those of the group.

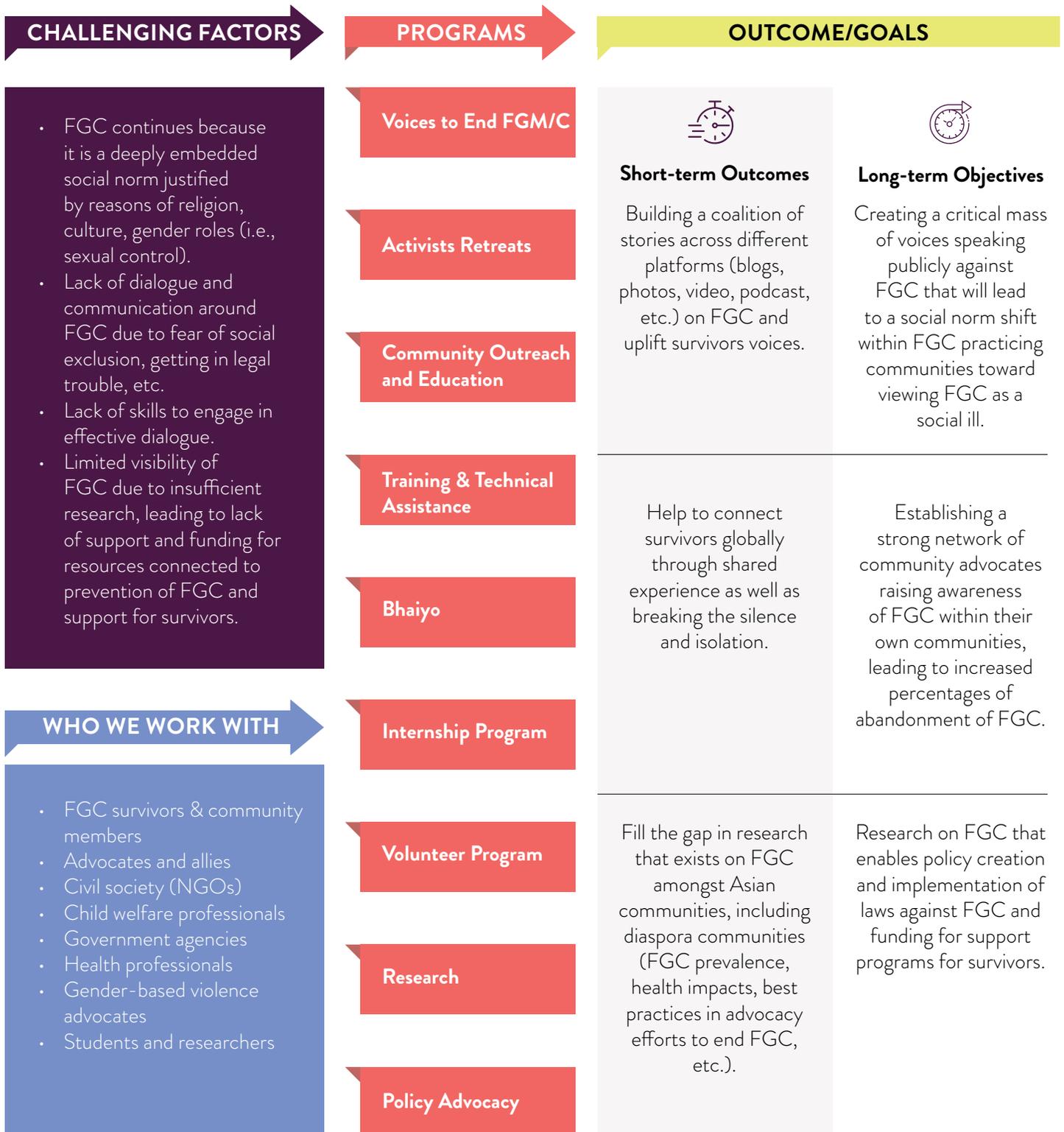
Sahiyo's research revealed that 81% of the Bohra community surveyed does not support the continuation of FGC, yet the fear of social rejection and the resulting silence around the practice have allowed it to persist.

Sahiyo understands that only by building a critical mass of voices willing to challenge FGC will the trend towards abandoning it gain momentum. **Creating safe spaces and support systems where community members can discuss FGC without fear of reprisal—or have a support system in place if reprisals do occur—is crucial for fostering social change.**

A 2018 study revealed that once 25% of a social group adopts a new social norm, the rest are likely to follow.

To reach this 25% tipping point that shifts the social norm from cutting to not cutting, it is vital to engage a vast number of community members in informed conversations about FGC. Sahiyo utilizes social mobilization techniques involving storytelling to drive this effort.

Sahiyo's programming has focused on breaking the silence surrounding FGC, supporting survivors, raising awareness, and seeking systemic change at the policy level. This essential groundwork has led community members to debate FGC within their networks of family and friends.



PROGRAMS AND IMPACT

Our organization is proudly all-women-led, with a diverse team representing various ethnicities, religions, sexualities, and age groups. This diversity enriches our programs and enhances our approach to advocate and support those impacted by FGC.

Over the past year, Sahiyo U.S. has undergone significant changes to improve our outreach and program effectiveness. We have said goodbye to some familiar faces, and also embraced the opportunity to grow and diversify our team with the addition of several dynamic new roles. Our new Community Engagement Coordinator and Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator are playing key roles in expanding our community-driven efforts. Additionally, our former Editorial Coordinator has transitioned to the role of Research Coordinator, bringing a focused approach to our data-driven advocacy efforts. The growth of our finance team, with the addition of an Accountant and a Bookkeeper, ensures that our operations are efficient and prepared for scaling, supporting our future growth and impact.

Our Sahiyo U.S. intern and volunteer program has also seen remarkable growth and has become a vibrant network of **83 volunteers, 18 interns, and 2 fellows** this year. Their support enhances our capacity to raise awareness and effect change, reaching diverse communities globally.

SAHIYO U.S. DEMOGRAPHICS

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)



FGC Survivor or Friend/Family Member a Survivor



Identify as Female



■ Staff and Advisory Board ■ Interns, Fellows, and Volunteers

Over the past year, our programs and campaigns have garnered attention in various media publications, including:

- [The New Times: Activists unite to end female genital mutilation](#)
- [People Magazine: Aja Naomi King Helps L'Oréal Paris Unveil Its Women of Worth Honorees: 'They're Driven by Passion'](#)
- [The Conversation: Female genital cutting remains a taboo subject in Pakistan, preventing real progress from being made](#)
- [PolitiFact: Fact-checking 3 claims in Tucker Carlson's show on trans health care](#)
- [The Borgen Project: 2 Organizations Combating FGM/C](#)
- [Hartford Courant: Connecticut is 1 of 9 states without a ban on female genital mutilation. Thousands are at risk, activists say](#)
- [The GW Hatchet: Milken researchers receive grant for female genital mutilation prevention](#)
- [The Free Press Journal: On International Women's Day, Calls To Address Female Genital Mutilation Gain Momentum](#)
- [Equality Now: Implementing Survivor-Led FGM Law In Washington State](#)
- [VOA: Activists See India as New Front in Fight Against Female Genital Mutilation](#)

OUR PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

10

NEW VOICES TO END
FGM/C VIDEOS

19

VOICES TO END FGM/C
PARTICIPANTS

16

U.S. ACTIVISTS RETREAT
PARTICIPANTS

34

COMMUNITY OUTREACH
AND EDUCATION EVENTS

134,406

SAHIYO
U.S. BLOG
VIEWS

POLICY ADVOCACY IN
WASHINGTON, CONNECTICUT, AND
MASSACHUSETTS

19

BHAIYO VOLUNTEERS

3

RESEARCH PROJECTS

20

INTERNS & FELLOWS

83

ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

Read more about Sahiyo U.S. programs [here!](#)

U.S. ACTIVISTS RETREAT

This retreat will help me with my work as an activist in giving me tools to communicate and interact with other women, other moms, and girls. I'm a pediatrician, I'm hoping that what I've learned here today I can be much more aware of when I'm seeing patients in looking out for this [FGC], as something that they might have experienced in their life and knowing how to help them through that.

- Nazneen Desai, 2023 Activists Retreat Participant

Since 2017, Sahiyo has hosted Activists Retreats, in response to the challenges faced by activists or individuals working in isolation to end FGC and their desire for connection. These retreats help to strengthen relationships amongst activists, who are often geographically dispersed. They allow for best practices and tools to be shared, empowering activists to enhance their advocacy efforts. The impact is evident as activists now integrate these best practices and tools into their work, forming new collaborations among retreat attendees.

In September 2023, Sahiyo U.S. hosted its 7th Activists Retreat, bringing together 16 FGC survivors and activists in Atlanta Georgia, for our first in-person retreat since 2019. Since the program's inception,

Sahiyo **has trained 103 advocates.** These individuals have subsequently organized and led workshops to raise awareness of FGC, spearheaded outreach campaigns within their communities, and provided critical testimony at policy briefings across various states concerning FGC.

Based on valuable participant feedback from previous retreats, Sahiyo is expanding the scope of the 2024 Activists Retreat program. While the program has traditionally focused on the South Asian Bohra community, future retreats will welcome individuals from additional Asian, Pacific Islander (API), Middle Eastern, and North African (MENA) FGC-practicing communities in order to promote inclusivity and extend support to a broader spectrum of survivors.



VOICES TO END FGM/C

Hearing stories from others was an eye-opener. At the workshop, I became more aware that FGM/C can be like secondhand smoking: the procedure can affect those who themselves did not undergo the surgery. I found out that the ripple effect can be as devastating as the cut. Meeting others at the workshop made me feel a kinship with those affected directly or indirectly. Our experiences left us with a long-lasting bond.

- Caroline Illogienboh, 2023 Voices to End FGM/C Participant

Launched in 2018, Voices to End FGM/C is a dynamic collaboration between Sahiyo and Silence Speaks. Silence Speaks uses trauma-informed digital storytelling methods to address gender-based violence and other human rights concerns. The primary goal of the Voices program is to mobilize a critical mass of storytellers, uniting survivors and advocates worldwide. Through sharing their experiences with FGC, participants heal from their experiences, grow as leaders, and create short videos calling for an end to this harmful practice.

In August 2023, Sahiyo hosted its eighth Voices cohort, a milestone marked by our first-ever hybrid workshop in Berkeley, CA. This innovative approach combined virtual and in-person gatherings,

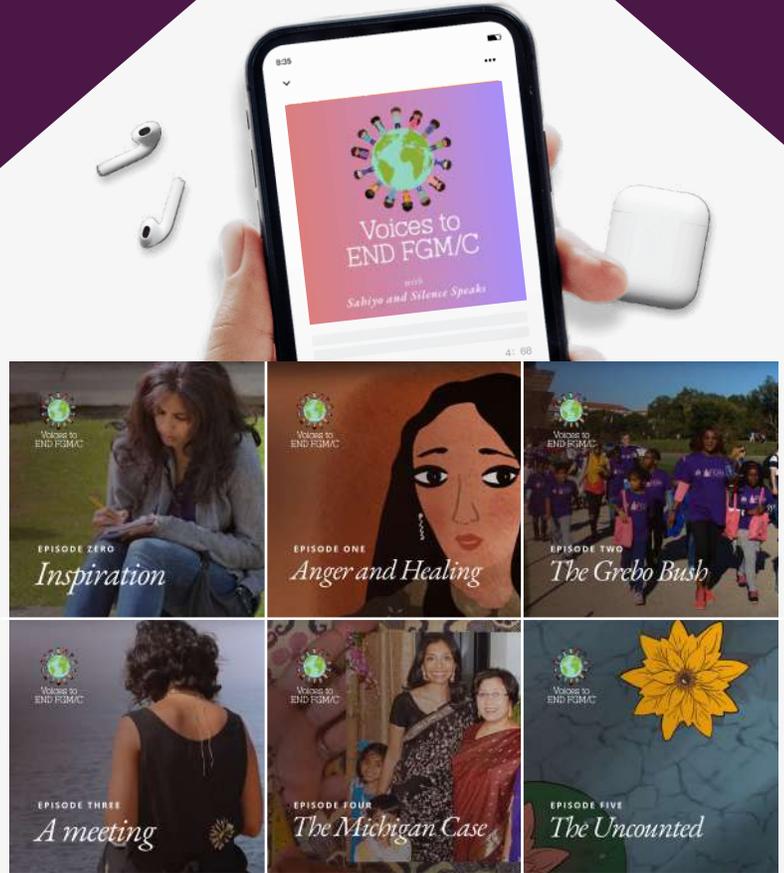
resulting in the creation of nine new heartfelt videos. Subsequently, in June 2024, Sahiyo hosted its 9th Voices cohort taking place as the second ever hybrid workshop in Washington, D.C. Welcoming 10 additional storytellers to our growing, global Voices alumni network! With these additions, our collection continues to grow and now includes 75 videos, each shared widely to educate communities, healthcare professionals, and policymakers. These narratives have resonated across borders, reaching audiences over 19 countries, including Singapore, Indonesia, Tanzania, Egypt, Portugal, South Africa, Kenya, the U.S., and India. Their profound impact is felt by viewers and participants alike, shaping conversations and driving change on a global scale.



Across Sahiyo’s social media platforms, Voices stories have garnered over 101,000 views since the program’s inception (check out the [Voices YouTube playlist](#)). These stories highlight the multifaceted experiences of FGC, bridging crucial data gaps regarding its reach and impact. With each shared narrative, we deepen our understanding, empowering us to provide enhanced support and advocacy for those impacted.



SPOTLIGHT



Sahiyo’s Voices to End FGM/C Podcast

Sahiyo’s Voices to End FGM/C program has grown into a global platform, featuring more than 80 storytellers from over 20 countries. While their compelling short videos have shared powerful stories, much remains to be uncovered. In a six-episode podcast series, each episode lasting 20-40 minutes, Voices founders Mariya Taher and Amy Hill engage in intimate conversations with workshop participants. Together, they delve into the complex familial, cultural, and political contexts surrounding their stories. The podcast also features guests, including intimate partners, therapists, public health experts, and elected officials, who lend their voices to speak out against FGC. If you’re interested in hearing more from our storytellers and gaining valuable insights into the medical and legal landscapes surrounding FGC, tune in to our podcast.

LISTEN NOW

Episodes are available on the [Voices to End FGM/C website](#), as well as on [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#).



COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Sahiyo actively engages communities through thoughtful and inclusive outreach and educational events, focused on various aspects of FGC and Sahiyo’s mission. These events allow for discussions to be initiated and empower participants dedicated to ending FGC by amplifying their voices. **From July 2023 to June 2024, Sahiyo hosted and participated in 34 such events, reaching over 1,400 individuals globally from countries** including the United Kingdom, Germany, United Arab Emirates, Japan, India, Myanmar, Kenya, and Nepal. The welcoming and informative nature of these events helps build a supportive community across borders, enhancing understanding and advocacy efforts.

Notable events include:

1. [Training the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice on how to support survivors of FGM/C](#)
2. [Survivors Speak: Stories of Courage and Healing Webinar](#)
3. [Pain, Stigma, and Sexual Health: Healing Through Storytelling](#)
4. [Quiet Activism and Understanding the Psychosocial Impacts of FGC](#)



TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Sahiyo offers comprehensive training and technical assistance to enhance the knowledge and capabilities of service providers and frontline professionals in addressing FGC. Our programs are designed to empower organizations engaged in combating gender-based violence, alongside collaborators from law enforcement, educational institutions, social work, healthcare, and mental health sectors. Through customized training, these entities are better equipped to integrate culturally competent and sensitive approaches into their services, thereby improving support for FGC survivors.

This year, Sahiyo has expanded its reach by delivering informative presentations to a diverse group of key stakeholders. Notably, we've collaborated with [Washington State Department of Health](#), the [San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium](#), and the [Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#).



SPOTLIGHT

Milken Institute School of Public Health Joins Community Partners in Receiving \$300,000 DOJ Grant to Prevent Female Genital Cutting

On February 6, 2024, the Milken Institute School of Public Health in partnership with Sahiyo U.S., the U.S. End FGM/C Network, and the Global Woman P.E.A.C.E. Foundation announced receiving a \$300,000 grant from the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. This funding will support training and technical assistance for community-based organizations across the U.S., focusing on the prevention and response to female genital cutting (FGC). The announcement coincides with International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation.

Mariya Taher, Sahiyo Cofounder, shared her own excitement about the partnership.

“FGC is an issue I’ve known about my entire life having grown up in a community in which it was practiced. This partnership between our various organizations highlights something as a child I never thought possible, a public recognition that FGC is a concern in the U.S., and that for us to prevent the next generation from undergoing it, we have to work in a multisectoral way that partners the government with community-based organizations, with the advocates and the survivors who have the expertise on how to address this issue.”

Throughout the project, the team will conduct listening sessions, provide training and technical assistance, and coordinate the creation of online resources that can be utilized to increase the capacity of care given to FGC survivors by community service providers across the U.S.

SAHIYO BLOG

As a survivor of FGM born and raised in The Gambia, a Serahule, and a proud Muslim, my journey has been one of pain, resilience, and unwavering determination. I have learned that it is important to recognize my roots and the challenges that come from speaking up, especially if you are a woman and of my background. Today, as I reflect on the challenges that lie ahead, I am compelled to raise my voice in defense of the progress that has been made in protecting our daughters, our sisters, and future generations of women and girls.

- Jaha Dukureh, Activist

Sahiyo offers survivors of FGC, FGC-practicing communities, and advocates against FGC a platform to share their stories, opinions, research, and efforts toward ending the practice. Storytelling is an important medium for healing, allowing those impacted by FGC to narrate their experiences in their own words and connect with others through shared experiences.

The Sahiyo Blog collects and shares survivor stories, provides a voice to those seeking to express themselves, and equips activists with the information needed to enact change. Our readers and contributors come from the U.S., India, the U.K., Pakistan, Kenya, and many other countries around the world. This year alone, Sahiyo has published **144 blog posts**. Over time, the blog's viewership has grown significantly, with **over 136,400 views between July 2023 and June 2024**.

Some of our most viewed blogs and posts from the past year included:

1. [Our Fight to End FGM in The Gambia: Who is Listening?](#)
2. [A Space to Belong: My Reflection on the 2023 Activist Retreat](#)
3. [UNICEF releases new data on global prevalence of FGM/C](#)
4. [Finding safe people and protecting your peace is key, says activist Grace Culqui](#)
5. [United Against Female Genital Cutting - Sahiyo staff spotlight: Editorial Assistant Megan Seaver](#)

Read these personal stories [here](#).

SPOTLIGHT

*Dear Maasi Advice Column*

Our blog features the “Dear Maasi” column, a collaborative effort between Sahiyo and WeSpeakOut that addresses inquiries about khatna (or FGC) and its effects on bodies, minds, sexualities, and relationships. The column serves as a resource for those seeking understanding and support regarding FGC's impact. “Maasi,” meaning auntie in the Bohra community, reflects the warmth and guidance offered to readers navigating these complex issues.

We invite all to [submit their anonymous questions](#) to be addressed by novelist and psychotherapist Farzana Doctor, affectionately known as Maasi.

View our Dear Maasi column animated video response to

[“How do I move past the shame of being cut?”](#)

Explore some of our top Dear Maasi reads:

1. [Dear Maasi: Did khatna impact my sex life or is it all in my head?](#)
2. [Dear Maasi: Is there something wrong with me because I like this kind of sex?](#)

POLICY

[The Washington Coalition was] a great example of what can happen when there are these state coalitions that are survivor and community-led... working with the state senators and involved in drafting the bill language, saying these are the provisions we want, this is what we want involved, this is what we need, these are what our demands are...They know who would be the best representatives or senators to reach out to sponsor the bill, to champion them. They know who the best organizations to reach out to...Engaging the local communities to take the lead on that and really engaging them because they know best...We really hope that other states see this and learn from it.

- Caitlin LeMay, Executive Director of the [U.S. End FGM/C Network](#), WA Coalition Member

Sahiyo supports policy work to address FGC at global, national, state, and local levels. We recognize that effective policies and laws must be informed by and created in partnership with the communities that are impacted by FGC to achieve widespread abandonment of FGC and to support survivors.

Over the past year, Sahiyo has continued to strengthen its leadership within coalitions in [Connecticut](#), [Washington](#), and New York City, while also co-initiated new coalitions in California and the DMV area (District

of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia). Our coalition work involves educating stakeholders on the need for policy solutions on FGC, including creating new laws where none existed, amending and updating existing legislation to enhance its effectiveness, and supporting the implementation of these laws. In particular, we emphasize the importance of community outreach and education provisions, as seen in our efforts in [Washington state](#).

Some of our most viewed blogs and posts from the past year included:

1. [Building Support for the Connecticut Coalition to End FGM/C After Failure in 2024 Legislative Session](#)
2. [Zehra Patwa on Sahiyo and the Coalition to End FGM/C's recent panel discussion with Connecticut legislators – and why it was a positive step forward](#)
3. [2023 Kigali Declaration launched at the Women Deliver Pre-Conference](#)



SPOTLIGHT

Implementation of Washington State FGC Legislation to Protect Children

Following the enactment of Washington's [Senate Bill 5453](#), signed in April 2023 to address FGC, the Washington State Department of Health awarded Sahiyo U.S., and co-applicants, Mother Africa and the U.S. End FGM/C Network, a contract to guide the implementation of Section 6 of the legislation, focusing on prevention and support for survivors.

The primary purpose of the “Prevention of and Response to FGC” project is to provide coordination and expert-level consultation on FGC, while facilitating the engagement of various stakeholders. These stakeholders include government entities, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and healthcare providers.

Key activities include:

- **Community Engagement:** Engaging communities across Washington impacted by FGC in a culturally respectful and responsive manner, providing feedback and guiding project initiatives.
- **Training and Technical Assistance:** Developing and delivering targeted training to a broad range of agencies and communities, focusing on preventing FGC and addressing the needs of survivors. This includes equipping stakeholders with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively support impacted individuals.
- **Policy Development:** Initiating the creation of policy recommendations that strengthen interagency and multi-sector collaborations. These policies aim to prevent FGC and provide comprehensive support to survivors, ensuring a coordinated response across different sectors.

To learn more visit the project's [website](#) and watch the Year 1 [video recap](#).



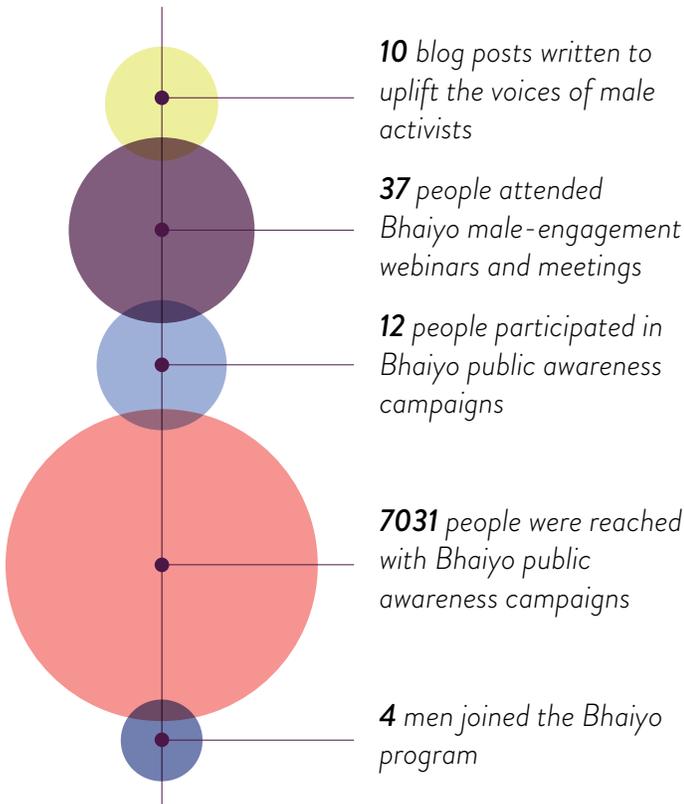
BHAIYO

I am supporting Sahiyo and Bhaiyo in their endeavor to spread awareness about the practice of female genital cutting. It is imperative that men are just as active as women in the campaign to end this practice and to support women all over the world. To join this campaign, simply start a conversation, with yourself and then with those around you and find out how and what we can do to end FGC.

- Abbas Bohari, Bhaiyo Volunteer

On International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation in February 2021, Sahiyo launched our male allyship program, [Bhaiyo](#), meaning ‘male friends’ or ‘brothers’ in Bohra Gujarati. This program seeks to mobilize men and male-identifying individuals as allies and educate their communities and the greater public about the need to end FGC. Through discussions, community meetings, public outreach campaigns, and other grassroots efforts, Bhaiyo members work to raise awareness and to build strategies for increasing male engagement on this issue. The program uplifts the critical roles men can play—as father figures, caregivers, and decision-makers— in ending FGC within their households and communities.

Over the past year, Bhaiyo has accomplished the following:



One campaign in particular held this past year includes our [Bhaiyo Father’s Day Campaign](#) which was initiated on June 16, 2024. Through this campaign, community members were asked to share how they have raised the topic of FGC in conversation with the men in their lives – their brothers, fathers, husbands, friends and more. Twelve people participated in the campaign throughout the month of June, sharing messages about their discussions with community members about the harmful impacts of FGC.

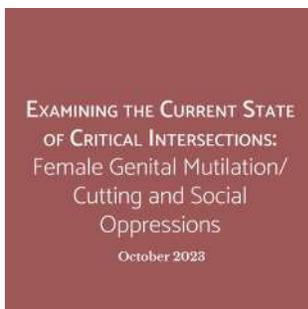
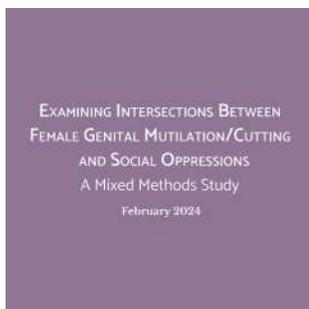
RESEARCH

Together, we've delved deep into the intricate web of societal challenges, exploring how they intersect with FGM/C. It's been a testament to the power of interdisciplinary collaboration, where each perspective adds a layer of insight. Our collective efforts have advanced our understanding of critical intersections and illuminated pathways toward a more inclusive and equitable future. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a dynamic and purpose-driven team

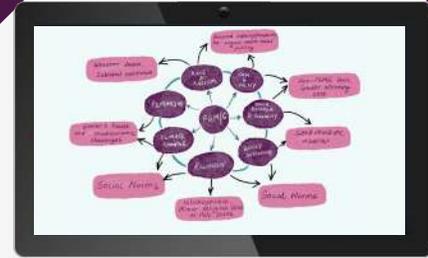
- Aisha Dorley, Sahiyo Volunteer

Sahiyo recognizes that research is critical to understanding the prevalence and impact of FGC, as well as how to engage in programs and methods to end it. As such, Sahiyo conducts innovative research to bridge the gap in data that exists on FGC globally, and to bring understanding, awareness, and advocacy to the topic of FGC within Asian and other communities.

Additionally, Sahiyo works with and supports students on their capstone projects, theses, and dissertations on related FGC topics such as psychosexual health and healing, raising awareness in education institutions, and the importance of engaging male allies. In 2023, we worked with and supported students from George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, Cornell University, Simmons University, Georgetown University, and the University of Northern British Columbia.



SPOTLIGHT



Critical Intersections

In late July 2021, Sahiyo held a webinar, [Critical Intersections: Anti-Racism and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting \(FGM/C\)](#) to explore the intersection of anti-racism work and its impact on the FGC movement. The success of the webinar indicated a high demand and need for further exploration into these themes, as well as recommendations on how to address these themes to strengthen the movement to end FGC for all future generations. In line with past research, we initiated exploratory research to better understand the challenges, best practices, and opportunities that exist or could exist to better address how the movement to end FGC movement was impacted by related intersecting social justice movements.

This past year, Sahiyo’s nine-member advisory group consisting of experts and advocates on FGC from around the globe, as well as experts from related social justice fields, guided the development of two reports that were published in October 2023 and February 2024.

Additionally, report findings have been shared with partner organizations such as The Girl Generation, the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, and the World Bank.

“Understanding how FGM/C may differentially impact certain individuals and communities based on their other identities is essential to creating targeted interventions, policies, and programs aimed at ultimately ending the practice.” —Examining Intersections Between Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Social Oppressions A Mixed Methods Study, February 2024

INTERNSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

My time with Sahiyo has been invaluable to my development as a professional and a person. Sahiyo and all of the individuals who I have had the pleasure of working with have taught me so much. It has been a privilege to be trusted with hearing survivor's stories and being able to work as an ally and an advocate to end FGC. This experience has helped me to recognize how important social justice and advocacy is in my career and personal goals.

- Sophia Jones, Sahiyo Events and Programs Intern



The internship program at Sahiyo immerses individuals in the organization's operations and teaches them about the inner workings of a social justice organization. We generally host **7-12 interns** at a time across various departments, including Development, Editorial, Events and Programs, Policy, and Social Media and Communications.

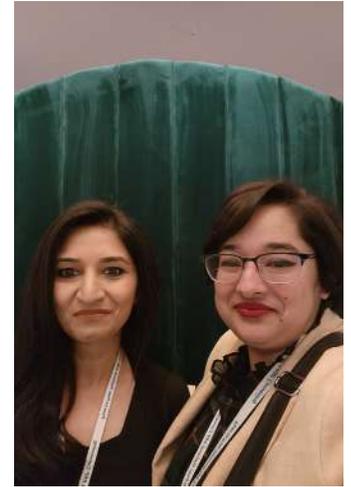
These interns engage in a wide range of activities, from research and community engagement to digital content creation. Their dedication not only supports our organizational capabilities but also allows them to develop important professional skills, thereby contributing to our global impact.



This year, Sahiyo introduced two new fellowship positions: Fundraising and Grant Writing Fellow and Nonprofit Governance and Administration Fellow. These fellows have joined the team to strengthen our fundraising efforts and enhance our organizational structure to amplify both the reach and efficacy of Sahiyo's growing efforts.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

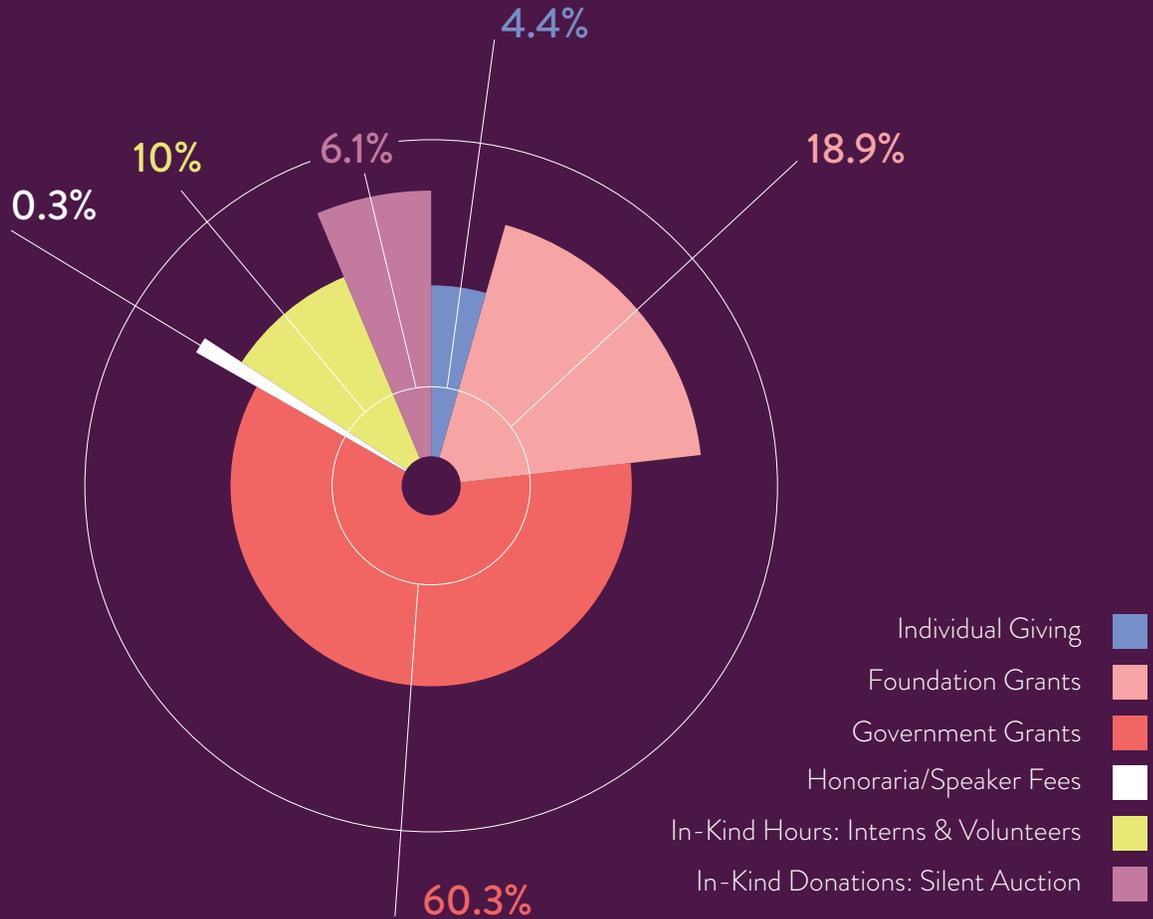
Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and Sahiyo thrives on their passion and dedication. Sahiyo currently has 80+ active volunteers spanning across the globe—from the U.S., India, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Bahrain, Canada, Germany, and more. These dedicated volunteers collaborate with us remotely, contributing significantly to our research and storytelling initiatives, leading training sessions, and assisting in report-building and administrative tasks.



FINANCES AND FUNDING SOURCES

Total Operating Budget: \$576,444.01

INCOME

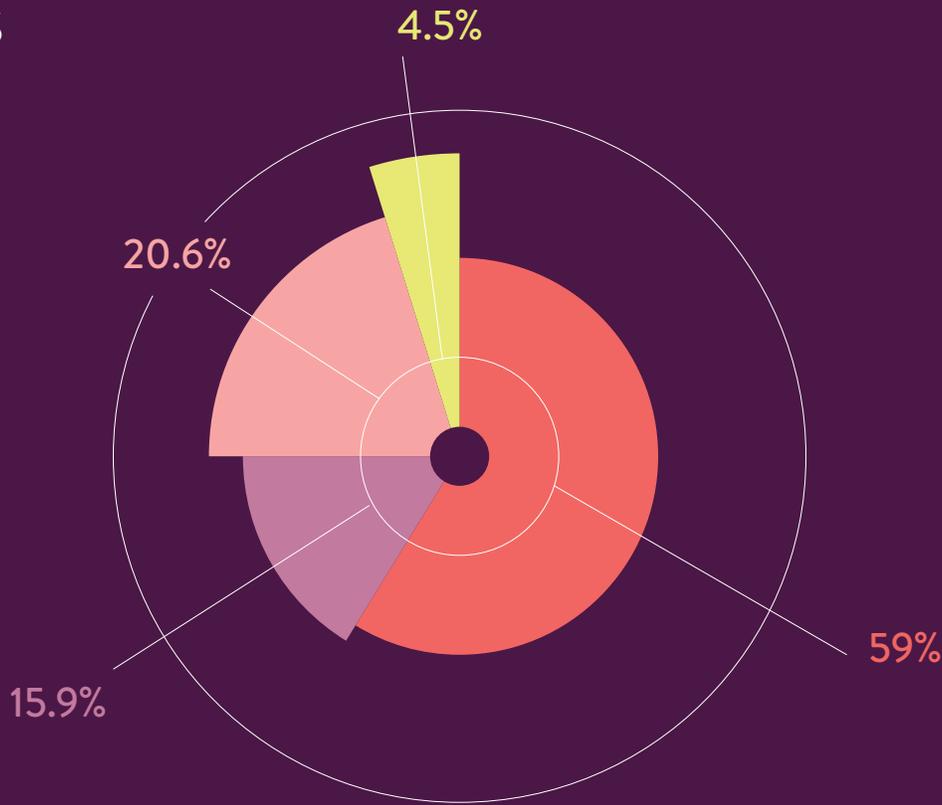


Each year, Sahiyo continues to increase and diversify our funding streams. This past year, we received private foundation funding from Wallace Global Fund, Resist, L’Oréal USA Giving Fund, Ben & Jerry’s Foundation, Allstate Foundation, and the South Asian Bar Association of North America Foundation. We continued with federal funding subcontracts from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime; RTI International; and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. This past year, Sahiyo secured two additional government funding streams from the Washington State Department of Health and the U.S.

Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

This year, Sahiyo saw an increase in individual donations from our generous supporters, including those from our second annual Comedy Show & Auction in March 2024, in honor of Women’s History Month. Sahiyo also received Honoraria for various speaking and training engagements. Additionally, Sahiyo received over \$35,000 in in-kind donated gifts from our supportive community. Finally, our Sahiyo volunteers and interns provide numerous hours of in-kind donated time to our various programs.

EXPENSES



- Programs
- Administrative
- Fundraising¹
- Other²

1. Comprises 63% in-kind contributions, including fundraising gifts and the valued hours of development interns.
 2. Primarily includes fiscal management and banking fees.

Sahiyo’s main expenses go towards fulfilling our programmatic mission to connect with FGC-impacted communities and survivors including:

- 01** Supporting survivors in their individual healing journeys.
- 02** Creating a critical mass of voices within communities to support the abandonment of FGC and prevent it from occurring to future generations of girls.

- 03** Engaging with frontline professionals including healthcare, gender-based violence advocates, child protection workers, social workers, legal professionals, government officials, and more to create macro-level systems of care for women and girls at risk of FGC.

GET INVOLVED

DONATE

Help us support FGC survivors and sustain our programs by donating. [Donate here.](#)

DONATE



VOLUNTEER

Contribute your skills, interest, or time to support our mission. Volunteer opportunities include creating newsletters, translating content, assisting at events, education, outreach, and more. [Sign up to be a volunteer.](#)

SIGN UP



INTERN

Gain valuable career experience in Nonprofit Development, Social Media, Editorial, Policy, and Events and Programs. Internships require a minimum commitment of six months and ten hours per week. These remote positions offer excellent opportunities for those interested in human rights work. [Learn about the internships and apply.](#)

LEARN MORE



HOST A FUNDRAISER

Raise funds and awareness for FGC survivors by hosting your own fundraiser. Work with your peers to support Sahiyo and help end the practice. For more information and resources, contact michelle@sahiyo.org.

CONTACT



CONTRIBUTE TO OUR BLOG

Join our cohort of voices speaking about FGC by writing for our blog. Sahiyo's Editorial staff can assist you throughout the process. [Submit a blog post](#) or email sheena@sahiyo.org for more information.

SUBMIT



BECOME A BHAIIYO

Engage in male advocacy against FGC or get involved with male engagement work by joining our Bhaiyo program. [Sign up to be a Bhaiyo.](#)

SIGN UP



SERVE ON THE U.S. ADVISORY BOARD

Our advisory board includes experts from various fields such as health, law, and media, helping to advance Sahiyo's mission. To learn more, email info@sahiyo.org.

LEARN MORE



PARTNERS

OUR FUNDERS

 <p>greening the grassroots since 1985</p>		
		
		
		
		

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special Thanks To



Thank you to our 2023-2024 volunteers and interns for donating over 2,750 hours of support this year in areas such as blog and grant proposal editing, program support, communications, organizational development, fundraising, policy work, and social media.



Special thanks to [Designverse Ltd.](#) for offering their graphic design and editing skills to the completion of this annual report.

Thank You to Our Donors

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CONTACT US



EMAIL

info@sahiyo.org



U.S. PHONE

+1-508-263-0112



MAILING ADDRESS

45 Prospect Street, Cambridge MA, 02139



@SAHIYVOICES

SAHIYO.ORG