



BHAIYO: MALE ALLIES PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2021 - 2023

Needs Statement

Many communities impacted by female genital cutting (FGC) uphold patriarchal structures in which men exert great influence on the women in their lives. A [study](#) in central and southern Senegal, where FGC is practiced, found that husbands were classified as decision-makers rather than influencers in support networks. Husbands also had the greatest reported levels of influence, followed by other male relatives such as sons, brothers, uncles, and brothers-in-law. As a result, if men are knowledgeable of the practice and able to speak on it, they may have the opportunity in their social networks to change whether or not FGC continues.

Men influence the continuation of FGC in a variety of ways. For example, in some communities, men may intentionally or unintentionally uphold widespread misconceptions 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 the Dawoodi Bohra community, a South Asian Muslim community with origins in India and a big diaspora in the U.S., it is common to hear that men are not aware of FGC as it is often relegated to a woman's issue or private matter. Thus, men's role as main decision-makers in these families often influences whether women continue the practice. Community-rooted social sanctions can be changed if men help counter the traditional gender norms that they uphold, in this case, continuing the practice of FGC.

[Bhaiyo](#), which is Sahiyo's male allyship program, was launched on International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGC in February 2021. Meaning 'male friends' or 'brothers' in Bohra Gujarati, Bhaiyo is both a resource and an avenue for men to become involved in raising awareness of FGC. This program grew organically from male allies interested in creating a space to discuss male engagement on the issue of FGC.

Program Goals

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

Program Activities

Bhaiyo aims to educate and engage men utilizing a variety of strategies:

- Educational webinars
- Public outreach campaigns
- Blog writing
- Creation of male-focused content
- Volunteer study circles
- Community member meetings

Program Impact

This program further enables the creation of various virtual platforms, such as blogs, webinars, and private group chats for male allies to share stories, resulting in an increased knowledge base of male engagement work in the movement to end FGC. As a result, male allies have increased opportunities to meet one another, form a community of allies, and work collectively to address FGC in their respective communities.

These platforms also help to uplift the voices of active male allies in the public arena. This works to create a space for male voices in the anti-FGC sphere and allows other male-identified individuals to recognize the need for their voices in the work to end FGC.

Program Impact by the Numbers

2020-2023

18

men became members of
the Bhaiyo program

13,247

people engaged with our
public awareness campaigns

36

people participated in our
public awareness campaigns

28

blog posts written to uplift
the voices of male activists

176

people attended Bhaiyo
male-engagement webinars

81.3%

of members have joined additional
anti-FGC programming efforts
after joining Bhaiyo

Looking Forward

Sahiyo will continue to expand the scope and capacity of our Bhaiyo program in the following ways:

- Create programming to support involvement in anti-FGC education and prevention work, both men from FGC-practicing communities and men from non-FGC-practicing communities.
- 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.
- Create educational events and resources that uplift and support the need for male engagement programming in the field of FGC prevention.
- Train Bhaiyo members on how to host educational workshops so they can provide education to men on the topic of FGC.
- Foster leadership development amongst existing Bhaiyo male allies, allowing them to take more proactive roles in organizing and planning Bhaiyo public awareness campaigns for further engaging men to end FGC.
- Create a survey to (1) understand awareness among men in FGC as well as non-FGC practicing communities, (2) understand what their views are and the support they require for work towards ending the practice.
- Create informative brochures in Hindi and Gujarati on the Bhaiyo program to make the programming and information more accessible.