

## RESEARCH PROGRAM OVERVIEW

2016 - 2023

### *Needs Statement*

Female genital cutting (FGC) is a global issue that is [reported to have occurred in 92 countries](#); this updated data comes after the United Nations (UN) claimed that 200 million girls and women had undergone [FGC in 32 countries](#) throughout Africa and the Middle East. In the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates over half a million women and girls are at risk of or living with the effects of FGC. However, this CDC data has not been updated in over ten years and is an estimate based on indirect immigration data from the 32 (mostly Sub-Saharan African) countries. The statistics do not include women from other regions of the world where FGC is reported, including most countries in Asia or Latin America such as India and Columbia. Gaps in the data also include individuals born in the U.S., second and third-generation Americans, and survivors who don't identify as cisgender women.

The lack of accurate research and data can lead to negative consequences: an incomplete picture of who is impacted by FGC and a resulting lack of prevention and support resources for these survivors. Therefore, funding opportunities related to FGC research, prevention work, and/or survivor support resources are few, or nonexistent in some parts of the world, but very necessary. The creation of public policy often relies on data and needs representative and accurate findings to address issues. Service providers who believe FGC is not relevant to their work must also understand the scope of this issue to inspire opportunities for training on best practices to support survivors.

To address the absence of relevant data, Sahiyo's research program utilizes a community-focused and community-driven approach that centers on the voices and experiences of FGC-impacted communities. As such, the research conducted aims to be inclusive of the diverse experiences of survivors and community members, and the research itself has been initiated by survivors and activists in the field.

## Program Goals

- Address current gaps in research on FGC (i.e. research into FGC in the Bohra community).
- Produce research that is community-centered and driven.
- Amplify the voices of survivors.
- Support emerging researchers (community-based, student researchers, etc.) to grow and contribute to the knowledge base on FGC.

## Program Activities

- Conducting original research; which involves recruiting participants, creating interview/survey materials, administering interviews/surveys, coding qualitative data, analyzing quantitative data, discussing findings, and more.
- Disseminating research findings, including outreach to media, partners, and other influential figures as well as directly to participants and communities that practice FGC who can benefit from the findings.
- Collaborating with student researchers/organizations/individuals on their FGC-related research by providing technical assistance and helping them build skills across the scope of research.

## Program Impact by the Numbers 2016-2023

**3**

**original and Sahiyo-led  
research projects**

**21**

**collaborations with student  
researchers from 17  
universities**

## Program Impact

Thus far, Sahiyo's research program has involved several projects:

1. In 2016, Sahiyo published the first-ever global study on FGC in the Dawoodi Bohra community, which surveyed over 384 Bohra women. It found that 80% of women had been cut and that 81% did not want FGC to continue to the next generation.
2. In 2017, Sahiyo investigated and revealed that FGC is practiced in parts of Kerala, India. This countered the previous assumption that in India, FGC is practiced only by Bohras.
3. In 2019, Sahiyo conducted a Needs Assessment survey among Bohra community activists on how to better support them and their advocacy efforts.
4. Since 2021, Sahiyo has been undergoing a research project titled, "Examining Intersections Between FGM/C and Other Social Oppressions Research Project," which seeks to explore the intersection between FGC and other forms of oppression. (i.e. racism, Islamophobia, transphobia, and other forms of inequity).

Additionally, Sahiyo provides ongoing support to students working on their capstone projects, theses, and dissertations on topics related to FGC, such as psycho-sexual health and healing, raising awareness in education institutions, and the importance of engaging male allies.

## Looking Forward

As Sahiyo grows, we aim to expand our research program in the following ways:

- Create a dedicated staff position for managing research-related projects.
- Conduct original research every 2 to 4 years.
- Create dissemination strategies that help to make research initiatives more inclusive and allow from FGC-impacted communities to utilize the results themselves to create social change.
- Enhance support and structure for student researchers by expanding supervision capacities to ensure the delivery of high-quality work.
- Build relationships with universities, institutions, and professional researchers.
- Equip student researchers with valuable skills such as coding, proficiency in conducting in-depth interviews, and adept report writing.
- Evaluate the post-research experience of student researchers to understand how Sahiyo assisted in their professional development.