

sahiyo
United Against Female Genital Cutting

SEMIANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2024 TO DECEMBER 31, 2024





TABLE OF CONTENTS

03

WELCOME FROM SAHIYO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

04

ABOUT SAHIYO

05

MEET THE TEAM

12

THEORY OF CHANGE

14

PROGRAMS AND IMPACT

28

FINANCES AND FUNDING
SOURCES

29

GET INVOLVED

30

PARTNERS

31

OUR FUNDERS

32

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

33

CONTACT US

WELCOME FROM SAHIYO'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Sahiyo,

I am thrilled to welcome you to our semi-annual report for July to December 2024, a period of incredible growth, transition, and transformation for Sahiyo. This special report marks an exciting milestone in our journey: Sahiyo has officially incorporated in the state of Massachusetts and is now in the process of becoming an independent, tax-exempt nonprofit organization recognized as a 501(c)(3) by the IRS.

This change represents a pivotal step forward, allowing us to better serve our mission of driving social change by empowering communities to end female genital cutting (FGC). With this change, our fiscal year will now align with the calendar year, running from January to December. As such, this report provides a summary of our work during the latter half of 2024 as we prepare to fully adopt this new structure.

This reporting period has been a time of remarkable accomplishments for Sahiyo. In July, we hosted our eighth annual Activists Retreat, bringing together a diverse group of activists and survivors to heal, connect, and gain tools for impactful advocacy. August saw us participating in the [2024 Asian Pacific Institute for Gender-Based Violence National Summit](#) in San Francisco, where we connected with advocates and experts across the country to strengthen our shared mission. In September, we began work with the [Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds](#) to address FGC and advance racial and health equity within the state, marking an important step towards further addressing systemic inequities.

We have also continued our partnership with the Washington State Department of Health, now in its second year, to [prevent and respond to FGC statewide](#). Additionally, we released 10 powerful new stories through our Voices to End FGM/C initiative, amplifying the lived experiences of survivors and advocates. To address

findings from our [Critical Intersections Research Project](#), we launched specialized training and technical assistance, equipping stakeholders with the tools to tackle this complex issue effectively. Finally, we released a comprehensive [policy outreach, education, and advocacy impact report](#) showcasing Sahiyo's progress and influence from 2015 through 2023.

We acknowledge that we are navigating a time of uncertainty and newfound challenges due to the Trump administration. These significant shifts in the political climate have brought unique obstacles to our work and to the communities we serve. Yet, in these moments of adversity, we find strength in unity. At Sahiyo, we remain steadfast in our belief that change is possible and that together, we can create a world where human rights, bodily autonomy, and equity are valued and upheld.

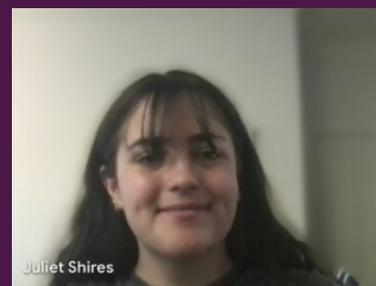
We are immensely grateful for the unwavering support of this community during this time of growth and change. It is because of you—our donors, partners, and advocates—that we are able to take bold steps forward and continue our vital work. Together, we are building a world where every woman and girl, every individual, can live with dignity, autonomy, and freedom from harmful practices.

Thank you for being part of the Sahiyo family. We are excited to share the highlights of this transformative half-year with you and look forward to continuing this journey together.

With gratitude and hope,

Mariya Taher, MSW, MFA

**Co-Founder and 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 affects over 230 million people worldwide, including an estimated 500,000 individuals in the United States. FGC can result in lifelong physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual harm.

At Sahiyo, we envision a world free from FGC—also known as female genital mutilation or female circumcision—an internationally recognized human rights violation. Our goal is to cultivate a culture where women’s and girls’ bodies and sexuality are not feared or suppressed but celebrated as natural and normal. Central to our mission are the values of consent and the fundamental right of women and children to autonomy over their own bodies.

Sahiyo operates transnationally, with a primary focus on initiatives within the United States. We collaborate with survivors, their families, and the wider 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 was officially incorporated in Massachusetts in October 2024 and is in the process of obtaining IRS tax-exempt status. As part of this transition, we have changed our fiscal year to run from January to December. This semiannual report is part of our commitment to transparency and keeping our community and stakeholders informed during this important time of growth.

From July 2024 to December 2024, Sahiyo was a fiscally sponsored project of Empowerment WORKS, Inc.



MEET THE TEAM

MARIYA TAHER

(she/her)

Executive Director



mariya@sahiyo.org



Executive Director Mariya Taher has worked in the gender-based violence field for 15+ years in the areas of teaching, research, policy, program development, and direct service. Mariya has held many leadership roles and has been instrumental in having FGC recognized and addressed at the governmental level in the United States. She served as an expert consultant for the U.S. Department of Justice's Training and Technical Assistance for Addressing FGM/C Program. 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, including Washington, in passing similar laws. She also sits on the steering committee for the U.S. End FGM/C Network. 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; and the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women.

Additionally, Mariya is an extensive writer and has contributed pieces to NPR, Ms. Magazine, HuffPost, The Fair Observer, Brown Girl Magazine, Solstice Literary Magazine, The Express Tribune, The San Francisco Examiner, and more. She is currently a Public Voices Fellow through the Op-Ed Project and Equality Now. Mariya 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 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.

ashley@sahiyo.org



SAMMAN MASUD

(she/her)

Community Engagement Coordinator

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, the death penalty, and other human rights violations in the U.S. and abroad.

samman@sahiyo.org



KRISTEL MENDOZA CASTILLO

(she/her)

Communications Coordinator

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.

kristel@sahiyo.org





ARIES NUÑO

(she/her)

Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator

Aries Nuño is a public health professional specializing in women's sexual and reproductive health, with cross-cultural experience in advocacy, research, and program development. As the Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator at Sahiyo, Aries designs culturally sensitive training materials, supports policy advocacy initiatives, and strengthens partnerships to address and prevent female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). With an MS in Public Health from Johns Hopkins University, Aries has contributed to a range of public health initiatives, including HIV/AIDS prevention, maternal and adolescent health, and gender-based violence.

aries@sahiyo.org



KIRA OMANS

(she/her)

Communications Assistant

Kira Omans joins Sahiyo with a background in humanitarian advocacy, communications, community outreach, and storytelling. She completed her B.F.A. with a concentration in Stage & Screen Performance and a Communications minor from George Mason University. She also works as an adoptee activist, fighting for adoptee rights and to increase adoption education. Kira is dedicated to Sahiyo's mission of ending female genital cutting, and she is passionate about leveraging her experience to further this important message.

kira@sahiyo.org



ZIMING RAO

(she/her)

Accountant

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.

ziming@sahiyo.org





MEGAN SEAVER

(she/her)

Editorial Assistant

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, which 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.

megan@sahiyo.org



MICHELLE TAYLOR

(she/her)

Development Director

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.

michelle@sahiyo.org



SHEENA VASANI

(she/her)

Editorial Coordinator

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.

sheena@sahiyo.org





RACHEL WINE

(she/her)

Research Coordinator

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 MS from Georgetown University and a BS from Tulane University. Overseeing Sahiyo's Critical Intersections Research Project reinforced Rachel's belief that research can be a bridge between theory and action, and her goal is to expand Sahiyo's capacity for intersectional collaboration with other social justice movements. Rachel also develops original research opportunities, research partnerships, and technical assistance provision for other organizations.

rachel@sahiyo.org



MEET THE ADVISORY BOARD



ZEHRA PATWA

(she/her)

Sahiyo Advisory Board Chair

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 actively 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.

zehra.patwa@gmail.com



SAKINA SHARP

(she/her)

Sahiyo Advisory Board Vice-Chair

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.

sakinasharp@gmail.com



ADDITIONAL SAHIYO ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS



NESHA ABIRAJ



RENEE BERGSTROM



AREFA CASSOOBHOY



INSIA DARIWALA



JOANNE GOLDEN



DENA IGUSTI



AAREFA JOHARI



JO KEOGH



KANEEZ MADRASWALLA



ABSA SAMBA



JOANNA VERGOTH



KRISTEN ZALESKI

THANK YOU TO
OUR WONDERFUL
INTERNS AND
FELLOWS:

Development Interns and Fellows play a critical role in sustaining Sahiyo's financial stability. Their responsibilities include researching and securing funding from grant-making organizations, launching fundraising campaigns to support programming, and contributing to the overall growth and development of the organization. During this reporting period, our Development Interns were **Aariana Saunders, Abigail Cervantes, Archisha Pal, Cloe Clocchiatti, Elaina Baliner, Lauren Gabbe, and Lisa Zhu**. Our Development Fellows were **Camillah Canty and Sarah Rennie**.

Events and Programs Interns contribute to Sahiyo's education and outreach efforts by planning and coordinating virtual events. Notable examples include a webinar on male ally engagement in preventing FGC and a virtual screening of Voices to End FGM/C digital stories. During this reporting period, **Maeve Monger and Sharlon Bolos** served as our Events and Programs Interns, providing essential support to these initiatives.

Policy Interns advance Sahiyo's policy work by attending meetings with advocates, organizations, and legislators as needed. During this reporting period, our Policy Interns included **Sara Khattak and Juliet Shires**. Notably, Juliet transitioned into the role of Policy Fellow in October 2024 to further strengthen Sahiyo's policy initiatives addressing FGC at all levels.



THEORY OF CHANGE

Based on both external research on female genital cutting (FGC) and independent research conducted by Sahiyo involving over 400 women from communities impacted by FGC, 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 about FGC, driving social norm change toward abandonment.

Our Theory of Change aligns with the social norm approach recommended by the [UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation](#). This approach recognizes that **FGC continues because it is a deeply embedded social norm, justified by cultural or religious beliefs or the perceived need to control women'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.

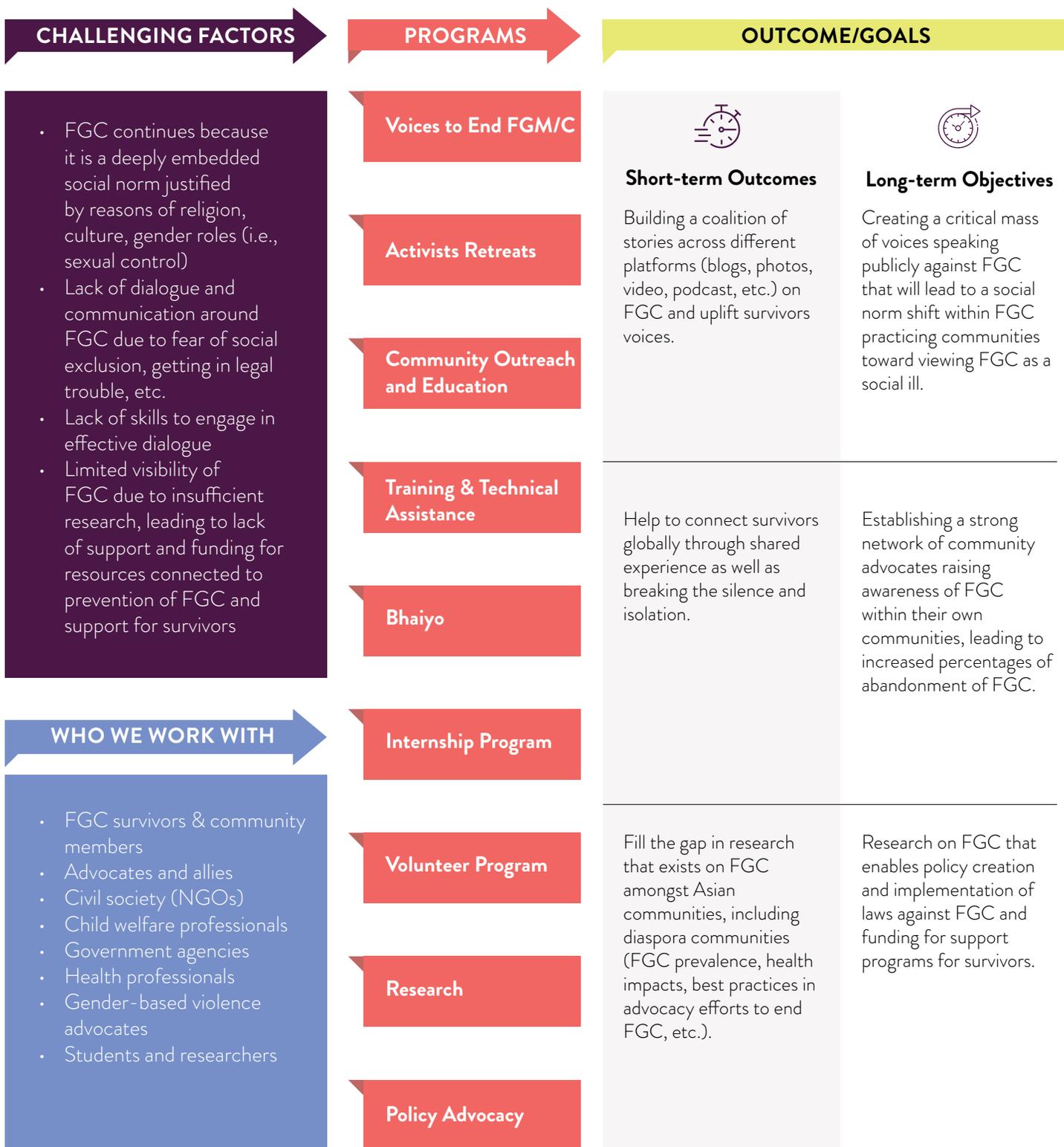
81%

Sahiyo's research revealed that while 81% of the Bohra community surveyed does not support the continuation of FGC, the fear of social rejection and a prevalent culture of silence have allowed FGC to persist. Sahiyo recognizes that only by building a critical mass of voices willing to challenge FGC will the trend toward abandoning it gain momentum. **Creating safe spaces where individuals can discuss FGC openly without fear of reprisal-- and establishing support systems if reprisals do occur--is crucial for fostering sustainable social change.**

A 2018 study revealed that once 25% of a social group adopts a new social norm, the rest of the group is likely to follow. To reach this 25% tipping point that shifts the social norm from cutting to not cutting, Sahiyo focuses on engaging a vast number of community members in informed, meaningful conversations about FGC. Our social mobilization efforts use storytelling techniques as a powerful tool to drive awareness and inspire action.

25%

Sahiyo's programming focuses on breaking the silence around FGC, supporting survivors, raising awareness, and advocating for systemic change at the policy level. This essential groundwork has empowered community members to engage in critical conversations regarding FGC within their families and social networks, helping to spark a growing, broader movement toward abandoning FGC.



PROGRAMS AND IMPACT

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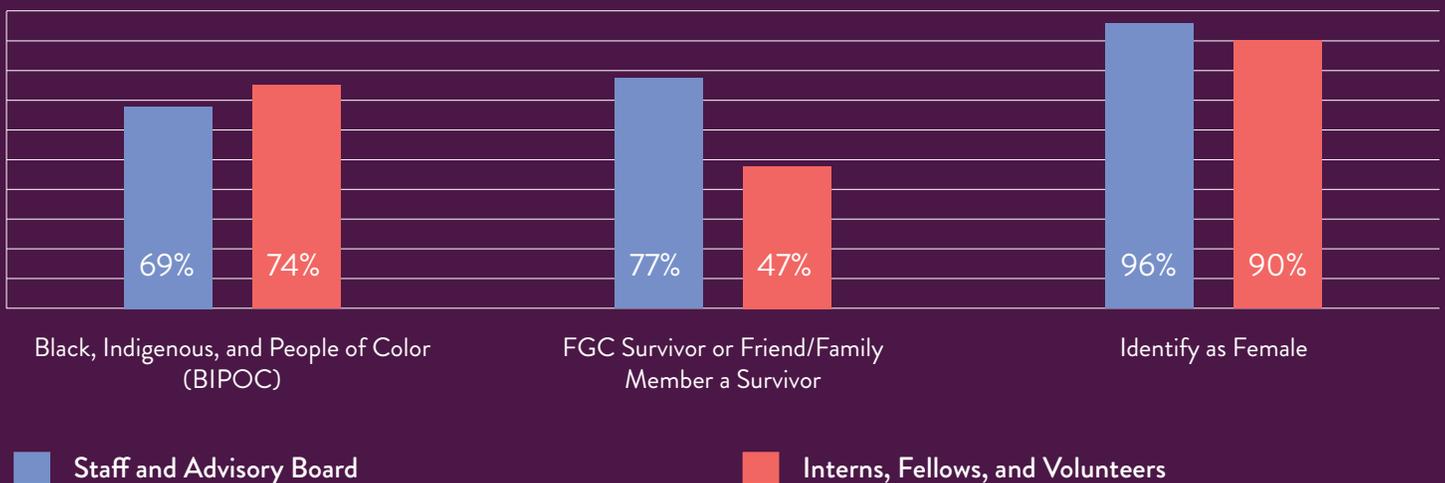
A large part of Sahiyo’s mission is working with survivors to share their stories and experiences, to inform communities, governments, and the public about the harms of FGC. These stories are critical in helping to enforce and create laws that address FGC because those who have gone through the practice have the most knowledge and understanding of why and how it should be prevented.”

-Sara Khattak, Sahiyo Policy Intern

With an all-women leadership team and a diverse staff that represents different ethnicities, religions, sexualities, and ages, we embrace the strength and inclusivity that comes from different perspectives. This diverse collective experience enriches our work to support and advocate for those impacted by FGC. During this reporting period, Sahiyo brought on a new Communications Assistant to continue amplifying survivors’ voices and to enhance our outreach to diverse communities.

Our Sahiyo intern and volunteer program has also seen remarkable growth and has become a vibrant network of **90 volunteers, 10 interns, and 3 fellows** during this reporting period. Their collective support enhances our capacity to raise awareness and effect change, reaching diverse communities globally.

SAHIYO DEMOGRAPHICS



From July 2024 to December 2024, our programs and campaigns have garnered attention in various media publications, including:

1. [‘Why didn’t my mother prevent it?’: healing the generational trauma of FGM | Global development | The Guardian](#)
2. [Trump directive ‘dangerously’ conflates gender-affirming care with a human rights violation](#)
3. [FGM in India: A Memoir of a Movement](#)
4. [When Protecting Girls Is Twisted Into Attacking Trans Youth: FGM/C Survivors Fight Back Against Transphobic Right-Wing Narratives - Ms. Magazine](#)
5. [10 Things About FGM/C in South Asia - Voices from Communities - Equality Now](#)
6. [Opinion: CT needs to ban female genital mutilation/cutting](#)
7. [‘Something has been taken away’: Pakistan’s well-kept FGM secret](#)

OUR PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

14

ACTIVISTS RETREAT PARTICIPANTS

10

VOICES TO END FGM/C PARTICIPANTS

10

NEW VOICES TO END FGM/C VIDEOS

20

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION
EVENTS

129,542

SAHIYO BLOG VIEWS

POLICY ADVOCACY IN CONNECTICUT, WASHINGTON, NEW
YORK CITY, CALIFORNIA, AND THE DMV AREA

19

BHAIYO VOLUNTEERS

3

RESEARCH PROJECTS

13

INTERNS & FELLOWS

83

ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

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

ACTIVISTS RETREAT

“

The retreat has profoundly shaped how I view my role as an activist. It reminded me of the importance of self-care and collective support in sustaining this work. I left feeling more confident in my ability to navigate the challenges that come with advocacy and more determined than ever to push for change.

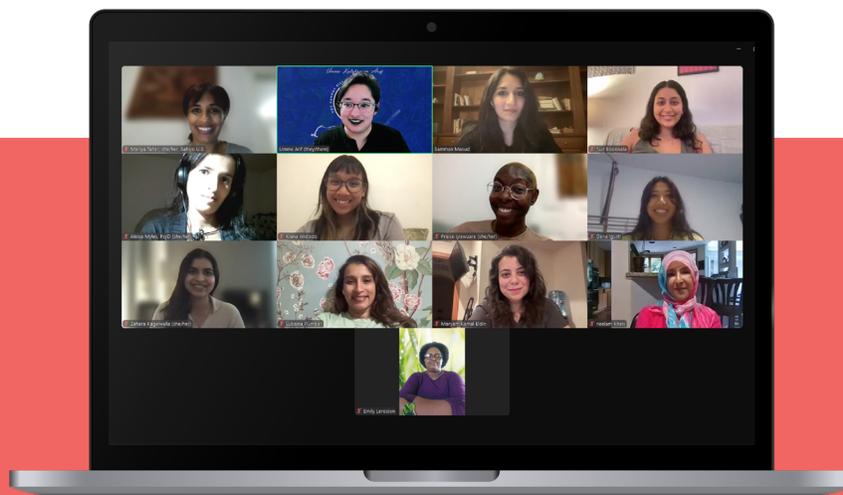
- Maryam Kamal Eldin, 2024 Activists Retreat Participant



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 positive impact is evident as activists now integrate these best practices and tools into their work, forming new collaborations among retreat attendees.

In July 2024, Sahiyo hosted its 8th Activists Retreat, bringing together 14 FGC survivors and activists located throughout the U.S. to convene in a virtual setting over three days and raise awareness of FGC. Since the program’s inception, Sahiyo has **trained 111 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.

The 2024 retreat was expanded to include individuals from additional Asian, Pacific Islander (API), Middle Eastern, and North African (MENA) FGC-practicing communities to promote inclusivity and extend support to a broader spectrum of survivors. This pilot workshop included 14 participants representing diverse ethnic backgrounds and gender identities who joined in a virtual space over three days. The retreat included discussions, knowledge-building workshops, action-planning sessions, and self-care activities.



VOICES TO END FGM/C

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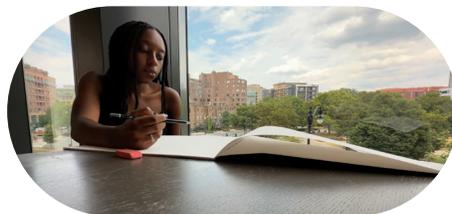
I wanted to attend the workshop because I recognized it as a unique opportunity to share my journey with FGM/C, a silent struggle I had endured for years. The workshop offered a platform for me to break that silence, connect with others, and contribute to a movement aimed at ending this practice. I felt that in sharing my story, I could help raise awareness and inspire others to join the movement to end FGM/C.”

- Simenesh Comollo, 2024 Voices to End FGM/C Participant



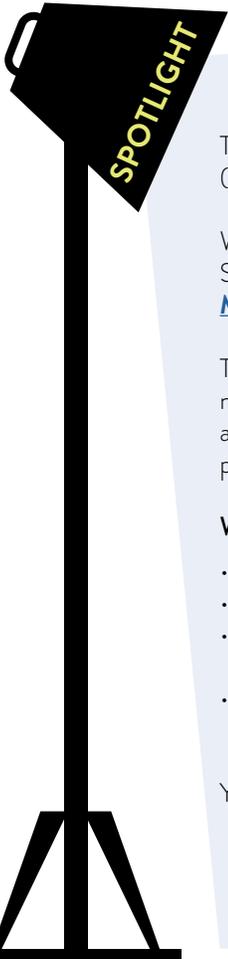
Launched in 2018, Voices to End FGM/C is a dynamic collaboration between Sahiyo and Silence Speaks. Silence Speaks employs trauma-informed digital storytelling methods to address gender-based violence and other human rights concerns. The Voices program aims to mobilize a critical mass of storytellers, uniting survivors and advocates worldwide. By sharing their experiences with FGC, participants not only heal and grow as leaders but also create powerful short films that call for an end to this harmful practice.

This summer, Sahiyo hosted its 9th Voices cohort in Washington, D.C., marking the program’s second-ever hybrid workshop. The workshop welcomed 10 additional stories and passionate advocates into the growing Voices alumni network! Today this global network includes 82 storytellers whose personal narratives have resonated across borders, reaching audiences in over 19 countries, including Pakistan, India, Singapore, Egypt, The Gambia, Cote d’Ivoire, South Africa, U.K., Portugal, and the U.S. Their impact spans continents, igniting conversations and driving meaningful change in communities worldwide.





Across Sahiyo’s social media platforms, Voices stories have garnered over **162,400 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.



The Launch of the Sharing Your Experience with Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) Guide

With the support of the Voices to End FGM/C and the Sahiyo volunteer community, Sahiyo unveiled a new guide titled **[“Sharing Your Experience with Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting \(FGM/C\).”](#)**

This guide is designed to empower survivors, activists, and advocates by providing the necessary resources to learn how to share personal narratives publicly. This resource aims to amplify voices, educate communities, and, ultimately, mobilize individuals to take personal steps toward addressing FGM/C.

What You’ll Find Inside:

- Writing Tips: Practical advice to help you craft and share your story in a way that feels right for you.
- Emotional Support: Insights on how to prepare yourself emotionally for the storytelling process.
- Public Sharing Guidance: Tips on how to share your story publicly, whether with friends, family, or a wider audience.
- Trauma Education: Information on the impacts of trauma and how to manage the feelings that might come up.

You can access the guide today on the Voices [website!](#)



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 2024 to December 2024, Sahiyo hosted and participated in 20 such events, reaching over 700 individuals globally from countries** including Greece, the United Kingdom, Canada, Switzerland, Uganda, Nigeria, Namibia, India, Myanmar, 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. [Breaking the Silence on FGM/C in the U.S.](#)
2. [Youth Advocates Against FGC: A Conversation on Change](#)
3. [Raising Awareness and Understanding of FGM/C in the U.S.](#)

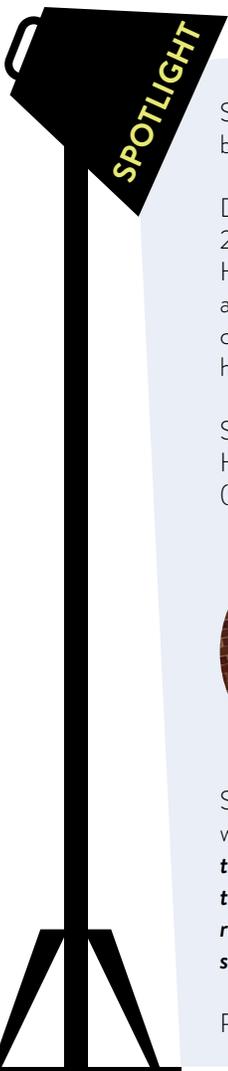


TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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 ending 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.



From July 2024 to December 2024, Sahiyo expanded its reach by delivering informative presentations to a diverse group of key stakeholders. Notably, we've collaborated with the U.S. Department of Justice's [Office on Violence Against Women](#), MassNow, [WomanKind](#), and [AshaKiran](#).



Sahiyo Joins Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds in 15.8M Initiative to address systemic barriers to health

During this period, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) announced that Sahiyo, along with 26 other organizations across Massachusetts, was a recipient of the 2024 Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds (the Funds). In total, ~\$15.8M in grants will fund efforts supporting 458 cities and towns across the state. All of the organizations, including Sahiyo, have committed to leading efforts to address the root causes of health inequities by disrupting systemic barriers to health and tackling institutional and structural racism head-on.

Sahiyo has partnered with the U.S. End FGM/C Network and UMass Chan Medical School Collaborative in Health Equity to develop systems of care and response for the prevention of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and support for survivors in Massachusetts.



Sahiyo Co-Founder and Executive Director Mariya Taher expresses her excitement about this initiative and the work ahead: ***“FGM/C is such an unaddressed issue in Massachusetts, let alone the United States. We’re excited about this project because the funding allows us to really address this issue by providing us the capacity and time to gather those who are impacted by FGM/C and/or who work with impacted communities throughout the state and create a real community-based solution on how to address this topic, and how we can build a collaborative approach to both support survivors and work towards prevention of FGM/C amongst future generations.”***

Read more about the project [here](#).

SAHIYO BLOG

“

We found that we all had something in common; We all had faced different forms of violence against women, especially in the context of human sexuality, in one way or another. We were able to find a degree of understanding in each other, even those who were not survivors were able to see on some level how FGM/C was a harmful violation of a woman’s body.”

- Nevin Sutherland, Activist and PhD Student

Sahiyo offers survivors of FGC, FGC-impacted communities, and advocates against FGC a platform to share their stories, opinions, research, and efforts toward ending the harmful practice. Storytelling is an important medium for healing. It allows 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. From July 2024 to December 2024 Sahiyo published **64 blogs**. and in 2024 Sahiyo published **a total of 149 blog posts**. Over time, the blog’s viewership has grown significantly, with **70,582 views between July 2024 and December**, and in 2024 Sahiyo had a total of **129,542 blog views**.

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

1. [Intern Spotlight: Policy Intern Sara Khattak](#)
2. [The Connecticut Coalition to End FGM/C Interview Series: Caitlin LeMay](#)
3. [Introducing The FGM/C Policy Advocate Care Fund](#)
4. [Bringing female genital cutting to the forefront: How Sahiyo helped Nevin Sutherland attend the 2024 Asian Studies Conference](#)
5. [Sustainable Development Goals: How the UN’s Benchmarks Align with Sahiyo’s Mission to End Female Genital Cutting](#)

Read these personal stories [here](#).



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’s animated video response to [“How do I move past the shame of being cut?”](#)

Explore some of our top Dear Maasi reads:

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



POLICY

“

I truly appreciate all the allies who work to help survivors and prevent this practice. The Connecticut Coalition is now huge — there are many organizations involved. It’s heartening to have so many allies, who may not be from FGC-practicing communities, but who understand that there are so many different ways that they can help. It makes me tear up thinking about how much people care about others with different experiences from themselves. It gives me hope that we will see the end of this practice in my lifetime.”

- Zehra Patwa, co-founder of WeSpeakOut. and CT Coalition Member

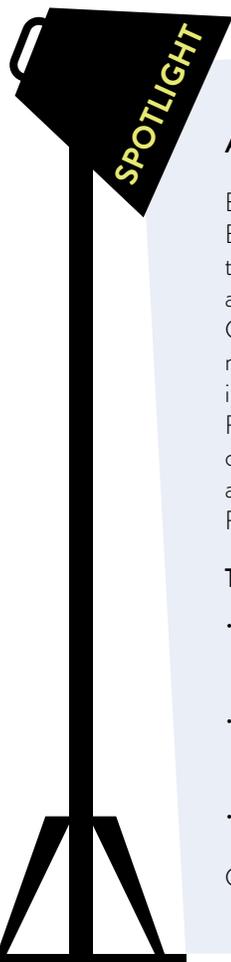
Policy work has been central to Sahiyo’s goal to end FGC and find ways to support survivors since our founding in 2015. Thus, Sahiyo is proud to have published the [“Policy Outreach, Education, and Advocacy: Impact Report 2015-2023”](#), a comprehensive summary of the policy work Sahiyo has engaged in at the 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-initiating additional 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 exist, amending and updating existing legislation to enhance its effectiveness, and supporting the implementation of these laws. In particular, we emphasize the inclusion of community outreach and education provisions in policy agendas addressing FGM/C.

Read more about Sahiyo’s policy work below:

1. [Building Support for the Connecticut Coalition to End FGM/C After Failure in 2024 Legislative Session](#)
2. [Reflecting on the “Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in California - Past, Present, and Future” Webinar](#)
3. [Sahiyo is Thrilled The Gambia Decided to Keep the FGC Ban in Place](#)
4. [Sahiyo Engages Community Stakeholders in Seattle, Washington to Advance Senate Bill 5453 Initiatives](#)





A NEW KIND OF COALITION: DMV COALITION TO END FGM/C

Beginning in August 2023, Sahiyo, in collaboration with The U.S. End FGM/C Network, Global Women P.E.A.C.E. Foundation, the Inter-African Committee - USA, and Equality Now, formed a regional coalition to address FGC in the DMV (District of Columbia-Maryland-Virginia), where over 50,000 people are at risk of or have undergone FGC. The DMV Coalition to End FGM/C is committed to working towards creating policy solutions to address FGC in connection and collaboration with survivors, non-profit organizations, community members, policymakers, researchers, and other individuals to build a collective movement toward ending FGM/C.



The DMV coalition seeks to achieve the following:

- Advance legislation for the District of Columbia addressing FGM/C. Following successful advocacy from members of the DMV Coalition to End FGM/C on this objective, the Council of The District of Columbia enacted [Act 25-559](#), “Female Genital Mutilation Prohibition Act of 2024,” on October 7, 2024.
- By amending Maryland’s current FGM/C law to include a “vacation cutting” provision preventing travel outside of the state to commit FGM/C on a child and adding provisions for education and outreach programs addressing FGM/C.
- Ensuring the implementation of both of Virginia’s anti-FGM/C laws, including the educational provision.

Contact the coalition at fgmcdmvcoalition@gmail.com

BHAIYO

“

It's shocking to me how FGM is such a quiet menace not only to survivors but also to men who are affected by it – with their wives and sexual pleasure – or the ability to have children. I'm just surprised how it's a form of violence, yet it's one that seemingly the world is not comfortable talking about publicly. I also want people to understand that FGM is a form of domestic violence. In the same way that we talk about abuse and other harms against women, FGM needs to be included in those conversations. And we can only do that by educating more people about the topic.”

- Brad Mazon, 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 aims 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 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.

From July 2024 to December 2024, Bhaiyo has accomplished the following:

13

people participated in Bhaiyo public awareness campaigns

7031

people were reached with Bhaiyo public awareness campaigns

3

blog posts written to uplift the voices of male activists



RESEARCH

“

As an advisor on the *Critical Intersections* research study for the past year, I have been consistently impressed by the Sahiyo team’s commitment to rigor, detail, and nuance. This research is the first of its kind, and it is laying down the crucial foundation for developing informed intersectional approaches to anti-FGM/C work around the world.”

– Aarefa Johari, Sahiyo Co-Founder and *Critical Intersections* Project Advisor

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 2024, we worked with and supported students from Georgetown University and National Louis University.

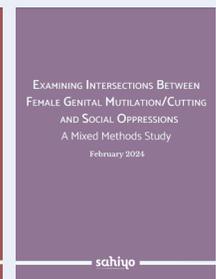


CRITICAL INTERSECTIONS

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 FGM/C movement. The high demand for the webinar indicated a need for further exploration into these intersecting social justice issues. Sahiyo initiated exploratory research to better understand these challenges and find best practices and opportunities in the FGM/C movement that sought to address these intersections in its work.



To date, Sahiyo has published an initial [Scoping Review](#) (in October 2023) and a [Mixed Methods Report](#) (in February 2024) based on findings from a survey administered to over 100 individuals. In 2024, Sahiyo’s advisory group, consisting of experts and advocates on FGC from around the globe, as well as experts from related social justice fields, finalized content for the third and final report in this project based on findings from 29 in-depth interviews with experts in the FGM/C field and other social justice advocates. The report is expected to be published in 2025.



Since the release of the Mixed Methods Report, Sahiyo has given training and presentations to share the findings and support partner organizations such as Asian Women’s Shelter to implement recommendations into their own programmatic work.

“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 involvement with Sahiyo has profoundly impacted me, opening my eyes to the sheer number of women worldwide who are survivors of female genital cutting—regardless of what country they live in. It has taught me the power of storytelling. I’ve had the distinct honor of hearing some survivors’ stories firsthand, witnessing their bravery and resilience.”

– Elaina Baliner Jones, Fundraising and Auction Intern

Sahiyo’s internship and fellowship program offers individuals an immersive experience in the organization’s operations while providing valuable insights into the inner workings of a social justice organization. We typically host **7-12 interns** at a time, working across various departments, such as Development, Editorial, Events and Programs, Policy, and Social Media and Communications.

Interns and fellows engage in a wide array of activities, including research, community engagement, digital content creation, and more. Their commitment not only strengthens our organizational capacity but also provides them with essential professional skills, furthering our global impact.

During this reporting period, Sahiyo introduced a new fellowship position: the Policy Fellow. This role continues to strengthen Sahiyo’s policy initiatives focused on addressing FGC at the global, national, state, and local levels.



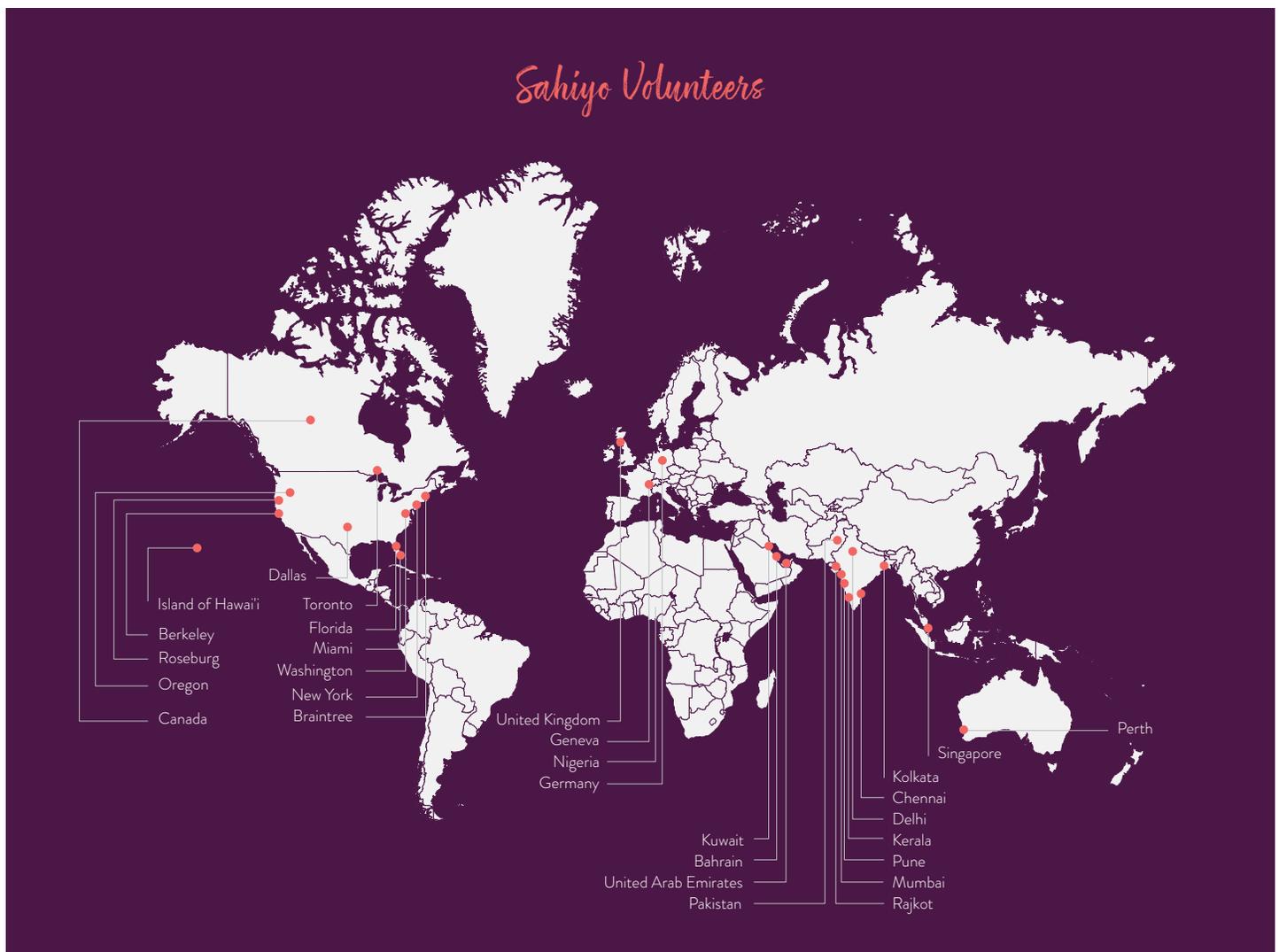
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

“

I am supporting Sahiyo and Bhaiyo in their endeavour to spread awareness about 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.”

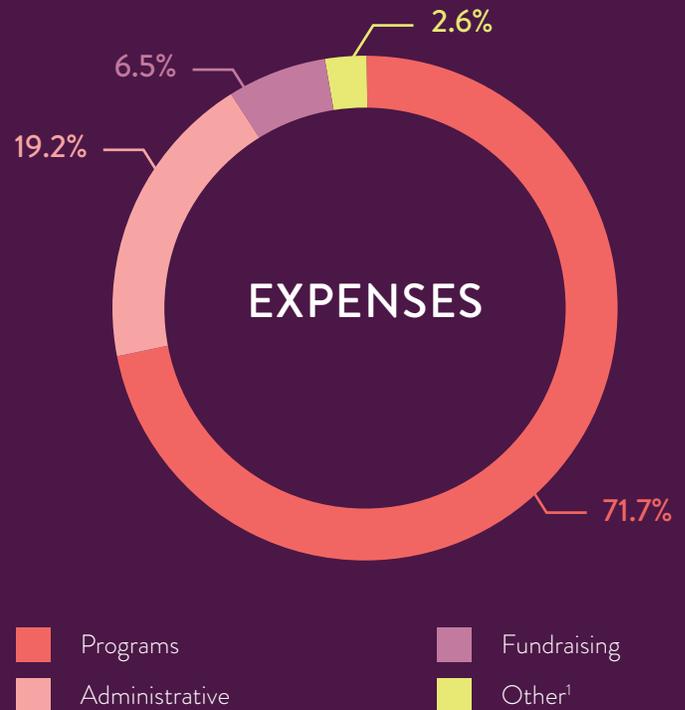
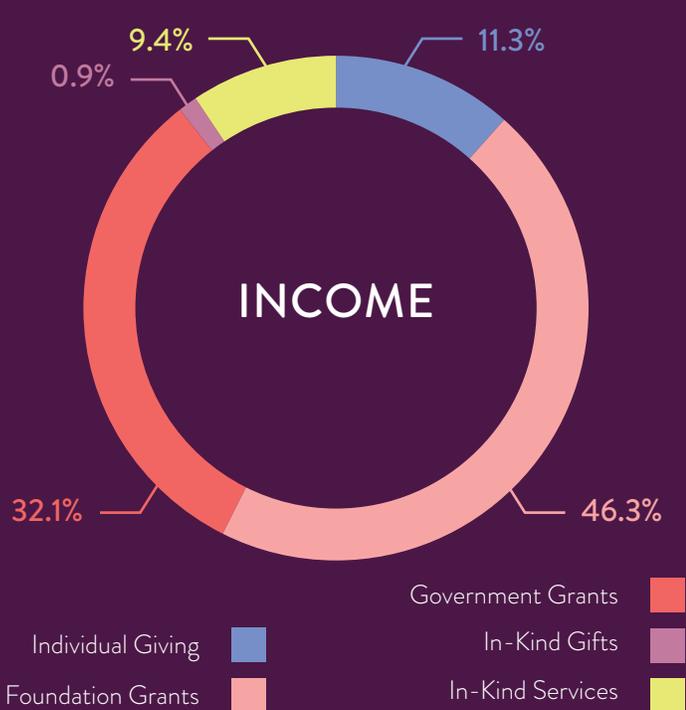
- Abbas Bohari, Sahiyo Volunteer

Volunteers are the heart of Sahiyo, and our organization thrives on their passion, dedication, and invaluable contributions. During this reporting period, Sahiyo was supported by over 88 active volunteers from around the world, including India, Pakistan, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and beyond. These dedicated volunteers collaborate with us both remotely and in person, contributing significantly to our research and storytelling efforts, leading training sessions, and supporting report development and event planning. Their efforts are essential to advancing our mission and amplifying our global impact.



FINANCES AND FUNDING SOURCES

Total Operating Budget: \$632,739.23



1. Fiscal management and banking fees.

Sahiyo has made significant strides in diversifying and expanding our funding streams each year. In the latter half of 2024, we secured private foundation support from esteemed organizations such as the Wallace Global Fund, Ben & Jerry’s Foundation, Allstate Foundation, and the Massachusetts Community Health and Healthy Aging Funds. Additionally, we continued to receive federal funding through subcontracts with the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime, RTI International, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families, the Washington State Department of Health, and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women.

During the second half of 2024, we witnessed a remarkable increase in individual contributions, fueled by the unwavering generosity of our supporters. Notable highlights included donations from #GivingTuesday and Sahiyo’s Giving Circle, our recurring donation program. Beyond monetary contributions, our community demonstrated extraordinary support by providing over \$59,700 in in-kind services through the dedication of our interns, volunteers, and pro bono legal team. Additionally, we received in-kind gifts valued at \$5,600 during this period, reflecting the deep commitment of our network to advancing Sahiyo’s mission.

These diverse streams of funding and support are a testament to the growing commitment of our partners, donors, and community in advancing Sahiyo’s mission.

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

1. Supporting survivors on their individual healing journeys;
2. Creating a critical mass of voices within communities to support the abandonment of FGC and prevent it from occurring to future generations of girls; and
3. 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

Sahiyo's work is made possible by our volunteers' dedication, our donors' generosity, and our advocates' passion. If you'd like to support our mission, here's how you can get involved:

“

Sahiyo's mission is so important – to women, to allies, to global partners who can make a difference and empower survivors through systemic efforts... Every ounce of awareness contributes to the growing ripple effect that can make a difference for generations of women and girls.”

– Lisa Fiore, Sahiyo Supporter

DONATE



Your support helps us amplify survivor voices and broaden our impact. Every contribution makes a difference. [Donate here.](#)

VOLUNTEER



We welcome volunteers from all skill levels, ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Opportunities include social media advocacy, translation, content and report writing, community outreach, and more. If you're looking for a flexible way to contribute your time. [Become a volunteer.](#)

INTERN



Would you like to gain career experience in human rights and nonprofit work? Our remote internships in Editorial, Policy, Fundraising, Social Media, Events, and more require a minimum commitment of six months and ten hours per week. [Apply for an internship.](#)

HOST A FUNDRAISER



Organize a fundraising event in your community or online to support Sahiyo. Your efforts help sustain our work and raise awareness for FGC survivors. For guidance and resources, contact michelle@sahiyo.org.

CONTRIBUTE TO OUR BLOG



Sahiyo believes in the power of storytelling to drive change. We welcome you to lend your voice to the conversation about FGC by writing a blog post. Our Editorial team is here to help throughout the process. [Submit your post](#) or email sheena@sahiyo.org to learn more.

BECOME A BHAIIYO



If you would like to join Sahiyo's Male Allyship program, become involved in raising awareness on FGC, and work towards supporting survivors and prevention for future generations. [Sign up to be a Bhaiyo.](#)

SERVE ON THE ADVISORY BOARD



Our Advisory Board brings together experts in health, law, media, and advocacy to further Sahiyo's mission. If you're interested in contributing your expertise, contact info@sahiyo.org.

OUR PARTNERS

OUR FUNDERS

 <p>greening the grassroots since 1985</p>		 <p>— Massachusetts — COMMUNITY HEALTH AND HEALTHY AGING FUNDS</p>
		
 <p>ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES</p>	 <p>Office for Victims of Crime OVC</p>	 <p>U.S. Department of Justice OVC Office on Violence Against Women Working Together to End the Violence</p>
 <p>WALLACE GLOBAL FUND <i>For a sustainable future</i></p>	 <p>Washington State Department of HEALTH</p>	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special Thanks To



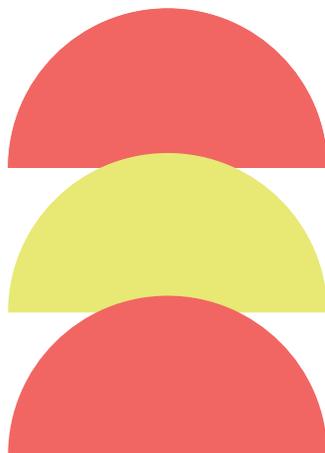
FOLEY & LARDNER LLP

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Foley & Lardner for their invaluable pro bono legal support as we transition to becoming an independent nonprofit organization.

Thank you to our volunteers and interns from July to December 2024 for donating over 1,375 hours of support during these six months 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 semi-annual report.



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CONTACT US



EMAIL

info@sahiyo.org



PHONE

+1-508-263-0112



MAILING ADDRESS

45 Prospect Street, Cambridge MA, 02139



@SAHIYVOICES

SAHIYO.ORG