



TOGETHER TO END FGM

How To...

GET

CONVERSATIONS

STARTED ON FGM



IN

THIS

GUIDE

- ▶ Overview
- ▶ Step-by-step
- ▶ Actions
- ▶ Glossary



thegirlgeneration.org



twitter.com/TheGirlGen



[instagram.com/thegirlgen](https://www.instagram.com/thegirlgen)



[facebook.com/TheGirlGen](https://www.facebook.com/TheGirlGen)

About this Guide

This guide is a quick resource for activists and campaigners working to End FGM, as well as those wanting to speak out about the practice, on how to get conversations started to end FGM. It can be used to encourage communities to begin talking more about FGM.

About The Girl Generation

The Girl Generation is a communications initiative, providing a global platform for galvanising, catalysing and amplifying the Africa-led movement to end FGM. We seek to inspire organisations and individuals, especially youth, across the most affected countries in Africa and beyond, to end FGM in one generation.

What is FGM?

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

FGM is a form of violence against women and girls. In 2012, the UN passed a resolution calling for a global ban on FGM.

Classification of types of female genital cutting

Sunna (no stitches) WHO type I	Partial or complete removal of the clitoris (clitoridectomy), requiring no stitching.
Intermediate cut WHO type II	Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision), requiring 2 or 3 stitches to partially close the vaginal orifice.
Pharaonic cut WHO type III	Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting and re-stitching the labia minora and/or the labia majora, with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation), requiring 4-7 stitches and resulting in only a very small vaginal orifice.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO START CONVERSATIONS ON FGM?

Silence perpetuates FGM. In community after community, parents continue to cut their daughters under the false belief that their neighbours think they should and will ostracise them if they do not.

They simply aren't having the conversation. The culture of silence around FGM allows it to continue, and people's reluctance to speak about the violent practice mean that laws alone are not enough to end it.

This is supported by a UNICEF study which found that speaking out in the media against FGM, or discussing the issue at home and the community played an essential role in moving communities in five Africa countries towards the abandonment of FGM. Everyone should be encouraged to play a part by speaking out and taking action.

Social change communication is key to addressing social norms that underpin FGM, and can support and accelerate change at different levels. Sparking conversations on FGM can create awareness and dispel myths about FGM, as well as emphasise the risks faced by girls and women. The more people talking about an issue will also increase its acceptance as an important and relevant conversation topic. The more you and your peers talk about FGM – the more you make yourselves think about the issue. Dialogue and discussion leads to greater clarity on your beliefs on the issue, as well as crystallising your demands on how you would like your community to end FGM.



HOW TO START A CONVERSATION ABOUT FGM...

FGM is a difficult topic to talk about. But it touches on many other issues which are easier to engage with – like girls' education, community protection or women's and child health.

Opening up the conversation by asking people about their interests, their views on a certain issue, or the challenges in their community can be a good way to lead into a discussion about FGM.

Asking someone's opinion is a good opener – rather than telling them what you think, which can shut the conversation down. It is important to think about WHO you want to talk to and why – you should understand what their interests are, what they are passionate about, and what they already understand or think about FGM.

Knowing this will allow you to prepare how best to approach the conversation – what topic would be a good lead in, who or what are they inspired by that would be a relevant topic of conversation, is there a new story that could help to open up the discussion. Be equipped with facts about FGM. Do not try to force an opinion, or criticise their beliefs or actions – but, when appropriate, present them with real facts about what FGM is, the harm it does and so on.

STEP-BY-STEP

Following the key steps for developing social change communication can help you design and implement effective actions and conversations:

1. Why do you want to communicate about ending FGM?

This is where you describe the change you want to see, in other words, your aim. The change you want achieve should be specific and targeted at the right level for the community.

2. Who do you want to communicate with?

Here you should decide who your audience is – think about who you need to communicate with to achieve your change, and who you have the ability to reach

3. Where, when and how should you communicate with them?

Plan your culturally relevant, audience-specific communications

Where – identify the correct communications channels/networks that your audience uses

When – think about when and how often your audience accesses these channels, and an optimal time to share your message for the most impact

How – what materials do you need, think about literacy levels, access to media and cost

4. What will you say?

(messages & information)

Think about what the audience needs to know and how this should be presented with the aim to share positive stories and successes

WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU TAKE?



Write about your experiences

- Write an op-ed or a letter in your local newspaper
- Write an article or blog with your views on how FGM has affected you
- Share your writing with an influential blog, or media publication for them to publish
- You can also upload it onto the campaign website



Use social media to get people talking

- Post videos on social media to raise awareness – use creative hashtags
- Use live feeds on social media to engage audiences, i.e. Facebook Live
- Engage people in a twitter chat
- Set up social media pages for your groups (or use existing ones for your network) and share information about what is happening on the ground in your area



Embrace the power of the petition

- You can petition your local politicians,
- Start a petition (online or offline) amongst your friends, neighbours, colleagues, peers and acquaintances and ask everyone to join you in signing the petition to end FGM



Reach out to influencers

- To spread your conversation, provide creative content and to engage a broader audience
- Recruit and celebrate champions among your friends and community – the people who can speak out for your group, and bring together everyone's thoughts into a cohesive voice
- Target influential people that your peers respect – and ask them to make a commitment to end FGM



Use art or drama to get your message across

- For example, murals on urban buildings can get people talking
- Form youth groups amongst your friends and peers where you might organise events (sports, arts, music, etc.) that could become an avenue to speak out and talk about ending FGM



Engage with local health workers

- Work with local community organisations, respected individuals and/or health workers within your community to hold a discussion about FGM, women and girls' health and education
- Engage local health workers to share their views, experiences and become advocates for change in the campaign

WHAT TYPE OF COMMITMENTS CAN YOU CALL FOR?

- ✓ **Speak out to end FGM**
- ✓ **Break the silence to end FGM**
- ✓ **Shout it out to end FGM**
- ✓ **Talk it out to end FGM**
- ✓ **Raise your voice to end FGM**
- ✓ **Talk about FGM with my family and friends**
- ✓ **Spread the word, sharing what you know about FGM**

SPEAKING OUT WITH RESPECT - “DO NO HARM”

Choose language carefully

The language we use when talking about FGM matters. We must be careful not to victimise or stigmatise FGM survivors or people from practicing communities, instead empowering them and emboldening them to end the practice

Empower and protect

Do No Harm is critical for empowering and protecting women and activists working to end FGM.

Do No Harm policy

For more information on our Do No Harm policy, go to thegirlgeneration.org/resources

EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES...

“I WILL END FGM”

Young people across Africa have launched the I will end FGM campaign to end FGM by sparking one million conversations to break the silence. As the largest generation of young people ever, they are inviting anyone from their peers to their communities to leaders to join them in a conversation about FGM. The young African advocates are posting videos on social media to speak out against FGM and are inspiring others to show their support by also making a pledge to end FGM. The videos, which are on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram with the hashtags #ihavespoken and #endFGM, seek to break the silence that surrounds the issue.



THE CRUEL CUT

Leyla Hussein wasn't sure how to translate her message from the UK to the US. She found that showing a short clip of the BAFTA nominated documentary – The Cruel Cut. Leyla quickly found that the brief clip served as a conversation starter. Leyla collaborates with photographer Jason Ashwood to create The Face of Defiance – a series of photographs of global survivors of and campaigners against FGM from the UK, US and Senegal. Those featured include women and men who are therapists, nurses, public speakers, authors, award winners and tireless campaigners – all of whom have dedicated their lives to ending FGM. The photographs broaden public awareness and create a new positive dialogue about ending FGM.

FGM TAKES CENTRE STAGE

In Nigeria, Active Voices, an organisation working on health and development, put on a series of plays called “Together: One Community’s Story of Ending FGM”. The plays were held in different areas across Abuja and attracted a wide audience, including local authorities. At the end of the play, a stand was set up that allowed audience members to ask questions, engage in a dialogue and receive more information about how they can support the end of FGM. The plays created an excitement amongst the attendees, leading to requests to have more theatre and drama in communities who were practicing FGM.

CHECKLIST



- ✓ Use your existing networks – to either serve as conversations starters – or to identify how to expand your reach
- ✓ Post across multiple platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) to spread the conversation far and wide
- ✓ Recognise supporters, and those who have helped to spread the conversation

GLOSSARY AND CONCEPTS

→ INFLUENCERS

A Social Media Influencer is a user on social media who has established credibility in a specific industry. A social media influencer has access to a large audience and can persuade others by virtue of their authenticity and reach.

→ SOCIAL CHANGE COMMUNICATION

Process whereby community dialogue and collective action work together to produce a social change in a community that improves the health and welfare of all its members



TOGETHER TO END FGM



thegirlgeneration.org



twitter.com/TheGirlGen



instagram.com/thegirlgen



facebook.com/TheGirlGen

