



TOGETHER TO END FGM

The
**EMOTIONAL
WELLBEING**
Project

Supporting social change

- A guide for activists -

THIS RESOURCE PACK

In July 2018, in Nairobi, the Emotional Wellbeing project piloted an innovative workshop for activists and campaigners. This resource pack shares the workshop content for those interested in running their own workshop or support group.

This resource pack is intended to act as a simple guide for those who don't have access to advanced psychotherapy services. You don't have to have had any experience in emotional wellbeing. Just an open mind and a desire to learn more.

We hope you find it useful.



BACKGROUND

FGM

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is an extremely harmful practice. It includes 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 global issue. More than 200 million women and girls have undergone FGM globally, and over three million more are at risk every year. FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the rights of women and girls.

The Emotional Wellbeing Project

The social movement to end FGM is driven by courageous activists across the most affected countries in Africa, and within the diaspora.

These activists often experience social discrimination, threats to their safety and stress during their work. They are at the front line, often operating alone, and until now, without adequate support. Challenges to emotional wellbeing, combined with limited support networks or resources for self-care, limit the end FGM movement's sustainability and effectiveness.

Campaigners are also increasingly calling for the psychosocial impact of FGM to be recognised and addressed, both for women's wellbeing, and as an essential component of prevention. If women can create safe spaces in which to reflect on their own experiences, and what this means for their own daughters, this creates an opportunity for the inter-generational cycle of FGM to be broken.

Funded generously by Wallace Global Fund, The Girl Generation's Emotional Wellbeing Project responds to calls from the movement to recognise and respond to these challenges.

A ground-breaking international collaboration across the end FGM movement, the programme builds and tests a package of support for activists and survivors in Africa, with the potential for future application in many other settings. The Girl Generation project represents an evolution of the Dahlia Project, a specialist service for survivors of FGM, established by Dr. Leyla Hussein.



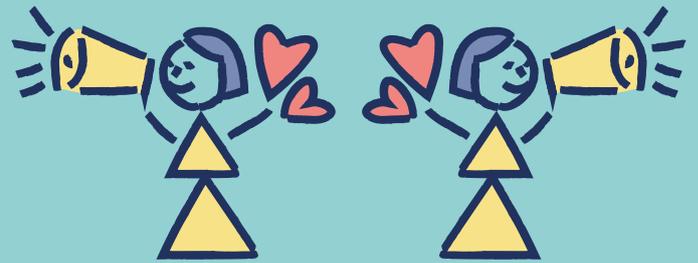
WHY EMOTIONAL WELLBEING?

The Girl Generation exists to accelerate and sustain social change to end FGM.

#1

Individual emotional support

Supported activists →
Sustainable & effective movement



#2

Encourage greater emotional support within the movement

Activists trained →
Women reflect on FGM experiences →
Prevention →
Wellbeing



A young Black woman with braided hair is smiling and looking towards the right. She is wearing a purple blazer over a black and white striped t-shirt. The background is a savanna landscape with acacia trees and a sunset sky with soft, golden light.

The project aims to strengthen the end FGM movement's ability to:

- Provide sustainable emotional support for women and girls affected by FGM, in order to enhance prevention efforts and support survivors
- Ensure self-care for campaigners, staff and volunteers working to end FGM, and
- Break down the stigma associated with FGM and related emotional/mental health issues.

By the end of the workshop the participants will have an improved knowledge of the following:

- FGM and its psychological effects on survivors and activists
- Human Rights relating to FGM
- The link between FGM and child abuse
- What to do if you are worried about a child's safety and wellbeing
- How to safeguard your emotional wellbeing

WORKSHOP CONTENT SUMMARY

Understanding FGM

The first part of the workshop provides all participants with a common understanding of FGM, a knowledge of the different types of the practice, why and where it is carried out, and an overview of its impact on girls and women.

FGM as a form of trauma

The workshop introduces FGM as a form of childhood trauma and explores its impact on survivors. Participants learn of how trauma can impact both the brain and body and can cause a wide variety of physical and emotional reactions, sometimes appearing many years later. This workshop also introduces the concept of secondary trauma as a common reaction amongst activists who work with FGM survivors. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences and their ways of coping with challenging situations. Emphasis is placed on respecting boundaries and always considering the safety and wellbeing of the self and others. This includes recognising personal limits and seeking help when appropriate from support networks, professional counsellors or psychotherapists.

Developing self-care strategies

Participants are taught how to look after their own wellbeing. This includes practical relaxation and yoga exercises, achieving a good work/life balance, effective communications on difficult topics, undertaking risk assessments to work safely, exploring how activists can work with NGOs, and how to safely set up and run support groups. Participants also learn how to create a personal self-care plan.



WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Day 1	
Start of day	Introduction to relaxation exercises
Morning session	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introductions2. Rules for the workshop including Do No Harm3. Creating a safe space for the workshop4. Understanding FGM as child abuse and childhood trauma
Afternoon session	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Exploring the impact of FGM on survivors and activists2. Safeguarding and protecting others and self3. End of day review and relaxation exercises
Day 2	
Start of day	Relaxation exercises
Morning session	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tools and techniques for promoting wellbeing2. How to develop a self-care plan
Afternoon session	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The role of support groups and how to set up and run a successful group2. Additional resources and support networks3. End of day review and relaxation exercises
Day 3	
Start of day	Relaxation exercises
Morning session	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete a self-care plan2. Action planning for participants
Afternoon session	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review and feedback on programme2. End of workshop review and certificate ceremony

TIPS FOR RUNNING A GREAT WORKSHOP

■ Be organised

- Select a calm and private space. Your participants will feel most comfortable that way.
- Provide accommodation. Plan for travel and per diem expenses. It's less stress that way.
- Set an example of great financial management and support. Your participants will be learning about this, it's your opportunity to set an example.
- Send invitations out ahead of time. Don't leave it until the last minute.



■ Create safe spaces

- Agree "Do No Harm" rules at the start of the workshop including respecting each other's right to confidentiality.
- Think about decorating the space with inspiring quotes and images.
- Small touches like open windows, a vase of flowers or gentle music can make participants feel comfortable.
- Let participants know that they can talk through a personal issues privately after the workshop, and can be referred to a trained counsellor if appropriate.



■ Make the workshop participative

- Be flexible in the workshop structure. Allow plenty of time for group discussion as well as adapting to participant suggestions.
- Bring on board a facilitator who can lead discussions and bring the whole room into the debate.
- You can encourage participants to treat the workshop as a place to practice listening skills and how to support to others.
- For ideas that cannot be immediately addressed, use the 'car park' tool to note them and return to them.



Expect the unexpected

- Participants will bring their own experiences into the room. Your workshops will take on their character. No two workshops will be the same. This is a good thing. Embrace it.
- A skilled facilitator will balance interactions with learning.
- Consider building in time for quiet reflection. This could be managed in groups, perhaps taking place in the evenings at residential workshops.

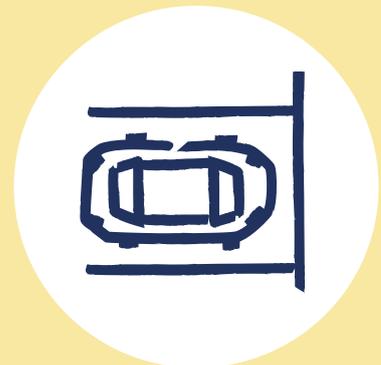


Build a strong platform for ongoing wellbeing

- Helping participants develop their own self-care plan is an essential part of the workshop. It should be treated as an ever-evolving document that participants regularly come back to.
- You might want to encourage participants to share contact details. It helps to build a functioning support group. Oh, and they might want to work on future projects together too.

Say hello to the car park

You might find that there are questions raised in sessions that take the conversation off track. But ignoring them is not an option. The car park solves this. All you need to do is to pin up large piece of paper on the wall and title it 'car park'. Whenever a question is raised that cannot immediately be discussed, ask the participant to write in onto a sticky note. At the end of the day, review the sticky notes and agree next steps. You might want to visit the car park at the start of the day to capture any overnight reflections too.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOPS

Workshop slides

These workshop slides are for use by the workshop facilitator. If you're the facilitator, try to draw on the real-life experiences of the participants. It's more relevant that way.

Roles & responsibilities for activists

NGOs. Government. Partners. Media. The range of organisations that activists encounter is vast. Roles and responsibilities are often undefined. This sheet aims to provide useful guidance and structure for activists interacting with different bodies.

Self-care plan template

This template allows activists to make their own self-care plan.

Certificate template

You can adapt this template to hand out to activists at the end of the workshop.

COMMUNICATIONS

Emotional Wellbeing Film

To hear for yourself how activists found the pilot, watch the film.

Emotional Wellbeing Postcards

These postcards showcase some fabulous activists from the pilot workshop. You could share these with attendees, future donors or just about anyone who is interested in the project.

LESSONS FROM THE PILOT

Selfcare as a much-needed skillset

Feedback showed the value participants placed in learning how to set boundaries and prioritise self-care. Attendees found it useful to listen to each other's experiences and to learn different coping mechanisms.

Support groups have many applications

The session on how to create support groups was really well received. Activists were keen to apply the lessons to their specific projects, sharing ideas of how they could create support groups of survivors, activists and others in the end FGM movement.

Relationships as key to success

Participants fed back that learning about how to develop healthy professional relationships was very helpful. Everyone agreed that healthy relationships remained key to furthering the end FGM movement.

Additional topics

Activists identified additional areas for more learning. They asked for more support on financial management – specifically on how to fundraise and how to negotiate with NGOs.

They also asked for more media training, recognising that developing resilience in handling media requests is very important to the movement.



For more information about the
Emotional Wellbeing Project
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