

Evaluating social change communication training

social change communications (SCC)

We believe that social change communications are an effective ‘lever for change’ to initiate and accelerate progression through stages of social change at all levels, from individual to collective behaviour change. We have trained hundreds of activists, campaigners and community organisations as trainers in social change communications to end FGM across ten of the most affected countries in Africa. These trainers go on to train others, and to apply their skills in addressing the social norms underlying FGM in their communities.

THE GIRL GENERATION ONE WEEK SCC TRAINING APPROACH

- Fosters peer networks and partnerships between end FGM activists and allows local organisations to spearhead strategies to grow the movement at local and national level, without necessarily needing ongoing support from TGG;
- Supports partners to deliver effective SCC to end FGM, and utilise a Do No Harm approach;
- Acts as a platform to harvest and amplify positive stories of change from our trainees and,
- Supports grassroots activation and resource leveraging.

Evaluating scc training

We explored results and lessons from an internal evaluation of our SCC trainings in Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan and the Gambia conducted in 2016. We applied a mixed-method survey which entailed online, self-completed questionnaires; face to face interviews and telephone discussions with selected participants.

We spoke to a sample of 40 of our members. Of these,

- 49% were national NGOs
- 36% were community-based organisations/local NGOs
- Others include international NGOs, government and media

The 40 organisations who participated in the research have a total direct reach of approximately 800,000 people and an indirect reach of approximately 12.4 million people.

In terms of respondents' organisational target populations, 95% of them work with youth. These organisations also work with traditional or religious leaders (51%), grassroots organizations and media (44 %), activists and elders (41%), survivors of FGM (38%), politicians (26%), networks (23%) and Ambassadors (21%). This suggests that our trainees are working for social change through a wide variety of target audiences and influencers.

Results

- ▶ Over 90% of respondents found the social norms and Do No Harm training either extremely or very useful
- ▶ 40 of the organisations directly reach over 800,00 people with their end FGM work
- ▶ 65% of respondents indicated that SCC training has scaled up or improved the effectiveness of their communication to end FGM.
- ▶ 55% were able to demonstrate with specific examples the change they witnessed as a result of the training.
- ▶ 17 respondents indicated that the media has documented their activities and positive stories after the training; these stories have been amplified through five TV shows, seven radio talk shows, 12 social media/blog links.
- ▶ Half of respondents reported implementing the strategies they had developed during the trainings.

RESPONDENTS FEEDBACK

The Do No Harm approach, understanding social norms, and effective message development for community dialogues were ranked highest.

“THIS IS THE BEST TRAINING I HAVE EVER ATTENDED. I WILL TELL MY ORGANIZATION TO CHANGE THE WAY WE WORK”

Some respondents noted that the Do No Harm approach helped them in developing sensitive messages and communication materials that have led to increased engagement by proponents of FGM in their communities. Others noted that understanding social norms and change is crucial for communities to develop relevant and sustainable strategies to end FGM.

Several respondents reported increased participation and reduced backlash while engaging with their communities after the training. Specifically, this was achieved through incorporating learning of the Do No Harm approach, a gradual shift towards factual and contextual message development, strengthened partnerships and growing

“NOW I CAN EVEN TALK TO TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS, YOUTH AND SURVIVORS WITHOUT FEAR OF

confidence in change agents to speak about FGM through conducting step down trainings and facilitating community dialogues.



MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT

In Pokot, Kenya, one trainee built the capacity of 79 local community elders and 45 influential women, transforming community discourse on FGM. From a situation where there was previously no public engagement, the Pokot Council of Elders and women are now able to speak openly about FGM and its effects. As a result, the Pokot Council of Elders made a declaration on ending FGM. According to the respondent, this significant change now requires more resources to support amplification of the Elders' message to the wider community. The Girl Generation will follow up to see where we can offer support to amplify the message.

In Nigeria, one respondent reported that in some communities FGM was considered “a normal way of life [in] which every girl must be initiated into womanhood.” Following the SCC training, community ambassadors were asked to identify 20 individuals from each community to be educated on FGM. A training manual on ending FGM was developed by Safehaven Development Initiative, a TGG member and End FGM Grassroots Grant recipient, and was used to inform awareness raising activities in churches for six weeks. By the end of six weeks, men in the communities were mobilized around the issue of FGM and advocated to the head of the clan that FGM was harmful to girls. This was complemented by some women in the community starting to advocate for the abolition of FGM.

In Kenya, one respondent reported that prior to the SCC training, there was a strong belief in the continuity of FGM among the Maasai community. A step-down SCC training was initiated by the Murua Girls Foundation and Pastoralist Girls Association after they had been trained by The Girl Generation. As a result, they report that the FGM issue is now driven by local youths and community leaders, and there is a notable difference in attitudes about FGM among community members

Looking to the future

KEY CHALLENGES

Several respondents highlighted the following remaining challenges to their work to end FGM, reflecting the fact that ongoing support is required for the movement, and that one week's training, however transformational, cannot resolve the multiple and complex issues they face:

- Resistance from key religious leaders due to fear of drawing away followers who support FGM
- Resistance and disengagement of communities
- Low literacy levels
- A continued hold on to cultural beliefs counterproductive to ending FGM
- Resource constraint to sustain the zeal and drive created to end FGM - the majority of the funding comes through issues adjacent to FGM e.g. sexual reproductive health, gender based violence among others - leading to the ending FGM agenda as under-resourced.

OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN

- ▶ Evaluating the training's contribution to our ultimate goal – a transformation in social norms leading to an end to FGM within a generation – remains a challenge. We are currently investigating supplementary M&E methods to help us strengthen the evidence base for change at scale across The Girl Generation (including the grants programme).
- ▶ We must prioritise finalising learning resources to support the ongoing application of the training, and to making these materials accessible online.
- ▶ Our evaluation approach can be strengthened. We will conduct more in-depth case studies to follow up with some trainees, to understand the processes of change across our results chain more deeply, and what The Girl Generation's contribution to this was.
- ▶ We are unable to assess the quality of cascaded trainings. We know people adapt the training materials and use them in different contexts. We will explore mechanisms through which we can offer more support and training resources, to ensure the highest possible quality of cascaded training.
- ▶ There are several areas that cannot be covered optimally in a week's training. The Girl Generation will support and communicate linkages to other service providers to support local organisations working to end FGM, especially for transferable skills such as advocacy, leadership and proposal writing highlighted by respondents as gaps in their expertise.
- ▶ The end FGM movement is still struggling with lack of financial resources. We will continue to advocate for increased funding to grassroots organisations working to end FGM and to seek additional funding for our End FGM Grassroots Grants Fund