



Working Together to End Female Genital Cutting

STRATEGY 2020 - 2023



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“Every time I speak about FGC, I speak as a survivor of the practice... My daughter will never speak as a survivor”

Seleyian Partoip

End FGC Activist, Founder and Director of Murua Girl Child Education Programme



INTRODUCTION

Every year, 4.1 million girls undergo female genital cutting (FGC)—also known as female genital mutilation (FGM)—in which their genitals are removed or injured for non-medical purposes. FGC is a global issue, which occurs in America and Europe, but it is more common in parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Families are increasingly aware of the harm that is done to their daughters by cutting, and many would prefer to end the practice. Families who would prefer not to have their own daughters cut, often fear that their daughter would be stigmatised, or find it difficult to get married, unless they too have been cut. Because of these persistent social norms, FGC can continue in communities long past the time when most people would prefer it to end.

Our approach is centred on working with grassroots partners to provide communities with the tools they need to make long-lasting and systemic changes to abandon cutting for themselves. Through facilitated open dialogue, the community members develop a shared understanding of the effects of cutting and build trust that their daughters will not be socially disadvantaged if they are not cut.

A social norms approach is the most effective in achieving sustainable community abandonment of FGC.

“My story is one of at least 200 million stories of survivors of this practice globally...This is what spurs me on to create change.”

Veronica Leluata
Project Manager and founding
member of SAFE Samburu and FGC
Survivor



FGC Abandonment Declaration, Kolda, Senegal, 2017 - Clement Tardif

THE IMPACT OF FGC ON GIRLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Female genital cutting is a profound breach of a girl's human rights. [It can have severe, long-lasting effects on physical and mental health.](#) Girls are, on average, less than five years old when they have been cut. Some girls die from infection or other complications. Those who survive may experience a debilitating range of issues including difficulty passing urine and menstrual blood, constant pain, difficulty with sexual intercourse and extreme obstetric complications. Female genital cutting increases the likelihood that a girl will leave school earlier, which on average leads to lower earnings and less control over life-choices including, crucially, marriage and family planning. FGC perpetuates gender norms and the control of women's bodies, aspirations, opportunities and wellbeing.

COVID-19 HAS SET US BACK

Even though prevalence of the practice is on the whole declining, progress is uneven and owing to population growth the actual number of girls being cut will increase. COVID-19 is making this worse as initiatives to reduce cutting are hampered by restrictions on movement, loss of employment and access to education. Girls are more at risk of being cut if they are at home instead of at school, and the economic crisis pushes families to maximise the marriage value of their daughters.

UNFPA [has reported](#) that an additional two million cases of FGC will need to be averted to meet Agenda 2030 as a result of COVID-19's delays to FGC programming.

OUR VISION

A world free from female genital cutting by 2030.

At the moment 4.1 million girls undergo female genital cutting every year. Despite targeted interventions, this number will increase every year because of population growth. We need to significantly scale up and accelerate our efforts, using identified effective practices to guide our approach. To achieve this, we identified four pillars that will anchor our strategy and underpin all of our efforts

1. Increase resources and commitments to end female genital cutting

2. Support communities to end female genital cutting

3. Enable evidence creation and its effective use to accelerate an end to female genital cutting

4. Strategically strengthen our organisation to effectively support an end to female genital cutting

We know that globally, positive changes to end the practice of FGC are happening, from communities declaring abandonment to increased support and commitment to the issue from national governments and policy makers.

Everyone has an important role to play in ending FGC. Ending cutting can't be achieved by one organisation alone. It requires a movement of organisations, activists, politicians, ambassadors and leaders at all levels.

OUR VALUES

Our values inform our thoughts, words, and actions. They guide the way that we work, and how we interact with each other, survivors, partners, and other stakeholders. We believe that living and working according to these key values will allow us to work with integrity and achieve meaningful impact.



WE ARE
COLLABORATIVE



WE ARE
**OPEN AND
ACCOUNTABLE**



WE ARE
RESPECTFUL



WE ACHIEVE
**TRANSFORMATIONAL
CHANGE**

WHAT ORCHID PROJECT IS DOING TO END FGC

PARTNERING WITH GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

We partner with pioneering grassroots organisations to design and deliver effective community led programmes based on non-judgemental community dialogue that aim to shift social norms and end cutting. We facilitate local, national and global meetings to share best practice, encourage experience exchange and make recent relevant research accessible. We advocate at the international level for sustained investment to the sector.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

We support communities to build shared understanding about the effects of cutting and to build trust that their daughter will not be socially disadvantaged if she is not cut. Our partners facilitate sustained community dialogue on the impacts of cutting, human rights and social norms. In order to effectively shift the social norm holding cutting in place, it is essential to involve the whole community in discussion. [Our approach](#) recognises that each context is unique and FGC is practiced in different ways. We carry out Knowledge Sharing Workshops based on 'UNICEF's Six Elements of Abandonment' - a best practice model for effective programming to end FGC. The Six Elements model allows us to be flexible and can be applied to different contexts.

SARAH'S STORY

September 2019 - Through traditional song and dance, laced with messaging about human rights and female genital cutting, Sarah and 17 other performers educate communities in Loita Hills about female genital cutting. After performances, the team talk widely with the community – from circumcisers, to young boys, parents and girls, across each region, to share knowledge and promote dialogue for change.

"Our message is that we are encouraging people to change one part of Maasai culture, but not give up all of what makes us proud to be Maasai", Sarah says.

Sarah believes that together with the men and women of the community who support her, the practice of female genital cutting will end in a way that actually strengthens and enriches their Maasai culture. S.A.F.E. Kenya has seen over 30% of families adopting an Alternative Rite of Passage – which means that girls graduate to womanhood without undergoing female genital cutting: instead milk is ceremonially poured over their thighs. As a result, community members feel their culture is preserved and respected. The result is a permanent end to the practice of cutting. Cutting in Loita Hills has decreased so far from 98% to 78%. We continue to work with S.A.F.E. Kenya and the Maasai community to reduce this still further, with the aim of eliminating cutting altogether, for this and all future generations.



SAFE Maa performance tour, Kenya, 2017 - S.A.F.E. Kenya

DRIVING GLOBAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Through concerted advocacy we have also seen great success in encouraging global governments to resource work to end FGC and helped to secure the first ever governmental commitment to ending FGC through the UK's Development Department. We have also successfully advocated for the inclusion of indicator 5.3.2 under the UN's [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG) which focuses on gender equality and the elimination of all harmful practices including female genital cutting. We are working to convene the sector and are a founding member of the Global Platform for Action to End FGM/C and have developed a global [Call to Action to End FGM/C](#) which is endorsed by over 80 organisations with the input of over 950 grassroots activists. We have also published a policy briefing on the impact of [COVID-19 on female genital cutting](#), and trends resulting from the pandemic in 2020 providing much needed research and evidence where it was lacking.

But, there is so much more to do to reach our ambition of seeing a world free from female genital cutting by 2030.

Globally over 24,000 communities have publicly abandoned the cut.



FGC Abandonment Declaration, Kolda, Senegal, 2017 - Clement Tardif

“It is crucial that they don’t tell people to stop or show judgement; they must create a non-judgemental open dialogue with people to ensure that communities are heard and can discuss, and so they don’t feel that external concepts are being imposed. This approach can then lead to communities choosing to end cutting”

Muse Jama Essa
Programme Manager for Women Rehabilitation and Development Association (WORDA), Somaliland

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Based on our understanding of what works to end the practice of FGC, we have set out four key strategic priorities to guide our work for the next 3 years.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:

ACCELERATE RESOURCES AND COMMITMENT TO END FGC AT ALL LEVELS

For progress to be meaningful under SDG indicator 5.3.2, global momentum and increased levels of resources and commitments to end FGC are necessary. In recent years we have made significant progress including President Kenyatta declaring his commitment to end FGC in Kenya by 2022, the development of a National Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C in Ethiopia by 2024, and the UK Government's global leadership on funding the African-led Movement to end FGM/C. However, there is still much more to be done. We know that rising population levels in high prevalence countries means that while the prevalence of FGC may be going down, the number of girls being cut is increasing every year.

At Orchid Project, we believe in a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to ending FGC that recognises that everyone has a role to play. We need to encourage philanthropic donors and governments to fund interventions which will end FGC either directly or as part of integrated programming on education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, or gender based violence. We need governments in practicing countries to make brave commitments to end cutting because their underlying constituencies support this. We will work in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders to strengthen, accelerate and scale an end to FGC globally.

We recognise FGC as a form of gender based violence and a violation of the human rights of women and girls. We therefore believe ending FGC requires comprehensive integration of FGC interventions into broader development and crisis response and recovery, including gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights programming.

Under this strategic priority we will:

- Strengthen movements to end FGC, including championing youth, grassroots and survivor leadership
- Increase the number of donors who are supporting an end to FGC
- Evidence improved implementation of law and policies to protect girls from FGC in two priority countries



ASIA NETWORK

The Asia Network to End FGM/C is a collaboration between Orchid Project and our partner, Malaysia-based regional feminist NGO, the Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW). Together we announced our support for the development of a network to end FGM/C in Asia at Women Deliver 2019.

Through a five-month consultation in 2019 with activists, civil society organisations, researchers and survivors from across the Asia region, we identified strong support for a regional network bringing together different actors working on FGM/C. There was also a rallying call to bring much needed attention, prioritisation, and adequate resourcing to the issue across Asia.

Our Network now counts over 100 members across 13 countries in the Asia region. Our members are activists, civil society organisations, survivors, researchers, medical professionals, journalists and religious leaders. We are committed to working collaboratively together to promote the abandonment of all forms of FGM/C across the Asia region.





COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDING FOR FGC ACTIVISTS

In 2020 Orchid Project joined the Global Resilience Fund, a donor consortium of 28 philanthropic foundations and organisations funding young women-led organisations on a range of human rights issues affected by COVID-19. The goal in Orchid Project joining the fund was to channel funding to grassroots organisations immediately so that they were better equipped to adapt to the pandemic. Our hope is to ensure that organisations working on ending FGC are automatically included in future emergency funding and to raise awareness of FGC among a new group of donors who care about broader gender equality issues.

By the end of 2020, the group had already disbursed \$1bn USD to activists and organisations working on a range of human rights issues including organisations and activists working on ending FGC.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:

SUPPORT COMMUNITIES TO END FGC

We know that FGC happens within the community, and it is therefore necessary for adequate support to be focused at this level. FGC is widely recognised as a social norm, held in place by gender inequality. Families choose to cut their daughters because it is expected and they want them to be accepted into the wider community. Our approach, grounded in relevant evidence and research, is focused on sharing knowledge, community dialogue and engaging the whole community in discussion on FGC, human rights and gender equality. Through dialogue we see that communities re-evaluate the value of FGC and take collective action to end the practice. We see this as a replicable and scalable model for community-led change. We are committed to continuing our support for community-led interventions that drive forward positive change and reduce the prevalence of FGC.

While successful interventions have led to a reduction in the prevalence of FGC, the number of girls at risk of being cut each year is in fact increasing due to population growth. We know we therefore need to significantly scale up and accelerate the change at community level if we are to see an end to FGC by 2030. Orchid Project is committed to working collaboratively with others to scale models for change.

Under this strategic priority we will:

- Work towards a measurable reduction in FGC prevalence in targeted communities we work in by 2023
- Establish innovative and diverse programmatic or advocacy partnerships in all priority countries by 2022
- Develop and test replicable scale-up approaches to ending FGC by 2030



Participants sharing examples of their work at a knowledge sharing workshop in Kisumu, Kenya, 2019 - Orchid Project

KNOWLEDGE SHARING PROGRAMME

Sharing knowledge and best practice driven by relevant research and data is paramount to effectively ending FGC. Orchid Project facilitates knowledge sharing workshops supporting grassroots organisations to learn, share and exchange their own experiences, challenges and solutions when working to end FGC.

Our recent collaboration with Mannion Daniels on a project funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has resulted in a series of virtual sharing sessions on social norms and gender norms, each session bringing together over 30 participants from across Africa to expand their knowledge, share their experiences and consider how to adapt their approaches to incorporate learnings.



KENYA PROGRAMME

Orchid Project has partnered with COVAW and S.A.F.E. Kenya in a consortium led project over three years to accelerate FGC abandonment amongst the Maasai and Samburu communities in Kenya. Through a combination of community dialogue forums engaging the whole community in discussion about how FGC can end, complemented by radio shows and performance tours to raise awareness of FGC, our consortium is committed to reducing FGC prevalence rates within the Maasai and Samburu communities by 10-19% points by April 2023.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

ENABLE EVIDENCE CREATION AND ITS EFFECTIVE USE TO ACCELERATE AN END TO FGC

We know there are significant gaps in evidence and research on FGC, with FGC prevalence data available for 30 out of 90+ countries where the practice takes place. For the sector to accelerate resources and commitments to end FGC and accelerate change within the communities, there needs to be a stronger evidence base of what works to end cutting. Orchid Project recognises that policy makers, donors and champions require tried and tested models for FGC abandonment in order to channel their investments towards the most effective approaches.

Orchid Project aims to play a role in building models for FGC abandonment, based on evidence and best practice, which can be used to guide donor investments and achieve impact in line with global commitments. Orchid has an appetite to deepen its own understanding of drivers and solutions for ending FGC, so that it can amplify and share successful models and catalyse change at scale. Furthermore, Orchid Project will use its influence to encourage others, from community based organisations to professional networks, academia and relevant institutions at the national and global levels, to innovate and add high-quality evidence to the global body of knowledge on FGC abandonment.

Under this strategic priority we will:

- Establish and implement a strategic research and evidence roadmap for Orchid Project's contribution to the FGC sector
- Cement and elevate Orchid Project's position as a thought leader and an NGO expert on ending FGC through strategic comms, advocacy and policy



COVID-19 POLICY BRIEFING

From March 2020, early in the global COVID-19 crisis, reports began to emerge from our partners and allies that they were witnessing elevated rates of FGC. Many reports emphasising the rising 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women failed to consider the impact of the pandemic on FGC. In response, Orchid Project began conducting interviews and surveys with over 40 of our grassroots partners and allies across 18 countries in West Africa, East Africa and Asia to explore the impacts of COVID-19 on the practice of FGC and the organisations and activists working to end it.

Our findings documented the impact that lockdowns and 'stay at home' orders were having both on efforts to prevent FGC and on support services for survivors of the practice. Based on our evidence, we were able to make submissions on the impact of COVID-19 on FGC to various UN agencies, governments and donors. [Our report](#) has been referenced by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and was included in her statement to the UN General Assembly on 1 October 2020 for the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action. The findings were also included in the UN Secretary General's report on progress on the elimination of FGC.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:

BE A STRONG AND STRATEGIC ORGANISATION TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT AN END TO FGC

We are a dynamic and professional team committed to ending FGC by 2030. We know the value of having a strong and supported team in order to achieve our mission. To that end, we are committed to investing in the development and wellbeing of our team and it is our ambition to ensure our team is reflective of those most affected by the issue, largely black, brown, and indigenous people of colour.

To end FGC by 2030, we as a sector and Orchid Project need to significantly increase the amount of resourcing available to scale initiatives to end the practice. We are committed to raising awareness of the issue with new and diverse donors, and working to secure more institutional funding for the movement such that we can create sustained impact and mobilise others to join the movement.

As a growing organisation, we recognise the importance of having systems and processes in place in order to most effectively and efficiently manage diverse funding and ensure transparency and accountability. We are committed to strengthening our own internal infrastructure and supporting our partners to do the same. Orchid Project has a zero tolerance policy for staff and organisational representatives committing harm. We strongly believe that everyone we work with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Under this strategic priority we will:

- Develop an HR framework to foster a diverse and inclusive organisation
- Strengthen internal systems for successfully managing multi-year diverse funding
- Establish a future-focused fundraising model

OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

Recognising the importance of having a strong, diverse leadership to guide us in achieving our mission to ending FGC, Orchid Project appointed two new trustees in April 2020; a trustee from a country affected by FGC in the global south and a Trustee youth representative with experience in women's rights.

We have launched an internal anti-racism working group and started reviewing all HR processes and developing a coherent framework, with a focus on anti-racism. In 2021 we are hiring two positions in Nairobi and taking steps to recruit more black and indigenous people of colour.



SECURING INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL FUNDING

In February 2020 we secured funding from the Human Dignity Foundation for a three-year project to accelerate an end to female genital cutting in the Maasai and Samburu communities in Kenya. This project has also attracted co-funders who have never before donated to the field of ending FGC so we are pleased to bring new donors into the sector.

Thank you for reading our
2020 - 2023 strategy

You can work with us to end female genital cutting

Over the next two years, we can make major progress toward our ambition of a world free from female genital cutting. But we need you at the heart of this transformative change.



Here's how you can help



DONATE

Without your support we cannot make our plans to end cutting a reality.

Please visit orchidproject.org/donate to make a gift



ADVOCATE FOR A GLOBAL END TO CUTTING

Lend your voice, tell your friends and be an active supporter!

Visit orchidproject.org to find out more



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info@orchidproject.org



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