

PRESS RELEASE



Female Genital Cutting around the world: 27 survivors and activists create videos to share their stories

Digital Stories to be released on February 6, 2020 onwards

On February 6, 2020, the **International Day of Zero Tolerance towards Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting** (FGM/C), [Sahiyo](#) and [StoryCenter](#) will release **‘Voices to End FGM/C’**, a series of **27 short videos** addressing FGM/C, created by survivors and advocates from countries and communities around the world.

‘Voices to End FGM/C’ supports women and men impacted by this issue to tell their own stories, through their own perspectives, in their own words. Participants receive training on how to create videos at workshops held either in-person or via webinars.

The program was first launched in May 2018 as ‘Sahiyo Stories’, when Sahiyo and StoryCenter hosted a residential workshop on digital storytelling for nine FGM/C survivors in Berkeley, California, in the United States. The videos created at that workshop, which have been screened at various events transnationally, can be viewed [here](#).

In 2019, Sahiyo Stories was expanded into the Voices to End FGM/C program, under which two residential workshops were conducted in the U.S. and one webinar-based workshop was conducted for 10 FGM/C survivors living around the world.

Most participants in these workshops had not previously shared their personal experiences with FGM/C. They received primary training from StoryCenter, which helped them write their own scripts and curate their own photographs and videos clips to make the finished videos. Some participants also worked in partnership with illustrators/visual artists to aid in the storytelling.

The 27 new digital stories emerging from these workshops will be released on February 6, 2020 on Sahiyo’s Youtube page at <http://bit.ly/VoicesFGMVideos>.

Contact Mariya Taher at mariya@sahiyo.com for interviews and more information.

What is FGM/C?

FGM/C is the practice of cutting or altering parts of a girl’s/woman’s genitalia for cultural, non-medical purposes. It is recognized by the United Nations as a human rights violation. Contrary to popular belief, FGM/C is not just an ‘African’ problem – it is prevalent in countries

and communities globally. At least **3.9 million girls worldwide** are at risk of being cut every year.

FGM/C is currently illegal in 59 countries, according to the [UNFPA](#). India, Sri Lanka, Mali and Sierra Leone are a few of many countries with no laws against the practice. Some countries, such as Benin, have made FGM/C illegal and seen a decrease in practice rates.

At the 2019 [Women Deliver](#) conference in Vancouver, over a dozen organizations from around the world came together to develop a global call to action: [to end FGM/C by 2030](#). This included recognizing the global nature of FGM/C.

Sahiyo has been working to end FGM/C in Asian communities around the world since 2015. StoryCenter, a US-based organization, specializes in supporting individuals and organizations in using storytelling and participatory media for reflection, education, and social change. Both organizations believe that storytelling can play a powerful role in raising awareness. By bringing international women together to share their stories, 'Global Voices to End FGM/C' has taken an essential step forward in breaking the silence on the global nature of FGM/C.

Quotes about 'Global Voices to End FGM/C':

"I believe that to create change, we have to speak about the harms in our community -- and storytelling allows us to do that in a safe and non-judgemental way. The online Voices to End FGM/C digital storytelling workshop has allowed survivors from around the world to connect to each other in a way that truly shows that FGC is a global issue requiring a global response."

~ **Mariya Taher**, Sahiyo Co-founder, US Network to End FGM/C Steering Committee Member, Voices to End FGM/C Program Director, and FGM/C Survivor

"Participating in this storytelling process was for me to be audacious, heal, and denounce how women's bodies are subjected to violence in many different ways. To share this process with other women was a beautiful process of collective empowerment that allowed us not to be invisible and do so while using our imagination, art, poetry, music, colours."

~ **Sunera Sadicali**, Global Voices Storyteller and FGM/C survivor

"StoryCenter remains deeply committed to supporting women's rights storytelling, through our Silence Speaks program. The partnership with Sahiyo on Voices to End FGM/C is rooted in the importance of creating safe environments where storytellers can forge new understandings of their own life experiences, repair fractured relationships with family members and other loved ones, and establish meaningful, new connections with their peers who are speaking out. Our hope is that collectively, these stories will influence conversations, community action, and policies in ways that ensure future generations of girls are spared."

~ **Amy Hill**, Silence Speaks Director, StoryCenter