Eliminating female genital mutilation by 2030 through social movements
Movements matter because the people most affected by injustice join hands, organize themselves and act together for the change they seek – and through their collective power and passionate vision of a better world, they create deep and sustainable change.¹

— SRILATHA BATLIWALA
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Background and Purpose</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Concept and Approaches</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Global Trends in Social Movements</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Key Considerations for the Joint Programme</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Guidance on Strategies and Approaches</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Empower Adolescent Girls to Eliminate FGM Through Collective Action</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Support Women- and Youth-led Organizations in Building Coalitions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Build Social Movements in the Context of FGM Elimination</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 1. Practical Resources and Further Reading</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annex 2. Examples of Movement Building and Adolescent Girls' Empowerment</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endnotes</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Acronyms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSE</td>
<td>comprehensive sexuality education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>civil society organization</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>female genital mutilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>Gender Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>gender-based violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAC</td>
<td>Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQI</td>
<td>lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRHR</td>
<td>sexual and reproductive health and rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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1. Introduction

Since its launch in 2008, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (the Joint Programme) has actively engaged women and youth in mobilizing collective action for the elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM). With opposition to the practice doubling over the past two decades, especially among adolescent girls and women in FGM-prevalent countries, Phase III of the Joint Programme prioritized gender-transformative approaches that empower adolescent girls and women to exercise agency, including their right to be healthy and free from gender discrimination and violence, including FGM.

Box 1: Growing opposition to FGM among adolescent girls

In countries with nationally representative data on FGM, 70 per cent of girls and women are opposed to the continuation of FGM. Adolescent girls (aged 15–19 years) are more likely than older women to oppose the practice. In countries such as Egypt, Guinea and Sierra Leone, adolescent girls are at least 50 per cent more likely than older women to want FGM to stop. With adolescent girls more likely to oppose the continuation of the practice, this presents an opportunity for building social movements to end FGM.

Phase IV of the Joint Programme – Delivering the Global Promise to End FGM by 2030 – builds on Phase III’s achievements in fostering girls’ and women’s empowerment while recognizing that gender-transformative change also entails adolescent girls and women acquiring collective power to change policies, institutions and social/gender norms that perpetuate FGM. Under Phase IV, the Joint Programme prioritizes movement building by expanding purposeful partnerships and fostering cooperation with women- and youth-led organizations and feminist and youth movements, as well as by enhancing adolescent girls’ agency and capacities to influence social change and amplify their voices on issues related to FGM through innovative and safe platforms and spaces.
Feminist movements have played a central role in placing FGM at the top of the global agenda for human rights and gender equality. Before the 1990s, the international community did not view violence against women and girls, including FGM, as a major issue. If violence against women and girls was recognized as an issue at all, it was seen as under the purview of national governments, not a subject of international law. Violence against women and girls was also widely viewed as a private act or a domestic matter carried out by private individuals. For this reason, FGM was initially placed beyond the scope of international human rights law. In the 1990s, the global feminist movement made significant inroads in addressing FGM. FGM was brought into the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and thus under international human rights law. In 1994, the international community addressed the human rights implications of FGM at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. In adopting its Programme of Action, 179 States agreed to take measures to abandon FGM. The international community again addressed the human rights implications of FGM at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. It is no coincidence that countries with the strongest feminist movements tend to have more comprehensive policies on violence against women and girls than those with weaker or non-existent movements.

In tackling global trends that threaten to impede progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5.3 (the elimination of FGM by 2030) – such as rising global poverty, chronic underfunding of FGM programmes, the global backlash against gender equality and a growing number of FGM-prevalent countries experiencing climate change emergencies, conflict and persistent fragility – movement building presents a strategic approach for the Joint Programme to accelerate the elimination of FGM.
2. Background and purpose

Both UNFPA and UNICEF have prioritized partnering with and strengthening feminist and youth organizations and movements in their strategic plans for 2022–2025. UNFPA’s strategic plan commits to institutionalizing accountability towards gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices by strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs) and feminist movements with specific attention to women- and youth-led groups and organizations. Under its Gender Action Plan (GAP), UNICEF intends to expand its partnerships with feminist organizations and networks led by women and girls, raising their voices as agents of change and partners.

The purpose of this technical note is to:

1. Develop a common understanding of the key concepts and approaches related to social movements and movement building.

2. Provide practical guidance on designing and implementing effective interventions and programmes that enhance adolescent girls’ agency, including collective action for social change, and build coalitions and movements to eliminate FGM.

This technical note draws on a review of academic and grey literature that looked at social movements and adolescent girls’ empowerment. Section 3 provides an overview of key concepts and approaches related to social movements and adolescent girls’ agency. Section 4 shares global trends related to social movements that present opportunities for the Joint Programme to engage in movement building in the context of FGM elimination. Section 5 provides key considerations for the Joint Programme in supporting movement building. Section 6 shares practical steps for enhancing adolescent girls’ agency, supporting women- and youth-led organizations in building coalitions and engaging in movement building within the Joint Programme. Section 7 includes monitoring, evaluation, learning tools and approaches for measuring strength in social movements. Annex 1 provides practical resources and further reading on social movements and FGM elimination, and Annex 2 is a compilation of programme examples.

One of the most vital ways we sustain ourselves is by building communities of resistance, places where we know we are not alone.

— BELL HOOKS
3. Concepts and approaches

Provided below is a description of the key concepts and approaches used in this technical note.

**Social movements** may be defined as “a set of people with a shared experience of injustice, who organize themselves to build their collective power and leadership, develop a shared agenda for change, which they pursue through collective action, with some continuity over time.”

Social movements generally consist of different actors. In addition to movement-building organizations, social movements also have allied organizations and service-providing organizations. Table 1 provides a summary of movement actors and their potential role in the elimination of FGM.

It should be noted that not all movements are ‘progressive’ or committed to achieving gender equality and social justice (i.e., equal access to rights, resources and opportunities) as evidenced by the anti-gender movement that opposes gender equality, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) rights (i.e., same-sex marriage, transgender rights), reproductive rights, women’s economic and political participation, and policies that protect women from GBV, among others.

**Movement building** is “a process of organizing and mobilizing communities and/or constituencies to respond to common problems and concerns; the organizing process involves developing a shared analysis of why the problem exists, a common vision and agenda for change, and short and long term strategies; movement-building also requires that those involved define shared principles and mechanisms for communication, roles, responsibilities and all of the internal governance of the movement itself.” This definition captures a critical issue related to movement building, and – although there are many ways in which social movements come about, and the historical roots of movements differ across regions and countries – in most cases, movements are built through “active and deliberate investment of labor, thought and resources over time to develop movement consciousness, grow and retain membership, and nourish movement structures.”

It is important to distinguish between movement building and coalition building. Not all processes of organizing and mobilizing communities and constituencies will result in social movements. Sometimes, coalitions are built. Coalitions are organizations connected with varying degrees of cohesion and closeness around a particular change agenda, acting collectively to implement that agenda. Social movements seek to challenge power relations that produce social inequality. For this reason, movements are distinctive from coalitions because they are sustained rather than episodic, multisectoral as opposed to special interest, frame their change agendas broadly (e.g., ending GBV) rather than on a single issue (e.g., ending FGM), and are community and constituency-based and seek structural change in addition to policy change. Table 2 provides an overview of the key differences between movement building and coalition building. While it is important to distinguish between movement building and coalition building, the Joint Programme should engage in coalition building as part of a process that supports movement building.

Intersectionality is the idea that disadvantage is conditioned by multiple interacting systems of discrimination and oppression based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and racial background, socioeconomic status, immigration status, national origin, abilities and disabilities. Intersectional movement building promotes the integration and cross-fertilization of social movements, the strengthening of allyship and solidarity across movements. Intersectional movement building also marks a critical shift away from single-issue organizing.
Social movement-building organizations exist independently of or outside the movements they build or support. They are established before the movement itself is set up and usually play a critical role in the emergence of the movement but are not created by it.

GROOTS Kenya is a national movement of grass-roots women-led community-based groups and self-help groups in Kenya (https://grootskenya.org/about-groots-kenya/). GROOTS Kenya has invested in nearly 2,500 women-led groups across 14 counties. Founded in 1995 after the fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, GROOTS Kenya began as a response to the lack of visibility of grass-roots women in development processes and decision-making forums that affect them and their communities. GROOTS is a stakeholder in Kenya’s road map for ending female genital mutilation (FGM) by 2026.

Yewwu-Yewwi PLF (Pour la Libération de la Femme) was established in Senegal in 1984. Yewwu-Yewwi engaged in advocacy for women’s rights, including ending violence against women and girls and FGM, that led to revisions in the Senegalese family law code in support of women’s rights. Yewwu-Yewwi never implemented projects, nor did it receive funding from donors. Instead, it focused on mobilizing constituents, conducting fundraisers, organizing international meetings with other African women’s associations and leading public advocacy campaigns on women’s rights in Senegal.

Social movement allies are formal and non-formal organizations such as political parties, academic groups, institutions, autonomous feminist groups, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors and the United Nations.

The MenEngage Africa Alliance Regional Campaign on Ending FGM works in partnership with regional and national women and youth networks to mobilize men and boys in the elimination of FGM and advocate for the implementation of legislation banning FGM. MenEngage members strive to work in partnership with feminist movements and commits to centring gender justice, women’s rights, LGBTQI rights and anti-oppression movements.

Service-providing organizations strictly provide services and are not engaged in any other strategies that explicitly identify them as movement building or as movement allies. They are still core constituents of movements but are not builders/supporters of the movements.

Service providers include health-care providers, teachers, social workers and law enforcement and actors in the justice sector.

### Table 1. Social movement actors and potential role in the elimination of FGM

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<th>SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTORS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
<th>ROLE IN MOVEMENT BUILDING</th>
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| Social movement-building organizations exist independently of or outside the movements they build or support. They are established before the movement itself is set up and usually play a critical role in the emergence of the movement but are not created by it. | GROOTS Kenya is a national movement of grass-roots women-led community-based groups and self-help groups in Kenya (https://grootskenya.org/about-groots-kenya/). GROOTS Kenya has invested in nearly 2,500 women-led groups across 14 counties. Founded in 1995 after the fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, GROOTS Kenya began as a response to the lack of visibility of grass-roots women in development processes and decision-making forums that affect them and their communities. GROOTS is a stakeholder in Kenya’s road map for ending female genital mutilation (FGM) by 2026. | • Critical awareness building on gender and power and FGM  
• Mobilizing and organizing adolescent girls, women and youth, including survivors of FGM  
• Capacity building of feminist and youth movement leaders and members  
• Providing strategic support, for example, by analyzing FGM policies and legislation  
• Providing convening spaces and networking opportunities  
• Advocating on behalf of girls and women at risk of or affected by FGM  
• Developing advocacy or representation mechanisms to interact with other movements and governments for advocacy purposes |
| Social movement allies are formal and non-formal organizations such as political parties, academic groups, institutions, autonomous feminist groups, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors and the United Nations. | The MenEngage Africa Alliance Regional Campaign on Ending FGM works in partnership with regional and national women and youth networks to mobilize men and boys in the elimination of FGM and advocate for the implementation of legislation banning FGM. MenEngage members strive to work in partnership with feminist movements and commits to centring gender justice, women’s rights, LGBTQI rights and anti-oppression movements. | • Providing opportunity-specific collaboration rather than ongoing relational support |
| Service-providing organizations strictly provide services and are not engaged in any other strategies that explicitly identify them as movement building or as movement allies. They are still core constituents of movements but are not builders/supporters of the movements. | Service providers include health-care providers, teachers, social workers and law enforcement and actors in the justice sector. | • Providing prevention, protection and response services to girls and women at risk of or affected by FGM such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, child protection, social protection and legal assistance |
Most social movements have long-term visions and build power and capacity over many years before achieving major victories through policy reforms and/or structural shifts.  

Coalitions do not have a long-term constituency or vision in place. Once a policy is in place, a coalition disbands.

Movement building requires a long-term focus and long-term investments, as movements pivot from issue to issue in alignment with their vision.

Coalition building on its own is not movement building. Coalition building is a tool that can be used by social movement actors to strengthen a movement.

Movements address social injustice more broadly (i.e., feminist movements that focus on ending GBV including FGM) rather than tackling a single issue. While coalition-building goals are as varied as coalitions, they tend to work towards influencing or developing public policy, usually around a specific issue.

As previously stated, feminist movements have historically played a critical role in advancing the elimination of FGM. During the 1990s, a strong, united, transnational feminist movement successfully mobilized support for the elimination of FGM, including the introduction of normative and policy frameworks, and national resources dedicated to ending the practice.

Like feminist movements, youth movements have been active for decades and are some of the most powerful drivers of social change, pushing path-breaking progress on issues such as political accountability, climate justice and gender equality. While the Joint Programme has supported youth organizations and coalitions, youth movements are emerging and adding to existing movements, coalitions and spaces that are focused on the elimination of FGM.

With youth movements set to be protagonists of systemic change in the next decade, cross-movement collaboration, building shared change agendas with feminist movements and allyship are vital to movement building in the context of FGM elimination. According to a 2020 research report by Oxfam that explored how to better support youth change agendas and collaborate with youth movements to achieve transformative social change, youth want to live in a world that ends impunity for GBV and dismantles social norms, practices and policies that perpetuate gender inequality. For this reason, partnerships between feminist and youth movements are important. The Joint Programme should prioritize outreach, mutual learning and collaborative work between youth and feminist movements. Combining youth and feminist voices and leadership enhances the Joint Programme’s efforts to achieve systemic change and engage governments, both for scale and for shifting social/gender norms.
As an example, Eastern European feminist activists have been building intersectional movements to counter the anti-gender movement that has rolled back policies and legislation that protect women’s rights or closed gender studies departments at universities. GBV and women’s reproductive rights organizations have joined forces with pro-democracy, LGBTQI rights and immigrant rights organizations to present a unified countermovement against the anti-gender movement.

Allyship means providing support for and promoting the rights, representation and inclusion of those who are furthest behind. An ally uses their privilege and power to speak out against discrimination and oppression, and advocate for those who are disadvantaged. For example, led by MenEngage Africa, a member of the global MenEngage Alliance, men’s organizations have joined the call to end FGM. Men and boys are using their voice and privilege to advocate for gender equality and ending GBV and FGM, recognizing that public spaces are ‘masculinized’.

Adolescent girls’ engagement with social movements is largely underexplored in academic literature. Studies that do explore adolescent girls’ civic engagement tend to focus on their potential as future activists. A focus on high-profile adolescent girl activists such as Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani advocate of girls’ education and the youngest-ever recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize, and Greta Thunberg, a Swedish environmental activist who is known for challenging world leaders to take immediate action for climate change, tends to overlook many “everyday ways” in which adolescent girls are “gradually and subtly negotiating more opportunities for themselves in their communities” including through collective action that challenges FGM as a harmful practice.

Engaging in movement building that is grounded in adolescent girls’ leadership requires recognizing that adolescent girls, especially those furthest behind, often lack the resources to participate in or lead social movements. Lack of resources includes limited opportunities for participation in life skills or comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) programmes; unequal gendered distribution of unpaid care and domestic work that limits girls’ time for learning, personal development and growth; or girls’ limited mobility. They may also face hierarchical relations of power with adults and systemic discrimination due to their gender, sexual orientation, race, economic status, immigration status, national origin and ability, which can also affect their participation in collective action.

Adolescent girls’ empowerment plays a critical role in their engagement in collective action. To be empowered, adolescent girls must have their human rights realized, with equitable and inclusive access to human, social, productive and developmental resources and opportunities (assets). Adolescent girls must have the critical awareness and agency to grow, protect and utilize these assets and make informed choices. They must have the right and opportunities to articulate their concerns and hopes in matters that affect them (voice) and the means and supportive environment to safely and meaningfully engage (participate) in collective action.

**Box 3: Why focus on adolescent girls?**

Adolescent girls are more likely to oppose the continuation of FGM, and they are directly affected by FGM. As a result, adolescent girls’ engagement in social movements to end FGM is critical.
4. Global trends in social movements

There are three global trends in social movements that present opportunities for the Joint Programme in supporting movement building in the context of FGM elimination:

1. **The recent explosion in feminist movements:** In the absence of effective entry points to policy processes due to shrinking civic spaces, feminist movements in several countries are building and mobilizing grass-roots capacities in an unprecedented manner. The #MeToo movement gives voice to many silence breakers, uncovering abuse and vulnerability and challenging men in positions of power and authority. #MeToo has managed to manifest itself as a transnational feminist movement because it has allowed activists in distinct spaces and localities to take ownership of the varying manifestations of #MeToo. In Latin America, the #NiUnaMenos (Not one [woman] less) movement has shed light on femicide, violence against women and girls and women’s right to bodily autonomy and safe access to abortions. In India, as well as mobilizing large protests and contributing to legal change, the #IwillGoOut campaign created a new coalition of feminist activists and organizations on social media. The #IwillGoOut campaign encouraged women and girls to reclaim public and digital spaces in India.

2. **Youth activists have been successful in transnational digital civic engagement:** Much like feminist activism, across different countries, transnational digital civic engagement has been characterized by a high level of youth activism. Many of today’s youth have taken to digital spaces to develop their civic identities and express political stances in creative ways,
claiming agency that may not be afforded to them in traditional civic spaces. The rise of the Internet in the 1990s offered social movements a new way to mobilize support. The consolidation of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, created an additional platform for activists. Youth have taken to digital spaces to develop their civic identities and claim agency in a way that may not be afforded to them in traditional civic spaces, and these digital spaces provide a low-barrier-to-entry canvas for young people to create content that is potentially vastly scalable. For youth movements, organizing on the Internet has created a particular kind of activism as well as new ideas and practices that are linked to participation and collective identity.

3. Momentum generated by ICPD+25 and the Generation Equality Forum: In 2019, the Nairobi Summit ICPD+25 convened over 8,300 individuals representing governments, civil society, youth, the private sector, communities, international institutions and faith-based organizations, among others, from 170 countries to affirm support for reproductive health and rights. Over 1,200 commitments were made by governments, organizations and individuals to work towards the ‘three zeros’ – zero unmet need for contraception, zero preventable maternal deaths and zero violence or harmful practices against women and girls. ICPD+25 builds on the optimism generated following the adoption of the Programme of Action in 1994 in Cairo, when 179 governments recognized reproductive health and rights, as well as women’s empowerment and gender equality, as cornerstones of population and development programmes. In 2021, the Generation Equality Forum concluded with bold gender equality commitments and the launch of a global 5-year action journey to accelerate gender equality by 2026. The Generation Equality Forum’s agenda will be underwritten by nearly US$40 billion of confirmed investments as well as ambitious policy and programme commitments made by 440 CSOs and 94 youth-led organizations. Lack of financing is widely understood to be a major reason for slow progress in advancing gender equality and in enacting the women’s rights agenda of the milestone 1995 Beijing Conference. The momentum generated by ICPD+25 and the Generation Equality Forum presents a key moment for movement building towards gender equality.
5. Key considerations for the Joint Programme

While social movements can be a catalyst for social change by shifting policies, legislation and institutional structures as well as social/gender norms and societal narratives, there are risks and challenges that the Joint Programme must consider in engaging in movement building:

1. **Not all contexts are conducive to movement building:** Prior to social movement building, countries in the Joint Programme should not only conduct a situational analysis of the potential risks, benefits and costs in engaging with movements, but also lay the groundwork for deciding whether a social movement approach is feasible based on the specific context, or which social movements to engage with. The Joint Programme needs to think through, carefully, risk management and security for both activists and staff.

2. **Risk assessments, child safeguarding and ‘do no harm’ must be a top priority:** Adolescent girls’ meaningful participation requires systematic attention to child safeguarding.\(^{57}\) Child safeguarding refers to proactive measures taken to limit direct and indirect collateral risks of harm to children. Risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies should be undertaken in collaboration with adolescent girls and other concerned stakeholders to ensure that adolescent girls do not face harm as a result of their participation in social movements. Risks may be present whether adolescent girls use digital platforms or are meeting face to face.

3. **Most bilateral and multilateral funds are not equipped to fund social movements:** Key constituents of movement ecologies are both informal and formal groups at the grass-roots level and individual activists and leaders, but these constituents are the hardest to reach through formal funding modalities.\(^ {58}\) The Joint Programme may consider partnering with women and youth funds, as well as other activist-led funds, in making resources directly accessible to movements. These funds have expertise in making small, flexible grants, accompanying groups with meaningful capacity-building support and supporting movement building through convenings and other strategies. They can reach movements in ways most bilateral and multilateral funds cannot.

4. **Challenging prevailing power structures takes time:** Movement building provides an opportunity to strengthen grass-roots, constituency-based movements that challenge and shift power structures.\(^ {59}\) Rather than targeting single organizations with short-term funding, movement building supports collective collaboration between organizations and movements.\(^ {60}\) Investing funds in short-term
project-based interventions has come at the cost of social movements that historically have proven effective in promoting deep structural change that challenge prevailing power structures but take time.\textsuperscript{61} In the context of FGM elimination, it is also important to invest in movement-building organizations that work more broadly on gender equality rather than tackling one type of GBV such as FGM.\textsuperscript{62}

5. **Highlight the mutual reliance between NGOs and social movements:** Both national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements want lasting and transformative change and are sometimes even aligned in their change agendas. That said, feminist scholars refer to the ‘NGO-ization’ of movements in which funding shifted power and support away from community and/or constituency-led organizing through social movements, which require long-term support and can take time to produce results, to supporting formal NGOs focused on single issue, service delivery projects. Such a claim ignores the mutual reliance between these two entities. Activists often need the structure of formal NGOs to create convening spaces or secure resources. In return, NGOs require people power and mass mobilization to maximize the impact of their work.\textsuperscript{63}
6. Guidance on strategies and approaches for movement building

Drawing on the findings from the literature review, and the Joint Programme’s experience in empowering adolescent girls, and mobilizing collective action among women- and youth-led organizations for the elimination of FGM, Figure 1 presents a continuum approach for the Joint Programme to engage in movement building. The continuum recognizes the need to create safe spaces and broader enabling environments for adolescent girls’ empowerment and participation in collective action; support women- and youth-led organizations in building coalitions to advocate for the rights of girls and women at risk of and affected by FGM; and provide social movements with the infrastructure, resources and capacity development needed to achieve structural change for the elimination of FGM by 2030.

Provided below are practical steps for designing and implementing the three key components of the continuum approach for movement building.

6.1 Empower adolescent girls to eliminate FGM through collective action

6.1.1 Enhance adolescent girls’ agency to participate in social movements
Girls’ or youth clubs that provide life skills and CSE programmes are associated with a wide range of empowerment outcomes such as greater knowledge, skills and development, and shifts in social/gender norms that empower adolescent girls by increasing their voice and participation to influence social change through collective action.

Support women- and youth-led organizations in building coalitions.

Work with feminist and youth movements for structural change including policies and legislation, and social/gender norms.

Figure 1: Continuum approach for movement building in the context of FGM elimination
perpetuate FGM. While life skills and CSE programmes should be context-based to address the specific issues adolescent girls face, such programmes should seek to foster adolescent girls’ agency in more actively participating and civically engaging, in opening up opportunities for decision-making they may not otherwise have, in developing critical awareness and expressing concerns about issues that matter to them (voice) and in being provided with the opportunity and the space to empower one’s self as well as engage (participation) in their homes, schools, communities and other institutions to influence social change, including advocate the elimination of FGM.

**Provide opportunities for civic engagement:** Where context permits, enhancing girls’ agency should include opportunities for civic engagement to help motivate them, place them in public spaces in safe ways, gather support for their rights and underscore their needs, and help girls to develop a better understanding of citizenship and empathy. Civic engagement can range from negotiating with elected officials to improve local services for FGM prevention and response, to facilitating awareness raising campaigns and community dialogues on FGM. Community civic engagement helps adolescent girls to be seen and heard in the community, and it stimulates a general spirit of community goodwill. Furthermore, it engages the community by deepening their stake in the growth and development of girls. Activities around civic engagement provide adolescent girls with the experience they need to participate as active citizens who assert their rights and hold leaders accountable for ensuring equitable opportunities for civic engagement.

**Provide social networking and mentoring opportunities:** An important way to enhance adolescent girls’ agency is to build networking and mentoring opportunities and encourage girls to use their voice and exercise meaningful participation. Research shows that acceptance from their family, community and peers is essential for adolescent girls’ agency. As such, a key component in developing adolescent girls’ leadership is the formation of girls’ social networks. These networks serve as hubs where girls learn to analyse, plan, work together and practice their emerging skills. The networks are a critical step in creating more places where girls can be heard and try out new skills. For adolescent girls to gain legitimacy in public spaces, they need support to be seen and heard in public spaces. Equally important to having legitimacy in public spaces is having mentors and role models who are willing to stand up for adolescent girls’ rights.

**Box 4: Avoid instrumentalist approaches to adolescent girls’ and women’s empowerment for the elimination of FGM**

While the Joint Programme should prioritize adolescent girls’ agency in taking collective action to end FGM, in no way should the programme employ instrumentalist approaches that situate girls’ and women’s empowerment as an ‘instrument’ for the elimination of harmful practices, rather than an outcome of multifaceted and sustained efforts to bring about a more just society. Instrumentalists tend to privilege short-term and narrowly defined gains in the status of girls and women over longer-term changes to the discriminatory systems that contribute to their disadvantage in the first place. Instrumentalist approaches tend to transfer the burden of responsibility for achieving gender equality away from governments and global governance institutions to girls and women. Only when the root causes of FGM, which are diverse and multidimensional, are addressed, including gender inequality, prevailing social/gender norms and a desire to control female sexuality, can we achieve gender equality and the elimination of FGM.
access to resources (i.e., services and productive assets) and opportunities (i.e., education and economic and political participation). Ideally, civic engagement interventions are determined by the girls, involving a process of identifying an issue within their community, developing an action plan to address the issue and taking collective action to implement their plan. Opportunities for civic engagement should include civic education and digital literacies and skills for digital civic engagement.

**Support adolescent girls’ participation in social movements:** Depending on the context, should adolescent girls choose to participate in social movements, the Joint Programme should promote intergenerational collaboration and the role of adult women in enabling adolescent girls’ voices to be heard. The Joint Programme as well as practitioners, activists and scholars working with adolescent girls should ensure their voices, experiences and expertise guide movement building for the elimination of FGM.

**6.1.2 Empower adolescent girls through gender-synchronized approaches**

Adolescent girls’ empowerment necessitates gender-synchronized approaches, including intentionality in reaching out to both adolescent girls and boys to promote mutual understanding, equalize power dynamics, prevent and respond to FGM, change social/gender norms and promote flexible gender roles and advocate gender equality as measures of programme success. Like adolescent girls, adolescent boys should also be provided with opportunities to participate in clubs that build knowledge and skills, and challenge social/gender norms that perpetuate FGM. Adolescent boys should also be supported in participating in collective action for the elimination of FGM.

**6.1.3 Create an enabling environment and supportive community for adolescent girls’ empowerment**

Any commitment to support adolescent girls on their empowerment journey requires efforts to transform the structures, institutions and dynamics that reinforce and perpetuate gender inequality. Creating an enabling environment for adolescent girls’ empowerment calls for a socio-ecological approach, with efforts to change attitudes and practices among girls’ families and communities, and to challenge discriminatory social/gender norms in the wider environment. Creating an enabling environment calls for a set of multidimensional and multi-level interventions that empower individuals (educating girls, building their assets and creating safe spaces), building healthy relationships (enhancing parental communication and peer social networks), engaging communities (working with men and boys to change harmful social/gender norms that perpetuate FGM as well as shift social/gender norms that prevent adolescent girls from meaningful participation in public spaces) and transforming societies (promoting laws and policies that protect the human rights of girls and women including the right to bodily integrity and autonomy and the elimination of FGM, and institutionalizing structures or mechanisms where adolescent girls can engage with governments).

**6.2 Support women- and youth-led organizations in building coalitions**

Since launching in 2008, the Joint Programme has been providing funding and technical support to women- and youth-led organizations. In shifting towards movement building, the Joint Programme, with its local, national, regional and global reach, is well-positioned to support coalitions that provide opportunities for organizations to build solidarity by convening and learning and sharing from each other, forge a common change agenda and develop joint advocacy plans and research efforts. Women- and youth-led organizations can also serve as conduits between the Joint Programme and fluid movements.

**6.2.1 Provide opportunities for capacity-building**

Coalition building presents an opportunity for the Joint Programme to provide a platform for women-and youth-led organizations to connect and increase their influence on social change, while also pooling expertise and resources to work collectively for gender equality and the elimination of FGM. Coalition building also presents opportunities to connect organizations in a community to build their power and overcome...
geographical limitations (this is especially important for rural-based organizations). Capacity development trainings may include transformational leadership that centres intergenerational and collective leadership, communication for social change, mobilizing communities and constituencies, and engaging in advocacy.

6.2.2 Develop shared change agendas

In the interest of solidarity and cohesion, women- and youth-led organizations as coalition members should be given the space to develop shared change agendas through inclusive and participatory processes. Change agendas should include strategies for shifting policy and legislation, as well as social/gender norms that perpetuate gender inequality and FGM. Developing change agendas are part of a cycle for coalition building presented in Figure 2.

Coalitions are the backbone of social movements. Building coalitions creates the opportunities and conditions necessary to then build movements.

6.3 Build social movements in the context of FGM elimination

6.3.1 Assess the strength and capacity of social movements

Given that social movements are multifaceted and dynamic and vary considerably across contexts and time, there is a need to better understand the wider ecosystem of social movements at national and subnational levels that align with the Joint Programme priorities and ensure more strategic and focused engagement in movement building. Situational and gender analyses informed by local voices are necessary to understand the context (i.e., Is civic space restricted or open? Do movements engage with diverse state structures and processes that are conducive to gender equality and the elimination of FGM?), comprehensively address any challenges or build on opportunities and ensure lasting impact and ‘do no harm’. Given that social movements are shaped by gender systems, gender analyses will help to understand whether systemic inequalities are reflected in social movements. Assessing the strengths and capacity of existing social movements allows for the development of tailored support by the Joint Programme.

Drawing on Srilatha Batliwala’s 2021 ‘All About Movements’ simple assessment of the movement-building process, there are four levels of movement growth and maturity, adapted for programmes addressing FGM, that should be considered as part of the situational and gender analyses:

- **Step 1:** How many among those affected by FGM actually recognize it as injustice? Who is beginning to speak up about FGM?
- **Step 2:** Are there at least a few people – from among those affected or those working with affected people – who feel strongly and passionately enough to bring others together around ending FGM?
Step 3: Has a space been created for those affected by FGM to meet regularly and talk about it? Is this space accessible, safe and inclusive for all those concerned about FGM to gather and discuss?

Step 4: What positive results have the movement’s actions produced? How have the movement’s members benefited from these or what positive changes have they experienced?

Another useful framework developed by JASS, a feminist movement support organization, involves four interconnected cycles of movement building, adapted for FGM, that may also help in understanding stages of movement growth:

1. Rising up: At this stage, an individual or small group of people decide to tackle FGM, have determined leadership that creates space and time to gather and discuss FGM with others, and the framing of a preliminary agenda for change – the elimination of FGM.

2. Building up: This stage involves mobilizing and organizing a larger number of people affected by FGM around the change agenda and identifying action priorities and strategies.

3. Standing up: During this stage, movement constituents begin to act for change, showing that the movement is serious, organized and capable of taking action towards its goals and, in the process, gaining something, facing potential backlash and garnering more supporters and constituents for the elimination of FGM.

4. Shaking up: This is the stage when a movement actually ‘shakes things up’ by making an impact, changing social/gender norms, public attitudes, policies and laws, or even simply the way people think and behave, and then moves on to ‘stand up’ all over again, with a deeper or broader understanding and agenda for change that supports the elimination of FGM.

By understanding a movement’s relative strengths and limitations, this allows for the Joint Programme to plan contributions to movement building more effectively and tailor technical support for movement growth. The frameworks provided above also allow for monitoring and evaluation of movements including their contribution to social change and the elimination of FGM.

6.3.2 Identify the role of the Joint Programme in movement building

Once the situational and gender analyses and capacity assessments of social movements have been completed, the Joint Programme can identify potential roles in support of movement building that are context-specific and minimize risk.
Drawing on the 2019 guidance paper by CARE ‘Supporting Women’s Social Movements and Collective Action’, potential roles for the Joint Programme in movement building may include the following:

1. **Convener**: As convener, the Joint Programme can use existing relationships with women- and youth-led organizations and feminist and youth movements to connect organizations and movements to one another. As a convener, the Joint Programme can link movements for peer learning and mentoring; provide support to ensure that movement voices are heard and that they are connected to key stakeholders such as donors, governments and other United Nations agencies; and provide support to ensure participation of movement actors at key events/moments in national, regional and global spaces to advance their agendas and goals.

2. **Resource partner**: Under this role, the Joint Programme would leverage resources and provide the following:
   - Capacity-building including movement building, leadership training, financial management, advocacy training, communications and media trainings, or working in coalitions;
   - Support for coalitions and/or broader issue campaigns that connect organizations, including overcoming geographical limitations;
   - Facilitation of connections between movements in different countries and regions through workshops and convenings;
   - Development and dissemination of knowledge products that enable exchange of information, experiences and learning, including research on successful strategies in movement building.

3. **Amplifier**: The Joint Programme may use its global presence and access to key decision-making spaces to amplify the narratives of social movements. By using its platform to propel the stories of social movements, the Joint Programme accelerates the pace at which movements are recognized at a global scale. Amplification of actions include, but are not limited to, retweeting grass-roots campaigns or bringing a legislative ‘ask’ from social movements to governments.

Once the Joint Programme’s role is defined, provided below are the 12 key steps for movement building. Examples are provided in Annex 2.

**6.3.3 Twelve key steps for movement building**

Drawing on Batliwala’s 2021 publication ‘All About Movements’, 12 steps in movement building that have been adapted for the Joint Programme are listed below. It should be noted that the steps are not necessarily sequential and should be informed by an assessment of the strength and capacity of social movements as discussed in section 6.3.1.

1. **Enhance critical awareness**: Support communities in understanding, discussing and reflecting on FGM as a harmful practice.

2. **Create space and gather to discuss the injustice**: Create a safe space where people can speak freely, gather and discuss ending FGM openly in a way that challenges dominant social/gender norms.

3. **Support inspired, determined leadership**: Provide capacity development opportunities for transformational leadership that inspires collective action to end FGM.

4. **Frame a preliminary agenda for social change**: Conduct an analysis of the underlying causes of FGM including key actors/stakeholders, social/gender norms that perpetuate the practice, policies and legislation that address FGM and gendered power relations that need to be challenged.

5. **Raise awareness and mobilize and organize others affected by FGM around the change agenda**: Build greater collective power by convincing others to join in the struggle for FGM elimination (emergence of a movement).

6. **Expand leadership base**: One single leader is not enough; strong, committed leadership must be built at multiple levels.
7. **Identify and implement strategies and actions for change:** When people feel strength in numbers, they talk about strategies and identify and prioritize concrete actions for social change that contributes to the elimination of FGM.

8. **Anticipate backlash and absorb the gains:** With increased visibility comes backlash, when the power structure (i.e., patriarchal systems that seek to control of women’s sexuality) realizes it is being challenged by a well-organized set of people intent on ending the practice; alongside backlash comes success and the need to absorb the gains.

9. **Expand participation and systematize governance:** As membership grows, a movement must create more systematic internal governance and decision-making systems that do not reproduce the hierarchies of power and privilege such as youth movements in which leadership is dominated by adolescent boys or young men or feminist movements that are inaccessible to youth.

10. **Build analysis of the situation:** Under this step, members begin to deepen their understanding of the power dynamics they have to challenge and change.

11. **Deepen the change agenda and identify new strategies and sites of action:** The movement has reached a phase of growth that involves deepening its change agenda and develops new strategies of action, and new locations and actors that the movement will engage (there may also be a cycle whereby a movement repeats steps 7–12 and begins all over again).

12. **Measure the strength of social movements:** The Global Fund for Women has developed an adaptable assessment tool that may be used to assess the relative strengths and challenges in social movements. See section 7 for additional guidance on measuring the strength of social movements.

6.3.4 **Provide platforms and spaces, online/virtual and offline, for movement building**

Developing a plan for online/virtual and offline engagement requires an understanding of the social, political and economic context, as contexts often define access and use of online/virtual and/or offline platforms and spaces. According to Batiwala (2021), there are several important differences between online/virtual movements and offline activism:

- **A space to build new or challenge existing discourse:** Digital spaces have become critical sites where adolescent girls and young women have chosen to challenge dominant gender ideologies (i.e., people’s attitudes regarding gender roles) and to frame new ideas and perspectives. They have also given a space and voice to people who may be silenced or stigmatized in their own contexts.

- **Build connections and solidarity across traditional boundaries:** Online movements have enabled people to connect with each other in ways that were not possible before the digital era. It has enabled new linkages between and across movements as well. This has created a whole new form of solidarity, collective power and resistance, and the possibility of bringing together diverse actors who may never have otherwise connected.
• Different notions of ‘membership’ and ‘participation’: Forms of engagement within virtual movements work differently. Virtual movements tend to be more fluid, more open, with new participants entering and older ones exiting, although they always have a core leadership and membership that remains constant.

• New ways of organizing and movement building: Many of the initial mobilization techniques of virtual movements are quite unique and creative. For example, audiovisual communication tools play a critical role in raising awareness and mobilizing people such as memes, GIFs, songs, pictures, videos and personal testimonies, which have a powerful impact of their own. These are particularly effective and appealing to young people, who tend to be the majority of those who become part of virtual movement-building processes.

The most important thing to recognize is that the boundary between ‘online’ and ‘offline’ movements has completely blurred. Few movements remain entirely online because they tend to engage in real-time, on-the-ground actions at some point or another. The Joint Programme has been successful in blended adolescent and youth engagement for the elimination of FGM; from promoting adolescent and youth-focused websites and social media platforms for information-sharing, expression and mobilization on policies and legislation, to intergenerational dialogues and adolescents and youth facilitating community dialogues. There is an opportunity for the Joint Programme to replicate and scale up this work in support of movement building. Active enablers of digital civic engagement include equitable access to technology and digital skills, civic education and the existence of civic space for activism. The Joint Programme should consider adopting such activities as part of a movement-building strategy.

6.3.5 Engage men and boys in movement building

In supporting movement building, men and boys must see themselves as allies in the process. To be gender transformative, engagement of men and boys should:

• Enable men and boys to lead action in support of gender equality and FGM elimination: Programmes should support and encourage men and boys to challenge harmful practices and promote positive social/gender norms. This may take place in communities, workplaces or other public settings. Actions can take many forms, including peer-to-peer engagement, local champions speaking out or collective action by men’s and boy’s networks.

• Connect men and boys’ actions with broader movements in support of gender equality and FGM elimination: Actions should take place in collaboration with broader groups, particularly movements led by those most affected by FGM. Men and boys must be aware of the space, recognition and resources they may attract around community and gender issues and ensure partners, including women-led organizations and feminist movements, are not overshadowed.
7. Monitoring, evaluation and learning in building movements

Monitoring and evaluation: More nuanced monitoring and evaluation tools are needed for measuring social change related to movement building. The Joint Programme’s 2021 technical guidance ‘A Comprehensive Approach to Accelerating the Elimination of FGM’ and 2020 compendium ‘Measuring Effectiveness of Female Genital Mutilation Elimination’ provide guidance on the use of appropriate methods for measuring progress towards movement building such as ‘outcome mapping’ and ‘most significant change’ technique. Another method includes adolescent- and youth-led participatory action research that promotes social change as adolescents and youth identify issues they want to improve, conduct research to understand the issues and potential solutions, and advocate change based on research evidence.87

Sharing and deepening learning: The Joint Programme is in a position to create a dynamic space where leaders and constituents from various social movements, who are already working in networked ways, can come together to share and deepen learning.88 This would include providing time and space for dialogues, engaging in active learning, co-generating analysis and identifying innovations in movement building for the elimination of FGM.

Knowledge gaps on social movements: There exists a wide and growing evidence base on social movements, including trajectories and impacts of feminist and youth movements. However, few studies have focused explicitly on the ways in which these movements contribute to changing social/gender norms.89 This literature gap applies to FGM as well. There is also a gap in the literature around strategies feminist and youth movements use or have used in conflicts, climate change emergencies or fragile contexts.90
Annex 1: Practical resources and further reading

Provided below are practical resources and further reading related to adolescent and youth empowerment, assessing social movements and building social movements.

**ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

**Step Up! A pocket guide to social change for young leaders (UNFPA, Lead for Impact and Prezi)**


Step Up! is a toolkit of simple, interactive activities that help learners to become leaders for social change. Through 4 steps containing a total of 17 activities, Step Up! provides young people with the fundamental skills and knowledge they need to design and implement a social change initiative. Each activity is centred around a framework and adopts a ‘learning by doing’ approach. The toolkit is designed to be completed by individual learners or by a small group. Step Up! can be used by youth-led organizations, youth leaders or educators.

**Technical Note on Adolescent Empowerment (UNICEF)**


This technical note provides a framework for adolescent empowerment, presenting the dynamic and interconnected nature of the four empowerment components – assets, critical awareness, agency and voice and participation – that together enhance adolescents’ abilities to make informed choices and negotiate a safe transition to adulthood.

**Engaged and Heard! (UNICEF)**


These guidelines have been developed to enhance systematic programming and advocacy to realize adolescents’ right to be heard in matters affecting them. The guidelines provide information on the ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘how-to’ of participation and civic engagement, with a specific focus on adolescents.

**Tip Sheets for Adults, Adolescents and Youth on Adolescent and Youth Participation in Different Settings (UNICEF)**


UNICEF Tip Sheet series offers suggestions for adults and adolescents and youth to support the safe and meaningful participation of adolescents and youth in different settings (conferences, advocacy events, campaigns, policy dialogues, public speaking and interviews, audio recordings and video productions, document reviews, networking, online engagement and in youth advisory groups). The series was designed in collaboration with adolescents and youth, based on their real-life experience participating in various activities. The series builds upon UNICEF guidelines ‘Engaged and Heard!’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT (CONTINUED)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GAGE Rigorous Review: girls’ clubs, life skills programmes and girls’ well-being outcomes (GAGE)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This rigorous review synthesizes studies on the empowerment impacts of girls’ clubs and life skills programmes with a gender equality focus. Girls’ clubs, or youth development clubs, have become an increasingly common component of school- and community-based programmes that aim to improve capability outcomes and broader well-being of girls in developing countries. The review, the first of its kind to synthesize existing evaluations of girls’ clubs, finds substantial evidence of the positive impact of these programmes, particularly around changes in discriminatory gender norms and practices. It also highlights remaining programming and knowledge gaps.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Young People’s Civic Participation and Civic Engagement (UNICEF)</strong></td>
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<td>The aim of this guide is to support the Generation Unlimited strategic priority to “equip young people as problem-solvers and engaged members of society, helping to create a better world”, by providing evidence and guidance that has the potential to improve young people’s participation and civic engagement. This guide identifies successful strategies that can increase young people’s civic participation and boost the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values crucial for future civic engagement. It also identifies structures that are likely to amplify young people’s voices in decision-making and benefit local communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Youth Toolkit for Girls Get Equal (Plan International)</strong></td>
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<td>This Girls Get Equal campaign toolkit is for young activists, human rights defenders and change makers. Now is the time for action! This toolkit is for anyone who wants to create a world where girls, young women and other marginalized identities have the power, freedom and representation to make decisions and shape the world around them, as equals. The toolkit may be used to design and implement a Girls Get Equal campaign for girls’ leadership and power.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shaking Up to Move Forward: Visions for stronger partnerships between youth movements and social organisations (Oxfam)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth and feminist movements are some of the most powerful drivers of change in many countries, pushing path-breaking progress on political accountability, climate justice, gender equality and economic transformation. With youth movements set to be protagonists of systemic change in the next decade, understanding how to equitably partner with and enhance the power of youth leadership is a priority for international organizations. This report draws on reflections from face-to-face workshops and digital conversations with more than 350 young people in over 30 countries in six continents. It recommends that Oxfam and other international organizations engage meaningfully with youth movements.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A MenEngage Africa Toolkit for Engaging Men and Boys to Advocate the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (Sonke Gender Justice)</strong></td>
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<td>The overall goal of the FGM toolkit is to inform MenEngage Africa partners and other similar minded stakeholders on how to engage men and boys to advocate an end to FGM. It is intended to create awareness on how to engage with men and boys in their diversities as they implement campaigns on ending FGM. Sonke has always been a pro-feminist organization, working to advance a women’s rights agenda by ensuring men and boys play a positive role in the achievement of gender equality.</td>
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## ASSESSING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>All About Movements: Why building movements creates deeper change (CREA)</th>
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<tr>
<td>This primer explains how and why movements can create deeper change and includes numerous tools for assessing the strength of social movements.</td>
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<p>| Movement Capacity Assessment Tool (Global Fund for Women) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><a href="https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/apply-for-a-grant/movement-capacity-assessment-tool/">https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/apply-for-a-grant/movement-capacity-assessment-tool/</a></th>
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<tr>
<td>The Global Fund for Women developed a tool to assess the strength and capacity of movements. The tool was adapted by Batliwala and is used to rate the level of agreement about different aspects of the movement. For each item, level of agreement ranges from 1 being ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 being ‘strongly agree’. To use the Movement Capacity Assessment Tool, a group of people selected by the movement members themselves – not only the leaders or the movement-building activists, but also representatives from different layers and locations of the movement – should participate in the assessment.</td>
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## BUILDING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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<tr>
<th>Feminist and Women’s Movements in the Context of Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Implications for funders and grant makers (UN Women)</th>
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<td>This paper presents an external literature review on feminist and women’s movements in the context of ending violence against women and girls, including the role of funders and grant makers. Building on lessons learned from United Nations Trust Fund projects funded through the Spotlight Initiative, which focused on supporting women’s movements, it is part of a learning journey to reflect on and better understand progress and challenges relating to supporting women’s and feminist movements in the context of ending violence against women and girls.</td>
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<tr>
<th>All About Movements: Why building movements creates deeper change (CREA)</th>
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<tr>
<td>This primer builds on concepts shared in CREA’s earlier primer ‘All About Power’ and thoughtfully and clearly answers some critical questions such as what is a movement and why do movements – and feminist movements – matter, how do we build movements, and how do we assess their growth and impact? The answers to these questions translate into action guidelines for all those wanting to explore, understand and use the movement-building approach in their work.</td>
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Annex 2: Examples of movement building and adolescent girls’ empowerment

**Deepshikha Adolescent Girls Groups (AGG)**
UNICEF India (2008–2014)

**Target population:** Girls aged 12–18 years in urban slums/rural areas

The Deepshikha programme, implemented by UNICEF in Maharashtra, India, encouraged the formation of self-help groups along with life skills training for adolescent girls, with the dual aim of reducing child marriage and re-enrolling girls who had dropped out of school. Deepshikha promoted girls’ direct engagement with local governance structures such as village councils. The programme engaged girls in protecting their rights and in providing life skills training.

**Illustrative programme results:** Deepshikha formed 2,238 adolescent girls’ groups and reached 64,360 girls. At baseline, only 6 per cent of girls reported that they attended village council meetings, compared with 10 per cent at end-line. Similarly, at baseline, about 5 per cent of girls reported having been involved in handling a village-level problem, rising to 14 per cent by end-line. Fourteen adolescent girls were elected as village leaders while another 353 were serving on village-level committees. Among project participants and a control group of girls, the greatest change (of over 25 percentage points) was in the proportion of girls who felt comfortable speaking in public and convincing others, though the evaluation does not report whether this was statistically significant.

Power to Lead Alliance (PTLA): Empowering Girls to Learn and Lead
CARE in Egypt, Honduras, India, Malawi, Tanzania and Yemen (2008–2011)

**Target population:** Girls and boys aged 10–14 years in vulnerable communities

PTLA promoted adolescent girls’ leadership skills development through social networks, extracurricular activities and opportunities for civic engagement. Life skills programmes provided information on how to engage with local governance structures and to make one’s voice heard in the public. Participants were also encouraged to work collectively to design and implement community improvement initiatives.

**Illustrative programme results:** Examples of civic engagement included girls in Tanzania lobbying to influence adults’ ideas in village forums and in ward development committees and negotiated for representation on these committees, using the opportunity to request schools to provide official time for students to participate in sports activities. In India, girls reported incidences of child marriage.


**Source:** Baric, Stephanie, ‘Where the Boys Are: Engaging young adolescent boys in support of girls’ education and leadership’, *Gender & Development*, vol. 21, no. 1, 14 March 2013, p. 147. doi:10.1080/13552074.2013.769777.

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**ADOLESCENT GIRLS’ PARTICIPATION IN COLLECTIVE ACTION AND/OR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

**Tipping Point**

CARE in Bangladesh and Nepal, Phase 1 (2013–2017) and Phase 2 (2017–2020)

**Target population:** Adolescent girls in 16 subdistricts of Nepal and 90 villages of Bangladesh, areas both geographically and economically isolated from other regions

Since 2013, the Tipping Point Initiative has engaged in participatory research to identify the social norms and expectations that underpin child marriage and community-led programming to transform harmful norms and build the agency and collective efficacy of girls to demand their rights. The Tipping Point model’s root-cause approach to community-level programming relies on synchronized engagement of adolescents and community members to ensure that all stakeholders can be part of the transformational change that comes from challenging social expectations and repressive norms.

**Illustrative programme results:** Girl-led movement building is a unique component of the Tipping Point model. To assess the impact of this intervention, collective efficacy among girls, their leadership competence and social norms related to movement building were measured at baseline for Phase 2. In Bangladesh and Nepal, the few collective action activities that had been initiated were efforts made by adults on behalf of adolescents and children and around issues such as sexual harassment and child marriage rather than adolescent-led initiatives.

**Useful resources:** Facilitator manuals for adolescent girls’ and boys’ groups and an activist package (Girl-Led Activism and Structured Allyship Brief) and simultaneous capacity-building for boy and parent activist allies ([https://caretippingpoint.org/implementation-manuals/](https://caretippingpoint.org/implementation-manuals/)).

BUILDING COALITIONS

Ford Foundation West Africa office invested in individuals, organizations and innovations to positively affect youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The principles that underpinned the Foundation’s programme included: honest engagement and exchange of ideas between grantees and the Foundation’s staff; long-term funding to grantee organizations; support to leaders on the front line of change; rigorous grantee selection processes that emphasized institutional capacity and sustainability planning; and support for grantees to appropriately network, leave ‘global footprints’, generate learning and stimulate solutions. The Foundation’s work in the region also showed that strength-based partnerships and strategic coalition building with critical stakeholders are crucial to effective programming and policy engagement.

Youth SRHR policy development and policy advocacy were core areas of focus by the Ford Foundation. The Foundation grantees played critical roles in the development of several policies relating to youth SRHR in the region. Building cross-sectoral, multisectoral and intra-sectoral partnerships and coalitions enabled the Ford Foundation to harness the strengths and capacities of various partners. An example, drawn from Nigeria, resulted in tangible changes in the policy environment including the enactment of new legislations outlawing FGM and widow maltreatment in several states – Edo, Cross River, Enugu and Oyo – due partly to the advocacy efforts of Ford Foundation grantees, with the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC). In Nigeria, among others, IAC provided technical and logistical support to the Federal Ministry of Health in the development and public presentation of the National Policy and Plan of Action for the Elimination of FGM in 2003. IAC was also actively engaged in advocacy to ensure the implementation of the policy. The organization worked with several state governments to develop the required policy and programmatic efforts to address FGM. IAC initiated and promoted the annual Zero Tolerance Day to raise awareness about FGM.


According to the Center for Rights Education and Awareness (https://home.creaw.org), a Kenyan women’s rights organization, the government has worked with CSOs and other non-state actors to co-create a work-plan, resource mobilization strategy and monitoring and evaluation tools that foster accountability and transparency. Kenya has also established a dedicated court for GBV cases and Policare, a national police service with integrated responses to GBV, which include service providers such as health-care providers, magistrates, medical-legal professionals and gender experts. All of this was accomplished through research, activism and media coverage led by CSOs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Kenya Forum, a coalition of over 350 CSOs across the country, launched Campaign TIMIZA (Towards and Beyond Commitments), which aims to create awareness about the government’s commitment to eliminating GBV and FGM.

FEMINIST AND YOUTH MOVEMENTS

Nigeria’s Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 is an example of women’s rights organizations building a strong movement for change. This Act criminalizes many forms of violence against women and girls, including rape (not marital), child marriage, FGM, abusive widowhood practices, spousal beating, forced financial dependence and forced eviction from home. This achievement was the result of 14 years of vigorous campaigning by CSOs. In 2001, women’s rights organizations, including Women’s Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, international human rights NGOs and religious organizations came together to form the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW) to push collectively for national laws to tackle violence against women and girls. Over the following years, they researched, wrote and launched a prospective bill on violence against women and campaigned for it to be adopted. After several years of rejections and pushback from parliamentarians and government, the coalition revised and relaunched the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Bill in 2008. They followed this with a sustained advocacy campaign, which led to the bill’s passing in 2013 and then passage into law two years later. Lessons learnt include the following:

• The use of global and regional frameworks: LACVAW based its demands on the state’s obligations to address violence against women and girls under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

• Targeting those with law making power: LACVAW hired a former member of Parliament to help navigate the parliamentary system and identify the most efficient tactics to lobby parliamentarians, including targeting them with a SMS campaign.

• Strategic use of media and communications: Coalitions trained journalists to keep domestic violence in the headlines and report in a sensitive, non-sensationalist, non-biased way. The campaigns for the bills garnered support from the media, which helped to elevate and sustain them. Social media was also widely used: LACVAW developed a website, set up a Twitter page and Pinterest account, and created YouTube videos and an online petition for the bill, all of which helped to raise awareness.

• Galvanizing the women’s movement: Coalitions made the most of key international moments, such as the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign and International Women’s Day, to shine a light on their demands by stepping up media work and mobilizing women. In Nigeria, a number of LACVAW member organizations were also part of Solidarity for African Women’s Rights that was set up specifically to pressure governments to ratify and domesticate the Maputo Protocol. Through their involvement in Solidarity for African Women’s Rights, these organizations took part in Oxfam’s Raising Her Voice campaign (2009–2012), which aimed to improve political participation of women living in poverty. These organizations gained access to and galvanized many more organizations working on violence against women and girls, helping them to amplify demands for the bill at local, national and regional levels. This was pivotal in driving the bill forward.

• Enlisting allies: LACVAW engaged with a range of stakeholders to garner their support for the bill, including traditional and religious leaders and groups, and ‘male champions’. They also reached out to international allies; international organizations including Justice4All, UN Women, Ipas, UNICEF and UNFPA actively supported the campaign.

• Raising public awareness: A range of strategies were deployed to raise awareness of violence against women and girls among the public, such as mock tribunals to showcase abuses of women’s rights, debates in schools and market places, and songs and slogans with simple, catchy messages.


BUILDING MOVEMENTS, BUILDING POWER: ELIMINATING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION BY 2030 THROUGH SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
Acknowledgements

UNICEF wishes to thank the people and governments that have contributed to this work. Specifically, we thank the European Union and the Governments of Austria, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Spain (AECID), Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America for their generous financial contributions and technical support to UNICEF towards the elimination of FGM.

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Endnotes


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.


8. Ibid.


11. The World Bank had projected 198 million more people living in extreme poverty in 2022 due to COVID-19. Global food prices alone are now estimated to add a further 65 million more people to that total.


17. Ibid.


29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
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