



## WAVES-SL SUCCESS STORIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

### WAVES-SL

Email address: [info@waves.sl](mailto:info@waves.sl)

Website: [www.waves.sl](http://www.waves.sl)

Tel: +232 76300009

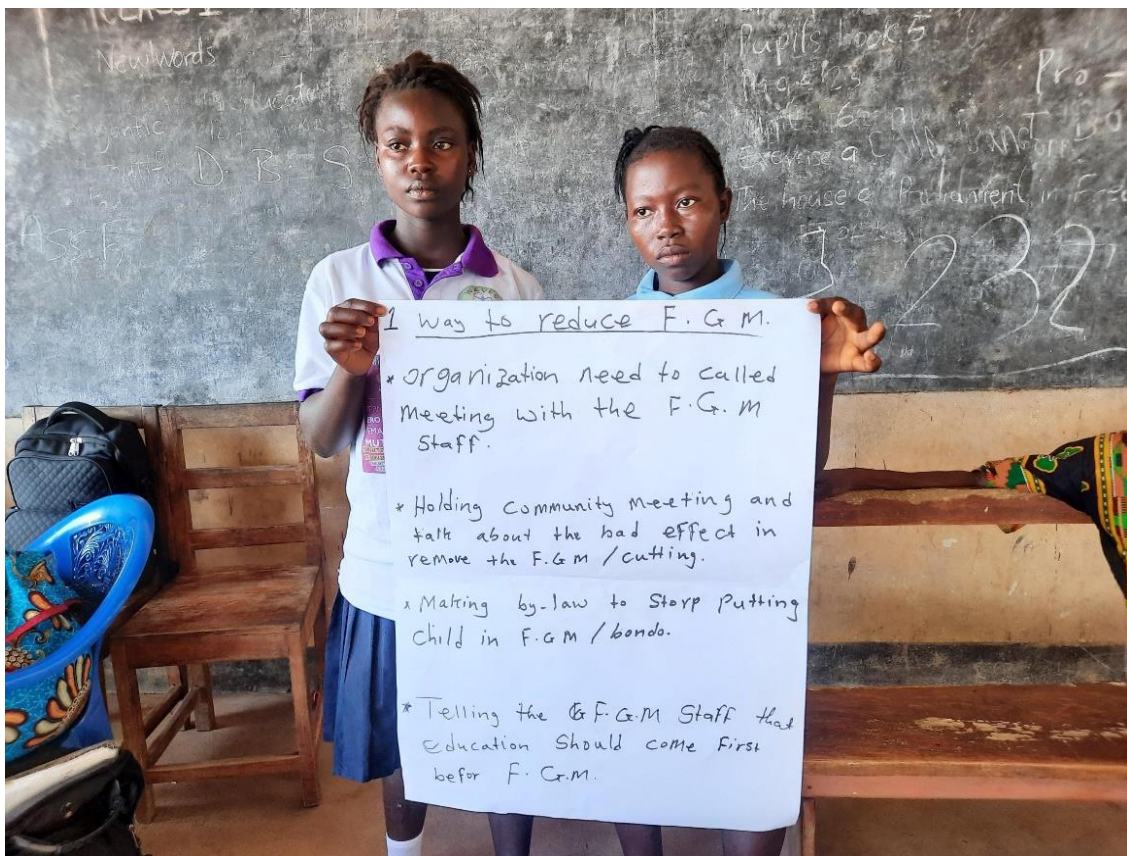
Address: 4 Amara Street,  
Bo City, Shellmingo,  
Sierra Leone



# WOMEN LEADING THE MOVEMENT TO END FGM/C

## INTRODUCTION

Each year, girls and women in Sierra Leone are at risk of undergoing the harmful practice FGM/C. While the customs and traditions that perpetuate FGM/C vary from community to community, the procedure is generally carried out sometime between infancy and age 15. According to WHO, FGM/C comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The procedure is usually done with a razor blade, surgical scalpel or knife and conducted under very unhygienic conditions resulting young girls to contract diseases or tetanus. The procedure forces girls and women to endure pain, trauma and life-threatening complications including psychological trauma throughout their lives. Girls who have gone through FGM/C are also at a higher risk of having complications during birth, endangering both the mother and baby. There is no health benefit to FGM/C and it is recognized internationally as a human rights violation.



Girls from Nengbema community presenting the results from the human rights training with WAVES-SL project officer Laura Lahei.

## SIERRA LEONE: PUTTING AN END TO FGM

Currently there are no effective laws that criminalize FGM/C in Sierra Leone.

WAVES-SL is working with other partners to support the State Governments to develop laws and community-based systems to protect girls against FGM/C. These efforts are making an impact as new evidence shows in the research report from WAVES in April 2023 - exploring the role of community perceptions in FGM/C and the impact of WAVES-SL conducted by WAVES-SL staff.

Together with child marriage, which similarly affects girls, FGM/C is a practice that must end. The change must be led by survivors and individuals from impacted communities. Strengthened by their own experiences, invaluable insights and years of local wisdom, survivors and affected community members are uniquely positioned to unpack cultural nuances, re-shape narratives and find solutions to end FGM/C. These are the voices we must hear. WAVES-SL collects success stories from the daily work against FGM/C in Sierra Leone.



Hannah Yambasu, director and founder of WAVES-SL.

19.04.2023

## SUCCESS STORY FROM THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY IN BO CITY

On April 19, 2023, three women from "New York" section, a community in Bo City, came to the office of WAVES-SL, a women's rights organization. They are concerned about a girl in their neighbourhood who is threatened by FGM/C. The girl is 8 years old and attends the third grade of school. The initiators, who perform the FGM/C practice called "soweis" in Sierra Leone have lured the girl to the "Bondo shrine" the women's secret society compound with an excuse. The "soweis" kept the girl in the "bondo shrine" for two days. The girl was restricted to leave the compound. The initiators wanted to perform the ritual of genital mutilation on the girl by force, against the will of the parents. The parents went to get the daughter out of the compound of the women's secret society.

WAVES-SL project officer Laura Lahai reacted immediately, when she got the complaint from three concerned women from the community. She knows that in such cases, time should not be allowed to pass. According to her it is important to act quickly to protect this girl from FGM/C. Laura informed the director of WAVES-SL, Hannah Yambasu. Hannah has been single-mindedly campaigning against FGM/C for many years, she has experience with such cases.

A meeting is organized with the three committed women from the community and the parents of the 8-year-old girl. Through persuasion and threats of taking the case to the police, WAVES-SL asks the initiators, the "soweis" women to come to WAVES-SL office. Two initiators including the district head "soweis" arrived at WAVES-SL.



Consultation in the office of WAVES-SL to protect the girl from FGM/C.

The initiators say they will only release the girl and spare her from FGM/C practice if a large sum of money and goods such as rice and oil are handed over to them. They insisted that they will not release the girl unless the ransom demands are met. The girl's parents are desperate and therefore ask WAVES-SL for immediate intervention.

Laura Lahai and director Hannah Yambasu argue Sierra Leonean children's rights. WAVES indicts the initiators and demands justice and freedom for the girl. Using negotiating and advocacy skills director Hannah increases the knowledge of the "soweis" of the laws and policies protecting girls and women in Sierra Leone. After the talk with WAVES-SL, the "soweis" handed over the girl to her parents in the presence of WAVES-SL team.

Appreciation is expressed for the work of the three dedicated women from the "New York" community. The attentive civil society must intervene in cases of sexual and gender-based violence, to which FGM/C belongs. WAVES-SL was thus successful in protecting the girl from FGM/C practice. Through education, consultative discussion with the initiators, their awareness of the negative consequences of FGM/C was raised.

WAVES-SL says- no more cutting. Stop the harmful traditional practice of FGM/C!



WAVES- SL manager Momoh Lukullay and project officer Laura Lahai raising awareness about the harmful traditional practice FGM/C.