

## How can you provide spiritual guidance to survivors?

### Create a safe environment



Create a safe environment: A safe and approachable environment helps survivors feel comfortable talking about FGM/C.\* For example, use peer discussion groups, women or men-only groups, survivor support groups, and other group environments to share open dialogue. Use phrases like a "calling in" rather than "calling out" space, and start the conversation with a personal experience or story to show vulnerability as a leader when discussing difficult topics.

### Spiritual Guidance and Discussion



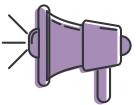
If a woman comes to you for spiritual guidance, listen openly to survivor's stories without minimizing their experience.\* Recognize and appreciate their trust in you as a faith leader for being able to bring up difficult conversations.\* Some survivors may find it very difficult still to speak about FGM/C.\* You can also suggest for her to think and write about her experience in her own time and space.\*

### Provide the tools



Provide her with religious texts and arguments against FGM/C and highlight that your religion does not support such practices that harm women and girls.\* This will give her the tools to speak up against the practice if anyone suggests to her that FGM/C is a religious requirement.\* You can help her to heal spiritually, but also can refer her to support like mental health or healthcare services.\*

### Amplify their voices



Amplify their voices: Engage with survivors of FGM/C and encourage them to share their stories on religious platforms, if they are comfortable doing so. [\*[5](#)] Statistics are important, however, creating a platform for survivors to share their stories with your support further empowers them, and is an important way to raise awareness about FGM/C.[\[6,7\]](#) If survivors share their story, they may relive the trauma. It's important to have a mental health professional on hand.

### Encourage empowerment



Support and advocate for the general empowerment of girls and women within your religious and faith-based institutions.\* This may include encouraging women and girls to continue their education, speaking out against all forms of gender-based violence (GBV), and making sure women and girls are aware of all their rights.

*\*Interviews conducted with faith leaders in Fall 2020.*

Please feel free to share these resources and the overall toolkit with your network.