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European FGM Conference

Promoting CHANGE towards the Abandonment of FGM
in Practicing Communities across the EU

*Adressing FGM in Practicing Communities:
The Role of Key-Professionals*

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AG FIDE e.V. (= „Women´s health in international development collaboration“/
Tropical gynecology), working group of the DGGG
(German Society for Gynecology and Obstetrics)

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Main key-professionals:

Gynecologists, social workers, educators

About practicing communities:

Due to my limited overview I am not making claim to be complete or to dispose of generalities.

I simply want to make some remarks based on the experiences and observations which I made while collaborating with communities.



Some remarks:

- **The more** communities are concentrating themselves on their own and prefer to continue merely the way of their original life (in the countries of origin)
 - **the less** they will have contact and exchange with the people and society where they are actually living.

Consequently there will persist the adherence to previous behaviours and concepts.

Certainly both sides should approach mutually, the natives and the newcomers.



Some remarks:

Knowing from each other

is an important condition to build bridges of understanding.

These bridges are essential to communicate further informations
in order to achieve change of behaviour.



The main hampering factors for the communities I:

- Language barrier, in some cases even lack of alphabetization
- Difficult or inappropriate administrative prescriptions, difficult recognition of certificates, poorly understandable, special administrative written (and spoken) language, inscrutable regulations...
- Prejudices from parts of the native people, to some extent may be even racist rejection
- Difficulties to obtain jobs and sufficient income, thus sometimes need to accept several jobs. The latter leads to lack of time which may complicate planning of training events
- Sometimes precarious living conditions



The main hampering factors for the communities II:

- Little practice in settling quarrels among each other thus blocking valuable creative energies due to dispensable disputes
- Prejudices within the communities against the native society which may have been raised by
 - offended proudness,
 - unexplained misunderstandings and misinterpretations,
 - anxieties,
 - in some cases little tolerance of frustrations,
 - sometimes insufficient coping with suffered traumas
(may be due to lack of adequate support)



Which factors are favouring the impact of key-professionals I?

- Expertise in transcultural communication,
the fundament of which is sufficient knowledge of the other culture and desirably own experience of living in different cultures
- Overcoming eurocentristic thinking towards globalized holistic concepts
- Ability for empathy
- Enlargement of the idea of tolerance
towards (childlike) curiosity and interest (latin: inter-esse = to be within) and thankful pleasure *because of the enrichment through the yet unknown*
- Dialogue on equal level (“at eye level”), readiness to learn mutually.
Each partner shall contribute (to the social process) his best own skills and knowledge



Which factors are favouring the impact of key-professionals II?

- The encounter should be joyful for both sides
- Preliminary agreement of aims (maybe in partial steps)
- Finalizing with feedback, evaluation (aims accomplished?)
and take-home-message
- Readiness to engage oneself in a continuous process



Which factors are favouring the impact of key-professionals III?

- Diversification of activities (in steps):
 - a) warming-up together
 - b) lecture on basic informations
 - c) seminars: community-based-working-groups for
 - female; -male; -mixed;
 - d) identificacion of multipliers (“training the trainers”)
 - in-depth-working-groups
 - e) youth groups: -discussions; -events; -excursions;
 - artistic activities:
 - scenic representation of contents;
 - fine arts such as painting, poems, songs, poster, IT-based etc.
 - f) Counselling: -medical consultations; -juridical consultancy;
 - pedagogical advices; -“compass” for dealing with administrative offices



Which topics have been identified as desirable and relevant and how should be performed a continuation I?

- Comprehensive presentation of the complexity of FGM as part of a larger context: **The role of females in a patriarchic society**
- **Reproductive health** and self-determination
- **Sexuality and FGM:** Basic physiological and psychological informations, discussions of ardent issues, support in partner problems, developing self-esteem and self-consciousness



Which topics have been identified as desirable and relevant and how should be performed a continuation II?

- Learning assertiveness in all facets of life:
 medical, administrative, commerce, social contacts, family
- Learning to push forward one's own requests
- Finding out practical advices
 how women can seize more initiative and self-determination
- Solidarity and mutual understanding



Which modes of activity have been proved as effective and helpful? *Integrating conviviality and joyfulness should be considered*

- interactive seminars
- recreative breaks with snacks and chats, perhaps with collective movement exercises
- sketches, scenic representations
- joint excursions
- planning and carrying out of campaigns
- postprocessing and feedback is important



How sustainability can be promoted? What type of structures could be useful for this goal?

- Avoiding “single-shot” events
- Planning and structuring series of activities in concerted sequence, finalizing with certificate
- Applied total quality management
- Identification of key-promoters within the communities, involving them in the planning and management to enable them to continue by themselves later on (→ HELP FOR SELF-RELIANCE)



Financing requirements:

Money is necessary,

but one's own initiative and *gratuitous commitment* as well!

External guidance of successful budgeting



Reasonable expectations towards politics

at all three german levels: **federal, state level and communal level**; and also at the fourth level (**European**)

- Support of awareness-raising campaigns
- Improvement of legislative rules
- Acknowledgement of valuable contributions by members of the communities
- Support of round-tables (and their founding)
- Support of medical, psychological and socio-pedagogical consultations
- Support for information material
- Providing locations for meetings, events, information campaigns, round-tables
- Encouraging members of administration to inform themselves and support anti-FGM activities
- Support of networking at European level



Possible repercussions to the countries of origin

Exchange and contacts

between practicing communities and relatives in the countries of origin

may raise awareness about achieved insights

in Europe and abroad

with **impact on behavioural change**



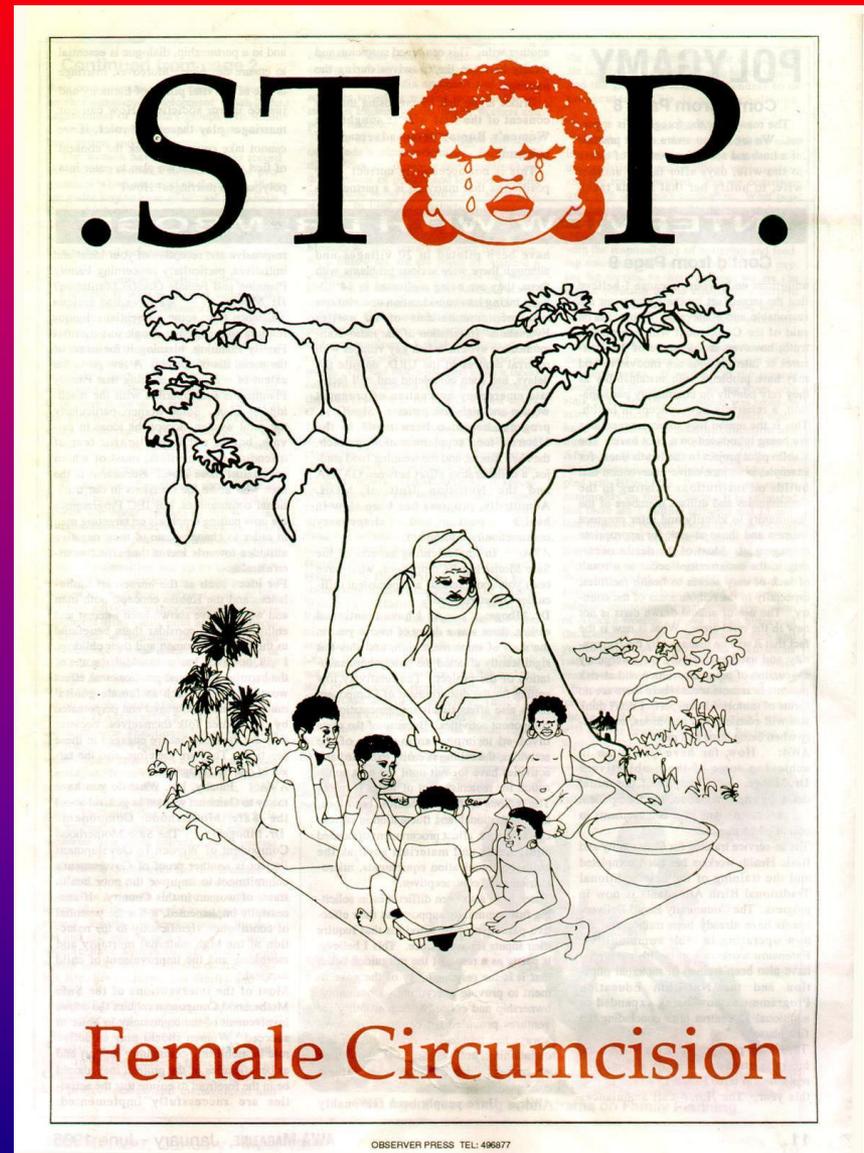
Female Genital Mutilation





Female Genital Mutilation

Thank you
for your attention!





**AG Frauengesundheit
in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit
/Tropengynäkologie – AG FIDE e.V.
Sektion der DGGG (Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Gynäkologie und Geburtshilfe)**

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