

News from Fulda

A terrible practice

Center for PROFS of Fulda University of Applied Sciences at conference against genital mutilation in Nairobi

Nairobi/Fulda (FZ)

Six hundred international and national government representatives, envoys from the UN, the European Union and the African Union, as well as experts from all over the world took part in the "International Conference on Female Genital Mutilation" in Nairobi, which has just ended. One of those present was Professor Muthgard Hinkelmann-Toewe from Fulda, the head of PROFS (Practice-Oriented Feminist Science) at Fulda University of Applied Sciences: she was invited as an expert speaker by the Kenyan Ministry of Home Affairs.

The terrible practice of genital mutilation has been categorised as a violation of human rights by the World Health Organisation (WHO). In Kenya, genital mutilation has been banned by law since 2001. Nonetheless, even today, more than half of all girls and young women in Kenya are subjected to this practice of mutilation.

The Fulda professor has already been working with Kenyan women since 1986 on ways to reduce this practice, and founded the research project "Women in Kenya" at Fulda University of Applied Sciences. In her speech before the delegates in Nairobi, Hinkelmann-Toewe emphasised that advances can be made in this topic if it is possible to gain the trust of the people affected.

In reducing genital mutilation, the actual inclusion of men is very important, the professor stressed, referring to the results in practice of the project co-financed by the EU, "Psycho-social, health-promoting work for and with women and girls in the Mosocho Division, Kenya". Right from the start, this project, which has been put into practice since 2002 by the Fulda institution, "Vivid Communication with Women in their Cultures" in co-operation with the women's research project, "Women in Kenya", was planned and organised hand in hand with the people of the Kisii ethnic. In this ethnic, the tradition of genital mutilation was still very widespread at the time the project began, at 97.6%. After the project had run for two years, it was possible to save 2,500 Kisii children from genital mutilation: a drop of 15%. This means that the project, founded thanks to expertise from Fulda, is in accord with the aim set out by the Kenyan Foreign Minister Chirau Ali Mwakwere at the conference: "There is still a lot to do, as millions of women and girls are still endangered."

At the International Conference, the Fulda–Mosocho project met with great interest.

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