

### Focus on the needs of those affected – men and circumcisers learn a new way of thinking

In the Kenyan Kisii ethnies, which consists of around 3 million people, roughly 98 percent of all girls and women were circumcised when the project was launched in 2002. This figure was reduced to well below 40% in the project region up to December 2006 (In the Kisii community December is the month in which circumcision is done). Since then, thousands of girls between the ages of 4 and 7 have been spared this fate in the project region. In large public events they were celebrated and by handing out a certificate on their names they were officially declared full members of the Kisii community in front of thousands of guests. Today, numerous men themselves fight against this bloody tradition and even circumcisers have given up their profession and pledged never to practise it again.

A change of attitude of previously unknown magnitude has taken place in this region. It was initiated by professor Hinkelmann-Toewe, who relied on trust, personal talks and an extensive education programme for heads of schools, teachers and other multipliers. A German employee of the Fulda institution lives on site permanently, where she organises and coordinates with a local team the seminars, workshops and events.

190 school heads and teachers (50 percent male, 50 percent female) have in the meantime completed the three-year further education course "Sexual and Reproductive Health",

and now they act as multipliers, spreading the change in values supported by numerous clan-elders. Many Kenyans have already joined a waiting list in the hope that this training programme will be held a second time.

However, this will only be possible if sponsors can be found for it, because the EU funding was only granted for the first "round".



Apart from the three-year course of study with a final certificate, there are also very popular one-day seminars and workshops that deal with issues of anatomy and health as well as reflection on the relationships between the genders. In role-plays, participants tackle traditions – and in this way the basis for change is created.

Together with the local grassroots people, the project also set up a Communication and Health Centre in Mosocho. Women and families seeking help can come here with their questions and problems. In the meantime this centre has gained a supra-regional reputation as a centre of information and expertise in the fight against female genital mutilation. Another major pillar of this work are visits by trained helpers to the families to provide advice and encouragement in a private atmosphere.

### Appeal for support and contact Girls are mutilated not only in Mosocho – our project needs broad support

The pioneering project has already been able to help thousands of girls and their families in Mosocho. To ensure this cultural shift can develop further and also to respond to the huge demand in neighbouring regions, it urgently needs your support.

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[www.fulda-mosocho-project.com](http://www.fulda-mosocho-project.com)

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A related project: [www.mit-reiseprojekt-kenia.de](http://www.mit-reiseprojekt-kenia.de)

### Vivid Communication with Women in their Cultures e.V.

"Women in Kenya", Research and Practice Project of the Center for PROFS



## Fulda-Mosocho-Project

We can overcome female genital mutilation

Nominated for Sakharov Prize 2006 – the Human Rights Award from the European Parliament

TV report on ARD "Weltspiegel", 5th of February, 2006

## We can overcome female genital mutilation! Fulda-Mosocho-Project puts the brakes on bloody ritual in Kenya

A day of joy in Mosocho! Four hundred girls march around the main square of the small Kenyan town. They have succeeded in escaping an ancient, bloody tradition that until recently seemed unstoppable among the Kisii people in western Kenya: clitoris circumcision, which officially marks the transition to womanhood and acceptance into the ethnic community.



This cruel mutilation is still widespread in many regions of Africa and some Arab countries, despite worldwide condemnation by the United Nations and legal bans on it. Some three million girls a year are physically and psychologically crippled by this practice.

Previously, the Kisii ethnies had belonged to the staunchest supporters of this ritual. Then the Fulda-Mosocho-Project kicked off a sustainable cultural revolution,

and since 2002 it has already saved several thousand girls from this martyrdom – although millions are still threatened by it.

## Violation of human rights in the name of a misogynistic tradition

Even today, for many African women the most important “celebration” apart from their wedding goes like this: Without anaesthetic, the small girls, some of whom have not yet reached school age, have their clitoris removed with non-sterile razor blades or broken glass. The genital mutilation frequently takes half an hour, with the child being held down by several women. Severe pain, infections and bleeding are the result. Many girls die during this act of torture. Fusions and scar formation mean that the vagina



is no longer flexible so that sexual intercourse and child-birth remain agonising for life.

The cultural background that explains why families covertly have their daughters circumcised despite government prohibition is that men will not marry an circumcised woman. They consider that this destruction of sexual pleasure is a guarantee of faithfulness. Uncircumcised women are considered unclean and they are assumed to have an unbridled sexual drive. Female genital mutilation is a key part of a system of values that controls relationships between the genders.

Turning from genital mutilation means re-defining the relation-structures between men and women. That is why this deeply rooted tradition cannot be changed “from above” by law. Only when we succeed in changing the attitude of the community to this tradition can parents and daughters be sure that girls will not be dragged to circumcisers secretly after all.

This is where the Fulda-Mosocho-Project sets its focus. It has worked with huge success since 2002 for an end to female genital mutilation in Kenya and is supported by the EU.



## Trust, communication, reflection, information – pioneering work for a new era

The Fulda-Mosocho-Project goes back to 1985 at the World Women’s Conference in Nairobi. That was where Prof. Dr. Muthgard Hinkelmann-Toewe, head of the Center for PROFS (Practice Oriented Feminist Science at Fulda University of Applied Sciences), met a Kenyan school headmistress from the Luo ethnies. She invited the German woman to visit her home. By the time they parted, they had decided to jointly embark on innovative ways of development cooperation. In dialogue with each other they developed and carried out seminars on family planning.

Once word had spread about this seminar work based on trust, Kisii women approached Prof. Hinkelmann-Toewe. They wanted to create a tolerant environment in which Kisii parents could take the courageous decision not to have their children circumcised. That is how the unique and sustainable “Fulda-Mosocho-Project” started. Since 2002 it has been run by the Fulda organisation “Vivid communication with women in their cultures e.V.” in cooperation with the research and practice project “Women in Kenya”, run by the Center for PROFS.



It works according to the *Value-Centred Approach*. Accordingly, it was planned and organised right from the start hand-in-hand with the population of the Kisii community. This close cooperation with the people affected is also the basis for its success. That’s because dictating behaviour from above is no match for a tradition that is older than any religion. Only the joint reflection of everybody concerned can break through old structures.