



LA RÉPUBLIQUE
DE DJIBOUTI



NO PEACE
WITHOUT JUSTICE

CONFERENCE SOUS-REGIONALE SUR L'ELIMINATION DES MUTILATIONS GENITALES FEMININES

*Pour un consensus politique et religieux sur l'abandon
des Mutilations Génitales Féminines*

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Eritrea is a new country which only won its independence in 1991. Its population is 3.5 million. Eritrea is located in Eastern Africa, with the Sudan to the North, Djibouti to the Southeast, Ethiopia to both the West and South and the Red Sea to the North East. Administratively, Eritrea is divided into six regions.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a deeply rooted traditional practice widely observed by all ethnic groups in Eritrea. According to DHS 2002, its prevalence rate is 89%. In Eritrea most of the circumcisions are performed when the girl is between 1-4 years of age.

This harmful traditional practice (FGM) is a big problem in our country. The three types of circumcisions are practiced in our area of the world. This discriminatory problem leads to an increased mortality rate of female children and women. In Eritrea during a girl’s childhood, it is mandatory to circumcise the female child. After she is circumcised, they tie her legs for at least one month until her wounds are healed. Most of the time she can not stop the bleeding and in this case she is at risk of dying. When they happens her parents say, that she was taken by God due to certain cultural beliefs. All of society accepts it.

During the practical training, the men say, we don’t see the practice during circumcisions, it is the mother and the traditional birth attendants (TBAs) who perform the circumcisions, they are the responsible for this problem.

They say, we don’t care about intervening on the girls’ behalf, but in reality they, the men, push the women to do it. If the female isn’t circumcised, she will not get married at all. A women’s society, parents and friend all discriminate against her, and they considers her “dirty”.

There is another problem with FGM, associated with the time of labour. With labour there is the complication of heavy bleeding. During labour, as the fetus begins to leave the uterus, the vaginal canal is stretched, this is the same piece of tissues where there is a scar from her circumcisions, due to this condition the women will often bleed heavily, and if the bleeding continues and there is no clotting, then the woman will die as a result. In our society there are many victims due to these consequences of the harmful traditional practice of FGM.

The government of Eritrea is committed to combat all harmful traditional practices, especially the practice of FGM. The Eritrean government signed both the CRC and CEDAW immediately

following independence in 1993, and 1995. Additionally, in 1998 the Ministry of Health developed a sexual and reproductive health policy. Written in this policy is a statement on FGM that states how the government is committed towards achieving the “prevention of harmful traditional practices such as FGM and early marriage”. Moreover, the government states in the policy how it will provide treatment, counselling and rehabilitation for women who suffer from the negative consequences of FGM.

NUEW’s efforts to eradicate FGM are comprehensive. We work to educate and raise awareness throughout Eritrean society about the impacts and consequences of FGM, especially on maternal and child mortality. NUEW is increasing its reproductive health program (the training of health promoters) and they have incorporated specific activities focusing on FGM in their since 2003. The main focus of NUEW’s previous anti- FGM activities. Focused on women and a shift to community leaders. NUEW is a grassroots organization and has a strong network throughout the country from the national to the grassroots (village) level. NUEW has been waging campaigns against FGM since it was established in 1979.

Thank you.

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