



Somali Women Association in Denmark presents:

Female Genital Mutilation in Europe and Africa & Radicalization and criminalization of young boys

Seminar the 27th Of October 2010 in Trivselshuset, Aarhus



Project coordinator Ambara Hashi Nur from Somali Women Association in Denmark and moderator Ali Nur, former member of the City Council I Aarhus.



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Preface

This seminar was held as a part of the 2015 campaign. In 2002 189 of the world state leaders decided upon eight concrete goals that are to be reached by the year 2015.

The eight goals:

- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability

The seminar is connected with several of the 2015 goals. First and foremost FGM is a major threat to gender equality and in order to empower women it is of great importance to eradicate this harmful practice. Furthermore FGM is a threat to maternal health as the circumcised women may face severe complications during pregnancy and birth. Finally FGM constitutes a major risk for the girls who are in danger of bleeding to death during the operation or contract deadly infections. In all FGM is a harmful traditional practice which not only has enormous health consequences, both physical and psychological, for the circumcised women, but also is a major violation of the Human Rights. It is therefore of the outermost importance to prevent FGM and make sure that this damaging practice will not be passed on to the next generations.

Another important issue that was addressed on the seminar is radicalization and criminalization of young boys with minority background. An important task of today's society is to prevent radicalization and criminalization of the youth. Research has shown that there is reason to fear radicalization among specific groups of the Danish society, for instance among the Somali youth where recruitment to al-Shabaab is a growing problem. To prevent this development we have to create a society which includes instead of



excludes. A society where young people, no matter color and religion, feel welcome and as a part of the community. We have to make sure that young people with minority background sees a future for themselves in Denmark and in order to do so education, internships and work is of major importance. It is no secret that it is difficult for young people with minority background to find internships and work in Denmark and that of course gives a feeling of exclusion. It is therefore of the outermost importance to guide the youth and help them reach their goals in these fields.



Joan Nørgaard Madsen, project worker Somali Women Association in Denmark and cand.mag in history and Middle Eastern studies.



Introduction by Ambara Hashi Nur



Ambara Hashi Nur, Chairwoman of Somali Women Association in Denmark and Vice President of Euro-Net FGM

There are two overall aims of this seminar

1. Eradication of FGM
2. Prevention of radicalization and criminalization of the youth, especially young boys, by providing guidelines in connection with education and work. We need to show the young boys that education is important and that they should go to school instead of doing crime.

FGM

FGM is an unacceptable practice which must be eliminated throughout the world. In Denmark it is forbidden by law to take part in any activities that leads to FGM and such activities are punishable according to Section 245 and 246 in the Danish Criminal Code.



The code was amended in 2003 making any arrangements made for FGM to take place outside Denmark punishable as well, even if circumcision is legal in that country. However the law does not seem to be used in practice.

To prevent FGM it is important to:

- Promote women’s knowledge, attitudes and capabilities
- Make radical changes in women’s life conditions and thereby promoting “equality in health” among ethnic women in Europe
- Involve other ethnic women organization, as it is not only the Somali women who need to be informed more widely about women’s rights, health and FGM.
- Work with the humanitarian rights for women and children, family planning, health related and cultural issues in order to elaborate and empower the target group in the future.
- Educate “agents of change”
- Build up a social network to provide social support to women with various ethnical backgrounds.
- Provide the women with positive views of their own bodies as well as themselves as individual human beings.
- Understand the necessity of educating mothers and parents to confront traditions and outdated practices to save the lives of their children and give them a better future.
- Form a united front among those with medical, psychological, social and cultural expertise and thereby promoting a coordinated overall solution.
- Find new ways and methods to co-operate with religious leaders. Arranging a religious conference to promote dialogue, network and mutual respect is the way forward.

The youth plays a crucial role in the fight against FGM as they are the future parents, and it is therefore of great importance to involve the youth in this work. We need to empower the young groups and create role models. Last but not least we need to treat them with respect. Without respect it is impossible to create a dialogue.



Recommendations for future work

- We have to make a follow up on this seminar.
- We have to use agents of change to arrange meetings and seminars in the future.
- We have to focus on building bridges between Europe and Africa. It is important to involve societies from both continents in the fight against FGM.
- We have to stand together to achieve zero tolerance towards FGM.
- We have to make a campaign to end FGM.
- We have to find out about the root causes of the problem.
- We have to work together with women in Africa who have already undergone circumcision – they are the real professionals.



Information about FGM on the name of the voluntary Danish Steering Committee against FGM by Sonja Mikkelsen



Sonja Mikkelsen, former Minister of Health and Traffic in Denmark and member of the Danish Voluntary Steering Committee against FGM.

Since 2007 a voluntary Steering Committee has been working to prevent FGM, with Ambara Hashi Nur as the driving force and in close collaboration with the Danish Association against FGM in Copenhagen.

An attack on the human body has in hundreds of years been a crime in Denmark, if the purpose isn't treatment to help recovering from deceases. FGM does not have that character. The question is: how do we prevent that FGM takes place in Denmark or in any other country in Europe and Africa in the future?

Information and prevention are the key words for the needed actions in Denmark. The last 10 years – unfortunately – the Danish government hasn't used a penny to meet the needs



for information and prevention – not even if a broad group of women has given the government an offer of voluntary work for short money of support.

With support from the EU from 2007 to 2009 The Danish Voluntary Steering Committee against FGM has worked out an action plan. The aim of this action plan is to give information about FGM to the public as well as to professionals with contact to the ethnic groups in Denmark who has a tradition of FGM in their home countries. Furthermore the aim is to give information to the ethnic groups themselves in order to prevent this harmful practice.

As mentioned before FGM is forbidden in Denmark, but the law does not seem to be used in practice. Until now only one case has been taken to court. There is rarely taken any action to help already circumcised women, and the level of knowledge about FGM is very low among both ethnic groups and professionals as well as in the society as a whole. Therefore there is a big need for the National Action Plan against FGM.

The Voluntary Steering Committee in Denmark is a part of the European initiatives against FGM. The main purpose has been to develop a Danish national action plan against FGM and to get the necessary support from the Danish Government. Inspiration has been found in action plans from other European countries where state authorities have taken their part of the responsibility.

The members of the Steering Committee is representatives from both the Somali Women Association in Denmark, The Women's House in Aarhus, Intercultural Women Association, The Danish Association against FGM as well as individuals, who are fighting against FGM. The housing association, Præstehaven, has been providing administrative help.

The purpose of the Danish National Plan of Action against FGM is:

- To reduce the risk of circumcision of girls who live in Denmark.



-
- To provide relevant information, guidance and health services to girls and women in Denmark who has already been circumcised.

This can be achieved through:

- Creating a political will and achieve economically support for activities, which can help prevent circumcision of women in Denmark and relieve nuisance for the women who are already suffering from the consequences of this tradition.
- Creating networks and activities, especially directed against young men.
- Providing accessible information to girls and women in the risk group.
- Providing electronic based information to relevant professional groups, such as teachers and others who are in contact with children from ethnic groups where FGM is a tradition.
- Offering already circumcised women physically and mentally help.

The Steering Committee has been in contact with the Minister of Health and the Health Committee in the Danish Parliament. Furthermore the Committee has been applying for funds. Unfortunately the Steering Committee has not yet had any success with raising the money necessary for the voluntary work and unfortunately there is still no sign that the Danish Government will take its responsibility seriously.

According to the Danish Health Board FGM is not a problem in Denmark, but the truth is that no one knows the extent of the problem, not even the women in the ethnic communities. Consequently the state authorities are willing to risk the bodies and souls of girls and women from exposed groups.

Recommendations from the Steering Committee:

- There is a great need of a revised edition of the information material on FGM that was published more than ten years ago by the Danish Health Board.



- There is need for guidance on how to professionally relate to a suspicion that a little girl has been circumcised or are in danger of becoming circumcised.
The municipalities are important players, especially the big municipalities with lot of citizens from countries where FGM is a tradition. It is very important that the local employees know about their duty to act as well as their options to act in these situations.
- There is a great need to conduct research among young men from ethnic groups where FGM is a tradition in order to find out about their position on FGM and to find out if they know about the consequences of this ancient practice. It is important to give these young men information about this harmful practice and make them speak up against FGM. If they take a clear stance and tell that they do not want girlfriends or wives who are circumcised, it is possible to make the elder women understand that it will be difficult for circumcised girls and women to get a family in the future.
- The preventive work in the target groups should be performed by representatives from the ethnic groups and with support from professionals and others with knowledge of FGM.

The Steering Committee has a research team in Copenhagen, who has prepared a research project on FGM. Unfortunately without money the research will never be conducted. Most of the work that the Steering Committee is proposing is volunteer work, but even this kind of work cannot be conducted without a little amount of money. It is therefore of the outermost importance for the future work against FGM to raise money and make the state authorities take their part of the responsibility. The Voluntary Steering Committee will continue this work.



Consequences of FGM by Hanne Gylche



Hanne Gylche, midwife and sexologist and Ali Nur, former member of the City Council in Aarhus.

There are three important stages in a girl's/woman's life where confrontation with the major anatomical changes connected with FGM can create problems:

- 1) In puberty where menstruation debut is current.
- 2) In juvenile life with the sexual debut.
- 3) In adult life where pregnancy and birth are current.

FGM has physiological, psychological, social and sexual implications.

At any surgical procedure there is a risk of bleedings and infections whether it takes place under hygienic conditions at a clinic or it is performed in private. Pricking and sunna can



therefore not be justified from a health professional perspective as a compromise to prevent the more radical form of female circumcision, the so called faraonic circumcision.

Immediate complications: Pain, bleeding, chock, infection, tetanus, blood poisoning, lack of ability to empty the bladder (urinretension), fractures and death.

Intermediate complications: Inflammation, prolonged wound healing, scar tissue, benign fibrotic/firm scar tissue (keloid formation), malformation of epidermis in the shape of tumors (epidermoidcysts), abscesses and nerve tumors (neuromer).

Long term complications: Chronic pain, sexual dysfunction, inflammation, accumulation of menstruation blood in vagina or uterus (hæmatokolpos), complicated births, infertility, psychological traumas (flash back, anxiety, attachment problems and depression).

Not all circumcised women experience complications. The incidence of women who does not experience complications is not known with certainty.

Psychological consequences

Literature studies has shown psychological consequences of FGM such as insomnia, nightmares, depression, neurosis, psychosis, PTSD, tension, concentration difficulties and emotional paralysation.

Loss of security and trust because of the mother's secrets and lack of knowledge about what has happened before years after the circumcision. This is perceived as extreme violence and affects the mother/daughter relationship negatively.

Circumcision gives an inadequate picture of one's own body and sexuality. A feeling of lack of power, injustice an anxiety can arise. The traumas can lead to low self esteem, loss of weight and denial of sexuality.



FGM and sex

Research shows that when an important erogenous tissue is removed the women have a tendency to feel reduced sexual response and satisfaction.

In 2008 the Norwegian Knowledge Center for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies made a major comparative study on the consequences of FGM. The result showed that there was a significant difference between the experiences of pain and reduced sexual satisfaction among circumcised and not circumcised women.

FGM and birth

In 2006 a study conducted by WHO was published in The Lancet. The study consisted of 28509 women, who gave birth on 28 obstetric departments in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan between November 2001 and March 2003. The study showed that women who has been circumcised, has a significant higher risk of birth complications, and they have a higher risk of losing their children during birth. The study also showed that the frequency of complications was increased in proportion to how extensive the circumcision was.

Men and FGM

Lars Almroth has interviewed 59 married men in different age groups, who have experienced complications in connection with their sexual life and FGM. They had penetration difficulties, wounds/infections on penis, impotence and mental problems. Another result of the research was that the majority of the young men expressed that they would have preferred to marry a woman who had not been circumcised.

The pain in a cultural context

Elise Johansen, researcher and former leader of the Norwegian project against FGM, OK prosjektet, has written an article where she is arguing that the pain from infibulations



becomes a part of the women body, and it affects them differently depending on the social and cultural context. Norwegian-Somali women feel the pain from their infibulation different from Somali women in Somalia. The pain becomes culturally meaningless in Norway, and the women's control of the pain is threatened. They have to find new ways to understand and bear the pain. The experience of pain changes from being cultural meaningful to an individual experience, that is not shared by the majority of women. They feel different.



The participants from different nationalities.



The Dutch Approach to FGM by Zahra Naleie



Zahra Naleie, MA and Senior Coordinator/trainer FGM, FSAN (FGM Ambassador, the Netherlands)

In 1993 The Dutch Government took a clear position to prohibit all forms of FGM under the child protection laws and thereby defining FGM as a form of child abuse. From 1994-2002 short information campaigns against FGM were conducted by a variety of organizations and Institutions in the Netherlands. These early programs slowly brought the issue of FGM to the attention of the Dutch public, media and politicians

In 2005 the Dutch Cabinet decided that immigrants and refugees from high risk countries should be informed about FGM. Furthermore youth health care (0-19 years), gynecologists, midwives, family doctors as well as the police and teachers should be trained and educated on FGM. At the same time it was decided that enforcement legislation should be introduced, and an intensified information campaign in six pilot cities were launched.

Pilot programs 2006-2009





- In this campaign more than 2000 professionals were trained by FSN and Pharos
- Guidelines and protocols for youth health care, advice and reporting centre for child abuse, gynecologists and midwives were developed.
- Educational materials for schools were developed.

Law enforcement

- In 2006 an adjustment of the law made FGM performance abroad punishable as well.
- In 2009 the statute of limitation of the criminal prosecution for FGM was extended.
- Since 2003 Holland has been providing residence permit to women and girls who flee their home countries for fear of being mutilated.

New developments

- The experiences of the pilot cities will be adopted nationwide
- Training of midwife experts
- The Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis (OLVG) in Amsterdam has recently started performing reconstructive surgery on female genitals that were maimed as a result of FGM
- A lot of parents feel pressured to circumcise their daughters when they are visiting their home countries. To prevent this pressure a declaration against FGM has been made and signed by the Ministry of Health and Justice. In this declaration the Dutch approach to FGM is explained in several languages (Somali among others)

Success and challenges

FGM has become a topic to be discussed among the African communities. Leaders of community based organizations launched to speak out explicitly against FGM: SAY NO TO FGM.

Our challenges are that many people are still eager to circumcise their daughters in the name of religion or tradition.



Recommendations

1. To strengthen and support migrant organizations in their role against FGM.
2. To provide adequate medical and psychosocial care for women and girls who have already been genitally mutilated.
3. To develop a national data base on FGM in The Netherlands.
4. To increase FGM knowledge among professionals.
5. To continue prevention programs with law enforcement.
6. To give special information and attention to newly arrived refugees.
7. To promote cooperation and building bridges in The Netherlands and Africa.

Conclusion

FGM violates the basic fundamental rights of women and girl children. Therefore it must be stopped. We are committed to fight all forms of FGM and we expect all levels of our society to participate in its eradication once and for all.

Women, young girls and FGM in Somalia by Batulo Essak



**Batulo Essak,
midwife and
public health
nurse in Finland**

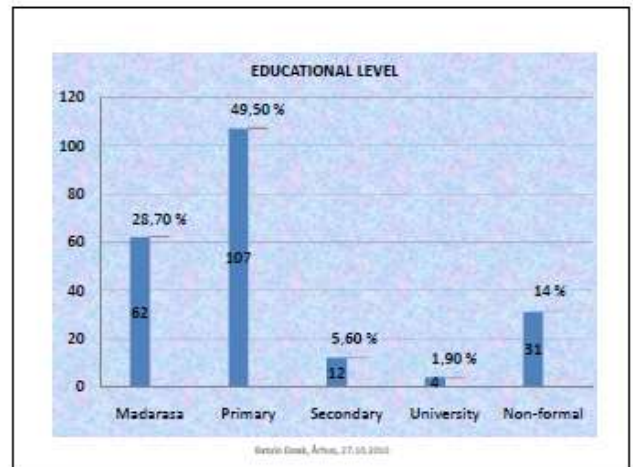
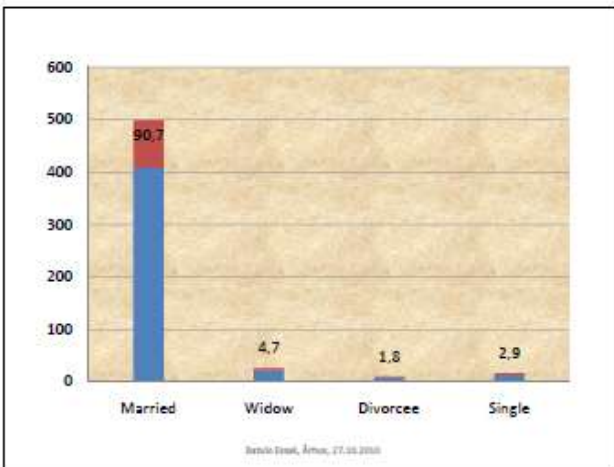
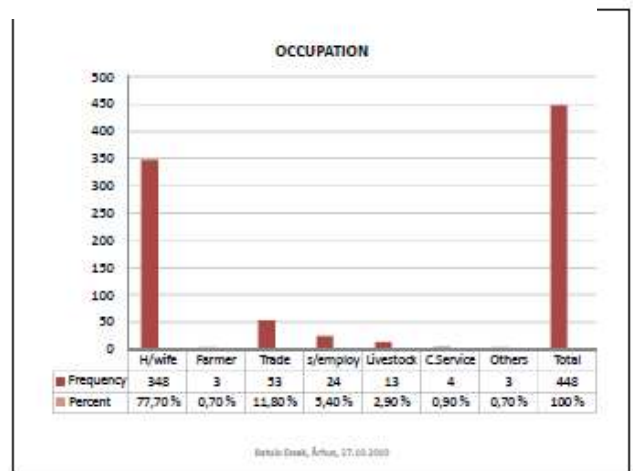
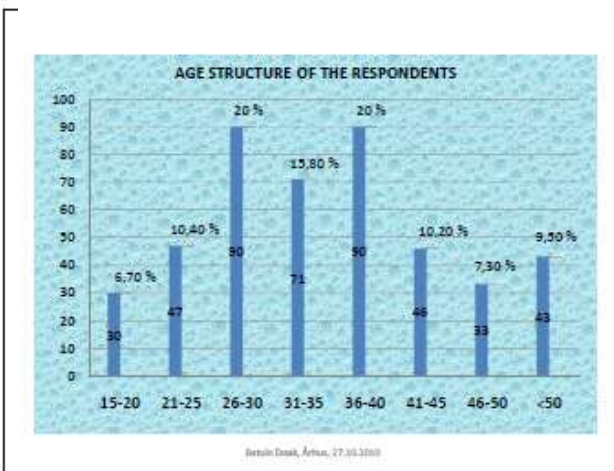
A study has been made in Somalia in 18 different cities:

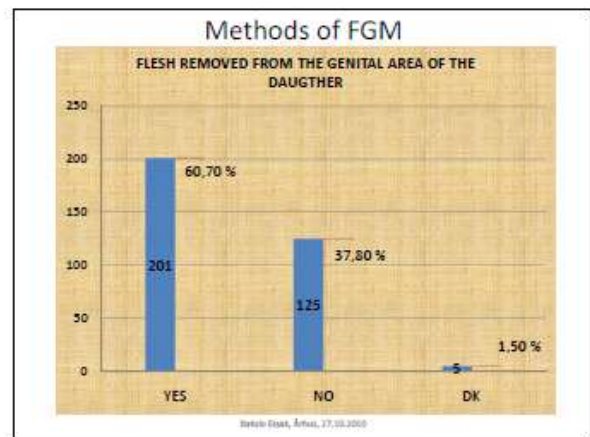
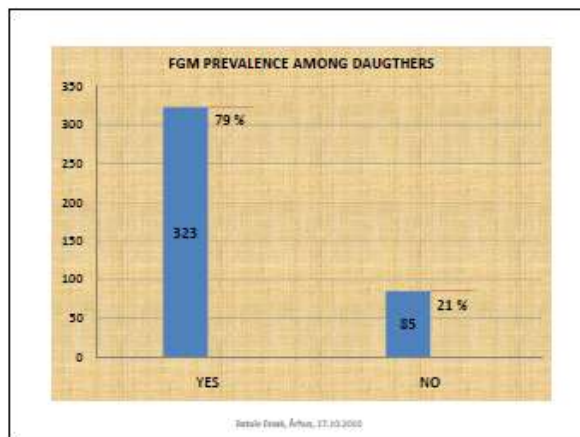
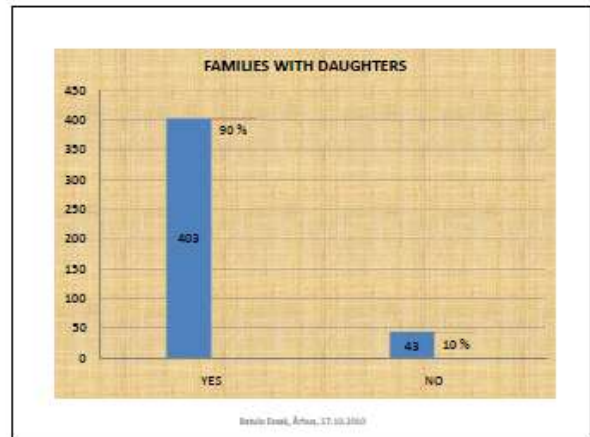
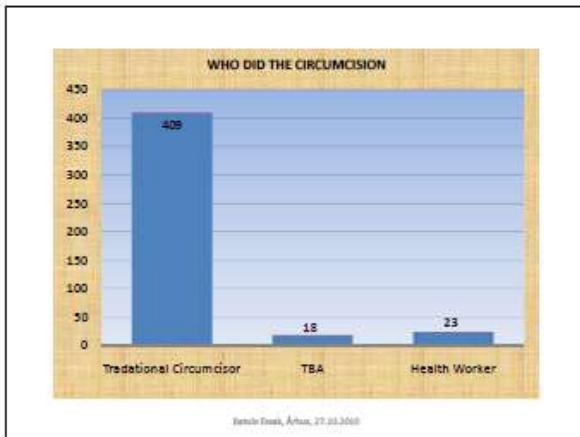
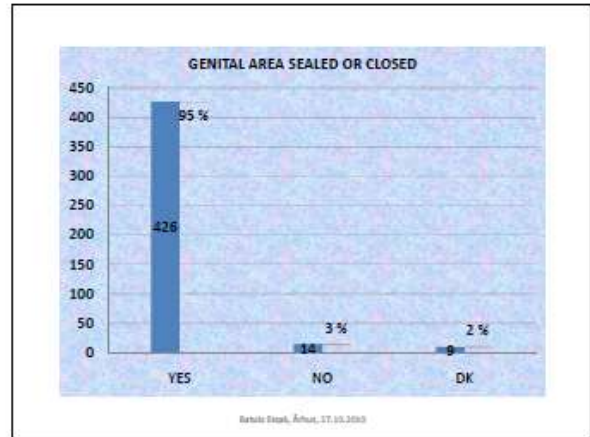
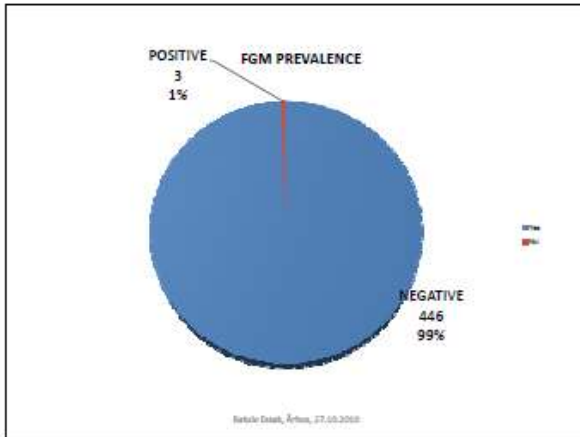
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5. Baki (Xoorey)
6. Zeila
7. Lughaya
8. Berbera (Mandheera)
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12. Buuhoodle (Qorilugud)

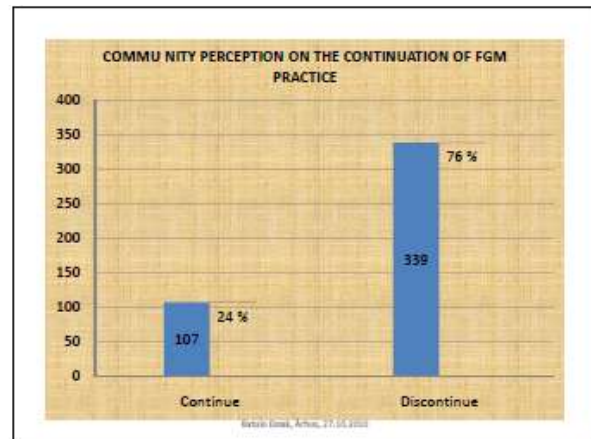
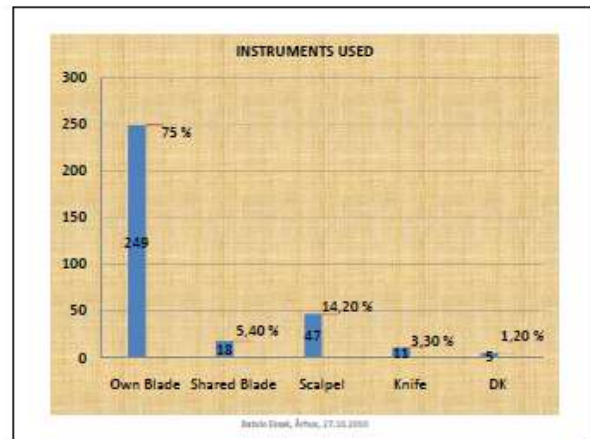
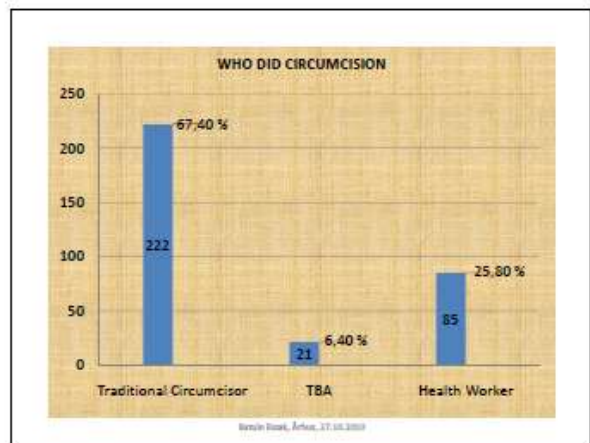
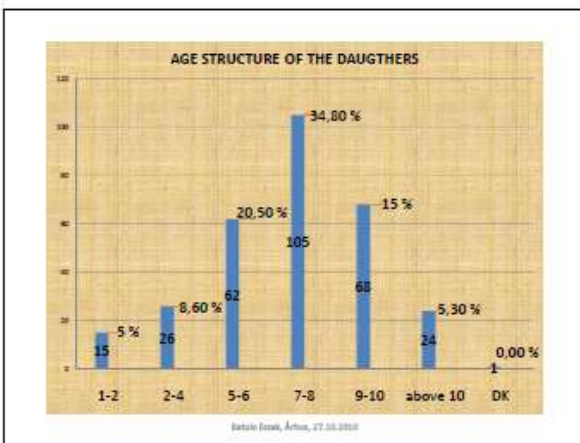
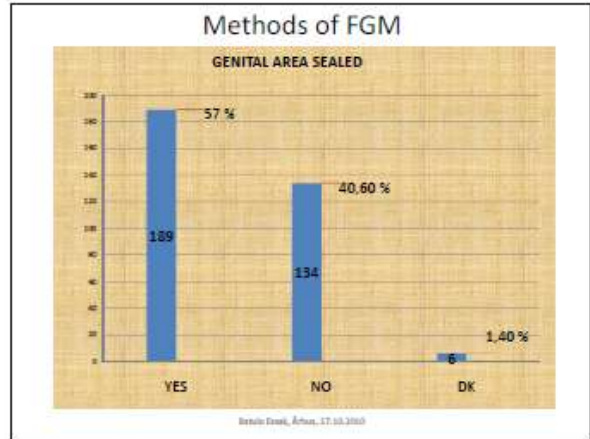
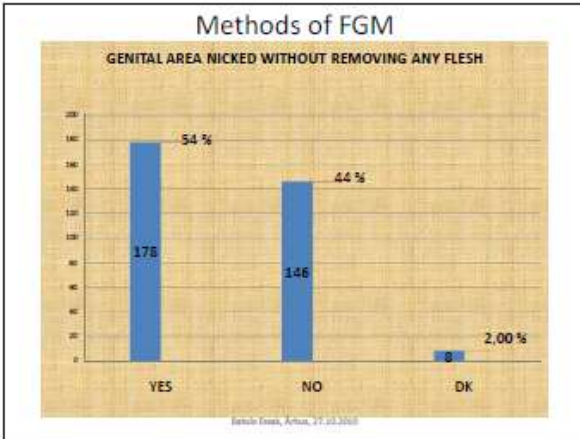


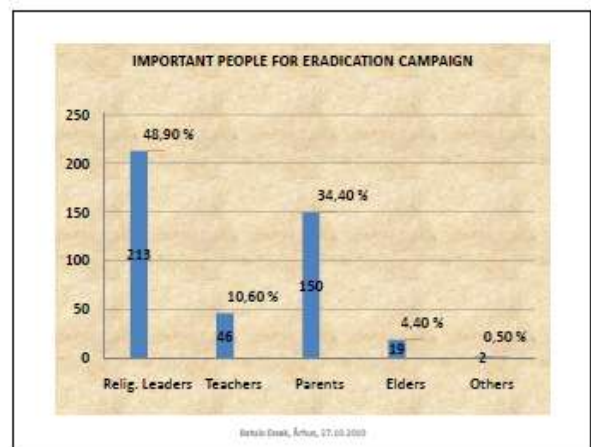
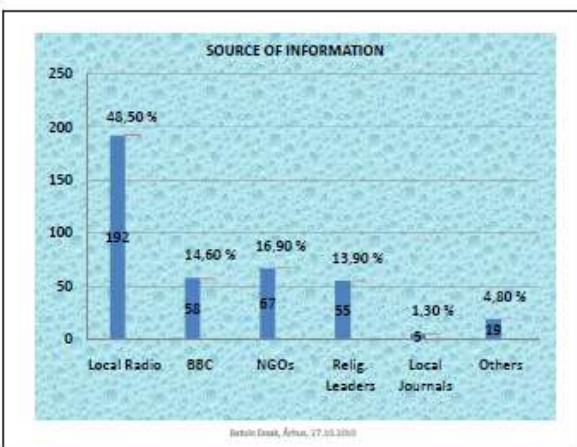
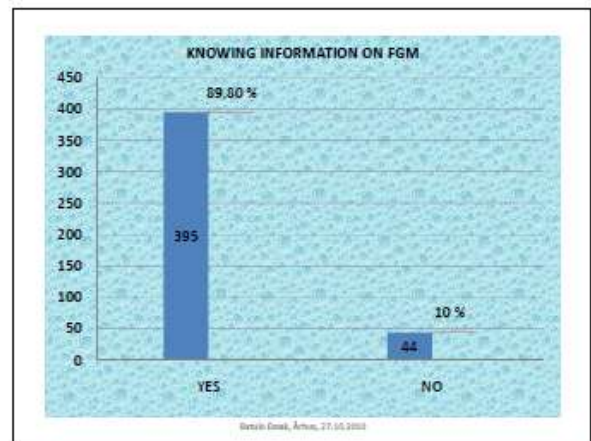
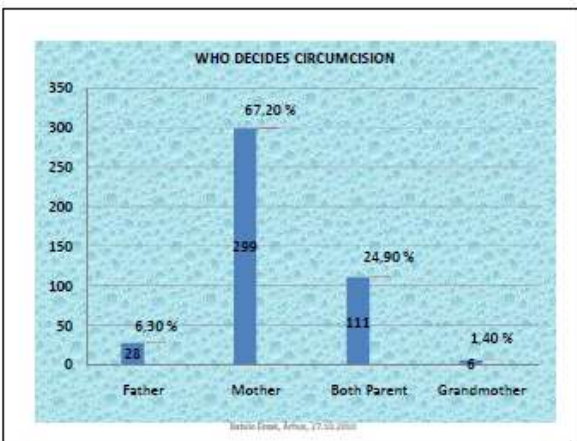
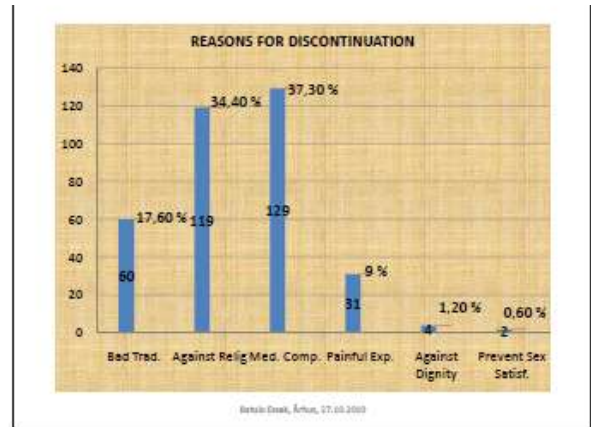
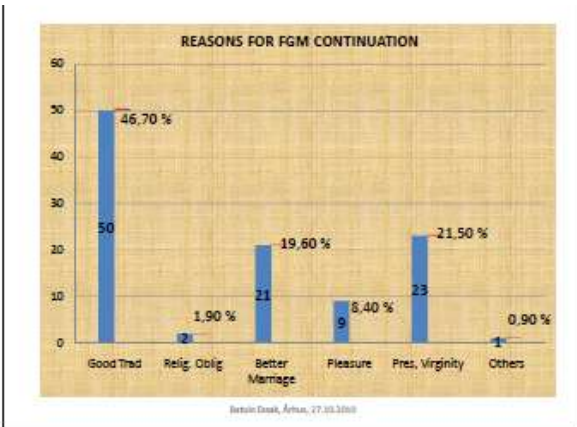
- 13. Ainabo (Waridad)
- 14. Garadag
- 15. Eil-Afwein (Xamilka)
- 16. Erigavo (Barwaaqo, Kulmiye, Yufle)
- 17. Lasanod (Canjiidh, Shulux)
- 18. Yagoori

The findings in this study are collected in these statistics:











Conclusion

Among the most important findings this research shows that mothers are the primary decision makers when it comes to FGM (67,20% of the cases). In 24,90% of the cases both parents decided upon the circumcision, and in only 6,30% the circumcision was decided only by the father.



**Edna Essak, Batulo
Essak and Ali Nur.**



Radicalization and criminalization of young boys: Awareness, differentiation and proper advise can make a difference by Said Abdille Ali

Ali



Said Abdille Ali,
Chairman of Somali-
Danish Friendship
Association and soon to
be candidate in
educational sociology.

Awareness

- Ethnic parents and the Danish system must be aware of any eventuality, where the youth in Denmark can be radicalized or criminalized.
- The Danish Authority should demand better collaboration from all organizations which are involved with children and young people of another ethnic background than Danish.
- Ethnic parents have to start showing more awareness than before. They have to know what their children are doing when they are outside the home and with whom they are associating.
-



- Somali parents should be aware of the difference between the Somali school system and the Danish school system
- It is necessary that both parents and the Danish system find better methods in order to help the children and prevent them from associating with radical or criminal groups.

Differentiation and proper advice

- We have to be better to differentiate the youth when we are giving them advice about their future education, so that the youth do not choose the wrong education and thereby risk failing after their basic school.
- Ethnic parents should have a better knowledge of how their children are doing in school, as there is sometimes a big difference between the parent's expectations and their children's actual status or skill level at school. Many Somali parents expect their children to acquire prestigious careers, as engineers, doctors of medicine or lawyers, even though their children are not qualified for that.



Pia Mortensen, social worker and head of Trivselshuset, Samia Y. Ali, chairwoman of the Danish Association against FGM.



Workshop 1: The Role of Practicing Communities in the Fight against FGM by Zahra Naleie

In order to find out about the extent of FGM in Denmark and make changes in the practicing families and the worlds attitude towards the problem it is important to start a dialogue with the following groups:

- Young people with minority background in order to confirm or dismiss the statement that young men only wants to marry girls who has been circumcised.
- The mothers who are in charge of the children's upbringing and often feel pressure from their own mothers to arrange the circumcision
- The fathers who are in charge of the families and who has a great influence on their children's choice of spouse
- The religious leaders who are unfortunately often very little informed and who are often afraid to take a clear stand against FGM
- Social network groups in the society, who are interested in this subject and who are capable of giving information on and against FGM.
- Relevant groups in society, for instance doctors, midwives, nurses, social workers and teachers.
- The women who are performing the circumcisions, and who needs an alternative way to earn money if they give up their work in this field.
- Pupils in schools where there is a lot of foreigners.

Furthermore it is important to have a relevant law to protect the girls against FGM



There was a discussion on whether a total ban against FGM was necessary or it was possible to tolerate sunna, which is the mildest form of FGM. Zahra Naleie was very clear in this discussion: “TOTAL NO TO ALL FORMS OF FGM.”

Facts about FGM:

- Around 130 million women in the world are circumcised.
- FGM is also practiced in the poorest areas of Kurdistan
- FGM is not a Muslim practice and a lot of Christians also circumcise their daughters. It is a culturel practice.

Zahra Naleie is asking for a clearer stand against FGM from the authorities in Denmark. In Holland the Health Minister and other prominent persons are protesting in public against FGM.



A group of women and men in dialogue about FGM.



Workshop 2: What can we do to prevent radicalization and criminalization of young boys? by Said Abdille Ali.



When young people are excluded from the Danish society it gives them a feeling of disappointment and not belonging anywhere. This feeling paves the way for radicalization and criminalization.

- In Somalia the man is the one who earns the money and who is in charge of the family. In Denmark a lot of Somali men do not work, and instead they get their money from the state. Because of this the man has lost some of his position and respect in the family – both from his wife and his children.
- Somali girls are surrounded by a great social control, while boys are allowed to do everything – they have no boundaries and no responsibilities. The lack of control on boys is a big problem. For instance boys are rarely seen in the café in



Trivselshuset, where they can get help with their homework. This café is almost only attended by girls and as a result the girls are doing much better in school than boys.

- The Danish Authorities have to work together with the parents in order to find solutions for the young people.
- Culture is not something static, and it changes all the time. As Ambara Hashi Nur put it: If some parts of our culture (FGM for instance) does not fit in with the rest of the world we delete it! We are here to stay, and we have to do our best to be a part of the Danish society - otherwise we will always be outsiders.
- The participants agreed that it is important to create a dialogue among the Somali society in Denmark and other countries in order to change this development.



Debate: Men's role in FGM

A question about men's role in FGM was raised.

- One of the participants explained that it was his wife who insisted that their daughters had to be circumcised. The reason why she insisted was that no man would ever marry a woman who is not circumcised.
- The female participants all agreed that men are playing a major role in FGM. They know what is going on, and they are not trying to prevent it. Right now men are denying their role – they have to take responsibility.
- Both men and women are responsible for FGM.
- It is important to talk to both men and women about FGM. So far the talk has mostly been concentrated on women, but we need to involve the men as well – they are the future husbands and fathers.
- We have to urge young men to say no to marry women who are circumcised.





Conclusion

With this seminar an important step towards eradication of FGM was taken. Both men and women came on the floor to discuss this harmful traditional practice, and especially men's role was on the participant's agendas. There was a general agreement that it is necessary to involve both men and women in the fight against FGM. So far the discussion has mainly focused on dialogue with women, but it is important to involve men as well and make them realize their role and responsibility instead of just washing their hands.

Another important issue that was brought up on this seminar was the lack of support from the Danish Government. In order to prevent FGM in Denmark the Danish Authorities have to live up to their responsibilities like their colleagues in Holland. In Holland the Government has taken a clear position against FGM, and a lot of initiatives have been launched to prevent FGM. These initiatives can easily be copied by the Danish Government.

Criminalization and radicalization of young boys was also on the agenda, and in order to prevent this development both parents, the Danish Authorities and schools play crucial roles.

Somali Women Association in Denmark will continue its work for the prevention of FGM and anti-radicalization/anti-criminalization of young people. We will continue our work to reach the goals in the 2015 campaign.



We would like to thank our sponsors for making this seminar possible:



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