



Helsingin Sanomat

06.02.2014

## **ZERO TOLERANCE TO FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION AND CUTTING**

According to the World Health Organization WHO as many as 140 million women and girls in the world have undergone female circumcision. It is estimated that this year about 3 million girls face the risk of undergoing female genital mutilation. The procedure involves either removal of all or part of the external female genitalia.

The practice prevents the girls from having a healthy sexual and reproductive life and makes them vulnerable to several health problems, even death. In the developing countries the main cause of death amid teenage girls are the complications experienced during pregnancy and in giving birth. Female genital mutilation increases this risk noticeably.

International organizations and agreements prohibit the practice of female genital mutilation unanimously. 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' (CEDAW) demands nations to secure that women are treated equally. Women have an equal right to health, education and decision making.

Also, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (LOS) demands that nations protect children from all violence against human rights. The practice of female genital mutilation breaks these general agreements.

All girls living in countries where female circumcision is prevalent are at risk of facing this procedure, but especially vulnerable are girls who live in poor conditions in remote areas. Often female genital mutilation is a condition for future wedding plans. In many cultures the future husband will pay dowry to the parents of a circumcised girl. The economical profit received from circumcised girls is substantial to poor parents and partly contributes to the prevalence of this hazardous tradition.

The practice of female circumcision is often an ancient cultural tradition, as girls e.g. in Ethiopia are circumcised regardless of their religious background.

The human rights and integrity of girls must be protected regardless of tradition, belief or religion.

Several organizations have been active for years to counteract female circumcision. In the projects supported by Plan Finland, the best results have been received through education and through developing alternative non-violent rites for adulthood and for finding alternative sources of income. It is essential that all members of society,



including children and young people, participate in the project. After Finland's initiative the International Federation of University Women accepted a declaration demanding that female genital mutilation be regarded as a criminal offence.

Despite all this action development in this matter has been too slow. Nations need to put into effect the international agreements that they have ratified. Individuals and collectives in villages need to be educated and included in search for solutions. Causes for poverty must be tackled.

In Finland female genital mutilation is a crime. We need to start actively monitoring that girls living in Finland are not taken to other countries to be sexually mutilated. The 6th of February, the UN supported awareness day against genital mutilation of girls, requires zero tolerance to female genital mutilation.

We in Finland need to say an absolute no to female genital mutilation.

Helena Ranta  
President  
Finnish Federation of University Women

Ossi Heinänen  
Secretary General  
Plan Finland

*(English translation: Niini Vartia-Paukku)*



AKATEEMISET NAISET  
KVINNLIKA AKADEMIKER  
UNIVERSITY WOMEN