

Final Report

Stop FGM Middle East

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1. Introduction

During the first twelve months of the project Stop FGM Middle East (after a preparation phase of six months), the German team planned and prepared a field trip to Oman, where a high prevalence of female genital mutilation (FGM) was expected and a number of potential actors had already been identified. The trip took place from November 21st till December 5th 2013 and was successful in mapping actors and achieving a more profound assessment of the situation in Oman – both in reference to FGM and in terms of possible future activities.

On May 7th-10th, a conference was organized with participants from Oman, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, India, Malaysia and Indonesia which was held in Istanbul as the Second Conference on FGM in the Middle East and Asia.

On this conference, a regional network of activists from eight countries was formed. New partners were found for projects in Iran which started to be put in action shortly after the conference. With activists from Malaysia first plans for projects were made.

On May 31st the project coordinator held a lecture in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) about FGM in the Middle East. In July two partners were invited to the Girls' Summit in London to speak about FGM in the Middle East.

Through projects and desk activity it was possible to achieve a relevant media coverage of FGM in the Middle East and Asia, also other NGOs started pointing to the existence of FGM in Asia. Several contacts with the UN led to the participation of high-level Unicef officials in the conference in Istanbul by skype as well as the participation of a representative of Unicef Iraq all through the conference. Unicef Iraq has become a partner of WADI in Iraq in the struggle against FGM.

Furthermore it was possible to get a number of fatwas by religious figures concerning FGM.

Further activities included the launch of an Arabic website, the collection of all relevant studies about FGM in the region, the production of several press releases and background articles, outreach to the press and regular updates of the English and Arabic website and the Facebook page. As a result, a number of media outlets reported on the new project and the number of page views has risen significantly.

2. Summary of Activities

2.1 Oman

2.1.1. Field Trip to Oman (Indicator 3.1.)

Please see Oman report

2.1.2 Successive activities

The study of the Omani activist [Habiba Al Hinai on FGM in Oman](#) was translated from Arabic to English, edited and complemented with an introduction, methodology and summary of results in cooperation with her.

In the context of February 5th, Stop FGM Middle East and Habiba Al Hinai were interviewed for a long reportage in the [popular Y- Magazine](#) about FGM in Oman.

Habiba Al Hinai was interviewed by a number of Arabic Media afterwards – not all of it was published but in some cases it was possible to reach a large audience like on BBC Arabic in September when Al Hinai mentioned in a discussion which was more generally about activism, reform and human rights the existence of FGM in Oman:



During the Second Conference on FGM in the Middle East & Asia Habiba al Hinai from Muskat and an activist from Salalah in Oman met up for the first time and started planning further mutual activities.

They also participated in the Video Workshop offered at the conference and were provided with a camera to contribute to a regional film project (see section 2.3)

2.2. Second Conference on FGM in the Middle East & Asia



30 activist and researchers from South East Asia and the Middle East have met for a 3 day conference in Istanbul on 7-10 of May, 2014, to continue efforts on eliminating FGM from their local contexts. One of the main objectives of the conference was to establish a regional network within South East Asia and the Middle East, where activists from various countries can join efforts to establish a unified voice that counters FGM, but also to exchange tools and best practices.

The conference was able to succeed in sharing newly found data in:

- 1- Oman where it exposed the prevalence of the practice within the Omani society
- 2- In South and Central Iraq where for the first time prevalence of FGM was investigated and was found to be as high as 25%
- 3- Iran, where only recently a number of small studies have been published in a book for the first time

Further presentations gave insight into the situation in:

- 4- Saudi Arabia, particularly showing medical data and evidence related to the practice itself in Saudi Arabia, where it is associated mainly with migrant workers.
- 5- Indonesia, where a high number of local studies exists all indicating a high prevalence of FGM of 80-90% within the Muslim population
- 6- Malaysia, where less studies exist, but results indicate a similar pattern as in Indonesia

7- Examples of best practices and different approaches were given from Northern Iraq (Unicef, Wadi), Malaysia (Sisters in Islam) and Indonesia (Hivos, Kalyanamitra)

A great success in terms of reaching out to UN organizations to get them to recognize the prevalence of FGM in the Middle East and Asia was the participation of Cody Donahue, co-manager of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation and Claudia Cappa, author of Unicef's statistical overview on FGM participated by skype in one session. Stop FGM Middle East presented the pitfalls of the statistical overview and its wordings, e.g. that only who reads the overview fully may understand that FGM does not exist in 29 countries only, but that UNICEF only has data for 29 countries. Unfortunately, after Ms Cappa had given her presentation on the statistical overview little time was left for discussions and questions. Yet, it was possible for an activist from Oman to stress the need for support by Unicef on this issue in Oman also by the local Unicef representation.

In addition to that, the conference was able to tackle an important detail in regards to the cultural dimension of the practice, specifically in discussing the relationship between Arab Muslim societies within the Middle East and non-Arab Muslim societies in South East Asia.

It was evident that some of the justification for FGM in South East Asia came from some religious figures from Arab Muslim societies who are able to influence non-Arab Muslims, while their influence within their own Middle Eastern societies is limited. Therefore, the practice of FGM in Asia is in some cases of a higher percentage then in many Middle Eastern countries.



Mawaheb Al Mouelhi from the Egyptian Task Force against FGM discussing with Omani activist Habiba Al Hinai, Thomas von der Osten-Sacken and Falah Murradkhin from WADI listening closely

This discussion was crucial to lay a good foundation for a regional network. Activists attending the conference were able to establish a common ground to work together against a practice that is often regarded as a Muslim practice. Therefore, the conference has succeeded to define the wider discourse that can represent more than seven countries across the continent in fighting FGM, but also in setting clear priorities in terms of the challenges.

The conference was able to meet its goals through:

- 1- Participants have agreed to work on establishing a regional network that covers all of Asia (Middle East including Iran, Gulf Region and South East Asia).
- 2- Participants have agreed to work together within the same country locally.
- 3- Participants have identified participants in each country that would be documenting data and cases for a documentary video.
- 4- Participants have identified areas that need more research and support in their own context and regional:
 - a. More research on Saudi Arabia in term of prevalence of the practice within Saudi society, and the collection of existing Fatwas banning FGM.
 - b. More research in terms of the prevalence of the practice in Iran, documentation of governmental efforts to combat that and Fatwas banning FGM from the clergy.
 - c. More research and data on FGM in Malaysia and Indonesia, also documentation on the governmental stance on FGM, possibly documenting the aspects of how the practice in both countries is legal.
- 5- Participants have identified areas in which more support is needed:
 - a. Networking and access to UN agencies, and inclusion of FGM in Asia and Middle East in WHO agenda.
 - b. Training on information management and dissemination.
 - c. Support and training on the establishment of the Regional Network from Wadi, so that it becomes functional.
 - d. Training on how to implement a regional and local advocacy campaign to change attitudes towards FGM, and engage religious leaders in addressing the issue and eliminating FGM.

2.3 Video Workshop on the Conference and film projects in Iran, Malaysia, Oman and Iraq (indicators 1.1., 2.2.)

When it became clear that Objective 4: “Small Intervention Fund” for Yemen is not possible to follow up on because the security situation in Yemen remains too risky, Stop FGM Middle East proposed to use parts of the budget for objective 4 for a video workshop on the Second Conference on FGM in the Middle East & Asia.



Activists from Malaysia and Indonesia conducting interviews about their work against FGM

The objective of the video workshop was as stated in the proposal:

- to train Anti-FGM activists in basic video filming and interviewing skills
- to get footage from different countries and from different perspectives about FGM which can be assembled in one documentary
- to create awareness by screening the documentary

During the Second Middle East and Asia Conference on FGM held in Istanbul, 7-10 of May, 2014, participants had the opportunity for training in video citizen journalism. Learning from the experience of our successful video project in Kurdistan that led to documentary and news coverage on BBC, BBC Arabic and the Guardian, we embarked on the idea of providing activists and researchers with cameras and production knowledge to expose FGM across Middle East, West Asia and Southeast Asia. We believe citizen journalists can document FGM in a way that professional non-local journalists cannot match because of the sensitive nature of the topic and difficult terrain we operate in.

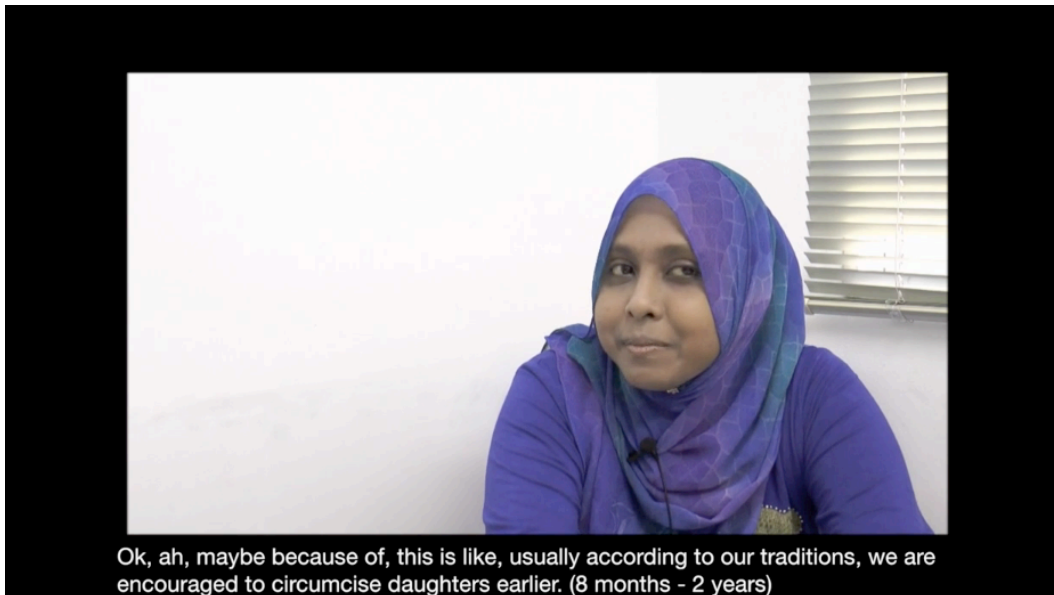
Around 30 activists and researchers from many countries including Iraq, Egypt, Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia and India attended the workshops to learn basic camera operations and sound recording as well as interview techniques and the production process.

Activists from Iraq, Iran, Malaysia, and Oman were provided the Panasonic AG-AC90, an easy-to-use broadcast quality HD camera, to take back to their home country. These four countries were chosen because the activists from these countries already had a plan of what to film (e.g. activists, victims) and filming is possible even if under difficult circumstances. Participants from Indonesia already had their own filming equipment.

Since then, the film project's manager, John Chua, has maintained contact with the activists from those four countries. We are able to share our experiences with each other. Especially in Malaysia and Iran filming is progressing.



Footage from Iran



Footage from Malaysia

With sufficient funding, Iran and Malaysia are the targeted countries in our next stage of the project. Armed with new video material and access to international media, we believe citizen journalism will be a strong tool in ending FGM globally.

2.4 Iran Projects (Indicators 1.2, 1.3, 2.1., 3.1., 4.3)

Due to the difficult political situation in Yemen with violent conflict flaring up it was not possible to follow up on the plan to map grass root groups in Yemen and support activities including trainings, leaflets etc. Instead it was possible to support a similar project in Iran and even get involved on a much wider scale. Therefore indicator 4.3 which was intended for Yemen can be seen as achieved for Iran.

Since June 2014, Stop FGM Middle East was able to support in Iran:

- A research in the province of Kermansheh
- Research about FGM in different regions of Iran was published in English
- translation and publication of a booklet on FGM
- publishing fatwas of religious leaders who oppose FGM

Prior to the Second Conference on Female Genital Mutilation in the Middle East two new activists from Iran were contacted and invited to the conference which were won as partners for projects in Iran.

In the past five years, researcher Rayehe Mozafarian has collected all existing studies about FGM in Iran and conducted her own study on the Island of Qeshm in the Persian Gulf. She also collected statements by religious leaders about FGM. Her research was published this year in the book “Razor and Tradition” in Persian.



Rayehe Mozafarian on Qeshm Island

Osman Mahmoudi, Ph.D. student in Family Counseling in Kermanshah Province, City Javanrood was planning to write his thesis about FGM in the region of Kermansheh and had previously contacted Stop FGM Middle East asking for support.

At the conference it was possible to coordinate with Ms Mozafarian and Mr Mahmoudi further cooperation and support for their projects.

2.4.1 Research in the Iranian province of Kermansheh (indicator 3.1)

With the support of Stop FGM Middle East, Mr Mahmoudi was able to start his research about the “Comparisons of mental health, sexual function and marital satisfaction of couples who are victim of female genital mutilation and other couples in Kurdistan Iran”. The questionnaires were prepared and colleagues trained to interview couples. Six institutions were found for cooperation. First interviews started in October. For this study a total of 500 couples (250 with the wife victim to FGM and 250 with non-mutilated women) will be interviewed in three cities and 50 villages in West Iran.

2.4.2 Translation of research results on FGM in Iran and statement to HRC (indicator 1.3, 3.1)

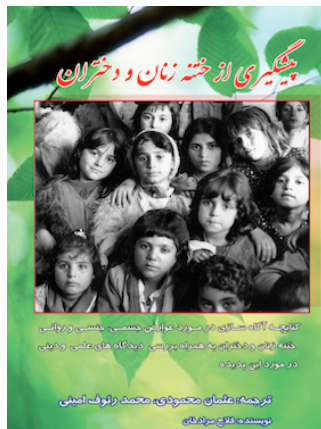
With the support of Verein Südwind Entwicklungspolitik, an Austrian non-governmental organization, it was possible to publish results from Ms Mozafarians book „Razor and Tradition“ in English in the publication „[Violation of Girls’ rights: Child Marriage and FGM in the I.R. Iran](#)“.

Verein Südwind also submitted a [statement to the Human Rights Council](#) of the UN General Assembly about FGM in Iran on June 6th.

2.4.3 Educational Training in the Iranian provinces Kermanshah and Kurdistan (indicator 4.3)

Mr. Mahmoudi who holds the post of managing director of the Hamraz Consulting Center newly introduced a training session about FGM at this family counseling center. At the center, trainings for housewives already existed in which daily issues such as coping with marital problems, hygiene and health issues were discussed. Since summer 2014, Mr. Mahmoudi and his colleagues are also discussing psychological and physiological risks of FGM within these classes.

During Ramadan in July 2014, 23 training sessions for 1.300 housewives were held. The discussions showed that knowledge about the consequences of FGM was low. To support the message of these sessions the book on FGM by Wadi’s head of the Iraq office Falah Muradkhin was translated into Persian.



2.5 Iraq Projects

Since June 2014 a comprehensive 18-months campaign against FGM in Northern Iraq and the Kirkuk region is co-funded by Unicef Iraq. Details will be part of the report “Core Funding Activities to Advance Women’s Rights in Kurdish Northern Iraq”, contract No. DRAG 10080003.

For the first time, it was possible to show that FGM also exists outside the Northern Iraqi Kurdish region. Wadi and Stop FGM Middle East supported a [study on FGM in South-Central Iraq](#) which showed a prevalence of 25% which was published in July.

The author of the study had been invited to the Second Conference on FGM in the Middle East and Asia and had presented her findings.

Another important breakthrough was the fatwa issued by [Grand Ayatollah Al Sistani](#) who is the most important religious Shia authority in Iraq. Sistani took a firm stand against FGM, answering a question by the Iranian activist Rayehe Mozafarian:

“If the purpose of female genital circumcision is cutting clitoris this operation is not right and is not a religious tradition. If the girl is hurt, it is prohibited. Female genital (sexual) mutilation or cutting off a part of her genital is certainly a crime against girls and there is no permission and justification for parents to do this operation.”

His fatwa and the first findings of FGM in Central and Southern Iraq are starting to trigger a discussion about a topic which is still entirely a taboo subject.

This has also caught the attention of Unicef Iraq and currently negotiations are underway between WADI and Unicef how a campaign in central Iraq can be supported by Unicef.

2.6 Winning religious leaders to take a stand against FGM (indicator 1.2)

Ms. Mozafarian had already requested statements from religious authorities in Iran about their religious opinion concerning FGM. The collection of statements are published in her book and in a short version in the English documentation [Violation of Girls’ rights: Child Marriage and FGM in the I.R. Iran](#). Stop FGM Middle East translated and published statements of the most important Ayatollahs in full length on its Website: [Grand Ayatollah Al Sistani](#)
[Supreme Leader of I.R. Iran Ayatollah Khamenei](#)

Professor Abdulrahim Rouzi, gynecologist at the King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, was able to convince Saudi Sheikh Mohammad Al Arefe with 9 million followers on twitter to state on youtube that FGM was not an Islamic ritual „because it has been proven that it is not a good deed, and it was a habit done by Arabs pre Islam.“ Stop FGM Middle East translated [the statement](#) and published it on its website.

2.7 Public Relations (Indicators 1.1., 1.2, 1.3., 3.1., 3.2., 3.3.)

2.7.1 English Website

Several new pages have been added to the English website:

[India](#)

[Saudi Arabia](#)

[Iran](#)

[Indonesia](#)

[Fatwas against FGM](#)

[No African Problem](#)

The page Fatwas against FGM is a collection of relevant religious rulings condemning FGM sorted by arguments.

The page “No African Problem” is the start of a series which will discuss different aspects of the phenomenon of FGM in Asia, differences to FGM in Africa and reasons for its neglect on the Asian continent. The first article discusses the MICS and household surveys Unicef based its “statistical overview on FGM” on and discusses how and why data was not collected in Asian countries.

The same article was published in the German Third World Magazine IZ3W under the Title “[Weibliche Genitalverstümmelung ist kein afrikanisches Problem](#)”

All new and newly found research about FGM in the region was collected on the [Research page](#) providing a comprehensive collection and data base for researchers and journalists. Short summaries of the studies ensure a fast find.

Also the Link list “[Connect with others](#)” was complemented by more than a dozen of organizations working in FGM.

The page [Films and other resources](#) was enhanced by educational and other youtube films about FGM.

The whole website which had been launched in April 2013 was undated completely in October according to new research and article findings.

The newswire of the website was regularly updated with news articles from the region. During the reporting Period 10 press releases and blog entries were written and published:

[Law or education – the debate how to eliminate FGM](#), 7. Aug 2013

[New FGM study inline with Wadi findings](#), 25. Aug 2013

[Saudi Ministry Sheikh pro FGM?](#), 29. Sept 2013

[An amazing case of informed ignorance](#), 29. Oct 2013

[Field Trip to Oman: FGM is acknowledged but is afraid to tackle it](#), 30. Nov 2013

[Oman: Precise descriptions of FGM already in the 1960s](#), 3. Dec 2013

[Meeting a circumciser: Men suffer from it](#), 6. Dec 2013

[Mufti of Oman: We can't describe it as a crime against women](#), 21. Jan 2014

[New study in Oman shows high prevalence of FGM](#), 22. Jan 2014
[In Oman 80% of women could be mutilated – results of a two-week field trip](#), 31. Jan 2014
[Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation; Action in Asia is needed](#) 5. Feb 2014
[Feb 6th: Many media reports on our work and FGM in Asia](#) 7.Feb 2014
[Joint forces against FGM in Asia and the Middle East](#) 11. Feb 2014
[Second Middle East Conference on FGM to tackle myths](#) 30. Apr 2014
[Second Middle East & Asia Conference on FGM shows that new strategies are needed](#) 16. May 2014
[Talking about FGM in Dubai](#) 4. June 2014
[The point of view of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Female Genital Mutilation](#) 7. June 2014
[Kurdish villages declare themselves FGM-free](#) 13. June 2014
[One in four women in Central and Southern Iraq is affected by Female Genital Mutilation, new study suggests](#) 14. Jul 2014
[Don't leave girls under FGM threat by ISIS alone!](#) 24. Jul 2014
[FGM in Iraq: The hoax of a hoax?](#) 29. Jul 2014
[New report: Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage in Iran](#) 30. Jul 2014
[Tackling FGM in Iran: Education about FGM during life skill classes for housewives](#) 5. Aug 2014
[Iraqi Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani issues Fatwa against FGM](#) 6.Aug 2014
[Popular Saudi Sheikh Alarefe warns of the way FGM is done](#) 6.Aug 2014
[Elimination of FGM in one generation possible – After 9 years campaigning 70% oppose practice in Iraqi Kurdistan](#) 15. Sep 2014

2.7.2 Arabic Website

In August the Arabic website was launched. It includes the translation of all page articles found on the English website at that time. Page articles which were added later to the English website have been translated into Arabic successively, the newswire has been filled with news stories from the region.

The objective of the blog is to collect material in Arabic covering FGM in the Middle East, and also provide Arabic content produced by the Wadi team concerning progress of work within the region.

Twelve press statements and project updates have been translated into Arabic:

The Press Release on the occasion of [Zero tolerance Day 2013](#)
 The launch of the [campaign Stop FGM Middle East](#)
 The PR on the [BBC Film in Kurdistan](#)
 The report on the [Circumciser in Oman](#)
 On the occasion of February 6th: [Zero Tolerance on FGM](#)
[Second FGM conference on elimination of FGM in the Middle East](#)
[One Generation to eliminate FGM](#)
[Opening a dialogue about FGM in Iran](#)
[An Article about the second FGM conference](#)
[Evidence on FGM being practiced in Oman since 1960](#)
[Field visit to Oman](#)
[Interview with Marzouka](#)

The website also provided [29 articles and snippets on FGM](#) found in Arab media.

2.7.3 Facebook

All articles from the Arabic and English Website were posted on Facebook in addition to other interesting FGM related articles and cartoons found on the Web. The number of Likes reached 445 by October 2014 with the number of people reached ranging between 42 and 490 in October. The page is liked by a high number of people from effected countries with 180 from Iraq, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Jordan, Sudan, India, Syria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and Oman.

Visits peaked in February and end of May, beginning of June when several press statements were posted.

2.7.4 Media work (Indicator 1.1.)

The main media work started after the field trip to Oman. Prior to this trip one interview was given to the freelancer Mirielle Valette who published it under the title "[Sexual Mutilations outside Africa](#)" in English and French in the feminist online magazine Sisyphé. Project Coordinator Hannah Wettig wrote an article about Stop FGM Middle East and the BBC Film about Kurdistan on [Publikative.org](#). In Oman we met a journalist from Muscat Daily (see Oman report). The findings for Oman were reflected in different articles and blogs and networks like [wluml](#) or [No FGM Australia](#). Also to the Oman context belongs an article by the [popular Y- Magazine](#) about our findings.

Around the remembrance Day against FGM in February an interesting article about our work was [Embracing shame: turning honour on its head](#) by Heidi Basch-Harod in Open Democracy.

In Dutch media we got the following articles: '[Meisjesbesnijdenis heeft wel degelijk met de islam te maken](#)'. Another one by "Trouw" "Vrouwenbesnijdenis met glasscherven en daarna as op de wond" from June [is here](#).

In the German daily Die Welt we were able to write a long article "[Der schwierige Kampf gegen ein brutales Ritual](#)" about FGM in the Middle East in February. Die Welt also took notice of our press statement "FGM in Iraq: The hoax of a hoax?" and asked us to write something for their audience in German about the Islamic State and Fatwas on FGM: "[Genitalverstümmelung – Fatwa oder Falschmeldung?](#)"

POLITIK



Der schwierige Kampf gegen ein brutales Ritual

Lange galt die Genitalverstümmelung von Mädchen als Brauch in Afrika. Doch auch muslimische Frauen – von Oman bis Malaysia – müssen sich dieser Tortur unterziehen, wie eine Studie zeigt

HANNAH WETTIG UND OLIVER M. PIECHA

Wenn man zu viel wegschneidet, mag die Frau keinen Sex mehr“, erläutert Doktor Mazouka. Die Beschneiderin ist zur semi-staatlichen Frauenvereinigung in der omanischen Provinzhauptstadt Salalah gekommen, um zu erläutern, wie und warum sie neugeborenen Mädchen die Klitoris wegschneidet. Lassig spielt sie mit ihrem Autoschlüssel. An den Fingern trägt sie schwere Ringe. Eine ärztliche Ausbildung hat sie nicht. Früher hat sie mal als Krankenschweflin gearbeitet – daher nennt man sie hier Doktor. Heute beschneidet sie bis zu sieben Mädchen täglich. 15 Omanische Riyal (30 Euro) kassiert sie pro Eingriff, sagt sie. Die jungen Mitarbeiterinnen der Frauenvereinigung kichern, als Mazouka weiter über Sex redet. Über so etwas haben sie noch nie nachgedacht, sagt eine. Dass Mädchen die Klitoris wegschneit, finden sie normal. „Jeder tut das hier“, erklärt eine andere. Sie würde aber gern wissen, warum man das eigentlich machen muss. Die Generalversammlung der Vereinten Nationen hat 2012 eine Resolution verabschiedet, die weibliche Genitalverstümmelung – Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – ächtet. Der Eingriff schränkt nicht nur das Sexualempfinden deutlich ein, wie die Beschneiderin in Salalah zugeht. Infektionen, Zysten und sogar Unfruchtbarkeit können die Folgen sein. Je nachdem wie die Wunde verheilt, muss die Frau vor der Geburt eines

Kindes aufgeschnitten werden. Ein Gynäkologe aus Saudi-Arabien berichtet, dass in seinem Krankenhaus „beschnittene“ Frauen grundsätzlich einen Kaiserschnitt bekommen. „Alles andere ist uns zu riskant.“ In Saudi-Arabien sind viele Migrantinnen an den Genitalien verstümmelt, auch im Süden an der Grenze zum Jemen soll der Eingriff praktiziert werden. Im Süden des Oman scheint man wenig von diesen Risiken zu wissen. Kampagnen gegen FGM gab es hier noch nicht. Die Vereinten Nationen und die Weltgesundheitsorganisation (WHO) haben über Jahrzehnte FGM als afrikanisches Problem gesehen. Erst im vergangenen Sommer gab das Kinderhilfswerk Unicef einen statistischen Überblick über die weltweite Praxis von FGM heraus. Doch darin werden außer Irak und Jemen wieder nur afrikanische Länder aufgeführt. Dabei ist Presberichten und regionalen Studien seit Langem zu entnehmen, dass sie in vielen islamischen Ländern Asiens bis nach Malaysia und Indonesien praktiziert wird. In staatlichen Krankenhäusern von Salalah weiß man immerhin, dass die Sache heikel ist. Kein Arzt will darüber reden. Ein Verwaltungsgangesteller erklärt sich schließlich dazu bereit. Er hat im Internet gelesen, dass es gesundheitliche Risiken gibt. Im Krankenhaus sei es verboten, sagt er, aber die Beschneiderin komme trotzdem am Kindbett. „Wie sollen wir unterscheiden, wer zur Familie gehört und wer nicht?“ Die Beschneiderin Mazouka sagt, es sei eben Tradition. Aber viele Mütter und Großmütter wollen „die alte Art“ der Beschneidung – das sei soviel, dass sie die Wunde nähen müsse. Mazouka ist damit eigentlich nicht einverstanden. Aber sie macht es. Der Süden des Oman gilt als konservative Region des Sultanats. Historisch sind die Einwohner eng mit den benachbarten Stämmen des Jemen verbunden, bei denen FGM als Problem international bekannt ist. In der im Norden gelegenen Hauptstadt Muskat verweist man gerne auf diese kulturelle Prägung der Süd-Omanis.

Aber auch im Norden und sogar in Muskat scheint FGM weit verbreitet. Das lassen Studien erahnen. Das Gesundheitsministerium zitiert in seinem letzten Fünf-Jahres-Plan eine Befragung unter Jugendlichen. Dabei hatten 80 Prozent der Frauen angegeben, dass sie „Mädchenbeschneidung“ gutheißen. Das Ministerium äußerte sich besorgt und kündigte in dem Plan von 2005 Maßnahmen an. Passiert ist seitdem nichts. Die Aktivistin Habiba al-Hinai beschloss im Oktober vergangenen Jahres, die Sache selber in die Hand zu nehmen. In Einkaufszentren und Krankenhäusern der Hauptstadt befragte sie jeweils 100 Frauen und Männer. Das Ergebnis war erschütternd: 78 Prozent der Frauen gaben an, beschneit zu sein. „Mich hat vor allem schockiert, dass keineswegs nur ungebildete Frauen FGM gutheißen. Viele Studentinnen waren dafür“, sagt al-Hinai. Sie schrieb an den Mufti des Landes und bat um ein islami-

ches Rechtsgutachten (Fatwa). In ihrer Befragung gab die Mehrzahl der Frauen religiöse Gründe für die Praxis an. Viele internationale FGM-Gegner betonen hingegen immer wieder gerne, der Islam habe nichts mit FGM zu tun. In Publikationen der Vereinten Nationen wird hervorgehoben, dass FGM schon vor dem Islam und von Anhängern verschiedener Religionen praktiziert wurde. Das ist richtig, treffend ist allerdings, wenn die WHO behauptet: „Obwohl es keine religiösen Schriften gibt, die die Praxis vorschreiben, glauben viele der Überübenden die Praxis habe religiöse Unterstützung.“ Die Fatwa, die Habiba al-Hinai erhielt, kann man durchaus als Unterstützung der Praxis lesen. Der oberste islamische Rechtsgelehrte in Oman schrieb, Mädchenbeschneidung sei keine Pflicht im Islam, aber gottgefällig. Was als weibliche Genitalverstümmelung beschrieben werde, sei nicht die islamische Mädchenbeschneidung. Denn sofern etwas gesundheitlich schade, müsse es im Islam verboten sein. Diese Meinung entspricht dem bisherigen Konsens der Muslimischen Liga, in der Vertreter der staatlichen Religionsbehörden der islamischen Welt versammelt sind. Doch nicht alle staatlichen Muftis folgen diesem Konsens. In Indonesien, dem bevölkerungsreichsten muslimischen Land, erklärten die religiösen Autoritäten „weibliche Beschneidung“ zur Pflicht für Muslime. Hier wie auch im benachbarten Malaysia belegen Studien eine weite Verbreitung der Genitalverstümmelung. In beiden Ländern sind aus den Jahren 2010 und 2012 horrende Opferzahlen erhoben worden: Zwischen 80 und 100 Prozent aller Mädchen in bestimmten Regionen. Auch in Süd-Thailand und auf den Malediven praktizieren Muslime FGM. Tatsächlich kann der Brauch der weiblichen Genitalverstümmelung anders als in Afrika erst mit dem Islam nach Südostasien. Bevor die Menschen dort dem Islam annahmen, hingen sie hinduistischen und buddhistischen Glau-

Die Hadithe lassen Raum für Interpretationen. So leitete etwa der verstorbene schiitische Obergelehrte des Libanon daraus ab, dass Mohammed die Mädchenbeschneidung nicht mochte, aber nicht sofort abschaffen wollte, um seine Anhänger nicht zu verprellen. In Indonesien hingegen gilt dieser Hadith als Beweis dafür, dass die Operation vollzogen werden muss, allerdings nur wenig geschnitten oder nur geritzt werden darf. Die indonesische Regierung hob vor drei Jahren unter dem Druck von Muslimorganisationen ein beschliches Verbot auf und erließ stattdessen Vorschriften, wie eine Beschneidung auszuführen sei. So soll nur die Klitorisvorhaut, nicht aber die Klitoris selbst beschneit werden. In den indonesischen Krankenhäusern kennt man diese Vorschriften allerdings meist nicht, kritisiert eine Mitarbeiterin einer islamischen Nichtregierungsorganisation. Ob eine solche Operation überhaupt entsprechend islamischer Interpretation vorgenommen werden kann, bezweifeln einige. „Man müsste mit einem Laser arbeiten“, erläutert der saudische Gynäkologe. „Ich persönlich habe noch nie eine Frau gesehen, die islamisch korrekt beschneit war. Wenn das möglich wäre, wäre ich als gläubiger Muslim dafür. Aber es geht nicht.“ Mit der Aufhebung des Verbots in Indonesien ist die Akzeptanz der Praxis gestiegen. Die Zahl der Opfer steigt. Ganz anders als in Indonesien urteilen die religiösen Autoritäten in Ägypten. Dort hat die renommierte Al-Azhar-Universität für islamische Theologie FGM schon 2006 für verboten erklärt, weil sie Frauen physisch und psychologisch schade. In Ägypten versucht die Regierung seit Jahrzehnten, FGM einzuschließen – mit mäßigem Erfolg. Nach jüngsten Erhebungen werden immer noch 75 Prozent aller Mädchen genital verstümmelt. Immerhin – es waren einmal mehr als 90 Prozent. Neben dem staatlichen gibt es auch die privaten Prediger, deren Fatwas beim Volk oft beliebter sind. Insbesondere den Muslimbrüdern und Salafiten nahestehende Prediger propagieren FGM als noblen Akt. Islamisten machen auch dem Sultan des Oman, Ibn Saïd al-Qabus, zu schaffen. Wie auch anderswo in der arabischen Welt nutzen sie die Aufbruchstimmung des „arabischen Frühlings“ 2011, um ihre Forderungen in die Öffentlichkeit zu tragen. „Gut möglich, dass der Sultan wegen der Islamisten nichts gegen FGM veranlasst“, sagt die Aktivistin al-Hinai. Qabus gilt als Anwalt der Frauen und ihrer Rechte. Nach seinem Putsch gegen den eigenen Vater 1970 führte er sofort die allgemeine Schulbildung für Mädchen ein. Er verfügte, dass Hochschulbildung und Berufskarrieren von Frauen gefördert werden. Als besonders religiös gilt er nicht. „Er ist fraglos ein aufgeklärter Mann“, sagt Hina. „Aber inzwischen nicht mehr sehr mutig.“ Hannah Wittig und Oliver M. Piecha arbeiten für die Initiative „Stop FGM Middle East“, deren Ziel die Bekämpfung von weiblicher Genitalverstümmelung im Nahen Osten und Asien ist. Die Initiative ist ein gemeinsames Projekt der deutsch-irakischen Organisation Wadi und der niederländischen Organisation Hivos.



Ein omanisches Mädchen verbringt aus Scham ihr Gesicht. Mehr als drei Viertel aller Frauen in Oman sind beschneit

beschnitten an, in denen Beschneidung verboten ist. Heute dominiert dort die schafitische Schule des sunnischen Islams – die einzige der vier Rechtsschulen, die Mädchenbeschneidung verpflichtend vorschreibt. Islamische Gelehrte bescheiden sich zumeist auf einen Hadith, eine überlieferte Erzählung aus dem Leben und den Gewohnheiten des Propheten Mohammed, nach der eine Beschneiderin Mohammed gefragt haben soll, ob sie ihr Handwerk weiter ausüben dürfe. Er habe geantwortet, sie solle nicht zu viel schneiden, denn das bringe die Frau zum Strahlen und gefalle auch dem Mann.

Stop FGM Middle East also published in the German development periodical [I3ZW](#): “Weibliche Genitalverstümmelung ist kein ‘afrikanisches’ Problem”. The German Radio Dreyeckland interviewed Hannah Wittig prior to the conference in Istanbul on FGM in Asia: [FGM- die Verstümmelung weiblicher Genitalien weiter verbreitet als angenommen](#)

Almost 60 journalists were contacted in Istanbul prior to the conference, mainly foreign correspondents based in Istanbul. Of these three came to the conference. Here is the detailed article the participating NGO [Terre des Femmes](#) (german section) wrote about the conference.

After Reza Aslan’s comments about FGM being an African Problem in reaction to Bill Maher’s remarks on Islam, Stop FGM Middle East contacted both Reza Azlan and the journalist at Pundit Fact (Tampa Bay Times) who had [qualified Reza Aslan’s comments as correct](#). As a

result Pundit Fact wrote a second article correcting its previous view and quoting also other experts that FGM was indeed widespread in Asia:

[Revisiting Reza Aslan's Response to Bill Maher on female genital mutilation](#)

Reza Aslan send an email pointing to the UNICEF numbers for his view.

2.7.5 Lecture in Dubai (indicator 1.1.)

The project coordinator of Stop FGM Middle East was invited to Dubai to speak about [FGM in the Middle East and Asia at Bold Talks women](#) on May 31st. This was a highly publicized event at the Dubai Community Theatre & Arts Centre (DUCTAC) in the Mall of the Emirates. About 400 people attended the whole day event in a Ted talk format. After the lecture about a dozen spectators asked for more information on FGM or for ways they could help. Three U.A.E. based media outlets interviewed Stop FGM Middle East in the weeks following the lecture in Dubai: the women magazines Femina, Emirati Women Magazine and the newspaper The National. After contacting them recently the journalists of the women's magazines affirmed that they are still awaiting publication.

2.7.6 Girls' Summit London (objective 1)

In July, filmmaker John Chua was invited to speak about Wadi's work at Girl Summit in London, the UNICEF conference hosted by David Cameron and attended by world leaders and specialists in human rights. He spoke about the work Wadi has done with help from Hivos, and the successes we have had as well as our future plans to use video documentation to expose FGM in areas outside the African continent.

Omani activist Habiba Al Hinai was also invited to the Summit and was able to speak about FGM in Oman and on the Arabian peninsula.

2.9 Outreach to researcher (Indicator 3.1.)

Several researchers working on FGM in the region were contacted, namely in Saudi Arabia, Iran, the U.A.E., Kuwait, Israel.

In December a meeting in Istanbul was arranged with Professor Abdulrahim Rouzi from King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah (see attached report). Professor Rouzi was invited to the conference in Istanbul, he is sharing his work and providing members of the Stop FGM in Asia network with information when they need it.

Researchers from Iran were also invited to the conference in Istanbul. Stop FGM Middle East was able to support their research and work following the conference. (See: projects in Iran)

The assistant of Professor Belmaker of Ben Gurion University of Negev provided us with unpublished studies about Bedouins who used to practice FGM and background information.

2.10 Other activities

In October Hivos printed a flyer.

