

Celebration for pioneers of a new era

200 examinations through the Fulda Kenya-project / charity needs new money

FULDA/MOSOCHO (vn) Professor Muthgard Hinkelmann-Toewe from the University of Applied Sciences in Fulda — and the Fulda based NGO Lebendige Kommunikation (Vivid Communication), who for years have opposed genital mutilation in Kenya, are very pleased about the completion of this stage: 180 head teachers and teachers from 70 schools in Mosocho are the first to graduate from the three year course of further study in "Sexual and reproductive health" designed by Professor Hinkelmann-Toewe. The graduates were publicly celebrated by their communities as pioneers of a new era. "The cruel custom of mutilating female genitals is deeply enrooted in the Kisiitradition. A whole value system is attached to it, which rules the relationship between the sexes. Leaving the custom behind will mean reweaving the tapestry of relationships between men and women. That demands for an appropriately challenging training overall several years", according to the Professor.

The training has been running since 2002 within the framework of the joint project "Overcoming Female Circumcision" co-financed by the European Union (EU), Kindernothilfe (Emergency help for children) and Vivid Communication. The Professor emphasises "Only when we successfully change the attitude of the community towards this ageold tradition can parents and daughters be sure that girls will not still be dragged off to the circumcisor behind the back of the parents



A schools inspector from Mosocho (right) and the project trainer Claudia Wegener hand over the certificate to a teacher. photo: private

in the night or in fog". The graduation certificate displays the signatures of the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza Province, the District Education Officer (DEO) (inspector of schools) and the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) alongside that of the Center for PROFS and thus carries high academic and social weight. The certificates were presented by the DEO with the District Officer (DO), 60 clan elders, 70 head teachers from neighbouring divisions and districts and many community members in attendance. Professor

Hinkelmann-Toewe's speech opened the celebratory ceremony. Dozens of benches from surrounding churches and schools were brought in for the honouring of the graduates and a podium was erected. A solemn atmosphere reigned over the square.

"It makes me proud to see the examination graduates so happy, with their certificates in their hands and the yellow sashes around their shoulders, as is traditional at academic graduation ceremonies" enthused Claudia Wegener

from the charity Vivid'Com, the non-profit making Fulda NGO, with whom Hinkelmann-Toewe and the Center for PROFS carried out the work in Kenya. The work of the German-Kenyan project has received approval from all quarters of the population. The DO questioned in his speech: "What is the name of the capital of Germany?" the answer from the audience: "Fulda!". The Professor emphasises that Fulda has won an enormous reputation in the region through this project. Thus the project is also given the shorter name of Fulda-Mosocho-Project.

Fulda stands for successful work between whites and blacks. Many Kenyans have already been on the waiting lists for months and hope that the training programme can run a second time, for a further 210 teachers, 50 % men and 50 % women.

Due to its proven sustainability the European Union (EU) has extended the project by six months. The extension runs out at the end of October 2005. The project therefore already stands faced with the difficult task of gathering the necessary resources for continuing their work. Contact the Center for PROFS: Phone 0049-661-65062 or e-mail : center-for-profs@web.de, the NGO Lebendige Kommunikation: Phone 0049-661-64125, Fax 0049-661-6790091, E-Mail: lebendige-kommunikation@gmx.de. Account number for donations: 435 102 03, Sparkasse Fulda, Sort code 530 501 80, Keyword female mutilation.