

# Female Circumcision

Strategies  
for Talking About  
the Issue

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**IDOS**  
An Association for  
Women in  
Development



**SWDO**  
Somali Women's  
Democratic  
Organization

## THE ROLE OF THE ILO TRAINING CENTRE IN THE SWDO/AIDS INFORMATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST INFIBULATION

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adies and Gentlemen,  
I am here today to describe the role that the ILO Turin Centre has played in the implementation of this campaign.

First of all I would like to say a few words to explain what the ILO Turin Centre is. The ILO Turin Centre is a specialized United Nations Agency which was created in 1963 by the International Labour Organization and the Italian Government. Its main activity is training for development. Since its creation, 24 years ago, more than 33,000 participants have studied there. Besides the implementing training courses, the Centre designs and develops multimedia training material, often in collaboration with other institutions, as in the case of this co-production with AIDOS and SWDO.

In the past years, the ILO International Training Centre in Turin has made a substantial effort to contribute to the promotion of women's participation in the development process. With regard to this, we have built up a structured action plan at different levels.

First, we have pushed for an increase in the number of women participants in the core of courses which are given at the centre in different sectors: management, small- and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives, trade unions, energy resources, curriculum design, training methodology and audio visual aids courses.

Secondly, we have organized tailor-made courses, addressed exclusively to women participants, such as training of trade union trainers for Central America, the impact of new technologies on women's employment (also for Latin America); a specific course on office management for women of the SWPO Liberation Movement for Namibia and, last year, a new course on the role of cooperation in the development of women, for French- and English-speaking Africa, which we hope to repeat this year, thanks to funding from the Italian Government.

In my opinion, however, the most meaningful contribution that the

centre has made to the promotion of women, is the collaboration that has been strengthened with those organizations dealing specifically with women and development, within the framework of international cooperation.

This collaboration began with the production of multimedia training material, for the organization of high-level seminars on "Women, water supply and sanitation", in co-production with INSTRAW (International Research and Training Centre for the Advancement of Women), an autonomous United Nations body.

The successful outcome of this first project, has given us the incentive to develop other forms of similar collaborations, which combine the experience and competence of the ILO Turin Centre in the field of training methodology, and the experiences and specific competences of other organizations within the framework of women and development. For this reason, we accepted with great enthusiasm AIDOS's proposal to produce jointly the training multimedia packages for the "Campaign for the eradication of infibulation in Somalia".

Several factors have strengthened our enthusiasm:

On the one hand, the involvement and professionalism demonstrated by AIDOS, which has drawn the attention of the Italian Government to the topics related to women and development, within the framework of the International Cooperation Policy, and the courage and the determination demonstrated by this organization in choosing to carry forward a project facing so "delicate" a problem as the sexual mutilation of women.

On the other hand is the precision with which the project was formulated, aiming at a direct involvement of the Somali Women's Democratic Organization (SWDO). A project which is addressed to different target groups, accurately selected, in order to be able to generate the multiplier effect at which all training projects aim.

What, then, has been the contribution of the ILO Turin Centre to this project?

On the basis of the documentation supplied by the Italian and Somali Scientific Committee and in close collaboration with AIDOS experts, we have structured and edited the training material related to the training information and sensitization activities of the campaign, which takes the form of a multimedia training package including both printed documents and supplementary audiovisual material.

The training, based on current principles of non-formal and participatory education, is designed to strike a balance between structured learning and guided, yet independent, discovery combined with

acquisition of knowledge.

The choice of the modular structure is determined by its flexibility, providing a step-by-step progressive learning approach, with a constant control on the attainment of training objectives.

The modules may be used in several ways. They may be used together in the predetermined sequence outlined in the introductory module; but they are also designed for easy insertion into other types of training situations with their own plan and strategy.

Each modular unit is self-contained so that it can be used independently from the others, according to a particular training need. Each modular unit consists of five components:

- I. Input documents
- II. Body of the module
- III. Output documents
- IV. Trainer/facilitator guide
- V. Audiovisual Aids (AVA)

The *input documents* clearly describe the general and specific objectives of the package and the main characteristics of the audience.

The *body of the module* includes text that can be used by the facilitator to prepare the lesson-presentation, or by the trainer to reinforce the concepts presented during the session. To reduce learning time and improve learning efficiency, as well as to sustain the motivation of the user, the text of the module contains only information and activities considered essential for the achievement of the training objectives of each modular unit. This component of the module is completed by a glossary and a detailed bibliography.

The *output documents* ensure that a feedback control process is applied to each modular unit. The main item is a most important key-issue checklist to encourage trainees to discuss the major points presented in the unit. The checklist also enable the facilitator to discuss key issues with participants and to verify their level of understanding and learning.

The *trainer-facilitator's guide*, one of the most important parts of the module, contains the necessary instructions for and aids to organizing and conducting a training session. It lists the hardware required for conducting the session, the documents to be distributed during the session and the audiovisual aids to be used. It also gives a detailed lesson plan which indicates in a logical sequence the key points to be presented or discussed; the training methodology and the documents to be distributed.

The *audiovisual aids* include overhead transparencies, audio cassettes, slides sequences, sound-slides and video programmes. All these

materials are organized into separate folders in a ready-to-use form. Copies of the transparencies are included with the trainer-facilitator guide for easy reference, while for easy use, the sound-slide programmes are supported by a storyboard which helps the user to follow the presentation.

The slide packages are presented as self-contained units that can be used separately from the rest of the modular unit, when very brief sensitization sessions are needed.

While designing the training component of the "Campaign", we have encountered some difficulties. The first one was of logistical, since the three teams working in the design were placed in three cities: Mogadisho, Rome and Turin. Every doubt, correction or suggestions for improvement needed to be discussed, with an inevitable long operational effect, owing to the distances.

The second problem we encountered was due the fact that being a completely "new" project, as far as the topic, approach, choice of transmission channels, target groups, methods, etc., were concerned, the project had constantly to be modified during its production. A case in point was the component addressed originally to both medical and paramedical personnel, which had to be clearly subdivided for the two target groups with different topics, language, training structure, and the further development of the foreseen topics which, from the original notes have been transformed into complete and exhaustive texts, integrated with glossaries and bibliographical notes.

Probably, the most stimulating but at the same time the most serious difficulty encountered has been the research of appropriate iconic and verbal communication channels related to the cultural traditions of the Somali population and, particularly, to the different target groups of the project.

As you know, the same image can be perceived in extremely different ways in different cultural contexts, and it can therefore transmit messages sometimes totally opposite to the original intention. Furthermore when we deal with taboos, such female or male reproductive organs, menstruation, coitus, and the like, it is easy to imagine how difficult it has been to identify ways and means which would not create an immediate negative or ironic reaction on the part of the target groups.

Similar attention has been given to finding an appropriate language and an appropriate approach in relation to the different target groups. On the basis of identical topics, as far as women are con-

cerned, we have given priority to an approach based on group discussions and collective thoughts (reflections) on individual experience, while a more "scholastic" approach was adopted for young students. In-depth discussions, based on key issues, were used for the religious target group and up-dating courses using a more "technical" language were used for medical staff.

All this has resulted in a structured approach, certainly not perfect, but one which, however, is, in my opinion, sufficient to start a concrete campaign based on sound training actions, even if subject to ameliorations.

To conclude, I think that the collaborative experience with AIDOS has been highly positive for the ILO Training Centre in Turin, since it has enabled us to experiment with the application of training methods to topics involve personally, in their daily lives, millions of women and girls.

Furthermore, it has given us the opportunity to test the flexibility of our structure, of the human and material resources, as well as the coordination of different services.

At one stage during the project, I was working with such a numerous team, that it seemed that almost half the Centre's staff was involved in this task-force for the eradication of infibulation. In fact, typists, graphic artists, the entire reproduction unit, the translation/interpretation unit, the speakers, the sound and video technician, the photographer and myself were all involved.

All the women and men have worked with motivation and enthusiasm, with an exemplary team spirit, as happens only when one is convinced that the work which is being carried out is truly aimed at the implementation of something useful and positive.

Within the framework of its specific training function, the Turin Centre hopes to be able to contribute to the development of projects aimed at the promotion and improvement of women's conditions, in their respective countries, and their full participation in the development process, and their self-management. In this direction AIDOS is for us a privileged point of reference.

Finally, we congratulate SWDO and AIDOS for the courageous and coherent way in which they have faced the problem of infibulation in Somalia, by choosing the training approach which, according to our philosophy, is the only path to development.