

F a G n t a . u t a t o n
A n n t . r a t s C a s t . o r n . n r . o F r o H r

By Eloise Sims

“An average girl who isn’t circumcised has very little hope for the future.”

This stark statement, by Nikki Denholm, manager of the New Zealand Female Genital Mutilation Education Program, puts an African reality on a practice that Western society views as abhorrent child abuse.

“An uncircumcised girl is not eligible for marriage. Without a husband she has no access to land or the income flow that comes from this. She can find herself ostracized,” Nikki explains. “So a deep cultural understanding of why it’s such an important practice and why loving parents actually circumcise their daughters is crucial to helping prevent it in future.”

Would this procedure have been performed on me? Almost certainly. The idea of being forced to lie down and be held still while my genitals were cut away, without my consent, or any anesthetic, makes me feel sick.

But, as Denholm explains, my instant reaction of horror is in fact detrimental to her cause. One of the main ways to manage the prevention of FGM is to firstly understand why the practice is so important and therefore common

There are fact sheets, diagrams