

LONDON BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH ACTION PROJECT

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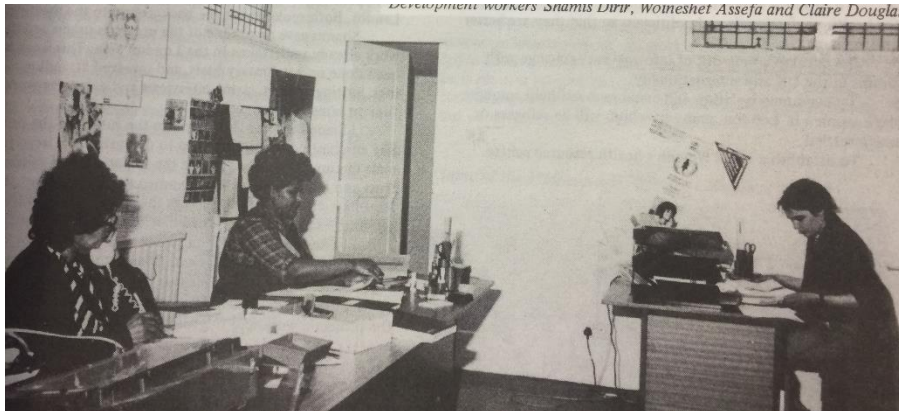
London Black Women's Health Action Project

- Founded in 1982 - Self-organising group of women within the Somali and Arab communities in Tower Hamlets
- Group's first director, Shamis Dirir - health care worker
- Early campaigning work on Female Circumcision and expanded to deal with women's broader health needs

Campaigning and Support for Women

Campaign against Bill to Prohibit FC:

- Concern about criminalization of practice on grounds of custom or ritual as racist
- Argued government policy lacked knowledge about communities affected by legislation and done without consultation
- Worry that would create “confusion and unrest” in community and fear of prosecution would mean not seeking aid



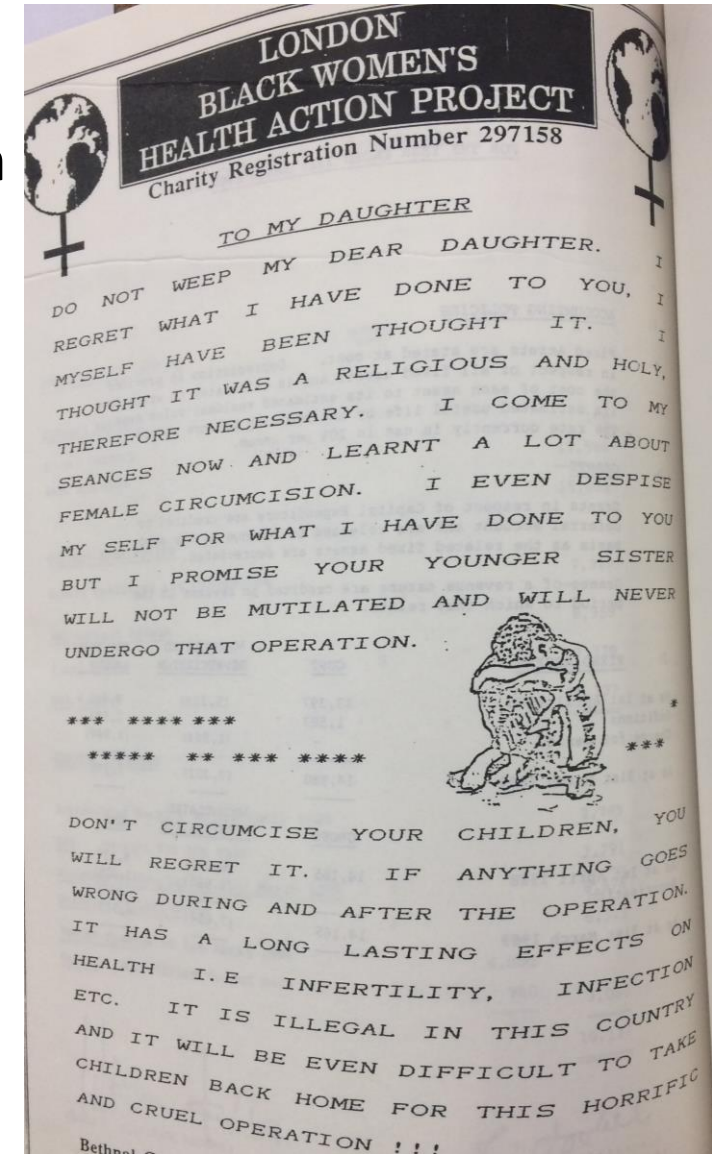
Campaigning and Support for Women

Prohibition won't lead to prevention without education

- “Main way to stop female circumcision will be through education and support for families concerned”

Government offered funding to NGOs to run such educational campaigns – DHSS provide funding for educational materials

GLC Women's Unit Funding – allowed the LBWHAP to become “an information resource for other community and professional groups on the health needs of black women.”



What Happened After and Where Are The Now

- 1980s community based health education at a grassroots level with a focus on education, advice and information and empowerment
- 1990s expanded out work to focus on health education of young people and to provide social work training
- 2000s change of name to expand focus beyond London and just women – becomes Black Women's Health and Family Support – looks at employment programmes, older members of the community and young people
- 2010s turned away from FGM work for the most part owing to funding issues focus on women's empowerment programme, youth programmes and employment training

Changing Tides

- Group is concerned about ability to compete for a funding that is all commissioned based – lost of their recent programmes as a result
- Ending of various local government streams brought an end to specific campaigning and education work outside of the community on FGM
- Concern about the movement to have services based at hubs throughout the local area – when women in the local community still rely on the group as a trusted one stop shop