

the establishment of a special information and counselling service for women – a place where they can meet and discuss their problems. This has shown itself to be necessary as the (ab)use of khat among women is even more tabooed than among men.

The project has obtained good results by linking the social effort and the treatment effort and can point out some special focus points:

- The significance of bicultural employees
- Placing the treatment effort in the local community
- The collaboration between volunteers, authorities, and individuals in the local community
- Linking social activities and treatment services
- Availability and flexibility regarding time and place for the service and treatment

Not only a substance abuse problem

Experiences from the project show that many in addition to their khat abuse also have massive problems, including poly-drug abuse and major social and psychological issues; many with PTSD-like symptoms. In addition to alcohol and cannabis which are the most common, the poly-drug abuse includes stronger drugs such as cocaine and heroin.

The result is that many of the users live in a parallel community; they have trouble functioning socially in relation to both their families, the Somali community, and not least the Danish society in general. They experience great barriers in regards to employment¹, language, knowledge of the system and the Danish society in general. Experience show that khat abuse among Somalis in Denmark often is related to a long list of problems of social, health, and mental character and as such we are dealing with a group of citizens living under extreme pressure which the project has managed to reach through a coordinated and comprehensive effort.

¹ Employment of citizens of Somali ethnicity aged 16-64 years in Aarhus is: 36%. (2008). More than half of the citizens of Somali ethnicity of the working age are living on transfer incomes. (2008).



Introduction to the Iftiin Project

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Linking social work and treatment efforts in connection with khat addiction in diaspora

The Iftiin project has come about as collaboration between the Social Service Centre, Center of Substance Abuse Treatment Service, Employment Center, police, and the local Somalian clubs.

Iftiin is a local outreach team of bicultural employees from the Department of Social Services in the Municipality of Aarhus. The team offers help and treatment for citizens with khat addiction and attempts to prevent potential khat users from becoming addicted.

Since spring 2008 the project has been in touch with more than 100 men of Somali ethnicity² representing a group of citizens particularly at risk. About half of them have enquired about counselling and/or treatment for their substance abuse and regularly visits the drop-in centre for counselling and activities such as exercises and communal meals.

By the end of September 2009 41 citizens with addiction were receiving treatment for substance abuse and related psychiatric disorders.

The service consists of motivating courses and a treatment course. The first is based on individual conversations with users which uncover the abuse and problems related to it with the intent to motivate the addict to start treatment. The second service is for addicts who are motivated to stop using drugs, and consists of group sessions, primarily based on conversational therapy based on cognitive methods. 2/3 of the users participate in motivating courses and 1/3 in treatment courses. At this point we have no experience with finalized treatment courses.

Connected to the service of treatment is an employment initiative for users who are motivated to and able to hold a regular job or a job with assistance.

² Approximately 16,500 Somalis live in Denmark. 2/3 are refugees or people who have been reunited with their families and 1/3 are progeny. (The Danish Department of Statistics population figures 2008). 3,769 people of Somali ethnicity live in Aarhus – just over half of them are under the age of 18.

“Gadeklinikken” is a walk-in clinic which is a service provided in the substance abuse treatment field. Here social and health service assistants provide support and guidance to addicts and they also provide the clients with assistance in establishing a connection with the established health care system. “The Center Base” is a special service for at-risk citizens which – in cooperation with the local psychiatric department – assists the project in providing support for the homeless regarding housing and in-home support

In addition to offering support and assistance, the project has helped uncover new knowledge regarding abuse patterns among khat users in diaspora as well as gathering experience regarding treatment.

Khat use in Denmark has not previously been mapped out. The special effort in the Municipality of Aarhus is continuously documented with a view to gathering knowledge in the field.³



A user survey conducted on behalf of the Danish National Board of Health in 2009 regarding the extent and use of khat among Somalis living in Denmark⁴ shows that almost half of the men and 16% of the women in the survey chew khat regularly. This emphasizes the need for this special effort.

The Iftiin project is just about to make contacts to approximately 15 women who have approached Iftiin regarding their problems with personal finances, social conditions, and parenting.

We know that a number of these women also use khat and we are currently examining to which extent we are dealing with actual substance abuse issues. Most of them are divorced single mothers. The project is currently working on

³ Center for Social Innovation (CSU) is responsible for collecting data and performing evaluation. [Http://www.aarhuskommune.dk/csu](http://www.aarhuskommune.dk/csu)

⁴ “Use of khat among people of Somali ethnicity in Denmark – a survey of the extent and the attitude towards it” The Danish National Board of Health, 2009.