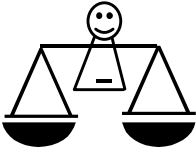
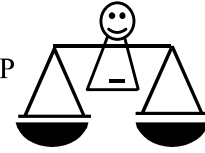


**CAMEROON YOUNG JURISTS LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER  
CYJULERC**



Registration No 236/G.37/D.14/1/Vol.8/T/OAPP  
Vision: “securing a livelihood within a legal framework”  
P.O BOX 68 Buea South West Province- Cameroon  
Tel: (237)7764 27 30/ 993 07 05, Email: [cyjulerc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cyjulerc@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.cyjulerc.bravehost.com](http://www.cyjulerc.bravehost.com)



---

**FINAL ACTIVITY REPORT**

**NO  
CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECT ON THE ERADICATION OF FEMALE  
GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)**



**IN THE  
ARABE CHOA TRIBES OF THE LOGONE AND CHARI DIVISION  
OF THE  
FAR NORTH PROVINCE CAMEROON, AFRICA**

**Supported By: EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IN CAMEROON**

## INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Cameroon is amongst 31 African Countries practicing FGM. Female circumcision has been a long-standing cultural practice in the Arabe Choa tribe in the Far North Province. Documented cases within this tribe indicate about 20% of women and girls undergo clitoridectomy or excision between two weeks of age. In the same vein uncircumcised young women undergo the ritual shortly after giving birth, because it is believed that the practice initiates them into womanhood, controls their sexuality, control birth rate and conserves the monogamous status of the women.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practiced by the Arabe Choa tribes is a cultural practice meant to marginalize women and subordinate them into prescribed roles under the men within the family and the community. It is linked with the unequal status of women in the political, social and economic structure of the society. FGM is a gross violation of the human rights of women. It is also harmful to the health of the woman. Very little is done on FGM in Cameroon despite the various UN International Human Rights Conventions that Cameroon has signed.

CYJULERC worked in collaboration with a Kousseri based organization known by its acronym as AL FAN headed by one Mariam Mousa and the Assistant Divisional Delegate for Women and the Family, Mr. Miscouna Saliou. They were the two main resource persons who work relentlessly through out the implementation of this project.

Mr. Miscouna is a Social Welfare expert who wrote his end of course dissertation at ENAM on FGM practice in the Logone and Chari Division so he has a mastery of the situation of FGM in the Arabe Choa communities. The two resource persons are indigenes of this Division so they played key roles in the success of the project. They target population is an indigenous one with a below 1% literacy rate. Most of the sensitization was done through translation and directly by Mr. Miscouna.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** Female Circumcision (FC) otherwise known as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practiced in all the eight (8) Sub-Divisions of the Logone and Chari Division. It is practiced by the Arabe Choa, and the Sara, communities, with 100% practice rate among the Arabe Choa communities. The Saras are a minority group which migrated from Chad and settled along the Logone and Chari river. They have a practice rate of 25%.

Generally the girls are mutilated between 3-10 years with those between 4 and 5 most victimized. The age for mutilation ranges from 2 to 14 years in the aforementioned communities but girls aged 16 and adult women are also circumcised due to social pressure from their peers or families. Circumcision is done during the months of November, December and January for it there are less flies and mosquitoes during these months. It not also done on Fridays for it is believed accidents which can lead to the victim's death occur easily on Fridays. The circumcision is done on a group of girls at the same time and usually girls of the same family members. They are group into one large

group in one of their parents' home and they are circumcised. They are nursed for a few days and then sent to their various parents.

Women and girls are deprived of school and kept in fattening homes for 1 year (3 years in the past), to prepare them for circumcision and marriage (how to take care of their husbands). Girls in these communities are exclusively meant for marriage and often to very old men with several wives. Most are not given the opportunity to have the basic primary school education while the boys are sent to school and given opportunities to grow and have independent lives.

**OBJECTIVES:** This project was aimed at creating awareness within the communities of the need to stop the practice of FGM, empower women socially, economically and politically, thus increasing their self esteem and promoting equality with men in the community. In this way, their practical and strategic gender needs will be met.

**GOALS:** The goals of project were to seek the protection of the human rights of women, lobby law makers and government officials to adopt legislation against FGM in Cameroon. It was also aimed at beginning the process of the eradication of FGM in Cameroon in the Arabe Choa tribes in the Far North province.

This project marks the beginning of the implementation of the 1997 United Nations Joint Plan of Action adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the Far North.

## ACTIVITIES

This is a final activity report on the *Civic Education Project on the Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation in the Arabe Choa tribes of the Far North Province in Cameroon.*

The report is on all the activities, that is:

- Sensitization, Counseling and Mobilization of the community and formation of anti-FGM groups;
- Training community groups in FGM advocacy techniques and the use of materials for effective campaigns;
- Entrepreneurial skills development;
- Equipping CYJULERC resource centre with infrastructure and materials on FGM issues in Cameroon;
- Economic empowerment of victims and women's groups;
- Advocacy Workshop on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

## **SENSITIZATION, COUNSELING AND MOBILIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY AND FORMATION OF ANTI-FGM GROUPS:**

Sensitization campaigns and mobilization was done in thirty (31) village. TEN (10) REASONS WHY STOP FEMALE CIRCUMCISION was the slogan used for a civic education program on the eradication of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), otherwise known as Female Circumcision (F C), in the Arabe Choa communities of Logone and Chari Division, in the Far North Province of Cameroon sharing borders with Nigeria and Chad.

The project team moved to the village communities and held conferences and lobbied with the village heads known in their communities by the appellation 'Blama', to lend their support to the project.

A one (1) week intensive mobilization and sensitization was done from the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> day of December 2006, through village conferences with the village heads (Blama), men, women and youths in the targeted villages.

The following activities were done:

- Distribution of campaign materials; T-shirts, face-caps, and flyers.
- Posters were pasted around the community centers and certain strategic positions in the villages.
- Banners were tied around certain strategic points in five (5) villages.
- Examine the situation of female genital mutilation (FGM) in each village, that is, to closely examine the prevalence rate in the various villages and the communities' perception on its significance;
- Educate village heads, men, women and youths on the harmful effects of female genital mutilation on the health of a woman;
- Educate the community on the psychological effects of female genital mutilation on the woman;
- Counsel the community on the legal consequences of the practice of female genital mutilation on the practitioners, victims and families of victims; and Obtain population's view point on the best methods to eradicate the practice.

### **Village Conferences**

Preliminary meetings were held with the village heads, men, youths and representatives of women's groups in villages. The men accepted it is their culture to circumcise women but they are not against the eradication of the practice moreover, the men do not do the circumcision of women. They were educated on the dangers of female genital mutilation. About 6000 persons were sensitized in 31 village communities.

The following villages were sensitized:

Alaya,, Ngoumati, Mawak, Arkis, Djarangoubou, Al Khanam, Malak, Hidjelidjé, Ndjagaré, Yadjitouna, Ngamadji, Mboula, Fachir, Meserigué, Michédiré, Ibou, Massaki I, and Massaki II



Massive turn out of women from seven (7) villages in Ibou during the Village conference

### **Women's Conferences**

Women's Conferences were held in thirty one (31) villages. The women shared their experience on FGM with the team and they were sensitized on the dangers of the practice. Each village created an Anti-FGM association and elected an executive committee to manage the association.



### **Media Campaigns**

Media campaigns were also carried out by FM Kousseri radio. Mariam and These campaigns were done through out the two weeks, from December 1-15. These media campaigns were carried out in the local language called Arabic and by different persons. The local language broadcasters of Arabic carried out most of the campaign for he is works with the Kousseri FM Station. Some campaigns in French language were carried out by the one of the resource persons Mr. Miscouna. He also campaigned in the Arabic

language. Mariam also sensitized the population over the radio in the Arabic language. All the campaigns were focused on the dangers and the harmful effects of the Female Genital Mutilation and the need to stop the practice.

### **WORKSHOP TO TRAIN COMMUNITY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS IN ADVOCACY TECHNIQUES AND THE USE OF MATERIALS FOR EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNS**

One training workshop was organized at Kuserrie to train the executive members of all the 31 village anti-FGM associations in advocacy techniques and on the use of materials for effective campaigns.

Sixty-two (62) women had a three-day intensive training on the following:

- the Harmful effects of FGM on the health of the woman,
- the Psychological consequences of FGM on the woman,
- the Legal consequences on the practitioners, victims and family

They were educated on advocacy techniques so that they can be able to sensitize and educate the women in their various villages with the aid of posters and flyers on the dangers of the practice of FGM so they can be convinced to stop the practice.

The workshop brought the members of the executive committees of all the villages together to discuss and take common resolutions on the fight against FGM in their community.

Flyers, posters, T-shirts and face caps were distributed to each executive committee at the end of the workshop. Didactic materials were also distributed to them for use during their Anti-FGM village association meetings.



Mr Miscouna Saliou and the National Coord and Mme Mariam giving lectures on the dangers of FGM

Women showed a lot of interest in the workshop. Various life testimonies on the dangers some of the women suffered when they were circumcised were made. They said their consent was never sought and recounted how they were tortured and forced to be circumcised. Some bled and went into coma and almost died. The women opened up and revealed that some women and children actually died as a result of FGM. All the aforementioned problems caused some families and villages to stop the practice.

## **ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

Entrepreneurial skills development is part of activities intended to create alternative income generation for practitioners and victims of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the Arabe Choa tribes.

Training was organized in the two village communities; Hibou and Djagere, where the mills were installed. The mill in Hibou will serve six (16) neighboring village communities while that installed in Djagere will serve seven (11) village communities.

Fifty two (52) participants; thirty nine women (39) and thirteen (13) men participated in the training workshop in Hibou while twenty-nine women and men participated in the training workshop in Djagere. Participants were educated on the need for Arabe Choa women to get involve in income generating activities so as to improve the standard of lives and that of their families. They were educated on the importance of engaging in self-reliance income generating activities which will give them economic independence from their husbands and thus promote their self esteem. They were also educated on the importance of working together as groups with common interest for better productivity and income.

Examples of self reliance activities like commercialization of milk and group rice farming and group irrigation of farms were cited by participants as activities which can help the women generate income for themselves. Participants agreed that the mill were a good source of income considering the fact that, the main meals of the Arabe Choa tribes are rice, millet and maize which need to be ground. Every household will use the mills consequently, they will generate income for practitioners and the women. Participants said the entrepreneurial skills acquired will help them to manage the mills and that will mark the beginning of the economic empowerment and independence of the Arabe Choa woman. The practitioners will no longer rely on circumcision of women and girl children for income in their communities.

### **Equipping CYJULERC resource centre with infrastructure and materials on FGM issues in Cameroon**

This phase of the project was intended to create a website for CYJULERC so that, information on female genital mutilation (FGM) in Cameroon can be easily available to the public. A website [www.cyjulerc.bravehost.com](http://www.cyjulerc.bravehost.com) has been created. Most of the information on the website is on the situation of female genital mutilation (FGM) in Cameroon. The information on female genital mutilation (FGM) on the website and the CYJULERC's activities on the field prompted the Minister of Women Empowerment and

the Family to call an enlarge meeting to commence action on female genital mutilation (FGM) in Cameroon. The government has neglected the issue and there has been no action since the adoption of the 1997 Joint UN plan of action to eradicate female genital mutilation (FGM) in the world. The website has also exposed the situation of female genital mutilation to Cameroonians and the world and many people are getting concern and calling on government to act.

CYJULERC's head office in Buea have been equipped with copies of all the reports; hand outs, papers and video CDs on testimonies of victims and practitioners on female genital mutilation. These materials are at the disposal of the public for consultation at their convenience. The office is open to the public during working ours and on appointments after regular working hours. The office was also equipped with a book shelve, tables and chairs.

### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF VICTIMS AND WOMEN'S GROUPS**

The economic empowerment of victims and women's groups is aimed at providing female genital mutilation (FGM) practitioners with alternative income generating activities. We thought that limiting the alternative income generating activities to the practitioners only will encourage other women to become practitioners. All women were organized into groups of Anti-FGM associations in the each village community and the mills were offered to several groups as aforementioned.



Some wild nuts and grains which make up most of the food stuff of the Arabe Choa tribe exhibited during CYJULERC's village conference in Hibou.



Two women demonstrate how the coats of the nuts and grains are peeled off and ground manually for powder for powder on a stone during an FGM sensitization campaign



Two mills intended to generate income that will replace the income earned from circumcision were offered to two groups of eleven (16) and sixteen (11) village communities. One was installed at Hibou and Djagere village communities respectively. A management team comprising of representatives from all the village communities which have benefited from the mills made up the management committee of each mill. One man was included in each management committee to give technical assistance in the maintenance of the mills. The mills were handed over to the two management committees. There were demonstrations on the use of the mills by a technician from the company who manufactured them. The management committee members were trained to use the mill.



Multi-purpose Grinding Mills donated to Hibou and Djagere village communities.

### **ADVOCACY WORKSHOP FEMALE GENITALE MUTILATION (FGM)**

The Advocacy Workshop was organized at the United States Embassy under the auspices of the Ambassador, Her Excellency Janet E. Garvey under the theme: Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon: the Role of the Legislature. The objective was to lobby government ministers, diplomats, law makers (parliamentarians) and other stakeholders in Cameroon on the need to adopt a law specific to punish female genital mutilation in Cameroon. A file made up of a copy of the proposed law and a photograph of mutilated female genitals- type 3, was distributed to all the over 70 participants in the hall.

The workshop started off at about 9:40am with an opening statement from the moderator Mrs Jessie Atogo Ekokule. She welcomed the guests and apologised for the late start of the programme before calling on the president of CEJULERC to do her presentation.

#### **Presentations**

The power point presentation titled: Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon: the Role of the Legislator was delivered by Magistrate Ayuk Esther (president of CEJULERC). In her introductory speech, the presenter emotionally expressed the pathetic nature of some images of female genital mutilation which she has observed from some African countries, including that of 14 months old Ojong from Babong village in Manyu Division of the Southwest Province of Cameroon. Such practices are generally carried out on young girls under the guise of initiating them into womanhood and to control female promiscuity, she said. The presenter went further to identify some areas in Cameroon which still practice FGM, specifically, in the Far North, Eastern and Southwest Provinces. While presenting

the effects of such an inhuman practice on women (including, severe pain and bleeding, infections, long term depression and death in extreme cases), Magistrate Ayuk made an appeal to the guests to participate actively in the fight towards the complete eradication of FGM in Cameroon. The adoption of a law specific to punish FGM was identified as a strategic measure towards this drive.

The adoption of a law prohibiting FGM would:

- Deter practitioners against the practice;
- Legitimise campaigns against FGM in the field;
- Punish all those involved or associated with the act;
- Domesticating existing conventions, covenants and agreements (CEDAW, and CRC, African Protocol) related to the practice ratified by Cameroon;
- Adhere to the UN Joint Plan and Action to eradicate FGM in the world.

The presentation took about 9 minutes and reactions lasted for about 1 hour 18 minutes.

Reactions from guests were preceded by a testimony from an FGM victim from the Northern Province. In her testimony, the victim recounted the painful nature of FGM, which she underwent when she was six years old. She also feared that her inability to conceive after two years of marriage could be a consequence of FGM. She however wished that such a deadly practice should be completely eradicated from Cameroon.



Her Excellency Janet E. Garvey, the US Ambassador presenting her paper, the 1<sup>st</sup> Console for British High Commission, His Excellency the Vice PM, Minister of Justice, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Presidents of the National Assembly, and other stake holders listening keenly to the CYJULERC'S National Coord

## Reactions

Reactions to the presentation was open up by the Vice Prime, Minister of Justice – His Excellency Amadu Ali; he expressed complete rejection of FGM, observing that the negative effects of FGM on women greatly out ways the justifications given by perpetrators of the act. He said the entire Penal Code will be modified including Section 277 which had been modified by CYJULERC and proposed to the participants to table at the National Assembly for adoption. This was followed US Ambassador's and the representative of the British High Commissioner's papers.

The US Ambassador expressed the United State commitment to the UN joint plan of actions to eradicate FGM in the world. She concluded by congratulating CYJULERC for its tremendous effort towards the eradication of FGM in Cameroon. She also commended the efforts of some members of parliaments, especially Honourable Rose Abunaw, who is working hand in glove with CYJULERC in the fight against FGM in Cameroon.

On her part, the representative of the British High Commissioner to Cameroon, highlight a series of projects, funded by the British High Commission and executed by CYJULERC in some communities which practice FGM in Cameroon, as alternative sources of income to those who carried our FGM as a source of income generation. These include introduction of snail farming the some communities in Manyu Division, etc. she equally congratulated CYJULERC for its activism in the fights against FGM in Cameroon. Other reactions came from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the National Assembly who represented the Speaker of the National Assembly. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President of the National Assembly, Mrs Rose Abunaw Makia also reacted and narrated all she has been doing with CYJULERC to fight against FGM. Many members of parliament who were present there intimated their willingness to see FGM eradicated in Cameroon.

Reactions from other participants centred on the discriminatory and inhuman nature of the FGM. The audience condemned the discriminatory attitude of some parents who allow their daughters to undergo such a deadly and painful exercise. The audience also reacted positive to the amendment of section 277 of the penal code, to include punishments for perpetrators of FGM. This idea was justified by the drastic drop in the prevalence of FGM in countries that have adopted a law against the practice, such as Nigeria, Central African Republic, Chad, etc.

Reactions lasted till 11:26am before the moderator closed the workshop. This was followed by radio and television interviews; the CYJULERC team left the premises at about 12:20am and to return to Buea the same day.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

The representatives of the communities said the project and the mills in particular for they will not only provide income for the women they will alleviate the suffering of the women and girls who spend a whole day to grind cereals manually for household meals. They said the young girls will be encourage to go to school now since they will not need to spend the time on grind cereals.

CYJULERC observed that there is an urgent need for adult education to enable the indigenes to communicate with the organization so we encouraged them to start adult literacy classes in their village communities during the sensitization phase of the project. Some women in some five (5) village communities have started classes but they are unable to pay the teachers regularly. They pleaded for support from CYJULERC to continue the literacy classes for they needed them to be able to manage any income generating activities.

That no woman or girl could write, and very few boys and men could write and there were very few schools in the communities and this explain why there is a very high illiteracy level.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

The women took the following resolutions:

- To remain committed to the fight against FGM until the practice is ERADICATED.
- CYJULERC resolved to organize adult elementary classes for the women in their various villages so as to permit them read and write as such they will be able to manage their groups
- The Prime Minister, Minister of Justice resolved to amend Section 277 of the penal code to punish FGM when amending the code which will soon be amended.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- That CYJULERC should extend the project to all the Arabe Choa and Sara village communities and create a Union of anti-FGM associations, made up of all the representatives of the village communites in the Logone and Chari Division
- That some alternative income generating activities be provided to the old women who practice circumcision for the eradication process to succeed, for they gain material and financial benefits. They will certainly resist eradication if they have no other source of income;
- That the men should be included in the FGM eradication campaign for they have a strong role to play in the lives of their wives and girl children
- All the speakers at the workshop agreed that FGM was very bad and a law was necessary to stop it.
- That adult literacy classes be instituted in the communities;
- That children especially girls, should be sent to school.

## **Difficulties Encountered:**

The very indigenous nature of the target communities was a major handicap to the

implementation of the project. All the activities in the field were done through translators and there was no direct communication with the population.

The high level of illiteracy also posed a major difficulty. The training activities could not take any conventional method for most of the participants could neither read nor write. All the training were through interactive and conversational methods.



CYJULERC's National Coordinator, Mme Ayuk Esther, granting an interview to the press after the Advocacy Workshop at the United States Embassy



Mrs Nathalie Lell, the Project Coordinator for Democracy and Human Rights Fund at the US Embassy, with FGM victims and CYJULERC team after the Advocacy Workshop at the Embassy, November 19, 2007