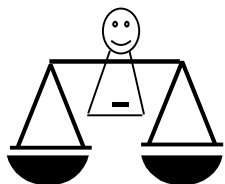
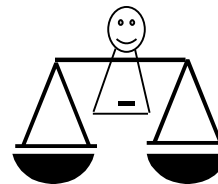


CAMEROON YOUNG JURISTS LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER CYJULERC



Registration No 236/G.37/D.14/Vol.8/T/ OAPP

Motto: “ Securing livelihood for women and
children within a legal framework”



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CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECT ON THE ERADICATION OF FGM IN EJAGHAM AND BOKI TRIBES OF CAMEROON, AFRICA



FGM victim, Arung Delphine, narrating the ordeal she went through when she was circumcised after the death of her first child to the female MPs at the advocacy workshop. Yaoundé. June 8, 2006

2nd FGM ACTIVITY REPORT JUNE -- OCTOBER, 2006

PRODUCED BY: CAMEROON YOUNG JURISTS
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INTRODUCTION

This report is based on Activities IIIa-d and IV. **Activity IIIa** is Sensitization and Partnership Building with other anti-FGM organizations; **IIIb** is the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Advocacy workshop with all female members of parliament; **IIIc** is Media Presentation on national and private TV, Radio and news paper write ups; **IIId** is Presentation of Victims at the plenary session of the National Assembly and **Activity IV** is Management/Monitoring and Evaluation.

ACTIVITY IIIa: SENSITIZATION AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING WITH OTHER ANTI-FGM ORGANIZATIONS

A team of CYJULERC members traveled to Yaoundé to sensitize and build partnership with other non-governmental organizations that have been working on the eradication of female genital mutilation and on the protection of women's human rights in general in compliance of Activity IIIa of the project.

Eight (8) non-governmental organizations were educated on the need to work in collaboration for a concerted effort towards the promotion of women's rights in Cameroon. These included the Association of Female Doctors (ACAFEM), the Association of Female Jurists, (ACAFEJ), Association de lutte contre de violence faits aux femme (ALVF), Inter-African Committee against traditional harmful practices (IAC-Cameroon), and African Indigenous Women Organization (AIWO-CAN); IFCD; and a Manyu umbrella organization called Efokhuyo.

ACTIVITY IIIb: WORKSHOP WITH FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT



Anti-Female Genital Advocacy Workshop with Cameroonian Female Members of Parliament
Yaoundé, June 8, 2006

The main activity of this phase of the project was Activity IIIb, *the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Advocacy workshop with all female members of parliament and Eyumojock and Akwaya members of parliament.*

The workshop took place on June 8, 2006 at the National Assembly hall. Fourteen (14) members of parliament and ten (10) representatives of the aforementioned non-governmental organizations working for the protection and promotion of women's rights were present.

The workshop started at 10.30 am, and was presided over by Honorable Rose Abunaw Makia, the only female vice president of the National Assembly. The attendance sheet is attached hereto.

An opening speech made by Honorable Rose Abunaw Makia, who emphasized on the existence of female genital mutilation in Cameroon and on the need for its eradication. She emphasized on the role of the female members of parliament and the need for them to contribute to the fight against female genital mutilation by adopting a law to punish the practice for it is an abuse of the woman and a gross violation of the human rights of the woman. She said it was against the dignity of the woman and the practice dehumanizes the woman. She called upon the participants to take the workshop seriously to enable them come out with concrete resolutions at the end.



Opening ceremony of Anti-FGM Advocacy workshop with female members of parliament, Yaoundé June 8, 2006

After opening the workshop, a video tape of life testimonies collected by CYJULERC during sensitization campaigns and training workshops on the in the Ejagham and Boki communities were projected to participants. They were shocked at the revelations they of the victims. They were also shocked to hear

some practitioners and women insist on the fact that the practice has to continue.

Victims told their life experiences of severe pain and torture when they were mutilated. Some went into coma for weeks and others died of severe bleeding. Some suffered severe infection and could not make children.

The opinions of some practitioners and some conservatives of the communities were also recorded. They insisted on the fact that the practice is their culture and so it must continue. They also said the practitioners earn some income in it so they need alternative income generating activities that will replace the income earned from the practice.



Female members of parliament watching a video tape of life testimonies recorded in the Ejagham and Boki communities.

ACTIVITY III d: Presentation of victims and testimonies

One of the victims, Arung Delphine, whom CYJULERC met during sensitization campaigns at Mbakem village in the Ejagham communities, was presented to the female members of parliament at the workshop. She told her gory story in tears. She still had a vivid painful memory of her experience.



Arung Delphine tells her gory experience of circumcision in tears to the female members of parliament, June 8, 2006.

Delphine could not hold back her tears when she gave a vivid life testimony of the ordeal she went through fifteen (15) years ago, circumcised by her aunt. She wept as she told her pathetic story to the fourteen female members of parliament and the other participants present at the workshop. All participants were touched by her story and they could not hold back their tears.



Female members of parliament could not hold back their tears as Delphine narrates the ordeal she went through during circumcision

After Delphine’s testimony, the members of parliament and the other participants of the workshop reacted to the testimonies and made suggestions that can contribute to the fight against female genital mutilation in Cameroon.

The national coordinator of CYJULERC presented a paper on the situation of female genital mutilation in Cameroon. She also presented the Joint Plan of Action adopted by three United Nations agencies; The World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA). This Plan takes a three-pronged approach:

- educating the public and law makers on the need to eliminate FGM,
- “de-medicalizing” FGM that is; tackling FGM as a violation of Human Rights as well as a danger to women’s health ,and
- Working with the entire UN Systems to encourage every African country to develop a *national, culturally specific plan* to eradicate FGM.

She also presented CYJULERC's plan of action on the eradication of female genital mutilation in Cameroon. She laid emphasis on the need to educate lawmakers on the necessity of a law specific to punish female genital mutilation adopted, as this will not only deter and punish practitioners, it will also legitimize sensitization campaigns. This Plan of Action consists of the following:

- To carry out intensive sensitization and education in all the communities which still practice Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon within ten (10) years;
- To create Anti-Female Genital Mutilation associations in all the regions practicing FGM in Cameroon within ten (10) years;
- To fight for the adoption of an Anti-FGM law;
- To support all the Anti-FGM associations with income generating activities;
- To create alternative income for practitioners.

She presented the precarious situation of female genital mutilation in Cameroon. She equally presented the activities implemented so far by CYJULERC and the impact of the activities on the communities.



The National Coordinator of CYJULERC, Ayuk Esther, presenting the situation of FGM in Cameroon during the workshop

CYJULERC Coordinator presented a draft bill to punish female genital mutilation in Cameroon, drafted by CYJULERC. The bill is an amendment of Section 277 of the Cameroonian penal code. She proposed that the Female Parliamentarians table it as a Female Parliamentarians' Private Members Bill. The participants debated on the bill. They were unanimous that, a law to punish female genital mutilation was necessary, but resolve to move to the communities to meet the victim and practitioners so they can have a better appraisal of the situation before tabling the law.



Dr Nouthe, member of ACAFEM presenting the various types of Mutilations to participants at the advocacy workshop.

The representatives of non-governmental organizations presented some of the activities they have implemented on female genital mutilation. Doctor Nouthe, the representative of the National Association of Female Doctors (ACAFEM), presented the various methods of circumcision and educated participants on the health hazards of circumcision.



Female members of parliament watching the documentary on life testimonies collected by CYJULERC during sensitization campaign in the Ejagham and Boki communities

WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

After the long reaction to the video documentary, the victim's testimony and CYJULERC National Coordinator's presentation, they agreed on the following resolution to enable them join the fight against FGM in Cameroon:

- Female Parliamentarians resolved to go to the Ejagham community to meet the victims and practitioners so they can have an appraisal of the real situation before they table the draft bill. This will enable them to be able to defend it at the plenary sessions of the General Assembly of the Parliament.
- The non-governmental organizations in attendance resolve to work together for a more concerted action to fight for the eradication of female genital mutilation in Cameroon.

The national coordinator of CYJULERC made her closing remarks and Honorable Rose Abunaw Makia closed the workshop.

ACTIVITY IIIC: MEDIA PRESENTATIONS

There was a TV Talk show and News paper write-ups to raise awareness and sensitize the Cameroonian population on the situation of FGM.

TV TALK SHOW

A TV talk-show to expose the real situation of female genital mutilation in Cameroon was organized at the Cameroon Radio and Television Center, Mballa II, Yaounde on October 27, 2006 and projected on the National Television on Sunday, November 26, 2006, at 5'00 pm.

A representative of one of the United Nations agencies which adopted the Joint Plan of Action on the eradication of female genital mutilation, Mrs Beat, the UNFPA who was one of the panelist gave a detailed explanation of the United Nations plan of action. She spoke on the role the UN systems represented in Cameroon play to assist the female genital mutilation process in Cameroon.

Dr Nouthé, the representative of the National Association of Female Medical Doctors in Cameroon (ACAFEM), spoke on the health hazards of female genital mutilation.

Delphine Arung, a victim from Mbakem village at the Ejagham community narrated her painful experience of circumcision after the birth of her first child.

One victim from the Ejagham women's group which was invited told her story to the audience. She said her mother was a practitioner and she was circumcised by her against her wish. She also explained the pains and torture she went through when she was circumcised. She said every girl child was

circumcised in her village for it is believed that if you are not circumcised, you are a man.



The moderator of the TV program, Jessie Ekukole (center) with CYJULERC team after the TV program.

The following groups, resident in Yaoundé took part in the TV-Talk show:

- Ejagham women's group
- Boki women's group
- Akwaya women's group
- Eyumojock Sub Division meeting executive members
- Mfuni women's group
- Ejagham-ngemaya women's group

There were contributions from therefore cited groups. The women shared their experiences with each other. They tried to come out with some strategies to contribute to the eradication of female genital mutilation in their various communities.

TALK SHOW RESOLUTIONS

- The women resolved to integrate the fight against female genital mutilation into the activities of their various associations and this fight will be extended to their village communities.
- The men resolve to involve the elders of their various communities into the fight against the practice of female genital mutilation.
- The women resolve to rely on CYJULERC for support and assistance in the implementation of this fight in the various communities.

NEWS PRINT MEDIA

Le Messager newspaper wrote an article to sensitize the Cameroonian public on the precarious situation of female genital mutilation in Cameroon. The article was titled in the French language “ *Bientôt une loi contre cette pratique au Cameroun?*”. The article is found on page 5 of No 2146 of Tuesday, June 13, 2006.

Cameroon Tribune published an article title “women Seek Legislation Against Genital Mutilation” on page 14 of Monday June 12, 2006 edition, No. 8617/4816.

The Post news paper No. 0772 of Monday, June 12, 2006 reported on female genital mutilation on page 6. All the aforementioned news papers are submitted herewith.

ACTIVITY IV: MANAGEMENT/MONITORING

Activity IV of the project comprised of the management, monitoring and the evaluation of the success of the activities and the assessment of the impact on the target communities.

The project was managed and monitored by the National Coordinator and the Secretary General of CYJULERC. They personally took part in the implementation of all the activities of the project. They also made up part of the resource team.

However, the executive members of the various village associations equally play an important role in the monitoring of the project for they were charged with the responsibility of managing the newly created Anti-FGM associations in their villages.

Three (3) quarterly visits were made by two members of CYJULERC to the Ejagham and Boki communities to monitor and ensure the activities of the project are making an impact on the target population. They were also made to resolve difficulties which arose in the follow up of the project within the communities.

A problem arose with the Ejagham Union of Anti-FGM associations as regards where to keep the office equipment donated to set-up their office. It was agreed that the equipments should be kept at the municipal council office and there were kept there. However, the newly appointed municipal counselor said the equipment was not the municipal council’s property as such it could not be kept in their premises. We resolved that the equipment be kept in the home of the president of the Ejagham Union of Anti-FGM Associations.

EVALUATION / MONITORING

Monitoring and evaluation of the project was carried out by a CYJULERC team, made up of the National Coordinator and the Secretary General. They traveled to the Ejagham and Boki communities to assess the functioning of the Anti-FGM Associations their impact on the population.

There was a general awareness of the dangers of female circumcision within the various villages. Men, women and even teenagers were aware of the fact that there are serious negative consequences attached to female circumcision as such they need to stop the practice.

Fifteen (15) Anti-FGM Associations in the Ejagham communities and five (5) in the Boki communities are functional. The two (2) Unions of Anti-FGM Associations of the Ejagham and the Boki communities are also functional. They have held at least two quarterly meetings of the associations to find ways and strategies to stop the practice of female circumcision in their various villages.

Some of the associations have started a **savings and loan scheme** as a means of encouraging women to adhere to the association for it will help them to solve some immediate financial problems.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the Anti-FGM Associations raised many issues which are hindrances to the FGM eradication process in their various villages. They however suggested some solutions to the problems and are seeking the assistance of the government and other non-governmental organizations to assist them in that regard, for such assistance will enhance the FGM eradication process.

The main issues raised as a hindrance to the eradication of FGM are:

- The provision of alternative income generation to practitioners who use FGM as a source of income;
- The extension of the eradication campaign to all the villages which still practice female circumcision in the two communities.

(Please see minutes of some of the Anti-FGM Associations attached hereto).

UNEXPECTED OUT-PUT

- This project has had been of great impact not only to the target communities but to the Cameroonian policy makers and the international community despite the limited funds we had for its implementation.
- The advocacy workshop with the Female Parliamentarians ended up with them resolving to visit the Ejagham community to meet the victims, the practitioners and the women so as to have a better appraisal of the situation in order to defend the law at the Plenary of the National Assembly.

- The Minister of Women Empowerment and the Family has also indicated her willingness to join the Female Parliamentarians to visit the Anti-FGM Associations in the Ejagham communities.
- The wife of the American Ambassador to Cameroon has also indicated her willingness to join the Female Parliamentarians to visit the Anti-FGM Associations.
- The British High Commission has funded a Snails Multiplication Farm for the training of FGM practitioners in snails' domestication as a means of alternative income generation.
- The American Ambassador in Cameroon called for the proposed draft bill and submitted copies to the President of the National Assembly and to the Minister of Women Empowerment and the Family during his visit to them. He urged them to ensure the bill was adopted at the parliament. He is supporting the Anti-FGM campaign in the Far North Province.
- CYJULERC discovered another traditional discriminatory practice against the Girl Child in Akwaya; the use of Girl Children as collateral for, or payment of debts; and the betrothal of Girl Children as early as babies.

Twenty-four (24) national and international media agencies reported in English, Dutch and German languages on the workshop with female members of parliament. They reported extensively on the workshop and the draft bill proposed by CYJULERC to be tabled as a Female Parliamentarians Private Members Bill. The internet search site 'Google' carried their reports. (Please find attached hereto the Google page and a copy of one of the reports).

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

The difficulties we encountered were mostly the inaccessibility of most of the target communities. Traveling to the Boki communities was extremely risky and difficult. We went by motorbikes and canoes to get to Kajifu I and Kajifu II. We also went through rivers without bridges.



CYJULERC team crossing River Ebinsi on their way to Boki for anti-FGM training workshop

We also had financial difficulties for the realities on the field called for some extra amount of money which we had to spend for the activity to be

implemented. The funds were so restricted that no amount was allocated for contingencies and posed a major financial difficulty.



Uncircumcised girls entertain the Ejagham Union of Anti-FGM associations with the 'NKIM' dance during a training workshop at Eyumojock, March 2006