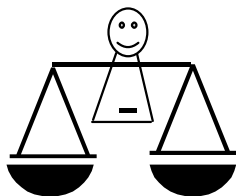


# CAMEROON YOUNG JURISTS LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER



## CYJULERC

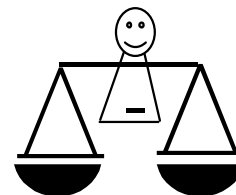
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**Motto:** “Securing livelihood for women and children within a legal framework”

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## SECOND ACTIVITY REPORT



CYJULERC project team members with interviewers after training workshop in Kousserie, Far North Region

**A research on the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and to lobby ministers and parliamentarians for a law to criminalize FGM in Cameroon in Mayo Sava and Logone & Chari Divisions of the Far North Region of Cameroon**

Supported By: **British High Commission in Cameroon**

## INTRODUCTION

This is a report of the **Phase 2** of the project “**A research on the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and to lobby ministers and parliamentarians for a law to criminalize FGM in Cameroon**”

This research is an explanatory study designed to explore cultural practices; and to analyze and assess the current level of the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the Mayo Sava and Logone & Chari Divisions of the Far North Region of Cameroon.

The research comprised of:

- **Meetings and Discussions**
- **Interviews and Data collection**

**Phase 2** of the project was based on the Logone & Chari Division in the Far North Region of Cameroon. Ten (10) Sub-Divisions make up the Logone & Chari Division. They are; Kousserie, Logone Birni, Makary, Goulefey, Waza, Zina, Hile Alifa, Blangoua, Fotokol and Darak Sub-Divisions. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still practiced in all the 10 Sub-Divisions because the Arabe Choas make up most of the indigenes of whole Division. Since they are more concentrated in four (4) Sub-Divisions, we agreed with our collaborators to carry out the research in those four (4) Sub-Divisions, mainly Kousserie, Logone Birni, Makary, and Goulefey.

### **The Planning / Contact Trip**

CYJULERC started working on FGM in the Kousserie Sub-Division in 2006 so we have a local collaborating organization called AL FAN there. Considering that we already had collaborators there, only the National Coordinator traveled to join the collaborator from APEECF in Maroua and Kousserie to plan and implement the project.

The National Coordinator traveled to Maroua in December 2008, she met Mr Ezechiel Marvizia and both of them traveled to Kousserie the next day to join Mrs Mariam Moussa to plan and commenced implementation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project. Mr Ezechiel and Mrs Mariam part of the project team and also coordinators of this 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project.

The team held a meeting at Hotel de la Paix in Kousserie to plan the implementation of the project. We agreed to carry out the research in four (4) Sub-Divisions out of ten (10), which are, Kousserie, Logone Birni, Makary, and Goulefey. This is because most of the indigenes of these Sub-Divisions are Arabe Choas. The project team moved to villages identified in Kousserie Sub-Division to discuss and plan the implementation of the project there. Mr Ezechiel and Mrs Mariam were charged with responsibility of traveling to Logone Birni, Makary and Goulefey to plan activities in those Sub-Divisions.



Logone and Chari project team

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

There were three main activities in the field; the one (1) day training seminar for interviewers, discussions with women and stake holders in the various communities and the collection of household data on the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

### **TRAINING, MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **Training Seminar for Interviews:**

The one (1) day Training Seminar for interviewers took place at Hotel de la Paix in Kousserie, the head quarters of Logone & Chari Division in December 2008. Considering the fact that the meeting involved old women, we decided to organize the meetings with women in the various Sub-Divisions since they were very far from each other.

There were 13 participants from the four (4) Sub-Divisions, Kousserie, Logone Birni, Makary, and Goulefey. The National Coordinator of CYJULERC introduced the project to the participants and the reason why they were selected to do the interviews. She said though CYJULERC started working on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Logone & Chari Division in 2006, no research had been conducted to know its prevalence in the Division. She informed the participants they were in Logone & Chari Division to conduct a research on the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). She said they were however going to use this opportunity to find out the situation of early marriage, literacy, and the prevalence of fistula in the Division. She said the aim of this meeting was to discuss these three issues which cause serious problems to the health of women.



CYJULERC's National Coordinator and Mr. Ezechiel Marvizia, resource persons at the Training Seminar



Training Seminar at Hotel de la Paix, Kousserie

The National Coordinator said, the seminar was to discuss the data collection form and to train the interviewers on the methods interviews. The research methodology that was used in this project was not a standard methodology, considering that FGM is a culturally sensitive issue, any standard research methodology could not give the required results. The fact that the target communities are indigenous and illiterate also made it difficult to use the conventional method.

Among the interviewers selected, were teachers, social workers, field extension workers, and some influential literate men and women. These groups were targeted because they all speak the local dialect and they were also well-known in the various communities.

CYJULER's National Coordinator thanked the interviewers for accepting to collect data from the community on FGM. Copies of the data collection form were distributed to all the interviewers. Mr Ezechiel a collaborator and member of the implementation team took the interviewers through the data form. He gave a detailed explanation of all the questions on the form and what was required of the interviewers. All the issues raised were discussed and 650 forms were distributed to the interviewers. Mrs Ayuk Esther, said the form also contained questions on Fistula, early marriages and education. She said CYJULERC wants to take advantage of this household data collection to get some information on such related issues. It was also aimed at diluting the focus on FGM so that the population can open up and give true information about their families.

The different villages and communities of the four (4) Sub-Divisions to be targeted for the researches were identified and distributed to the interviewers. Five (5) village communities were covered in each Sub-Division as follows:

In **Kousserie**: Massaki I, Massaki II, Kousserie, Michédéré, and Ibou.

In **Logone Birni**: Hadjarengoubou, Kessowa, Djidat, Ngolaké and Elbirké.

In **Makary**: Ngree, Ngarkawa, Mada, Ngartou, and M'Choulga.

In **Goulfey**: Mignmigne, Djagalad, Alkrenique, Amdan and Amfara.

The target village communities were distributed among the interviewers and the forms were also distributed to them.



Interviewers at the training seminar



## MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The project team moved to Massaki I and held a joint meeting with women and men from Massaki I & II the next day, January 29, 2009. Almost all the women from the two villages were present for they are members of Anti-FGM associations created by CYJULERC in 2006 and since then, they have been working with CYJULERC to end the practice. The National Coordinator, who is well known in those villages, introduced the research project and told them the reason a research. Mme Mariam, the head of the collaborating AL FAN association and member of the project team, acted as the interpreter during the workshop.

Discussions on the practice of FGM were not new for we have been working with the women to put an end to the practice. Fistula and Early marriage were the new and exciting issues discussed. Like in Kolofata, they said they do not send their girls to school because schools are far and they are afraid that the girls could be raped so only very young girls go to school. They did not know anything about Fistula and so did not have any contribution to make in that regard. The women however took this opportunity to discuss the progress made by the Anti-FGM associations created in 2006 to educate the community against the practice.

Together with men, they pledged their total support to the research project and promised they were going to give true information to the interviewers. They also said, they will try to send girl-children to school but they need more schools so that the girls do not need to go far from the homes. The session ended with photographs.



Meeting with Massaki I & II women, Kousserie Sub-Division



The project team traveled to Logone Birni Sub-Division and met the women, men and the community heads. The first stop was at Hadjarengoubou. The response to the call was very positive for the chief's (Blama) palace was filled with women and notables before the arrival of the project team. The inhabitants were very excited to receive the CYJULERC team once more. Mrs Mariam Moussa introduced the reason for our visit to the Blama, notables and the women. The National Coordinator took over, gave a brief presentation on the three issues and Mrs Mariam translated all what she said. They were already familiar with FGM since CYJULERC has been working with them for the past three (3) years. After discussions, the community head said they had no problem with the project and they promised to cooperate. They however said the issue of fistula was not well known to them but they were going to give the interviewers an honest and true situation of their community.

The project team also visited Ngree in the Makary Sub-Division, and like in Hadjarengoubou the crowd was waiting. The team continued to Goulfey Sub-Division but without the National Coordinator. They held meetings and discussed with the target village communities and all the communities pledge to cooperate. Please, see photographs below.



Hadjarengoubou (Logone Birni) and Ngree (Makary) village meetings



Ngree village traditional birth attendant and FGM Practitioner

## Discussions Community Stake Holders

### Massaki I & II

There was a detailed discussion with the men on the three issues raised; FGM, Fistula and Early marriage. The men said the women are those directly concerned with the issues, but they however agreed that the men have a major role to play in FGM and early marriages and education of the girl child so they will make an effort discourage FGM practice and early marriages; and they will also make an effort to enroll girls in school.



Project team with community heads and notables Of Massaki I & II, Kousserie Sub-Division



Project team with Ngree community heads and men





Djagalad village in Goulfey Sub-Division



Mgnmigne village in Goulfey Sub-Division



M'Choulga village in Makary Sub-Division



The lone Arabe Choa boy who could write among hundreds of women & young girls, taking down names of participants

## INTERVIEWS AND DATA COLLECTION

The main findings are the same for all the four (4) Sub-Divisions. Thirteen (13) interviewers conducted household interviews in twenty (20) village communities in the four (4) Sub-Divisions in the following communities:

In **Kousserie**: Massaki I, Massaki II, Kousserie, Michédiré, and Ibou.

In **Logone Birni**: Hadjarengoubou, Kessowa, Djidat, Ngolaké and Elbirké.

In **Makary**: Ngree, Ngarkawa, Mada, Ngartou, and M'Choulga.

In **Goulfey**: Mignmigne, Djagalad, Alkrenique, Amdan and Amfara.

**FINDINGS:** Similar to those of Mayo Sava Sub-Division.

1. From the discussions and meetings FGM is a common cultural practice among all the four Sub-Divisions.
2. FGM is regarded as a cultural identity of Arabe tribe.
3. Girls are circumcised (mutilated) between the age of six (6) and eight (8).
4. No *man of Arabe origin* can marry an *uncircumcised girl* of Arabe origin.
5. Uncircumcised girls are regarded as outcast within the Arabe tribe.
6. There are very old FGM Practitioners who also act as traditional birth attendance in their communities.
7. The FGM Practitioners derive financial benefits from circumcision.
8. The population is very ignorant of any negative effects on the women.
9. Illiteracy is very high, with a school attendance rate of 16.25% and 31.8% for girls; and 14.9% and 45.9% for boys.
10. Only the very young girls are sent to school and they are withdrawn as from the age of 10 and above and sent to marry as from the age of 12.
11. The older girls are withdrawn from school for fear of rape and unwanted pregnancy, for schools are far from the homes and it is an abomination to have one's daughter pregnant.
12. The Muslim or Arabe girl is prepared solely for marriage and motherhood; education is not regarded as necessary for the girl-child.
13. Early or girl-child marriages are a very common and normal practice among Muslims, even among the highly educated or literate class.
14. Very little is known about Fistula and there are very few known cases.
15. Boy-child marriages do exist as early as the age of 14.

## DATA

### Kousserie:

- 211 families were interviewed in 5 village communities of Kousserie
- Total number of children 1.016
- **Number of boys - 529**
- Number of boys who attend school – 79
- **Total number of girls - 480**
- Number of girls who attend school – 78
- Number of girls circumcised – **102**: **1** before 5years; **5** between 3-5 years; **96** between 6 – 10 years.
- Fistula - 2

### Logone Birni:

- 192 families were interviewed in 5 village communities of Logone Birni
- Total number of children 803
- **Number of boys - 413**
- Number of boys who attend school – 107
- **Total number of girls - 390**
- Number of girls who attend school – 84
- Number of girls circumcised – **222**: **1** before 2years; **61** between 3-5 years; **160** between 6 – 10 years.
- Fistula - 0

### Makary:

- 199 families were interviewed in 5 village communities of Makary
- Total number of children 1.127
- **Number of boys - 684**
- Number of boys who attend school – 314
- **Total number of girls - 443**
- Number of early marriages - ????
- Number of girls who attend school – 130
- Number of girls circumcised – **279**: **5** between 0-2 years; **74** between 3-5years; **197** between 6 – 10 years.
- Fistula – 0

### Goulfey:

- 250 families were interviewed in 5 village communities of Goulfey
- Total number of children 1.467
- **Number of boys - 791**
- Number of boys who attend school – 360
- **Total number of girls - 676**

- Number of early marriages - 220
- Number of girls who attend school – **215**
- Number of girls circumcised – **290**: **11** between 0-2 years; **73** between 3-5years; **206** between 6 – 10 years.
- Fistula – **0**

## **MAIN FINDINGS:**

### **Circumcision:**

Kousserie Sub-Division - 21.25 %  
 Logone Birni – 56.9 %  
 Makary Sub-Division – 62.9 %  
 Goulfey Sub-Division – 42.9 %  
 Most girls are circumcised between 6-10 years

### **Education: Girls:**

Kousserie Sub-Division - 16.25 %  
 Logone Birni – 21.54 %  
 Makary Sub-Division – 29.3 %  
 Goulfey Sub-Division – 31.8 %

### **Boys:**

Kousserie Sub-Division – 14.9 %  
 Logone Birni – 25.9 %  
 Makary Sub-Division – 45.9 %  
 Goulfey Sub-Division – 45.5 %

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still practiced in the Logone & Chari Division of the Far North Region of Cameroon, with a very high prevalence rate of 21.25% in Kousserie Sub-Division, 56.9 % in Logone Birni Sub-Division, 62.9% in Makary Sub-Division, and 42.9% in Goulfey Sub-Division.

16.25 % in Kousserie Sub-Division, 21.54 % in Logone Birni Sub-Division, 29.3% in Makary Sub-Division, and 31.8 % in Goulfey Sub-Division.

Education and literacy has a major role to play in the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) for Kolofata Sub-Division has the higher FGM prevalence rate, the lower the literacy rate.