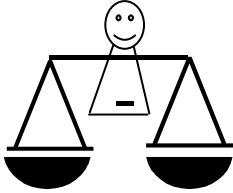


# CAMEROON YOUNG JURISTS LEGAL RESOURCE CENTER



## CYJULERC

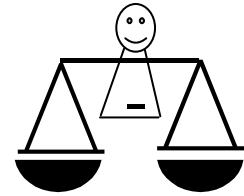
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**Motto:** “Securing livelihood for women and children within a legal framework”

P.O BOX 68 Buea, South West Province- Cameroon

Tel: (237) 764 27 30/ 993 07 05, Email: [cjulererc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cjulererc@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.cjulererc.bravehost.com](http://www.cjulererc.bravehost.com)



### FIRST ACTIVITY REPORT



CYJULERC project team members with interviewers in Klofata, Mayo Sava Sub-Division, 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 1** 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 1** of the project was based on the Mayo Sava Division in the Far North Region of Cameroon. Three (3) Sub-Divisions make up the Mayo Sava Division. They are; Mora, Tokombere and Kolofata Sub-Divisions. Among these three (3) Sub-Divisions, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still practiced in two (2), Kolofata and Mora. The main reason why FGM is still practiced in these two (2) Sub-Divisions only is because, FGM is practiced by the Arabe Choas only and they are settled in these two (2) Sub-Divisions only. Considering that our project is to carry out a research on the prevalence of FGM, we decided to limit our activities to the Kolofata and Mora Sub-Divisions.

## **The Planning / Contact Trip**

The project started with a planning trip to Mayo Sava Division of the Far North Region. After a general meeting to announce the decision of British High Commission to fund the project, and to discuss its implementation, the National Coordinator, Mme Ayuk Esther and the Secretary General Mme Nembouwo Elizabeth Ayuketang, who were among the project implementation team, were charged with the responsibility to travel Mayo Sava to contact the Sub-Divisional Delegates of the Sub-Delegations of the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family.

On September 17, 2008, the National Coordinator and the Secretary General, traveled to Mora. They met the Sub-Divisional Delegate of Mora, Mahamat Sale and the President of the Network of Mora Women, Boubakari Aissatou and held a meeting with them at the premises of the Delegation of the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family. The Delegate of Mora, Mahamat Sale and Mme Boubakari were retained as main collaborators in the implementation of the project in Mayo Sava Division.



CYJULERC team meet with Mahamat Sale and Boubakari Aissatou to plan project.

The next meeting was at Dr. Mossa's Clinic in Mora. The CYJULERC team accompanied by Mme Boubakari Aissatou, also visited one Dr. Mossa Djidda, a Surgeon of Arabe Choa origin, an advocate of FGM, one of the persons whom the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Justice told us to meet. The team met him in his private hospital in Mora and had a long meeting with him.



Dr Moussa Djidda, a supporter of the practice of Female Genital Mutilation

He insisted on the importance of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to the woman. He said it is a tradition that the Arabe Choa tribe inherited from fore-fathers and recommended that the CYJULERC team should advocate for the FGM Practitioners to be trained so that they can avoid all the health hazards like bleeding and infection. He also said we should also educate the women to come to his hospital to avoid the complications.



CYJULERC team at a meeting with Dr Moussa Djidda to discuss the effects of FGM on Women

## **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

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

### **MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

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

The one (1) day Training Seminar took place at the Women's Empowerment Center in Mora, the head quarters of Mayo Sava Division on November 26, 2008. There were two (2) sessions, a morning session, and an afternoon session.

The first session was a meeting with the presidents of Women's Network in the three Sub-Divisions of Mayo Sava, the three (3) Sub-Divisional Delegates for Women's Empowerment and the Family, all the women in charge of the Women Centers of the three (3) Sub-Divisions and the interviewers of Mora and Limani. The second session was the training of interviewers.

There were 26 participants from the three (3) Sub-Divisions, to wit: Mora, Tokombere and Kolofata. The representatives of women's network were old, indigenous and influential women in their communities. The Sub-Divisional Delegate for Women's Empowerment and the Family for Mora, introduced CYJULERC and the project team and thereafter the National Coordinator of CYJULERC took over the meeting. She informed the participants they were in Mayo Sava 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 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.





Training Seminar at Women’s Empowerment Center, Mora- Mayo Sava Division

The Mayor of Mora’s wife, Dadja Fatime an old retired social worker who was one of the representatives of Mora women acted as an interpreter through out the session. Being of Arabe Choa origin and well known by the old women, she got them to tell the honest and true situation of the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in their various communities and why they were still practicing it. Participants opened up and the representatives of Kolofa and Limani said, FGM was still being practiced in their communities. They said they inherited the practice from their ancestors and since then they have upheld it. They did not know there were any health hazards that affect the girls or women as a result of the practice.



CYJULERC’s National Coordinator (left) with heads of Limani and Kolofata women’s group.

The president of the network of Kolofata women Haouwa said if an Arabe girl is not mutilated or circumcised, she cannot get married to an Arabe man so the girls are

obliged to be mutilated since they want to marry Arabe men. She said that is why she has mutilated her grand-daughter Ouha Hadidja whom she brought along to the workshop recently at the age of six (6). Ouha Hadidja has never been to school and will never go to school.



Mme Haowa, president of Kolofata women's group with her mutilated grand-daughter Ouha Hadidja whom she circumcised, at the Mora workshop.



Six (6) years old Ouha Hadidja, victim of FGM, mutilated by her grand-mother in preparation for marriage, will never go to school.

Fanne Gona, the president of Limani women's group said, FGM was still being practiced in their community because they need to uphold their culture and they need to prepare the girls for marriage. She went further to say, the Arabe men do marry non-Arabe girls who are not circumcised and but not uncircumcised Arabe girls. She said another reason is to reduce the girl's sexual drive, for the men have multiple wives.

The CYJULERC National Coordinator presented a brief paper on the effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on the girl-child and women. The two coordinators of the project in Mayo Sava, Mr Marvizia Ezekiel and Mahamat Sale also gave brief presentations on FGM and religion; and culture. There was a frank long discussion that followed the presentations. Most of the literate Arabe and non-Arabe women present at

the workshop reiterate the fact that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was not healthy for the woman and it is an age old tradition which has many disadvantages and no advantage. In conclusion the women agreed they did not know the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) had such disadvantages for nobody has been to their communities to educate them, but now that they aware, they will try to stop it progressively. They said they whole community needs to be educated and emphasis need to be laid on the education of men if we want FGM to be eradicated. They said some women earn some financial benefits from the practice CYJULERC should consider an alternative income for them. The morning session ended with group photographs and launch.



Participants at Mora workshop.

The afternoon session was to discuss the data collection form and to train the interviewers the methods they had to use during the 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.

Interviewers were selected from all the two main Sub-Divisions of Mayo Sava where FGM is still practiced. Among those selected were, teachers, social workers, field extension workers, nurses and some influential literate women. These groups were targeted because all of them speak the local dialect and they were also well-known in the various communities. More interviewers were selected than planned in the project for we realized there was a need to cover more communities. There were 11 interviewers for the Mora and Limani communities of the Mora Sub-Division; and 12 for the Kolofata Sub-Division. For effective work, these groups were separated into two and those of Mora and Limani were trained in Mora, while the others were trained in Kolofata after the women's meeting.

CYJULER's National Coordinator thanked the interviewers for accepting to collect data from the community on FGM. Monica Akocha, a member of CYJULERC implementation team, distributed copies of the data form to all the interviewers and the other participants present. Mrs Nembouwo Elizabeth Ayuketang, CYJULERC's Secretary General who was also a member of the implementation team took the interviewers through the data form. She gave a detailed explanation of the entire questions on the form and what was required of the interviewers. All the issues raised



were discussed and 200 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 and get some information on such related issues. It was also aimed at diluting the focus on FGM so that the population can open and give the true information about their families. The different villages and communities were of Mora and Limani to be covered were identified and distributed to the interviewers. Eight (8) village communities were covered in Mora to wit: Bounderi, Touchki 1,2,3; Tagawa 1,2; Kangarwa, Klosale, Ganai 1,2,3; Ninguitiwa and Doulo. Ten (10) in Limani, to wit: Wambaché éli Gadou, Boudoua Ramat, Bla Djarma, Wali yassi djere, Wali yassi eli gadou, Kinzandi bla djarma, Limani, Goumbouldi, Igawa, Pivou.



Training workshop of interviewers

CYJULERC team moved to Kolofata the next day, November 27, 2008 and held a meeting with the women and the interviewers at the hall of the Women's Empowerment Center in Kolofata. The hall was full with about a hundred women. The Sub-Divisional Delegate for Women's Empowerment and the Family introduced the project team and all those he invited to the meeting. CYJULERC's National Coordinator took over after the introduction and she told the women the reason the meeting. Mme Gadji neé Mazakre, in charge of the Women's Empowerment Center, acted as the interpreter during the workshop. She was also one of the interviewers.





The same issues to wit: FGM, Fistula and Early marriage were discussed. Among the stake holders invited was the surgeon of the Kolofata District Hospital Dr. Kuzu Daniel. He gave a brief talk to the women on all the three issues raised but laid emphasis on FGM. He said almost all the women whom he has consulted have been mutilated so there is a very high prevalence in the Kolofata Sub-Division.



Project team at Kolofata training workshop.



Dr. Kuzu talking to the women during meeting.

Kolofata Sub-Division is made up predominantly of the Arabe Choa tribe. The women had an honest reaction to the issues raised. They said FGM is a cultural practice which they do to young girls in preparation for marriage and if they do not the girls no Arabe man will marry them. They also said they do not send their girls to school because schools are far and they are scared that they can be raped so only very few young girls go to school. They said they had a few cases of fistula and two names of women with fistula were given to the team.



Mme Gadji neé Mazakre, in charge of the Women's Empowerment Center, talking to the women in Kolofata



The women said they have never had any problem with FGM and any uncircumcised in the Arabe tribe is regarded as an outcast so it will be difficult for them to stop FGM.

They however 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 house. The session ended with a family photograph.



Kolofata meeting family photographs, the crowd was to large for a single photograph

After the women's meeting, 11 interviewers selected for the Kolofata Sub-Division were trained on the methods of collecting information, and how to fill the data collection form. Eleven (11) communities were identified and distributed to the interviewers and two hundred (200) forms were distributed to them.



Project team with Kolofata interviewers

The next stop of the project team was at Limani to meet the women and the traditional ruler and notables. 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. As usual the Sub-Divisional Delegate for Women's Empowerment and the Family introduced our mission to the Blama, notables and the women. The Blama and notables retired after a brief discussion with them to enable the women air out their views freely. Unlike Kolofata Sub-Division, Limani is made up of two main tribes, the Mandare and Arabe Choa. The Mandare tribe does not have the culture of mutilating girls and women while the Arabe Choa does. The CYJULERC National Coordinator gave a brief presentation on the three issues as mentioned above and the women reacted by giving the true situation in Limani.



The young Arabe girls and women were very happy to hear the team came to do research on FGM and to educate the population to stop the practice. They told the project team that they did not like the practice and wanted it to be stopped. One of the young women who were against FGM was a daughter to one of the FGM practitioners in Limani. She said FGM is a bad practice that should be banned, but she could not explain further because her mother circumcises young girls and women. Contrary to the young women, the old women supported the practice and intimated it must continue, for it is their tradition. The young Arabe girls said, they do not see any reason for the Arabe men imposing that they should be circumcised when they marry uncircumcised girls from the Madare tribe. They urged the CYJULERC team to find ways of banning FGM.



Women's meeting at the Limani chief's palace



Women's meeting at the Chief's Palace in Limani

## Discussions with Stake Holders

### Limani:

There was a brief 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 role to play in FGM and early marriages but they will try to see what they can do discourage those practice. The chief (Blama) enjoined the CYJULERC team to lay emphasis on early marriages for they were a serious problem in the Limani communities. He said the men were going to retire to give room for the women to discuss freely without any fears given the fact that the society is a very chauvinistic one.



Project team discuss with Limani community head and notables



Limani community head and CYJULERC project team in the palace guest room



Limani community head and notables sit in front Limani Palace during the women's meeting



## Mora

The project team visited the Mayor of Mora Abba Boukar and his Counselors to discuss their mission in Mora and the Mayo Sava Division in general. The mayor and the counselors admitted that the Arabe Choa tribe which makes up part of the population of Mayo Sava Division still practices Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). They also raised the issue of early marriages which they decry. The mayor said one of the worst problems which they face in the Mayo Sava Division is illiteracy and a very high rate in girls. They were very impressed to have a team which is willing to educate the population on the effects of FGM and early marriages. They recommended that emphasis have to be laid on girl-child education if the CYJULERC team wants to succeed in the eradication of FGM in Mayo Sava.



CYJULERC team meets Mayor of Mora and Counselors at mayor's residence in Mora

## INTERVIEWS AND DATA COLLECTION

The main findings are the same for Mora and Kolofata Sub-Divisions. Twelve (12) interviewers conducted household interviews in eight (8) village communities in Mora to wit: Bounderi, Touchki 1,2,3; Tagawa 1,2; Kangarwa, Klosale, Ganai 1,2,3; Ninguitiwa and Doulo; and ten (10) village communities in Limani, to wit: Wambaché éli Gadou, Boudoua Ramat, Bla Djarma, Wali yassi djere, Wali yassi eli gadou, Kinzandi bla djarma, Limani, Gombouldi, Igawa, Pivou.

Twelve (12) interviewers conducted interviews in eleven (11) village communities of Kolofata Sub-Division, to wit: Zize, Dalasi, Djamena, Blabline, Alger, Bia arabe-soa, Brouvare, Grea, Wawili, Makakaya Patou, Bornori and Alagarno.

## FINDINGS:

1. From the discussions and meetings FGM is a common cultural practice among the Arabe tribes in the Mayo Sava Division.
2. FGM is regarded as a cultural identity of Arabe tribe.
3. FGM has a colonial origin, done during the conquest age - 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries to curb sexual activities or reduce libido of their wives while their husbands were at war for long periods.
4. Girls are circumcised (mutilated) between the age of six (6) and eight (8).
5. No *man of Arabe origin* can marry an *uncircumcised girl* of Arabe origin.
6. Uncircumcised girls are regarded as outcast within the Arabe tribe.
7. There are very old FGM Practitioners who also act as traditional birth attendance in their communities.
8. The FGM Practitioners derive financial benefits from circumcision.
9. The population is very ignorant of any negative effects on the women.
10. Illiteracy is very high, with a school attendance rate of 12.9%.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. The Muslim or Arabe girl is prepared solely for marriage and education is not regarded as necessary for the girl-child.
14. Early or girl-child marriages are a very common and normal practice among Muslims even the highly educated or literate class.
15. Very little is known about Fistula and there are very few known cases.
16. Boy-child marriages do exist as early as the age of 14.

## DATA:

### Mora and Limani:

- 202 families were interviewed in 18 village communities of Mora and Limani
- Total number of children 1.011
- **Number of boys - 529**
- Number of boys who attend school – **79: 1** before 5 years; **53** between 6-12 years; **19** between 13-20 years.
- **Total number of girls - 475**
- Number of early marriages - 79
- Number of girls who attend school – **78: 0** before 5 years; **66** between 6-12 years; **12** between 13-20 years
- Number of girls circumcised – **100: 1** before 5years; **5** between 3-5 years; **94** between 6 – 10 years.
- Fistula - 0

## **Kolofata:**

- 197 families were interviewed in 12 village communities of Kolofata
- Total number of children 1.140
- **Number of boys - 573**
- Number of boys who attend school – **83: 1** before 5 years; **55** between 6-12 years; **28** between 13-20 years.
- **Total number of girls - 567**
- Number of early marriages - 220
- Number of girls who attend school – **37: 1** before 5 years; **33** between 6-12 years; **3** between 13-20 years
- Number of girls circumcised – **247: 1** between 0-2 years; **32** between 3-5years; **191** between 6 – 10 years; **23** between 11-20 years.
- Fistula – **5**

## **MAIN FINDINGS:**

**Circumcision:** Kolofata Sub-Division **43.5 %**  
Mora Sub-Division **21.0%**  
Most girls are circumcised between 6-10 years

## **Education:**

**Mora Sub-Division:** Overall % of school attendance = **15.6 %**

Girls – Nursery education - **0%**

- Attendance between 6 – 12 years = **13.8%**
- Attendance after 12 years = **2.5%**

Boys – Overall attendance rate = **14.7%**

- Nursery education = **1.2 %**
- Attendance between 6 – 12 years = **67.0%**
- Attendance after 12 years = **24.0%**

**Kolofata Sub-Division:** Overall % of school attendance = **10.5 %**

Girls - Nursery education = **2.7%**

- Attendance between 6 – 12 years = **89.1%**
- Attendance after 12 years = **8.1%**

Boys - Nursery education = **1.2%**

- Attendance between 6 – 12 years = **66.2%**
- Attendance after 12 years = **33.7%**

## CONCLUSIONS:

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still practiced in the Mayo Sava Division of the Far North Region of Cameroon, with a very high prevalence rate of **43.5 %** in Kolofata Sub-Division and **21.0 %** in Mora Sub-Division.

Education and literacy has a major role to play in the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) for Kolofata Sub-Division has a higher FGM prevalence rate of **43.5 %** and a low school attendance rate of **10.5%**; while Mora Sub-Division has a higher school attendance rate of **15.6%** and a lower FGM prevalence rate of **21.0526 %**.



Part of CYJULERC team on the train to Ngoundere