

**REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN**

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**REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON**

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# **TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE LOCAL COMMITTEES FOR THE ELIMINATION OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**



**United Nations**



## FOREWORD

Among the worst forms of violence women and girls continue to suffer in silence and in the privacy of their families, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is high on the list.

The United Nations General Assembly of 20th December 2012 unanimously adopted Resolution 65/170 entitled «Intensifying Global Efforts for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)», as the global response against this plea. Through this decision, the United Nations wanted to remind Member States that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) constitutes a severe act of violence that undermines the dignity and full enjoyment of the human rights of women and girls.

The Cameroon Government is resolutely committed to combat the phenomenon, with the assistance of development partners and those from the civil society. This determination is translated by the Head of State's concern to end violence against women and girls; a concern that was reiterated during the 32nd Session of African Union's Heads of State and Government with the launch of the SALEEMA Initiative on 11 February 2019.

This political will is mainly expressed through the enactment of Law No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 on the Penal Code which henceforth sanctions this practice under Sections 277 et seq. ; adoption of the NDS30 with relevant guidelines on the elimination of Gender Based Violence. Other specific actions such as public awareness, the development in 1998 of an action plan, updated in 2011 and 2017, support for the professional reconversion of practitioners of excision, the establishment of local control and watch committees, the training of traditional and religious leaders and of community relays and members of local committees for the elimination of FGM.

In order to further encourage the involvement of local actors in combatting this plea, it is necessary to regulate their activities in the field. This support is based on the reinforcement of prevention, care to the survivors, training and monitoring/ evaluation of the various interventions.

The main objective of the present Terms of Reference of Local Committees for the elimination of FGM is to harmonize actions in the field. It also determines the methods and strategies underlying the actions to be carried out and is thus a practical tool for all those acting in favor of zero tolerance for FGM. Finally, it provides a reference and guidance framework to members of Local Committees on how to organize their work in the field.

**The Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family**  
**Mrs. ABENA ONDOA née OBAMA Marie Thérèse**

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## I - DEFINITION DES CONCEPTS CLES

For the purpose of these Terms of Reference, the concepts Female Genital Mutilation, Gender Based Violence, Sex, Gender, Equity, Equality, Gender Equality/Equal Opportunity, Local Committee for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, are defined as follows :

### I-1 Mutilations Génitales Féminines

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as procedures that intentionally alter or injure the external female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Female genital mutilation is classified into 4 major types by WHO, and the most common include excision and infibulation :

- ✓ **Type 1** : : clitoridectomy. Partial or total removal of the clitoral glans and, in rare cases, of the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoral glans);
- ✓ **Type 2** : lexcision. Partial or total removal of the clitoral glans and the labia minora, with or without removal of the labia majora;
- ✓ **Type 3** : infibulation. It is the narrowing of the vaginal opening through a covering seal which is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removal of the clitoral glans ;
- ✓ **Type 4** : This includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area or inserting corrosive substances.

## **I-2 Gender Based Violence**

Gender Based Violence (GBV) or Gender specific violence refers to any act perpetrated on a person on the basis of his/her sex. It is violence directed specifically against a man or woman on the basis of their sex and affecting women or men disproportionately.

## **I-3 Sex**

Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women as well as the biological characteristics that identify the human being and distinguish the male from the female. An individual is male or female regardless of his/her race, class, age or ethnic background. However, the social meaning given to the biological constitution of an individual may vary according to his/her ethnic background (UNESCO, 2017).

## **I-4 Gender**

Gender refers to the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that the society at a given moment deems appropriate for men and form women. It is about women and men, girls and boys and the relationships between each another within different groups. It equally refers to relations between groups of women and groups of men. These roles and attributes are socially constructed and learned through socialisation.

## **I-5 Gender equity**

Equity represents the idea of “fairness”. In the gender perspective, equity is an approach that aims to address the existing inequalities in order to achieve equal chances or opportunities between men and women. This means impartial

treatment is accorded to men and women, depending on their respective needs. This treatment may be identical or different but, it should be similar in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and possibilities.

## **I-6 Gender equality**

Gender equality exists when there is no discrimination between men and women in the distribution of resources and benefits, or in access to services, to productive factors or to decision making in public, family and community affairs. It refers to the idea that men as well as women receive equal treatment and enjoy the same citizen and human rights.

## **I-7 Equal chances**

According to the dictionary “la Toupie”, equal chances is a vision of equality that seeks to ensure that the individuals are given the same chances and the same opportunities in social development, regardless of their social or ethnic background, of their gender, their financial means, their parents, their place of birth, their religious beliefs or a possible disability, etc.

Equal chances which is different from equal human rights, consists mainly in giving advantage to populations facing discrimination, in order for them to be treated fairly, that is, making sure that the gaps relating to their place of origin are neutralised.

## **I-8 Local committee for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation**

The Local Committee for the Elimination of FGM is a community-based structure, which acts as a relay between the

communities and the decentralized services of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, as well as other support structures.

## I-9 Stakeholders

They are people involved in matters concerning FGM. They are of 03 (three) categories, namely :

- **Primary stakeholders** (young/little girls, women/mothers and aunts, men, female and male excisers) ;
- **Secondary stakeholders** (Institutions and international organisations, Civil Society Organisations) ;
- **Major stakeholders** (International institutions and organisations, Civil Society Organisations, Decision makers, traditional and religious leaders).

It is worth noting that each of these stakeholders have their motivation and their own strategies.

## II - OVERVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONING OF LOCAL COMMITTEES FOR THE ELIMINATION OF FGM

Created in 2005, local committees to combat FGM have functioned in a disparate manner. Thanks to a survey conducted as part of the follow-up of the implementation of activities and effective functioning of these structures, the strengths and challenges of their operationalization were highlighted.

### II-1 Strengths

- Community participation in the fight against harmful practices;
- setting up of local committees to combat this phenomenon in the focus areas and in areas where the immi-

grant Shoa Arabs are found;

- existence within the local committees of operational relays that help in implementing and monitoring initiatives that contribute to the promotion and protection of the human rights of girls and women;
- the possibility to collect statistics for documentation and production of activity reports that are useful in the preparation of country reports on the implementation of normative frameworks regarding girls' and women's rights;
- the role of resource persons available in the fight against FGM in their respective sectors;
- the presence of multi-sectoral actors in the local committees against FGM;
- increased collaboration between the Government, Technical and Financial Partners and the Civil Society;
- the adoption of a new Penal Code with provisions on repressive measures against the perpetrators of FGM and their accomplices ;
- Adherence of the leaders and of community radio stations to government initiatives in this domain.

## **II-2 Challenges**

- Non-appropriation of the National FGM Action Plan;
- non-existence of Terms of Reference defining precisely the composition and missions of Local Committees;
- poor training of the committee members regarding FGM;
- insufficient operating budget that results in a lack of resources and financial means to operate the Local Committees;
- poor mobilization of communities for the denunciation of cases;

- weakness of the monitoring and evaluation system (reporting, documentation) of statistics in this area;
- persistence of socio-cultural constraints;
- weak commitment of traditional and religious leaders to the prevention of FGM;
- insufficient accountability of the coordination mechanism of the committee's actions;
- lack of communication on FGM;
- fear to report cases of FGM;
- non-existence of legal text on the creation and organization of LC/FGM.

Looking at the problems identified, it became necessary to formulate the Terms of Reference in order to provide a framework for the development, implementation and follow-up-evaluation of strategies to combat Female Genital Mutilation.

### **III – ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE LOCAL COMMITTEE FOR THE ELIMINATION OF FGM**

#### **III-1 Organization of the LC/FGM**

The Local Committee to Combat Female Genital Mutilation, abbreviated to LC/FGM, is a forum for dialogue/communication/accompaniment set up by the competent authority and whose members are proposed by the communities concerned.

It is made up of volunteer community members (men, women, young girls, young boys), opinion leaders, notably traditional and religious chiefs, elites, community relays, former excisers, survivors, leaders of organized groups of young people, women, men and families residing in the localities where it operates and who are committed to the fight against

FGM. The Committee operates under the coordination of the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO). It is generally made up of 10 to 25 members depending on the size of the community. The Sub-Divisional Officer determines the composition of the Committee by a decision.

The Local Committee to Combat Female Genital Mutilation is structured as follows :

➤ **Supervision team :**

- 01 General supervisor (the SDO);
- 01 assistant supervisor (the Mayor) ;
- 01 active President (a woman) ;
- 01 Vice President ;
- 01 Secretary.

➤ **Operational team :**

- Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family (02);
- FMO (01);
- Ministry of Public Health(01);
- Ministry of Justice (01);
- Ministry of Social Affairs (01);
- Ministry of Youth and Civic Education (01);
- Civil Society Organization (02);
- Women's network (01);
- Traditional leaders (02) ;
- Religious leaders (02) ;
- WANZAN (excisers) (03),

- Traditional birth attendants (03) ;
- Technical and Financial Partners (02).

## III-2 Functioning

### *III-2-1 Tasks of the Local Committee to combat FGM*

The Local Committee for the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation whose mandate is 03 years has the mission to contribute to the fight against all forms of FGM. As such, it is responsible for :

- **Mediation**
  - Act as an interface and operational relay between its community and the Ministry in charge of women's and children's rights and gender issues;
  - collaborate with the networks of former excisers.
- **Advocacy**
  - Carry out advocacy actions towards other opinion leaders for their involvement in the fight to eradicate FGM.
- **Prevention**
  - denounce individuals and families who practice FGM;
  - organize advocacy and awareness-raising sessions against FGM during health and security crises;
  - organize mass campaigns to popularize the provisions of the Penal Code repressing these harmful practices which are FGM;
  - set up a monitoring and evaluation system to assess the activities carried out.

- **Care**
  - Develop a mapping of local actors in order to facilitate the referral of cases to local support structures/spaces according to the geographical orientations of the mapping;
  - receive and record community complaints so as to examine those related to FGM;
  - receive, listen and provide guidance to survivors of FGM cases or other harmful cultural practices, or to their relatives;
  - keep a monthly record of FGM cases;
  - set up a system for reporting cases;
  - set up a circuit for the management of actors;
  - protect the whistleblowers;
  - empower the survivors and practitioners of excision.
  
- **Funding and management**
  - Ensure the rational management of the equipment made available to it or acquired by it;
  - seek diverse support from MINPROFF and other partners in the fight, if necessary;
  - ensure the management of information and data.
  
- **Capacity building**
  - Provide assistance for the creation/revitalization of local committees to combat FGM;
  - train the members of denunciation brigades;
  - train the members of the Local Committees against FGM on interpersonal communication;
  - train and strengthen the members' capacities in the fight against FGM;

- train the Local Committee members on the psychosocial management of the victims.

For this task to be achieved successfully, the Committee will:

- develop and implement quarterly work plan for the fight against FGM, with the support of staff of the decentralized services of MINPROFF;
- implement and monitor the recommendations and resolutions from the working sessions organized by the officials of the relevant services of MINPROFF and TFPs;
- draw up and transmit activity reports on the elimination of FGM as well as related statistical data;
- report cases of FGM to the competent authorities. .

### ***III-2-2 Meetings***

The Local Committee shall meet once every three months and as many times as necessary. These meetings shall have as objectives to :

- initiate/organize quarterly meetings to monitor cases in conjunction with other local actors (heads of brigades/spaces for reporting or accompanying FGM cases);
- draw up and transmit periodic reports (quarterly, annual) to MINPROFF services;
- take part in the periodic coordination meetings of MINPROFF at local level;
- participate in meetings of actors in the local intervention chain for the fight against harmful practices;

- participate in the various meetings to which the services of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family and other partner structures invite them.

### ***III-2-3 Supervision***

At local level, the Sub Divisional Officer takes a decision to designate and install the bureau members of the Local Committee to combat FGM. He/she is also responsible for the overall supervision.

## **IV - MISCELLANEOUS AND FINAL PROVISIONS**

- The MINPROFF officer of the locality concerned provides support to the Local Committee for the fight against FGM;
- the Local Committee for the fight against FGM benefits from capacity building, with the technical support of MINPROFF and its development partners, in terms of promoting the human rights of girls and women in the implementation of the activities of its work plan;
- MINPROFF ensures the follow-up of the activities of the Committees to make appropriate advocacy.