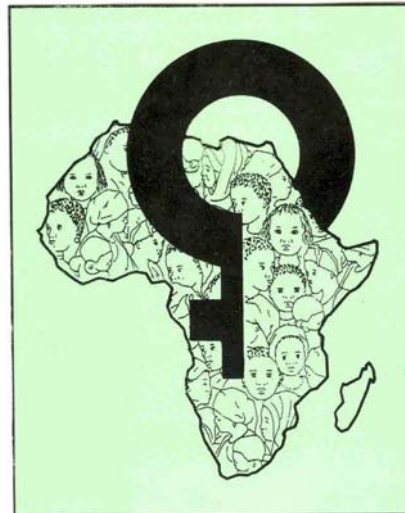


**The Inter African Committee
Le Comité Inter Africain**



Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting?

**Messages from IAC National Committees and Group Members to
maintain the term
Female Genital Mutilation**

Burkina Faso

Dr Bathijah,

J'ai le plaisir de porter à votre connaissance que le terme mutilation génitale féminine (MGF) est celui retenu par notre comité national pour qualifier toute atteinte à l'intégrité de l'organe génitale de la femme par ablation totale ou partielle, par excision, par infibulation, par insensibilisation ou par tout autre moyen.

Recevez mes salutations distinguées.

Madame Aina OUEDRAOGO

Secrétaire Permanent du Comité National de lutte contre la Pratique de l'Excision (SP/CNLPE)
du Burkina Faso.

Cameroon

Dear Heli Bathijah,

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION is a barbaric practice that is carried out in Africa, Europe, Asia, and the United States of America sometimes by immigrants who settle out of Africa.

For over 20 years the InerAfrican Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC) has been campaigning for the eradication of this practice all over the world and in Africa in particular.

We cannot imagine that a healthy organ that is cut off for no good reason and which causes enormous pain and even death to its victims can be referred to as mere cutting instead of Mutilation. The healthy organ is Mutilated.
Cutting does not describe the gravity of this problem.

Please, MUTILATION is the right word to use in describing a barbaric practice like this one. Please we are strongly against changing Mutilation to Cutting. I hope you will think twice before making any such changes.
Thank you for your kind understanding,

Yours Sincerely,
COMFORT EFFIOM
PRESIDENT IAC CAMEROON

Congo

A Mme Batijah,

Suite au message de Mme Berhane relative à la pratique néfaste de l'excision, le Comité National des Droits de la Femme/CI-AF section Congo par ma voix, vous prie de garder l'appellation mutilation génitale féminine au lieu de coupure.

Pour le respect et la dignité de la femme africaine, nous considérons la première appellation. Car le mot mutilation exprime mieux la douleur, la souffrance et la violence sur l'appareil génital de la femme.

Plein succès à l'atelier de l'OMS
Vive le CI-AF ensemble nous vaincrons
Mme Onanga

Côte d'Ivoire

Madame,

Suite à votre mail, je viens par la présente, en mon nom personnel et au nom du Comité de Côte d'Ivoire préciser que nous soutenons l'appellation MUTILATIONS GENITALES FEMININES et rejetons toute autre forme d'appellation pouvant dévier le sens de notre combat. Rassurez vous de notre soutien total et sans réserve aux actions du CIAF.

Merci

Imam CISSE DJIGUIBA
Président Fondation DJIGUI la Grande Espérance Président du CIAF-Côte d'Ivoire

Guinea

Chère Madame Batijah,

C'est avec une vive émotion que CPTAFE (Cellule de Coordination sur les pratiques traditionnelles affectant la santé des femmes et des enfants) branche guinéenne du Comité Inter-Africain a appris que votre organisation doit tenir un atelier sur les termes pour désigner les mutilations génitales féminines (MGF).

Madame, pourquoi après 22 ans de travail de 28 pays africains à travers notre organisation panafricaine CI-AF, qui a décidé d'appeler ces pratiques par leur nom réel (MGF), certaines personnes cherchent à imposer une autre appellation?

On n'a même pas besoin de réfléchir pour savoir qu'enlever un organe s'appelle mutilation. En Guinée, nous considérons que chercher à adoucir les termes qui désignent les MGF, c'est mépriser les victimes.

Pour une fois, peut-on respecter les africains dans leur choix, surtout qu'ils en sont victimes?

Respectueuses salutations.

Le Bureau Exécutif de CPTAFE

Kenya

Dear Madam

The name female genital mutilation has been trivialized to many names such as female genital cutting, the cut and etc.

My national committee is situated in an area where female genital mutilation is still very serious. The communities practice all types but for infibulation and excision, the fitting name is female Genital mutilation. In fact it is mutilation. We therefore support the name and it is in fitting with the kind of practice with female genital mutilation.

The cut implies cutting and leaving some parts.

Please it is my humble request that all those addressing the issue for FGM, should address it while empathizing with those who practice it AND HIGHLIGHT THE SERIOUSNESS OF MUTILATION.

In this part also are increasing cases of fistulae, world health should address it and develop a coping strategy in order to facilitate reconstruction and surgery of the millions suffering in silence. We have done the awareness campaigns and they have come out, can you press for funding.

Lastly, while discussing issues, take seriously what Berhane Raswork will present as she will be our voice there. The Kenyan Committee presses for retention of Female Genital Mutilation. With kindest regards

Lilian J.C. Plapan
Kenya

Mali AMSOPT

A Mme Batijah,

Je me garde de faire des commentaires par rapport à la terminologie MGF ou « coupure genitale ». Je vous envoie la photo de cette victime malienne de **mutilation génitale**, qui ne peut être traitée au Mali à cause de complication. Sa prise en charge est estimée à 10.000 euros et c'est grâce à la bonne volonté d'une ONG américain « Equality Now » qu'elle aura peut-être la chance d'être guérie.

Kadidia



Mali APDF

Chère Madame Batijah,

J'ai été très contente de recevoir votre message. Concernant les 2 terminologies :

- Mutilations et coupures: Mon idée est que je préfère la Mutilation que coupure parce que le mot mutilation désigne l'ablation qui est un acte irréversible , alors qu'une coupure peut être suturée raison pour laquelle je préfère la terminologie mutilation au lieu de coupure.

-
Terminologie qui a été toujours notre instrument de travail pendant des années. C'est un mot populaire et bien vulgarisé Association pour le Progrès et la Défense des Droits des Femmes

APDF

Hamdallaye ACI 2000 Immeuble DJIRE

BP 1740 Bamako

Tél 229 10 28

Bamako Mali

Niger

Bonjour Madame Batija

Le CONIPRAT/Niger a été très surpris et très choqué d'apprendre qu'il y a une proposition tendant à vouloir changer le terme "Mutilation" par celui de " Coupure".

Nous sommes vraiment désolés de constater que des personnes qui ne vivent absolument pas, et ne savent rien des conséquences des MGF, ni physiquement, ni moralement, veillent à la place des victimes ramener cette pratique à une simple coupure.

Comment une coupure peut-elle traduire l'état dans lequel se trouve une fille, une femme qui se voit enlever le clitoris, les petites lèvres, les grandes lèvres et parfois le tout cousu, pour ne laisser qu'un petit trou pour faire passer les urines ?

Cette fille, ou cette femme, handicapée à vie peut-elle dire seulement qu'elle a été coupée ?

Aussi le CONIPRAT s'oppose fermement à l'idée de réduire ces mutilations à coupures.

Par conséquent il n'admet pas le terme coupure pour signifier l'acte criminel que subissent les filles et les femmes africaines.

Nos salutations fraternelles

Mme Maiga Amsou Amadou, Présidente Nationale du CONIPRAT-Niger

Nigeria

Dear Mme Batijah,

We in Nigeria of the Inter Africa Committee write to support the name Female Genital Mutilation(FGM) for use to better describe the practice that had always been referred to as

circumcision. The dictionary meaning of circumcision is "cutting in circle" just as is done doing the male circumcision. However, experience has shown that what is done on the female genitalia goes beyond cutting in circles only. Practically seeing where it is carried out has proven that the perpetrators, oblivious of the anatomy of the organs just get hold of something which they perceive is flesh and cut. Also the crude edge of the instrument used does not allow for a smooth cut thus the cutting can extend to any length injuring the surrounding organs. It is based on these facts which we who work at the community levels have seen and proven, that made WHO adopt the name Female Genital Mutilation.

Also if we consider Type 4 which is termed UNCLASSIFIED and consist of other practices on the female genitalia some not even involving cutting but causing damages: the appropriate word would be FGM.

We in IAC Nigeria therefore urge that WHO continue with the word FGM which without doubt best describe what is being done on the external genitalia of the female gender and move ahead to find a permanent solution to the practice which to all intent and purpose do more harm than good.

Oyefunso Orenuga
Senior Programme Officer
IAC-Nigeria

Somalia

Dear Dr. Bathija,

Somalia - National Committee on FGM wishes to express its full support to keep the term Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) instead of Female Genital Cutting (FGC). Thank you.

Kind regards,

Asha Hagi
Chair, Somalia - NC.

Sudan

Dear Batijah,

I have the pleasure to introduce myself to you, I am an associate Prof. on social and educational psychology by profession but have been involved in the campaign against FGM practice in the Sudan and the Horn of Africa countries since 1979. Beside that, I am the founder of the Inter-African Committee's (IAC) chapter in the Sudan which is (Sudan National Committee on Traditional Practices SNCTP), the pioneer active NGO on the elimination of FGM/HTPs/HIV/AIDS/GBV while protects women's and children's rights in all aspects of live.

We in the Sudan as well as at Horn of Africa networks decided to use the term Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); while campaign on its elimination. Our determination was based upon intensive and comprehensive dialogues made with the medical anatomists who showed us the different types of the operations made on the subject concern and the complications emerged in

every type. In addition to that, there are unknown re-circumcision operations that being made to women after delivery and at late stage of live before death. It was discovered in 2000 when I did my Ph.D. in the subject. The TBAs and trained midwives described exactly how they perform the re-circumcision. They mutilated the organ badly in addition to severe pains accompanied. It is observed that in most parts of the Sudan and the Horn of Africa grandmothers even some of the educated still insist in performing infibulation and re-circumcision to their daughters and married ones.

Therefore, in order to condemn all forms of the practice and re-circumcision we need to use a strong terminology to stop all forms, we do not want to use cut.

We reject the use of FGC: It is not strong in prevention and people evaluate it as a normal cut and can heal easily without any negative complications. Cutting a male prepuce in circumcision is totally different than cutting any part in the female genitalia, it by all means mutilates the organs and its surrounding organs.

All forms of FGM show some sorts of mutilation on female organs and pave the way for risk to HIV/AIDS. In the Sudan SNCTP discovered that there are many unknown types of FGM practice that have been performed in IDPs camps by old women who have no idea to carry it and the practice is not part of their cultures but they rapidly earn income.

Accordingly, SNCTP and the FGM/HTPs network in the Sudan appeal to WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF to stick to the use of FGM and intensify joint work to speed up its elimination before the end of 2015, hopefully.

Dr. Amna A.R Hassan
SNCTP Director
IAC Vice president (Anglophone)
Sudan

Tanzania

Dear Dr Bathija,

We IAC Tanzania we plead that the term Female Genital Mutilation be maintained and used instead of Female Genital Cutting. We strongly feel that the procedure is more than just cutting. It involves removing the organs that have specific biological functions so it is removal and that is mutilation and not mere cutting. Even in Tanzania the term Kukeketa{meaning FGM} has replaced the term Kutahiri which means circumcision. It has strongly been felt that the procedure is brutal.

Juliet Chugulu , Bridget Shirima, Zainab Ugulum IAC TANZANIA

Afrikanische Frauen Organisation, Austria

Dear Mrs. Bathijah,

We are very sorry that we heard recently that WHO is making a conference on the FGM terminology and we are surprised like others, that the UN Agencies do not speak the same

language. We would like to remind you that in the Conference of the UN Human Rights Commission in 1993 in Vienna at the presence of 171 countries including the Inter-African Committee from Africa the term Female Genital Mutilation was adapted. At the same time some donors would like to name it Female Genital Cutting. This was also not accepted in the IAC Addis Ababa Conference in 2003, there it was again stressed that the term should be Female Genital Mutilation.

At the European level it was also raised, discussed and decided in the 2005 Gent Conference where many European NGOS were meeting that the terminology should be Female Genital Mutilation.

We would also like to remind you that in the IAC Mali Conference which was held from 4.-7.4.2005 at the presence of representatives of 28 African countries including your organisation and many European and international organisations it was decided that the term should be FGM.

It is important that the victims accepted it and are working over 25 years with it and now it surprises us that we are wasting time and resource for terminology again. We think people should concentrate on working on the substance of the matter. Having disputes over the terminology and imposing the term Female Genital Cutting on the victims can never bring any change.

We would like to stress once more that the term Female Genital Mutilation should continue.

With best regards,

The Committee of the African Women`s Organisation

CAMS France (commission pour l'abolition des mutilations sexuelles)

Chère Madame Batijah,

Notre organisation, à la pointe de la lutte contre les mutilations sexuelles féminines en France, est préoccupée par la fâcheuse tendance qu'ont de nombreux organismes des Nations-Unies et certaines ONG à ne pas oser nommer clairement ce qui est infligé aux victimes de ces pratiques : il ne s'agit ni d'une simple coupure ni d'une circoncision mais **de l'ablation d'un organe.**

Il faut donc nommer cette pratique pour ce qu'elle est, **une mutilation**, ce qu'a amplement rappelé l'Académie Nationale de Médecine française lors de son colloque du 10 juin 2004 intitulé « *Les mutilations sexuelles féminines, un autre crime contre l'humanité* ».

Nous soutenons la démarche légitime du Comité Inter-Africain qui demande que la dénomination internationale déjà adoptée de *mutilation génitale féminine* soit maintenue, encore qu'en France nous préférons dire *mutilation sexuelle féminine*.

En effet ce n'est pas la fonction reproductive donc génitale qui est visée par la pratique mais bien la fonction sexuelle la plus intime de la femme.

Je voudrais faire encore une remarque : minimiser l'atteinte portée aux femmes en usant d'un vocabulaire inadéquat ne peut que retarder leur nécessaire prise de conscience de la gravité du dommage qui leur est causé ainsi qu'à leurs filles.

Pensez-vous qu'un homme à qui le gland du pénis aurait été coupé dirait qu'il a subi une *coupure* ?

Non. Il clamerait qu'il a été victime d'une *mutilation* et il aurait raison.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Chère Madame, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.

Linda Weil-Curiel

FORWARD

Dear Madame Batijah,

As president of FORWARD-Germany and first elected Secretary of the European Network against FGM, I would like to express my dismay at the news of an upcoming discussion that may have broad consequences for public understanding of the female genital surgeries which our groups have been working hard for more than thirty years to end. Clitoridectomy, excision, and infibulation are mutilations.

I have been personally involved in campaigns against FGM since 1977. The earliest African women activists used a clear vocabulary that expresses, in medical terminology -- mutilation -- what these operations do to a healthy organ.

There remains so much to be done on this terrain to change the minds of people who practice FGM, and this means so many committed donors -- agencies and individuals -- must be found, that to hide the gravity of the operation behind more 'neutral' language is irresponsible.

The clear influence of the United States in initiatives to change the terminology -- FGM -- chosen by African women activists at official conferences, expressing their preference for FGM again and again in the 1990s, is also regrettable. The United States has no special mandate to lead on this issue. In fact, its unique history of racism and current tensions between African Americans and African immigrants are part of the background to the present discussion.

The Inter-African Committee, on February 6, 2003, launched the International "Zero Tolerance" to FGM Day, adopted by groups throughout Europe. These NGOs act in the spirit of impeccable representation in Africa of the Inter-African Committee for whom genital surgeries of the type discussed are mutilations.

I am asking that the extraordinary memoir written by FORWARD - Germany's vice-president, Fadumo Korn be sent to you ASAP. I translated it from German as quickly as possible because, like few other books, it makes vivid the reasons why we should continue to call genital operations "mutilation," even though, as Fadumo is the first to assure us, she is not a "damaged" individual. Rather, the values in whose name her genital organs were destroyed, resulting in life-long suffering and struggle toward recovery, should be changed. I'm attaching a fine review from Publisher's Weekly and a flyer announcing the book that came out just last week.

In sum, to attract donors and active supporters, we need to remain frank. I therefore urge you to support the current usage when speaking publicly about genital threats to the health of women and girls.

Thank you.

With best wishes,

Tobe Levin, Ph.D.

Collegiate Professor, University of Maryland in Europe Non-resident Fellow, WEB DuBois Institute, Harvard University President, FORWARD - Germany Translator, Fadumo Korn. _Born in the Big Rains. A Memoir of Somalia and Survival._ NY: The Feminist Press, 2006.
+49 177 749 40 62

GAMS France

Mme Heli Batijah,

Par la présente, nous souhaiterions attirer votre attention sur notre volonté de maintenir le terme de mutilations génitales féminines.

Depuis 1982, composée de femmes migrantes et de femmes occidentales, notre association œuvre pour l'abolition des mutilations sexuelles et plus récemment, elle a élargi son champ d'action à la prévention des mariages forcés. Notre siège social, quant à lui, est situé dans le 20ème arrondissement de Paris.

La reconnaissance de notre action, au niveau national, après auditions en 2005, a été soulignée dans les derniers avis de la Commission Consultative des Droits de l'Homme, ceux du Haut Conseil à l'Intégration, ceux des groupes de travail sur les violences faites aux femmes, de l'Assemblée nationale et Egalité Hommes/Femmes du Sénat.

Au niveau international, notre expertise est reconnue par le Comité Inter-Africain sur les pratiques traditionnelles affectant la santé des femmes et des enfants, dont nous sommes la section française, depuis sa création à Dakar en 1984 et par la Commission Européenne. En effet, celle-ci soutient le GAMS pour le « Premier programme de lutte contre les mutilations génitales féminines en Europe », qui concerne 10 Etats membres et 15 ONG partenaires. Cela nous a ainsi permis d'obtenir le Label Paris Europe en 2002.

Nous étions présentes lors de la Conférence des 19 au 24 novembre 1990, à Addis-Abeba, initiée par le Comité Inter-Africain et il a été décidé lors des résolutions spécifiques que : « Considérant que les termes « circoncision féminine » et « excision » peuvent prêter à confusion et pourraient pas décrire pleinement la diversité de cette pratique, Nous, les délégués à la Conférence, recommandons que ces termes soient remplacés par « Mutilations Génitales Féminines ».

Par conséquent, nous nous opposons fermement à l'utilisation du terme « coupures », extrêmement réducteur et posant les mêmes problèmes que précédemment pour les termes « circoncision féminine » et « excision ».

Vous souhaitant bonne réception de la présente, et en espérant que notre association connaîtra une suite favorable à sa demande,

Nous prions d'agr eer, Madame, l'expression de nos salutations distingu ees.

Isabelle GILLETTE-FAYE,

Sociologue, Directrice du GAMS,
du R seau
Chef de Projet du Premier programme  -contre les
Pr sidente.
europ en de mutilations g nitales f minines en
Europe, Expert international aupr s de l'Agence
Intergouvernementale de la Francophonie,
l'UNICEF et du Minist re des Affaires Etrang res
sur les Pratiques Traditionnelles N fastes (PTN).

Coumba TOURE,

Co-fondatrice du Comit  Inter- Africain,
Euronet lutte MGF et du GAMS,

RISK Sweden

Dear Mrs. Heli Batijah,

Please find herewith the views of RISK, (National Association for Ending Female Genital Mutilation) in Sweden, about the term that should continue to apply for the practice of Female Genital Mutilation.

CUTTING OR MUTILATION?

The age-old traditional practice of artificially interfering with the natural state of the female genital organs has been variously designated. But the name Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has gained general acceptance. We believe that FGM is an appropriate designation and should not be replaced by "CUTTING". There are many reasons for saying so:

- The female genitals, made in the state in which they are made to fulfil the purposes for which they are made, are very sensitive parts of the body. Any artificial change made on them changes their natural state and disfigures them. The organs are disfigured in proportion to the degree and extent of the practice that artificially interferes with their natural state. Whatever the degree and extent of the practice it results in disfigurement. Because the disfigurement is in a generally hidden area does not make it any less a disfigurement.
- The disfigurement varies from the comparatively lighter one to the one that is most extensive. If one adopts the word "cutting" for the light one, how is one to designate the pharaonic type? "Cutting" does not show well the deliberate defacement or mutilation of the organs following the pharaonic operation. The name that describes the greater damage to the organs should not be abandoned for the sake of the name that describes the lesser damage.
- The campaign for the full eradication of the practice of FGM is well underway. People are used to the name of FGM. And there is no reason for changing names now. The campaign must continue with full force, ever-reminding all concerned of the unnecessary and terrible physical consequences of the practice of FGM. And for this purpose the designation of the practice as mutilation gives the right picture. Besides, changing the name of the practice of FGM to a term that is comparatively less shocking might give the

impression that the organs have not suffered serious damage. This might confuse people and weaken the future force of the campaign against FGM.

Sincerely,

Fana Habteab

RISK, Sweden

Vluchtelingenorganisaties (organization for refugees), the Netherlands

Dear Mrs. Heli Batijah,

We are writing this letter because it has come to our attention of the unfortunate and untimely discussion about the use of terminology to describe the harmful traditional practice of what is widely known as "Female Genital Mutilation".

In fact in Dutch we use the term "Vrouwelijk Genital Verminking". As you know this subject is the most complex and most sensitive because it is intermingled with cultural, ritual and religious believes and practices.

It is not my intention to dwell on the content and subject matter now because we have discussed this for more than three decades and it is deeply regrettable that we are compelled to go to square one on the subject matter at this moment our critical and favourable stage of our struggle. Not only women every where in countries where such practices is rooted but also those in the Diaspora are fully aware of the dangers of such inhuman practices. In actual fact those in the Diaspora are consciously strategising and intervening in the most appropriate ways to stop the practice in their respective countries of origin and to prevent it from becoming one of the export items in the list of bad practices.

After such a long struggle and after walking a long way, it is deeply regrettable that we are now back to square one discussing terminology. This cannot be a serious. We find it very offensive and we are seriously worried about the threats to our unity and solidarity due to differences in our meaning and understanding of our well-established concept and terminology relating to Female Genital Mutilation.

I am writing this letter not as a concerned African individual or woman but also on behalf of all active pioneering African Women in The Netherlands who at the moment are actively working in the Project Zero tolerance to FGM, Project terfpount and Project Agents of change which we have just lunched. In these project workwomen from Ethiopia, Liberia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Ghana, Ivory cost, and very many Dutch concerned women are involved.

As far as we are concerned, the use of the terminology 'Cutting' can only be an insult and a slap in the face that undermines our struggle. Hence, we would like to kindly request you to seriously reconsider the negative implications and ramifications of such kinds of ideas.

It should be stressed that the Inter African Committee (IAC), which is one of the leading African women struggle in Africa, is constantly using the term Female Gentile Mutilation. Moreover, in our annual meeting of member countries in Mali we have addressed this issue and have unanimously chosen to use the term "Mutilation" to stresses the graveness and seriousness of the problem.

As an affiliated member of the IAC we would like to stress to you that we have constantly and consistently used the term "Mutilation" in the Netherlands and have asked our Government to use the term in all their policy papers. It was not an easy venture but in the end the Government have agreed to use the term and we consider this as one step further in our struggle to make our Government commit to designate the grave problem as "Mutilation" and abuse of human right of the child girl. Hence, from our point of view it is not possible to go back to discuss issues about terminology now.

Hoping that you will come to a better understanding of our struggle and what it means to us

With warm Regards,

Alem Desta
Project Coordinator.