



**Amnesty International
Special Project on Female Genital Mutilation
and Human Rights**



Dear friends,
This is the first of quarterly bulletins by the FGM Project Team.

The FGM Project:

The current one-year project aims at conducting comparative research in the dynamics of FGM in order to provide a basis for developing campaigns and support membership efforts related to work on FGM as a human rights issue. Although the project will be focusing on three African countries (Sudan, Kenya and Senegal), it is informed by previous research and actions conducted both at the IS and within the broader movement in particular in Africa, but also including membership from the North and other NGOs.

Building on membership experience, the project team should be able to identify the challenges posed by the cultural and social context as well as define methodologies to address these challenges in a thoughtful and culturally sensitive manner. There is no doubt that the cultural and legal challenges, as well as the innovative and thoughtful initiatives developed in the three focus-countries will allow the project to address some of the most compelling aspects of campaigning on FGM.

In order to ensure coherence and sustainability the project team will be working in close cooperation with AI membership and thematic, research and campaigns teams at the IS.



"Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation Now!" - A workshop in Dodoma, Tanzania, 1997. ©private

This initiative is meant to provide Amnesty International with the tools to effectively campaign on FGM issues, taking into account the specificity of the organisation and of each of its constituencies, thus enhancing the impact of campaigning efforts.

The project team

The project team is composed of Inah Fatoumata Kaloga, FGM Programme officer, based in Amnesty's Africa Regional Office (ARO) in Kampala, Uganda, and Michael Hammer, working as the Project Manager in London. In Kampala other IS staff members with particular experience in the field of women's rights will be supporting the team in its work.

The project team is of course also in contact with the IS Gender Unit, relevant legal advisers in the International Organisations and Law program (ILOP), and many others also working on the upcoming Violence against Women Campaign.



Inah, after a month at the International Secretariat London offices has started in Kampala in early March. She is a lawyer who has been working for the last three years in the fields of human rights and humanitarian action. Her previous positions included work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross, in Guinea, Switzerland and Sudan.

In order to ensure that the project leads to results which can be used by AI across the membership, the project is working to constitute a **mirror-group**, consisting of members of AI who have been personally involved in work related to FGM and women's rights.

The project will be in discussion with this group on the project, its results and policy implications. Through the members of the groups members will also have a further opportunity to contribute to the project and engage in discussions beyond what would be possible with the project team alone.

Current working steps

- The project has so far completed a legal overview on West Africa and is currently engaged in doing the same for Eastern Africa. We are also developing our contacts to relevant NGOs working in this field, often in a national context.
- Delegates from the Africa Regional Office recently attended a Conference of the Inter - African Commission on Harmful Traditional Practices in Addis Ababa. The next steps will include work on international instruments and mechanisms which are of relevance, such as the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Draft Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, expected to be adopted in July 2003 at the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Mozambique.
- Travel to the focus countries will be used to strengthen the NGO contacts and gather information on the practice, how other partners are campaigning on this issue and where good practices can be identified across the national, regional, linguistic and also professional boundaries in the field.

The bulletin: a forum

These quarterly bulletins are intended to keep members informed of the development of the project and put relevant AI's activities on this subject on display. Membership contributions and comments are welcome and can be communicated to Inah (email IKaloga@amnesty.org, Tel. +256 31 350 100 / +256 41 252 900).

We know that many of you have been very actively campaigning against FGM and your insight and experience would definitely enrich this bulletin. Please do not hesitate to send us your thoughts, describe initiatives taken in the field and your ideas on how to best deal with this topic as a human rights violation.

We are looking forward to working with you on this challenging issue,
Inah,

