



Alliance pour les droits des femmes mauritaniennes (ADFM)

FA 01000251905202202325



## Project Report

Strengthening women's rights in Mauritania through the establishment of awareness committees to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding.



Canada

## ABOUT THE PROJECT



The objective of the project is to reduce the prevalence of violence against women in Mauritania through an awareness campaign and the establishment of awakening committees. This interregional campaign was implemented in Brakna, Gorgol, and Guidimakha, three regions severely affected by female violence. In each region, the populations of 3 cities or villages were engaged and questioned about the practice of force-feeding and female genital mutilation (FGM) in their community. At the end of the workshops, an awakening committee was formed in each city/village to enable ADFM to maintain regular communication with the communities involved and equip them to continue their awareness efforts once the project is completed."

## COMMUNITIES INVOLVED

The rural regions of Brakna, Gorgol, and Guidimakha have been targeted by our interventions, as women living in these areas are particularly affected by the practice of excision (FGM) and force-feeding. According to OFPRA, 88% of women living in Brakna were excised in 2013, with a higher percentage in the Gorgol region (95%) and Guidimakha (97%). These numbers are mainly attributed to the ignorance of remote communities that continue to practice and believe that excision and force-feeding are required by religion and beneficial for women's health. These types of female violence are primarily practiced by the Fulani, Moors, and Soninke, who consider these practices as rites of passage that will make the young girl more attractive in the eyes of her future husband.



# GORGOL

February 6th to 10th, 2023



Kaédi  
30



Tétiane  
42



Tioutch  
44

Gorgol had 335,917 inhabitants during the General Population and Housing Census of 2013. This administrative region of Mauritania is located in the south of the country, bordering Senegal, and its capital is Kaédi.

# KAÉDI



## General information

- Presence of **(30)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Very good dialogue between ADFM and the people of Kaédi.
- The participants felt concerned about the topics discussed and were attentive during the awareness session.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

Questions about family planning were raised during the awareness workshops, particularly regarding contraception and adherence to Islam. Is it a permissible practice? If so, under what circumstances?

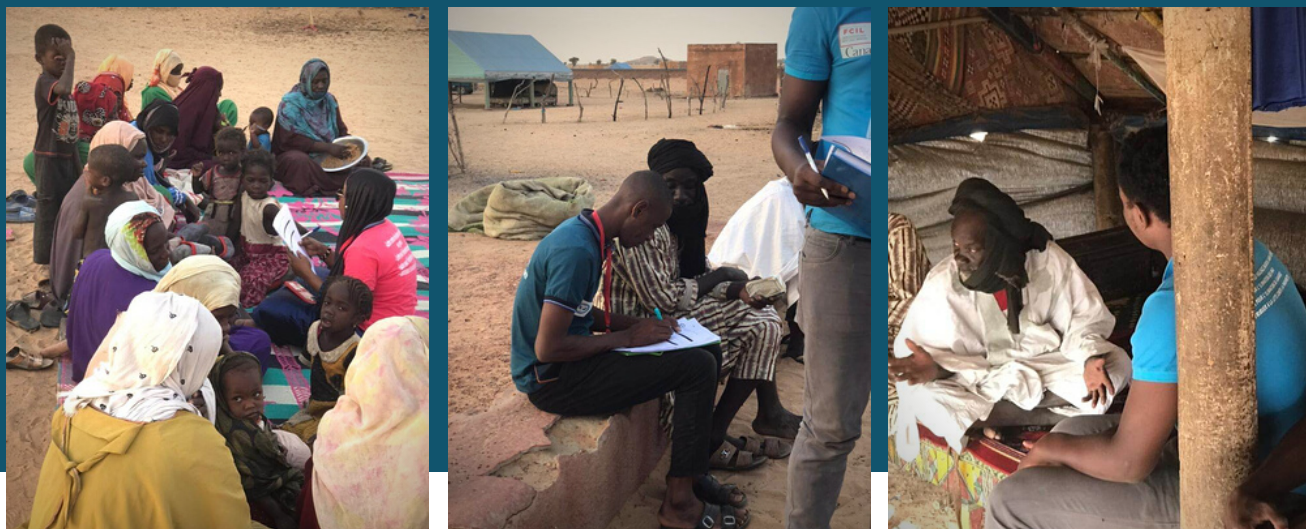
## Other relevant information

Kaédi is a city where religious leaders hold significant influence and support the practice of FGM. Their followers are scattered throughout the city and may be willing to go to great lengths to enforce their master's ideology. ADFM paid close attention to the security of its team during the workshops.

Our mission coincided with the legislative election campaigns in Kaédi, and thus, most Kaedians did not see themselves participating in one of our workshops when they could gather elsewhere and earn money.



# TÉTIANE



## General information

- Presence of **(42)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- All the women present felt concerned and were attentive to the topics discussed during the discussion.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

More than half of the men present during the discussion session believed that these topics concerned women more than men and did not see themselves sitting with women to discuss them.

## Testimony

Coumba Barry testified to having circumcised her 3-week-old daughter in 2009. The procedure went wrong as the child kept bleeding, and the wound became infected. The mother went to Nouakchott to seek medical attention for her daughter, but in vain. It was in Senegal that she was able to treat her daughter, who is now 14 years old and remains there for ongoing treatments.

# THIOUTCH



## General information

- Presence of **(44)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Fruitful exchanges between ADFM's team and the Thioutch community on female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

The women present felt concerned about the topics discussed, but not all of them were attentive. According to the information gathered, the practices of force-feeding and female genital mutilation (FGM) are based on customs. Men did not feel concerned and were very few in number during the discussion.

Besides excision and force-feeding, the women in the village of Thioutch reported that early marriage was a significant issue. Indeed, the latest case of early marriage involved a 12-year-old girl.

## Other relevant information

Our activities coincide with the harvest season; as a result, almost all the women in the village go to the fields, which are 5 km away from the village, leaving their children unattended.



# GUIDIMAKHA

February 11th to 15th, 2023



Sélibabi  
**60**



Khabou  
**141**



Hassi Cheguar  
**121**

Guidimakha had 267,029 inhabitants during the General Population and Housing Census of 2013. With an area of 10,300 km<sup>2</sup>, it is the smallest region and the one located furthest south in the country.

# SÉLIBABI



## General information

- Presence of **(60)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Fruitful exchanges between ADFM's team and the community of Sélibabi on female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

All the men and women present felt concerned and were attentive to the topics discussed during the awareness session. The women of Sélibabi now testify to being well aware of the seriousness surrounding female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding. Most of them assured us of reporting the practice to the awakening committees if they witness such incidents.

## Other relevant information

Our arrival in Sélibabi was marked by a meeting with the governor of the Guidimakha region, who showed great interest in our project. He emphasized that modern force-feeding is a very common practice in the region and encouraged us to continue our efforts in the area.

Several members of civil society were present in Sélibabi: Espoir Sélibabi, Main Dans La Main, and Voix des Jeunes.



# KHABOU



## General information

- Presence of **(141)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Fruitful exchanges between ADFM's team and the community of Khabou on female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

All the women present felt concerned and were attentive to the topics discussed during the awareness session. Not all men felt concerned because they were very few in number during the discussion. The women of Khabou testify to being well aware of the seriousness surrounding female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding and assured us that they would report these practices to the awakening committee.

## Other relevant information

The roads leading to Khabou were rugged, and we had to make stops in certain areas due to concerns for our lives. According to the mayor of the village of Khabou, wrongdoers had set a large part of the bush on fire the previous day. Knowing that our activity would conclude in the evening, we could have found ourselves trapped in the bushfires set by the wrongdoers.

The mayor of Khabou welcomed and thanked us for our presence, advising us to have an awakening committee for each ethnic group present in the village.

# HASSI CHEGUAR



## General information

- Presence of **(121)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Fruitful exchanges between ADFM's team and the community of Hassi Cheguar on female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

All the men and women present felt concerned and were attentive to the topics discussed during the awareness session.

The women of Hassi Cheguar testify to being well aware of the seriousness of the consequences surrounding female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding. Most of them assured us that they would report these practices to the awakening committee if they witness them."

## Other relevant information

The roads leading to Hassi Cheguar were rugged, and we had to make stops in certain areas because wrongdoers had set a large part of the bush on fire the previous day.



# BRAKNA

February 16th to 19th, 2023



Boghé  
20



Lopel  
44



Dioloum  
114

The Brakna region is home to a population of approximately 328,000 inhabitants, 70% of whom are under 25 years old. In addition to Arabic, the official language, French, Pulaar, Soninke, and Wolof are commonly spoken languages in the region.

# BOGHÉ



## General information

- Presence of **(20)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Fruitful exchanges between ADFM and the members of the women's cooperative BAYE NIASS in Boghé on female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding. The women's cooperative promised to raise awareness in the community about these practices.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

All the men and women present felt concerned and were attentive to the topics discussed during the awareness session.

## Other relevant information

The roads leading to Boghé were degraded, and the driver had to be very cautious. Our arrival in Boghé was marked by our meeting with the Hakem of the Brakna region and the deputy mayor of the municipality of Boghé, who showed great interest in our project. However, they were not familiar with the practice of modern force-feeding but promised to help us.



# LOPEL



## General information

- Presence of **(44)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Fruitful exchanges between ADFM's team and the community of Lopel on female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

All the women present during the awareness session felt very concerned during the discussion, which was rather intense. Despite their low presence, the men actively participated in the exchange and discussions.

The Lopel community is deeply attached to customs and traditions. Our interventions touched on sensitive topics, causing tensions that could lead to retaliation against ADFM's team because the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is perceived as normal. In fact, several women are not ready to abandon these practices.

## Other relevant information

Our arrival to the village was cold because there was a death in the village, which is why there was less mobilization. The population promised to come back in larger numbers for our future activities.

# DILOULOM



## General information

- Presence of **(144)** individuals during the awareness workshop.
- Fruitful exchanges between ADFM's team and the community of Diouloum on female genital mutilation (FGM) and force-feeding.

## Considerations regarding gender equality

All the women present felt concerned and were attentive to the topics discussed during the awareness session. The men also felt concerned about the subject, as there were more than twenty of them present. Another form of gender-based violence prevails in Diouloum: domestic violence. The residents have asked us to return to raise awareness on this issue. Additionally, several have highlighted a problem of juvenile delinquency.

## Other relevant information

The road from Boghé to Diouloum lacks asphalt, so the driver had to be very cautious on the road.

We received a very warm welcome from the residents of Diouloum, who were delighted with our visit and encouraged us to come back more often to eliminate practices they consider as harmful taboos to health.



# BILAN DE NOS ACTIVITÉS

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### REGIONS

Despite some difficulties on the roads, ADFM's team was able to visit the three regions it had targeted for this project. This is a positive observation for the implementation of future projects in Gorgol, Guidimakha, and Brakna, regions particularly affected by gender-based violence.

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### AWARENESS COMMITTEES

ADFM's team was warmly welcomed by the communities targeted for this project. The population of each city/village visited agreed to establish an awakening committee that will maintain strong and lasting ties with ADFM to continue mobilizing and raising awareness against violence against women."

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### INDIVIDUALS

Against all expectations, we have significantly exceeded the number of people we thought we would be able to raise awareness with. Our goal was to meet with 50 individuals per city/village, totaling around 450 people. Thanks to the support of local civil society organizations and the involvement of local authorities, our workshops attracted a large number of participants, including several men who spoke out against the practice of female genital mutilation and force-feeding.