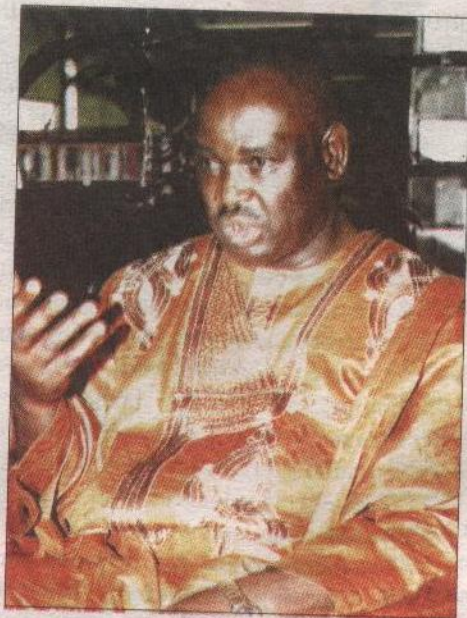


Using Movies to Fight Female Genital Mutilation

Mwalimu George Ngwane, explains why he decided to produce a film on female genital mutilation.

What prompted you to produce this telefilm on Female Genital Mutilation called "Nkuma"?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is an age-old practice that is perpetuated in many parts of the world. In Africa alone, there are 27 countries that have been battling with this controversial practice that not only draws a dichotomy between traditionalists and modernists but has placed Cameroon in the storm of practices that impair women's well being. As a matter of fact, a UN report estimates that about 20 percent of women in Cameroon go through a form of Female Genital Mutilation called infibulations. Certain areas of the South West and North Provinces have been cited as championing this practice.



Mwalimu George Ngwane: «The film industry is a strong medium of communication».

What has been your viewers' reaction so far?

Our approach in the telefilm is to find common ground through dispassionate dialogue between those who firmly believe FGM is an initiation rite of passage to womanhood and those who see it as a violation of human or woman rights. In other words some of the responses we have received by phone are in the light that it is possible to maintain the cultural practice of female initiation without necessarily targeting female genital organs. We met parliamentarians during the 2006 November session,

we gave copies of the telefilm to the coordinator of CERAC, National Vice President of the Assembly, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, etc. We are happy to note that this year's theme for the International Day of the Woman is reflective of the main issue of the telefilm, i.e. gender-based violence.

So how is the telefilm exploited to have sustainable impact?

Its first broadcast on one of our

local TVs did not go far enough for lack of promotion. The second broadcast on three of our TVs was programmed during the activities marking the International Day of the Women. The Ministry of Women' Empowerment and Protection of the Family has virtually appropriated the telefilm as a major tool in the fight against FGM. Public large screen broadcasts have been slated in many towns of the South West Province and posters of he telefilm will be used during the march pasts. Radio talks have also been scheduled. So the information and sensitization aspects are quite taken care of. As for advocacy, I was happy to learn that Madam Rose Abunaw, the Vice Speaker of the National Assembly led a delegation of female parliamentarians to Logone and Shari to start constructive dialogue about this practice.

And where do you go from here?

The film industry is a strong medium of communication, education, information and advocacy. I hope our government can invest in it by training film producers and by our schools taking arts and especially theatre arts to a professional level.