

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used to collect data for the study. The primary method of data collection was individual interviews, although group discussions with men and with women were also conducted. Sound recordings of the interviews and group discussions were made and these recordings were subsequently transcribed, translated into French, and analyzed by the interviewers and their supervisors.

The individual interviews with women were the main focus of the study because the authors wanted to find out firsthand what women had to say about their education and their experience with coming of age. The individual interviews with men discussed education, the process of finding a wife, the image of an ideal spouse, and opinions on female circumcision. The group discussions focused on opinions about the practice of FGC in general.

2.1 Preparation of the Study

Stanley Yoder, Qualitative Research Specialist at Macro International, designed and directed the project. This involved recruiting persons capable of directing research teams and interviewers, conducting a training seminar, developing interviewing guides with the research teams in the four national languages, organizing the calendar of events, and suggesting the broad lines of analysis to be used at the end of the research. The first week of training was spent studying the principles of qualitative research; the second week was spent developing the guide for the interviews in local languages. Papa Ousmane Camara and Baba Soumaoro, sociology professors at the University of Conakry, were the supervisors for the study. The eleven interviewers had some interviewing experience or had studied sociology at the university. However, the group had little experience in qualitative research interviewing. Therefore, it was necessary to discuss the principles of this type of interviewing and analysis before proceeding with the fieldwork.

The eleven interviewers and two supervisors participated in ten days of training on the principles of qualitative research, the logic underlying this study, and the best way to ask questions in the four languages. Assuming that the Guinean way of initiating and carrying on a conversation differs from the French way, the researchers at first sought to adopt an approach that would be close to that of the local languages. An appropriate Guinean style of introduction was found, but it was necessary to revert to the French style in presenting the questions and waiting for the responses. This approach was not entirely successful, but the researchers developed basic interviewing guide sheets in French (see annex documents) that were then translated into the appropriate languages.

At the end of the training, two interview teams were formed, each consisting of, in addition to the supervisor, three women and one or two men. One team interviewed in the Sosso language and later in Fulfulde. The other team interviewed in Maninka and later in Guerze.

2.2 Fieldwork

The two teams spent two weeks at each of their field sites collecting data in the four national languages. In each of the four regions, one week was spent in an urban center and the second in a rural village. The Sosso and Maninka interviews were conducted at the end of November and the beginning of December 1998; the Fulfulde and Guerze interviews were conducted in January 1999.

The criteria used to select villages and neighborhoods were ethnic homogeneity, ease of access, and political security. Sites were selected that were readily accessible by vehicle, that had relatively homogeneous populations, and had demographic characteristics common to the ethnic group in question. The field sites chosen were the following:

Language	Region	Urban	Rural
Sosso	Lower Guinea	Kindia	Bangouya
Fulfulde	Middle Guinea	Dalaba	Ditinn and Bodyé
Maninka	Upper Guinea	Kouroussa	Bokoro and Moussaya
Guerze	Forest Guinea	N'Zérékoré	Gouécké

When the teams arrived in an area, local authorities provided them with a guide to facilitate identification of the women and men to be interviewed. In each region, the female interviewers were to interview 36 unmarried girls, 36 young married women, and 36 older women, and then organize a discussion group for each age category. The male interviewers were to interview 12 young married men and 12 older men, then organize a discussion group for each age group. Although 108 women were interviewed in Sosso (Lower Guinea), Fulfulde (Middle Guinea), and Guerze (Forest Guinea), only 98 were interviewed in Maninka (Upper Guinea), because the unmarried girls were not in the village at the time of their visit.

2.3 Data Collection

Data for the study were collected in three ways:

- 1) Open, loosely structured interviews with individuals on their life experience;
- 2) Open interviews with practitioners of FGC,
- 3) Facilitated group discussions (in same gender, same age groups).

Recorded and transcribed, the data were in the form of three types of text

- 1) Individuals' personal narratives and commentaries on life events;
- 2) Practitioners' descriptions of their work and understanding of women's health;
- 3) Group discussions on the topic of FGC

It was assumed that perceptions of and experience with FGC would vary according to gender, age, marital status, and ethnic group. Therefore, interviews (in the four national languages) were carried out with a variety of people in each of the four natural regions of Guinea

Over a two-week period in each region (one week in urban and one week in rural areas), the teams interviewed the following categories of respondents.

- unmarried teenage girls
- women less than 20 who had been married for at least a year
- women of over 40
- FGC practitioners (traditional practitioners, TBAs, midwives, nurses)
- men of under 35 who had been married for at least a year
- men of over 40

Group discussions at each site were organized as follows:

- Three women's groups: one with unmarried girls, one with younger married women, and one with older women;
- Two men's groups: one with younger married men and one with older men.

The individual interview sought to draw out stories of events that had marked the respondent's life from childhood to coming of age and marriage. The objective was to assist the respondent in recalling events. The researchers were seeking to learn as much as possible about the experience of coming of age.

The interviews with FGC practitioners focused on their practice of FGC and knowledge of women's health. The study sought to learn what they could report about recent female circumcision events, as well as the relationship they perceived between women's health and the consequences of FGC.

The group discussions focused on FGC issues, soliciting opinions on female circumcision and the coming-of-age process among women. Participants in the groups were not asked to share direct experiences with FGC, but rather to tell what they thought of the custom, what it involved, who participated, and what the benefits and consequences of FGC might be.

2.4 Data Analysis

The initial analysis of the narratives and conversations gathered had three objectives:

- 1) to inform the questions underlying this research;
- 2) to compare the data collected in the four regions and the four languages;
- 3) to gain a better understanding of the recorded materials.

The interviewees were asked to participate in the beginning of the analysis so they would be able to use the knowledge they had just acquired to enrich the analysis. Under the guidance of the supervisors, the field teams spent two weeks in Conakry analyzing the materials they had collected. The work proceeded generally as follows:

- 1) reading the interviewer's notes,
- 2) verifying the transcriptions made from the recorded interviews,
- 3) developing in four languages a list of terms, concepts, and proverbial expressions referring to the topics of the study;
- 4) holding team discussions on points that seemed fundamental;
- 5) preparing summary tables of the most frequent responses and comments;
- 6) composing summary texts in French on the results found in each of the four languages.

To prepare the summary texts on the data collected in the four languages, the supervisors collaborated with two interviewees designated from each corresponding team.

