

'End of year FGM ritual to be stopped'

By Waryoba Yankami

STAKEHOLDERS of the National Forum to declare end to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) are scheduled to convene on intervention methods against the planned annual FGM ritual in at least one region of the country.

It is reported that, despite previous efforts to end the practice, in Mara Region and particularly in the districts of Tarime, Bunda and Serengeti FGM is still been conducted annually through rituals held at every year end.

The upcoming forum is organised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with the Tanzania Media Women's Association (Tamwa).

Saumu Ngoma Inspector of Police in Rorya District in the region said that, in Mara, numerous girls are mutilated every year but that this year police in the region are working hard to rescue them.

"We have been informed of the planned December FGM rituals in the region and we are working hard to intervene and rescue the girls," she pledged.

Commander Ngoma was however keen to point out that, in this matter, police are only law enforcers but the war against FGM is a communal responsibility.

"It is very hard for the force to fight traditions and norms...this is a social aspect and must be dealt with on communal basis," she said.

"At the moment, there is very little cooperation from the community...they won't cooperate and actually work to hide the persons involved in the practice," she lamented.

Francis Selasini from the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGM) said more than a cultural aspect the practice is driven by financial motivations.

"The organizers who conduct the practice have no other source of income and depend revenue they earn from the practice," he said.

In that wise, Selasini said their organisation is working to introduce alternative income generating mechanisms for the persons involved, mainly elderly women.

Community Development, Gender and Children minister Sofia Simba said despite the international human rights signed by the government of Tanzania but still gender based violence continues to take place with impunity.
