

FGM put young girls under death threat

By DEOGRATIAS MUSHI

YOUNG girls who are below one year old are undergoing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practice in Tanzania, a recent research has indicated.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Deputy Representative, Ms Mariam Khan, says that the survey indicates that some parents conduct FGM on children who are less likely to defend themselves and more likely to keep up a veil of secrecy.

“These children are too young to advocate on their own behalves. That is where we should all come in and propose ways to end the vice,” said Ms Khan in the city, during a meeting convened by Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA) to discuss how to end FGM practice.

According to Ms Khan, during FGM season every year (usually in December), numerous healthy Tanzanian girls bleed to death as a result of undergoing FGM and some of these deaths go

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unnoticed by the majority.
The Minister for Community Development, Gender and Children, Ms Sophia Simba concurred with Ms Khan, insisting that the community should stage a serious war against FGM.

Ms Simba warned the public against practising the mutilation, equating it to murder and a vice that affects social economic development of the country.

According to the minister, FGM is rampant in Mara where 40 per cent of all women undergo the practice, while the number was even higher in Dodoma where 64 per cent

of women are cut. Other regions practising FGM are Singida (51 per cent), Man-yara (71 per cent) and Arusha 59 per cent.

Recent World Health Organisation (WHO) report says that women who have undergone FGM are up to 55 per cent more likely to lose their newborn children during or shortly after delivery.

The same mothers are also much more likely to die during delivery themselves due to up to 31 per cent increase in the need for a C-section and up to 69 per cent increase in postpartum hemorrhage.

However, good news from Kilimanjaro and Man-

yara regions say that efforts to end FGM is proving success, as community get sensitised to end the vice.

In the two regions, about 200 female 'circumcisers' recently surrendered the tools they used in the act and confirmed in public that they will no longer perform the procedure.

The Executive Director for the Moshi-based Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM) organization, Mr Francis Selasini said children camps to end FGM have also been conducted in Rombo, Same, Hai and Simanjiro districts, involving 800 pupils.

In the camps, said Mr Selasini, the girls had the opportunity to learn and exchange information and ideas on FGM and strategies to prevent themselves from being subjected to the practice.

"NAFGEM has participated in a rare Maasai traditional gathering and was opportune to convince the decision makers to give order against the FGM vice to their clan members" said Mr Selasini.

He added that special programmes such as the Maasai anti-FGM, village animators and children camps have brought an enormous change in the targeted communities.