

# Fight against FGM lagging, public uncooperative - police

● Fear of peer reprisals ● Threats of been outcasts

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EFFORTS to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) have been frustrated by reluctance of the general public to abscond the practice and to reveal the perpetrators, the police have said.

Sergeant Veronica Abedi, the Coordinator of the Gender desk at Sirari Police Station told this paper yesterday that fear of reprisals from fellow villagers has left the public reluctant to volunteer information that would help the authorities take appropriate legal action.

Abedi said even when police make arrests no villager is ready to come forward and testify in court for fear of becoming outcasts

of their own communities.

Nonetheless, the authorities have reasserted their determination to see the practice stopped.

"The police force through the gender desk is now planning to construct more secluded and secret gender centers to protect girls who run from the illegal practice and to also offer safe haven for those who fear reprisals," Sergeant Abedi said.

She went on to explain that the current placement of the gender desks, inside regular police stations deter, especially girls, from seeking help due to long term standing stigmas against the force.

Last week the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) launched a three-year alternative rite of passage



pilot project in Tarime District aimed at reaching more than 5000 girls in the

district, mainly from primary schools.

According to TGNP's Deogratius Temba, the project is designed to restore confidence to the girls and to provide an alternative to the ritual that will be welcomed and honoured.

The programme will among other things offer recognition for girls performing well in school and vocational centers seeking to empower them to make independent informed decisions and to recognise their efforts.

This is recognition of the fact that many of the girls are lured into FGM by their parents and guardians thorough financial entrapment and promises of other forms of support should they partake in the illegal practice, he explained.