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## **Married women now undergoing circumcision**

By David Mafabi

Faced with the new law against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), traditionalists have now shifted to circumcising married women with the consent of their husbands.

Statistics released at the 2017 cultural day celebrations that focused on public health, reported that among more than 200 youth interviewed across Sebei sub-region (Kapchorwa, Kween and Bukwo districts), only 24 per cent of girls aged 10 to 14 have experienced some form of genital mutilation, while 76 per cent of women between 25 and 35 have undergone the procedure. Speaking to Daily Monitor last week, the Reproductive Education and Community Health programme executive director, Ms Beatrice Chelangat, said although the practice of circumcising young girls is slowly declining in Sebei, the trend has changed to circumcising married women.

“And this is being done in houses with the knowledge of husbands, in the villages and in the bushes even across the borders to Kenya. Wives claim that they are visiting relatives in Kenya but cross with local surgeons,” said Ms Chelangat.

The statistics reveal that uncircumcised married women are undergoing pressure from their husbands and society because they are not allowed to serve elders, get food from the granary and attend traditional meetings.

“The mothers-in-law abuse them, they are shunned,” said Ms Chelangat.

While reading from the 2017 FGM survey in Sebei sub-region, she said REACH found that in spite of the ban, traditionalists are carrying out the practice unabated in the bushes, in the hills and in caves with most incidents happening in secret, sometimes unhygienic places - creating a big risk of infection.

Former Kapchorwa District chairman Nelson Chelimo urged NGOs involved in the fight against FGM to now target married people.

### **FMG source**

Globally, it is estimated that 100 million to 140 million girls and women alive have undergone some form of female genital mutilation, according to the United Nations Population Fund.