

Police in the Rusizi district have arrested five traditional healers for allegedly carrying out infant oral mutilation and uvulectomy.

The five suspects were arrested on June 12 according to the district administrative security Support Organ (DASSO) in the sectors of Nzahaha, Bugarama, and Muganza,

Superintendent of Police (SP) Bonaventure Twizere Karekezi said that the operations followed increasing cases of the harmful and fatal traditional practices in the Rusizi district.

“We identified eight traditional healers in Rusizi District, who are engaged in these traditional harmful practices. Five have been arrested but three others are yet to be detained,” SP Karekezi said.

SP Karekezi identified those accused as Emmanuel Gasigwa, 68, Joseph Majyambere, 39, Ignace Ngirinshuti, 40, Elysée Tuyishime, 31, and Rachel Uwamahoro, 44.

Police said that they also found 14 parents at the home of the accused Ngirinshuti, who had brought their babies for either tooth bud removal or uvulectomy.

The suspect Ngirinshuti is accused to have used dangerous instruments such as scissors, knives, and forks, which were also seized.

“The suspects and exhibits were handed over to Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB) and Muganza station,” SP Karekezi added.

Police claim that at least 28 children with these oral mutilation complications were admitted to Mibirizi hospital in Rusizi District between January and June this year.

Of these, they say that 22 were treated and discharged, three were transferred, and two were fatalities.

“Operations against traditional healers engaged in these dangerous and fatal practices are continuous, and we call upon the general public to be responsive against these practices by reporting those involved so as to save lives of children,” SP Karekezi reiterated.

Infant oral mutilation (IOM) is a widespread and dangerous traditional practice

affecting 25 million children in East Africa.

It involves the extraction of unerupted deciduous canine teeth in young infants owing to the corresponding swellings being mistaken as the cause of diarrhea and fever.

The rudimentary practice, undertaken by local healers, can sometimes be fatal.

A vulvectomy on the other hand is the removal of part or the entire vulva. The vulva is the outer portion of a woman's genitals. There are risks and side effects related to having a vulvectomy.