

## Film to Challenge “Male Genital Mutilation” in Africa



KAMPALA, UGANDA - 08/07/2018 (PRESS RELEASE JET)

Do African men mind being circumcised? That is the central question of the *Bamasaba Cut*, an upcoming mini-documentary on child circumcision from a Ugandan point of view. Men from the Bagisu—or Bamasaba—tribe offer a wider range of perspectives on the ritual than commonly assumed.

“It’s a must to become a man in the community,” explains Peter Masaka.

“It has no harm when you get circumcised and be like any other man,” adds Mati Makabi.

Still, others challenge the ritual on human rights grounds. “I think it is some form of mutilation,” says Stephen Pedimasafu.

“It was done by force, against my will,” a visibly angry Martin Wapaholo recalls in his tribal language. “It’s not right.”

The film is part of a global dialogue on the ethics and legality of child circumcision. Legislative bills to restrict the practice to consenting adults are currently under consideration in Iceland and Denmark, where circumcision is rare.

As in Africa, global viewpoints on child circumcision are mixed. The foreskin comprises the motile component or “moving parts” of the penis, and has mechanical and sensory functions that

become part of a man's sexuality. To some, its removal constitutes egregious bodily harm. To others, circumcision is vital to cultural belonging. In the US, a circumcision-normative country, proponents highlight possible health benefits to the procedure when performed early in life.

While the actual acceptance of circumcision's touted benefits varies between medical associations, the World Health Organization recommends the procedure as a means of reducing HIV transmission to men within 14 high-burden African countries, and has gradually added benefits that are relevant to women (who are encouraged to urge their partners to circumcise). In partnership with UNAIDS, American government agencies have funded the circumcision of 18.6 million Africans—mostly children and adolescents—since 2008. UNICEF has been circumcising African infants since 2016.

The multi-billion dollar effort hinges on the very idea that the Bamasaba Cut aims to dispel: that African men do not mind being circumcised.

To the film's director Prince Hillary Maloba, the topic is personal. "I was forced to submit to the pain and humiliation of forced circumcision," he says, referring to his own "Bamasaba cut" in early adolescence. "We must raise awareness."

Maloba is the Executive Director of the [VMMC Experience Project](#), a non-profit organization representing families unwittingly caught in the circumcision drive in Africa. The Project has criticized the ethics and efficacy of the campaign, uncovering a wave of reports of involuntary circumcisions and fatal rumors of HIV immunity from the procedure. Video interviews on the Project's website reveal that a third of the circumcised interviewees featured in the Bamasaba Cut identify as HIV-positive.

As for the child circumcision debate, the world may not have an answer yet. The Bamasaba Cut adds Ugandan voices to the fray.

The film will be released during the opening launch of the Bamasaba circumcision season on August 11 at <http://www.vmmcproject.org/bamasaba-cut>.

###

**Media Contacts:**

Max Fish - The VMMC Experience Project - [www.vmmcproject.org](http://www.vmmcproject.org) - [media@vmmcproject.org](mailto:media@vmmcproject.org)