

Dont look away, act against Domestic Violence

Brenda Kugonza – Program Officer, Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP)

WE are grateful that the Government finally acknowledged that domestic violence is rampant in Uganda. For example the 2006 Uganda Demographic Survey revealed that 68 per cent of women had experienced physical assault.

This law will help prevent further domestic violence, we call upon all Ugandans to rename violence as a criminal offence, and take action.

The Domestic Violence (DV) Act is telling the public that violence within the home is not a private or bedroom matter anymore. That beating a spouse in the name of disciplining or 'love' is now criminal. That it is a violation of her right.

The DV Act if further telling the public that it is their responsibility to prevent or report to police any tendencies of abuse; and is emphasizing the right of the victim to speak out.

The DV Act is very keen on the roles of the duty bearers: the Police or the Local Chairperson and the magistrates' courts and the message is loud and clear:

"Domestic violence is a criminal offense and should be seen to be treated with the seriousness it deserves but not like previously where the Local Councils or the Police would rather reprimand the abuser and the victim counseled or reminded of

a culture that justified it".

The health providers who used to treat wounds of the abused without inquiring the cause, the law now requires them to give the victims the support, how to access legal aid and police protection so that the 'disease' the health worker is treating, is eventually cured. This too goes for the magistrates' courts.

For the Family and Children Protection Unit, at the Police, the law has strengthened their powers from just dealing with children's issues to dealing with domestic violence cases.

And for us the local communities, neighbours or co-workers, the law is very clear. It is asking you: "What did you do to ensure that the victim was protected from domestic violence?" So, domestic violence is now a community or a public issue. It is that serious.

The other fundamental issue about this law is its definition of domestic violence. It has not left out anything to do with domestic violence unlike other laws such as



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the Penal Code or Children's, Civil or Local Council Acts which only looked at only one form of violence: physical abuse!

The Domestic Violence Act 2010 covers all forms of violence: physical, economic, emotional, and sexual because it is trying to give relief and protection to the victims from the vice, and to hold perpetrators accountable! What is remaining now is to have Government operationalize the law and financially support its operations including a nationwide awareness campaign on the same.

The DV Act is only a single step forward - Rita Aciro



Ministry Of Gender officials walk around Mayuge town to mark the 16 days of activism last year.

Rita Aciro Executive Director Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) says:

THE passing of the Domestic Violence Act is a major landmark. However the necessary regulations should be put in place for it to be operational, because without them it will remain on paper like others.

The institutions supposed to enforce it must have the capacity and adequate resources both human and financial, for example if the police or the local councils are handicapped, who will benefit from it? The uniqueness about the DV Act is that domestic violence for the first time has been defined in totality and has been smuggled out of the home to the public.

Besides, the civil society and women organizations need to monitor the implementation of this law. It is very important to identify the gaps, what is working and also continuously work to bring out the options Government can have to deal with those gaps.

But there is a lot more that needs to be done. Issues of domestic violence are diverse and complex, changing attitudes call for sensitization. Dealing with patriarchal dominance takes a lot more than having the law in place.

So the law is just one step forward. In achieving the objective of this law, we cannot leave it to Government alone. Civil society and other stakeholders including traditional, religious leaders, and communities in general need to work together. As women activists and indeed women in general, we need to first educate ourselves about the law, understand its implications, and take it as a matter of priority because whatever you do, whether in the media or whether you are in the legal fraternity or whether you are a social development worker, domestic violence will definitely affect your work.

All stakeholders working on development programmes need to look at domestic violence as a priority because the results affect the delivery of their services.

Men and women tell each other how to stop domestic violence

MEN

- Women should give us respect as the men in the house!
- Women should forgive and forget, if I beat her or did any negative thing she should forgive and forget but not keep reminding me of it!
- Women should not be over jealous
- Women should have confidence, they should not be swayed by rumours.
- Women should stop nagging us, sometimes we are not in position to provide, they should understand that.
- Women should stop using witchcraft which they sometimes make us eat!
- Women should stop quarrelling too much!
- They should not believe in hearsay that their husbands have other women!
- Some women are dirty, so we discipline them!
- Women should stop mistreating their step children.

THE Chairperson, Uganda Media Women's Association invites women media practitioners for a session on business skills and managing personal finance due Saturday January 15 2011 at Grand Imperial Hotel. Time: 8:00AM

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WOMEN

- Men should say sorry, we women forgive very fast.
- Men with more than one wife should show equality.
- There should be effective communication at home.
- Men should respect us. We are also human beings with blood, feelings, and aspirations just like them.
- Men should show us love and care
- Men should know that they too make mistakes, they are not gods. And they should be told that they are wrong sometimes!
- Men should not abdicate their responsibilities at home.
- We don't like it when a husband gets another woman, glorifies her and spends his time and resources on her at the expense of the first wife, and children.
- Men simply do not respect women; they have that superiority complex and think /state that they are the authority in the home and have therefore the power to decide on any thing including our bodies and money. This is wrong!
- Men do not spend enough time with us, they come back late and never account for their actions. When we demand for answers, hell breaks loose.
- Men have that controlling nature, but as human beings, we too want our space.
- Once a man fails to provide for the home, he feels shy and inferior. He feels he has lost 'control' and with any irritation he loses temper, beats the wife or children and sometimes abandons the home.

After rape, go to hospital!

What should happen after Rape? Go to Hospital to prevent STDs, HIV!

HIV tests will be performed on all people before commencing PEP, with their permission. They will also receive pre- and post-test counselling.

If a person refuses an HIV test, PEP will not be provided. People who are either known to be HIV-positive or found to be HIV-positive will not be offered PEP.

They will be counselled and referred to an appropriate health facility for long-term management. If the person is HIV-negative treatment will be started immediately.

●If a rapid HIV test is not available people will be started on PEP with a three-day starter pack. If the results come back positive the treatment will be discontinued and the person will be given appropriate advice. If the person is HIV-negative the full course of the treatment will then be provided.

●Children over 14 years do not need a parent's or guardian's permission to have an HIV test or to take PEP. Children under 14 years require consent from a parent or guardian. In emergency cases such as rape, treatment can be given to children under 14 years on the authority of the doctor or hospital superintendent.

The health professionals and counselors who conduct and discuss the HIV test are bound, by law, to keep the results strictly confidential. Other people, such as fami-



Masaka defiler, Charles Mbaziira infected his daughter with HIV!

lies or friends, will only be told of the results with the person's permission.

What does PEP involve?

PEP shall only be effective if first administered within two hours to three days after rape.

PEP is a four-week programme of anti-retroviral medication that must be taken several times a day. The drugs can have unpleasant side effects such as nausea, headaches, fatigue, skin rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea. These side effects are not serious and usually do not last long. If they become difficult to cope with, a doctor should be consulted.

●PEP is nearly 100% effective in preventing HIV infection post exposure but it becomes less effective if doses are missed or if the full four-week programme is not finished. It is therefore

extremely important that a friend or family member support the rape survivor during treatment and make sure that the medication is taken properly for the full four weeks. Post-traumatic stress resulting from a rape can affect the person's ability to take medication reliably

●People receiving PEP should ideally be seen after one week and then again at six weeks, three months and six months after the exposure. HIV testing should be performed at the six-week, three-month and six-month visits. If the person is still negative after six months they can know for sure that they have not contracted HIV disease as a result of the exposure

Additional treatments given to rape survivors

●Antibiotic treatments to prevent other sexually transmitted infections like venereal disease.

●The 'morning after' pill to prevent pregnancy

Remember at all times when dealing with anyone who has been raped that it is a very traumatic experience and rape survivors need both professional support and the support of families and friends.

Rape survivors also have the right to be treated with respect and dignity at all times by the doctors, nurses, police officers, prosecutors and social workers who help them after the rape.

NB: In Uganda PEP is only found in general referral hospitals, Grade 4 and a few grade 3 level health centers, Most grade 2 and 1 levels do not have PEP.