

The Other Voice



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WHY SHOULD WOMEN BE CONSIDERED LESS AS HUMAN BEINGS?

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RAPED OR DEFILED!

Which way first, police or hospital?

By Our Reporter

FOR many, coercive measures must be quickly and forcefully sought against a sexual abuser: a rapist or defiler. Rush to police and arrest so and so, many are heard yelling with a lot of anger.

Others are busy advising the victim against being seen in public for this is "shameful and would cost her a relationship or marriage". By this time the victim has already been 'neatly' washed off the semen, her torn under-pant and that of the perpetrator he quickly abandoned have been burnt or thrown deep down because they will bring bad omen!

Situations of rape or defilement bring a lot of distress to the victim and the immediate family. They quickly want to forget that it ever happened but deep down they, or we all want to bring the culprit to book, and see justice done. But unfortunately justice cannot be administered without concrete evidence.

At a community dialogue on No Violence Against Women held last month in Kingo, Masaka District, most residents were against taking the victim to hospital because they wanted to first 'deal' with the perpetrator. One resident quipped: "By the time I get a medical report, wouldn't the offender have run away, or even committed a similar offense? We must secure the offender and keep him in custody before we do anything else."

What the Kingo community forgot to say is that sometimes the perpetrator may even disappear for good, and if they are lucky to get him, he will deny, and by this time, he may not bear any prima facie linkage with the crime. And for the victim? She was safely guarded against visiting the hospital!

A consultant on Gender, UNFPA, notes that however disgusting and

'embarrassing' for the victim to visit the hospital with unwashed private parts, a medical examination should be step one, not only to collect evidence against the perpetrator but to save her life by reducing on her chances of getting infected with STDs, HIV/AIDS and tetanus, as well as getting unwanted pregnancy.

Ms. Loyce Asire Allen, responsible for backstopping gender at UNFPA says: At any Grade Four or any major hospital in Uganda, the victims will be given post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), a preventive treatment (in tablet form) against STDs, HIV/AIDS and pregnancy.

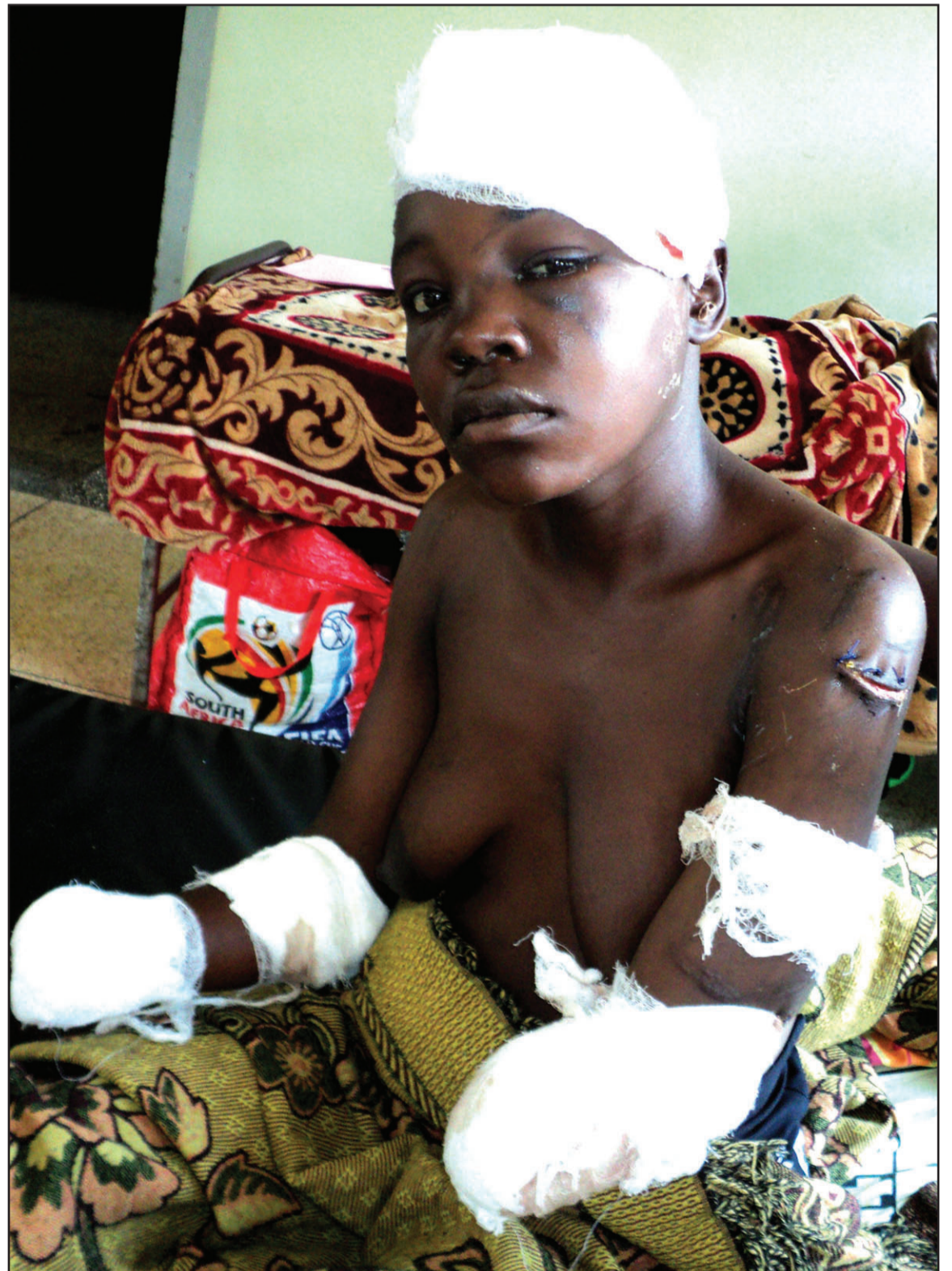
Also she will receive a tetanus toxoid injection against bacteria in case she suffered any tears while struggling with the offender. For effectiveness, this medication should be administered between 2 hours and 3 days after the crime was committed; after which the victim will be susceptible to those diseases.

Emphasizing the importance and urgency of the medical examination, Ms. Asire noted that sexual offenders are mostly HIV positive, therefore the need for the preventive measure to be done quickly.

She urged women to have confidence in the medical personnel because it is only after examining the offender's fluids and pubic hair that may have stuck in or on the body that will provide concrete evidence for the case.

She says:

"The medical and not the police report is the only concrete evidence that the court can use against the perpetrator. But it is also important to have the medical officer ready to testify". The women were further advised to always have more than one copy of such documents to avoid situations of "files getting lost at the police stations!"



Annet Nazziwa lost both her hands when her jealous husband cut them off. How will the law on Domestic Violence stop such acts? What is your role?