

Sunday, January 17, 2016



Esther Wekesa: "I was recruited on the project as a Representative of the Pentecostal Churches. I have since then introduced an element of domestic violence prevention in the pre-marital classes under the church. This is a new thing

because the church, then never used to talk about domestic violence..... but instead emphasized love and respect of the man by the woman, at whatever cost! It is unfortunate that all religious faiths tend to push women to submission

and persistence in a marriage, despite some of them being glaringly abusive". Outside church, Wekesa, is full of other surprises. On all the products she makes: cakes, lotion, shampoo, she has provided an inspiring message 'Twagala okush-

anana, ffenna nga bwe tulwayisa obutabanguko' (We can all look nice but as we fight domestic violence). A message on the wedding cake reads: 'Domestic violence is a crime. For more information contact 0705 214 949'.

FOR OTHER INNOVATIONS SEE PAGES 2,3 AND 4.

Change starts with you!

Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA, in partnership with the International Solidarity Foundation, ISF (Finland) has for the five years implemented a Gender Education Program on Domestic Violence Prevention in Wakiso Town Council; and Mulagi Sub-County in Kyankwanzi District.

Perhaps the uniqueness of this project is that both the authorities and the community members have been involved right from the problem analysis; identification of strategies, and the actual implementation and evaluation processes.

Secondly, though domestic violence is a crime, police arrests were never the priority, but emphasis was to utilize the traditional mediation structures / systems to solve the cases.

Gender was also taken very seriously, because unlike most projects that tend to influence social behaviours with the aim of contributing to social justice and gender equality, but focus on women only, this project had an equal number of men and women as implementers and as the targeted communities. Also of utmost importance is the attention it paid to working with and within the local structures meaning that the political / technical and other forms of opinion leaders including media managers / practitioners, cultural, religious and 'witchdoctors' played a very active, and positive role in minimizing the escalation of domestic violence within the two sub-counties.

As part of the local structures, the project identified local people, and trained them in a range of skills: communication, negotiation and mediation / counseling. Such people who were later referred to as *Community Activists* were also exposed to several sessions on human rights, gender equality, and social justice, in addition to conceptualizing and appreciating the Domestic Violence Act. The Community Activists, then became the local contacts: creating awareness on human rights, mediating in cases, and sometimes standing as witness in the courts of law on domestic violence related cases.

Several life changing stories have been told of this project including those in authority hitherto, deadly wife beaters, but now taking constructive actions against domestic violence within their spheres of influence.

Today we share some of the innovations made by the grassroots people, to sustain the cause. But what motivated them? A wish to make a difference? Impressing the project implementation team that they, too can do it on their own? Or is it this catchword: "Domestic violence (DV) is here with us, we are also here. Change starts with me...!"

For example, self proclaimed human rights abuser, Tito Kyadondo, by the time of his death, December, he had become a key women's rights activist, offering part of his LC office to the activists in Wakiso to handle domestic violence cases, noting that such victims require privacy. He had also started exposing the evils that fellow 'healers' execute, against the unsuspecting women who would visit their shrines.

WHY ELECTIONS HIGHTEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

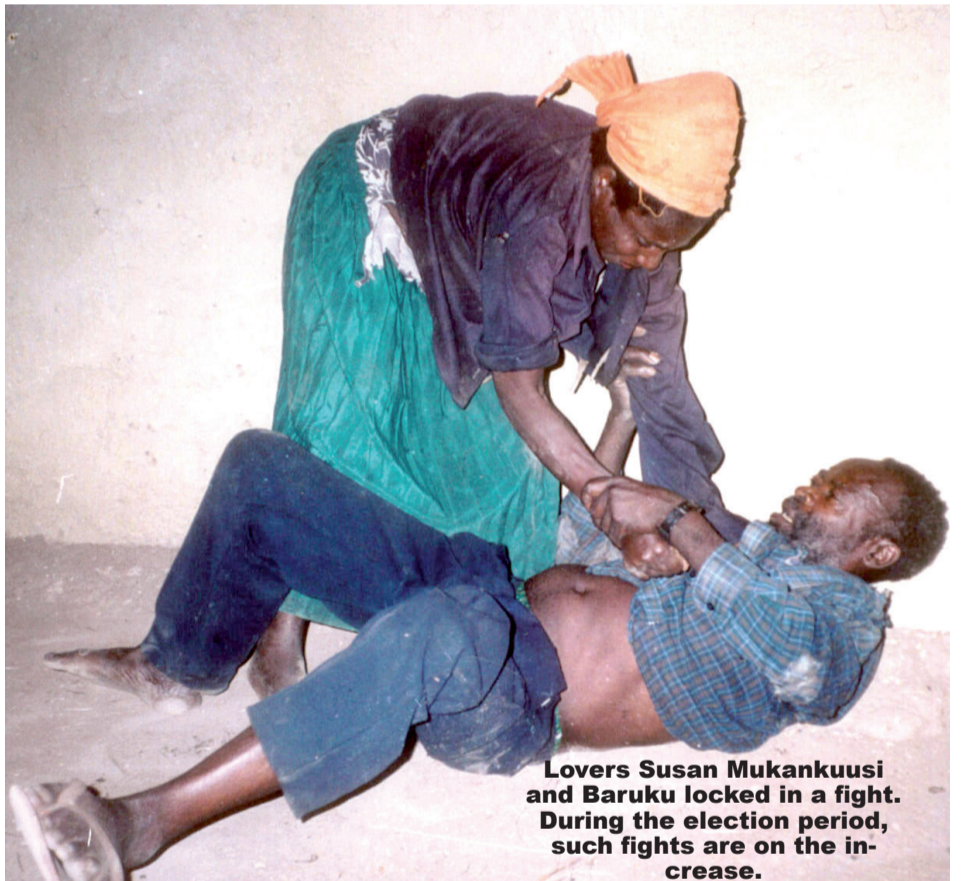
YOU and me may know that voting in the 2016 general elections will be by secret ballot; but there are thousands of people especially women who are living in fear at the hands of their providers / partners. Reason: they "must vote for a candidate as dictated by their partner / provider!"

Robinah Nakyanja says, "My husband insists that I should vote Col. Dr. Kiiza Besigye because he has been consistent in fighting for people's rights. But my choice is Yoweri Museveni for emancipating women, but I fear, my husband will get to know and beat me up.

But already some women are loud and clear: they will vote a candidate of their choice... Come rain or sunshine! And you guessed right, the 'providers' are already feeling uncomfortable about this pronouncement. Providers are up in arms – a number of men are denying their families the basic necessities especially food; the beatings have gone up; some women have been divorced because they have refused to say Yes to their husbands' wishes.

But even then, some men aspiring for elective positions have sold household property to finance their campaigns. Yet again some women, also aspiring for positions, are taking too many a day out of their homes, searching for votes. And the children? They are left to fend for themselves, some may end on the streets for all sorts of crimes!"

Harriet Nabankema, Senior Advocate with FIDA-Uganda observes that spouses supporting different candidates are prone to more domestic violence, poverty and unemployment, noting that as long as a man brings food to the table, he will tend to make rules to the extent of influencing a woman's



Lovers Susan Mukankuusi and Baruku locked in a fight. During the election period, such fights are on the increase.

voting rights, including standing for an elective office.

Richard Makumbi, Program Officer, Centre for Domestic Violence observes: "The election period is enough to ignite pressure between lovers, especially those supporting different candidates".

Such scenarios are synonymous with the election period, especially in developing countries, and according to **Stephen Kalyegira, Inspector of Police, Kira Road Police Station**, most of the offenses reported to police, at this time relate to domestic confrontations fuelled by differences in opinion on who to vote for and in extreme cases, spouses have been killed by partners. So how do we minimize on domestic violence incidences during this election period?

●Remember voting will be by secret ballot. Nobody will know who you have voted for!

●Don't get so excited about elections, the candidate or a party you are going to vote for. Stay calm!

●If you feel your partner / colleague may not like your choice, pretend you support his/her candidate / party.

●Whether husband or wife, and you are seeking for an elective position, do not let the campaign time impact on the family time. Remember, there is a life after elections!

●Do not provoke your partner / colleague because you suspect he/she is supporting a candidate, of not your choice. It is his/her right to support whoever!

●Do not sell any of the family property to finance your campaign. But if you have to, your partner and children must approve of that decision, but this should not, in a way leave the family wanting in basic or social needs.

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