

OPINION Domestic Violence is in the mind

We all want peace, stability and progress, especially as we draw near February 18, 2016 the polling day. Unfortunately what is already obtaining in our midst are signs of violence coming from various corners! Intimidation, tear gas, gunshots, beatings, fighting and alleged kidnap!!

In a home setting, signs of domestic violence are in abundance: family property sold to finance a campaign; couples are not talking to each other; men denying children and wives the basic necessities; some women are denied the right to contest for elective positions, while others are fearful of voting a candidate that may not be supported by the husband. But some women too, are abdicating their roles because they are busy campaigning!

Stephen Kalyegira, Inspector of Police, Kira Road Station, intimidated to the Kisaasi community in December at a function organized by Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA that the election period tend to attract an increase in cases of domestic violence. That we should do the best to minimize on such incidences!

Perhaps what the Inspector forgot to mention is that domestic violence is in the mind, cultured by unequal relations that both men and women have been socialized in, for as long as it takes. And that, the mindset requires holistic and participatory Gender Programs like the UMWA Gender Education Program on Domestic Violence Prevention. Problem is that such programs are usually unceremoniously concluded due to inadequate resources, and change of policy from a donor.

It is through this paper, therefore, that the Management of UMWA sadly announces the close of this project; which had started causing positive changes in the lives of many! This also means that this Edition of The Other Voice is probably the last till, UMWA acquires new support.

As we appreciate the International Solidarity Foundation, ISF for the technical and financial support for the past five years, we wish to invite new partners in this journey of improving family relations.

The Other Voice, TOV is published by Uganda Media Women's Association, who also operate a gender based radio station, 101.7 Mama FM. We welcome your views and support.

I did this... because of the project....

Confessions of a Police Community Liaison Officer – Samuel Okodos:

If you arrest a man – do you really think that, that family will experience peace or more violence – the fact that the man has been the bread-winner! Where would the children get food or school fees or medical support? What do you expect the relatives of the man to do to the wife who 'caused' the arrest?! These are practical questions which need practical answers!

"I pride myself for having worked with UMWA! We, as police have applied the acquired knowledge and skills to cause better relations among hundreds of families. Police arrests are no longer the option, rather several such cases



have been amicably solved by activists; and estranged couples have since reconciled including families of district leaders, who have since applied the skills in their places of work!

Yes, being a Change Agent / Community Activist is good but one must be prepared to invest own time, be patient and available whenever the community needs you".

I now get less cases because of the UMWA project

Margaret Nanyondo, Community Development Officer, 4 years, Kyankwanzi District:

"Domestic violence has cost Uganda, billions of shillings in terms of law enforcement, health care, lost labour and the general progress of development. When a woman is battered for example, her immediate family members including the husband will suffer because, she is not able to perform her domestic chores, she will need medical care, and police may have to be facilitated to arrest the perpetrator. In the meantime, she will not be productive in form of bringing income to

the family..... etc. I am very happy with the UMWA project, it has caused a positive impact. Now there are less files on my desk, relating to domestic violence! But I still believe that once a woman becomes economically empowered, she will have more and better choices, even to choose to stay away from an abusive relationship. I therefore appeal to all those interested in implementing initiatives on domestic violence prevention to include a component of economic empowerment. Such organizations should also remember that behavioural change takes time, meaning that

these should not be a one-off activity but rather long-term interventions which should also have a sustainability component right from the design of the project. It is also important to appreciate the changing faces of domestic violence, and to apply innovative strategies to quell it. For example, the fact that many men hardly participate in community seminars where human rights are discussed, yet they have been found to be the worst perpetrators, it is important to intensify strategies that may allow the message to reach them, where they work or socialize from.

Afande Sylvia Mutesi, OC Child and Family Protection Unit – Wakiso:

"Before getting involved in the UMWA domestic violence prevention project, I could file all domestic violence related case as assault, and arrest the accused perpetrator. But now – we try as much as possible to first interview the accused, and counsel both parties for an amicable solution. It is now that I appreciate the impact of domestic violence on both spouses and the family at large. Once the man was jailed, the wife would quickly run for dear life lest she is mauled by in-laws for causing the arrest of their son....

Elections heighten domestic violence

●If you decided to contest for an elective position, this should not come as a surprise to your partner or children. A progressive / sensitive political leader must be supported by the whole family, no matter the difference in choice for a candidate. ●Husband or wife / man or woman, should practice a world view that accepts and respects differences in opinion. ●Once the voting is finished, results declared, the family should stay calm, and congratulate yourselves on a successfully concluded exercise. And if you have to contest the results – do it in a calm way!



Nanvubya

How I suffered violence at the hands of my wife



Confessions of a married Man, who suffered Domestic Violence at the hands of a wife and children – John Mbaaga, 54 years, has fathered 8 children:

"I'm a leader. Suffered domestic violence for over ten years. But happy that I'm out of it, thanks to Joseph Butereeba. At some point I had decided to vacate my home. But then I said No – this is my home. I bought the land and built the house – and after all, I had provided for this family for over 20 years. Where would I go – anyway?

The source of domestic violence in my house was that I had fathered a child outside 'marriage'. Yes, it was a mistake but.... the child was there.... her mother

had even passed away! I had in fact apologized to my wife and implored her against involving our other children in spousal fights. But she could not take it. She teamed up with them, and for over ten years..... they would beat, sometimes bite me. Here.... see....! The children said they were punishing me for not providing for them, which was not even true! 'How can an LC / political leader be beaten..... after all by a family I provide for!! Amman..... I was so embarrassed and emotionally tortured!!

At the local council court, I'd listen and later took advantage of the lessons I picked during the ten-year catastrophe. For example, I learnt to be more accommodative, and a good listener, promised myself not to show too much love to anybody, any more. I also know that it is important for both parties to participate fully in the reconciliatory meetings, one must accept to listen and learn from them; and most importantly that it is very important not to rush a case. I also learnt that domestic violence has no barriers! I also identified opportunities that came with the scuffles within the ten years. For example, I picked mediation and counseling skills from the sessions that Community Activists and the Police applied in our case. I learnt more about causes and manifestations of domestic violence.

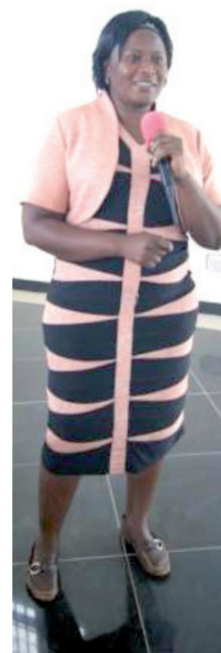
I'm very grateful to my colleagues / Activists especially Butereeba who later recommended me to the project as a potential Activist. I later embraced my task, and have since brought a smile to other couples. But it is so embarrassing for a leader if the public knows / suspects that you are a wife beater. They would no longer trust you because you have no moral authority to warn against domestic violence or mediate in such cases!

I introduced a special desk on domestic violence

Betty Nabuganda, In charge of Health Centre IV, Wakiso:

"After being challenged by fellow activists on what new thing I would do to promote the project in the district....., I introduced a Special Desk to receive domestic violence cases, and we have since then abolished the charge on Form 4. It is now this Desk which receives and treats expeditiously, women who have been violated by an intimate partner. This innovation has attracted several battered women who would then, choose to stay at home in pain for fear of exposure, as they would be seen in a queue with bruises and people would start talking or stigmatizing them. I am now convinced that health services should be in places where women feel safe, treated with respect and not stigmatized.

My challenge, however, is to get the violated women speak the truth in the shortest time possible instead of pretending that they had acquired the bruises in a boda-boda accident. Telling the truth in a short time helps to expedite treatment or the next course of action, for their benefit".



I have set up a sub-county court

Joseph Butereeba – Chairperson, Mulagi Sub-County Domestic Violence Court, Kyankwanzi:

"One major thing that I have done due to this project is creating a sub-county court to handle domestic violence cases. This has reduced the amount of work at the Local Council Court, but such cases have also reduced due to the mediation and counseling we provide to the couples – that they no longer find it necessary to go to court.

Working with local leaders is a big plus. For example, as a Local Council leader, or Police Officer, Religious or Cultural or Herbalist, we interact and share notes thereby expediting the process of resolving a case. This is possible because we have all participated in the training workshops on domestic violence prevention.

Nassif Kalyoowa is 28 years, married, and with a 3-year kid. Graduate of a Diploma in Education, and taught in secondary school for some years:

"I was motivated by the project implementers who kept reminding us that the project, like any other will come to an end, but that, as the targeted people we had to find ways of sustaining the cause.

Using my own phone number +256 0784 461 803 and money, I started a What's App group and Facebook Account, ten months ago to specifically reach and engage the youth on domestic violence. The youth seem to be too busy to participate in community meetings but spend much time on social media. It is also true that the youth have less time for human rights issues, and yet they are affected by domestic violence..... The Facebook has so far attracted 200 likes who keep on encouraging and giving us tips when we are on a journey to mediate in a case. Japanese and the Swedish are part of the people who visit this page. I would however wish that there is a full time person to engage the visitors because currently I'm torn between a boutique I'm running and the activism work.

Asked why he is doing activism work, Nassif says: "I grew up with my mum in very poor situations but I would see her lending a hand to yet, less advantaged people, than us. She would not see people suffer. I think, I too, took up after her. I want to be part of that journey which will bring positive changes to an



Nassif Kalyoowa

individual or community. I cannot hesitate to give a shilling if I'm convinced it will bring a smile to an individual. None of us has benefited from the project financially. Rather it is us who provide our time and money for transport costs to the benefit of the violated women, and when the family is happy, me too become happy. But the project has helped me become more known, particularly in Wakiso Town Council.

Nassif is now Secretary of Wakiso Town Council Community Activists Association on domestic Violence.

Facebook: Wakisotowncouncilcommunityactivistsassociation.

I have brought politicians to book over DV

Tathdeo Luyimbazi is Local Council Chairperson, Kaasangoombe, Deo as he is popularly known, divorced due to irreconcilable factors. He uses his experience to impact on domestic violence cases and leaves families, happy!

He uses his resources to attend court cases, related to domestic violence, as a witness; and even actively challenges fellow Activists who are involved in corrupt tendencies. Deo says: "I was an elected Local Council Chairperson but government had not



trained me and other leaders in our functions or roles. So I was not able to execute my roles. But when UMWA trained us in communication, mediation and conflict resolution, records keeping and negotiation skills. Also armed with the law, I'm now able to execute my roles. There is a case that I followed to its logical conclusion. It involved highly placed politicians in the country.

A chief campaigner of one of the highly placed politicians in this country was reported to have been engaged in a sexual affair with a girl who was under his care. It is my daughter from Nkoowe High School who gave me the tip. I was determined to secure the

girl from the ruthless people. I reported the case to police and at the same time talking to the people involved. But it was manipulated at all levels, with support from the office of that big politician. It reached the point when the powerful politicians started threatening me, and monitoring my movements to throw me in jail. But with the knowledge and skills I got from UMWA, I managed to pursue the case to its logical conclusion. The girl is now back to school, and under the care of reasonable people".

Journalists pin UCC on gender-based violence

Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has been accused of failing to take action against media houses that fuel domestic violence (DV) and in general, violate women by misrepresenting or under-covering them.

Said one journalist: "There are three new television stations whose content is way below standard, but pretend to promote family relations by monitoring movements of a spouse suspected to be engaged in extramarital affairs, but end up causing physical violence between the two, and sometimes relatives join the fury".

Another one says: "You would expect that newspapers, founded and run by senior / professional journalists, should take balanced or analytical journalism seriously, but alas – a public newspaper is running a tabloid which you could describe as blue movies. This, spells danger to our country especially the young generation, but UCC is simply watching even when another company, soon turning into a media conglomerate continues to present women as passive, sex objects, weaklings, trouble makers or secondary citizens".

Journalists who had concluded a 3-day training session on gender sensitive reporting made the observations, also pointing out that some media managers too, are to blame for the unfair coverage of women citing occasions where reporters have submitted balanced news reports, but sub-editors choose to short change them for purposes of attracting readers with nude pictures of women, to make money at the expense of the female gender, and sometimes persons with disabilities.

The training was organized and conducted by Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA, and supported by the International Solidarity Foundation, ISF on a soon-to-be concluded 5-year project on Domestic Violence Prevention, Wakiso and Kyankwanzi Districts.

Over 60 journalists from both districts reporting for about 15 media houses including Central Broadcasting Service (CBS), Mama FM, Kiboga FM, Voice of Africa, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC), among others participated in the training. While the first training took place in September 2014, the second was conducted a year later, at which several of the journalists reported changes that they had already caused due to the earlier training at their workplace, including introduction of a slot on domestic violence, paying extra attention to the needs of both men and women before and during presenting a radio program; ensuring that the voices of men and men are equally captured, and quoted on the same subject matter, rather than elevating men over women.

Nsamba Peter (Kiboga FM): "I'm now more sensitive when choosing a topic for discussion. I ensure equal number of voices of men and women. I mainstream domestic violence in most of the programs I do, maintaining an objective mind, and offering information on referral services for domestic violence cases, if need be!"

Other journalists reported that they have since then shunned judgmental language which usually depicts women in bad light. Others narrated how they had become active advocates against domestic violence instead of being indifferent, even when it was their relatives or immediate communities that were involved in such incidences. As a result of the training, Journalists and Community Activists from each Project District formed a network to prevent / respond to domestic violence, but further appealing to UCC to penalize such media that escalate domestic violence in our country.

Clothilda Babirekere, Project Coordinator says, "We recognized the role of the media in attitude change, but also saddened to know that the practitioners / owners / managers, too were cowed by domestic violence and negative stereotypes that promote inequalities between men and women; tribes and age groups which is why the journalists were targeted. But we are also aware that attitude change takes time, meaning that continued training and interaction on human rights by the media would be key".

Margaret Sentamu-Masagazi, UMWA Executive Director says, "I am hopeful that once the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for Media in Uganda receives the necessary technical and financial support, issues of inequalities or misrepresentation in and by the media, would be a thing of the past. The Strategy was designed by UMWA with support from the Ministry of Gender, and the UN Human Rights, in 2014."



A cross section of journalists in Kyankwanzi who attended the training in Gender sensitive reporting.