

## I use my 'telescope to save people's families

**Moses Nganda uses his Telescope to shame violators in Wakiso. So be warned!**

"I am considered to be one of the opinion leaders within the Town Council. I own a telescope popularly known as *Ekizindaalo* (a local media platform for announcements and local debates).

I've brought a smile to many faces in our community, and now referred to as *Mr. Mediator*, and any time, a domestic violence related case occurs, the community members are happy to benefit from my services. Politically powerful men too, have been my clients. Some of them offering me gifts for having facilitated peace in their homes. There is one man for example, who had for some time been sexually molesting an underage. And once the girl utilized the telescope, I was quick to intervene, threatening even to expose the man further. He quickly agreed to let go of the girl in addition to supporting her pursue further studies. Whether out of fear or at the pretext of buying me off, he offered to finance my campaign posters come, 2016 elections!

The *Ekizindaalo* has brought some sanity within Wakiso Town Council, after having introduced a 'Name and Shame' segment of those who violate women. The designers of this project were forward looking, the fact that they recognized the importance of working within the local structures and systems as this contributes to the project sustainability. I have for example utilized my *Bizindaalo* not only to promote the project, but allowing common people to utilize them at no cost, not forgetting fellow activists including the Police Community Liaison Officer. Use of local structures also facilitates a multiplier effect the fact that I use this platform or the networks I belong to, to spread the change message, which is later picked by those within my other spheres of influence".



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## Drama has changed people's behaviour

**Rose Kasozi, Kyankwanzi:** "We have used drama to impact people's behaviour. It may not be professionally done, but the few training sessions on designing drama skits by UMWA was enough to drive the point home. We decided to design the content according to the calendar year. For example, we do drama during harvest time with a message that would stop especially men from selling off produce that they never contributed to. We have also started doing drama during the election period, advising on potential areas that would cause domestic violence, and how to avoid them."

## What activists say on challenges of the project

SOME OF the immediate causes of the beatings within the home could be lack of basic needs such as soap or food which the husband / partner may not see as part of his responsibility but that of the woman, who also is not in position to provide. In such cases, Activists may have to provide such necessities to conclude the case lest the beating may resume.

**Says Councillor Betty Nalunga:** "Sometimes we cannot meet the needs of every violated woman the fact that we do this all the time, in addition to transporting ourselves to where the case for mediation has been identified. And by the way, as Activists we also have our family needs which we may not have addressed, but there

you are..... a survivor of domestic violence needs this item so badly!

Adequate use of time is crucial in solving domestic violence cases but the parties do not seem to realize this.

**Says Rev. James Nsonga:** "I am expected to work within 14 churches in a radius of 50 kilometres. So when you meet a couple who needs a lot of prompting to open up..... this would definitely impact on the next client, and my other many responsibilities and of course my patience levels".

**Margaret Nassiwa adds:** "As Activists, we must invest time in this work, against other many competing demands. Today, for example I had to spend four hours with two young women, and eventually transport-

ing them to the Probation Office. I needed to guide them because they are not able to read or write. So you find yourself so much involved in this work like you don't have your own problems".

Possibly rooted from cultural beliefs, older couples who may wish to seek for mediation services are yet to appreciate input from those who may be younger than them.

**Says Sentongo, 29, Activist, Kyankwanzi:** "Many married couples doubt our counsel claiming we lack experience in relationships since we are not yet married. But we apply professional knowledge and skills, and a bit of experience we have acquired during the past 5 years!

But there are also cases bordering on the integrity of either party (the 'Mediator', domestic violence survivor or the perpetrator).

While an activist who is a pastor is made to feel an intruder in a family that does profess Christianity, some of the activists have been accused by their colleagues of taking advantage of the situation for financial gains from the perpetrators, or seek sexual affairs from the women who seek mediation services. Yet again, there are situations where activists have professionally handled cases but they are later victimized by the perpetrator or the survivor herself. Cases like: who gave you permission to talk to my wife are rampant.

## Project has touched on all leaders

**Clothlida Babirekere, Project Coordinator, on the importance of working with local structures / leaders and the challenges faced during the implementation:**

"Since domestic violence cuts across class, implying that even leaders can be/are human rights violators, it was important to target them at all levels, with a message of self evaluation, to improve on their family relations. This way, they could act as role models of the project.

Secondly, we wanted the leaders to use their positions of authority to influence their organizations' operations by mainstreaming domestic violence therein. Moreover, by the virtue of those positions, they are in position to meet hundreds of people whom they would influence with messages of improved social behaviour especially regarding domestic violence prevention.

Such leaders would in addition, to speaking at functions organized by their organizations, are also more likely to be given a platform to speak at political, social, cultural or religious functions, which they would use to pass on the message on domestic violence prevention. Moreover, it was also envisaged that once the targeted leaders, meet at any function, they



**Part of the project team attend the celebrations to mark Women's Day celebrations in Kyankwanzi District. Clothlida Babirekere (with glasses) next is Charles Ssuuna and Joseph Kibirige.**

are more likely to also share notes on the status of domestic violence within their communities. It is however important to note that witchdoctors, were specifically targeted to stop taking advantage of their 'clients' mostly women.

As a project team, we are happy, that even when, we move out of the districts, there is visible evidence that the project cause will be sustained for some years, thanks to the commitment and the networking spirit that

the targeted leaders have shown, already resulting into innovations that they have already made.

On the challenges, I think that the program has been a learning experience; we did not copy any where, we would therefore take time to learn, and try out something new, which would be time consuming!

Secondly, the offence of DV has no boundaries yet the project was confined within certain boundaries/budget posing challenges. For example – a crime committed in Kakiri could be traced even 200 kilometres away where activists were expected to make follow ups as witnesses using their own resources. In the end the project showed signs of liability as some of the activists, and some of the project team members, became a bit tired to make endless sacrifices.

Moreover, by the nature of the offense ( Domestic Violence), it was difficult to draw a line between a victim or a perpetrator, even among the targeted leaders or activists. There was a 50 percent – chance that these too were perpetrators.

Other times they would take sides in cases they would be mediating, contributing to delays in project implementation, and sometimes working on wrong assumptions resulting into wrong / poor decisions or actions.

## Project was one of the best things to happen

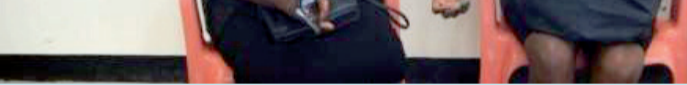
**Margaret Sentamu-Masagazi, UMWA Executive Director:**

Success stories from the communities is evidence that the project is one of the best things that happened to UMWA and the beneficiaries, but a few things need to be given serious attention in future undertakings.

There is need to balance attention between the communities and the institution implementing the initiative.

In the case of the project, more attention was paid to the local communities to the extent that the Project team remained with little time to re-learn, and document

**Margaret Sentamu-Masagazi, Executive Director, Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA shares with the Community Development Officer, Kyankwanzi District**



the project processes, but also to fundraise from other sources. And so, when the decision from Finland came to cut development aid, the project and indeed UMWA found ourselves in a panicky situ-

ation with no immediate sources of funding to sustain or consolidate the success stories mentioned above, or to address the project gaps.

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