

The Other Voice

MAMA
101.7 FM
THE VOICE TO LISTEN TO



Sunday, October 10, 2010

WOMEN IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS MORE PRONE TO HIV INFECTION

By Michael Kasiko and Team

DIANA is HIV positive but recalls several incidences of Domestic Violence in her relationship with her late husband. Charity is threatening to quit her 25 year old marriage. Reason? The man is controlling me to the extent of forcing me into unprotected sex despite my offer to nurse him when he falls sick due to opportunistic diseases. Last week we tested for HIV, he is positive and I negative!

Besides their gender, Diana and Charity share two fundamental factors: Domestic Violence, and in the case of Charity, it is clearly spelt out as forced unprotected sex, and chances are that both women are HIV positive despite Charity's pronouncement that she was recently found negative!

But which is a better devil? Caught in an abusive relationship or being found HIV positive? Well! It is tricky but what has been confirmed by World Health Organisation and several studies is the significant correlation between the two variables. It does not matter which came first and the results are devastating, women being the worst hit, courtesy of their physiological set up, economic and cultural vulnerability.

The presence of HIV/AIDS tends to lead to violence and alternatively violence to HIV/AIDS infection. In situations where Domestic Violence emerges from sexual promiscuity revenge in most cases ends up with having sex with an immediate person disregarding their sero status.

In our social set up Domestic Violence rotates around the sex urge, excessive consumption of alcohol, drugs, and cultural sanctions of women among others. The presence of HIV/AIDS acts as a potent emotional stressor that precipitates some incidents of abuse.

While the presence of HIV/AIDS in an abusive relationship adds many unique dynamics, much as women partners may choose not to disclose their HIV status for fear of violence, there are some issues that those in this situation may have in common with others who are surviving Domestic Violence. In addition the outcomes of Domestic Violence can become more serious and threatening illness is involved in the scuffle.

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The Director COFCAWE, Ms. Catherine Othieno being interviewed by MAMA FM's Rebecca.

'Help women learn how to contribute to the family income'

By Rebecca Birungi
and The Other Voice Team

THE community Development Officer, Wakiso District has advised organizations working on Domestic Violence prevention to include a component of income generating activities for women to reduce their dependence on their husbands. She says that most of the cases received at the

district result from men's failure to look after their families.

Ms Zaina Nakubulwa says, families that solely depend on the meager incomes of the husband tend to register more cases of Domestic Violence and therefore it is important for women to financially contribute to the family's well-being. This also gives them confidence and increases their self esteem.

Ms. Nakubulwa notes that this would be possible if institutions or NGOs like UMWA conduct basic business skills trainings for mothers to enable them start projects. She said women bear the brunt of Domestic Violence as they are forced to remain in abusive relationship because they are economically vulnerable.

She was speaking at a UMWA sensitization seminar on Domestic Violence pre-

vention organized for the district leadership.

She says that in Wakiso District, at least five cases of Domestic Violence are reported weekly and all are related to failure to provide basic necessities and school fees ending up into quarrels between spouses leading to women being battered.

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Domestic Violence
has dealt us fatal blow

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Dad almost killed
us at Xmas!

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COFCAWE takes
the fight to schools

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The Other Voice

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OPINION

Govt. not doing enough in the fight against domestic violence

AS parents, do we ever understand how deep our actions affect our children? Take the physical fights between a husband and wife, the emotional or psychological torture one of the parents has to cope with, because of, for example the partner, alone making the rules and decisions in the home - which family members to talk to, where to go, what time to report back from work and others.

Some husbands nowadays have made it a habit to check their wives' mobile phones and demand why so and so called or what were you talking about!

Well, the one year olds are watching and hearing what is going on. They feel the anger, the 'brave' ones may join the fight, take sides and 'hit back' at the parent they would have sentenced as the perpetrator. But most of them resort to the easiest tool.....crying! Others keep quiet but not for a life time. When they decide to react, the parents and/or their future spouses won't like it. It is a cycle of violence which may include child poisoning or killing a parent, husband/ wife or spouse!

The Other Voice brings you some of the testimonies of children directly affected by Domestic Violence. Robinah whose parents separated while she was three years old says, "I could not understand why we traveled that far and left mum behind!"

Ibra who had been turned into a spy over his mother revealed: this was making me very uncomfortable and up to this day I feel a sense of betrayal to my mother. I hated dad. Tracey who was bullied by her step mother has not gotten over the huge gap created in her life when her biological mother left. She keeps lamenting: How I wish my mother was staying with us This would not have happened.....!

Many girl children whose parents separate often have been sexually abused by their biological or step fathers. Many continue to miss out on the basic necessities of life including love, care and education. That is why the work of civil society organizations which provide psycho-social support to such children is very commendable.

COFCAWE is such organization and already its impact in Wakiso District is felt. But where is Government? Apart from providing the legal framework (and we applaud it for the Domestic Violence Law 2010), we do not see our Government investing in institutions and facilities such as women's crisis centres, income generating activities for the victims, physical and social support to children.

It is therefore incumbent upon our Government to do more to address Domestic Violence because it is a cost from whichever perspective you look at it: psychological, economical or political.

We welcome partnership to produce The Other Voice.

The scourge of Domestic

BY CHIPO BRENDA

WHILE other children are still sleeping, Tracey Kobusheshe 11, is already awake at 6 o'clock to begin her daily household chores.

Yet, she has to catch up with the morning class at 8:00A.M, 8 kms away! Each day, Tracey and her siblings wake up very early in the cold morning, lest they anger their step mother.

"Wake up Tracey! Is their water in the drum?," her step-mother shouts each morning.

Tracey Kobusheshe (not real name) is a Primary five pupil at St. Kizito - Titikalu Primary School in Wakiso District. She recalls how it all started, a cycle of Domestic Violence in her home.

One Sunday evening, her pregnant mother was peeling sweet potatoes while the children were preparing vegetables for lunch.

"Dad called mother inside our two - roomed house and shut the door. The next thing we heard was mother yelling for help! Since we were young, the four of us started crying.

By the time she left the house, mother was bleeding all over, we were crying quite



Members of the ISF/UMWA project assemble for a group photo after a community

loudly but no one in Ssenga village came to our rescue. I am now forced to believe that we never got help because the neighbors thought that our parents were punish-

ing us for some thing.

That day mother went into a coma, we thought she was just sleeping. When she came around, she left, never to return.

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My problems started when I got a co-wife

HANIFA MBOGO

When my husband got another wife he started mistreating me and my children. He would not even buy food or pay school fees. Due to the demands from the second wife he started selling off our property, including two cows; I alone had reared.

One day my husband sent home two men to buy the cows at a very cheap price, UGS 400,000, and when he came back he demanded for the money. He gave me only UGS 10,000 which he later demanded. When I asked him how he had spent the proceeds he said he had to clear some debts but I later learnt that he had spent it with my co-wife.

He would not return home for days and when I enquired he would beat me. I reported to my inlaws and the local council who advised me against a divorce or separation. Now I am here not sure of what to do, hoping that he will change. At present he is not beating me but spends most of the time at my co-wife's place.



Community activist, Ms Nakiwala

It's not a private matter when a wife is battered

RUTH KANYIKE

I AM Ruth and stay in Najjanankumbi, I witness a violent relationship where a husband used to beat his wife almost daily. He would kick her and do a lot of violent things on her. This was public knowledge and all would sympathize with her but could not do anything because this was a 'private matter'.

One day after the beating, it is alleged that he poisoned the man to death. People are sad because they felt happy that she could now have peace.

COFCAWE takes the f

By Rebecca Birungi

CONCERN for Children and Women Empowerment - COFCAWE is a Non-Governmental Organization operating in Wakiso district, in the sub-counties of Gomba and Busukuma.

It was born out of the need to address poor sexual reproductive health among children aged 8-14 years, high HIV/AIDS infections, high risk groups, increased abused / neglected children in the community and high levels of Domestic Violence among families.

Among the programmes COFCAWE runs is the gender integrated programme on HIV/AIDS focusing on behavioral change among children aged 8-14 targeting out of school children to help change behaviour, using parents and local leaders as advocates.

The Director, Ms Catherine Othieno, emphasizes that their starting point, are the children in schools who list the problems in their communities, analyze their possible causes and solutions.

"For example when early sex was listed as a problem, this led the COFCAWE



Some

facilitator to ask if they had what does this involve? For the children know their behavior they involve?

When they mention reproductive organs, they are then asked to talk about traditional practices as well as spiced up by the participation of police, human rights organizations and community development

Tackle women's dependence on men

From Page 1

Ms Mubiru Liz, the District Information Officer noted that economically empowered women largely suffer emotional violence and this is worse than physical violence because the controlling nature of the man may lead to the wife's death if not addressed early.

She said, while society still regards women as dependents and sex objects, the working class women would rather not discuss or report violence inflicted on them for fear of losing status. She commended UMWA's project approach noting they have not waited for Domestic Violence cases to be brought to their desks but have instead gone to the

grassroots to help prevent it. She urged UMWA to extend the project to islands like Kasengeje where due to transport hiccups, information there is a rare commodity.

The principle assistant secretary called for programs addressing unequal power relations within the home noting that the absence of mutual respect and communication are twin causes of Domestic Violence. Nathan Lujumwa however noted that some women and men do not recognize that Domestic Violence is a crime, calling for more human rights training to awaken people and contribute to the social movement now started by UMWA in the district.

Violence has dealt us a fatal blow



Workshop in Kiboga District.

home with my elder sister who twelve years old at the time. I know then, how to peel or However the neighbours were

of great help for almost a month until our grandmother came to our rescue.

She would prepare our meals, but unfortunately she did not have the means to cater for our every need.

Each day before our grandmother would retire to her one-room house, she would remind us to open for our dad, who had become a drunkard, and serve him food.

Any delay to open the door or serve food, would earn us slaps. One day, my sister told me that whenever father demands that she takes his food to his bedroom, he tries to rape her!

I was so shocked, but to our surprise, grandmother never believed it. In fact she accused my sister of being spoilt and a liar.

Our other sister was also sexually abused at thirteen under the same circumstances. That day father ordered her to serve him food inside his bedroom, we heard slaps and her cries. Dad was yelling at her to keep quiet saying, he is supposed to be the first 'beneficiary' 'after all you are being used by the village boys!'

Since our grandmother did not provide any solution, my sister ran to our aunt's home in Matugga where she now stays.

Then my father married another woman. What hurts is the fact that dad manages to

pay school fees for her two children, yet the only chance we got to go to school was when our step-mother complained to father that we eat a lot and proposed that we be sent to school.

COFCawe now supports my education and provides psycho-social needs.

I am glad that my mother now finds time to pay us a visit once in a while at the risk of being seen by dad who swore to kill us if ever he sees her around. On such occasions, we are able to enjoy some nice bites.

For me, after coping with the effects of domestic violence and exposure to COFCawe psycho-social workshops a stable family is that one with children going to school, having enough food and with parents who do not fight each other or become drunkards.

Harriet Katabira a teacher and patron for the behaviour changing club at St Kizito Tiikalu Primary School says, "After identifying children who require psycho-social support we try to show them love and encourage them to study.

We also encourage them to have a positive attitude; and avail ourselves for consultation. Surprisingly, most of these children are brighter than many who come from well to do families."

Build trust, fight Domestic Violence

TEBUJJADDA Mary Lubinga, a farmer and LC1 chairperson youth council, Kikabala village:

In 2008, a one Mukasa aged, 30, borrowed Ug shs1M from a micro finance institution without the consent of his wife.

He bought maize seeds and coffee seedlings but waited for the rains which did not come. The prolonged dry spells were clear signs that the harvest would be poor.

Mukasa watched helplessly and was wondering how the loan will be re-paid. Caught in a state of helplessness the man decided to sell the household property and the land.

In the beginning, the wife looked on but later gathered confidence and questioned the husband why he was selling the property they co-owned. The husband instead beat her claiming that a woman should not question a man's decision.



Teacher Afua at a recent workshop

The wife decided to report to village authorities. I perceive domestic violence as issues arising out of disagreement, causing the family to live miserably. Poverty may be one of the causes but in this case lack of trust and transparency made the man beat his wife.

Battering wives is culturally unacceptable as no cultural value teaches people to beat others, instead it is the individual character or behaviour that one embraces, sometimes groups may influence an individual.

We called the couple and listened to each one's side. We chose not to condemn the man but cautioned him against selling land without the consent of his wife. In marriage there is

no secrecy, instead transparency is an important element in building trust between the spouses. The man listened and eventually they reconciled.

But there are women who don't even report cases of violence for fear of 'shame'. I call this ignorance and there are others who don't know where to report.

A majority of the rural and some urban women are ignorant of the law on Domestic Violence. I recommend that UMWA builds partnership with other Non-Governmental Organizations to campaign against this social ill, for example some youths think that beating women is a right yet this is wrong!

'Dad has two wives, he can't look after us!'

MY name is Sylvia; I stay with my aunt in Makerere- Kavule and study at Makerere Church of Uganda Primary School in P6.

My father is married to two women and my mother is the first. We are seven children and I am the second last. We used to live a happy life with our father before he got a second wife.

He could pay school fees promptly, buy us new uniforms and we attended good schools. At the end of each term he would review our reports and promise to reward the best performer.

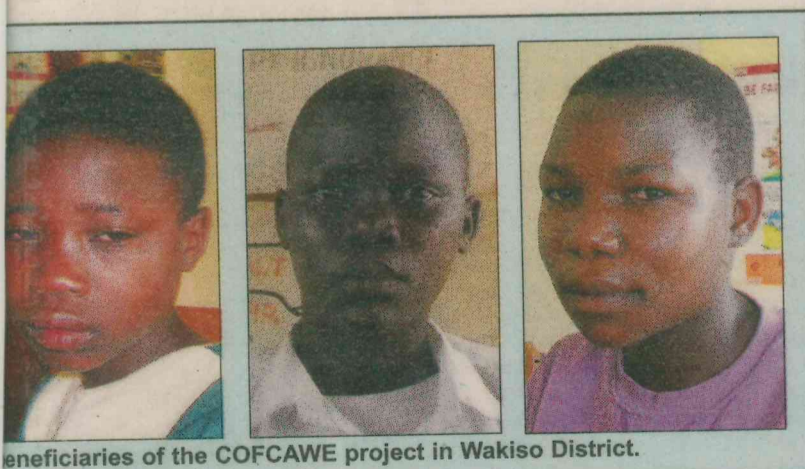
My mother was happy and I had never seen them fight but this all changed when he married the second wife. Father started coming home once in a while, sometimes he could refuse to eat food or take any drink served by my mother. He also cut the assistance, delayed to clear school dues especially for my elder siblings who are in secondary schools and later he ordered my mother to register us in UPE Schools.

He started calling mother names. That she is from a poor family, she failed to study, has produced dull children, not

beautiful and not his standard! The family members were called to solve their differences but they failed and he threatened to kill her if she reported the matter to police.

While father abandoned us, mother also failed to cater for all of us; we now eat one meal a day. When I dropped out of school for a whole year, my aunt took me to live with her. I will now be sitting PLE exams next month. My elder sisters dropped out and are now married at a young age. I appreciate what my aunt has done for me!

Workshop for socio-behaviour change to schools



Beneficiaries of the COFCawe project in Wakiso District.

At the end of the five days, children would have changed their behaviours. We encourage them to make behavioral change clubs in their schools and also choose a patron to continue with the programmes at school without COFCawe.

As a must we conduct a one day feed back session and in attendance are teachers and parents.

It is both an exciting and anxious moment because the children speak from

the heart. They reveal how they are mistreated by teachers and parents.

Some of them speak of rape, torture, defilement and denial of their right to speak out. COFCawe, please teach our parents how to talk to us, the teachers how to discipline us, and leaders how to advocate for rights; they would cry out.

We also work with cyclists commonly known as boda-bodas which has caused a multiplier effect in transforming

behavior. We are already seeing an impact in the community where COFCawe has worked. The women and children at the sub-county level are reporting sexuality causes and abuse to the police. Police is happy with our work!

In our work we use a 'blind' approach. Blindness means: you may be having your eyes open but blind to something. It means you are illiterate to something you are doing.

For example Some Ugandan men are blind to women's sexuality. Some men don't even know that a woman goes through menstruation!

They assume that if they want sex, the woman too wants. So the only person that can tell them that I am not ready is the woman. It is woman's bargaining power to say I want it but let's hold on, negotiating hmmm?

This calls for a very big transition that is why we work with the schools, with a view that once the children appreciate equal gender roles they will then walk with them to adulthood.

The expectations of people in the project are running high; they are demanding that COFCawe goes to every community which is not possible"

HELP! My parents separated, now I'm out of school

MY name is Ibra, commonly known as Kony. I live in Kibe zone, Kalerwe in Kawempe division, Kampala district.

We are two boys in the family, my young brother is 8 and I, 11 years old. My parents used to fight most of the time, sometimes father would not come home for a week or two.

Whenever he did, it would be late at night, drank and overly abusive to mother especially over food. He would shout at the top of his voice and we would all wake up.

Some times he could accuse my mother of dating other men and promise to harm her. One day I witnessed my parents fighting at night and mother was seriously beaten. That night she slept at the neighbor's place.

I was so worried the whole time thinking that I too would be beaten up because father would enquire whether there is any man who comes to our house or whether mother goes somewhere and stays a while?

Luckily, he ordered us to sleep, in the morning he prepared and served us

breakfast and then left for work.

Mother came back later but we never went to school the whole week. Quarrels continued, mother would pack her belongings and stay with her relatives or friends for sometime leaving us to prepare our meals. Whenever she came back, father would be indifferent.

My parents separated three years ago and we remained with mother. I stayed with her for 6 months before she got another man whom she is currently staying with.

My father too has another wife and has totally abandoned us. We rent a small room, but recently we were thrown out of the house by the landlord.

My mother has taken back my brother, while I live with my father. I dropped out of school in P4 and now I help my step mother sell jackfruit and roast maize.

Her children go to school but I remain at home. I appeal to any well wisher to help me go back to school.

'Children most affected by Domestic Violence'

JOHN Wamala 14, is in primary six at St. Kizito Ttikalu Primary School. He has never seen or heard his parents fight, but he stays with an uncle who told him his parents had separated due to fighting in the home.

He has lived there since he was three years old. After narrating how a male relative raped and later killed a twelve year old and police failed to arrest the culprits, Wamala contends that children are most affected by whatever happens in the families. If the mother had not been chased away from home, her daughter would not have died in a miserable manner.

Wamala considers a stable home to be one where both parents are faithful to each other, respect themselves and provide for their children.

I would like to become a religious teacher because if a kid is taught religion he / she grows up with a forgiving heart.



Kityo Yafesi, a community activist in Kiboga, at a recent workshop.

DAD ALMOST KILLED US AT CHRISTMAS!



Women at a training session on Domestic Violence prevention in Kiboga District.

NABATANZI REGINA

This happened during the Christmas season of 2007; a police officer whom I had been married to for 20 years abandoned us and did not provide us with anything for Christmas.

On Boxing day, he came back unannounced and found us with a few things we had bought. This did not please him. At around 9PM he threatened to kill himself. (He would do this every other day)

But this time, we were all scared

because he even threatened to hit us with a machete!

We ran and sought help from neighbours and the LC chairman, who advised us to go some where safe for the night.

Next day, I reported to the police and he was summoned. He denied the offence and instead alleged that it was me who had come back home drunk!

Ever since that time he has never been that violent. However all of us are scared that he will try to kill us

again. We feel restless.

The Local Council chairman has not helped either. All he says is these things happen in a marriage!

When I participated in the UMWA's project in 2008 it made me understand that Domestic Violence doesn't happen to me alone but I should get courage and talk about it.

These days I do my best to prevent misunderstandings with my husband. For example I keep the communication lines open and ignore provocations.

When Domestic Violence leads to HIV infection

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IN a related aspect the frequent family violence can lead to a partner to look for an alternative that will give him / her peace of the mind but this bears repercussions as it may be harried.

In some situations the abuser may threaten to tell others that the partner has HIV/AIDS. This sometimes sparks off violence as disclosure of one's sero status may bring about social embarrassment on the victims.

Therefore due to additional social stigma attached to HIV regarding drug abuse and sexuality, as well as the continued bias that people with HIV/AIDS face, this can pose an additional threat to people that may bring about violence based on that fact, as it may sound like she/he is reminded of the HIV status.

An abuser with HIV/AIDS may infect or threaten to infect a partner, or may use

claims that the victim is responsible for the abuser's sero-conversion and use this as a reason why the victim cannot leave freely. An HIV positive abuser may even do the same things to undermine an attempt to blackmail the survivor.

The victim will continue struggling with the HIV positive partner on the basis that she/he gets housing, food, health care or other forms of support. The additional power that accompanies this threat is that the survivor partner despite abuses, nature mandates the victim to continue staying with the partner till death. The victim may also fear that family, friends and the community who do not understand or are not aware of the abuse may falsely turn against the victim for leaving someone who may be sick or perceived as vulnerable.

In addition to women's greater physiological susceptibility, social, cultural, and legal forms of discrimination compound

their vulnerability to HIV. Domestic violence, already a leading cause of female injury, deprives women of bodily integrity by eliminating their ability to consent to sex, negotiate safer sex, and determine the number and spacing of their children.

In many cases, the threat of abandonment or eviction constrains economically dependent women to remain in abusive relationships, thereby exacerbating their vulnerability to HIV infection. One woman said, "He used to force me to have sex with him. He would beat and slap me when I refused..... The very first time I asked my husband to use a condom because I didn't want to give birth he said no. He raped me and I got pregnant. I am still with him because I don't have a cent. He at least pays the rent!"

There exists a correlation between Domestic Violence and women's vulnera-

bility to HIV infection that calls for governments to address the issue of Domestic Violence in the society. The unequal decision making power and status within the intimate relationships and violation of Human rights law, clearly establishes state responsibility to protect women from battery, as a useful tool that Government is held accountable for.

Domestic Violence deprives women of bodily integrity by eliminating their ability to consent to sex, negotiate safer sex, and determine the number of spacing of their children. The threat of abandonment or eviction constrains women to remain in abusive relationships, thereby exacerbating their vulnerability to HIV infection as a result of Domestic Violence phenomenon.

Additional material adapted from Diclement R.J et al 2004. World Health Organisation World Report on violence and Health, and Guedes, A. 2004

from YOU 

Come out more often!

Dear Editor,
This is to thank you for the great stories in The Other Voice edition, August 1st 2010; the topic "Domestic Violence" was timely!

The Other Voice gave free expression where individuals aired out their views and problems freely without fear; it was well balanced, both men and women spoke out on the prevention of Domestic Violence.

The Other Voice is different from other papers where only women speak about issues that impact negatively on women. My appeal however is, more pages on the prevention of Domestic Violence should be published and also in local languages for every body to learn.

A page should be provided to policy makers too, to pronounce themselves on the Domestic Violence and very important, the children's voice is missing in the paper yet they can also air out useful views on this topic, more-over they are the worst hit.

The colour should be maintained to make the paper look beautiful and attractive.

Please keep up the good work!
Mukasa Gorret,
Ntinda

Involve every one in the fight

The Other Voice was an educative piece! The editorial was good; the pictures came out well.

The paper was informative in a way that women also contribute to Domestic Violence much as they are violated. For example the article on Nakawooya Harriet who used to quarrel with the husband and in the end would end up being beaten. But all the stories had good content.

The articles show that UMWA is doing a great job in the fight against Domestic Violence. I am happy that men of different ages are interviewed and taught as activists in the communities. Ugandans should be grateful to the International Solidarity Foundation for supporting this project and indeed it will change the lives of Ugandans a lot.

Esther Mugisha
Kawempe

Acknowledgements:
International Solidarity Foundation
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