

VOICE OF MIFUMI

April 2010



INSIDE THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- * Women's day celebrations.
- * A Survivor's fight against domestic violence
- * A vote of thanks to donors

HELPING WOMEN AND CHILDREN ACCESS JUSTICE

Most of MIFUMI's clients revealed that they were happy with the justice they received after MIFUMI intervened in their cases.

This commendation came after a survey was carried out last month. 107 random survivors were directly interviewed to comment and rate the justice achieved when their cases were being resolved. Below is the response:

77% of those surveyed achieved either very good or good justice.

Some comments were as follows:

'... it was just good enough to make him apologise and ask for

forgiveness and sign an agreement in front of an authority not to abuse me again...'

'...I believe I was not cheated in the ruling. He served his sentence as ruled...after he had beaten me badly ...'

' ... he was asked to return my child to me, charged with a maintenance order, and given restraining orders to prevent further violence...'

15% revealed receiving fair justice; these believe the punishment was not enough of a deterrent to stop the violence.

These are most common in family / clan and LCs courts where the men dominate the decision making.

And 7% revealed that they never received any justice when their cases were being resolved. Such cases considered closed but "failed" as the survivors are faced with 'social pressure' and forced to let go usually with an assumption that the situation would naturally adjust.

The assessment was based on the MIFUMI's theory of Change; The JSEC (Justice, Settlement to violent free life, Economic empowerment and Confidence built to survivors).

Empowered with the greatest tool to help others

I told her she had been raped and needed to get help.

She quickly threw one hand to her head and the other to her lips like I had just said the most abominable word on the planet, worse still like they had come out of her lips.

I had gotten used to this kind of reaction of surprise and shock.

I waited till the surprise passed and repeated myself; this time explaining to her in detail that what had happened to her was wrong and she could not keep it to herself, besides, she needed immediate medical attention and a few years ago I had behaved the same when a MIFUMI counsellor spoke to me about violence.

As we spoke, she revealed, it was not the first time, the limp in her right leg was not a natural disability, she twisted her ankle when he was punching and kicking her last year. Her husband was abusing her.

I would have broken down, cried with and told her that I had been through worse, but I held my head high and bravely listened to her tragic story. I needed to be strong for her. She needed this reassurance.

Surviving violence and abuse comes with a cost, the healing process more painful than the violence and yet the healing is fulfilling.

Justice is only the first step to healing but the confidence to address violence is the real healing.

My name is Abbo Florence; I am a survivor of aggravated domestic violence, abuse and bride price violations.

With full fledged support from MIFUMI and my children, I established a survivors' movement group in my community and today our group has about thirty survivors who act as counsellors, watch dogs and advocates of violence against women and children by holding our community leaders and duty bearers accountable for the vices that that still go unaddressed in our communities.

The True Face of polygamy

First there is the absentee demi-god father who you only get to see either at dinner time or when you have been summoned in his presence. His loyalty and attention shifts from you and your mother and is divided among his numerous wives. You almost do not know that man because you never talk much. You were raised by your mother who reveres him. To you he becomes the father you may never get to know.

Then there are jealousies and rivalries among your several mothers as each competes for affection and resources for themselves and their children and her children. Sometimes you get caught between these arguments and fights and wonder what you did wrong to deserve all this.

If it so happens that your mother dies, leaving you with this already absentee father and several step mothers, you will automatically take on all the tongue and physical lashing intended for your mother. But what do you know, you are only a child. You are also most likely to be used as cheap labour by your other mothers.

Your absentee father is nowhere to notice your suffering and you need to bond with him now that your mother is gone.

There are more chances for you as a child to be abused, neglected and denied your basic rights in a polygamous home than with divorced parents.

And if it so happens that you are the oldest of the children and you luckily got an education, you will never enjoy the fruits of your labour as three quarters of your life will be spent raising and educating your numerous siblings. You inherit your father's sins.

Polygamy has no place in our capitalist times characterized with credit crunches and poverty

Thank you...

Grouville School, Jersey donates to MIFUMI Primary School

Grouville School and Jersey Overseas Aid has generously made donations to MIFUMI Primary school again.

Recently, Mifumi Primary school received numerous donations ranging from scholastic materials to utensils. With funding from Jersey, a new kitchen is being erected in place of a shack that existed then.

'John Carnegie is more than our beneficiary, he is our friend, and the children call him daddy now. We are grateful and thankful for these donations.'

Bernard Onyango Headmaster MIFUMI Primary School.

MIFUMI Health Centre receives Solar fridge from Dr. Uta Steigler

Medical Dr. Uta Steigler from Germany has donated the first ever solar fridge to MIFUMI Health centre to enable us to store our own drugs. Dr Steigler visited the health centre in 2004 and was impressed with the dedication of the staff.

The irregular power cuts have affected the health centre drug storage. Previously MIFUMI health centre had to keep its drugs at another health centre about 20 kilometres away from the health centre which proved to be a great inconvenience during emergencies. The solar fridge will solve these inconveniences.

MIFUMI is very grateful for this generous donation.

Chair, MIFUMI UK organises a fundraising the pupils of MIFUMI.

Meg Wyld, Chair MIFUMI UK is organising a fundraising event in Winsor UK whose proceeds will benefit disadvantaged children of Mifumi Primary school.

Meg Wyld and her friends have since the inception of Mifumi primary school supported pupils who have excelled in their Primary Leaving Exams but are unable to continue to secondary school for various reasons. The Scholarship scheme founded by Meg sponsors these children in their secondary education.

This year's scholarship beneficiaries were Nanzirina Aketch, James Omollo, Vincent Drileba and Rosemary Auma.



Vincent Drileba



Nanzirina Aketch

The Story of Bride Price



I was born a girl
I was taken out of school
I was married at 13
My husband was aged 42
I am his third wife
I was exchanged for 8 cows
My parents called this Bride Price
I was pregnant by my 14th birthday
Every day I worry about getting HIV
My husband beats me when I try to talk about it
My daughter is now 12 years old
My husband has no money and says
it's time for her to marry
I want to escape with her and
find us a new home
But I feel trapped
My parents are scared to help



They don't have the 8 cows to refund my Bride Price

The story of Bride Price echoes throughout Africa. It has different names. But the fears are the same: Mifumi has been working in the field of domestic violence since 1994. Our work started in a village called Mifumi twenty years ago and steadily expanded into Tororo District and throughout Uganda. Mifumi is now impacting on the international arena. In 2008 Mifumi collaborated with two experienced researchers, Dr Ravi K Thiara (University of Warwick) and Professor Gill Hague (University of Bristol). The aim was to investigate the links between Bride Price, domestic violence and poverty in Uganda. Anecdotal evidence from survivors and community workers regularly told the story but Bride Price is often viewed as a cherished cultural practice. More rigorous research was needed.

Methodology

15 months exploratory project using participatory action research methodology. A key part of the approach used was the recruitment and training of 13 local community-based researchers who conducted local interviews with women, men, young people and duty bearers from a wide variety of tribes and clans. A total of 257 interviews were conducted in four data-sets: i) members of the public with experience of bride-price; ii) members of the public with experience of domestic violence; iii) widows and iv) key professionals, experts and duty-bearers.

Outcomes

This ground-breaking research confirmed the links between Bride Price, domestic violence and poverty. Prior to the study, nobody anticipated the strength of feeling that Bride Price should be reformed. A resounding 88% of people interviewed in Uganda believed it should be reformed or abolished. Only 12% wanted to leave Bride Price as it is. The research findings give voice to the silent impact of Bride Price and legitimacy to the campaign for change.

The momentum is building. In 2009, Tororo is the first district to outlaw Bride Price in Uganda. Mifumi has petitioned the constitutional court to do the same. In Tororo, as a result of Mifumi's efforts, it is now illegal to request Bride Price or to ask for a refund, and families are returning to the traditional practice of giving gifts. The research established the importance of understanding all aspects of Bride Price and encouraging people to discuss its values and not see it as a prerequisite for marriage. In September 09 this campaign prompted the BBC's Have Your Say to broadcast the debate Should Africa ban Bride Price? In 2010 we are targeting DFID and other policy-makers and funders to recognise the links between Bride Price and domestic violence. Collaboration with the University of Bristol and the University of Warwick has helped to realize this.

We are working towards a future where women and children can live free from the fear of violence and abuse. Let's make it happen!

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