

VOICE OF MIFUMI

Women rights are Human rights – 16 days of activism, celebrating women



MIFUMI Staff pose for a photo before the march to launch the days of activism

Confession of a witness:

Maryse Leclair was down, but still alive. She pleaded for assistance, which attracted the gunman back to her. The strange young man sat down next to the wounded woman, quietly pulled a knife from the sheath strapped to his body, and used it to stab her in the heart. She screamed in surprise and pain...He pulled the knife out and then plunged it in twice more until the girl lay silent, blood gushing from her wounds.'

This strange young man was Marc Lepine.

The massacre:

While the rest of Canada enjoyed the fruits of the Quebec revolution with women taking on non-traditional occupations and educational programs, somewhere lurking in the shadows were a group opposed to this change, one member being 26 year old Marc Lepine. On Dec. 6, 1989, armed with a semi-automatic rifle Lepine walks into a Polytechnic school in Montreal, separates the men from the women, lets the men go and starts on a shooting rampage, shouting 'I hate women, I hate feminists,...They want to retain the

advantages of being women... while trying to grab those of men.'

That day Lepine killed 14 women and left several seriously injured. Their crime was that they were born women. Today the international community commemorates this day as one of the 16 days of activism for a Violence free world for women.

Ending violence Against women:

The world still has thousands of Marc Lepines; there are the cold murderous ones, openly violent ones and the silent abusive ones.

All around the world women are abused, many by the people they love and live with.

The end to violence against women starts with us realizing that women are human deserving dignity, respect and love. The International community has taken a step by recognizing the 16 days of activism that start on the 25th November and run up to the 10th of December each year.

The 2009 theme for the 16 days of activism is **Commit • Act • Demand: We CAN End Violence Against Women!**

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MIFUMI:

Has established 11 advice centers across Tororo District with a national helpline for survivors of domestic violence. MIFUMI advice centres receive over 200 women reporting abuse.

Lobbied the District to address increasing cases of Bride price related violence resulting in the newly passed bridal gift ordinance declaring the payment of bride price a gifts not demanded and not refunded. This ordinance will benefit the over 800,000 people in Tororo district.

Built Confidence and reduced the burden of poverty by economically empowering survivors of domestic violence with her socially enterprising project MIFETI (MIFUMI Ethical trade Initiative). Poverty makes women and children vulnerable to many forms of violence like domestic, sexual, mental and psychological violence.

Women won't be silenced forever

Audre Lorde, a feminist law professor said, "When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard or welcomed. But when we are silent, we are still afraid. So it is better to speak.

It's been 48 years since the Mirabel sisters in the Dominican Republic were assassinated on the order of Dictator Rafael Trujillo. The three sisters Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa were fighting to promote human rights during the Trujillo dictatorship.

In order to raise awareness of the problems that women face, November 25th has been designated as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

'...Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating effect on women's lives, on their families and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence-yet the reality often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned' **UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon stated in his 2007 international women's day Message.**

Ban Ki-Moon also added that, globally at least one in three women is beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused by a partner in the course of her lifetime. It is estimated that worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of

attempted rape in her lifetime.

A report by the Uganda Bureau of statistics in 2007 indicated that as many as 68% of women between the ages of 15 and 47 who are or previously were married experienced some form of domestic violence.

Human Rights activists, agencies, organizations, organisations paved the way for the women and children to speak out on violence and access justice.

MIFUMI has braced itself to defend and protect women and children from Violence and abuse.

MIFUMI believes in women and children's experience of violence and provides them with options available in the legal system help them achieve justice because statistics (United

Nations Fund for Population Activities) have shown that on average women are assaulted 35 times before reporting to police. Most women stay in violent relationships for 7-10 years.

As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we must all have it at the back of our minds that violence against women and girls is real.

Anyone can be a victim; it can be you, your sister, mother, daughter, niece or aunt.

Speak out on violence now.

If you do not have any reason to do so, just know; **IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.**



16 days of activism march in Tororo

Defining Justice for the girl child; it starts with you

From the moment a girl is born, her father counts his cows and her mother welcomes a helper and friend. Her responsibilities to the family and community are clearly spelt out.

Some of these responsibilities will groom her to become the best home maker while others will reduce her to the lesser sex vulnerable to all forms of abuse like slavery, rape, defilement, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, arranged marriages among others.

When a neighbor reported the case of 14 year old Achieng, who was defiled and raped by a 65 year old man to MIFUMI, she denied anything happened, though the doctor's report revealed otherwise. When a MIFUMI abuse counselor spoke with her, she opened up but pleaded with the counselor not tell her parents. They had advised her to deny.

Most family members had decided on settlement in form of money; and nearly everyone agreed, except the good neighbor.

Aggie, a 22 year old mother of two (9 year old derrick and 6 year old Samson) confesses that she was forcefully married off to a man who raped and defiled her.

'My parents said that my case was embarrassing and could bring the family shame if we reported it to the authorities. A few family members were called and I was quickly married off to this man... I think my parents were more interested in the financial gain than my happiness or bringing this man to book'

9 year old Stacy plays with a counselor at the MIFUMI refuge, oblivious of the fact that a couple of months ago she nearly died after her father raped her.

Her mother says she had suspected this all along but could not bring herself to report for fear of what her husband might do to her and what the community will say. Her daughter tested HIV positive.

The girl child is the first to drop out of school when a decision has to be made on who is the better child to educate. She will also be taken out of school in times of financial and material need to be married off, many times to wealthy old men. Some of these wealthy old men could be HIV positive or after this marriage, continue to practice adultery as accepted by most customs and traditions; leaving the young innocent girl at the risk of catching the virus.

Many of the local cultures view a child as the one that belongs to the community.

While any member of the community may rebuke the child when they do wrong, it should also be the responsibility of the community to

protect children.

Many times the perpetrators walk scot free with reduced penalties or a few years imprisonment leaving such cases with little to investigate and no justice for the abused.

Justice for the girl child is seeing beyond that fact that she is a girl and realizing that she is a human being with feelings.

Justice for the girl child means; seeing abuse and taking it on as your responsibility to see it stop.

It is the responsibility and obligation of all parents, family members, relatives, friends and members of the community to watching over the girl child and have the courage to report any case of abuse to the nearest police stations or human rights agencies like MIFUMI.

The Sure Start Project of MIFUMI through its gender, karate and taekwondo trainings has equipped 1920 girls with skills to ward off unwanted advances.

In MIFUMI Primary school, the children are also counseled on developing healthy relationships.



Only one third of girls in primary school in villages get to secondary schools

**It's time to
grow
up!**



**MIFUMI's
mission is to**

Protect women and children from domestic violence and abuse and secure for them basic rights through Education, Health Care and economic self sufficiency.

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MIFUMI

Stop Violence Against Women

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