

VOICE OF MIFUMI

June 2010

MIFUMI donates First Ever Purpose built CFPU to Tororo Central Police



L-R: Florence Kirabira, Director CFPU, Mpimbaza Hashaka RDC Tororo, Atuki Turner of MIFUMI and Engwedu Joseph, DPC Tororo at the CFPU launch.

When MIFUMI visited the Tororo District police in 2003, she saw the need to establish a new Child and Family Protection Unit to enable families to access justice on marital and rights issues.

On Friday 9th April 2010, the National Director of the Child and Family Protection Unit, Ms. Florence Kirabira unveiled the first ever purpose built Child and Family Protection Unit to the Tororo District Police station. The handover was witnessed by district officials, survivors of violence and abuse, NGOs, CBOs, among others.

On average 80% of the cases Tororo Police receives (in the Child and Family Protection Unit) are of abuse to women and children. This modern, fully furnished building is a donation from MIFUMI to improve on the delivery of services to the people of Tororo especially the women and children who visit this department.

The District Police Commander, Mr. Engwedu Joseph said 'we are grateful to MIFUMI for her thoughtfulness and generosity. The premises are big with office space for all CFPU services, we will also allocate a room for counselling couples.'

In her speech Atuki Turner the Executive Director of MIFUMI said; we are glad we could do something for our duty bearers to execute justice better, above all for the women and children of Tororo district who are the most vulnerable to abuse.

The RDC, Mr. Hashaka Mpimbaza, who also manages a desk in his office for child abuse conclusively applauded MIFUMI as a lead example to all NGOs addressing human rights issues and begged; 'like Oliver Twist we appreciate your unconditional support and we won't hesitate to ask for more.'

Children are mostly abused by people they love and trust



Children this age are the most vulnerable to many forms abuse

Child abuse takes on many forms ranging from physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal to neglect whose end result is pain and suffering of a child.

Of all the above, sexual abuse has come to the lime light in Uganda.

Tororo police station recorded about 50 cases of child sexual abuse and MIFUMI received 170 cases of child abuse in the past year; most children who even after counselling and justice being served, are afraid to return to their homes for fear of being shunned by their communities.

These instances do not necessarily show an increase in child abuse because African family loyalties, shame, materialistic mindsets and cultural beliefs leave hundreds of child abuse crimes to go unreported.

Ironically, it has been noted that children are mostly abused by the people they love and trust. The most common perpetrators are fathers and stepfathers, brothers, sisters, mothers, baby-sitters, uncles, family friends and neighbours.

We have often, heard the saying 'abusers are the abused' however there is no reason for child abuse other than the repression of the abuse and confusion which adults have to deal with in order to stop the cycle.

Sexual abuse should bring about legal actions.

Protect your children from sexual abuse

No child is psychologically prepared to deal with sexual stimulation. Children are frequently threatened by their abusers with death or family breakup if they tell. Because they love or trust their family or abuser and do not want to be responsible for anyone's unhappiness, they listen and obey their abusers.

MIFUMI through her dedicated child focussed projects is trying to address all forms of child abuse through our children's congresses, gender relations trainings and sports in schools and communities. The children are encouraged to make good use of their community duty bearers in case they experience or see any form of child abuse. They are also encouraged to talk about sexual abuse, setting boundaries on how far they can be touched and taught basic self defence skills.

Parents have also been encouraged to:

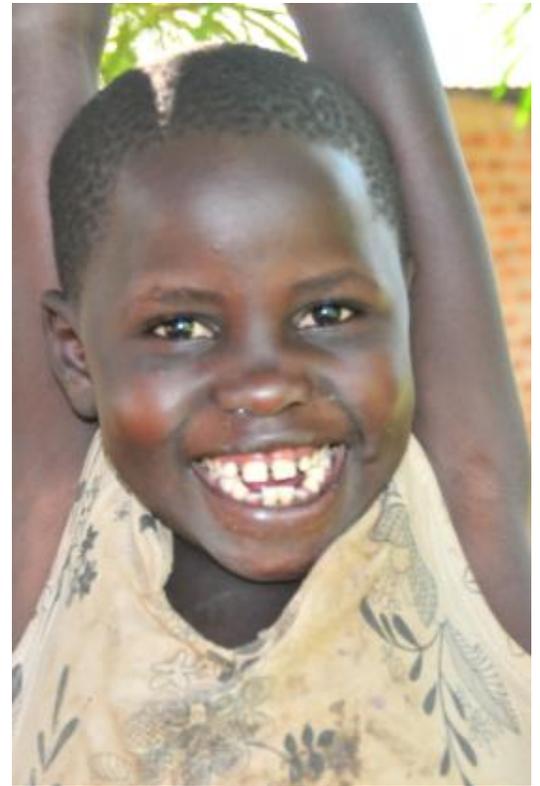
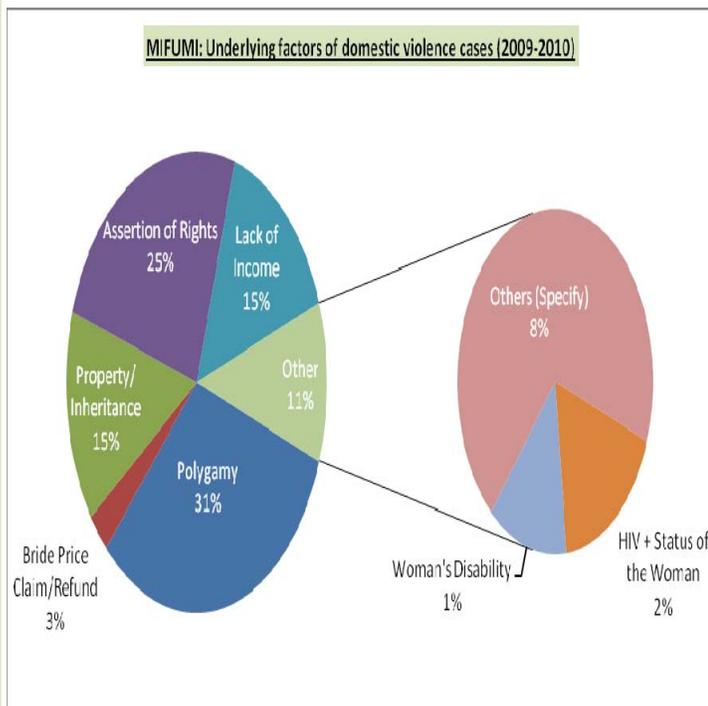
- Believe their children when they report any form of abuse.
- Help their children identify boundaries for play and affection and boundaries that are private.
- Bond with your children and let them learn to trust you and talk to you about everything; tell them gifts and threats from anyone should not be a secret.
- Teach children to be responsible for their friends
- Do not let your children walk around naked. Dress them up decently and do not leave them alone too long.

Underlying factors of domestic violence

Through the years of work, research and experience, MIFUMI statistics have revealed that polygamy amongst others is the underlying cause of domestic violence. This is closely followed by assertion of rights, property/inheritance, lack of income, Bride price and vulnerability.

On a happier note, instances of Bride Price related abuses are dropping in Tororo district, the 2009-2010 statistics have revealed.

This is credited to MIFUMI's endless campaign on Bride Price in the district. The Tororo Bridal gift ordinance is now in place declaring bride price a gift that is not demanded or refunded.



A life Transformed through economic empowerment

Right from the time I was a teenager, I always figured out ways to make a living and many times surprised my parents when I came home with savings from odd jobs I had done during the holidays like baby sitting, digging, cleaning, hospitals and voluntary work.

However when I got married, my husband did not approve of my income generating initiatives. He wanted me to be like other village women who were controlled and confined at home by their husbands. In his absence, I always found a way to busy myself. When he got to learn about this he started abusing me and the abuse soon turned into physical violence. Then in December 2009, he beat me up so badly and I sustained a deep cut on my hand.

MIFUMI helped me attain justice by working hand in hand with the Police where my husband was summoned, talked to; we were counseled and he pledged to change. We reconciled and moved back to our marital home.

The community was mobilizing survivors of Domestic Violence to form a savings and credit group, I requested my husband, and he willingly allowed me to join the group. I was both surprised and glad that he had started to love me and understand me; which used not to happen before.

Since I joined the group, I have seen a big change in my marital, social and economic life. I have learnt to associate with my fellow colleagues who have suffered the same, through sharing our experiences, and counseling one another.

Through the savings and credit scheme in this group, I have been able to save my money on weekly basis which originally I used to keep in the dress pocket and hang up on my mud and wattle wall. My money is more secure. The savings and credit scheme allows me to update my weekly and total savings, using a personal pass book. I appreciate the transparency within the group; where my group leaders count and announce to us the savings and balance the cash book ledger at every meeting.

My fish business has flourished. I used to sell silver sardines but I had always wanted to sell bigger fish. With the loan from my group, I upgraded from small fish to Nile perch and Tilapia which are more lucrative and have enabled me to support my husband and my family with some of the basic needs.

I appreciate MIFUMI for the great support towards the establishment of these groups and availing us with the initial funding to this group.

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Draw the line between disciplining and abusing your children.

This year on the African Child's day which falls on Wednesday 16th June 2010, commit yourself to be the best parent and guardian who your children will honour even if you are gone.

Child abuse is mistreating a child subjecting them to pain and suffering while discipline is the training of the mind and character of a child.

Many parents and care takers have failed to draw this line and in process end up abusing their children.

The first step to administering discipline to a child is to understand consequences of your choice of action.

Your choice of action should be one that will train mind and character not one made out of anger to cause suffering.

Our culture allows us to spank children and but the question we should be asking ourselves is if the spanking is making them better children who are emotionally healthy.

What your child should feel is regret for what they did not pain.

CONTACT US:

MIFUMI Uganda
P. O. Box 274, Tororo Uganda
Tel: +256 392-966282
E-mail: mifumi@mifumi.org

MIFUMI UK
Brunswick Court, Brunswick Square,
Bristol BS2 8PE
Tel: +44 117 916 6457
prompt@mifumi.org

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Protecting women and children from domestic violence