

VOICE OF MIFUMI

Men at the fore front in the fight to end violence against Women.



Community meeting in Kirewa Subcounty- Tororo

Around the world, great advances have been made regarding legal frameworks, mechanisms and policies to protect women from violence. However, United Nations human rights bodies, Non Governmental Organisations, community based organisations, human rights activists, researchers and individuals have started to realise the role and importance of involving men as part of the solution to combat violence against women.

MIFUMI vibrant men's movement which goes by the name Movement Building Men (MBM) is a community-based grassroots initiative spearheading this change for a more positive community action against violence against women.

For generations women around the world have been abused emotionally and physically regardless of culture, region, ethnicity, religion and economic status. The causes of these abuses are interlinked with cultural, legal, economic and political factors.

Men may be the biggest group of perpetrators of violence against women, but they play a role in decision-making and hold power in most communities in the world. It is therefore important for women's rights agencies to garner their support and commitment in ending violence against women.

Secondly many men have realised that violence directly affects them, whether as relatives, victims, witnesses and perpetrators.

MBM is taking on the collective action against violence against women in order to encourage other men to get involved and to show that it is a sign of strength to fight violence, instead of a sign of weakness.

By involving men, MBM believes that men will begin to take responsibility for their actions, choose not to use violence, and develop an alternate definition of being 'a man'.

MBM also views working with men to

end violence as part of an overall goal of achieving gender equality because work with men compliments women empowerment and gender equality.

MBM is determined to mobilise men to end violence against women, raise awareness among youth, cultural leaders, religious institutions, local and national government authorities as well as advocacy with media.

The movement has identified individuals, groups and institutions both at rural, local and national level that will support them to realise their objectives within the next 5 years.

With these entities in place, MBM hopes to increase the visibility of violence against women by supporting and motivating communities and men in particular to challenge the attitudes and beliefs around it and to support survivors to access justice and to heal.

Nangongera women Village Saving and Loan Association comes of age

On the 15/09/2010, the women of *Rwemo Chandi* Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) in Nagongera sub-county, Tororo marked an end to the year long saving scheme the groups had formed. The women received their savings of over one year in a ceremony at the Nagongera Catholic mission.

The ceremony was presided over by Laura Leach in the company of fellow Peace Corps, Linda and Dan. There was a lot of anxiety as excitement swept through the members who have come a long way and were finally about to reap the fruits of their hard labour.

The members of *Rwemo Chandi* VSLA were trained by Laura Leach a Peace Corps volunteer attached to MIFUMI is trained the women on how to establish and maintain a savings and loan scheme. The members saved 2000 shillings per share and on every 2000 deposited they earned 905 shillings interest. They also contributed five hundred shillings weekly as emergency fund to members in case of any abrupt problem requiring money.

During the ceremony the members received the money they had saved in the one year period and the interest earned, they also received back their contribution towards the emergency fund.

The members resolved to start another circle of saving after electing new office bearers. The old officials can present themselves for re-election if they so wish to continue serving the VSLA.

Apart from the two members who had unpaid loans, the ceremony ended on a happy note with every member in attendance impressed with their saving scheme.



Laura Leach (Centre) with is welcomed by members of *Rwemo Chandi* VSLA



Rwemo Chandi VSLA

A new home for Richard

Richard's paternal Aunt Jessica* claims his father was murdered because he was a thief and murderer. The widow disappeared and has never been seen to this day. Jessica was given the responsibility of raising him.

After their marriage, Jessica's new husband suggested they move to his village. Here she discovered that her husband was already married to someone else who he called his wife and now she was the second. Worse still his relatives outright showed her that they did not like her because she was a 'foreigner' not raised in their village who spoke a different language.

Because they detested her so much, they denied her the opportunity to be part of the bigger communal family. Sometimes she and Richard had to go without food.

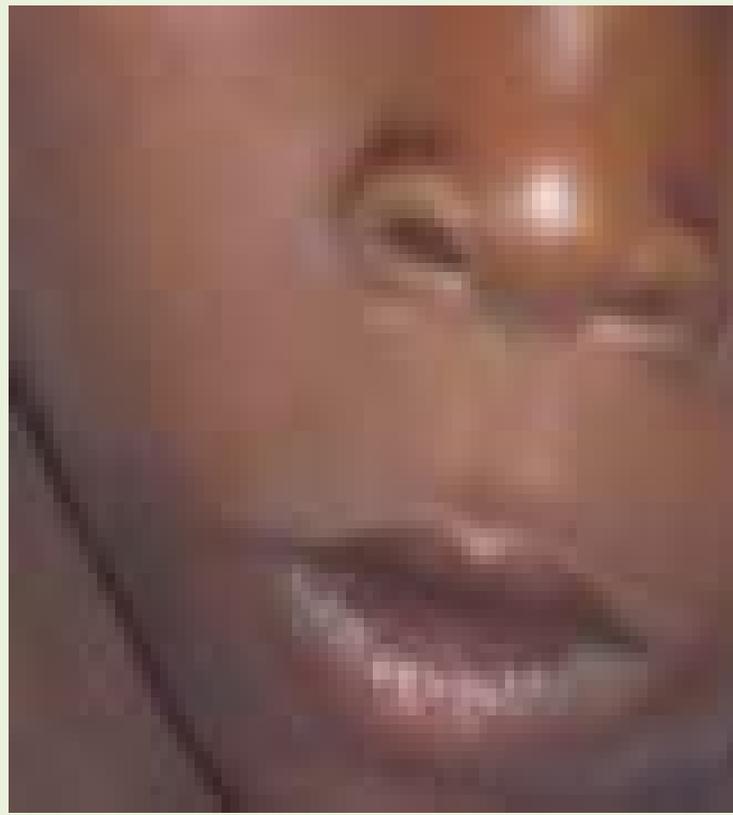
For young Richard when the hunger became too much, he started to steal a little from the neighbours and family members.

One such day was the day he uprooted a neighbour's groundnuts and ate them.

All the anger Jessica had been harbouring for the months came down on poor Richard. She beat him to pulp, tied him up on a tree and burnt his hands with dry banana leaves.

This act of aggression towards a child had never been experienced by some community members who quickly reported the matter to the Local council chairperson of the village who forwarded it to Police. MIFUMI was immediately brought on board to the aid of both Richard and his aunt (who needed counselling).

Richard was immediately taken to hospital and when he was out of danger, MIFUMI took him to The Haven as Aunt Jessica had to face the law for her grievous actions to a minor. MIFUMI continued with the search for Richard's relatives and family members who would take him on.



Efforts to reunite him with another relative were in vain as Richard escaped and returned to MIFUMI Haven. Nobody else showed up to take on Richard.

MIFUMI contacted a partner organisation-Smile Africa in Tororo committed to supporting children like Richard. Smile Africa received Richard whole heartedly.

Richard's stay at The Haven

He was a very fearful child; could not mix freely with fellow children at The Haven, was careful of what he said; chose who to speak to, could not play with others and when given food he could find a hiding place to eat.

After 8 days we started noticing a positive change in his behaviour. MIFUMI continues to counsel Richard who is a much happier and healthy child now.

*not real name

Raise your sons to become gender sensitive men

In the past year, the media has published news stories about young boys and men committing acts of violence, often against their spouses. Through the many years of work with children in the Voices project, MIFUMI has learned that violent and aggressive behaviour is often learnt early in life from either family members or their communities.

Parents therefore play a vital role reducing violence by raising children in safe and loving homes. There is a cultural tendency in Africa to raise boys who deny their feelings thus forcing them to deny the reality of their feelings about things and also to view women and girls as the inferior sex. This results in problems in their relationships as adults.

This denial combined with the many years of learned power and control over women from his elders grooms them to be the culturally accepted men; however, the suppressed emotions over the years are still there.

When the young men mature, when they meet potential partners who seem like their dream women, they tend to project the hidden emotions they have denied over the years onto them. As long as the women's behaviour is in line with their, "dream woman", everything is fine but the day their partners step out of what they have idealised for years, they feel attacked and react as they would to an attack; with threats and anger.

As a parent, the most important thing to do is to talk to your teenage son or sons about dating violence, give your children consistent love and attention, make sure your children are supervised, show your children appropriate behaviours by the way you act, be consistent about rules and discipline, keep violence out of your home and try to keep your children from seeing too much violence in the community and media.

MIFUMI offers counselling services to children who experience or witness abuse of women at her advice centres on Tororo District.

Contact MIFUMI today at:

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MIFUMI envisions a world where women and children are free from violence and all forms of oppression and everyone has the opportunity to realize their full potential.

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