

PRINCIPLES, VALUES & NORMS OF BRIDE PRICE, THE LANGO CONCEPT

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CAMPAIGN AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN COMMUNITY (CADOVIC)

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Introduction
- Principles of Bride Price
- The values & norms of bride price and its rights implications.
- Way forward

Introduction

- Bride price is monetary and material wealth, which is given by the groom in exchange for a bride
- The shifting pattern of bride price
 - From food stuff (1900s) to a current collection of materials wealth
 - From an average of 10 metres of cattle to a few and a greater tendency to monetize the practice
 - In terms of consent, situational context education level
 - From non-consenting adults to an observed pattern of marrying amount more consenting adults.

Principles of Bride Price

- It is demanded by the girl's family and paid by the boys family
- Paid by instalment
- Meant for social investment; for marrying another women in the clan
- Initiation ceremony of bride price into new clan, though dying out
- Refunded in case marriage does not work out
- Amount to be paid set by girl's family. Final amount depends on bargaining power.

Perceived values and Norms of bride Price

- From cultural perspective
- Building relationships
- Expansion of the groom's clan (cows multiply while bride must produce children)
- The amount of bride wealth paid and the number of wives is a source of prestige

From groom's family perspective

- Self respect
- Recognition to adulthood / manhood
- Source of power / authority (self esteem)
- Acquiring tools for production

From Bride's family perspective

- Wealth acquisition (marriage, debt payment, school fees for boys, food security)
- The bride feels secured (burial, sense of belonging)

Bride Price and Human Rights

- Women relegated to status of property
- Women have no rights since they are property. 'How does a property which I bought claim to have rights when I paid bride price?'
- Wife battering without seeking for redress. How can a property sue it's owner? Case study of Nelly.
- Women have no control over their sexuality (family planning, HIV/AIDS)
- Widow inheritance
- Women do not control even their own labour

- Women are in a state of hopelessness in regards to their human rights
- Barrenness is unacceptable – a barren woman must make wealth to marry her co-wife.
- Women do not have authority over children and household property
- Women have no voice
- A married woman belong to the husbands clan
- A woman must abide by the cultural rules, taboos and practices, some of which are dehumanising e.g. initiation into the clan (tweyo lao)
- Forced early marriage to acquire wealth to meet family demands (case study of 14 year old girl exchanged for the services of a 55 year old Traditional Medicine man)
- Girls used as traps to attract wealth especially “defilement” cases.
- A woman rarely initiates divorce since it means immediate refund of bride wealth.
- Women remain in abusive relationships.
- A married woman can be stopped from gainful employment by the husband (abuse of economic rights)
- A woman can not contest any political position without the consent of her husband
- Girls denied right to education in preference for bride wealth and boys education.

Effectiveness of Legal frameworks/Mechanisms

- Constitutions of Uganda: articles 21, 30, 33 provides for equal treatment of all persons; rights to consent to marriage, at its initiation and dissolution; and prohibits laws, cultures and traditions which undermine women’s dignity ...;
- But the domestic relations bill, which should have supported the enforcement to these provisions, has remained a bill for over 30 years!
- Under the Marriage Act, one has to abide by the rules governing the type of marriage he or she chooses
- Most issues to do with domestic relations are brushed off as private affairs by judicial legal organs (e.g. Nelly’s case)
- Misuse of power e.g. LCs handling defilement cases and negotiating for out of court settlement
- Institutions like Uganda Human Rights Commission are far away from peasants.

Recommendations

- Domestic Relations Bill be debated in parliament and enacted in harmony with the constitution of Uganda
- Marriage gifts be non- refundable
- Bride price/ bride wealth be outlawed
- User-friendly systems be developed and implemented for addressing issues of abuse of women and children’s rights.
- Uganda Human Right commission should be decentralized to districts.
- Women should be educated on their rights
- Services should be taken nearer to the people
- Economic empowerment of women so that they are assertive.