

# WHAT PRICE BRIDE -PRICE?

**RESEARCH INTO THE CUSTOM AND  
PRACTICE TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT  
AND PRODUCTION OF A DOCU-DRAMA ON  
BRIDE PRICE.**

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Funded by the Danish Embassy (Ambassador's Fund)

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# WHAT PRICE BRIDE -PRICE?

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The report outlines the findings of research into the custom and practice of bride price designed to inform a docu-drama on bride price as a key advocacy tool for reform of the practice at local and national level.

The docu-drama will be the first comprehensive documentary on the traditional practice of bride price. Although MIFUMI had previously developed and produced a documentary on bride price, it was pitched at the level of policy makers and duty bearers. This research seeks to highlight the impact of bride price on the lives of ordinary people and to give voice to their experiences.

An editorial board was formed to develop and advise on the research methods and interviewees. It was composed of a collaborative partnership between MIFUMI, and independent filmmakers from the UK and Uganda and a Domestic Violence and Health expert as the lead researcher.

The research and film production project was made possible with the generous sponsorship from the Danish Government.

## **2. BACKGROUND TO MIFUMI'S CAMPAIGN ON BRIDE PRICE**

MIFUMI is a women's rights agency whose mission is to strengthen communities to resist Gender Based Violence. Due to its close contact with rural women, MIFUMI became aware of the negative impact of the custom and practice of bride price on the status of women and it began campaigning for the reform of bride price since the year 2000 on the basis that the custom and practice of bride price violated women's human rights.

Following sensitisation and consultation with different stakeholders, MIFUMI carried out a referendum in Tororo District in December 2001 to ascertain the views of the rural population regarding this traditional practice. Rural people voted and more than 60% of respondents voted for reform of bride price to make it a non-refundable gift.

MIFUMI continued to advocate for reform of the practice to legislators and policymakers making representation to the Legal and Parliamentary committee during the Constitutional review of 2002.

### **2.1. The International Declaration on Bride Price 2004**

In February 2004, MIFUMI organised the first international conference on Bride-price, attended by representatives of many African countries, including human rights activists, academics, policy makers, national and pan-African politicians, human rights bodies and women's organisations. The conference discussed societal effects including limited opportunities for girl-children, homelessness/destitution for widows and children, gender based violence, forced and early/child marriages and increased HIV infection due to the practice and custom of bride price.

In recent years, the issues involved in the practice of bride price begun to be brought to the fore and awareness has been increasing in Uganda, for example, the 2005 Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan highlighted bride price as the most significant factor holding back women's empowerment (2005:19)

MIFUMI's work on bride price received international recognition in 2007, when Atuki Turner, MIFUMI's Executive Director was nominated one of the three Torch Bearers in Uganda to promote the Millennium Goal on Women's Equality and Empowerment (MDG3). Ms Turner pledged to continue to campaign on the issue of bride price through research and to raise its awareness through the media, particularly through film and drama.

To this end, research was carried out in a joint collaboration between MIFUMI, Professor Gill Hague of Bristol University and head of the Violence against Women research group, and Dr Ravi Thiara, senior research fellow at the University of Warwick. (Bride Price, Poverty and Domestic Violence in Uganda, Hague and Thiara, 2009) with funding from the British Academy.

A radio soap opera was developed in 2010, in collaboration between Professor Jane Rogers of Sheffield Hallam University and MIFUMI. The radio drama enacts issues relating to MIFUMI's work including bride price, gender based violence, child marriages and property rights. Seed money was obtained from the British Academy and continuing funds secured from UNFPA and the Norwegian embassy. 100 episodes of the radio drama are being written, recorded and aired through various radio stations and in different languages across the country.

## 2.2. The Tororo (Bridal Gifts) Ordinance 2008

In October 2008, MIFUMI was successful in lobbying for a bye-law in Tororo district which resulted in the Tororo (Bridal Gifts) Ordinance 2008. This bye-law superseded the 1964 Bukedi bye-law which stipulated the amount of bride price to be given in terms of the number of cows and other animals as a way of regulating the practice.

In 2010, MIFUMI filed a petition in the Constitutional court seeking a declaration on the Constitutionality of bride price on the grounds that it violated a number of constitutional rights, including the Right to Equality, the Right to Free Consent in Marriage, the Right to Protection from Cruel, inhuman and degrading acts, Women's right to dignity on the basis of equality with men, and the rights to equal rights in marriage. A panel of four judges to one, ruled to uphold the custom, although their ruling held that there were many problematic aspects of the culture that needed addressing.

Following the ruling, MIFUMI decided to use a media approach to promote its campaign on bride price and to bring home to the public the suffering endured by ordinary people because of bride price, through the production of a docu-drama.

### **3. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The research was carried for the purpose and aims listed below using methods governed by research ethics.

#### 3.1. Primary Purpose

To use the bride price film as a key lobbying tool in advocating for the reform of bride price with policy makers and the general public.

#### 3.2. Secondary purpose

To identify material for the production of the docu-drama on bride price by indentifying subjects with the capabilities to best depict the problems associated with bride price.

It explores issues relating to the custom and practice of bride price in relation to human rights violations in order to inform MIFUMI's advocacy work.

The research also included a reconnaissance of shooting sites and environment.

Not all the subjects interviewed will feature in the bride price docu-drama. Additionally some people interviewed during the filming had not been subjects of the research.

This is a report on the first phase of the research which was undertaken during March and May 2012. A second phase of research is planned for September/early October which will cover the Central, Western and Southern districts.

### **4. AIMS AND METHODS**

The aims of the research were to:

- Explore the custom and practice of bride price.
- Explore what happens during a traditional marriage?
- Investigate the impact of bride price on the lives of women, children and men in terms of their relationships, quality of life and health.
- Explore the issue of Refund of bride price.
- Explore the links between bride price and domestic violence.

The main questions asked were:

- Who practices bride price? Mainly which tribes in Uganda and what categories of people?
- Why is bride price practiced and what reasons are given for the practice?
- On the day of bride price:
  - Who attends the ceremony?
  - What do they say?
  - What sorts of gifts are presented?
  - How do the bride and groom prepare for the occasion?
  - Who accompanies them?
  - How do people dress for the occasion?
  - Are there special dances or music for the occasion?
  - What words of wisdom are said to them?
  - Traditional chiefs are usually invited. What is their role?
- What are the problems that have been associated with bride price?
- What is your opinion on the refund of bride price?
- Do you believe that bride price increases women's risk to domestic violence?

#### **4.1. Who the research team interviewed**

The research was developed in collaboration with local people and MIFUMI's partners in the field. Four staff members of MIFUMI were enlisted as research assistants working with the lead researcher, and conducted interviews with women, men, young girls, community leaders, lawyers and judges.

The research was carried out on a total of 30 men and women were interviewed and answered a series of questions on their understanding of bride price in February 2012 including:

- Women who had suffered injustices occasioned by bride price.
- Men who had suffered injustices occasioned by the refund of bride price.
- Reformed perpetrators.
- Judges and lawyers who had participated in MIFUMI's bride price petition in court.
- Community leaders who uphold the practice of bride price.

#### **4.2. Interviewing in prison**

Permission was sought from the Commissioner in charge of Prisons to interview inmates charged with bride price related offences, however this was denied.

#### **4.3. Editorial Board**

An editorial board was established to critically reflect the challenges and achievements of the research in relation to MIFUMI's mission and campaign, meeting several times during the development and production of the film with the Directors of the film.

#### **4.4. Location**

The research was conducted in various districts across the country to provide a national overview of the project. Specifically research was carried out in Tororo, Soroti, Lira, and Kampala. It included districts in which MUFMI had little or no presence in order to avoid possible bias.

## **5. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

*Please note all names have been changed and others withheld in the case studies described below.*

### 5.1. Historical context of bride price

Cultural leaders and expert interviews gave the following views on the custom and practice of bride price and its importance in society.

#### **5.1.1. What is bride price?**

Bride price is a number of cows, gifts or money you have to pay to the bride's parents when taking their daughter away for marriage. Bride price has been practised for many years. At first many cows and goats were paid. In the eastern region of Uganda the law was 5 cows and 5 goats. In Buganda the central tribe paid a lot of money. In Teso and Ankole where there are many cows, they had to pay as many as 30 cows. At some stage bride price started reducing from a big number of cows, which was competition between clans to show their power and riches, to just what people could afford.

In 1925 there was a byelaw that regulated bride price since it was being exploited. A referendum was proposed in 2005 following research on bride price and was held during the first international conference on bride price.

The Tororo Bridal Gifts Ordinance (2008) championed by MIFUMI made bride price a non-refundable gift which could not be demanded.

Status, power, Riches. If you are bringing your daughter to marry off, the value of you could not be appreciated enough so they had to give something in return. By then cows were a valued asset, so they gave cows. But as time went on things started changing and the colonialists started regulating it like passing of the Bukedi bylaw. Even in Teso it was limited to a certain number of cows and a certain amount of money could be paid for a bride. But because the Itesot men didn't want to look cheap, they would take the official number to be recorded at the sub-county but they would secretly pay more to the Bride's parents. That went on for long.

(Key expert interviewee: cultural leader)

#### **5.1.2. Reasons for practicing bride price**

Bride price was seen as a means of protecting the marriage. When bride price is paid, the woman belongs to the home. It was seen as a form of stability where the marriage was bonded with cows and goats and this kept the marriage stable and recognised. And then if the couple separated, you had to return everything. It did not allow you to abuse the marriage and run away as a result of small quarrels and problems. It was, and still is, seen as recognition that the girl is married when the bride price is presented because the day is witnessed by the families and clans of the bride and groom as well as village chiefs who write down and sign for what has been presented. It's recognised by the court of law as marriage. It acts as an appreciation for bringing up the girl. The payment of bride price is seen as a replacement for the labour that will be lost when the girl is taken to a new home.

*With the girls, parents, especially mothers were to produce and nurture girls to become responsible women; not just a woman who will be lazy in a home; but hard working and respectable. So now it became the family responsibility to groom their daughter for the best price. If they took her to school, the price was even higher.*

(Key expert interviewee: cultural leader)

The man who has paid bride price is recognised as an in-law. When you don't pay bride price, you're not recognised and not accommodated at parties and burials by families and clans.

Women are not happy when bride price is not paid as there is no ownership of the bride. Some women think marriage lasts longer when bride price is paid as return of bride price is difficult.

Even old people have a voice and a stronger base when bride price is paid. They can talk at the village and clan meetings. Some women say bride price is for marriage protection as it makes you endure marriage. They know they are married, owned and recognised when bride price has been paid.

*You say because of dowry, women have no voice; they are property. Well, maybe now because times have changed. Those days, the first wife was the queen of the home. I, as the man would not marry another wife without her consent, her decisions and what she says about you is what I believe.*

(Key expert interviewee: cultural leader)

Courts of law have upheld that a woman is only married when bride price has been paid because village chiefs come and witness the occasion.

*The two are identified by both sides, the boy's side goes to the girl's side to be assessed that day there will be eating and drinking. Next, the girl's side goes to the boy's side to see the cows and confirm if you were serious. Much, much earlier, they used to throw the spear to determine how many cows you would pay for the Bride*

(Key expert interviewee: cultural leader)

### **5.1.3. Bride price can be expensive**

In Buganda, bride price used to be exorbitant with high prices demanded and paid. Over time, they passed a policy which reduced it to 10,000 shillings which means you pay in thousands. At present in Buganda, it is a show of wealth and becoming expensive again as men bring expensive gifts, like cars, as bride price.

#### 5.1.4. Bride price day

On bride price day the groom's father has to send a letter with money to say that the girl is living in their home or getting married. The giving of the bride price takes place at the girl's home and at every speech, money has to be put on the table before you can speak. If the girl presents a gift, the man has to pay double. People in the home and the clan have to be present. The village chiefs come to witness the gifts and sign what has been presented. Praise songs of the clan and girl's village are sung. The groom has to come with *gomesi* and *kanzu* (traditional dresses) to the bride's home. They give whatever gifts they have and a party is prepared for the occasion.

*A date was set, that is 25<sup>th</sup> April 1999. This gentleman came for introduction. He came with the Dowry; in fact the things had been combined; **introduction, assessment and payment of dowry on the same day.***

*(Survivor interviewee)*

#### 5.1.5. Positive impacts of bride price

- Payment of Bride Price creates a sense of belonging, status, value, name to the woman and her children
- Bride-price bonds families and couples.
- It is a source of wealth being transferred between families.
- Bride-price benefits women's parents, compensating for the expense of bringing up daughters.
- Bride-price can be used by brothers for their own marriages.
- It is also a symbol of appreciation to the wife's parents, as a recognition and partial recompense for the fact that the woman is leaving her natal family and will no longer be able to contribute to that household. Through its payment men earn recognition and respect from the in-laws and community.
- Bride-price gives value and legitimacy to the marriage and to the man as husband; he is viewed as a 'proper' husband and it indicates to him that he is now a 'responsible man'.

## 5.2. Nature of problems associated with bride price

### **A: EARLY/FORCED MARRIAGES OF GIRLS**

Young girls were being forced out of school and married off when their parents wanted bride price.

Failure to return bride price put men in jail because the daughter had run away and they could not return the bride price and had to sell land to pay it back.

#### **Case study 1**

Anna Rembo, 15 years old in Primary 6.

In Anna's own words:

I used to be harassed and tortured at home by my mother, who also influenced my father to hate me. Both my parents did not want me at home and they did not want me to study. They denied me all the basics like books and pens to enable me go to school; all they wanted was for me to get married so they could get bride price. Whenever I would back home from school they would abuse and call me all sorts of names like you're are stupid and useless and only fit for marriage. I got so disturbed and did not know what to do. In 2010 Barbara the Sure Start Karate trainer came to my school and asked if there was anyone of us with a problem. I went and talked to her about my problems at home. I think that same day I talked to Barbara, she had gone to my home and talked to my mother because when I went back home, my mother asked me why I had reported her to MIFUMI. She became even more annoyed promised to kill me and started slapping me with a Panga and infact she even cut my leg and I still have a scar for that. When my father came back home that night, he found a lot of confusion at home, he asked my sister what happened. My sister explained to my father what had happened and then he confronted my mother about it. However, my father could not help me because my mother threatened that if my father did not send me away from home, she my mother would be the one to leave home; and when my father heard that, he choose to send me away rather than have his wife go. After I had been sent away from home in the early morning, I decided to go and get married.

#### **Impact on girls**

- Young girls are forced into early marriages.
- The girl child is forced to leave school get married and her Bride Price used to educate her brothers and/or be used by her brother to pay bride-price.
- Many girls develop severe medical problems due to early pregnancies.
- The girl child is exposed to sexual abuse (and HIV) by older men and have no way to escape, due to their age, inexperience and lack of power in the situation.

## **B: REFUND/RETURN OF BRIDE PRICE**

When the girl leaves the marriage her parents have to return everything they were given. This causes a problem because the gifts are usually distributed to the relatives whom you find have used everything and cannot return it.

At old age, when they have been married for many years and have had children, the husband starts asking for the return of bride price when he wants a separation. Violence is often used to take back the bride price such as taking old men (the father of the bride) to court.

Sometimes bride price is given away to another family in order to secure marriage for a son and the family cannot give it back. In other cases, there is a next of kin who knows nothing about the bride price but because the father of the bride has died, he is asked to pay back everything.

*In our time no refunds were even demanded. For us even if you differed with your husband and went to stay home, it wouldn't be an immediate thing that I am coming for my cows. First we will try to understand why you have differed; Divorce did not mean all the Bride Price had to be refunded. Your husband sends back even as much as one goat to the girls parent's, it will signify divorce has been affected and both of you are free to remarry. But before he does that, you have to know you are still his wife. He will come and say to you your house is still there. But if at a certain time he feels, ah, why am I bothering, they will bring back your cow. And for a woman who has produced children, it is very rare that anything will ever be refunded.*

(Key expert interviewee)

### **Case study 2**

#### **Josephine Amongin**

Amongin married traditionally after her husband was assessed and made a payment of cows as dowry. They lived together for 8 years without any major problems and had two children, a boy and girl. In 2006 they started living apart when her husband was transferred to another town as a district official and he became distant towards her. Josephine was told that he was having an affair with another woman. When she went to their house to visit her children, he said he wanted nothing further to do with her. Another time, she returned to the house to see her children, especially her son who was still a baby, the husband threw her out of the house and asked the *askaris* to remove her from the compound. When she learned that her husband was secretly trying to conduct a church wedding with another woman, she intervened and stopped the wedding because she and her husband were not yet formally separated. The husband went to Josephine's father's place with two lorries, 2 mini-buses full of his relatives and a pickup with local police to demand his dowry. One day while he was away at work, she went to his house and took her children away because she had been told they were suffering. Her husband ordered the police to arrest her for kidnapping the children but she told the Police those were her own children.

*Later the next day, my sister gets a call from Police claiming that she had kidnapped a child. She called me aside and told me that a police lady had called her saying we had kidnapped a child and Susan had been 'arrested' for conniving with us.*

The children are now with her but her husband refuses to pay their fees or provide maintenance unless they are returned to him. Police all feared bringing the husband to book as he was an important official in the district.

*I went to Kamuli with a police letter I had been given from Tororo CFPU and the gentleman in Kamuli told me; 'basically this is our boss and we can't handle him, maybe you try somewhere. Maybe I can call DPC'. DPC was called, He took his time. I went to Kamuli at 9:00am and I was attended to at 4:00pm. All that time, the DPC feared saying that the man was their boss.*

*I went back to Kamuli Police CFPU, and the gentleman told me; 'to be sincere with you, this is our boss we can't do much, so you try elsewhere'.*

### **Case study 3**

Rebecca is a 30 year old woman with three children. She started having marital problems a few years after marriage. She was beaten daily because she brewed beer and the man suspected her of having affairs with the customers until one day he came and set the home on fire. She ran away with the children and managed to escape to the neighbours. Then he accused her of having made him poor because of paying bride price and she should pay for it. She was finally interviewed at MIFUMI where she reported being badly injured and nearly burnt and had nowhere to stay. Her brother then decided to build her a house. Her husband came and injured her by cutting her with a machete and told her to return the bride price. There was nothing to return. He told them if they don't return it, they would be sent to jail. In this case she had nowhere to stay and could not return the bride price.

### **How is domestic violence associated with bride price refund?**

Many women suffer violent relationships and cannot leave because they cannot afford the refund of bride price.

#### **Case study 4**

Magdalena was a 35 year old woman who decided to take her life. She suffered continuous persecution from her husband. She suffered domestic violence, was always accused of not doing enough work in the home despite the payment of bride price. The man came back drunken everyday and if she asked for anything like food and clothes for the children, she'd get a beating as an answer. Finally he decided to send her away and went to her parents to ask for the return of his cows. He found they had nothing to return. They told her to go back. On seeing her, he beat her until she was unconscious. He wanted his cows back. She went once more to the parents who again sent her back where she was again beaten. This happened a few times and on the last return she decided to end her life by the roadside.

#### **Case study 5**

Justine is 18 years old. She had been married for 2 years and has 2 children. She divorced and the mother took her to the aunt's home where conditions were bad and she was given a lot of work and abused. They then decided to take her to the village, to the grandmother. After 1 year, the grandmother lost her sight and they started using her like a mother in the home. She was always the last to reach school. She got pregnant and the mother asked for bride price and they paid her 50,000 shillings. She got married because her mother could not look after her and wanted bride price. The man left her in the home and disappeared, leaving her with the children. She suffers from neglect; early marriage due to bride price which she suspects was heavy and cannot return it.

#### **Case Study 6**

Nyadoi Gorretti is a 36 year old woman with 5 children aged 9 to 15 years. Gorretti was married and together with her husband they operated a successful restaurant. Fights started in 2003 when she realised the money realised from the business was not accounted for by the husband and she inquired what he was doing with it. He said her bride price was paid so she had no right to question him. He stopped coming home early and finally just relocated to Wawulera (a nearby trading centre) where he had another woman. Whenever he returned home, he would only beat her. Due to neglect and mismanagement, the restaurant failed. She went back to her maiden home but she was told by her father to return to her marital home because he could not refund bride price. She decided to take poison, seeing suicide as the best option but ended up hospitalised. From hospital she returned to her maiden home, but was sent off by father on claims that he could not refund bride price, but by then her husband had brought a new wife. About the same time she was also called upon to take care of her –now- late father who was by then dying in hospital, but all this while the husband totally abandoned her. When she returned home after burying her father, her husband grievously beat her for staying so long. She decided to escape to her mother's maiden home in Busoga, a nearby district, but even there, her husband followed her and beat her almost to death even biting her neck, claiming she was now far from authorities and he could kill her and get away with it.

### **Case study 7**

The case was reported to Mulanda Police Post four (4) years ago by the first husband of Osinde's daughter Jessica. At the time she was living with her second husband from Iyolwa. Her second husband refunded 1 cow to her first husband and it was rejected. In December 2011 Jessica's first husband reported Mzee Osinde to the LC111 of Nabuyoga Sub County. He was arrested and detained in cells over failure of bride price refund, for two days, he was made to sign an agreement that he will refund the cows in one month's time. The chairman went ahead and even gave him a letter to go to police so that the second husband of Jessica is arrested instead and made to pay bride price but he failed to get the letter of arrest. He came back to his home and after various attempts to re-arrest him by the chairman he decided to go into hiding in Busoga.

#### Impact on men

A number of impacts of bride-price on men were highlighted in the interviews with male respondents. These included, as noted, being forced into poverty as a result of having to pay bride-price; going into severe debt; young brothers being left to repay bride-price; men not being able marry at all or to marry women of their choice; male feelings of inferiority; huge pressure on young inexperienced men when they have no resources; and young people starting marriage and adult life in financial trouble.

### **C: RECURRENT VIOLENCE**

Women who are living with violence cannot leave the home unless they return the bride price and they are made to stay on in circumstances of abuse and continuous violence. They live amidst hatred. They have no rights and are dependent on their partner. Women are conditioned to believe in the power and ownership granted to men through the payment of bride price. They are given terms and conditions which are sometimes unbearable. If they delay anywhere without permission they are badly beaten. Seen as dependents, they have no right to own property, no right to plan, no right to make a will. Bride price has an influence on the status of women that is discriminatory, contributes to their inequality and encourages violence in the home. Women suffer severe injuries when they are badly beaten and are also neglected. This can cause confusion, hysteria, isolation, depression, very low moods, lack of communication, tolerance of violence, lack of confidence and apathy (an extreme form of depression).

### **Case study 8**

It all began after getting married; we stayed together for three years. In the first year of my marriage we got one child and after three years we got another child but during that period I was experiencing a lot of domestic violence including verbal abuse and psychological abuse and hurting words from my husband. I left my husband's home on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012, when he had sent me away. I went home

with my child naked, when I reached home I got my people and they were happy to receive me. Before I left, my husband asked me to leave behind everything that belonged to me, saying that I went to his home with nothing and so I should leave empty handed. We used to grow rice and we got ten bags. He started calling me a thief saying that I am always stealing his rice to sell and take the money to my parents, yet even the clothes I am putting on sometime it's my parents to buy for me and when he sees me in new clothes he says am stealing his money to buy them. During harvesting, he does not call me a thief but after harvesting he begins to call me names. Those are the problems I am facing. I got married to this man when I was eighteen years old. My husband paid four cows as bride prize.

My husband came home to solve the problem, pleading that I should go back with him, I do not think I can go but my parents requested that I go back with him because his (my husband's) clan at one time gave them (my parents) land to live on. He bought land somewhere else but when it rains the whole house floods with water and I have to keep fetching that water to pour it outside. The house was very cold and the children were sickly. One day he told me that I give birth to cold blooded children who have blisters on their skin. Nobody forced me into this marriage I went willingly. My husband does not drink any type of alcohol When beats me, but he reminds me of the bride prize he paid and he says any time I make a mistake he will send me away. When he arrived home, I had gone to church for prayers but when I returned I found him telling my parents that, he does not want a dirty woman, he wants to marry another woman. I refused to go back with him and he gave my parents two days saying within those two days if I do not get back to his home he is coming for his cows. My clan members told him that they will not refund his cows unless he comes with his clan members. After two days he came with ropes ready to take his cows. No clan member came from his family so now it's between my clan members and him.

### **Case study 9**

Alweny has been married for 13 years, has 3 children and suffers recurrent violence. One day she was beaten using a *panga* and was left unconscious for 3 days. She was suffering from neglect and lack of care and was taken to hospital. The man was questioned and wants the survivor to leave the home. He took Alweny's maize and gave it to the co-wife to sell. When Alweny complained, he started beating her, saying he had paid 3 cows and 4 goats. He went to her parents and found there were no cows or goats to return. He returned home and broke the house down so Alweny had nowhere to stay. He beats Alweny in the morning even before he has had any drink and does not buy any food. Alweny suffers from frequent headaches due to continuous beatings. He transfers what she grows to the co-wife or sells it. People who witnessed the marriage tried to help and stop the violence but it continued. He told her to disappear from his home when she had just delivered their baby and had no food or paraffin.

*Alweny: Bride price is a problem as it's a law and you have to pay and return it and women suffer and are unable to leave violent relationships. It needs to be reformed.*

### **Case study 10**

Amoit is 30 years old and is from Soroti. She got married in 1998 but she did not know the man had weird manners; he beats her for every mistake. She has children but he also beats them and makes them sleep in the toilets. He told Amoit to go and stay in the father's home. She made some money and bought 8 cows, 7 goats and 20 hens. He decided to collect all she had bought and go and sell it, came with a panga and chopped the house down. He told her to move away from his home and return the bride price. He said all the cows and goats she had bought were all his own property since he had paid for bride price and still demands for the return of the bride price which he paid originally. When the parents intervened, he pretended to settle down but then gave away Amoit's cassava garden to the new wife. He was taken to the Probation Office to get some money for the children. He decided to beat Amoit for reporting him to the law. She was then given some support from an organisation so he collected all her things, burnt the house down and told her she's a widow and he is dead and cannot support her. She then told him, she's not a widow and he's not dead. He threatened to kill her if she cannot return the original bride price.

### **D: REMOVAL/LOSS OF WEALTH ASSOCIATED WITH VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**

Women are seen as objects to be beaten. When bride price is paid, wealth is removed from the home and men see the woman as someone who has taken money from them which causes a lot of violence and abuse.

### **E: WIDOW INHERITANCE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

When a woman's husband dies, his brother or male relatives are entitled to inherit the widow since bride price was paid for her. She is seen as property belonging to the clan.

### **Case study 11**

Amal Teresa is 48 years old and has been married for 22 years with 2 children. The husband died in 1988, killed by unknown men. From the time he died Amal was forced to live with the brother and had one child, a girl. The father of the child does not give her any help. He married another woman and started mistreating Amal. Due to problems and neglect she got ulcers and he never attended to her when she was admitted to hospital. He does not help her with the garden or child support. They separated and the man started staying elsewhere. He gave her the land but then complained that it is his brother's land and should not be given to her. He used to beat her and did not buy any food and kept saying he wanted his brother's land back. She took the case to the clan and the land was given to her. He started to threaten and beat her because the land was given to her. She survives by doing casual labour and is now stranded with a problem. If she leaves, she has to pay back the bride price which her parents no longer have. She would have to leave the land together

with her grown up children and would have nowhere to go. If she stays, she is continuously beaten.

### **F: REFUSAL OF BURIAL IF BRIDE PRICE IS NOT PAID**

Many cultures don't allow the man to bury his wife if bride price is not paid. The relatives of the bride come and take the wife's body to the father's home or they leave it decomposing while they argue over payment. Relatives of the wife sometimes come in a big gang and beat up everyone at the funeral place until someone finds some cows and money and pays the bride price. They are not concerned that the bereaved husband has no money.

*This business of paying for dead brides. Such instances have been because of change of behaviour. You know the clan will always have a heart, they will not sit there and watch their son suffering; whether you wanted ten cows, they will just give it to you. The reason for paying for a dead bride is actually punitive. They reason like this, you take our daughter, we agree on something, for years she is with you and you are not bothered. Now when such things happen, it is very unfortunate for the family or for the clan.*

*(Key expert interviewee)*

### **REFORMED PERPETRATORS**

A reformed perpetrator was interviewed together with his wife to find out his views on bride price and whether he felt it contributed to behaviour towards his wife.

#### **Case study 12**

Immaculate Nyakecho 43 is married with 3 children. During her marriage she suffered domestic violence and various forms of abuse and threats. At twenty, her beauty was visibly notable; her father could not marry her off for anything less than 5 cows and goats. And when the suitor came she was married off.

*"He made the rules clear, he was the man and I was the woman. I did not see anything wrong with that, it was obvious even to a child. Little did I know what his definition was.*

A few weeks into the marriage, even her father in law could not stand the abuse she suffered. First her husband bought a spear and Panga (machete) and kept them in our bedroom, when she asked him what they were for, he bluntly said to kill her if she misbehaved. She did not want to die. So each night he went out, she stayed up till he returned. Her duty was to open the door before he knocked. Because his fists always went for her face when he returned in his drunken stupor, she hid behind the door when she opened it. Some days when she presented the meal before him he would decline saying he had a craving for something else. He would demand for something fresh from the garden at midnight or 3.00 am. She had to make it. Then he would insult her and the children until he fell asleep. Only then would the rest of the house go to sleep. But while the children went to sleep, she only managed to dose off for fear that he might kill her in her sleep like he'd promised. Twice he had attacked her with the spear.

It was unheard of then in my family for a woman to return home because of abuse from her husband. She had been trained by her mother, grandmother and aunts to

live through it. So she stayed. Some nights he would throw them out. She kept beddings in the nearby bush to keep them warm in the night.

When he did not have money to buy anymore alcohol, he wanted to sell her pig. When she told him she did not want her pig to be sold, he returned drunk as usual, went to the sty and killed the pig claiming that she brags around with her male pig because it is the man in his homestead because it swings, and it has big testicles. Friends and neighbours who had witnessed this continued abuse asked her to leave or seek for immediate help. She had given her life for her children and her marriage to work. She had fed them, clothed them, educated and provided for their basic needs. She was tired. After she narrowly missed being speared to death and losing a leg. Immaculate reported her abuse case at MIFUMI advice centre. With pressure from the domestic violence advisor, duty bearers swung into action and her husband was arrested. Remorseful for his actions, the husband admits he needs help and has agreed to attend fulltime counselling sessions and to be monitored during this time. He is now a reformed husband, supportive of his wife's initiatives and an advocate for women's rights. Immaculate is now a community women's mobilise. The couple are planning to formalise their marriage through a church wedding.

### **Impact on women**

- HIV infection.
- Landlessness and homelessness.
- Destitution and malnutrition.
- Domestic violence
- Loss of dignity
- Inhuman treatment
- Degrading treatment
- Disrespect to the dead.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Most of the men interviewed felt that bride price had positive values that contributed to the marriage institution.

Most women associated the violence and abuse they experienced to the bride price paid for them which they felt caused them to be treated like property.

Many of the subjects interviewed did not agree with the practice of Refund of bride price.

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