

VOICE OF MIFUMI

January 2010 Newsletter

MIFUMI Survivors' conference; a time of sharing and breaking the silence on violence



Some of the participants at the conference

Annually MIFUMI holds survivors conferences for survivors of domestic violence to meet at one central point to share their experiences, fellowship and build their confidence.

The conferences are also intended to build a survivors' movement that acts as a community watch dog creating community pressure to community leaders to address domestic violence, name and shame perpetrators of domestic violence, educate women on their rights and places to access justice in case of abuse.

When advocacy is taken on by the people, the incidents of women and

child abuse will reduce by half. On the 7th December 2009, over three hundred women from 20 sub-counties of Tororo District attended the survivor conference at Rock View Primary School; many to support fellow survivors of domestic violence.

The LCV secretary for gender, Hon. Sarah Apadet Okumu, the guest of honour for the day was impressed by what MIFUMI was doing for the abused women and children of Tororo.

She promised that she will address these issues with police and medical workers to support women who come to report or seek medical care in cases of abuse.

This Month

- Survivors conference
- Culture and violence
- MIFUMI Primary School
- Sure start Launch

Child Abuse on the rise

Child Abuse constitutes any physical injury, threat to harm, negligent treatment or maltreatment, sexual contact including, but not limited to rape, sodomy, incest, sexual penetration with a foreign object, sexual exploitation for purposes of pornography or prostitution of a child.

In the past year (2009), MIFUMI recorded over 469 cases of child abuse in her advice centres. The 2008 Uganda Bureau of statistics and International Labour Organisation showed that out of the total child population of Uganda (estimated 17 million in 2009), 65% are vulnerable to abuse.

About 80% of the cases of child abuse reported in the media and annual crime report from the Uganda Police are of sexual assault by nature, and in most instances involve defilement. 1.76 million children are engaged in child labour with majority being among orphans and school drop-out children. This exposes them to health problems and other vulnerabilities.

The responsibility of addressing child abuse falls on the parent, neighbour, teacher, physicians, clergymen, counsellors, among others.

Culture and violence

Bride price may be appreciated by many culturally inclined individuals. Many excuses have been forwarded for keeping this rather degrading practice, have you heard people say it is my cultural identity, my mother was paid for why not me, men will lose respect for women and vice versa.

I strongly believe that the African culture is a very rich one that only one aspect cannot erode it. There are still many ways that the African culture and identity can be preserved without necessarily depicting a woman as property of a man.

We should therefore in our efforts to remain true to our culture not ignore the fact that culture has some negative aspects which need reform or complete abolition.

It is clear from the many angles that bride price has taken, that MIFUMI's efforts to reform or abolish bride price is not a selfish motive but rather an effort that will benefit many people who suffer untold humiliation due to this practice.

Parents should empower their children to start a new life together instead of exploiting one party. In this way, neither the boy nor the girl will feel indebted to the other and therefore mutual respect will exist.

Mary Wafuoyo
Gender trainer



Girls this age are forced into early marriages for Bride Price

Respect for culture should imply a possibility of positive changes where every member of the community is happy to enjoy their human rights and still be part of the community.

Culture shall always be a part of the human nature but traditional practices that are harmful to women must face social change in the culture itself in effect instead of silencing women, it will empower them.

Addressing harmful cultural practices in traditional African societies where superstitions and witchcraft are still part of people's lives is a challenge for many human rights activists such as MIFUMI.

Many women in these communities are unaware that they live in violence and accept violence as part of their lives.

If culture defines our identity, then our identity is something we should all be proud of without marginalizing a given group in the community like pointing out

the wrongfulness of violence committed against a particular group.

The Payment of Bride Price has for years reduced women to property. MIFUMI's campaign on Bride price has seen the payment of Bride Price become a gift that is freely given with no strings of demand and refund attached through the newly enacted Tororo District Bridal Gift Ordinance 2008.

The entire population of Tororo District is estimated to be about 838,600 people. 80% of this population will directly benefit from the passing of this ordinance; especially, women, young girls, young men, the elderly and widowers from whom the exorbitant demands are made for a traditional marriage or resolution of one.

Recently the government of Uganda outlawed female genital mutilation. Under the new parliamentary act, perpetrators face up to ten years' imprisonment.

MIFUMI Primary School

Co curricular programs:

Mifumi primary school has been chosen as a model sports school in Tororo district.

It is to implement Physical Education and Sports (PES) as indicated in the syllabus and guidelines set. This calls for collective responsibility for all teachers and school managers together with the parents and guardians to effectively implement this programme.

We appreciate our donors who have continually supported us in sports through MIFUMI.

Our school actively participated in the various programs/activities organized by the district and planned by the Ministry of Education and Sports and also planned and organized by the school. These include Athletics, football, netball and volleyball competitions. Both the boys and girls participated right from school level up to district level. In the ball games, six of our pupils (four girls and two boys) competed up to district level. In athletics, again six pupils (three girls and three boys) competed at the district level. Their efforts were publicly recognized during the school



Girls at a netball game

assemblies and some prizes general awarded to the best competitors in all events held at school. Other programs that ran included Agriculture, Debate, Guidance and Counselling, Music, Dance and Drama, Art/Crafts, Disability and Orphans, Karate, Children's Congress and Scouting etc.

Guidance and counselling

This goes on throughout the year. The girls in most cases are counselled by the senior woman teacher and other female teachers whereas the senior male teacher looks after boys. Resource persons are also called upon once in a while.

Sex education and HIV/AIDS, sanitation, good behaviour/discipline is always emphasized to the pupils. The need to stay at school and concentrate on studies is central in the discussions with the pupils.

Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication (PIASCY) Week

Initiated by President Yoweri K. Museveni in 2002, Piascy aims to teach teenagers and youth the value of life by discouraging teenage sex and sex before marriage as HIV/AIDS enters the human body mostly through sex. MIFUMI Primary school held a one week training with the pupils in the month of September to help in sensitization against HIV/AIDS, stigma among school children, families and the community. This was based on the theme "supporting the children in the era of HIV/AIDS." Activities included assemblies, talk shows and Music, dance and Drama. Children were deeply involved with the teachers' guidance.



MIFUMI launches the Sure start project.

MIFUMI project on the 10th of December 2009 launched the sure start project.

The sure start project was initiated in 2008 with activities like karate and tea-kwon-do in community primary schools with a target of instilling confidence and self defence into the girl child. The sure start project has also trained girls on gender relations and life skills with a target of training up to 1920 girls by the year 2010.

The RDC of Tororo, Mr. Samuel Mpimbaza Hashaka, the chief guest of the day commended MIFUMI for her tireless work on domestic violence and increased role in the development of the girl child.

He said the Sure start project of MIFUMI was the first project of its kind in the district dedicated to the all round development of the girl-child.

Mr. Hashaka added that Karate and tae-kwondo training will help girls combat many forms of sexual advances by men such as defilement, child sacrifice, rape, and other forms of violence.

Also present at the launch were the National presidents of Karate and Tae-kwon-do in Uganda. They were impressed by how much the children had learned and hoped they would put both the discipline and skills the project had instilled in them to good use.

The national Female sports girl of the year, Agnes Aneno, urged the girls to use their new learned skills to address problems of the girl child and poverty.

Mr. Hashaka presented the day's graduates with certificates of completion of training to become trainers and promised to work closely with MIFUMI in areas of justice and development.



Girls during the Tae-kwondo Training

New Year message:

The management and staff of MIFUMI wish to thank all their beneficiaries, donors, duty bearers, stakeholders, friends and well wishers for your continued support in our work.

May the New Year open doors to bigger blessings in your lives and work.

Thank you

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**Protecting women and children from domestic violence
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