

# Domestic violence problem in Uganda

Mukwaya Isaac

February 2018

## 1 Introduction

Domestic violence has been defined as “the range of sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts used against adult and adolescent women by current or former male intimate partners.” Domestic violence can also be violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour in a relationship.

Though most definitions of Domestic violence call it spousal abuse that occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person, this is not always the case. Children and people who are not related to one another also face domestic violence. The sad part of it is that the vice is always overlooked, excused, or denied. This is especially true when the abuse is psychological, emotional and economical rather than physical.

## 2 Body

Traditionally, Domestic violence (DV) was mostly associated with physical violence. For instance, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition, domestic violence is: “the inflicting of physical injury by one family or household member on another; also: a repeated / habitual pattern of such behaviour.” In 1993, The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women identified domestic violence as one of three contexts in which violence against women occurs.

In Africa most Physical abuse was seen as the man’s responsibility over his wife and children. This often resulted into injuries on victims, sometimes miscarriages as well or death at delivery. As the world developed Physical assault or battering became a crime, whether it occurred inside or outside of the family. [Cited from An analysis of domestic violence problem in Uganda; By Nyangoma Patience]

According to Police reports, domestic violence still remains one of the least reported cases and thus has far-reaching consequences on victims many of whom remain silent.

The recent crime report released by Uganda Police, for instance, reveals that last year, 163 women met their deaths from domestic violence—up from the recorded 109 in 2010.

It is no wonder the media often runs stories of women mutilated at the hands of abusive partners. Rural women like their urban counterparts are also prone to abuse.

In Africa, Domestic violence originated from, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women. In recent years "Child maltreatment, sometimes referred to as child abuse and neglect, has become a common phenomenon. It included physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation, child sacrifice that results in actual death potential harm to the child's health. There is also elderly abuse.

World Health Organization (WHO) states that globally, about 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner. In 2011, the National Crime Records Bureau reported 8,618 dowry deaths in India, but unofficial figures currently estimate that there are at least three times more dowry deaths than previously thought.

The new Vision of June 18, 2013 reported that there were 2,461 victims and 1,339 cases of domestic violence reported by April 2013 in Uganda.

Also the deputy IGP Mr. Ochola reported that there were 9,278 victims and 2,793 cases of domestic violence in 2012. Ochola added that they planned to elevate the Child and Family Protection department of the police to a directorate to handle the rising cases decisively.

### 3 Conclusion

Beyond finding the statistics, there is need to sensitise and empower communities on the existing laws and their options for reporting domestic violence. Involvement of leaders especially traditional leaders like Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi to end gender-based violence in Buganda through being part of the global campaign "HeForShe" are commended and should be emulated in other parts of Uganda. Victims of domestic violence should be confident to report their cases and get support of systems such as the family, police, judiciary and the community.

Efforts of different organisations such as Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention have gone ahead to formulate support systems for domestic violence must be supported. Particularly at family level, partners must be encouraged to speak out, seek redress and not be stigmatised as this only perpetuates the issue.

Unless we give these cases priority, the high prevalence of domestic violence will continue to stand in the way of social and economic development of the country. Classification of this research is both Quantitative and Qualitative.