

# Gender-based violence

**ABUSE** **68** Statistics. The percentage of married women between the ages of 15 and 48 that have experienced some form of domestic violence. UGANET



**Coping.** Victims of gender-based violence make jewelry. FILE PHOTO

## Violence: A painful financial burden

**Eliminating Violence:** In commemoration of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, we are running a daily feature on violence. The campaign, which challenges violence against women and girls, runs until December 10. Today, **David Mafabi** explores the issue of financing.

Sylvia Nambafu's relaxed evening at home in her small grass-thatched house in Bufukhula Village in Bududa District, one day, last year, was interrupted by a rude knock on her door.

Upon opening, her husband pushed her roughly and grabbed her by the neck, demanding that she leaves his home. "He kicked, punched and shoved me to the floor in a fit of rage. When I realised that he would batter me to death if I resisted or screamed, I lay quiet on the floor, gritting my teeth to keep myself from screaming," the 38-year-old mother of four recalls. The couple had been married for 18 years.

"I never recovered full use of my ears and some of the scars you see are part of the battering I used to go through daily at my marital home, which are an effect by the blows and sharp objects to my face," she explains. Nambafu eventually walked out of the marriage after one of the incidents of violence and moved back to her parent's home. She sold her land at only Shs550,000 and two of her goats at Shs140,000 to cater for her treatment at Bududa Hospital.

As Uganda joins the rest of the world to bring to light the plight of victims of gender-based violence (GBV) during the 16 days of activism that started on November 25 and end on December 10, many such

stories of harmful acts against women and children will be brought to light.

### Alarming numbers

According to Dorah Kiconco Musinguzi, the executive director of Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/Aids (Uganet), an NGO involved in the fight against GBV and HIV/Aids, statistics in Uganda indicate that 68 per cent of the married women aged between the ages of 15-48 have experienced some form of domestic violence.

The recent crime statistics released by police in March indicate that crimes committed against women and children between 2010 and 2016 have increased as a result of domestic violence, women trafficking, defilement, rape, incest, and child desertion among others.

In 2010, 109 women died as a result of domestic violence compared to the 163 that lost their lives in 2016, defilement cases rose from 14,973 in 2010 to 17,567 in 2016, rape cases shot up from 898 in 2010 to 1,572 in 2016 while child desertion increased from 1029 in 2010 to 1,525 in 2016.

"The effects of domestic abuse run the spectrum from bruises to homicide, and every thing in between and can epidemic costs many things—marriages, child lives—it also has very real, and very

significant, monetary costs as well," says Kiconco.

The chairperson of Parliamentary Committee on Gender, Ms Margaret Komuhangi, adds that the broader economic effects of GBV are described as economic multiplier effects and include increased absenteeism; decreased labour market participation; reduced productivity; lower earnings investment and savings and lower intergenerational productivity.

For instance, Maimoona Namakula, a 34-year-old mother of four, who suffered abuse by acid attack, was forced to sell her salon at Galilaya Plaza and her Raum car to cater for her treatment at a private facility after failing to get adequate care at Mulago hospital. Today, mimed partly on her face and most of her body, she lives with her parents and survives on handouts from good samaritans at her church or earnings from small scale craft work under the flagship of End Acid Violence Uganda.

According to the director, Mr Ernest Kayanja, the cost burden of treating acid victims lies on government through Mulago hospital much as there are a few private facilities that can help because it is very expensive. Victims, however, meet their cost of welfare that can be high depending on circumstances.

Dr Barnabas Rubanza, a police surgeon, says when they receive GBV victims, they usually test them for HIV/Aids, presence of semen, sexually transmitted diseases especially after rape and defilement, any pus discharge and that this costs not less than Shs 50,000.

"This is where there is a problem, if the woman can't raise up the money, the case dies at that level because courts of law need a medical report as proof that there was Gender based violence," says Dr Rubanza.

He says victims with minor injuries spend not less than Shs200,000 and that those with major injuries usually spend between Shs1m to Shs2m depending on the extent of the injuries suffered.

A report by Uganet says government of Uganda loses close to Shs70 bn police, healthcare and courts of law every year to

handling GBV across the country.

The paper entitled: "The economic cost of domestic violence" presented on November 14 adds that GBV often takes a considerable financial toll on government, women and their families, resulting in a decline in economic stability and household well-being.

Komuhangi said although GBV is very expensive, it is mainly funded by development partners and civil society to a tune of 80 per cent while the government of Uganda puts in only 20 per cent.

She says although the government has tried to respond to the high incidences of GBV by integrating prevention and response strategies in the National Development Plan, the results are still very minimal.

Ms Irene Ovonji Odida, the chief executive officer of the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers, highlights that GBV is one of the most common human rights violation that both reflects and reinforces inequalities between women and men.

"The costs of treating GBV complications consume significant resources of women and their households in Uganda, it is also true that women continue to pay much more money on chasing cases related to GBV in Uganda," says Ovonji.

Uganda has committed herself to promoting the protection of all gender in all sectors and spheres of life including the area of justice, law and order.

"Several legal and policy reform against gender violence and discrimination such as the Domestic Violence Act, 2010, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, the recent amendments to police form 3 and 3A have also been passed but even with all these, GBV still remains high" said Komuhangi.

The minimal allocation of financing to implementation of the act is a major setback. Sophie Nampewo Kakembo, the budget policy specialist of civil society budget advocacy group, stresses that unless government commits by following through on financing the existing frameworks little progress will be made.

## Shs77b

**Cost.** The amount of money government loses every year to handle gender-based violence across the country.

"The frameworks like Domestic Violence Act, require financial support for its implementation. This means specific financing so that the law can have an impact. So far financial support is mostly from development partners, donors and civil society," she says.

She adds that the police is currently intensifying sensitisation of people on GBV while the Judiciary and Law society are publicising the Act.

Prof Grace Bantebya, the head of school of Women and Gender studies at Makerere University, argues that GBV is a human rights issue and that more needs to be done beyond adoption of legal and policy frameworks, government needs to allocate more funds and step up efforts to protect women and girls against the evils of GBV.

"We need to educate people and make them aware of the dangers of GBV and health facilities need to be equipped to take appropriate care of the victims. There is also need to create a special unit at the hospital to cater for these victims because many of them don't want to go in the public to talk about the problems," says Prof Bantebya.