

Our·ganda Newsletter



Ourganda's domestic violence program is growing, expanding, and saving families!



Exciting Updates: Ourganda's Domestic Violence Program

Dear Friend,

Afraid and Alone

When a spouse is abused by a partner, they can feel afraid and alone. They hesitate to tell anyone for fear of being judged, making their partner angrier, and perhaps losing their home and access to their children. Last month alone, one quarter of the women (6) who reached out to Ourganda for support chose not to testify in their abuser's criminal case due to fear. Ourganda is working hard to teach community members how to identify and report domestic violence, as well as ways to support victims.

Step One

If a victim feels the support of their community, they can enlist community members to help try and stop the violence in their relationship. In Uganda, the first step is the victim calling for a gathering of 'opinion leaders' to help intervene, and hopefully stop the violence in their relationship. These opinion leaders are often family and community members, village elders, church leaders, and members of Ourganda's mankind club.

The abused spouse (typically, but not always, a woman) describes the violence she is experiencing in her relationship to the group. (cont. on page 2)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author of this month's newsletter is Dr. Heidee McMillin, a professor in the Justice Studies program at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho. She teaches courses in victimology, violence and gender, and research. She has experience as a victims' court advocate, shelter advocate, and hospital advocate.

Dr. Heidee serves on the Idaho Offender Intervention Program committee which approves and oversees all batterer intervention programs in the state, and she is an Idaho Department of Correction mentor in the Free2Succeed program where inmates are matched with community members to help them integrate into society. We are delighted that Dr. Heidee is an active, volunteer member of Ourganda's local domestic violence committee.

The opinion leaders counsel the batterer to remove violence from their relationship and apologize for their abuse. If the woman is satisfied with this resolution, the process of accountability can stop there.

If That Doesn't Work

However, if the abuser is not remorseful and continues to harm his spouse, the victim can file a criminal case with the local justice council. Often, the 'opinion leaders' who tried to advise the abuser to stop his violent ways will serve as witnesses in support of the victim in the case. This more formal process can result in fines and punishment of the offender.

One drawback of this process is that victims must pay a filing fee of 20,000 shillings (~\$5.50 US). While this may seem like a pittance to us, in Bundibugyo, this fee is prohibitive for victims who seek the protection of government officials to stop the violence in their relationship. Fortunately, Ourganda has made a pledge to pay the filing fee for victims of domestic violence who are seeking protection when informal processes have not been successful.

Highly-Successful Youth Camp

In the month of March, Ourganda sponsored a 3-day domestic violence camp for young people from the eight villages that Ourganda serves. The camp was led by our ministry coordinator, Vincent, and his wife Esther who leads our domestic violence prevention program. Over 40 youth attended the camp which focused on the role of community members in identifying violence when it occurs, and reaching out for help when abuse occurs. This includes contacting Esther or Vincent, Ourganda's Mankind Club, or local government officials to intervene in violent relationships and provide accountability for the offender while supporting the victim.

Speakers at the youth camp discussed the rights of each partner in a marriage, tools for creating a healthy relationship, and the importance of cherishing and respecting each other. They also identified warning signs of potentially violent relationships including power imbalances, alcohol, and drug abuse. The attendees made a pledge to help identify relationship violence and reach out for help on behalf of their community. The youth have already begun contacting Ourganda when they learn of someone in need.

17 Calls; 28 Conversations

Along with the youth camp in March, Esther received 17 calls for help with domestic violence. She and her associates initiated conversations with 28 offenders to counsel them about the negative outcomes their violent behavior will bring if they continue to abuse their spouse. Of those 28 offenders, the cases were addressed evenly between Esther alone, Esther and Vincent together, opinion leaders, and local council officials.



Welcome Benard!

The greater awareness of the need for offender accountability and victim support has prompted Ourganda to hire a second advocate to work with Esther. Thank you to our donors, and welcome to Benard!

A Note from Ourganda's Director



We are thankful and encouraged - even delighted - at the progress we see. In addition to the good news Heidee shared with us, we are about to roll out an alcohol recovery program in our villages. More on that soon!

Here's how you can help: You can join Esther's team and our Mankind Clubs by partnering with them financially. Choose between a one-time gift or (even better) a monthly donation. Every penny you designate for the domestic violence program directly empowers Esther and her team to protect more victims and help offenders change their behavior. Thank you, Thank you. Thank you!

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