

Our·ganda Newsletter



*Ourganda's domestic violence team has confronted **121 offenders** in 4 months. That's an average of one per day!*



121 Conversations: Ourganda's Domestic Violence Program Continues to Make an Impact

Dear Friend,

Imagine being chased out of your home in the middle of the night by a spouse who cannot find a job – because there literally are NONE – and uses alcohol to pacify their feelings of shame. It's hopefully hard for you to imagine it, but it is an all-too-common occurrence in the villages of western Uganda.

Then the spouse takes out his frustration on those closest to him by wielding a machete forcing his wife and children to run for their lives without a safe destination. When that happens here in our country (and sometimes it does), we may not have nearly enough services for victims of violence, but they do exist.

In Uganda, however, the options for victims of violence are nearly non-existent. The majority of Ourganda clients do not have phones to call for help, nor cars to drive to safety should their home become a place of violence. There are no shelters for victims to retreat to during violent episodes, nor neighbors who have a spare room for people to stay in for a few nights.

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.

Changing the Culture

This month marks the one-year anniversary of Ourganda's Domestic Violence Prevention Program. Ourganda's advocates and medical team members, along with the brave ManKind Club and Soul Sisters Club volunteers have started to change the cultural acceptance of violence in Bundibugyo, leading offenders to choose kindness over violence.

Meeting with Offenders

Partially due to the limited resources for victims, Ourganda has chosen to focus on addressing the offenders and stopping their abusive behaviors to help keep families safe. In just the past 4 months, Ourganda team members have met with 121 domestic violence offenders and guided them through a variety of paths to take accountability for their actions and restore safety to their homes. Ourganda advocates have counseled offenders personally to stop using violence and helped set up opinion leader groups or local council meetings to admonish the offender's behavior, promising to refer the case to the criminal justice system if the offender does not take responsibility for their actions and make positive changes.

Also in these past 4 months, 67 domestic violence cases have been registered with these various authorities, showing communities that violent behavior will result in negative consequences if the behavior does not change. Further, Ourganda has received 94 phone calls either requesting help with a domestic violence event or requesting family or community training on domestic violence prevention.

Training and Inspiring

Ourganda conducted a Healthy Relationships camp for 40 teens and young adults representing the 8 villages that Ourganda serves, and later provided a two-day Bystander Intervention training for adults representing the 8 villages. Participants received practical strategies and tools to respond when they see or hear domestic violence happening, while not putting themselves at risk.

Finally, this summer Ourganda partnered with Step 7 Ministries (stepseven.org) to establish sobriety support groups. Over 100 men and women who are struggling with drug or alcohol addiction are meeting every week to support one another as they commit to remaining sober. Already, 30 men in the Bundibugyo District surrendered their lives to Christ, giving up the substances that were ruining their lives.

Igniting Hope in Our Villages

Meeting the Ourganda team and the various community members fills us with hope. They are kind, hardworking, God-loving people who care about their families and neighbors. They just need our help with resources to fulfill their desire for peace in their homes and villages.



A Note from Ourganda's Director

During our recent mission trip, I was present when members from our domestic violence team met face to face with a frequent offender. I was so proud of Vincent who explained - with grace and conviction - that using violence against one's family is no longer an option. I watched and listened as the man interacted with Vincent, wrestled with his options, then expressed his decision to turn over a new leaf. As Heidee mentioned above, *our team has confronted 121 offenders during the last 4 months and most of them are choosing kindness. **The curse of domestic violence is coming to an end.***

We invite you to help. You can support our Mankind and Soul Sisters Clubs by partnering with them financially. Choose between a one-time gift or (even better) a monthly donation. Every dollar 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!