Promoting Women’s Rights within the Context of Patriarchy
Help-Seeking for Domestic Violence in urban Uganda

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Key Question

What are the factors and contexts that affect help-seeking for domestic violence in urban Kampala, Uganda?
Multi-level, multi-sited ethnography

Policy
Government agencies
UN
Donors

Practice
Civil society organizations
Service providers
Duty bearers

Women
Kyegwelede Village, Kawempe Division
Case using DVA outside Kampala

Participant observation, living in Kyegwelede, informal interviews, semi-structured in-depth interviews (20 women), targeted focus groups, accompanying women – legal aid, police, courts
November 2013 – March 2015
Domestic violence in Uganda

- In Uganda, in 2016 Demographic Health Survey reports for women ages 15-49:
  - 20% experienced physical violence in the last year
  - 56% experienced physical or sexual violence at least once by a current or former spouse
    - Of those ever experiencing physical abuse, 39% sustained an injury
  - Most do not report outside the family (i.e. 69% of those experiencing physical abuse)
The Domestic Violence Act 2010

- **Broad definition of DV**
  - Includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological, economic abuse
  - Covers relationship abuse not only between intimate partners

- **Allows criminal and civil penalties**
  - Including compensation to the victim/survivor
  - Protection orders can be an alternative to criminal prosecution

- **Promotes reconciliation and mediation**

- **All courts can hear cases**
  - Including Local Council (LC) court
• Child support not being paid
• Attempts to sell the matrimonial home
• Severe physical abuse
Factors Affecting Reporting

Factors:
- Social
- Personal
- Structural
Respect as Cultural Value & Social Norm

- Key to understanding how women think about and act when responding to DV
- Predict some behavior while sanctions other behavior
- Embodied and performed
  - Patriarchal and hierarchical power predict practices
- Not demonstrating respect can “justify” disciplining or punishing wife
- Humiliating a person = disrespect
...after fighting I still give him food. Sometimes he refuses the food. I keep giving. Up to now. I have never failed to give him food. Even if he beats me with blood. I have never failed.
Economic insecurity – often with polygyny/infidelity

Of 19 women asked:
• 13 knew husband had at least one other woman in his life
• 6 of the 13 knew husband supporting another woman & children

Of 8 women in sample who had reported abuse:
• 4 cited polygyny/infidelity as a factor
Structural factors, including patriarchy

- Limited existence or capacity of entities to support reporting
  - Particularly legal-aid
- Lack of in-depth knowledge about DVA by duty bearers
- Structural violence resulting from patriarchal norms, customary laws, and some statutory laws
- Lack of budget allocation by Government of Uganda for implementation of the DVA
Model: Factors in Decision-Making

Decision to Seek Support
friends, neighbors, kinship/social network, cultural/religious leader, shelter

Decision to Report
local council, police, magistrate court, practitioner (health clinic, legal aid)

Personal Factors
age • education • marital status • dependents
ethnicity • kinship/social networks

Basic Needs for self and children

Basic Needs
humiliation • shame • blame • threats • pressure
to persist fear of losing custody, economic security, love, respect • time • money • lack of confidentiality

Global Human/Women’s Rights
National GBV Policy & Budget
Local Religious & Cultural Institutions

Government Accountability
Donors
Accessible & Equitable Services
Transnational Practices

Family Level
Community Level
National Level
Global Level
Model 1: Why Women Do and Do Not Report

Decide to Report
Factors that motivate reporting:
• Threatened physical or economic survival
• Severe physical abuse
• Need for child support

Facing Barriers: Personal
• Humiliation
• Shame
• Disrespect
• Threats
• Negative pressure
• Loss of status & love

Facing Barriers: Time and Money
• Time away from work
• Transport costs
• Facilitation and appreciation/corruption, including medical, police, process servers, court clerks

Facing Barriers: Duty Bearers
• Structural patriarchy
• Structural violence
• Lack of knowledge about DVA
• Lack of confidentiality in reporting

Facing Barriers: Time and Money
• Inadequate budget for GBV
• Lack of capacity by service providers and duty bearers
• Laws contrary to gender equality
• Patriarchal kinship & social structures
• Patriarchal religious & social norms

After Mediation
• Husband may not follow through on agreements
• Return to: Decide to Report

Go to Mediation
• To preserve marriage
• Family agreements for “better” behavior
• Possible agreements for maintenance payment to legal aid, court
• Agreements on property, custody, etc.

Political Economy of VAW Policy/Practice

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Political Economy of VAW Policy/Practice
Conclusion

Thank you to Deo Kúsemererwa for many of the photos