

## DEVASTATING STATE OF MOTHERS IN OGOOMA.

The major aim of this article is to create awareness on the desperate situation of women in this village, their dependence on men to get through the day, and how it leaves them helpless and devastated. This has negatively affected the children and is increasing levels of poverty. The article will then suggest a few measures by looking at how TOUCH can actually make a difference and reduce this “**generational issue**”. We shall give one scenario from a neighbor’s life.



There is a woman who lives about 800 meters away from TOUCH. She’s called Aluka Hellen Rose. Rose is 29 years old with no stable source of income or property. She is married to Emootai George and they have 3 children together. The couple has been married for about 13 years now.

Rose is known for her bravery. She has managed to live with her husband for many years and yet she is not shown any kind of affection. Unfortunately, the baby came the very day her husband was taking cattle to marry another wife. So she was all alone and had to walk for 10km in labor pains in order to go and deliver their baby. Since she had no items needed for the delivery, the hospital provided them. However, she was tasked to pay for it. News about Rose reached TOUCH ministries. At the time, Sheri Richer was in the village (for starters Sheri Richer is from Ontario, Canada). Immediately, visited the home with other members of TOUCH Ministries. They went along with water, soap, and many other items for Rose to use. Sheri offered to support Rose by starting up a two roomed house for her. Her relationship worsened 10 months later when their baby died. Her husband married two women after her and had more children with them. Although his second wife fled, George stays with his third wife and took Rose’ other child with him. Rose remained faithful to her husband and now has 3 children with him.

He completely neglected her and denied responsibility for his children. Rose however, works in people’s gardens to get money for food and to pay for her children’s education. Even to date, George only accepts their first child and rejects the other children. He works in Jinja as a part-time teacher and provides better education and support to his new wife and other children.



Rose went back to her mother’s home in 2016 for help, but it was all in vain since she is now old and couldn’t take care of her. 3 years with her mother and no change in life, she sought comfort from another man and has a child with him. But life is so complicated. She decided to come back to her husband this year, and has not seen him for months since her return. Rose is scared but at least at peace with her mother in-law and other relatives at home in the absence of her husband, Rose also has support from the community since they know her story.

### ***What is the problem?***

Generally, women are trapped in the web of responsibilities; to their husbands, in-laws, children and the gender role. (They know that it is their duty to producing children for their husbands).

***Fact!*** Men in this region feel more masculine when they have more children. So, women feel the need to keep producing children.

Their voices have been muted in the name of submitting to their husbands and culture. It has reached a point where women and their children's rights are abused but they keep quiet in fear of losing their husbands and support. But then, cases of men denying children the support and parental love have become very common to the point where the children live in a horrible state and are considered orphans. But with a family available and able to provide support if they actually worked together. But they are rejected. Women have to struggle and try their best to find a meal to provide for their children.

They have even reached the point of marrying off their children to lessen the weight of struggle and get some livelihood through bride price. Meanwhile, most of the men spend time socializing and drinking alcohol. This has made life worse for the young boys. The older men set such examples and the children grow up believing it is the way of life.



***PLEASE NOTE*** that not all men abandon their children. For some, life is just so complicated and they are not able to support their families. But they stay, support and love their families. It's just that in this particular region, a large percentage of the men treat their women and children in such a manner. Abandoning them and marrying other women only to leave them in a similar situation. The cycle then continues and poverty, dependency, pain and suffering continue.

***There are even more women than men in the FAL program in TOUCH and they are testifying of the benefits of the program to them and their families.***

***There's a spark of hope.***

Now that TOUCH Ministries is in place, it can actually carry out one of the major roles as a nonprofit organization to reach out to these women and lead to even faster development. By creating awareness and empowering them. TOUCH can work hand in hand with the local leaders and police who protect the women and children's Rights. To let them know that it is better to have one child and be able to care for him or her, rather than 10 children who will suffer and struggle to achieve a better life. To assure them

that it is better to stand up and be innovative, to create ability to provide for their families, rather than wait for people to get them items that won't wipe out their pains completely. TOUCH Ministries can give aid to help empower and sensitize women in amazing ways to actually overcome poverty, and helplessness.

***What can TOUCH Ministries do to improve lives of women in such situations?***

Women and children have the power to change the situations of their families. Currently, there are hundreds of women like Rose all over the region with no one to run to or get help from.

TOUCH Ministries have a vision of a God-fearing community living self-supporting and sustainable lives. And a mission to achieve it by improving lives of orphans and vulnerable communities through empowerment, using God's plan and upholding Christian values.

Already, TOUCH has in place a program that has got potential of shifting the lives of community men and women (Functional Adult Literacy - FAL). We can actually achieve the vision by using this program to give attention to women and men. In it, women can acquire knowledge and skills that can possibly change their lives. Already, from the program, testimonies of a change in lives and income generating activities of FAL students are heard.

TOUCH has full facilities of a school and church that can actually create awareness of women and children's rights. The church can also emphasize the role of the men to the development of their families and escaping poverty and hunger.

For example, women and men attending the FAL classes have devised hygienic habits, balanced diets, family planning methods, creativity and business prosperity. They have spiritually grown since they are able to read their bible and practice Christian values. Most of them are able to assist and motivate their children with homework.

**I BELIEVE THAT IMPROVING LIVES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN THROUGH EDUCATION AND SENSITIZATION IS VERY EFFECTIVE. ( 8<sup>th</sup> March is International Women's Day and we can actually set up an activity for them.)**

It could reduce on the high levels of dependency as well as provide knowledge and skills for them to be innovative and entrepreneurs. Let us give the children a better set of adults to look up to, through education and empowerment.



**Together we can surely make Ogooma a happier community.**



***We applaud women for staying strong and brave and managing their families. Even in such painful situations and for giving their children something to eat daily. We keep praying to God to grant us the capacity to change this situation.***



**Also, Aluka Helen Rose is very grateful for the love and support she received from TOUCH Ministries. She sends special love and blessings to Sheri Richer and her husband Tony.**



***The picture above is of Helen and her child demonstrating how they sleep every night. Helen sends her smiles and love from the bottom of her heart.***

**Kaladi Peace T.**