

From forced early marriage to sitting for National Examinations...



Metrine Nambuya at her home



Metrine poses for a photo with Mr. Kunikina Eridadi, Better HAG Uganda's COP (Change Agent)

Millions of young girls worldwide are forced to marry when they are still children - with Uganda having one of the highest early and forced marriage prevalence at 46%. As a result, victims are denied the ordinary experiences that young people elsewhere take for granted: schooling, good health, economic opportunities, and friendship with peers. This exposes them to numerous detrimental consequences associated with early marriage.

Community Paralegals (CoPs) were trained by Better HAG Uganda as Change Agents to extend paralegal services related to different gender based violence cases like the above.

Nambuya Metrine is a 15 year old first daughter of one Mityero Yokana of Buwambwa village, Sirekere Parish, Bumbo S/County in Manafwa district. On learning that she was being infatuated by a 16 year old boy, her father forced her to get married to him. ***"...yes, I was having an affair with my boyfriend but I felt I was not ready for marriage. My father withdrew me from school and pushed me into it, he told me I was old enough to start my own family...I went into it against my will"*** revealed Metrine.

Her new marital status was however never to last for long following her father-in-law's disapproval. He could not consent to the marriage on considerations that the 'love birds' were not only underage but also due to the fact that he was still housing the groom. He therefore sent her packing to her Father's house who also forcefully tossed her back to her 'husband's house. ***"How could I allow 'children' to get married...yet it beats my understanding to see that my counterpart (Metrine's father) insists on wanting this engagement on...I have no doubt that he is expecting wealth (dowry) for his daughter"*** wondered Metrine's would-be Father-in-law when approached by Better HAG Uganda.

It was at this point when Better HAG Uganda's COP, Ageing Kunikina Eridadi intervened. Naturally, Mr. Kunikina visited the girl's parents to expound on laws against forced and early marriage in addition to others that relate to women and girls' human rights. However, the drama was yet to unfold as Metrine's father 'set new age' for his daughter, raising it to 18 years. On hearing this, Ageing Kunikina wisely told the man that the 'real' age meant that if pursued; Metrine would undergo defilement charges as the law equally applies to females who defile underage men.

Beaten on all fronts, Metrine's father yielded to the COP's advice of restoring Metrine in school. ***"...he accepted in principle to take his daughter back to school, and I am glad to confirm from the girl that she is attending classes..."*** noted Mr. Kunikina.

The COP used the analogy of soup and chicken in advising Metrine to concentrate on her studies. ***"...don't be deceived, for it doesn't make sense for you to fill your tummy with soup and leave no space for chicken"***

It is great to learn that Metrine is back at school and is set to sit for National Primary Leaving Examinations in November 2015. We are keeping our fingers crossed for Metrine to make good grades. Educated girls are undoubtedly at a lesser risk of any form of gender based violence.

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