

Why domestic violence persists

■ Marriage counselors give tips on how to end menace
■ Police, govt initiate awareness campaign

By Ngozi Nwoko

ACROSS the country, in the past months, there has been a resurgence of cases of domestic violence, causing death and permanent disability to many.

A 36-year-old woman, Josephine Isaac, was allegedly stabbed to death by her husband, Olu, during a domestic dispute at their Agbure Community, Ogun Waterside home.

The incident occurred at 1am on Thursday, March 6th. It was said that Olu fled the scene, leaving his wife in a pool of blood. Josephine was rushed to Ibiade General Hospital, where she died from her injuries.

Ogun Police Command spokesperson, Omolola Odutola, confirmed the incident, saying detectives have launched a man-hunt for the fleeing husband. The corpse was deposited at the mortuary for autopsy.

Police Commissioner Lanre Ogunlowo condemned domestic violence, urging couples to seek peaceful means of resolving disputes.

In another tragic event, a seven-month-old marriage ended in tragedy after a businessman, Kelvin Izeke, allegedly stabbed his pregnant wife, Success, 38, to death in Benin City, Edo State.

The incident occurred on February 22nd, at Upper Mission Extension, Benin City.

Sources revealed that the couple had a minor disagreement before the husband allegedly committed the heinous act.

Edo State Police Command confirmed the murder in a statement by its spokesman, CSP Moses Yamu.

Yamu said police operatives from Aduwawa Division responded swiftly to the report and met the lifeless body of the woman lying in a pool of her own blood with deep cuts on her head.

The police spokesman quoted the Edo State Commissioner of Police, CP Betty Eneken Isokpan Otimiyin, as condemning the recent cases of spouses violently attacking each other.

The CP assured that there would be a diligent investigation into the death, assuring that whoever is found culpable would face the law.

The suspect, Kelvin Izeke, is currently in police custody for investigation.

On Friday, December 20, 2024, a 40-year-old man, Joshua Nwafor, allegedly murdered his spouse, Charity, over a tuber of yam in Nsokkara, Ezza South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

The tragic event transpired in the couple's residence, where they had been married for 17 years. Joshua, an indigene of Nsokkara, and Charity, originally from Awkuzu, Onicha Local Government Area, have three children together.

An eyewitness recounted that the dispute commenced when Joshua brought the yam to prepare for the family. Charity, however, didn't want it cooked. Instead, she proceeded to roast it.

This disagreement intensified when Joshua became enraged, forcefully pulled his wife into the room, locked the door, and assaulted her until she sustained injuries and died.

The eyewitness, advocating for resolution, cautioned that when a marital union becomes life-threatening, the victim should call for help and secure their lives, regardless of societal expectations.

The Ebonyi State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Joshua Ukandu, confirmed the incident and assured that a comprehensive investigation would be conducted, adding that the suspect would be prosecuted.

Another woman, 48-year-old Chizaram Egbujo is a caterer/fashion designer mar-



Gboyega

ried to a spouse who allegedly physically assaults her at the slightest perceived or real provocation.

When she finally mustered the courage to report the physical abuse to the authorities at the Ejigbo Police Precinct in Lagos, she was purportedly requested to provide witnesses to corroborate her account notwithstanding her visible bruises. The alleged offender, her husband, was granted release on bail.

Narrating her ordeal to *Saturday Star*, she said: "I'm not comfortable discussing the details of the incident because I have been shamed and mocked for not being submissive to my husband."

"That my husband hits me is not about what I did or didn't do. I would like to emphasise that no one deserves to be abused, and it's never the victim's fault. Unfortunately, people always blame women for being the cause of the assaults by their violent husbands."

"This is about my husband's choice to use violence and control over me. I'm focused on my healing, my safety, and my well-being, which is why I ran out of the house to report him to the police, but they asked me to record him while beating me as evidence to my allegation."

Another victim of domestic brutality who had a similar encounter with Chizaram is Agnes, a mother of five offspring who discovered that her spouse was sexually exploiting her 11-year-old niece in their home at Festac town and is still fighting for justice at the Ikeja High Court.

A recent study commissioned by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Nigeria revealed that 28 per cent of Nigerian women aged 25-29 have experienced some form of physical brutality since age 15.

Reacting to the menace that has destroyed once-peaceful homes, Lagos-based relationship and marriage coach, Adegboyega Ilori, opined that the manner and circumstances of meeting a spouse is essential.

He said that meeting a life partner in a responsible and respectable way reduces or eliminates the chances of abuse or violence.

"The background of your partner - it's a known fact that someone from an abusive background that has not been refined or has gone for rehabilitation is likely to be an abuser or a violent person because he or she is likely to think violence is normal in marriage."

"The person's understanding of marriage also matters. Couples should know that marriage is not a slave and master arrangement, but a destiny partnership meant to achieve, that is meant to give happiness and joy to both parties. A part-



Nwafor

ner that is given to alcohol is most likely to be violence-prone. So, if your partner is an alcoholic, be ready for violent moments in your marriage."

"The partner's ability to manage his or her anger and temperament. If a partner can manage his or her anger or temperament, violence can be curtailed. Anger and temperament classes are available, and it can help. A spouse should also learn to help his or her partner that is given to anger. Learn to keep quiet or walk away when arguments or misunderstanding are about to degenerate."

Olusegun Idris, another marriage counsellor, noted that ending domestic violence requires a multifaceted approach that involves individuals, communities, and societies working together to promote healthy relationships and challenge harmful norms that support domestic violence and prevent it.

He said: "As a marriage counsellor, I would like to emphasise that domestic violence is a complex issue with multiple causes and no single solution. However, there are some common causes and potential solutions. In a case where one partner seeks to dominate and control the other, often due to insecurity, low self-esteem, or a need for power."

"Poor communication, lack of active listening, and unresolved conflicts can escalate into violence. Unaddressed emotional and psychological issues, such as anger management, depression, or anxiety, can contribute to violent behaviour."

"Cultural norms, societal expectations, and exposure to violence in childhood can perpetuate domestic violence. Some husbands are drug and alcohol addicts. When they abuse substances, it can increase the likelihood of violent behaviour, and financial difficulties and stress can contribute to tension and conflict in a marriage. The list of causes is inexhaustible."

The marriage counsellor further gave insights on solutions to end domestic violence. He said: "Couples therapy, individual counselling, and support groups can help address underlying issues and develop healthy communication skills."

"Practising active listening can help in resolving conflicts in a constructive manner. Recognise, understand, and manage emotions to prevent escalation into violence. Promote mutual respect, trust, and empathy in the relationship and seek help for emotional and psychological issues, such as anger management or substance abuse."

Domestic violence is a pervasive problem in Nigeria, with many victims suffering in silence due to cultural and societal norms," says Judith Ejike, a lawyer who shared her opinion.

Unlike the general belief in this part of the world, Mrs Ejike disclosed that it is essential to acknowledge that men also



Late Charity Nwafor, a victim of domestic violence

experience domestic violence and urged that domestic violence against men must be addressed by providing support and resources for male victims and promoting a culture of non-violence and mutual respect in relationships.

She said: "Men are also victims of domestic violence, which can take various forms, including physical abuse, psychological trauma, emotional manipulation, and financial control when the woman is the breadwinner."

"This phenomenon is often underreported due to societal norms, stigma and lack of support systems for male victims. Due to their masculinity, they are expected to endure any pain and not show that they are hurting as they will be seen as being weak. This is more dangerous for the man, his family, and society."

The Lagos State Police spokesman, Benjamin Hundeyin stated that each precinct has a Family Support Unit (FSU), as well as a Gender Unit at the police directorate in Ikeja and the State Investigative Department (SCID) in Yaba, Lagos, that address domestic brutality, sexual exploitation, and gender issues.

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Additionally, the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) has launched a comprehensive campaign to combat domestic violence, collaborating with Community Development Councils (CDCs) to raise awareness and encourage community members to report cases.

The purpose of this initiative, he stated, is to provide survivors with access to support services and ensure perpetrators are held accountable.

In addition to these services, the Lagos State Police Command is working closely with the DSVA and other stakeholders, such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) Gender and Child Unit, to tackle domestic violence.

To ensure effective justice, the DSVA emphasises the importance of strengthening evidence collection and preservation.

The Lagos State government has also established a legal framework, including the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) law, to eliminate violence, protect victims, and punish offenders.

The Lagos State Police Command is also implementing strategies to improve police officers' knowledge and skills on domestic violence issues, including training in alternative dispute resolution and incorporating domestic violence as a topic in police training programmes.