

katine it starts with a village

Issues: Women

Previous

Blog home

Next

Should Uganda's 'bride price' custom be outlawed?

The story of a woman forced by her husband to breastfeed puppies has infuriated women's rights groups in Uganda and reignited calls for the abolition of the 'bride price' practice

Share 3

Tweet 0

+1 0

Email

This week a macabre and unsettling story about a woman allegedly forced by her husband to breastfeed a litter of puppies has been dominating the headlines in [Uganda](#).

According to a report in the New Monitor, Nathan Awoloi made his wife, Jennifer Alupot, [breastfeed the puppies](#) because he had no cows left to do so after giving them to her family as part of her "bride price". Her third child, who she was also breastfeeding at the time, has since died of suspected rabies.

Awoloi was arrested and apparently confessed, but was later released. Alupot was called insane by investigating police officers.

Alupot's case has been taken up by [furious women's rights groups](#), which have demanded that Awoloi be charged and Alupot given a proper medical examination.

Alupot's case is also being used by the Uganda [Women's Network](#) (Uwonet), a consortium of women's rights groups, to reignite calls for the bride price tradition to be [abolished](#) in Uganda.

The group is among several that have declared their support for a petition to the constitutional court led by a Ugandan organisation called Mifumi — whose focus is combatting domestic violence and the bride price — demanding the custom of a husband "paying" for a wife with cows, land or money be declared illegal. It has also hit out at the



Posted by Annie Kelly Thursday 28 May 2009 12.00 EDT guardian.co.uk Jump to comments (4)



Article history

Katine Women · Governance

World news Uganda · Africa

More from Katine Chronicles blog on

Katine

On guardian.co.uk

Most viewed Zeitgeist Latest

Last 24 hours



1. News: Syria crisis: Three members of Assad inner circle killed in Damascus

2. News: Which are the laziest countries on earth?

3. Comment: This German circumcision ban is an affront to Jewish and Muslim identity | Giles Fraser

4. Football: Andy Carroll's divorce from Liverpool seems wasteful but inevitable

5. Sport: Tour de France 2012: stage 16 – as it happened

More most viewed

On Katine

Aid and development Background

Sites we like

AfriGadget AidData

3

Share

0

Tweet

0

+1

government for dragging its feet over the implementation of new domestic violence and sexual offences legislation designed to protect women from mistreatment and abuse in the home.

Groups such as ActionAid Uganda say the practice is the root cause of an epidemic of domestic violence and sexual assault against women across the country, who are being treated as little more than pieces of property by their husbands.

Rights groups have argued that the practice goes against the Ugandan constitution, which prohibits laws, cultures, customs or traditions that are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status.

If a marriage ends, many husbands expect the bride price to be repaid – when reporters from the Monitor travelled to Pallisa, in eastern Uganda, to interview Alupot, they apparently found her cast out from the family home with her husband demanding the cows he gave for her to be returned.

The bride price practice is common in [Katine sub-county](#).

In March, [Katine resident Joel Eidu](#) argued on this blog that the bride price and early marriage were destroying the lives of many young women in the region.

Ameel Didimos, headteacher at Katine's primary school, agrees. He told me in March that the practice was posing a serious danger to many girls in the sub-county as its growing commercialism has seen the dowry "market" skyrocket in the area.

With harvests failing and food prices rising, a growing obsession with bride price is leading to daughters being perceived as little more than assets to be bought and sold at the best price.

Despite efforts to try to encourage parents to keep their daughters in school, Didimos says that a family's desire to "eat" from their daughters is seeing many girls being taken out of education at 14 or 15 and pressured into early marriage.

With the bride price a widespread and culturally accepted tradition across much of Uganda, such calls for an end to the practice have been repeatedly ignored.

The media's interest in the Alupot case will be short-lived. Groups such as UWONET can only hope they can secure long-term change through the pressure they place on the government to start honouring its constitutional obligation to protect the countless number of women who are bartered and sold like the cattle for which they are exchanged.

• This article was amended on 2 June 2009. The original stated that Uganda Women's Network (Uwonet) was taking the lead in petitioning the constitutional court to declare the bride-price practice illegal. This has been corrected.

[Previous](#)

[Blog home](#)

[Next](#)

[Share](#) [Tweet](#) [+1](#) [Email](#)

[Women · Governance](#)

[World news](#)

[Uganda · Africa](#)

[More blogposts](#)

[Related](#)

18 Aug 2009

[Paying the price for marriage](#)

23 Apr 2009

[How can we change 'macho' attitudes to sex?](#)

8 Mar 2010

['Women in Katine have no idea what this day means'](#)

26 Mar 2009

[Rural women still have few rights to land in Uganda](#)

[Donate now](#)

[Education](#)

[Governance](#)

[Livelihoods](#)

[Project goals](#)

[Schools resources](#)

[Ugandan politics and history](#)

[Virtual village](#)

[Water](#)

[allAfrica.com](#)

[Amref](#)

[The Weekly Observer](#)

[Overseas Development Institute](#)

[Institute of Development Studies](#)

[TED Talks](#)

[Ugandan government](#)

[Uganda FM](#)

[UN News: Uganda](#)

guardianbookshop

This week's bestsellers



1. I am the Secret Footballer
£7.99

2. Tour De France ... to the Bitter End
by ed Richard Nelsson £6.99

3. Christian Beginnings
by Geza Vermes £15.00

4. On Poetry
by Glyn Maxwell £9.74

5. Complete Short Stories
by Elizabeth Taylor £11.24

Search the Guardian bookshop

Search

Katine Chronicles blog weekly archives

May 2009						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Ads by Google

Dinner With Barack Obama

Learn how you can have dinner with President Obama.

barackobama.com/dinner-with-barack

Join Adam Smith

Click Here To Endorse Adam And See His Growing List Of Supporters

www.electadamsmith.com/

How to Fix Your Marriage.

7 Secrets to Fixing Your Marriage. "I suggest you read this..."

www.MarriageMax.com/7-Secrets-Free

Comments

4 comments, displaying

Oldest first

 Staff

 Contributor

Comments on this page are now closed.



umfundi

28 May 2009 7:30PM

[Recommend \(2\)](#)

[Responses \(0\)](#)

[Report](#)

[Share](#)

The problem is that the men decide what aspects of tradition to conserve. Women do not have much say in the public debate, nor in the structuring of civil society that implicitly makes changes or keeps the status quo.

Thanks to this article for bringing this out once again. I hope the women's group can keep up the pressure. It is vital for evolved men to step up and become active too!

The country is being deprived of women's educated intelligence and cultural input by these practices, which are of greed. They then want to have uneducated women mothering their children, girls who are not emotionally fully developed even if their genitals are barely functioning, and they are in the non-home environment of the husband's family. T

The woman's family seldom supports them as they do not want to give back the bride price. If the woman has produced children then they have no right to have the bride price returned .

If not, the husband should return the children and pay some of their upkeep.

The society no only does not prepare its females to survive economically, but it subjects them to psychological stress by giving them no support whatsoever under these distorted family arrangements. If the harvests are not good, the daughters are not reserve currency. Especially if the prices are going up because of

greed.

It is sad that the man had to give all of his cows for the wife, and he does not value her as a human at all. How can she value herself under all this abuse and discord, when she has no say in solving it or helping herself?



Tourangelle
29 May 2009 8:12AM

The Mifumi Project in Tororo has been campaigning against bride-price in Uganda for several years now. Go to http://www.mifumi.org/index.php?prgm=news-details&news_no=36 for details of the latest challenge. It would be really useful if The Guardian gave more details of local civil society efforts to tackle these issues, so that readers don't get the impression that only outsiders can deal with them. Mifumi has, or had, a support group in the UK, and its Uganda email is mifumi@mifumi.org.

Recommend (0)

Responses (0)

[Report](#)

[Share](#)



chilipepper
1 June 2009 5:59PM

The bride price is not only an issue in Uganda. I rode recently with a taxi driver in Johannesburg who was pleased to tell me about his newly born (and first born) daughter. He subsequently mentioned that he would like to marry the mother of this child, but that the family wants a lot of money (as bride price or lebola) and he must save up before he can do so. So it seems bride price is also discouraging the formation of family units, something which doesn't seem to be in the best interest of unmarried fathers, mothers or their children....

Recommend (0)

Responses (0)

[Report](#)

[Share](#)



Dabby1
16 June 2009 11:35AM

I say we stop demonising Ugandan marital practices and give it a shot in the UK before we totally condemn it. I for one wouldn't mind nipping down to Tesco's for a bargain wife, provided I could always chuck her out once she's past whatever I deem her use-by date to be.

Recommend (0)

Responses (0)

[Report](#)

[Share](#)

Comments on this page are now closed.

Related information

Katine
[Women · Governance](#)

World news
[Uganda · Africa](#)



Should Uganda ban traditional birth attendants?

30 Mar 2010
Birth attendants are often the only recourse for pregnant women in rural Uganda. Will banning them really improve maternal mortality rates?

18 Mar 2010
[Ugandan domestic violence bill stalls](#)

23 Mar 2009
There needs to be a change in attitudes if Katine is to develop

22 Apr 2010
[Artists and musicians join fight against corruption in Uganda](#)

6 Mar 2009
[Advocacy group to offer legal advice to Soroti women](#)



(14 pictures) The women of Katine

15 Oct 2008
To mark the International Day for Rural Women, we celebrate the lives of some of the women in the rural sub-county of Katine, in north east Uganda

[More galleries](#)

[License/buy our content](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Terms of service](#) | [US Advertising](#) | [A - Z index](#) | [About guardiannews.com](#)

© 2012 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.