

Original Research Article



ACADEMIANS
PUBLISHERS
Advancing Knowledge. Inspiring Change.

Journal of Emerging Perspectives in Arts and Humanities

Exploring Ideas · Connecting Disciplines · Enriching Society

Volume 2, Issue 4, July-August, 2026



ISSN: 3121-6439



DOI: [10.36099/jepah.v2i4.002](https://doi.org/10.36099/jepah.v2i4.002)



From Domestic Violence to Household Peace: Examining the Role of Civil Society Organisations in Conflict Transformation in Kamuli District, Uganda.

MWOGEREZE RICHARD

KAMPALA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, KAMPALA, UGANDA

Abstract: Domestic violence remains a major threat to human security, family stability and sustainable peace in Uganda. Although domestic violence is frequently treated as a private family matter, its consequences extend beyond individual households to children, communities and wider social institutions. This study examined the role of civil society in transforming domestic violence into household peace in Kamuli District, Uganda. The study was guided by three objectives: to examine the nature and effects of domestic violence on household peace; to examine the role of civil society organisations in transforming domestic violence into peaceful household relationships; and to assess the contribution of individual agency, attitude and negotiation to the transformation of domestic violence into household peace. A qualitative case-study design was employed involving three civil society organisations in Kamuli District. Six participants were selected from each organisation, giving a total sample of 18 participants. Data were analysed thematically using conflict transformation theory as the primary analytical lens. Findings indicated that 15 of the 18 participants (83.3%) perceived domestic violence as a serious human threat that contributes to the breakdown of the family institution. Participants further perceived that domestic violence, although destructive, could be transformed into peaceful relationships through appropriate civil society interventions, behavioural change, dialogue and constructive conflict management. Civil society organisations were perceived as important actors in awareness creation, psychosocial support, empowerment, referral, community mobilisation and the promotion of nonviolent approaches to conflict. A particularly significant finding concerned individual agency, attitude and negotiation. One survivor stated: "I nearly died because of domestic violence but when I realized that I had the ability to choose peace no matter the violence, it was my choice and attitude, I was able to negotiate with my rivalry and we made peace." This testimony illustrates the potential importance of survivor agency and constructive negotiation in transforming destructive interpersonal conflict. However, the study does not equate choosing peace with tolerating abuse or abandoning justice and protection. Rather, sustainable household peace requires safety, accountability, voluntary participation, institutional support and transformation of destructive relationships. The article contributes to conflict transformation scholarship by extending peacebuilding analysis into the household and by proposing a Household Peace Transformation Framework linking recognition of domestic violence, civil society intervention, individual agency, safe dialogue, negotiation and relationship transformation.

Keywords: *Adomestic violence, household peace, civil society, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, individual agency, negotiation, Uganda, Kamuli District, gender-based violence.*

1. Introduction:

Domestic violence represents one of the most persistent threats to peaceful family life. It can involve physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, verbal and economic abuse and may produce consequences extending beyond the immediate victim. The consequences can include

physical injury, psychological distress, fear, loss of dignity, economic insecurity, family separation and adverse effects on children.

The World Health Organization continues to identify violence against women as both a human rights violation

and a public health problem with immediate and long-term consequences for women, children, families and societies. The latest global prevalence estimates published by WHO in 2025 emphasise that intimate-partner violence remains a major global concern.

Uganda is not exempt from this problem. Current Uganda Bureau of Statistics reporting indicates that domestic-violence cases recorded nationally declined from 17,698 in 2022 to 14,681 in 2023. However, the same UBOS profile reports that, according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2022, 44% of women and 39% of men had experienced physical violence since age 15.

Uganda's legal framework explicitly recognises domestic violence as involving acts or omissions that harm or endanger the physical or mental wellbeing, safety or life of a person in a domestic relationship. The Domestic Violence Act includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuse within its definition.

Despite this legal framework, domestic violence persists.

The persistence of domestic violence raises a critical question for conflict and peacebuilding scholarship:

How can destructive conflict within households be transformed into sustainable peace?

This question requires moving beyond the assumption that conflict within families is merely a private disagreement.

The family is a fundamental social institution. It provides care, protection, socialisation and emotional support. When violence becomes embedded in family relationships, these functions may be weakened. Domestic violence therefore represents not only a threat to individuals but also a threat to the institution of the family.

This study approaches domestic violence through the lens of **conflict transformation**.

Conflict transformation goes beyond managing or settling individual disputes. It focuses on transforming relationships, structures, behaviours, attitudes and social patterns that generate destructive conflict (Lederach, 1997, 2003).

Civil society organisations are potentially important actors in this process. They often operate close to communities and can provide awareness, counselling, psychosocial support, legal empowerment, referrals, community mobilisation and other forms of assistance.

The study therefore examines how civil society can contribute to a movement from domestic violence towards household peace in Kamuli District.

2. Background to the study

Domestic Violence as a Human Security Issue

Domestic violence threatens the most basic dimensions of human security: freedom from fear, freedom from violence and the ability to live with dignity.

The Ugandan Domestic Violence Act is significant because it does not restrict domestic violence to physical assault. It includes sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic forms of abuse.

This broad legal definition is consistent with the argument that domestic violence should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon.

Domestic violence may therefore involve:

- ❖ physical assault;
- ❖ sexual coercion;
- ❖ threats;
- ❖ intimidation;
- ❖ humiliation;
- ❖ psychological abuse;
- ❖ economic deprivation;
- ❖ controlling behaviour; and
- ❖ harassment.

A household experiencing these conditions cannot easily provide the safety and security normally associated with family life.

Evidence from Uganda:

Ugandan empirical research has demonstrated the scale and complexity of intimate-partner violence.

Gubi et al. (2020), using data from the 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, found that more than half of married women in their study sample had experienced some form of intimate-partner violence. The study identified factors including witnessing parental violence, controlling behaviour by partners, relationship duration and male-partner intoxication as associated with IPV.

Research on emotional violence in Uganda has similarly shown that violence is associated with social, community, relationship and individual factors, with rural residence and other contextual characteristics relevant to exposure.

A qualitative study of social norms in Uganda found that norms can sustain physical violence by treating it as a private matter, normalising women's experience of abuse and defining circumstances in which male violence is considered acceptable.

These findings are important for the present study because they demonstrate that domestic violence cannot be understood solely as the result of individual disagreement.

Social norms and community expectations can contribute to its continuation.

Domestic violence, Children and the Family Institution

Domestic violence can affect not only the direct victim and perpetrator but also children and other members of the household.

Research from Kampala has shown that intimate-partner violence and violence against children may intersect within families. Qualitative evidence identified patterns including bystander trauma, negative role modelling, protection and further victimisation, and displaced aggression.

This is significant for the present study because the family can become a site in which violence is reproduced across generations.

A child who repeatedly witnesses violent conflict may learn that aggression is an acceptable method of resolving disagreement.

Thus:

domestic violence → family instability → negative modelling → reproduction of violent conflict.

Transforming domestic violence therefore has potential intergenerational implications.

Civil Society and Violence Prevention in Uganda

Civil society organisations have played a significant role in Uganda's response to violence against women and girls.

One important example is the SASA! community mobilisation intervention implemented in Kampala by the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention and Raising Voices. Research on the programme found evidence of changes in relationship dynamics and broader community norms.

The wider SASA! evaluation also demonstrated that community mobilisation can influence experiences of intimate-partner violence and related behaviours.

Research on bystander behaviour further suggests that community interventions can influence people's willingness to act in response to violence.

These studies are important because they demonstrate that violence prevention can occur at multiple levels.

However, much of the established literature has focused on Kampala or large-scale intervention programmes.

There is comparatively less qualitative research examining the relationship between civil society intervention and **household peace in rural districts such as Kamuli.**

This study addresses that gap.

Kamuli District Context

Kamuli District provides an important setting for examining the relationship between civil society, domestic violence and peacebuilding.

The Kamuli District Community Based Services Department includes Community Development, Labour, Probation and Social Welfare, Gender and Women's Councils, Youth and Children Affairs and other social protection structures. The district reports programmes supported by both government and civil society organisations, including gender-based violence prevention programmes.

The institutional presence of community-based services provides opportunities for collaboration among civil society organisations, local government and communities.

This makes Kamuli an appropriate setting for examining whether and how civil society can contribute to household conflict transformation.

3. Theoretical Framework

Conflict Transformation Theory

The study was primarily guided by conflict transformation theory associated with John Paul Lederach.

Conflict transformation differs from conflict management and conflict settlement.

Conflict management seeks to control destructive conflict.

Conflict settlement seeks to reach an agreement.

Conflict transformation seeks to change the relationships, structures, behaviours and patterns that generate destructive conflict.

Lederach (1997) conceptualises peacebuilding as a process that addresses relationships and social structures in ways that create sustainable reconciliation.

Applied to domestic violence, conflict transformation requires attention to:

Personal transformation

Changes in attitudes, emotions and behaviour.

Relational transformation

Changes in communication, trust and interaction.

Structural transformation

Changes in unequal access to resources and power.

Cultural transformation

Changes in beliefs and norms that legitimise violence.

This framework provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding the movement from domestic violence to household peace.

4. Conceptual Framework

The study proposes the following conceptual pathway:

Domestic Violence-- → Fear, insecurity and family breakdown

Civil Society Intervention involves things like;

- ❖ awareness
- ❖ counselling
- ❖ psychosocial support
- ❖ empowerment
- ❖ referral
- ❖ community mobilisation
- ❖ legal awareness

Household Peace

The framework does not assume that every violent relationship can or should be reconciled.

Rather, it proposes that where safety exists and individuals voluntarily choose constructive engagement, conflict transformation may contribute to peaceful relationships.

5. Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by three objectives:

1. To examine the nature and effects of domestic violence on household peace in Kamuli District.
2. To examine the role of civil society organisations in transforming domestic violence into peaceful household relationships.
3. To assess the contribution of individual agency, attitude and negotiation to the transformation of domestic violence into household peace.

Research Questions:

1. What are the nature and effects of domestic violence on household peace in Kamuli District?
2. How do civil society organisations contribute to transforming domestic violence into peaceful household relationships?
3. How do individual agency, attitude and negotiation contribute to transforming domestic violence into household peace?

6. Methodology

Research Approach and Design:

The study adopted a qualitative research approach and a case-study design.

A qualitative design was appropriate because the study sought to understand perceptions, experiences and meanings attached to domestic violence, civil society intervention and household peace.

The case-study approach enabled the researcher to investigate these processes within the specific social and institutional context of Kamuli District.

Study Participants and Sample:

Three civil society organisations participated in the study.

Six participants were selected from each organisation, giving a total of 18 participants.

Table 1: Participant Distribution by Organisation;

S/N	ORGANISATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PERCENTAGE
1	Organisation A	6	33.3%
2	Organisation B	6	33.3%
2	Organisation C	6	33.3%
	TOTAL	18	100%

The organisations are anonymised to protect confidentiality.

Participants are similarly identified through codes rather than personal names.

Participant characteristics;

The study included participants drawn from the three participating civil society organisations. Because the information supplied for this manuscript does not include a complete demographic profile of each participant, the table below reports only the characteristics that can be supported by the study design.

Methodological note: A final journal submission should replace this table with the actual participant characteristics—such as gender, age range, role, years of experience and participant category—taken directly from the research records. These details should not be invented after data collection.

Data Collection

Data were collected from participants associated with the three participating civil society organisations.

The inquiry focused on:

- ❖ perceptions of domestic violence;
- ❖ effects of domestic violence;
- ❖ civil society responses;
- ❖ peacebuilding;
- ❖ individual agency;
- ❖ attitude;
- ❖ communication;
- ❖ negotiation; and
- ❖ household peace.

The survivor quotation was treated as a verbatim participant quotation because it was directly supplied by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed thematically.

The process involved:

1. familiarisation with the participant responses;
2. identification of significant statements;
3. development of initial codes;
4. grouping codes into categories;
5. development of major themes;
6. comparison across the three organisations; and
7. interpretation using conflict transformation theory.

The analysis generated three major themes corresponding to the three study objectives.

7. Findings

Objective one: Nature and effects of Domestic Violence as a Human threat;

Domestic Violence as a Human threat;

The most significant finding under the first objective was that **15 of the 18 participants (83.3%) identified domestic violence as a human threat and as a force contributing to the breakdown of the family institution.**

This finding demonstrates that the majority of participants understood domestic violence as more than a private disagreement.

Participants connected violence with:

- ❖ threats to physical safety;
- ❖ emotional suffering;
- ❖ fear;
- ❖ loss of trust;
- ❖ family instability;
- ❖ breakdown of communication; and
- ❖ weakening of the family institution.

The finding is consistent with the Ugandan legal framework, which recognises domestic violence as conduct that harms or endangers health, safety, life, limb or wellbeing and includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuse.

Domestic Violence and Family Breakdown;

Participants' perceptions indicate that domestic violence undermines the basic functions of the family.

When members of a household live in fear, the family ceases to function effectively as a protective environment.

The process may be represented as:

Violence → fear → mistrust → communication breakdown → emotional separation → family instability.

This finding is consistent with Ugandan research showing that violence within families can intersect with violence against children and generate cycles of trauma and negative modelling.

Domestic Violence as Destructive Conflict;

The findings suggest that domestic violence should be understood as an extreme form of destructive conflict.

Conflict itself is not necessarily harmful.

Families experience disagreements over:

- finances;
- parenting;
- property;
- household responsibilities;
- relationships;

- extended-family obligations; and
- decision-making.

The critical issue is how disagreement is managed.

Constructive conflict may result in:

communication → negotiation → problem-solving → improved relationship.

Destructive conflict may result in:

confrontation → intimidation → violence → retaliation → further violence.

The peacebuilding challenge is therefore to transform the second pathway into the first.

Objective Two: The Role of Civil Society:

Civil Society as a Bridge;

The findings indicate that civil society organisations can function as bridges between households, communities and formal institutions.

Their contribution is particularly important because affected individuals may not know where to seek help or may fear approaching formal institutions.

Civil society can therefore provide an entry point into broader support systems.

Awareness Creation:

Community awareness emerged as an important component of civil society intervention.

Awareness can challenge the perception that domestic violence is simply a private matter.

This is particularly important given Ugandan evidence showing that social norms may normalise violence or define circumstances in which violence is considered acceptable.

Civil society awareness programmes can therefore contribute to cultural transformation by changing what communities consider normal or acceptable.

Psychosocial Support:

Civil society organisations can provide or facilitate counselling and psychosocial support.

Such services are important because domestic violence may produce fear, trauma and emotional distress.

Uganda's experience with multi-sectoral responses to violence against women demonstrates the importance of cooperation among health systems, government, development partners and

Community Mobilization:

Evidence from Uganda's SASA! intervention demonstrates that community mobilisation can influence relationship dynamics and social norms surrounding violence.

This supports the present study's finding that civil society should not limit its role to responding after violence occurs.

Prevention is equally important.

17.1 Survivor Agency

Objective Three: Agency, Attitude and Negotiation:

The survivor explicitly identified "choice and attitude" as important.

Attitude can influence how conflict is perceived and responded to.

An individual may interpret disagreement as an attack that requires retaliation.

Alternatively, disagreement may be interpreted as a problem requiring communication.

This suggests that peacebuilding interventions should address not only knowledge but also:

- ❖ attitudes;
- ❖ beliefs;
- ❖ perceptions;
- ❖ emotional responses;
- ❖ communication habits; and
- ❖ expectations concerning relationships.

Negotiation and Peace:

Negotiation was central to the survivor's account.

She stated that she was able to negotiate with her "rivalry" and that the parties subsequently made peace.

Negotiation can provide a pathway for transforming destructive disagreement into constructive engagement.

However, negotiation in domestic violence contexts requires safeguards.

Negotiation should not be imposed where:

- ❖ there is continuing physical danger;
- ❖ coercive control exists;
- ❖ serious threats are present;
- ❖ one party cannot participate freely; or
- ❖ reconciliation would expose the survivor to further harm.

The appropriate principle is therefore:

8. Discussion

Domestic Violence as a Threat to Peace:

The finding that 15 of 18 participants viewed domestic violence as a human threat is consistent with the broader literature on violence and human security.

The finding also corresponds with Ugandan research demonstrating the prevalence and complexity of intimate-partner violence. Gubi et al. (2020) identified multiple factors associated with IPV, including controlling

behaviour, witnessing parental violence and partner intoxication.

The present study extends this literature by interpreting domestic violence explicitly as a **peacebuilding problem**.

Civil Society as Peace Infrastructure:

Civil society should not be viewed only as a provider of social services.

The findings indicate that civil society organisations can constitute a form of **peace infrastructure**.

They can:

identify problems → create awareness → provide support → connect institutions → strengthen agency → facilitate transformation.

This interpretation is consistent with evidence from Uganda's community mobilisation interventions, which demonstrates that community-level approaches can influence individual

9. Theoretical Contribution:

The study makes four principal theoretical contributions.

Household Peace as a Peacebuilding Domain:

Peacebuilding should not be restricted to post-war societies or political conflicts.

Households are also sites of conflict and peacebuilding.

Domestic Violence as a Destructive Conflict:

The study demonstrates that domestic violence can be conceptualised as destructive interpersonal conflict embedded within broader social structures.

Policy and District implications;

Uganda's peacebuilding policies should recognise household violence as part of the broader human-security agenda.

District authorities should strengthen collaboration with civil society organisations addressing domestic violence.

10. Recommendations:

1. Civil society organisations should expand programmes challenging norms that normalise domestic violence.
2. Establish household peace education Programmes to teach: -
 - ❖ communication;
 - ❖ emotional regulation;
 - ❖ constructive disagreement;
 - ❖ negotiation;
 - ❖ problem-solving; and
 - ❖ nonviolent conflict management.
3. Survivors should have access to integrated legal, psychosocial, health and social services.

4. Negotiation should only be facilitated where it is safe, voluntary and appropriate.
5. Programmes should address harmful masculinities, positive fatherhood and nonviolent relationships.
6. Economic empowerment should form part of domestic violence prevention strategies.
7. Civil society organisations should establish clear referral pathways involving health, police, social welfare and legal institutions.

11. Conclusion

This study examined the transition from domestic violence to household peace through three interconnected dimensions: the nature and effects of domestic violence, the role of civil society and the contribution of individual agency, attitude and negotiation.

The first objective demonstrated that domestic violence is perceived as a serious threat to human security and the family institution. **Fifteen of the 18 participants (83.3%) identified domestic violence as a human threat and as a factor contributing to the breakdown of the family.**

The second objective demonstrated that civil society organisations can contribute to transformation through awareness creation, support, empowerment, referral, community mobilisation and promotion of constructive approaches to conflict.

The third objective highlighted the importance of agency, attitude and negotiation.

The survivor's testimony provides the clearest illustration:

"I nearly died because of domestic violence but when I realized that I had the ability to choose peace no matter the violence, it was my choice and attitude, I was able to negotiate with my rivalry and we made peace."

The quotation demonstrates the potential movement from:

violence → awareness → agency → attitude → choice → negotiation → peace.

The central contribution of the study is therefore the proposition that: **"Domestic violence is not only a family problem; it is a peacebuilding problem".**

Consequently, sustainable peace in communities such as Kamuli requires attention not only to conflicts between groups and institutions but also to conflicts within households.

References:

- Bandura, A. (2000). Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9(3), 75–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00064>
- Boulding, K. E. (1978). *Stable peace*. University of Texas Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Ellsberg, M., Arango, D. J., Morton, M., Gennari, F., Kiplesund, S., Contreras, M., & Watts, C. (2015). Prevention of violence against women and girls: What does the evidence say? *The Lancet*, 385(9977), 1555–1566. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61703-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61703-7)
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3), 167–191. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301>
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3), 291–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027003005>
- Gubi, D., Nansubuga, E., & Wandera, S. O. (2020). Correlates of intimate partner violence among married women in Uganda: A cross-sectional survey. *BMC Public Health*, 20, 1008. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09123-4>
- Heise, L. L. (1998). Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework. *Violence Against Women*, 4(3), 262–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801298004003002>
- Jewkes, R. (2002). Intimate partner violence: Causes and prevention. *The Lancet*, 359(9315), 1423–1429. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(02\)08357-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08357-5)
- Karamagi, C. A. S., Tumwine, J. K., Tylleskär, T., & Heggenhougen, K. (2006). Intimate partner violence against women in eastern Uganda: Implications for HIV prevention. *BMC Public Health*, 6, 284. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-6-284>
- Kouyoumdjian, F. G., Findlay, N., Schwandt, M., & Calzavara, L. (2013). A systematic review of the relationships between intimate partner violence and HIV/AIDS. *PLoS ONE*, 8(2), e51410. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0051410>
- Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Lederach, J. P. (2003). *The little book of conflict transformation*. Good Books.
- Linos, N., Slaymaker, E., Chandra-Mouli, V., & Chandra, K. (2018). Addressing violence against women through community-based interventions. *The Lancet*.
- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. (2016). *The Uganda National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. Government of Uganda.
- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. (2016). *National Gender-Based Violence Policy*. Government of Uganda.
- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. (2018). *National Policy on Elimination of Gender Based Violence in Uganda*. Government of Uganda.
- Ministry of Health Uganda. (2020). *Strengthening the health system response to violence against women in Uganda*. World Health Organization.
- Republic of Uganda. (2010). *Domestic Violence Act, 2010*. Government of Uganda.

- Republic of Uganda. (2011). *Domestic Violence Act, 2010 (Commencement) Instrument, 2011*. Government of Uganda.
- Republic of Uganda. (2019). *National policy on elimination of gender-based violence in Uganda*. Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
- Raising Voices. (2008). *SASA! An activist kit for preventing violence against women and HIV*. Raising Voices.
- Saile, R., Neuner, F., Ertl, V., & Catani, C. (2013). Prevalence and predictors of partner violence against women in the aftermath of war: A survey among couples in Northern Uganda. *Social Science & Medicine*, 86, 17–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.02.046>
- Stern, E., Gibbs, A., Willan, S., Dunkle, K., & Jewkes, R. (2018). ‘Creating peace and harmony at home’: Understanding the relationship between women and men's experiences of violence and their relationship quality in rural South Africa. *Global Health Action*, 11(sup3).
- Starmann, E., Heise, L., Anderson, C., Kyegombe, N., Devries, K., Abramsky, T., & Watts, C. (2018). Examining diffusion to understand the impact of community mobilisation on intimate partner violence: Results from the SASA! Study in Uganda. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 72(8), 606–612.
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2022*. UBOS.
- Uganda Bureau of Statistics. (2026). *Uganda profile: Gender and gender-based violence statistics*. UBOS.
- United Nations. (1993). *Declaration on the elimination of violence against women*. United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (1994). *Human development report 1994: New dimensions of human security*. Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Women. (2024). *Facts and figures: Ending violence against women*. UN Women.
- World Health Organization. (2013). *Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: WHO clinical and policy guidelines*. World Health Organization.