

Silent crisis of broken families in Uganda

Uganda is a nation that deeply values children. We celebrate their birth, dedicate them in church, and place our hopes for the future in them. Yet beneath this love lies a painful reality we rarely discuss openly: many Ugandan children are growing up in broken homes, and the emotional impact of this situation is deeper and longer lasting than most people realise.

Recent national surveys show that single motherhood in Uganda has increased from 20 percent to 30 percent (Uganda Bureau of Statistics). Over time, society has begun to treat this trend as normal, often saying that “things happen” and moving on. However, while adults move forward, children carry the effects of family breakdown in ways that shape their behaviour, emotions, and identity.

Children are not small adults. They do not have the emotional capacity to process separation, abandonment, or ongoing parental conflict the way adults do. When a family breaks down, a child's sense of security and stability often breaks as well. Without the right support, those emotional pieces do not simply fall back into place.

Many children raised in broken homes struggle with anxiety, depression, anger, and low self-worth. Without a safe adult to help them process their pain, they often suppress their emotions, which later resurface

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Sylvia Arinda

Family



through destructive habits, unhealthy relationships, or difficulty trusting others.

Family breakdown can also shape how children approach relationships in adulthood. Children learn about love by observing the relationships around them. If what they witnessed was constant conflict, absence, or resentment, that pattern can become their reference point for relationships.

As a society, we must stop ignoring this reality and begin protecting children with the same commitment we use to celebrate them.

The good news is that broken families are not beyond healing. Restoration is possible, but it requires intentional effort and honesty from the adults involved.

First, parents and caregivers must address their own emotional wounds. It is difficult to nurture others when carrying unresolved pain. Seeking counselling or guidance from a trusted mentor can be an important step toward personal healing.

Second, children should never be drawn into adult conflict. Even when parents separate, children still need both parents in their lives. Speaking negatively about the other parent in a child's presence often harms the child more than the intended target.

Finally, parents should seek professional support for their children when they notice significant behavioral changes such as withdrawal, aggression, or sudden emotional struggles. These are not simply phases but signals that a child needs help.

Uganda's children are not just symbols of the future; they are individuals living in our homes today, absorbing everything around them. They depend on the adults in their lives to recognize these challenges and respond with care.

Healing can begin with simple but intentional steps: one honest conversation, one counselling session, or one decision not to carry pain alone.

Sylvia Arinda is a family life coach and author

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