

In this new era where parents are so busy struggling to make ends meet, a good maid is like a godsend. But what if she turns out to be your worst nightmare? **Dinah Kamengo** was told that molesters are the new monsters in sheep's skin



Sexual abuse

Dinah (not real name) a mother of four boys, narrates the shock she underwent on discovering that her perfect nanny who had worked for five months was molesting

Yuggling with maids, changing most weekly, Rashida, 20, o be a godsend. She was a orker who had the perfect oing all house chores -d carrying them out ly. The days of eating cold a the days I had to work- some history. I never ain about a grease hildren's clothes. She all with the boys. I felt I nded a keeper, only to s wrong. He realised my seven- w (not real name) was e nanny in a way that uncomfortable.

I had never seen him play this was with the many other nannies that had come and gone. Whenever, I observed this behaviour, I would spontaneously rebuke him for the inappropriate touches and ask him to stop. Andrew is an introvert and will rarely talk about things openly unless you probe. One day, Andrew got in trouble with me for something he did while playing with his friends. As punishment, I grounded him together with his five-year-old brother. Because I thought the punishment was harsh, I expected them to 'report me' to their father but they did not. I arrived home at about 11:00pm that night and everyone was asleep in the house. When I turned my bedroom light on, it awoke my husband. While we were sharing our highlights of the day, I asked him if the boys had told him the punishment that they had served.

He responded in the negative and wanted to know the details. When I told him the reason, he was so upset, he woke up the boys to talk to them. Enraged about his sons' poor choices, he reprimanded them severely and picked up a sandal to spank them.

THE SHOCKING TRUTH
Andrew's reaction to the threatened spanking was so shocking that the father was taken aback. He

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was so repulsive, dry-eyed and did not even let out a single cry, which was unlike the boy we knew. We do not usually cane the children, but rather use rewards to motivate them towards good behaviour. My instincts drove me to tell Andrew's father about how his son was playing with the nanny. In shock, he immediately dropped the sandal with which he had been punishing Andrew. My husband asked Andrew to climb onto his lap, and promised not to beat him. He then gently probed Andrew to tell him if his nanny had done anything to him. In gut wrenching pain, we listened as Andrew narrated the ordeal of what "Auntie Rashida" had been doing to him. In a hushed voice and with worry written all over his face, Andrew told of how the nanny would invite him to her bed. "What does auntie tell you to do when you go to her bed?" my husband questioned.

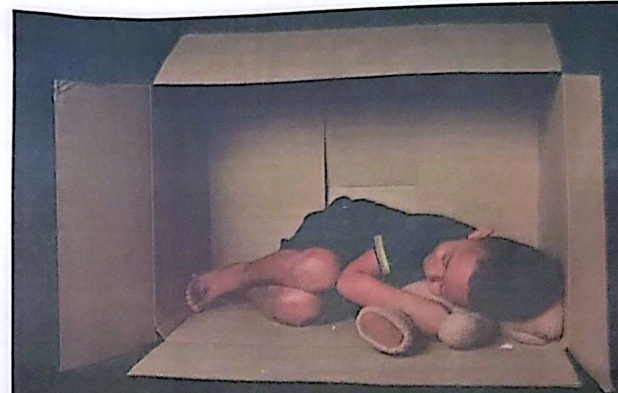
"Auntie asks me to take off my under pants," he replied. "Does auntie remove her pants?" he continues, to which Andrew nodded in the affirmative. "What is the colour of auntie's pants?" I asked to be sure my son was not making up a story. "Pink," Andrew replied immediately. All his responses came without any forethought, which more than convinced us that our baby boy was not cooking up stories. My poor little boy. By this point, I was suppressing tears, bewildered and unable to contain the shock. I summoned the courage to ask my son, who seemed oblivious of what the nanny makes him do. With a puzzled look, Andrew innocently demonstrated "the act". This was my breaking point. When we asked Andrew why he had not told us about this before, he said he feared we would beat him. We summoned Rashida to our

NATIONAL SURVEY DATA

According to a study titled: "Child Sexual Abuse Prevalence in Uganda" done by Kabogyeza Ssemabatta, the then assistant commissioner, children's affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in 2012, the following issues were discovered:

- National surveillance on child sexual abuse does not exist for Uganda.
- Sub-national studies indicate that children grow up with overwhelming levels of sexual violence in homes, schools and communities.
- Such violence remains largely under-reported and under-addressed.
- Studies done by Raising Voices so far have indicated increased violence against children.
- More than two-thirds (75.8%)

- reported having experienced sexual violence, such as being touched (Raising Voices).
- Girls experienced sexual violence more often than boys, with 46.5% reporting that had been touched sexually against their will and one-fifth (20.5%) reporting that they had been forced to have sex.
- A total of 13.3% of the boys reported being forced to have sex, and 27% reported being touched sexually against their will.
- Sexual vulnerability of boys appears to be overlooked and a further more detailed study is needed to understand the extent of the problem.
- 24.3% said mainly at school; 34.2% said at home and at school; and 9.3% in the community.



SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN YOUR CHILD

- Acting out in an inappropriate sexual way
- Nightmares, sleeping problems
- Becoming withdrawn or very clingy
- Outburst of anger
- Becoming unusually secretive
- Sudden unexplained personality changes, mood swings and seeming insecure
- Regressing to younger behaviours, e.g. bed wetting
- Unaccountable fear of particular places or people
- Outburst of anger
- Changes in eating habits
- New adult words for body parts and no obvious source
- Talk of a new, wider friend and unexplained money or gifts
- Self-harm (cutting, burning or other harmful activities)
- Physical signs, such as, unexplained sores or bruises around genitals or mouth, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy
- Running away
- Not wanting to be alone with a particular child or young person



PARENTAL INTERVENTIONS

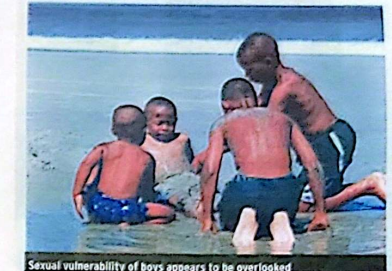
As a parent, there are some things that you must have at the back of your head concerning your child. These will help you keep track of your child and immediately step in to help in case anything is amiss. These include:

- You must know the personality of your child. Changes in the norm could be an indicator that something is going terribly wrong.
- Remember that boys are as equally susceptible to abuse as girls. Be aware that times have changed and so have the morals. Keep a close eye on your maids and the people your child is spending time with.
- If you have hectic schedules, take the children and the maid to a relatives' place, especially during the holidays where there can be a third eye on them.
- Limit unaccounted for time at home especially during the holidays. Keep the children busy by enrolling them into holiday activities.
- Empower your children to tell you about themselves. Do not let your guard down. The perfect maid or relative could be hiding something.

Parents should lovingly take the child through a thought process to help him know that much as what happened was bad, he can outgrow it and live a normal life.

bedroom and confronted her with our son's story and she denied it all. But I could see guilt in her eyes. We did not probe any further, we rushed the two to a nearby clinic for an HIV test. Thank God the test came out negative for both. Obviously, Rashida is no longer a part of our household, no matter how well she had worked for us. We started our son on counselling and working on communication so that he does not find it hard to tell us of any event in the future.

HELP THE CHILDREN TO OPEN UP
Joseph Musaal, a counselling psychologist, who is also the university counsellor at Uganda Christian University Mukono, says adverse childhood experiences cause trauma for the children. Such incidents fill the mind of the victim with negative feelings, hence creating trauma. The trauma, if not handled appropriately, can affect the child in adulthood.



Sexual vulnerability of boys appears to be overlooked

Therefore, the parents of the victim must seek ways of dealing with the trauma.

Parents should lovingly take the child through a thought process to help him know that much as what happened was bad, he can outgrow it and live a normal life. The child might be dealing with fear, which could have been orchestrated by the abuser through intimidation.

He adds that listening to the child and monitoring whatever goes on in his life will help create a secure environment, where he can talk freely with the parent. Endeavour to make the child your friend so that they can run to you in case the bad touches happen. Musaal emphasises that parents should take nannies for medical checkup as part of a family routine. He says that in the above scenario, had the nanny turned out to be HIV positive, it would have changed the lives of the entire family.

MEDICAL INTERVENTION
When such an incident occurs, Dr Miriam Laker Okeka says if there was no penetrative sex - which is likely so since the boy is very young - carry out an HIV test to ascertain their status.

tender loving care to rehabilitate the child. Take the abuser to the authorities so as to end the habit.

WHEN DO YOU INTRODUCE SEX TALK?

Pamela Musime, a mother of three, says she had the same instinct and set up precautionary measures to avert any possibilities of that happening in her house. "I empowered my son by putting him in charge of the affairs of the house in my absence from an early age. Whenever I would come back home, I would demand the report of the day," Musime says.

"In that way, the child would tell me whatever would transpire in the house. Being an only boy, I would not let the nannies bathe him. It was my responsibility or my husband's in case I was not home to bathe him. He had access to a phone to call me in case of any emergency."

Sex talk was started quite early in my house. Benjamin knew about the bad touches and was aware that he should not be touched by anybody in certain areas. However, there were also times when my son abused his rights. I would have talks with him on how to handle his authority."