

LETTER OF THE DAY

When fathers walk away: Single mothers need support, not stigma

I still remember the small but meaningful moments of my childhood when my mother would serve me a modest meal, and my father would quietly add a piece from his own plate, especially when there was meat. Those simple acts of love made all the difference. But not every child in Uganda grows up with that kind of presence.

This month on 8th, the world commemorated International Women's Day 2026 under the theme "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls." This reminded us to confront a painful and growing reality: more and more women are raising children alone.

Recent data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics indicates that single-parent households—mostly led by women have risen significantly in recent years. Behind these numbers are real stories of resilience, struggle, and, too often, abandonment. A recent post on tiktok captured this reality. A 33-year-old mother of three openly expressed her desire for a serious partner—someone mature and financially stable. Instead of empathy, she was met with harsh judgment: told she had no right to choose, only to wait and be chosen.

This response reflects a deeper societal problem. In Uganda, single mothers are often blamed, shamed, and overlooked—while the men who father these children and disappear are rarely held accountable. Single motherhood cuts across all divides. It affects women regardless of education, income, or social status. It is no longer a distant issue, it is our reality. It is our sisters, colleagues, and friends. So, we must ask difficult

fathers? "Why is responsibility so easily abandoned?" "And what kind of society are we building when one parent carries the full weight of raising a child?"

Part of the challenge lies in how we are raising our boys. While many well-meaning initiatives focus on empowering the girl-child and rightly so—there is often less emphasis on nurturing responsible, emotionally aware boys who grow into accountable men. Without guidance, mentorship, and positive role models, some young men grow up without a clear sense of responsibility in relationships and fatherhood. At the same time, we cannot ignore the role of changing social dynamics. Economic pressures, shifting relationship

of financial stability have all reshaped how relationships are formed and sustained. In some cases, this has led to fragile unions, transactional relationships, and ultimately, broken families.

Yet, amid all this, one truth remains: women continue to carry the heaviest burden. Single mothers in Uganda face economic hardship, social stigma, and emotional strain. They work twice as hard providing, nurturing, and protecting—often without support. Their children, too, face challenges, from emotional gaps to limited opportunities.

As we continue commemorating the International Women's "month," this is not just a moment for celebration—it is a

responsible fatherhood and hold men accountable for their roles, invest in mentoring boys, shaping them into respectful and responsible men, support single mothers, not stigmatize them, and finally strengthen families and communities, ensuring no parent feels alone.

Supporting women is not just about empowering them in isolation—it is about creating an environment where they are not forced to carry life's burdens alone. A stable home is not a luxury. It is a right. A supportive partner is not a privilege. It is a responsibility.

When fathers walk away, mothers rise—but they should not have to rise alone.

Emmanuel Nsadh, Nursing Officer and community

