

Uganda National Academy of Sciences and U.S. Institute of Medicine Hold Workshop on Intimate Partner Violence

Kampala, Uganda -- The Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) and the U.S. Institute of Medicine (IOM) have partnered to gathered together researchers, implementers, and decision makers to explore ways to prevent and respond to intimate partner violence in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. The workshop participants are drawn from the fields of public health, nursing, medicine, social science, criminal justice, social work, among others, recognizing that intimate partner violence is a problem that affects many sectors and requires the engagement of multiple sectors to develop solutions. The workshop discussions will focus on exploring promising solutions that are evidence-informed, innovative, and cross-sectoral.

Intimate partner violence refers to physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, or controlling behavior by a current or former partner or spouse. A 2005 World Health Organization study found that between 15 percent and 71 percent of women at 15 different sites in 10 developing countries reported physical or sexual abuse or both; Tanzania had one of the highest prevalence rates. Uganda and Kenya were not included in the study, but other studies have shown them to also have significantly high rates of intimate partner violence.

The workshop conveners, UNAS and IOM are both independent, unbiased scientific organizations. The mission of UNAS is to contribute towards improving the prosperity and welfare of the people of Uganda by promoting, generating, sharing and utilizing scientific knowledge and information, and to give independent, merit-based advice to government and society, among others. Similarly, IOM has equivalent aims to the U.S. government and other domestic and international stakeholders who seek its advice. Considering the missions of UNAS and IOM and their roles as scientific organizations, presentations and discussions at the workshop will focus on data and evidence that illuminates how widespread intimate partner violence is, its consequences, the causes and risk factors, and its effective or shown promise to prevent or mitigate it. Given the reputations of UNAS and IOM and the established body of work on violence prevention that has been produced through the IOM Forum on Global Violence Prevention, these entities are in a unique position to facilitate dialogue and exchange among a wide range of global experts and diverse stakeholders on preventing intimate partner violence.

The workshop will explore intimate partner violence as both a public health and a human rights challenge with far-reaching consequences. Within this context, workshop speakers will highlight that, through a better understanding of intimate partner violence, it is possible to prevent and mitigate it. Better prevention can be achieved through a greater understanding of the problem; its risk and protective factors; and effective evidence-informed primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention strategies. Following the public health framework, primary prevention aims to reduce the risk of experiencing or being exposed to IPV by addressing risk factors and social norms that promote it. Secondary prevention focuses on improving the detection of IPV and providing appropriate services for those affected by it, and tertiary prevention focuses on strengthening institutions to provide responsive care thereby mitigating the adverse consequences of IPV.

Specific sessions at the workshop will address intimate partner violence and the intersection with HIV, the unique needs of individuals experiencing or exposed to intimate partner violence across the lifespan, responding to intimate partner violence from screening to care, the role of social norms and community engagement in prevention, societal level policies and implications, and overall how to improve intervention and decrease intimate partner violence prevalence.

Members of the committee that planned the workshop included health professionals, nongovernmental implementers, and researchers from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and the United States.

Archived video of workshop presentations will be available a few weeks after the workshop at www.iom.edu.