

WOMAN WAHALA

Produced in Sierra Leone, January 2008

CHARACTERS

Hawa

Abdulai

Musu

Policeman

Frances

An exploration of the theme of violence against women, this program tells the story of Hawa, a woman who is beaten mercilessly by her husband while his family and neighbors do nothing to stop him. At this moment in the story, Hawa is battered for failing to sell enough wares and her friend convinces her to approach the police for help. After much cajoling, Hawa arrives at the police station only to be turned away because issues such as these are traditionally handled within the family. On her return home, Hawa is assaulted yet again for shaming her husband before strangers. Bruised and bloody in body and spirit, Hawa is finally delivered in the hands of a social worker who makes every attempt to help her.

SCENE ONE: *At Abdulai's house*

SFX: Hawa walks into the house

Hawa: Abdulai, good evening.

Abdulai: Why are you so late today, Hawa?

Hawa: How?

Abdulai: Are you asking me that kind of question?

Hawa: I don't know what you're talking about - that's why I'm asking

Abdulai: Don't you realize that you really came home late today?

Hawa: Abdulai, it's because of the sales it was very slow at P-Z market so I walked the streets to look for customer.

Abdulai: *(element of sarcasm)* What happened? You did not have much sales today

Hawa: No. I did not. - not much international around anymore.

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Abdulai: What? Are you opening your mouth to tell me that you don't have better sales today and about white people....

Hawa: But Abdulai...

SFX: Abdulai slaps Hawa

Hawa: (*screams, crying and calling out*) Why? My mother! Abdulai, Why did you slap me?

Abdulai: That's just for a start

Hawa: (*crying*) Is it because I did not make better sales today?

Abdulai: Yes - it's because when you are out there, instead of selling, you sit with your friends talking the whole of the day

Hawa: I don't have any friends when I'm out there doing my bizness.

Abdulai: Well, if that is not the case - you are the one who is responsible for eating the money that you made from the sales

Hawa: Abdulai, that is not true

Abdulai: Well, if that is not the case, (*angry and probing*) tell me what you did with my money. If not, I'm going to give you a sound beating

Hawa: You know that all the money that I made from sales - I give it to you when I reach home...

Abdulai: Just shut up! You are lying! You think that I don't know what you are up to?

Hawa: What?

SFX: Begin to beat her again

Hawa: (*shouts*) Woye? Leave me alone. Your parents are here and they say nothing when you are beating me

Abdulai: Nobody will open his mouth to talk to me

Hawa: so you want to kill me, not so?

Abdulai: I'm not talking about any other day but today - I will beat the hell out of you

SFX: Continues to beat her; Hawa continues to cry and it fades away

SCENE TWO: *In a market place in town*

SFX: Noise from people selling in the market

Musu: Hawa

Hawa: *(sadly)* Yes, Musu

Musu: What happened to your face?

Hawa: My sister - it's the same old problem that I am having with my husband at home

Musu: What went wrong again that he should beat you so hard

Hawa: It's for money business

Musu: Money? How?

Hawa: Yesterday I went home without having made many sales and I tried to explain that to him but he refused to listen to me and beat me up

Musu: What? Look at your face - it is all swollen up. Even your eye is bruised

Hawa: Musu, this is the problem that I am facing in that house

Musu: But, wait a minute - weren't his parents around when he was beating you?

Hawa: Musu, they were all there but they said nothing. His mother was there. His father was there. And his 3 brothers and sister were there. I pleading with them to let him stop, to save me *(breaks down in tears)* but they just laughed and called me names.

Musu: *(in anger)* Why should that be? This is real hell that you are going through.

Hawa: *(crying)* I'm really tired and sick with what is happening to me. I think I shall kill myself in a few days. *(pause)* don't look at me as if I said something wrong. I am in pain. I cannot feel emotions like all of you talk about.

Musu: You know what I'm going to tell you now?

Hawa: No!

Musu: I want you to go the police and make a report right now, this minute. Come.
(took her by the hand)

Hawa: I'm afraid Musu...

Musu: What are you afraid of?

Hawa: I'm afraid that if the police talks to Abdulai he will even beat me before them. He owns me, he can do what he likes.

Musu: What are you talking about? Are you out of your mind?

Hawa: *(still crying)*

Musu: Look at your face and your arms. An your eyes are so battered I think you will be blind if you don't see doctor this minute. - You are all swollen and you are telling me that you afraid to go the police and make a report.

Hawa: What shall I do when I go the police station?

Musu: Just go and tell them that you are coming in to make a report about your husband who has been beating you for a long time.

Hawa: *(sadly)* Alright

Musu: Hawa, don't fear. They have a Family Protection Unit there. They will help you out.

Hawa: Let me try to go there and make this report...please take care of my goods till I return

Musu: Don't worry - I'll be waiting for you.

SFX: Noise in the market increases and then fades away

SCENE THREE: *Inside the police station*

SFX: Footsteps of officers working the station

Hawa: Good morning, officer!

Officer: Morning. Can I help you?

Hawa: Yes, sah!

Officer: What is it?

Hawa: I have a problem with my husband at home.

Officer: Really?

Hawa: Yes, sah

Officer: So, what do you want me to do for you now?

Hawa: I want to file a report against my husband so that police protection unit will know what to do about that.

Officer: Madam, we have better things to do in this office, ok?

Hawa: I don't understand you , sah.

Officer: Well, let me explain - go to your house and meet with your husband so that you can settle things within the family.

Hawa: Officer, are you telling me to return to the man who beat me so violently and almost broke my arm?

Officer: Yes - I know why I'm saying that.

Hawa: Why did you say so?

Officer: Because you are going to shame and disgrace your husband.

Hawa: You mean me?

Officer: Yes, you - that is the way you women are - you all blame the men.

Hawa: Alright. I want to speak with the officer at the Family Protection Unit.

Officer: *(laughing)* What do you want to see him about?

Hawa: I want to report this matter to him

Officer: Madam, don't waste your time. Go home to your husband - go.

Hawa: *(angry)* Why can't you let me do what I need to?

Officer: *(laughing)* Just leave...

SFX: Footsteps walk away and fades out

[Scene continues in Hawa and Abdulai's house]

Abdulai: So, you went to the police station to make a report on me?

Hawa: *(no answer)*

Abdulai: I'm talking to you - are you not going to answer me?

Hawa: Do you want to beat me again today, Abdulai?

Abdulai: Yes, I will beat you if you do not tell me why you went to the police?

Hawa: How can you beat me?

Abdulai: Are you arguing with me?

SFX: Slaps here and begins to beat her again

Hawa: *(crying)* Woye, woye. Please leave me ALONE. Leave me alone. *(Frantic, sounds of tussle and furniture overturning)*

Abdulai: I'll beat you till I am satisfied.

SFX: Continues to beat her

Hawa: *(crying and screaming for help)* Please leave alone - what have I done to deserve this kind of treatment?

SFX: Crying and fades away

SCENE 4: *Inside an NGO offices*

SFX: Workers in the office

Hawa: Good morning, madam.

Frances: Morning, young woman. Can I help you?

Hawa: Yes *(sadly)*.

Frances: Ok - let me hear what you have to say.

SFX: Chair being pulled

Frances: Please sit down.

Hawa: Thank you very much.

Frances: You welcome.

Hawa: I have a very serious problem bothering me right now.

Frances: What is it?

Hawa: My husband is always beating me.

Frances: Why? What have you done to deserve it?

Hawa: My sister, I have gone to the police to make a report with the Family Protection Unit but the officer refuses to take my statement down.

Frances: What is happening in our police station these days? Is it that they don't have any concern for us - the women?

Hawa: That is what I see - that is the reason why I am here so that I can explain things to you.

Frances: Alright - don't worry. In this office, I am the one responsible for taking care of women's affairs.

Hawa: Please, my sister, I want you to help me this around - before my husband kills me or I kill myself and leave my children.

Frances: You know what we are going to do right now?

Hawa: No

Frances: I will try to get some first aid here in our office and then we will go the police station. You must be in a lot of pain. Your eyes are shut from beating who brought you here?

Hawa: I brought myself. And thank you. No problem, madam.

Frances: Please come with me for the treatment.

Hawa: OK then.

SFX: Footsteps walk in and fades away

[Scene continues at the same police station that Hawa was turned away.]

Frances: Good afternoon, officer.

Officer: Yes, good afternoon. Any problem.

Frances: Yeh - I come with this woman.

Officer: Ok.

Frances: She says she came here the last time but she wasn't given any help.

Officer: Madam, this woman has some problems.

Frances: *(in anger)* Yes she has. And don't tell me the FSU has now become a part of the women's problems.

Officer: I said the woman has problems madam.

Frances: What are you talking about...this woman's husband beats her up and you are telling me that SHE has a problem.

Officer: But, she should settle that problem at home with her husband.

Frances: And if he murders her - what will you do for her children?

Officer Brima: Every day the woman them come to police station to FSU. FSU. FSU. Hey. They must not disgrace their husbands and their family. These little things like beating and so must be settled in the house. That is our advice.

Frances: Look here, Mr. Officer, we as an NGO organization has already attended to this woman and after our stop with you at the station, we will go to Connaught Hospital for further treatment. We think her jaw is broken and her eyes - well, she might lose at least one of them.

And another thing, do you know that there are international agreements between the UN and Sierra Leone called UN Security Council - 1325. I am sure Officer Brima, that you were trained by the UN bodies around Women, Peace and Security. A sure a that. And am sure that you know that the FSU was set up to protect women like Hawa here.

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Officer Brima: *(laughing)* What agreement you talking about? I don't think there is anything you can tell me here. I am a senior officer and am trained by the UN and the international Community. So whether you NGO Oh, I don't think you understand Sierra Leone laws.

Frances: Let me inform you officer, the agreement say, and I quote:

“Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;”

Shall I go on. I think I will.

Officer Brima: I don't think I can stop you.

Frances: “1. African Charter on Human Rights...Article 18 3. The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of women and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions.”

You seem an intelligent man officer. Now are you going to give this woman her rights or not?

Officer Brima: *(a little nervous, pride bruised)* What was the reason you are here again?

SFX: Pause

Frances: *(pretending she did not hear him)* So, the reason why we are here this afternoon is to give a report against the husband of this woman and I want to charge this matter at all costs.

Officer: I'm very sorry, madam - I did not know that this woman was going through hell.

Frances: Well, now that you know the whole thing - you must make a report now before we go so she can sign it.

Officer: Alright you can please come in and make your report.

SFX: Footsteps walk into the office and fades away - door open and closed - chairs pulled and rustling of paper.

Frances: Thank you Officer Brima - I will let the Commissioner know how much you really respected the law and international agreements.

Hawa: *(mumbled thank you as she could not speak. During this time her face had gotten worst. She collapsed.)*

Officer Brima: O my god, please don't die here please *(ran for help and returns with a junior officer to take the woman to hospital, Officer Kamara come.)*

SFX: *persons running and breathing heavily.*

Officer Brima: *(to driver)* Get this woman to Connaught right. You and you *(referring to the other 2 officers)* get a warrant for Abudlai Gobeh and arrest him and charge him to the jail for what he has done to this poor woman. This must not happen in my precinct.

(to himself) he will not get away from this. A man can't wake up and come to work and have a good day with criminal like this trying to get me in trouble. I will make an example of him. Officer Momoh - prepare a Press release and inform the press about this situation that happen here today. I want everybody to know these laws to protect woman their rights.

Officer: Yes Sir *(saluted, foot steps fading).*

Epilogue: Hawa got several operation. Abdulai was charged to court and given 15 years at hard labour at Pademba Road prison.

These dramas are collaborative productions by the International Women's Tribune Centre, the 50/50 Group, Campaign for Good Governance, SLANGO, Thorough Empowerment and Development for Women in Sierra Leone, the Mano River Women's Peace Network, Network Movement for Justice & Development, Women's Partnership for Justice & Peace, Women's Forum and Talking Drum Studio.

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