

MAGAZINE



#WithHer

**Spotlight
Initiative**

*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*



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Initiative**

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#SpotlightEndViolence



Spotlight?

According to the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) and other prevalence studies, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) among those 15-49 years is the most prevalent form of violence experienced by women in Zimbabwe. About thirty-five percent of girls and women 15-49 years have experienced physical violence since age 15, 14% have experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime, and 32% of ever-married women have experienced spousal emotional violence. The experience of violence among adolescent girls also is high. The 2010 National Baseline Study on the Life Experiences of Adolescents shows that 43% of girls aged 13-17 years reported that their first incident of sexual intercourse was unwanted.

While these statistics are alarming, the COVID-19 pandemic has cast an even dimmer light on the progress made in ending sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and achieving gender equality by 2030 in Zimbabwe. One and a half years since the pandemic struck, a myriad of studies and surveys have reported exacerbation of gender inequalities as women and girls continue to bear the brunt of unpaid labour, while being disproportionately at risk of violence compared to their male counterparts. The pandemic is indeed not only a health crisis but also a social one.

The Spotlight Initiative is a comprehensive, joint programme between the United Nations and the European Union, launched globally with seed funding commitment of €500 million from the EU in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific. The programme was officially launched in Zimbabwe in 2019 against the backdrop of SGBV prevalence in the country in partnership with the Government of Zimbabwe. Its aim is to end all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices like child marriages, and promote the sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) of women and girls across the country.

Interventions under the Spotlight Initiative focus on the following six mutually reinforcing programming pillars:

1. Legislative and Policy Frameworks
2. Strengthening Institutions
3. Prevention and Social Norms
4. Delivery of Quality, Essential Services
5. Data Availability and Capacities
6. Supporting the Women's Movement

The following newsletter tells human interest stories, which highlight some of the successes of the Spotlight Initiative in Zimbabwe in addressing social norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls; promoting gender equality at the community level; and investing in women economic empowerment as a means to prevent SGBV in the country.

Spotlight Initiative protects women from sexual harassment in Zimbabwe



It is a sunny afternoon in the suburb of Epworth, and Moreblessing Takurai is preparing to wrap up a busy day at her market stall, where she sells fruits and vegetables that are always fresh and vibrant in color.

At 39 years old, Ms. Takurai is a single mother who lives with her five children in Epworth Overspill and is trying to earn a living as a vendor.

“I would sell my produce on the main road which was not safe for me nor my children.”

“I would sell my produce on the main road which was not safe for me nor my children.”

“In a way we are rich.”

After the Safe Market program was started in 2020 through Katswe Sisterhood however, things have changed for the better for Ms. Takurai and the women she works with. “People now see us as people of high quality because of the appearance of our workstation.”, said Ms. Takurai with a huge smile on her face.

In addition to providing the safe market space, Spotlight Initiative has facilitated peer-to-peer support groups for survivors of gender-based violence. Ms. Takurai testifies that, “It was through peer-to-peer talks and the trainings I received from the Spotlight Initiative that raised my own awareness of GBV.”

She explained; “Women experience bullying, humiliation, violence and discrimination in many ways such as not being allowed to engage in economic activities or to even associate with community organizations. The trainings helped me understand the violence present in our lives.”

WOMEN CAN

Katswe Sisterhood is a Spotlight Initiative implementing partner in Zimbabwe that is focusing on building a safe environment for female vendors and their children, following the Safe Market model. The organization is also raising public awareness of gender-based violence by engaging with the community. This has been incredibly beneficial to women in Epworth and is also motivating them to become better advocates for their own rights.



At forty-seven, Talent Goneso is a mother and widow who resides in Mutasa District. She is a Spotlight Initiative advocate representing Ward 18 in Mutasa District. “I joined the Spotlight programme in 2019, I attended one of the meetings that they conducted on gender-based violence (GBV) and that is how I became an advocate of the ward”, Talent said.

She continues to narrate her story:

“Before joining the programme I was a reserved person. I didn't like crowds and I never had sympathy for others. I was only concerned about what was going on in my life. When my husband passed on, I faced many challenges as my in-laws did not treat me as an equal nor did they consider me as their daughter. They would say horrible things to me, and I was so stressed to the extent that I ended up losing so much weight.

My parents came to visit me and took me back home where I got help and that is where I first learnt about the Spotlight Initiative. Today, I have the confidence to socialise with other people in my community, which is something I never used to do. I learnt that sharing your problems lightens the burden and it has the potential to set you free. I am now a loving and compassionate person. I now help other women who are facing gender-based violence and I get good feedback from the people I would have helped.

We have peace huts that were set up under Spotlight Initiative. At the peace huts we discuss and solve issues such as domestic violence and peace. In our community, we have recorded cases of rape, where the survivors are mostly young girls, and some are raped by their fathers. Through opening up to peers we hear about it, and we conduct workshops for such girls to educate them on life.”

The intervention that Talent participates in is the #PeaceBegins@Home campaign. This campaign is aimed at addressing the problems of

gender based violence and harmful practices like forced marriages from village level going up. The backbone of the campaign is the Peace Hut model. A Peace Hut is a village meeting where community members and stakeholders including traditional leaders, gender champions, health workers, Community Based Organizations and Village Development Committee members raise awareness on, and address issues related to Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices. Peace Huts are a source of information, community-based conflict resolution and prevention, preliminary psychosocial support and referrals.

“Through these dialogues we have empowered these young girls to teach others about ending GBV. We have also encouraged these young girls to go and share what they have been taught with their peers. As an advocate, at times I provide safe homes for victims of GBV to protect them from perpetrators,” Talent said.

Being an advocate is not an easy job, but in Ward 18 of the Mutasa district, Talent Goneso has proved to excel in her role, and she wears her title with confidence.



Fostering Peace at home, communities in Zimbabwe

The COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to have exacerbated the Zimbabwean economic crisis, with disproportionate impacts to the poor, mainly women and those who are already marginalized. Emerging evidence already shows an increase in food insecurity, household financial instability and high cases of gender based violence (GBV) as a result of the pandemic. This has been a living reality for Mazviita Kurega, a thirty-four-year-old woman living in Ward 16 of Mutasa District.

“The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a thorough cleaning machine in my life as a married woman.”

Mrs. Kurega shared her story about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected her life and the relationship she had with her husband. She recalled, “My husband used to work in Mutare coming home only on weekends, and some weekends he could even ask me to receive goods which he would have sent by bus. However, as a result of the pandemic, he was no longer going to work, so we would spend every minute of the day together and we ended up fighting day in day out,” she said.

“My husband and I would quarrel over simple things. Little did I know that he was not happy because I was now the one feeding the family since he was unemployed. The situation made him feel less of a man as our African culture normalizes that the husband should be the main breadwinner of the family. This resulted in my husband beating me. I remember one day I was hit for not cooking lunch because our mealie meal bowl was empty and our oil vessel was dry,” she said.

Such has been the reality of many women in the country, and indeed across the globe as governments enforced nation-wide lockdowns in an attempt to curb



Spotlight Initiative is working to reverse the scourge of violence against women and girls. Currently, 1 in 3 women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence

This had a negative effect not only on the economy as employers lost revenue and had to let go of some of their staff, but also on family dynamics as tensions intensified in many homes and some women and girls were stuck at home with the perpetrators of their abuse.

Mazviita’s life took a happy turn after she started participating in the Spotlight Initiative supported #PeaceBegins@Home campaign in her district. “I attended trainings and discussions facilitated by Women Action Group on gender-based violence preventative measures.



An Innovator Against GBV (IAG) speaking to members of a community in Mutasa on promoting peace at home

Through the #PeaceBegins@Home, we taught to find ways to understand our partners to avoid conflict. I also encouraged my husband to join the trainings where we were trained on projects that can help us feed our families.”

The #PeaceBegins@Home campaign is aimed at addressing the problems of gender-based violence and harmful practices at the community level. The campaign is fostering conflict resolution and prevention, gender justice and male engagement. The backbone of the campaign is the Peace Hut model.



STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A Peace Hut is a village meeting where community members and stakeholders including traditional leaders, gender champions, health workers, Community Based Organisations and Village Development Committee members raise awareness on and address issues related to Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices.



Thirty-four-year-old mother Kundai Matiza* resides in Hurungwe District with her four children, one of whom has a physical disability. According to Kundai her husband is rarely at home and “never around to support the family.”

“When my husband is around, we are always arguing which often leads us into physical fighting. We are getting marriage counselling from the chairman of the village and it works for some days, but most of the times my husband just leaves the house for days or even weeks and he never tells me where he is going. A good example is today – I have no idea where he is,” Kundai said.

“In 2020, a friend of mine shared with me information about the organization Apostolic Women Empowerment Trust (AWET) and their work in our district under Spotlight initiative.

Before joining the program, I always used to have suicidal thoughts and wanted to end the life of my children, but the councillor was always there to help us out and talk to me. I once purchased poison so that we could drink it as a family but VaSoko** the village head stopped me from making that mistake,” Kundai explained.

“AWET has helped me to understand that as a woman I can also be empowered and looked up to. It’s just a matter of having the right mind set and I am slowly, but surely, making my way there. After joining the Spotlight program, I still have challenges that I face especially in my marriage. At times my husband can just come out of nowhere and we start to argue. This affects me very much because this happens in the presence of the children. We live in a one roomed house. Yes, we have our good days, and I enjoy them very much but at times tables just turn drastically,” said Kundai.



Credit: UN WOMEN

Through peer-to-peer counselling and awareness raising campaigns conducted by Behavior Change Facilitators, AWET is continuing its work to help women in similar positions as Kundai, so that they can have a positive outlook on their lives and overcome the challenges they face in their marriages.



Apostolic women facilitate community dialogue to end violence

Makanaka Nyabadza is a thirty-seven-year-old mother with four children, living on a farm with her husband in Hurungwe. Before participating in Spotlight initiative activities Makanaka says, “My life was difficult because I didn’t understand how to handle internal family issues and would end up insulting my husband especially when money was misused, and we would start fighting without giving him time to explain anything.”

Makanaka goes on to talk of the infidelity in her marriage. “My husband would date other girls and take money from our savings and budget to cater to his girlfriend’s needs. This resulted in serious violence in my home.”

However, after the Spotlight Initiative was introduced in Hurungwe through the Apostolic Women Empowerment Trust (AWET), Makanaka attended one of their community dialogues and her situation has started to shift positively. “It has been a privilege to be part of the work that AWET is doing in my community because my life has changed as a result.”

According to Makanaka, “After participating in the program, I learnt to sit down and talk to my husband on why he was having extramarital affairs and on how to use our money more efficiently.

I then realized that I also need to work and help my husband to raise money for our upkeep, which has also led to less infidelity in my home and living a peaceful life.” Makanaka is teaching other survivors of GBV, and they are learning from her story.



Child marriage is still highly prevalent in Zimbabwe, particularly in the Apostolic community.

Asked about what more can be done to eliminate violence against women and girls, Makanaka expressed her belief that other programs that are to come under the Spotlight Initiative should also involve men as they are often the perpetrators of GBV. “Men should be taught how to manage their emotions when they are angry so that it does not result in physical violence,” said Makanaka.



SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE'S WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GBV PROGRAMMES IN PICTURES

