

SCOPE HIV SUCCESS STORY

MALAWI



Two girls practicing self-defense skills during an *IMPower* class in Lilongwe.

USAID/PEPFAR/World Relief/Ujamaa Pamodzi: Photo by Rahman Pelusi, Ujamaa Pamodzi Africa

NAME AND ROLE

Angela, student and *IMPower* participant

LOCATION

Lilongwe, Malawi

SUMMARY

SCOPE HIV is teaching girls and boys skills around the prevention of gender-based violence through *IMPower*.

WORLDRELIEF.ORG/SCOPEHIV

TEACHING GIRLS SELF ADVOCACY FOR PREVENTION OF SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

HIV infections in Malawi are on the decline, but positive gender norms and gender-based violence prevention is critical to sustaining that momentum. SCOPE HIV is working with Ujamaa Pamodzi to implement the *IMPower*, a curriculum meant to equip children ages 9-14 with skills and knowledge on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), to support this momentum.

IMPower is a curriculum customized for the unique challenges that boys and girls face: the Girls Empowerment and Self-defense curriculum portion teaches girls on boundary setting and diffusion tactics, verbal assertiveness, and negotiation, and physical self-defense skills, while the Boy's Transformation curriculum focuses on treating women and girls respectfully, and the prevention of SGBV amidst social and community pressures related to masculinity norms.

USING SKILLS DEVELOPED IN REAL TIME

Angela, a young girl in Lilongwe, shared her experience using the skills she learned attending *IMPower's* Girls Empowerment and Self-defense classes.

After class, an unknown older man stopped her, indicating that he had something to tell her. When she stopped, he shared that he was interested in her being his girlfriend. Angela knew she wasn't ready to be in a relationship and that the man was probably her father's age. So, using the skills she learned in *IMPower*, she "spoke to him assertively with a loud voice and courage that I was not

interested in the relationship, and I told him straight to his face that he is old enough to be my parent, not my partner.”

To her surprise, the tactic worked, getting the attention of those around her and the courage to walk away. The next day, she saw the man again and he didn’t even acknowledge her, despite her being alone.

Angela later shared the courage it took to draw attention to the situation and the skills that helped her identify the situation’s danger.

“I can now sense danger, respond quickly to danger, by lying, shaming, negotiating even warning for consequences in order for me to get away. And if the situation seems very dangerous, there is always readily available support from people and friends around.”

- Angela, *IMPower* participant

HIV’S LINKAGE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of HIV. In Malawi, an estimated 15-25% of girls and boys under 15 years old experience sexual and gender-based violence. Twenty percent of people living with HIV in Malawi reported experiencing physical violence.

By 2022, 39,000 children will participate in SCOPE HIV’s *IMPower* program, preventing an estimated 2,800 cases of sexual violence against boys and girls in Malawi.

This story is courtesy of Catherine Kalipa, Ujamaa Pamodzi Africa and World Relief.