

SCOPE HIV SUCCESS STORY

Malawi



World Relief Staff, Lighthouse Trainers and participants posed for a photo on completion of the training session in Mangochi

USAID/World Relief: Photo by Hexter Starch, SASA! Faith Supervisor, Mangochi

NAME AND ROLE

Eunice Jekete, psychosocial counselor

LOCATION

Mangochi/Traditional Authority Namkumba, Malawi

SUMMARY

A newly trained psychosocial counselor helped a mother and her teenage daughter fight back against her ruthless husband, who threatened to leave her if she didn't consent to him sleeping with his stepdaughter.

WORLDRELIEF.ORG/SCOPEHIV

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT: A GAME CHANGER IN SUPPORTING WOMEN AFFECTED BY SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Culture is one of the major factors contributing to gender-based violence and the spread of HIV. Due to gender socialization, many women fail to make decisions on issues that affect the health and welfare of themselves and their children. In Mongochi and Machinga, there are traditional practices in which a husband may demand sex from their daughters, often with consent from his wife. This consent is often given due to the economic dependency the wife has on her husband. But this behavior leaves trauma for many in its wake. Unfortunately, these women cannot seek psychosocial support due to the costs and scarcity of psychosocial professionals. This is why the presence of Eunice Jekete in Mangochi is so critical.

A psychosocial counselor trained by SCOPE HIV, Eunice is a win to the communities within Matekwe Faith Network. Together with her trained colleague, the two provide counseling to those in the Matekwe Faith Network affected by sexual and gender-based violence. Eunice and the other psychosocial counselors were identified by and are active members of faith networks in their communities.

One of Eunice's recent accomplishments is her support in counseling a 16 years old girl whose stepfather was pressuring her to have sex with him, or he would leave her mother. The girl disclosed the coercion during one of her sessions with Eunice. Eunice went on to counsel the survivor's mother, who disclosed to have given in to her husband's demand. Eunice counseled the mother helping her to escape the relationship.



Mr. Joseph Lungu, Psychosocial Master Trainer from Lighthouse during one of the training sessions in Mangochi

USAID/World Relief: Photo by Hexter Starch, SASA! Faith Supervisor

COMMUNITY-BASED PSYCHOSOCIAL PROVISION, A MODEL TO ADVOCATE FOR

This intervention was not part of SCOPE HIV's original project design. Still, it was recommended as the project was implemented due to a noted gap in psychosocial provision in the impact area. SCOPE HIV registered many sexual and gender-based violence cases, with most survivors requiring psychosocial support. Through the Ministry of Gender, the government of Malawi is a major provider of psychosocial services at the local level through child protection workers. However, child protection workers are too few to meet the service demand. In addition to psychosocial support, legal support is prioritized to get justice for victims.

During a three-day training, SCOPE HIV partnered with Lighthouse, which trained the identified counselors in basic psychosocial provision. Adopting this approach in programming sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response intervention can increase access to psychosocial support for victims in Malawi.

Community-based psychosocial provision is the real deal! Without this intervention, a 16-year-old child would continue to struggle, and the

wife would still be preyed on by her husband. Through this, she has rediscovered her self-worth as a woman and mother to lead an independent life.

This was echoed by the mother who opted for anonymity: "I am free at last! My whole life was tied to my husband. Accepted him to be sleeping with my daughter because I never wanted to be abandoned by him since I would have no one to support me and my children. Eunice has helped me a lot. Now I have discovered that I can leave on my own and take good care of my children. Life is hard but I know with God's grace we will make. My daughter can now afford a smile and I am sure she will start performing well in class. She is brave and never accepted to be used sexually by the devil I called a husband."



Eunice Jekete, a psychosocial counselor impacting lives of many in Matekwe Faith Network in Mangochi.

USAID/World Relief: Photo by Macdonald Chimlaza, Gender & Child Protection Technical Officer

This story is written by Macdonald Chimlaza, Gender and Child Protection Technical Officer.