

Stories of change

“ I used to be very shy and had no self-confidence, but through the Safe Space meetings I have found my voice. I can now speak in front of others in public. I can now speak in front of you without any fear or self-consciousness. Before the project this would not have been possible. ”

Mariam, 19, George compound

“ I was often beaten by my husband who was philandering and spending our money at the bar. My son [15] told us that this way of interacting with each other is wrong. He first spoke to me separately from my husband and then he spoke to my husband. He did it so calmly and so grown up. Since we had those talks in our house, things are calmer. Not all violence has disappeared but I would say it is much reduced. I am very proud of what my son is becoming through this project. Even his father is proud of him now. ”

Lynn, mother of young male participant, George compound

“ What this project has done for our daughters is a miracle. They have become confident young women who feel positive about their future. ”

Alinani, father of young female participant, George compound

“ I am a 23 year old mother with three children from two different fathers. Since getting married at 16 my life became difficult because I depended on my husband who used to abuse me economically, emotionally and physically. I joined the Safe Space and learned a lot about GBV, which has changed my life. I was privileged to be one to receive seed capital. I am now able to support myself, have left my abusive marriage and have started to build a house for me and my children. ”

Alicia, 23, Linda compound

Project dashboard: Empowering young female slum dwellers to tackle gender based violence in Lusaka

Goal

To support over 4,000 young people in 2 slum communities in Lusaka, Zambia with increased emotional resilience, improved economic security, and more equal gender relations within families and communities who reject all forms of gender based violence

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Implementing partners:

National Council of Zambia YWCA
Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA)



Funders:



Duration: January 2015 – June 2019

Cost: £ 833,386

Final Evaluation Report:
www.ycareinternational.org/publications-listing/



Y Care International creates opportunities for vulnerable young people across the globe to change their lives for the better. Inspired by and faithful to our Christian values, we work with people of all faiths and none to build a more just world, free from poverty.



Tackling gender based violence in Lusaka's informal settlements

From 2015 to 2019, we worked in partnership with YWCA Zambia to reduce gender based violence in two slum communities by providing safe spaces for young women, access to legal support, entrepreneurship training and seed capital, and community awareness-raising activities. We helped young people to build confidence, become financially independent and reduce their vulnerability to violence.

YMCA

The results

Context

Zambia has one of the highest levels of gender inequality worldwide and gender based violence (GBV) is an increasing problem. The detrimental effects of GBV on survivors' physical and mental health and wellbeing often result in high social costs which pervade Zambian society. According to national surveys 43% of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence at least once since age 15. Overall, 47% of married women report having experienced physical, sexual and/or emotional violence from their partner or husband. Our project focused on tackling GBV in two informal settlements in Lusaka: George and Linda.

Young women have increased emotional resilience, improved economic security and have greater influence in their families and informal settlements.

Safe spaces were offered to young women to discuss and learn about topics such as GBV, sexual reproductive health and rights, and other issues relevant to vulnerable youth in Lusaka's informal settlements. These weekly meetings helped build young women's confidence: 63% of the young women interviewed felt positive about their future, whilst 27% strongly agreed that they manage to solve difficult problems. Parents indicated that the young women have greatly increased their self-confidence and life skills. Overall, young women reported that they now feel respected at home and in their broader community, with 37% indicating that when they raise issues, their communities listen to them.

The financial literacy courses also included in the Safe space meetings had a very positive impact on beneficiaries and their households, with many individuals and households adopting savings strategies: 59% of young female beneficiaries are actively saving and 23% are members of a savings and credit group.

The entrepreneurship activities enabled many young girls to continue their education, an opportunity which might have been missed without this component of the project. Towards the end of the project, 57 young women were actively engaged in running a small business.

Service providers are more accountable and accessible to GBV survivors or young women at risk of GBV

The daily presence of mobile legal clinics and trained paralegals in Linda and George settlements run by project partner Women and Law Southern Africa (WLSA) have increased the legal support available to women and community members, resulting in at least 2,068 community members in both locations accessing free legal aid. Key informant interviews confirmed that through the project's various activities, but in

particular through the paralegals and the mobile legal clinics, there is improved communication with the police and medical personnel. Most of the GBV cases handled by the mobile legal clinics and the paralegals included child maintenance and other economic abuse situations, as well as physical assault.

Residents of George and Linda settlements are now much more aware that GBV is against the law, and where they can go to report cases. Key informants, including the police and focus group discussion participants, noted that the visibility of not only the paralegals and the mobile clinics, but also the mentors, the young advocates and the other project participants contributed to the noticeable sharp reduction of incidences of overt GBV in both settlements.

Young women enjoy more equal gender relations within families and communities who reject all forms of GBV

An independent research study on perceptions of safety was undertaken in the final months of the project, and found that safety remained a concern for women within their homes and broader community. However, community awareness campaigns and youth advocacy activities including Photovoice exhibitions that focused on GBV in each of the settlements raised GBV awareness beyond the limits of the settlements to the broader Lusaka community.

Two youth advocates in George settlement were elected to become members of the George Ward Development Committee. Their role on the committee is to represent the youth, and through the committee they hope to continue to work towards gender equity and rejection of GBV in their community. One of their first successes has been to secure a space for a community library in a community hall which is currently under construction because they recognise that education is key to achieving a sustainable, safer and more equal society.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have increased capacity to respond to the needs and rights of young women and survivors of GBV

The project focused on strengthening the capacity of CSOs through information sharing and knowledge building on gender issues and GBV. By doing this, the project successfully brought the various stakeholders together and established an effective network of CSOs in each of the settlements, as well as linking up the two settlements. Prior to the project, CSOs had operated in silos often targeting the same group for similar activities. By linking the various CSOs, churches, schools, clinics, police and ward committees, the project benefitted the wider community within both settlements. This is one of the most sustainable outcomes of the project.

What changed?

Our project in numbers

63% 
of young women feel
positive about their future

49% 
of young women are better off
financially than before the project

129 
small businesses established,
57 remain active at the end of the project

2,068 
people accessed free legal support

20  
CSOs actively involved in continuing joint
efforts to tackle GBV in Lusaka

What next?

The project put in place effective referral systems and networks to support survivors of GBV, operated by Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and government agencies.

Four legal desks have been established in Linda settlement to continue providing information and services to survivors and young women at risk of GBV.

Two young advocates have been elected onto local government decision making bodies, thereby increasing young people's voice and ability to influence decision-making at community governance levels.

Networks of CBOs, local government agencies, school, churches, health services and the police have been established to continue work to raise awareness of and reduce occurrence of GBV in Lusaka.