



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence against women and girls

Initiated by the European Union and the United Nations



From An Oppressor to a Gender Champion

According to UN, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world. It knows no social, economic, or national boundaries. GBV undermines the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence. Violence against women, girls, boys and men is widespread and can cause long-term physical and mental health problems. It occurs everywhere, at work, in the streets, in the home and community and both men and women are victims of gender-based violence. Violence and abuse affect all spheres of life and sadly these effects can be devastating and long lasting.

Lower Guruve Development Association (LGDA) under UNWOMEN Spotlight Initiative is implementing a project entitled **Strengthening Movement Building to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Mashonaland Central Province**, in Mbire, Guruve, Muzarabani and Rushinga Districts. During the first phase of the project, LGDA carried out sensitization programmes in both schools and communities to educate women, men, boys, and girls on the rights of women and girls. In schools, GBV was well included to enable young people to develop positive lifestyles that promote health living and social relations through the **Catch them young** initiative since the experience or threat of GBV impacts negatively on performance and school attendance of children. LGDA embarked on an aggressive mission to shun the structural and cultural violence that has left young girls and women vulnerable to incessant sexual abuse among others. This anomaly has been exacerbated by the intercultural environment that exists within Mashonaland Central especially areas along the border of Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

LGDA saw it worth to involve men in this programme since they are usually the perpetrators. It established community-based Gender Based Social movement (GBSMs) such as Men's Forums and the male Gender champion to challenge men who beat their wives and anyone who perpetrates any form of violence against women and girls and these groups changed lives in communities in Mash Central.



Mbire Men's Forum Trainings



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Cluster Mahembe (43) under Sabhuku Mabvudzeni grew up believing that beating a wife was normal and that it was his right to discipline her. “When I got married, I practiced this belief devotedly. I turned my wife into a punching bag every time I got drunk. On several occasions, she had me arrested for domestic violence. I expected her to be perfect in everything, I felt she was the cause of my trauma. Any conversation always ended up breeding quarrel and fighting. I developed so much hatred on her for no reason and got myself a small house whom I felt loved me better”

The 43-year-old resident of Mabvudzeni Village, Mbire District under chief Matsiwo felt his wife was a curse and a cause for all the economic hardships that he faced. “Life was unbearable for me and beating my wife became a daily ritual,” Cluster said. Despite all the challenges she faced, Cluster's wife, never gave up on her marriage and kept on hoping for the best. She stomached the thrashings with no thought of leaving her oppressor. Her husband had weakened her connections with family and friends, making it extremely difficult for her to seek support.

Cluster’s turning point was in 2021 when he joined the Men’s Forum initiative implemented by the LGDA Consortium in Ward 15 community of Mbire District. “The LGDA Innovators Against Gender Based Violence trainings changed my life. They encouraged men to participate in the fight against gender-based violence in their community. We were taught about the rights of women and girls. Since then, I have not lifted a finger against my wife. I have opted to champion for the rights of women” he said.

Cluster said that since the day he got trained to be a gender champion life changed. He now preaches against gender-based violence. “Because I no longer fight my wife there is now harmony in my home and our economic status has improved due to inclusive decision making. I want to encourage all men to support their women and be careful with the choice of their association. At times peer group influences are the contributing factors to violence at home. I have realized that violence is not a solution to any problem” he uttered remorsefully.

On behalf of Chief Matsiwo, Senior Village Head Robert Goredema of Goredema Village Ward 15 Mbire District applauded the LGDA efforts to the Mbire Community and further elaborated on how it will go a long way in improving their community. “I want to condemn any form of violence. Either gender can be a victim or perpetrator of abuse. Recently, a lot of women have been injured and some murdered in domestic quarrels by their own husbands. It is our obligation as men to advocate for women’s rights starting with ending all forms of domestic violence especially towards women. I want to encourage men and women to respect each other for the development of the country”, he said during an Interministerial Visit by UNWOMEN, UNFPA, UNICEF and Ministry of Women Affairs to Ward 15, Mbire District, Mash Central

According to Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, spousal abuse is the most common form of gender-based violence in Zimbabwe. Women are mainly under attack in their homes and society in general. They face sexual violence, physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, and socio-economic violence.



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LGDA under Spotlight Initiative launched the HeForShe programme in Mashonaland Central Province, an invitation for men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold, visible, and united force for gender equality.