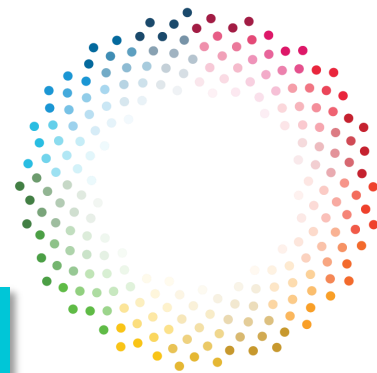


SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE BULLETIN

A Malawi Country Programme Official Newsletter



Volume One: July 2020



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TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS FOSTERS DEVELOPMENT



Maria Jose Torres Macho
UN Resident Coordinator

The Spotlight Initiative, a joint programme aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls, is the single largest targeted investment in eradicating such abuses that Malawi has ever seen.

The UN is very invested in making the Spotlight Initiative a transformational intervention, because it is mastering a 'business unusual' approach by looking into the survivors' needs and the institutions required to be at the forefront of the response. For that purpose, the Spotlight Initiative in Malawi is focusing on innovation and new partnerships, and rolling out a multi-sectoral strategy that boldly tackles Violence against Women and Girls from multiple directions.

The dire fact remains that Malawi's developmental progress will stall unless the women and girls who are over half of the country's population are able to thrive and contribute to national development. A case in point: improving gender equality in the agriculture sector alone could pull almost a quarter of a million people out of poverty.

As an accelerator of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, achieving gender equality is in the interest of all Malawians, the impact would be immediately seen in communities and in the households. It is clear that we would not be able to achieve SDGs, certainly not realize gender equality, unless women and girls can live a life free of violence.

Around 60 per cent of the programme's implementation is taking place in targeted districts (Dowa, Machinga, Mzuzu, Nkhata Bay, Nsanje and Ntchisi), where harmful attitudes and beliefs related to violence against women and girls are at the core of the vices. In a recent poll conducted through

the Initiative, we found that 24 per cent of respondents believe that harmful practices like child marriage are either important to Malawi's culture, or necessary for a girl's development. These are precisely the kinds of attitudes that the programme is working hard to transform.

In line with the 2030 Agenda's rallying cry to leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind first, the Spotlight Initiative is honing its attention on vulnerable groups as a matter of priority. These include persons with disabilities, refugees and marginalised communities who are situated far from district centres, and who are typically left out of development programmes due to access challenges. The Spotlight Initiative has solidified an unprecedented number of partnership agreements with grassroots organisations, in an effort to develop capacities to address violence against women and girls at the community level and transform harmful attitudes and behaviours.

Globally, the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a steep increase of violence against women and girls. In Malawi, data show that the numbers of child marriages and rapes of very young girls are mounting. Between April and May 2020 alone, the number of child marriages reported through the YONECO hotline increased by 18 per cent. This is an extremely worrying statistic given that, even before the pandemic, Malawi already had one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. For this reason, the Spotlight Initiative is working hand in hand with the Government of Malawi and civil society organisations (CSOs) to ensure that women and girls do not become collateral damage of the measures taken to stop the spread of this disease.

The Initiative is a collaborative effort between the UN, the EU, the Government of Malawi, CSOs, traditional leaders, faith leaders, academia, the media and our list of partners continues to grow. We are working with actors from all walks of life because eliminating violence against women and girls for good requires the commitment and the meaningful engagement of all Malawians.

Ultimately, it is only when we all unite to end senseless violence against women and girls, that we will succeed in propelling Malawi towards prosperity and growth for all.



Ivo Hoefkens

EU Head of Cooperation

The former High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini for the European Union once said; **"violence against women is violence against the society – so the entire society must react to it"**. It is not only the EU or the UN who share this view, but more importantly many Malawians have expressed a similar conviction. This then begs the question: why does violence against women and girls remain so pervasive in Malawi?

Many studies have been conducted on the causes of violence, and many strategies have been developed to address this reprehensible behaviour; some effective and others not so much.

The EU and the UN have joined hands to support those who are taking on the enormous challenge of **eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls** – we are calling it the **Spotlight Initiative**. Being a global initiative, it is addressing all forms of violence in different parts of the world. In Malawi, the Spotlight Initiative decidedly focuses on **sexual and gender based violence, including harmful practices**.

You may wonder **why** the EU has taken the initiative with the UN to put the spotlight on this painful issue. It has to do with the EU's **core values** of respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. Violence against women and girls run counter these fundamental values. Furthermore, we firmly believe that a targeted investment in women and girls, helping to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, is

indispensable for the development of the country. That is why the Spotlight Initiative proposes to put the **issue of sexual and gender based violence at the forefront**, to raise awareness on its harmful impact and to leave no one behind, reaching out in particular to the most vulnerable and marginalised women and girls, those who face multiple forms of discrimination.

Moreover, the Spotlight Initiative challenges us in many ways to do things differently, not in the least in our **partnerships**.

The EU/UN partnership, and the UN agencies' partnership, on Spotlight means we are working closely together towards a common goal, combining our areas of strength to ensure effective and efficient support to Malawi in ending sexual and gender based violence. This also applies to our **multi-sectoral approach**. Acknowledging the complexity of the issue of sexual and gender based violence, Spotlight is tackling the challenge from all angles, taking into account legal, institutional, educational, health and cultural perspectives.

Finally, there is a strong **community focus**. Taking us back to Mogherini's words that *the entire society must react to it*, we are fully aware that eliminating this scourge must come from within. We are therefore supporting in the first place the communities, strengthening their capacities and amplifying their voices.

In the end, we hope this initiative can support a sustained **movement of women and men, girls and boys saying NO to violence against women and girls**, as they make way to a developed Malawi with equal rights for women and men.

#StrongerTogether

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE SUPPORTS BIRTH OF CHIEFS' FORA: ENGAGING TRADITIONAL LEADERS TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

By Faith Mvula – UN Women



Recently, the Spotlight Initiative in Malawi supported a platform for paramount chiefs and senior traditional leaders to discuss the establishment of national, district and community forums for traditional leaders in Malawi.

The national consultative workshops provided space for 28 female and 32 male traditional leaders to develop social accountability mechanisms for their roles in eliminating violence against women and girls and promoting positive social norms.

As custodians of culture, traditions and social norms, the Spotlight Initiative will support the development of a sustainable policy and institutional framework that will facilitate a structured and harmonised way for Traditional Leadership to eliminate violence against women and girls, respond to COVID-19, promote gender equality, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV prevention, and eliminate harmful cultural practices in the

country such as child marriages.

The consultations were conducted against the backdrop of an outdated legal framework for Chiefs in Malawi (Chiefs Act 1967), the absence of a chiefs' policy and institutional framework, and the absence of a mechanism for coordinating activities with traditional leaders.

The event was co-facilitated by the Ministry of Local Government and the Rural Development, and the Ministry of Gender, Child Development and Community Development and also enabled traditional leaders to talk about their role in contributing to the COVID-19 response.

During the opening remarks, the Guest of Honor, Mrs. Erica Maganga, the Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Gender, Child Development and Community Development, appreciated the support from the UN and the EU in supporting the Government and traditional

leaders to develop an institutional framework that guides traditional leadership to address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and harmful cultural practices, promote gender equality and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), and respond collectively to COVID-19 across the country.

She added, “specifically, the national consultations aim to solicit inputs from Traditional Leaders on the Chiefs’ Policy formulation exercise, and secure their consensus and commitment to fully participate and contribute towards a Malawi where all women and girls, particularly the most vulnerable, live free from all forms of violence and harmful practices”.

The Principal Secretary recognized the importance of the consultations especially on generating awareness among Paramount Chiefs and Senior Chiefs around their role under the Spotlight Initiative and the Council of Traditional Leaders (COTLA), as well to kick start the process of establishing the National Forum for Traditional Leaders in Malawi.

Speaking on behalf of the traditional leaders, Paramount Chief Kawinga from Machinga- one of Spotlight districts- commended the UN and the Malawi Government for advancing an initiative that will see traditional leaders in Malawi operate and speak with one voice under the Traditional Leaders’ forum.

He applauded the long-awaited opportunity for the establishment of a structure that will help chiefs work together, share ideas, and be held accountable to their people as they work towards addressing GBV and other harmful practices.

He urged fellow traditional leaders to convey key messages from the workshops back to their communities so that all chiefs at different levels participate in the forums towards positive social change..

In her remarks, the UN Women Country Representative, Ms Clara Anyangwe, thanked the Government of Malawi for supporting an initiative that works with traditional leaders as critical change agents.

With over 80% of the population living in rural areas under the jurisdictions of Traditional Leadership, the Spotlight Initiative’s response to eliminating violence against women and girls has deliberately positioned Traditional Leaders at the forefront.

As the gateway to communities that the SI wants to

reach, Traditional Leaders will be tasked with raising awareness on and eliminating SGBV and harmful cultural practices, delivering gender equality messages, and facilitating the COVID-19 response. They will also play a direct role in collecting and relaying data on SGBV harmful practices, while ensuring that GBV survivors access essential and life saving services.



Photos: Left; A discussion in session. Above; Senior Chief Kachindamoto poses with a fellow traditional leader during the consultation meetings



INTRODUCING THE CIVIL SOCIETY NATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP– CS-NRG

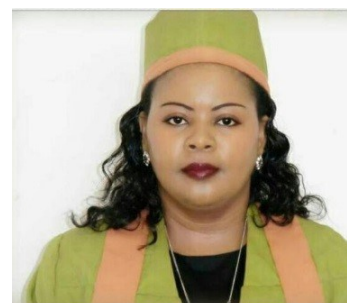
The Malawi Civil Society National Reference Group (CS-NRG) is a group of 15 pre-eminent national and local experts on eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Harmful Practices (HP), as well as on women's rights more broadly. The CS-NRG was set up in 2019 to ensure that Civil Society is effectively represented in the Spotlight Initiative, that their perspectives and expertise are reflected in the Programme. The CS-NRG acts as a bridge between the UN team and Malawian Civil Society, and in addition to helping to keep the SI on track to deliver results, serves as a think tank on contemporary issues related to VAWG and HPs. Lastly, the CS-NRG supports the effective dissemination of key messages from the SI to the general public, with a focus on marginalized groups, youth and the media. Find below short biographies of the members.



Esmie Tembenu – Current Chairperson -CS-NRG. A naturally born activist who has immersed herself in every part of the fight against Gender Based Violence; Esmie is a well known advocate for the rights of women, girls and children locally and internationally. She is now the Executive Director of a newly born organisation called the Family Rights, Elderly and Child Protection Trust (FRECHIP),.



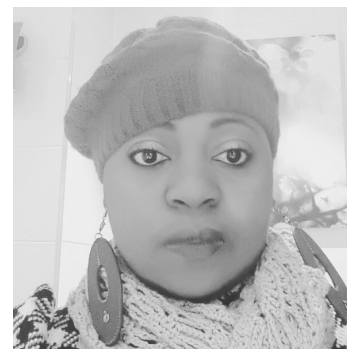
Viwemi Louis Chavula, Current Vice Chairperson-CS-NRG. Viwemi is a team leader for 50-50 Campaign Management Agency. So far, his contribution includes offering new thinking to the campaign which includes private sector involvement and support that goes beyond just one donor which has previously been the status quo.



Chief Mlolo strongly believes in pro-activeness, inclusion, teamwork, respect to other people's rights, transparency and accountability as key drivers of development and success at all levels. Chief Mlolo is currently working as a Principal Human Resource Management Officer in the Office of the Ombudsman.



Godfrey Kambewa is an upcoming activist who's passionate about seeing marginalized populations and individuals enjoy their full human rights. He is the Director of The Grey institute of health, a local civil society organization



Dr. Alinane Kamlongera Katenga-Kaunda is a specialist in the field of Gender Equity, Diversity and Social inclusion. She has experience in women's empowerment, men's engagement, and gender based violence (including violence against women) within the regions of Asia, Africa and the Middle East.



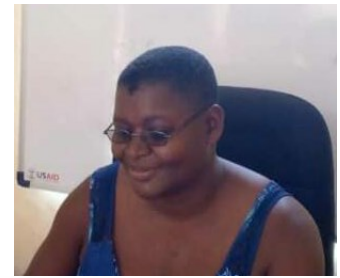
Beatrice Mateyo Mkanda is a gender activist and development expert working with women and girls in Malawi in gender-based violence, women leadership and advocacy. Currently, Beatrice is the Executive Director for the Coalition for the Empowerment of Women and Girls (CEWAG),



Dr. Steve Sharra is an educationist who works in educational policy and curriculum issues. He has teaching, research and advocacy experience in public policy, educational policy, curriculum theory, peace and social justice studies, and girls' education.



Wezi Moyo has worked for Action Aid Malawi as Country Thematic Head – (Women's Rights and HIV&AIDS). She is co founder of Giving Heart a local NGO in Mzuzu.



Zinenani Lucy Majawa is a passionate human rights activist. She is a member of the Malawi Global Fund Coordinating Committee (MGFCC). Currently Zinenani is the Founder and Executive Director of the Female Sex Workers Association –FSWA



Weston Moyo aspires to be a leading role model in facilitating vibrant women, girls and youth movements and development communications for meaningful sustainable community development in Malawi and beyond. He is the Co-Founder of Center for Community and Youth Development.



Naile Salima is a Gender Specialist by training and practice with eleven years of progressive work experience in organizations as well as an independent consultant with such organisations as Oxfam, UN Women and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA).



Action Amos is the Executive Director for Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA) which is the Umbrella Organisation of 12 Disabled Persons Organisations in Malawi. Action has proven experience in the area of human rights, policy analysis, research and technical application.



Esther Bonyonga is a gender activist who has gained more than three years' experience working with girls and women in Malawi. Currently, Esther is the Executive Director for Ladies in Tertiary Education (LITE),

Barbra Banda is an exceptional leader talented in project management . In 2018, she became the Chairperson for NGO Gender Coordination Network. Currently, Barbra heads the National Association of Business Women– NABW



SHOWING FAITH LEADERS HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN ELIMINATE HARMFUL SOCIAL PRACTICES SUCH AS CHILD MARRIAGE

By Blessings Samuel Phumisa, UNICEF Malawi



Lisa Banda is passionate about changing her community for the better and wants to help eliminate harmful practices such as child marriage and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). As an ambassador for U-Report, a social messaging tool and data collection system developed by UNICEF, Banda recently addressed a group of Malawian faith-based leaders, telling them about alarming data collected by the tool.

The data showed that 64% of the 31,756 “U-reporters” who participated in a nationwide poll on harmful practices said marriage before 18 was commonplace in their communities. The data came from a recent U-Report poll by the Spotlight Initiative, one of several polls conducted among young people across Malawi.

The polls aim to assess their levels of knowledge and their attitudes and perceptions on issues such as harmful practices, access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services, and social norms and practices.

Speaking to some 60 faith leaders who attended the Workshop on Faith and Positive Change for Children (FPCC) in Dowa, Banda said it was important for people in the audience to speak up about harmful practices and negative social norms.

“You are agents for behavior change and your voice matters in the communities,” Banda continued. “You can use your influence to effect positive change.”

Banda was one of five ambassadors who was invited to be part of the workshop to showcase U-Report. Designed

to improve citizen engagement, inform leaders, and foster positive change, the digital tool sends SMS polls and alerts to its participants, collecting real-time responses, and subsequently publishes gathered data. Opinion poll results are shared with policy makers and the media to foster advocacy and help ensure that the voices of young people are heard. Banda told the faith leaders that the 220,000-strong U-Report network can be used in the faith community as a powerful communication tool for advocacy on various issues affecting young people such as violence against children and sexual and gender-based violence.



Above: U- Report ambassador shows some faith leaders how U-Report works

“I feel that as much as we belong to different religions, we are always stronger when we work together for a common good. Our difference gives us an advantage to tackle various problems by exploring different avenues,” said Lisa. UNICEF Malawi Country Representative Rudolf Schwenk also addressed the workshop and spoke about the positive influence faith-based organisations can have on the wellbeing of children.

“When religious leaders speak, people listen so we hope that with them we can collectively address the issue of child marriage, which is currently very high in Malawi at 47%,” he said.

The faith leaders were brought together under the banner of FPCC, a global initiative on social behavior change aimed at strengthening partnerships with faith actors for positive outcomes. At the end of the meeting, leaders made a commitment to build action plans to tackle issues related to child protection, especially child marriage.

Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Information and Civic Education, Dr. Esme Kainja, said she was impressed that young people were at the frontline fighting practices that were harmful to children.

“Child marriage is a large contributor of poverty in this country, and for the future of Malawi we need to promote education and strong partnerships,” she said.

“Child marriage is a large contributor of poverty in this country and for the future of Malawi, we need to promote education and strong partnerships.”

Girls who marry later and delay pregnancy beyond their adolescence have more chances to stay healthier, to better their education and build a better life for themselves and their families.

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE GUEST: ELIZABETH CHATUWA

In this edition, SI Newsletter talks to Elizabeth Chatuwa; founding member of the African Women Leaders Network. Excerpts below

“Let us always have the hunger to be on the decision-making table at all levels of society and aim to contribute when we are there. Otherwise we will be taken as part of the meal on the table and eaten.”

SI: Please describe yourself?

EC: I am an energetic Gender activist with very high sense of ethics and integrity, performance driven and committed Impacting in the women and girls globally. I am the first born in my family born and raised in Lilongwe, but currently residing in Blantyre. I am a founding member of African Women Leader Network (AWLN) globally, and a pioneer of the AWLN Malawi chapter which was launched this year on the 2nd of March. A human rights advocate I am also a Youth Commissioner for Malawi Girl Guides Association. To earn a living, I am working as Information Communication and Technology-ICT alternate channels and Innovations Manager at NBS Bank.

SI: Why and how did you develop passion for women and girls?

EC: When I was in primary school, boys used to bully girls saying that our roles were merely home makers, with no career and a successful life. I joined Girl guides as a school club. This was a brave and safe space which empowered us to open up to one another and identify one's potential. It was so fun, and I became an active member. It was during these classes that I realised that women and girls are vulnerable, but they can become whatever they want if they are determined.

SI: How would you describe the situation in Malawi as far as Violence Against Women and Girls –VAWG is concerned?

EC: Violence against women and girls is still a widespread behaviour that many individuals and organisations are working very hard to eradicate. Much as there is a lot of advocacy around this, figures of cases on VAWG keep increasing. Most women and girls do not know their rights and sadly, over time, they have embraced violence as normal. In Malawi, we still have some harmful cultural practices that violate women and girls' rights, it is sad.

SI: As far as VAWG what was your lowest moment?

EC: I was 16, 2 of my friends, aged 14 and 15 then were raped. The person who raped the 14-year-old friend of mine got sentenced while nothing was done to the one who raped the 15year old, apparently it was an uncle.



The family convinced my friend not to talk about it. I wanted to help my friend, but I was 17 and helpless to overcome her parent's decision. It hurt.

SI: Briefly share with us your happiest moment?

EC: Through the program called 'Bring back the girl to school' we have managed to return over 70 girls from the early marriages in the districts of Mangochi, Salima and Dedza. We made follow ups and the girls were happy to be back to school. I was happy!

SI: How do you look at the Spotlight Initiative?

EC: Spotlight initiative is an excellent program with the aim of eliminating violence against women and girls. It's exciting to learn how the European Union and the United Nations are investing so much to impact the lives of women and girls in Malawi. I look forward to the Initiative registering amazing successes within the coming years.

SI: Picture Malawi in 10 years; What communities do you picture in terms of women and girls? Empowered girls?

EC: I picture well informed communities, where men, women, girls and boys will be able to identify violence and report cases to necessary authorities. I picture a country where all reported cases will be completed, and where victims will be able to go back into the communities without being stigmatised.

SI: Any message to women and girls?

EC: Let us join hands in eliminating all forms of violence by voicing the violence. Let us always have the hunger to be on the decision-making table at all levels of society and aim to contribute when we are there. Otherwise will be taken as part of the meal on the table and eaten.



Top: Elizabeth and school girls during a Girl Guides session at Blantyre Baptist Primary school



Above: Elizabeth with fellow Girl Guides members pose for a photo in Mulanje .



THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP: TRIZA MAKES A U-TURN ON MARRIAGE

By John Moyo(SI Nkhata-Bay District Coordinator) & Lizzie Waya(GENET Project Officer



Triza Nyamwera is 16 years old, she comes from Jumbo village, Traditional Authority Fukamalaza in Nkhata-Bay district and stays with her father and stepmother. She lost her mother years back. Triza's father is not employed and relies on piece works which are not easy to come by these days. Determined to survive, Triza decided to drop out of school and get married. She was in Standard 8 at Ching'oma Primary school.

"I resorted to accepting a man's proposal because, he promised me good life. He planned to travel to Johannesburg-South Africa to look for work. Although he said he would leave me at his parent's village; I was assured he would take care of me," said Triza.

Triza made plans and waited for her would-be husband to visit her home and make formal intentions to her

father; she met a determined mentor 20-year-old Memory who after being trained by Spotlight Initiative was out to recruit mentees to join the programme.

Memory Chinyonga was among 20 girls who were nominated by their communities to undergo training for the Safe Space mentorship programme implemented by Girls Empowerment Network (GENET) in the district.

Memory heard rumors that a young girl was planning to drop out of school and get married. She made her enquiries and reached out to Triza. She introduced Triza to the Safe Space mentorship programme and recruited her into her first safe space group. Memory requested Triza to stay behind after a session. She had planned to have a heart to heart talk with her; and they did.

"At first, she told me she wanted to drop out of school and go and with her relations somewhere; but when I dug deep, she opened up and confirmed that she was making plans to get married, because life was hard," Memory explained.

Memory engaged the programmes focal person in the community and together they visited Triza who finally made a U-turn on the marriage plans and agreed to tell the man that she was not interested in marriage anymore.

"The focal person and I had a discussion with the 20 year old man, we told him it was against the law to marry a girl of Triza's age. We advised him to stop his plans immediately so Triza could proceed with her education. He left angrily," explained Memory.

Triza, now confident of her choices, is keen to finish her education. "I will finish my education; I will work hard

so I can be self-reliant in future. As for the man who wanted to marry me; he can proceed to marry. I am not ready for marriage now,' said Triza.

Nkhata-bay district is one of the districts in Malawi where child marriages are rampant. Reports indicate that 9.1% of the girls aged between 15-19 get married per year.

The EU/UN Spotlight Initiative, through different interventions, is working with the Government of Malawi and other partners, to end child marriages in the district.

“I will finish my education; I will work hard so I can be self-reliant in future. As for the man who wanted to marry me; he can proceed to marry. I am not ready for marriage now,”



Left: Triza studying at home. Above : Triza having a chat with Memory



Girls who marry later and delay pregnancy beyond their adolescence have more chances to stay healthier, to better their education and build a better life for themselves and their families.



A RAY OF HOPE FOR GENDER BASED VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

By Joseph Scott — UNFPA



Elena Phiri* had high hopes that her daughter Brenda*, would one day go to University, get a good job and pull the family out of poverty. Elena, a mother of four, didn't go far with her education and she wanted a different life for her children.

To make this dream come true, Elena runs a small restaurant at their local market pull the family out of poverty. Elena, a mother of four, didn't go far with her education and she wanted a different life for her children.

To make this dream come true, Elena runs a small restaurant at their local market in Chowe village, Ntchisi. Sometimes, she has to travel far in search of farm produce. When she is away, Elena leaves behind Brenda to manage the restaurant.

However, Elena's restaurant is close to the only bottle store in the market. And most of the customers who come to the restaurant are imbibers who frequent the bottle store.

"I didn't know that I was exposing my daughter to many

dangers by letting her work close to a bottle store," says Elena, who is a widow. "At first, I heard a rumour at the market that my daughter was going out with the bar owner. I didn't believe it since I knew the man from way back. I treated him as a brother."

The rumour gained ground and it started making rounds even in their village. Brenda, who was 13 by then and in primary class five, was too young to be involved in a relationship, thought her mother. Worse still, the man whom she was purported to be dating was old enough to be her father.

Things came to a head when the man's wife had a fight with Brenda at the market.

"When I heard about the incident, I realized that the issue was serious and reported the man to the community police," says Elena. "The police arrested him but was released after a few days. They said there was no evidence that the two were

having a sexual relationship.”

Despite having laws in place, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is pervasive in most communities in Malawi. According to the 2013 National Survey report on VAWG, one out of five females in Malawi have experienced at least one incident of sexual abuse prior to the age of 18 years.

Like other districts, Ntchisi has also registered high incidents of VAWG with survivors having no or limited access to quality Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) services. More so, survivors of GBV often lack knowledge of available services and the courage to access them.

In Ntchisi, this is now changing, thanks to the EU funded Spotlight Initiative. The Programme, which is implemented by the Government of Malawi, the UN, Civil Society, and others, is seeking to eliminate VAWG and to ensure that women and girls have access to quality SRH and GBV services.

The evidence given by Brenda with the support of the Spotlight team, the police and child protection workers in the area, was enough to sway the magistrate to sentence the man to 60 months in prison with hard labour for defilement.

With the arrival of the Spotlight Initiative in the district, a case audit was conducted, and Brenda’s case was followed up in March 2020. During the initial follow up visit, the Spotlight Initiative team found out that sexual exploitation indeed happened and had continued when the suspect was released from jail. It was also established that Brenda was pregnant.

“I was devastated when I learnt that my daughter was pregnant at that tender age. All my hopes and dreams were shattered because of one man who violated my child,” says Elena.

The Spotlight team immediately referred the matter to the district police and within a few days, the suspect was re-arrested. Meanwhile, Brenda was referred to the District Hospital for tests and treatment. The medical report revealed that she was three months pregnant and had sexually transmitted infections. Brenda later suffered a miscarriage.

On her part, Brenda says she was coerced into the relationship and regrets not telling her mother what was happening.

“I respected him as an uncle,” she says. “He would give me money and threaten me not to disclose what was happening; I am happy that I got help and I picked up the pieces of my life. I now know better. Thanks to Spotlight Initiative.”

Photo: Grace Kabango; Spotlight Initiative GBV Services Officer; having a chat with Brenda at her home in Ntchisi

“At first, I heard a rumour at the market that my daughter was going out with the bar owner. I didn’t believe it since I knew the man from way back. I treated him as a brother.”

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

not only has negative consequences for women but also their families, the community and the country at large.



Early this year, the SI UN Malawi team embarked on a mission to the six implementing districts. Below are some of the photos captured during the mission



Left: Ntchisi District Commissioner for Ntchisi Peter Jimusole welcoming the team in the district; and right: Nkhata-Bay District Commissioner Rodney Simwaka opens the Nkhata-Bay meeting



A session in progress in Mzimba. Right; A participant asks a question during a brainstorming session in Dowa. Below Left: A session in Machinga. Below right: A brainstorming session in Nsanje



As part of the COVID-19 Response, Spotlight Initiative partnered with local celebrities to produce a short video on the pandemic and Violence Against Women and Girls. In the video, the celebrities and the EU and UN each said a line to form a cohesive message about the pandemic. Find below the celebrity quotes.



“To stop the spread of Covid-19, different measures have been put in place, including the closure of schools and workplaces. This means many women and girls are at home.”
Q Malewezi .

“ Do not be silent when you have experienced violence or you have seen or heard someone experiencing violence .”
Kim of Diamonds

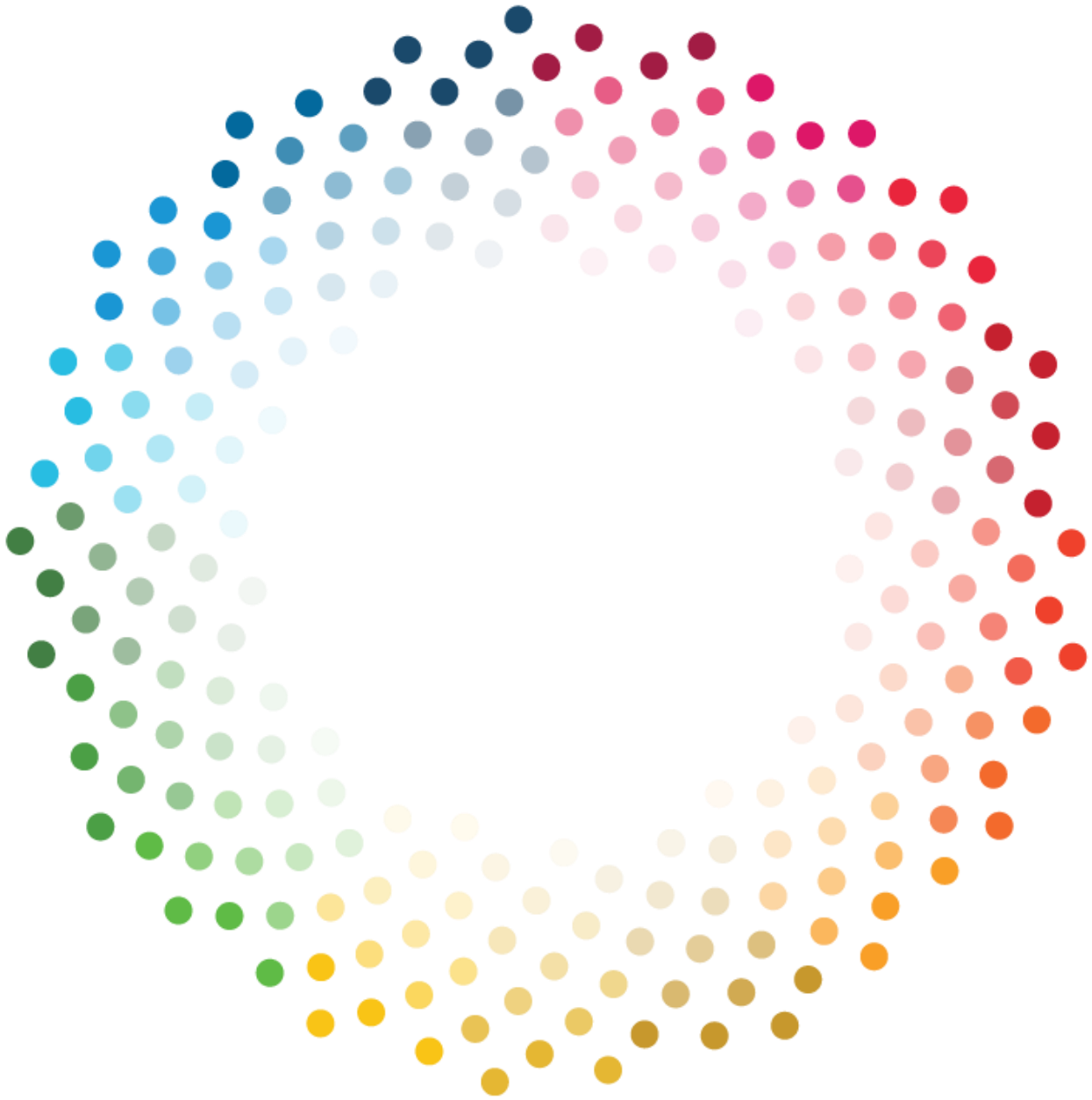
“ Speak about violence against women and girls, and take action. Report violence to the police or any community leader.”
Joab Chakhaza

Above: Q Malewezi– Poet Below: Kim of Diamonds– Artist



Joab Chakhaza; Media Personality





The Spotlight Initiative
United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office
P.O 30135 Lilongwe
Malawi