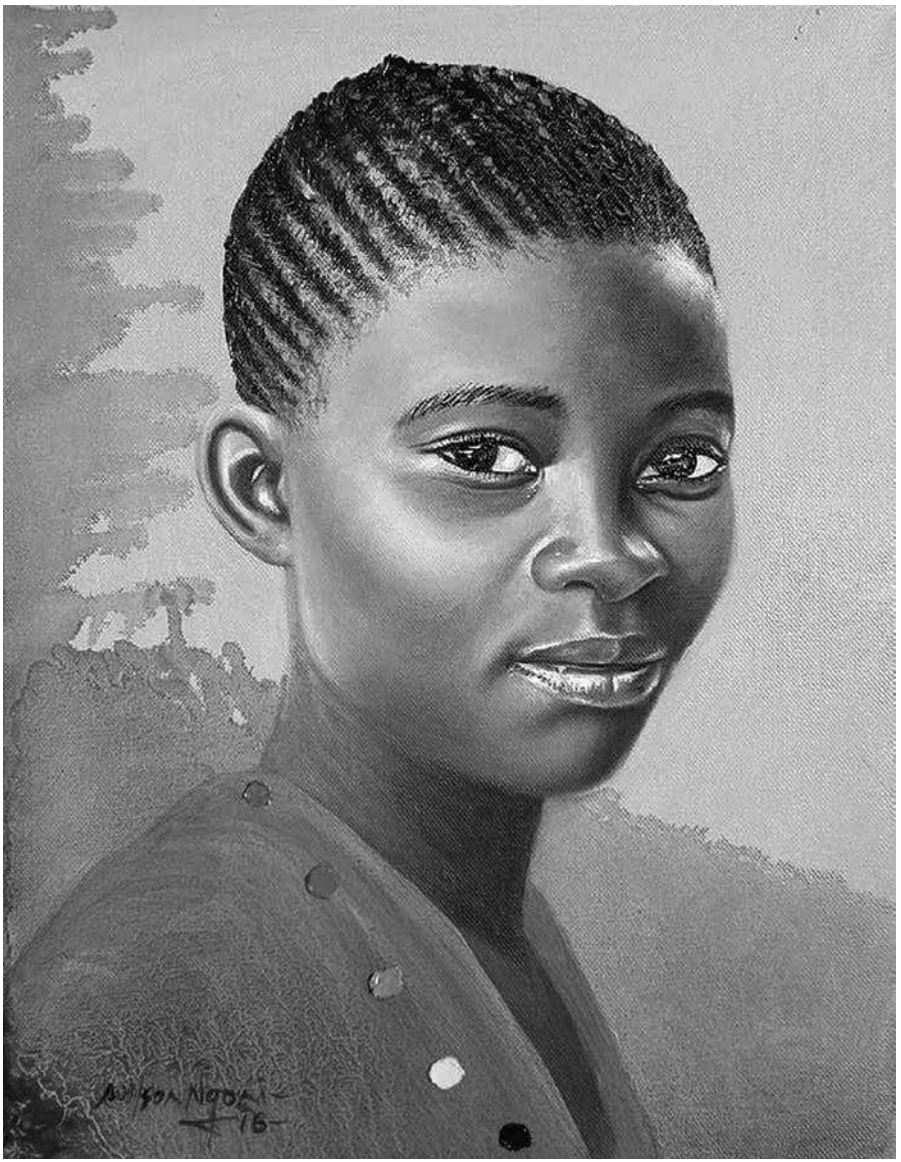
VOICES FROM BOTSWANA

We have survived Gender Based Violence



Produced and facilitated by Gomolemo Rasesigo

Illustrations by Wilson Ngoni

The writers have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity

PREFACE



Ntombi Setshwaelo
Board Member, Gender Links

> 67% of women in Botswana have experienced GBV, while 44% of men admitted to being perpetrators of this offence. **– SADC Gender Protocol 2016 Barometer.**
>
> While this statistic is alarming, several studies backed by empirical evidence, have established that a very high number of cases go unreported by women who have suffered GBV, exemplified by findings of a recent study by Georginah Muchado (2014) that, "…of respondents aged 50 and older in the Northeast District in Botswana, 87 of them have never called the police to stop their partners from hurting them, while 89% have never gone to court for protection from abuse.
> **– SADC Gender Protocol 2015 Barometer**

THESE observations are a serious and damning indictment on our society in this era of our developmental processes, at the personal, social, cultural and political levels.

Considering that it is now common knowledge that the vast majority of women remain in abusive relationships because of economic dependency, all possible efforts have to be made towards the emancipation of women from economic slavery, for the betterment and uplifting of their lives, as well as that of their children who suffer the brunt of such brutality.

Ntombi Setshwaelo
Botswana Board Member
GENDER LINKS

FACILITATOR'S DESK

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE SURVIVORS MOVE ON

Stories, Voices from Botswana, We have survived Gender Based Violence **(GBV) is a collection of success stories from GBV survivors who have decided that enough is enough. They have picked up the pieces and moved on with their lives.**

In this fourth booklet, Gender Links Botswana through its Gender and Local Government Gender Mainstreaming Program trained women from ten districts and equipped them with entrepreneurship skills.

The GBV survivors, a majority of whom had attended Gender Links workshops before were followed up and encouraged to participate in the training. Survivors shared how participating in the Gender Links workshops had helped them to deal with their abuse. They commend the business training which some say has made a difference in their lives.

They hope their stories which have been compiled into this book, will be used as a tool to educate and advocate for other survivors who have not had the opportunity to share their stories and that their experience of GBV will catapult the matter and put it at the top of the country's agenda.

This book brings knowledge and awareness of all forms of abuse, be it sexual, economic, verbal, physical and psychological. But it also brings hope to survivors and those who



Gomolemo Rasesigo
Botswana Manager, Gender Links

are still being abused. These are stories of hope and show how women have the strength to overcome abuse and adversity if given help.

All they needed was a chance to share the sad reality of what goes on behind closed doors. A platform is given to the women to speak out and it echoes the voices of many other women suffering in silence.

This book like the others before it, puts actual faces to GBV and encourages those who find themselves in the same predicament to seek assistance.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN THE FOURTH series of 'I' Stories, Voices from Botswana, survivors share success stories. These are women from ten districts who were featured in past 'I' stories battered, abused and frustrated. The stories were written by Gender Based Violence (GBV) survivors and facilitated by the Gender Links Country Manager, Ms Gomolemo Rasesigo.

These women attended a series of training workshops facilitated by Gender Links and learnt survival skills. They share how they have moved on after surviving gender-based violence. Some are now running successful micro businesses and are happy. As Botswana celebrates its 50 years of independence the women also have something to celebrate

These women deserve a standing ovation for their courage in sharing their stories. Especially for giving others the opportunity to look back and strive to put abuse in their past and most of all to not allow their partners to take away their dignity and sometimes their lives.

For years Gender Links Botswana has been using stories told by women from other countries and in 2013 the first local book was launched telling the stories from Botswana. In 2014, the 'I' Stories were published in Setswana to make them more accessible to the survivors. In 2015 more women shared their trials and tribulations.

We thank everyone who took part in the production of this book especially the staff of Gender Links Botswana office, the social workers for Bobonong; Chobe; Ghanzi; Goodhope; Jwaneng; Kanye; Kgatleng; Lobatse; Maun; Serowe as well as the Administration Authorities and Sub District Councils.

They ensured that the women who needed to have their voices heard had the opportunity to do so. We acknowledge the support of Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA) especially Ms Ludo Matshameko who ensured that councils were receptive at all times.

We thank UNFPA for their continued financial support that guarantees that the book production becomes an annual occurrence. A special thank you to the UNFPA Acting Representative Ms Mareledi Segotso as they continue to see the value in giving the survivors a platform to share their stories and heal in the process.

We also thank the UNDP Resident Representative Mr Anders Pederson who believed in the ability of Gender Links. Without the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW); EU and DFID (SA), this project will not have been possible. Gender Links is forever grateful to Ms Keabonye Ntsabane for her role in the initial production of the Botswana 'I' stories.

This book would be incomplete without the classic illustrations that tell of the celebrations, joys and pains of women by Mr Wilson Ngoni and a special thanks to Inhouse Creations - the production studio of ***The Voice*** for putting this together for the past four years.

WHERE TO GET HELP

THROUGH THE 2012 GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) Indicator study, it was revealed that 67% of women interviewed had experienced some sort of GBV at one point in their lives.

Most of the violence occurs within intimate relationships with almost half of the men admitting to perpetrating GBV.

Botswana government continues to fight against GBV in partnership with the civil service organisation and the 'I' Stories play a role in that effort.

Combating gender based violence needs concerted effort from various stakeholders. There is no way to end GBV when the voices of those who have experienced it are left behind.

Gender Links worked with women from various district councils and trained them on GBV and the importance of speaking out as a form of therapy since 2013 which culminated in the 'I' Stories. The women went on to write about their personal experiences in the manner which they wanted the world to hear it.

The exercise was very intense and it touched the very core of the women. Some had never dealt with their experiences and at times the process had to be stopped as women broke down, it was indeed an emotional process.

This was the beginning of the healing process for the women and together with social workers their journey began and for some of them it continued for months.

EMERGING ISSUES

Cultural

Most of the women did not speak out as they believed that by doing so they would be hanging their linen in public, which is not culturally acceptable. The silence has in a way contributed to the prolonged suffering by the women.

Cases are never reported to the relevant authorities as there are cultural channels to be followed.

The women have taken a brave step to break the cultural barriers, speaking out with the hope that this will be used as an advocacy tool to prompt government to take firm action against GBV.

By bringing the stories to the public the women are calling for change to the civil society organisation, communities and individuals as they challenge each person to play their part in ending GBV and contributing to a safe and secure nation.

Economic

The lack of access and control to economic resources rendered the women vulnerable and susceptible to GBV. In this series, they have learnt to find means of supporting themselves.

Most of the women who in the past alluded to staying in abusive relationships because they had no source of income were delighted that through business training workshops facilitated by Gender Links, they were equipped to move on and take charge of their lives.

This has assisted in starting conversations around empowering the women with life skills that can help them contribute to the family economically and in the end become financially independent.

Where to get help

Botswana Police Service

Social Workers

Lifeline Botswana
3911290 (Face-to-face), 3911270 (Telephone)

Childline Botswana - 3900900

Men's Clinic - 3909402 (Male Sexual Health)

Heart & Hands of Compassion - 73516022

BOSASNet - 3959119/72659891

BOCAIP - 3916454

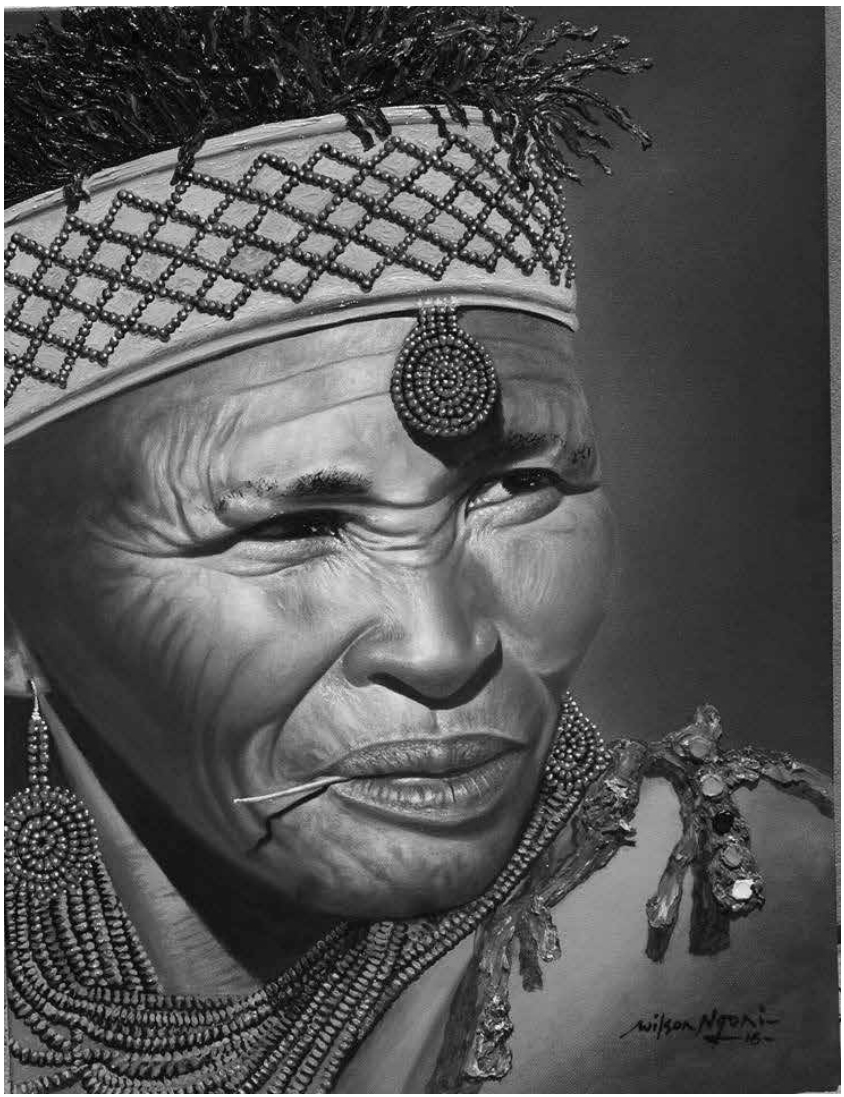
Ipoletse HIV/AIDS Call Centre - Toll Free Numbers 0800 600 700 / 711600

CEYOHO - 3919958/71763659

Women Against Rape - 6860865

Kagisano Women's Shelter Project SMS 'HELP' to 16510 and they call back - 3907658/9, 3900516 Medical & Legal Aid Support for Women and Children affected by Domestic Violence)

Bobonong "I" STORIES



Abuse is not a personal thing

By Tsabotlhe Lure

I am a 43 year old woman from Sekwadila ward in Bobonong and I attended Gender Links training workshops in 2014.

I realized that I was being abused because I was married to a man who was a bully. He used to tell me that he only married me so that I can do whatever he wants. He would leave me and spent nights away from home with other women and then he got infected with HIV. After he discovered that he was HIV positive he hid his hospital cards and never disclosed his status but had sex with me without using a condom. In 2000 I fell pregnant and the baby was born HIV positive and that was when I found out that I was also infected.

What I have learned is that as long as you are alive you should not give up. I also learned that I could start a business to provide an income for my children and me. I love selling products but did not know how to run a business but now I know all that.

Gender Links business training has changed my life because I can sell without feeling any shame to make a living for children. My husband passed on and life is better now that I am not being abused and my children have also grown up even though they have not yet found permanent jobs.

Personally I think that after going through training we are not provided with what we need like money so that we can start businesses or buy cattle or small stock. People who are still being abused should not be afraid to go to social workers and ask for help.

I am happy about Gender Links training because it has made me such an important person in my society and I can advise people who still do not know, that abuse is not a personal thing it can affect anyone.

Get the bad things out in the open

By Maria Setlhare

I AM A LADY OF 43 years and I enrolled in Gender Links workshops in 2013.

I felt that my world had fallen apart when I found out that my husband was having incestuous relationships with our daughters. The girls were very young, one was 10 years old and the other, 15. He ended up impregnating the 15-year-old and she had a son. I reported the matter to the District Commissioner and my husband was found guilty of incest and was sentenced to five years imprisonment.

I felt like it was the end of the world our world because of what my husband did but Gender Links counseled me. I got motivated and strong and was able to find piece jobs to make a living for my family. I also sold airtime and chicken feet in order to have money to pay for the connection of electricity in our home. I managed to save my profits at home as I could not open a savings account because my application for citizenship has not yet been approved.

I often worry about how our lives are going to be when my husband gets out prison because I wonder what he would have learned whilst there.

The situation of survivors of abuse could be improved if service providers such as social workers, police and others could visit them at their homes to hear about their challenges and to offer advice and guidance

I would tell people who hide or are living with abuse to talk about it, to get all the bad things out in the open so that they can be resolved especially those concerning children.

Start a business and have your own income

By Bogadi Bogosi

I am young a lady of 33 years and I come from Bobonong.

I started participating in Gender Links workshops on the 7th of July 2014 in Bobonong. I was introduced to Gender Links by a social worker after I had confided in him that I had a child when I was very young and I ended up marrying his father. In this marriage I was unable to use my money the way I wanted because my husband made decisions that he like for me. For example he did not want us to leave my parents home even though I had my own house. He also did not want me to go for further education. But I have now managed to do all that.

Gender Links taught me that I had to make decisions for myself in order to get out of an abusive relationship. For instance if you are married and feel that your husband is not treating you well you can have a discussion with him about the issue and tell him how you feel. If there is no improvement in his behavior it is not wrong to think about leaving him. They also encouraged us to look for work or those who have skills can sew, knit, make pottery, work in people's homes or do anything that can make an income.

I thank the social worker who introduced me to Gender Links because I did not know that nothing is impossible if you are responsible. I was able to explain the situation concerning my husband to my parents and how I wanted to handle it. I also talked to my husband and he has stopped his controlling ways. We have moved to my house and I am attending school and he sometimes helps with my schoolwork. We are happily raising our children with a lot of love.

There are organizations such as Emang Basadi and other women's organizations in my village and women in these organizations share ideas about what to do to improve their lives. For example there are metshelo where women form groups to buy household items for each other and some even buy building materials.

I have learned from business training, what I can do to start a business, where I can find financial assistance like from Youth Development Fund or CEDA. I loved learning how to do a business plan, because all businesses need to have one. I helped a young person to do a business plan because he wanted to apply for funding to rear goats and it was approved and he has started the project. I advise people who are still in abusive relationships to get out and engage with social workers to be counseled and I also encourage them to start businesses and have an income.

I thank social workers and Gender Links for allowing me to participate in the abuse and business training workshops. I was able to realize that my challenges were not that bad compared to what other women are going through. I am thankful that I have already started a business, as it had never occurred to me in the past that I could have one.


Wilson Ntoni

Start small and save

By Neo Motsamai

I am 54 years and I started attending Gender Links training in 2014. I have a handicapped daughter who was raped by one of my relatives and I reported the matter to the police. When he was asked why he did it he said that he loved my daughter. My other relatives suggested that I should not prosecute him since we were related, and that I should forgive him and that he should just be lashed. I refused and he ended up going to prison.

I have learned about different types of abuse from Gender Links and that it focuses mainly on women. I also learned that if you are being abused you can get in contact with social workers or the police.

I also learned a lot about how to start a business, to do a business plan and to find a suitable place to operate from. I have not had any problems with parents of the man who raped my daughter.

I advise people who are abused that they should take responsibility for their lives and report the abuse to social workers and police. I can tell people that they should take responsibility to make a living for their families and they can start small and save a little bit of money each time and with time the business will grow.

Stress has no place in my life

By Lucia Samuel

I started to attend Gender Links training workshops on the 8th of August 2014. When I started training with Gender Links I was staying with a man I had been with for ten years. He promised to marry me so we got engaged and I moved in with him. When we reached the twelfth year of our relationship he started another affair and by that time he had been physically abusing me and in the end I went back home.

I have learned that when I run a business I need to do record keeping, cash flow projections and a business plan. What I learned from Gender Links has changed my life because I am now making a living from sewing. I was taught that if I make a sale of P100, I must take P50 to the bank to save it. I also keep a debtors book for customers who buy on credit.

The training has changed my life for the better. People going through abuse should be counselled and given advice on how they can cope. I advise victims of abuse to get in touch with organizations that can help them to avoid stress, we should not allow stress into our lives.

Running a business renewed my life

By Dichauto Mooketsi

I AM DICHAUTO MOOKETSi from Dandane ward in Bobonong and I am 46 years old. I enrolled for Gender Links training in 2014.

My mother and my brother, who is the heir to our home, were abusing me. I lived a life of poverty that was plain for anyone to see.

My brother verbally abused me by often saying I had too many children that I could not afford to feed. I was treated like a worthless person. I eventually went to seek help from the social workers and they got me in touch with Gender Links.

I started training with Gender Links and they counseled me and taught me about the different forms of abuse and I also did business training to enable me to find ways to earn an income. They taught me how to do a business plan, market research, record keeping and cash flow projections. They also encouraged me to accept my situation.

Business training changed my life because as soon as I started running a business my life became renewed and I was able to sustain myself just like other women.

My new life created a good relationship with my family even though in the past they had made my life very unbearable. They now include me in the planning and running of the day-to-day life at home and we live in peace.

Programs in my village can be improved by assisting people who are still being abused to improve their livelihood because when you are being abused sometimes you don't even know how you can go about making an income to make your life better.

I encourage them to access government poverty eradication programs and they should get out of abusive relationships.

Men turn their heads when I pass

By Gosegomang Boipuso

I'M from the Dandane ward in the village of Bobonong. I am a young lady of 35 years and I started attending Gender Links training in 2014.

I learned a lot of things from the training. I was taught about the different types of abuse and the fact it affects women mostly. I also did business training and was taught what I needed to do before I start a new business. After writing my story I realized how Gender Links helped me to get out of the abuse I was in, and how I was able to understand myself and have the ability to cope with life challenges.

When we went through business training we were taught to identify the business we wanted to venture in, and that the place we want to operate from should be accessible to customers. We also learned how to do a business plan, market research and cash flow projections, and to know that when we run a business we need to make a profit.

We also learned that as a businessperson you should be patient because business has many challenges and you have to tolerate them. You need to have good customer relations and to know what you need to do in order to have a successful business e.g. have a receipt book, do pricing, do record keeping, stock taking and manage your business effectively. Business training has changed my life because I now know what to do when I want to start a business including the fact that it must be registered and have a bank account.

Regarding my story my partner left me with the baby, he did not care about us. He left while I was still pregnant and when I had the baby he still kept away. So I raised my child by my own, struggling. Sometimes when I did not have soap and asked my family to help, they would say that they were tired of my begging. I really struggled a lot when I was raising my baby.

My life has changed so much now, I am living a better life and even the man who had made my life such a misery salivates for me whenever we meet. I feel so much different and men turn their heads when I pass them and some even ask to speak to me. I feel so happy at all times and I have raised my child with a lot of love.

Life has really changed and I have met someone who loves me and makes me happy. He is a businessman, and a farmer and he has played a big role in my life. I can now afford to do my hair and to look like a lady. We have gotten married and we are very happy, I believe that God has seen my tears and he has wiped them away.

We do have programs in my village the problem is that processing applications is very slow. It takes long to get the equipment that we ask for, but if you are a victim of abuse you can get a social worker to help.

If a person is being abused they have to speak out and not be secretive, they should go and see a social worker or someone and tell them what they are going through. The problem is that people don't want to talk about these issues they just hide them. Also if someone has not gone through any training relating to abuse, it becomes difficult to take action because they do not know who are the relevant authorities they can go to for help.

So if you are still being abused, take action so that you can live a better and happy life, where you will be happy all the time. People think that if you seek help from social workers it shows that you are a destitute and that is not so, I am a living example of that.

My last word is that people, stop being secretive, stop saying that things will be okay. Ask for help before things take a turn for the worst so that you too can be like other people. Women, stop being secretive Gender Links is there, Emang Basadi is there as well as Gender Affairs department. These are women's organizations so let us stand up and be counted.

I want to create employment

By Tshotego Khutsana

I AM TSHOTEGO KHUTSANA, a lady of 46 years. I have started participating in Gender Links training workshops in 2014 in Bobonong.

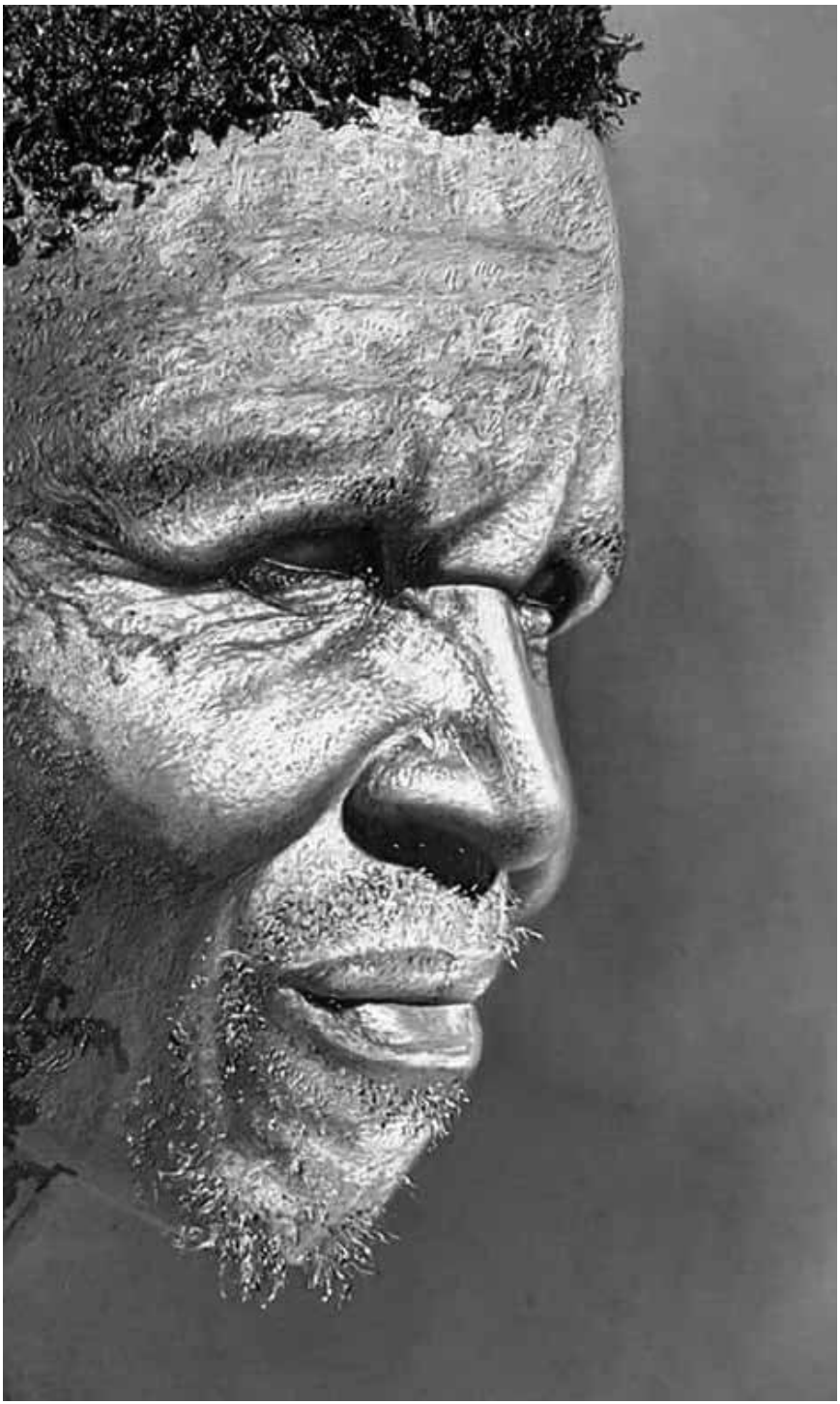
I experienced abuse through the boyfriend I stayed with. I am no longer being abused because I went to the social workers and asked for help and they counseled me. I can now give advice to others by sharing my story.

I have learned through experience that to succeed in being the person that I want to be I have to work hard at it. I must have dignity and self respect so that people can respect me. You cannot expect to be respected when you do not have self-respect. I need to have the competence and the strength to stand up and speak about my rights without fear of what people might say.

As a person you need have feelings of self-control, love, patience and sympathy for others. You need to be a member of village organizations and programs so that you may be able to share your skills with others.

I did not have any business skills but after I attended business training with Gender Links I learned a lot. I was taught that I had to first register the business, be able to determine if business is growing or if it is going down and to save my profits.

The situation of people in my story has changed for the better because I was not comfortable talking to them before but now I am able to communicate with them with a smile.



There are intervention programs in my village that help victims of gender based violence but what I have noticed is that there is always a long queue of people waiting to be assisted.

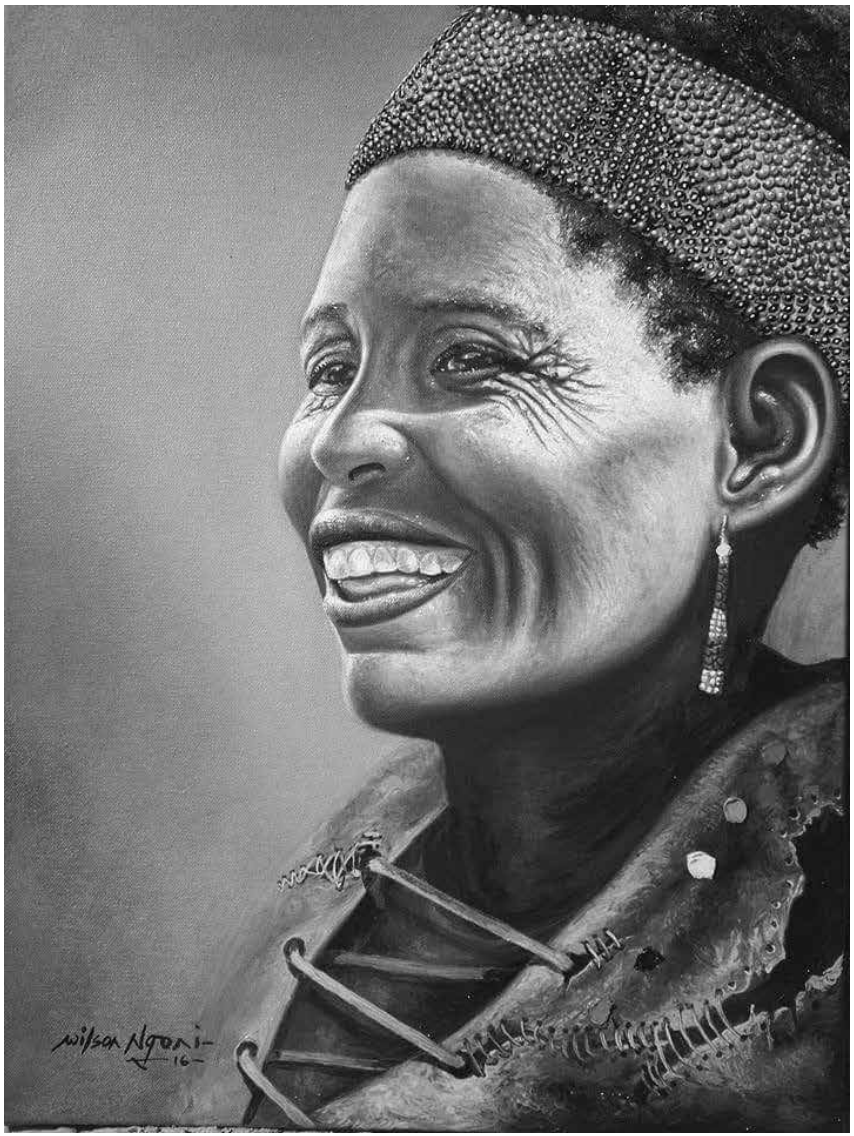
So I suggest that applications of survivors of abuse should be treated as urgent and not go into the queue.

I want say to those people who are still in abusive situations that they have their lives ahead of them so they should get in touch with social workers and other relevant authorities to counsel them and that they should never give up.

I say this in relation to the situation I was in and how I was assisted and that they too will find a solution and live happy lives.

My greatest wish is to be a very successful businessperson and to be able create employment for my fellow people and to continue attending these workshops.

Chobe "I" STORIES



It's 50/50... We are all equal

By Fatimah Gregory

AT THE AGE OF 33, not married, not working, having had different relationships, which resulted in four kids, I decided to find greener pastures in Ghanzi. This time I had made it a point that I would not share my love with any man unless he promises marriage.

This was in the year 1992 in January. I was temporarily employed by different construction companies for the whole year. Then later I was employed at a liquor distributor and I made it a point that any one interested in me should meet my parents first or else no sex. Then I met my so-called husband or Mr Right Tiro. He was so caring and loving and the first two months passed without sex but we spend nights together, cuddling and kissing. We were always together until we went to my family where we spent two nights together.

I had trust in him, he was mine and I was his and we started enjoying sex, and not long after I got pregnant he immediately dumped me. Whenever I visited he would immediately leave and he had stopped coming to my place. I went home to give birth, delivered in October and notified him, he told me that it was okay but he just ignored me. After three months I phoned to let him know that I needed nappies and some toiletries. Then he told me was that he had many wives and he would have to inform them about me but nothing changed.

I suffered even more until my mum gave me money for transport to go back to Ghanzi. On my arrival I was well treated. After a week he told me that he was going to Zambia and could not leave me in his house. I asked him to give me money to go back home but he refused and told me that he had to support his many wives and children.

I went to the place where I used to stay and started business as a Shebeen Queen and it was successful. He then started visiting me and the child, drinking my chibuku and smoking my cigarettes and at times he would bring his friends to get beer on credit. When I demanded payment and when they did not pay he would say that I don't behave well and did not treat his friends with respect.

By then I had started losing weight, I used to weigh 70 kilograms but by that time I had dropped down to 47 kilograms. Whenever I had an argument with someone he would tell them how bad I was. If someone stole my property he would offer to be a witness in court and to give evidence that I was a bad person. I kept losing weight until I was weighing only 43 kilograms. I then decided to test for HIV and discovered that I was positive, I then asked the counselor to check my son's status, he was negative and I was very happy.

I started living a positive life after I had known my status. After three or six months he would come to me at night whenever he liked because he knew nobody loved me because I was boney and skinny and looked like a skeleton.

I went back to hospital for ARVs only to be told that my CD4 count was 1000 and I was delighted. I was told that I was I not sick, that I had stress and for sure I had stress, I could hardly eat nor swallow food. I would spend sleepless nights waiting for him and he would come and satisfy himself then go back.

One day a Good Samaritan came and introduced me to the home-based-care unit because they saw that I was thin and thought I had AIDS but it was only stress. In the year 2011, I met Mma Ntsabane at a BOFWA workshop. She introduced Gender Links to us and how it was formed, its purpose, its quality and justice. Then came a training workshop in 2013 where we discussed our problems, concerning gender-based violence and we were all ready to write the 'I' Stories.

After the training and the writing of my 'I' story, I felt relieved it was as if I was delivered from a demon. In 2014, we had business training and at first we were told to draw a tree of life, which had many different parts.

This training motivated me. I knew who I was, I knew I had a purpose to live and that I had to set goals, visions, aims and a mission. There was a light at the end of a tunnel since I had already registered a company in landscaping. We were taught about the 3Ps; Production, Process, and Product.

Production – I know my product, I have researched the business, it is in demand and has elements like Garden Maintenance, Dry Landscaping, General Gardening with Lawns, Flower Arranging for different events such as funerals, weddings, bridal showers, anniversaries, graduations, prize giving events memorial services etc.
Place – I have chosen the right place for my business where there is plenty of water, the soil is fertile and there are a lot of customers and no competition.
Price – I have the lowest affordable prices for all. Why? Because I plant and produce, I collect from the bush and deliver.
Research – I made a market research to find out from lodges, the private sector, government departments as well as the community at large. The business is rare; I do not have competitors, only a few who take chances.
Distribution – I have my own nursery at the back of my yard. I do sketch planning, land preparation, lawn establishment, tree planting, cultivation, weeding processes, top dressing, pruning and watering.
Promotional Strategy – I have month-end specials on fresh flowers and decorate free of charge for the less privileged customers.

With this business I have gone far. I have achieved my goals and I have built myself a 2½-roomed house with tiles and ceiling. I wish to buy a Dyna truck for my business. I have opened an account for myself and for the company.

My relationship has changed for the better because I am financially independent, I am my own boss and I make decisions. I employ women and men and I mostly take time to talk to women to encourage them to start their own businesses. I have even told them that it is so easy to make your own business plan rather than ask a consultant to make it for you.

Survivors of abuse in my area need to be motivated and funded to buy the equipment they need. For those who are still abused please lets fight for freedom, it is 50/50 no man is bigger than a woman.

Lastly, I would like to thank Mma Ntsabane and the Gender Links Mme Collen Lowe, Gomolemo Rasesigo as well as the SADC Protocol for Gender Quality and Justice. Yes we must!!!



Speak out and break the silence

By Doris Koloi

I AM A NIGERIAN legally married to a Motswana. Since we got married in 1995, life was sweet for only two years. From 1998 my husband became so abusive to me, physically, verbally and emotionally.

He started not supporting fully at home. He would disappear from home at payday and come back only when he was broke and moneyless. When he arrived home, he would ask me about the footprints in the yard, and would beat me thoroughly, insulting me and my parents and accusing me of being a foreigner.

If I asked him to buy us food he would say that he would rather buy food for so-and-so referring to his girlfriend. He would tell me to ask my boyfriends to buy me food even though he was the one who was cheating. He even started saying that the kids were not his that I got them from prostitution.

Meanwhile I was not working, we were abused and starving and I ended up going to the Magistrate Court to sue for maintenance and he was asked to pay P300 per month. He does not even pay it unless the police officers make a follow-up that is when he pays up.

So the sour life of my children and I went on until I decided to go back to court and ask for a restraining order because life was just horrible. But he would not leave the yard completely as he was ordered to instead he was in and out and the violence continued. One day I visited the S&CD officers for help and after I had told them my problems, I was lucky to be introduced Gender Links that very day in 2013.

Since then I started attending the workshops, they were helpful to me because I shared my problems with others then when I went back home I knew how to handle the situation. I even attended business training and this has been helpful because now I am having a lot of ideas of how I can make a better living.

In the meantime, my relationship with my husband is better because I ended up restraining myself and kids from him in order to live a safer life.

In my village programs, which support survivors, are available but I think that if all officers from the offices were women it would be good. This is because when you go there to report your problem or your partner if you find a man you won't get any help instead you will be sent to other organizations.

What I can say to people who are living a miserable life of abuse out there is that please don't keep abuse a secret, you will die young, or end up being crippled because of being abused. There are programs out there, which can improve your life.

Then my last words to all victims, 'Speak out and break the silence'. A problem shared is a problem solved.

I pay my children's school fees

By Angelina Gakgamalang

I AM ANGELINA GAKGAMALANG, a lady of 49 years and I come from the village of Kazungula at the Sekao ward. I started taking part in Gender Links workshops in 2014 in Kasane.

Life with my husband was very difficult because he talked a lot and did not allow our children to attend school. My biggest problem was that I was not working and could not pay school fees for the children.

I went to my friend and told her about my problems and she made arrangements for me to attend Gender Links training. They helped me a lot. I was counseled and went through business training. I managed to start a business selling perfumes and body lotions, which I bought from Zambia. The situation at home is better and I am now able to pay my children's school fees and they go to school.

I encourage victims of abuse to utilize programs that are available in our village that will enable them to rear goats, breed chicken, do sewing and get tents to hire out for weddings parties etc.

The programs can be improved if the employees from Gender Affairs could go into the village to talk to women and men and ask them to stop the abuse and to teach them about how to start businesses to support their families.

I encourage all people who are hiding the fact that they are being abused to get in touch with social workers and employees from Gender Affairs so that they can be assisted.

I thank people from Gender Links for the training that they give us all the time.

I encourage victims of abuse to utilize programs that are available in our village that will enable them to rear goats, breed chicken, do sewing and get tents to hire out for weddings parties.

I will fulfill the 2030 vision of a prosperous nation

By Polelo Segwati

I AM VERY thankful that I am no longer going through the abuse I found myself in. I am running my own business and there are no problems in my life. I found it useful to put all my effort into running my business so that I could afford to raise my children and to ensure that we have a good future. The training I got from Gender Links has taught me a lot of things concerning my life.

Gender Links business training has been very useful to me because I have learned that before I start a business I have to do a business plan. I have learned about different types of businesses such as micro, small and medium businesses. I have also learned that when in business you have to save any profit that you make. My life has changed a lot because business is doing very well, my savings from the profits is growing and this shows me that my business will make me fulfill the 2030 vision of a prosperous nation.

The people I relate with are also experiencing a positive growth from the situation they were in. They are no longer being abused. There is improvement in their lives because they have gone through training and have decided to get out of their abusive environments. Some of them are thankful to me for bringing them relief from the challenges that had crippled their lives.

Programs that help survivors of abuse in my village include Ipelegeng and Gender Affairs and they help by educating us on how to fight abuse in our lives. People who find themselves in abusive relationships should speak out about their issues instead of concealing the pain they are experiencing. They should get in touch with social workers for advice and guidance.

I won first prize in a competition

By Matswi Dinyando

I am from antsintsileng and I met up with Gender Links in 2013. I was dumped for a young girl I had put through school and left with four children. My partner had told me that the girl was a daughter of his friend. I had given up, had low self-esteem and was afraid to go out in the public.

I took part in Gender Links training and they taught me how to regain my self-respect. I was also taught to not to tolerate abuse as well as how to make a living by starting a business. Gender Links training has helped me a

lot and I can now interact with people without fear. I am able go to relevant offices to find out about programs that can improve my life. Going through training has given me so much confidence that I go about with my head held high and people are amazed to see this change

Gender Affairs department offer training that addresses gender based violence and the police also offer help on these issues. I wish that government could build a safe house or shelter for people going through abuse. I encourage people not to let anyone abuse them, they should go to the police or to authorities that can help them to get out of being abused.

I now live happily with my children. I believe that my business will start operating by September this year. I encourage other women that they should believe in themselves without leaning on anyone. They should stand up for themselves and should not rely on crumbs from anyone's table. Programs are available to uplift everyone.

I am venturing into a cultural village business and I already have a plot to operate from. I have already started to build the houses. I applied for funding from Gender Affairs and I await their response. I took part in business competitions that were run in the country and I took first prize. I came second in the same competition for SADC countries.

Rescued from poverty

By Sediege Marum

I stay in a ward called Kgaphamadi in Kasane and I have six children. When my husband passed away leaving me with six children I wondered how I was going to cope.

I went to the social workers and asked them to help me with the upbringing of the children because I was not working. The social workers came to my rescue and gave us food and clothes for the children. In order to make a living I taught myself to sew and that is how I had sustained myself over the years. I then decided to get in touch with Social and Community Development and ask them to help me access programs that were available. They agreed to help and send me to train for sewing using a sewing machine.

In 2011 the Council arranged for me to attend Gender Affairs training and we were taught how to save money and do marketing. My business changed my life because I now have an income to meet my needs.I encourage people in my community to approach the Council or Gender Affairs in order to access programs that they qualify for. People who are going through abuse can contact the police, social workers and the S&CD so that they can get any help they need.

My last word is to thank Gender Affairs for rescuing me from poverty, for developing me and I encourage them to keep helping me to progress in many different ways.

Confront abuse before it's too late

By Ketlhobogile Kenalemang

I AM FROM Kgaphamadi ward in Kasane and I am 43 years of age. In 2012 I met and fell in love with Banthutse Kebuwalemang. After being together for two years he started abusing me. When we met I was running a small business selling clothes and he was working at Sharps Construction.

He started by asking me to borrow him money but at the end of the month he would not repay it and this went on month after month. If I refuse to give him money he would say that he was leaving me to go and look for a woman who would look after him because there were many women who were willing to give money to men. And because I was desperate for love I would give in so that he could stay.

He told me that I must give him money without expecting him to pay it back because when we were having sex he performed a duty and I must give him money to thank him for what he was doing for me.

After three months my business started to go down because I did not have money to buy stock nor pay school fees or buy clothes for the kids, I could not even pay rent.

In 2013 Gender Links came to Kasane and I attended their training where I learned about gender-based violence and passion killings that are so rife in our communities, what caused them, and how they could be ended. Gender Links taught me that if I am being abused I can report the matter to the police, parents, chiefs, neighbors and social workers

I also went through business training and was taught that I should save money from my business and what I could do to access money to start a business in order to earn a living. At this training, I was encouraged to do laundry or clean homes for other people in order to generate an income and not to be choosy about jobs.

I looked for a job and saved enough to restart my business then asked Banthotse that we should end our relationship. He got angry, shouted at me and said, 'you are a stupid woman who cannot maintain a man. I don't care about you and I am going to look for a woman who will give me money because there are plenty of them out there!'

Banthotse finally left and I was very thankful and happy about that. I continued doing my business and it is making progress. I can say to people who are currently being abused that they should report the culprits to the police, chiefs and to social workers.

If all fails they should end the relationship and look for a job so that they can start their own businesses.

They can also go the social workers to find out about the Poverty Eradication programs, which have helped a lot of people.

We have started a drama group in Kasane that teaches people about gender-based violence.

It also encourages those who are not able to talk about what is happening to them to see that they are not alone and other people are also experiencing abuse.

I encourage the society to always confront issues of abuse before it is too late.





GL Training takes away the pain

By Maikano Sebenjolo

MY NAME IS Maikano Sebenjolo in the Kgaphagamadi ward in Kasane.

I first met Gender Links officials in 2013 in Kasane. There was a discussion about gender-based violence and I attended. My first encounter with abuse is when my mother passed away and my father married another woman who ill-treated us. I am now going through another abuse by my elder brother and young siblings who want me to move out of our home.

The training I received from Gender Links has taken away the pain I was feeling and is strengthening me to carry on. I am no longer worried about being chased out of our home because I have a plot, which I am now developing and this means that I am already making an inheritance for my children. Gender Links has taught me where to go when I have challenges.

In business training I have learned that I should not use all the resources from the business without saving any money otherwise business will close down. I was also taught to be patient in my business and to know that it will eventually make a profit. Programs could be improved by engaging Gender Links to facilitate and ensure that we access the resources we apply for because they already know that we are involved in abusive situations.

I wish to say to all victims of abuse that Gender Links is there for us and they take all the pain that we go through and throw it away. Also when you are going through abuse you know where to go.

Gender Links has taught me where to go when I have challenges.

Ghanzi

"I" STORIES



I have business skills

By Xaka Kamote

MY NAME IS Xaka Kamote and I have attended Gender Links training on the 13th of November 2013. I learned about gender-based violence as well as how to improve my life if I am going through abuse.

In this training we were taught about the different types of gender-based violence and also about business training. Regarding abuse, I shared about the painful experience I was going through. I was beaten in front of my children, this affected them and their grades at school went down. They used to live in fear that when their father came home from his drinking he was going to beat all of us. They were even afraid to eat food because he would beat them if they ate it.

> I am able to earn money to buy food for my family.

After being counseled and when I had gone through training I realized that something could be done about my situation. So I approached a social worker and asked for assistance and they offered to pay my children's school fees and buy them school uniform.

When the Poverty Eradication program was introduced I went back to the social worker and she took me to Gender Affairs to apply for a business. I did and I am now waiting for the registration certificate but in the meantime I am knitting and I'm able to earn a bit of money to buy food for my family.

Having gone through training has made a lot of difference to my live because when I was being abused I thought that it was normal, that life was supposed to be like that. I was afraid of talking about it because I feared that people will laugh at me but now I am at peace with myself and I am happy with my life.

I have learned a lot from business training because I now know that I have to save profit from my business at a bank, know how much is coming in the business and what is going out. I have business skills and I know which business I want to start.

Do not be afraid to report abuse

By Dikitso Sebaga

I AM from Bosele ward in Ghanzi, and I attended Gender Links training on 13th November 2013.

I have realized that gender based violence is bad for our families. In 2011, I experienced gender based abuse that negatively affected my life. My cousin who stays in Gaborone asked me to go and stay with her family as she was going abroad to study for two years. I stayed with her children and her husband.

During my cousin's absence her husband forced me to have sex with him and threatened to beat me if I refused. When my cousin returned home I told her what has been happening her husband totally denied what he had done. My cousin threatened to call the police if he did not own up. This frightened him and he admitted that he did it and asked for forgiveness. They had a big argument after that and my cousin filed for divorce. This experience haunted me and I could not get it out of my mind.

After going through Gender Links training regarding gender based violence I can talk about my experience without fear. I have also learned how to do a business plan, to save money and what to do to fight abuse. I have registered a company and I sell Table Charm products to make a living.

I think people who are being abused should enroll in support groups such as Ka Loo Boiaiana, to seek help and guidance and also to approach organizations like Gender Links. Awareness education could be carried out at schools, hospitals, clinics, at the kgotla and in villages.

I can tell people who have been abused not be afraid to go to authorities like the police or social workers. They should ask for help before something drastic happens.

> I have learnt to do a business plan, to save money and how to fight abuse.

> I have registered a company and I am selling Table Charm products.

You only have one life

By Mmonadilo Badirile

MY NAME IS Mmonadilo Badirile, a 30 year-old young woman born in D'kar, a village 35 kilometres from Ghanzi on the way to Maun.

I started a love affair that was filled with anguish. I was treated badly, beaten all the time and forced to have sex even when I was menstruating. He never gave me money and even did the grocery for our home.

My eyes were opened when I attended Gender Links training workshops and learned about gender based violence. I had initially thought that whenever he beat me, it was to show that he loved me. Gender Links also taught me about business and business training taught me;

i. To save all the profit made no matter how small
ii. To record incoming and outgoing transactions
iii. To have a salary instead of taking money from sales because the business may not grow

I have gone back home and I am at peace with my family. I no longer go around with bruises and a swollen face. Even my son who always got involved in fights with others has improved and no longer gets into such trouble. The man I was staying with has passed away.

Programs that are available in our village are Mother's of All, and Gender Affairs. I don't think the programs need to be improved, we just do not use them because we are not willing to work hard.

I say to people who conceal that they are being abused out of fear that others will laugh at them or that they do not want to taint their reputations that, 'you only have one life'. If you not disclose that you are being abused you might end with health conditions such as high blood pressure, stress and depression or you may end up being killed.

Stand up women, stand up and work hard and together we shall work for our land. Botswana is doing a lot for us, what are you doing for Botswana, A woman is the backbone to the nation. Let us say no to abuse.

I have learnt about my rights

By Mariam Williams

I started attending Gender Links training in November 2013. I was one of the people going through abuse when we started.

I was being abused by my partner but was unaware that what I was going through was abuse. Mothers of my partner's children used to stay at his place where I also stayed whenever they came to Ghanzi. When I asked why that was happening he would explain that they had come to discuss the welfare of their children with him.

My partner did that because he knew that he was the sole breadwinner and I had to I tolerate it because I was not working. The sewing business I had was not sustainable because I was not putting enough effort on it.

What I learned from Gender Links has made me to take a firm decision to work hard so that my partner can see that I am also contributing to the welfare of our home. I learned about my rights in life, that I should never give in to abuse because of poverty.

Business training taught me that a business is not determined by its size, no matter how small it may be it is still a business. I run a sewing business as well as baking different types of bread. I am in the process of registering a name for my sewing business and at the same time I bake and sell bread and this enables me to pay school fees and buy my children food and clothes.

My partner now recognizes that I also contribute in bringing an income to our home. I keep business records and this enables me to see how the two businesses are doing. The abuse has subsided and we discuss what want to in our home together.

The programs that teach about gender-based violence in our village are very effective as they address issues of abuse at the kgotla and do not visit homes of victims of abuse. If they had financial means they could go to small villages. These programs are support groups, crime prevention and Humana People to People.

I advise victims of abuse to approach people and seek help. The police and social workers are available and so are churches to address these issues. They should not keep abuse as a secret.

I wish that as Botswana celebrates 50 years of independence gender based violence would no longer be there and there will be peace and stability.

Gender Links has boosted my morale

By Mothoosele Katse

I stay at Meriting ward in Ghanzi. I started attending Gender Links training on the 13th of November 2013 when we first started sharing our stories of how we experienced gender-based violence.

My partner and I did not have a good relationship because we fought all the time. One time I went to the hospital to test for HIV and found out that I was positive. When I told him about my status he just said that he did not have HIV. It was very difficult for me at first to accept my status because at that time it was a real challenge to be HIV positive. In the end I accepted my status. I am no longer being abused because I am no longer with him.

Gender Links can really get you out an abusive relationship, they can get you out of poverty and help you to be patient with what you want to achieve. In short they boost your morale and change your life.

Business training has changed my life because I now sell sweets and knit berets and I am able make a living unlike before when I was not doing anything.

The way I relate to people in my story is better as they used to see me as a worthless person because I was living with HIV but now they know that the virus can infect anyone.

Programs in our village are rearing of goats, cattle, chicken having tents etc and these programs have helped a lot of people, and others were able to get out of abusive relationships.

I can say to victims of gender-based violence that, government is supporting us so do not allow yourselves to be abused. Get help from relevant authorities, let us not condone abuse.

> I now knit berets and sell sweets. I am able to make a living unlike before.

Physical abuse can take away your ability to love

By Selelo Tuelo

I AM A WOMAN of 40 years of age from Kgotlaneng ward in Ghanzi. I started attending Gender Links training in 2014.

Physical abuse can take away your ability to love, your vision for the future, your ability to do things for yourself. It can prevent you from meeting other people and can make you stressful. I learned that I had to report abuse to the police, social workers and to organizations like Kagisanong Shelter. I learned different types of gender-based violence from Gender Links and they encouraged me to participate in poverty intervention programs.

Business training taught me to do a business plan and this is helping me a lot with my tuck shop which has rescued me from poverty. I have built myself a two roomed house and I feel proud of myself. My former boyfriend has enrolled with Men's Sector and life is good. I do voluntary work at VDC and VHC.

I am also with Window of Hope, Humana People to People VHC and Kagisano Shelter and I learn a lot from them. They encourage men to attend organizations that deal with gender-based violence, Poverty Eradication Programs and Gender Affairs.

Government could help with funding in order to hold workshops and activities for gender-based violence to take the message to the society.

Men and women lets know our rights, abuse should be reported let us not hide it. Let's attend organizations to learn about abuse and enroll in programs that will help to make a sustainable living. We can push our lives forward and help to make Botswana a compassionate and educated nation.

Protect your family from abuse

By Gabanthate Seloko

I AM a young lady of 30 years of age and I stay in Moreima ward in Ghanzi. I started attending Gender Links workshops on 13th November 2013 in Ghanzi where we were first taught about gender based-violence, what it is, and how it can be stopped.

I was abused by a man who impregnated me, then denied that he did. He beat me all the time to an extend that I went to report him to the authorities.

I learned a lot from Gender Links about abuse, that no one has a right to abuse another especially concerning women. Gender Links encouraged me not to condone abuse and I went to the social worker and she helped, in the end I broke up the relationship with that man and I am now living a peaceful life.

Regarding business, I have not yet started, I had gone to the social workers and they asked me to wait. I am still waiting for their response.

Since I ended the relationship with the man who abused me my life has changed a lot as me and my children live happily without problems. This has shown me that if you are living in an abusive situation you can report matter to the social workers and they will rescue you.

I wish to advise anyone who is being abused that they should not tolerate abuse, I want them to know that there are authorities such as Gender Affairs and Women Against Rape who can help them. I thank Gender Links for providing me with so much knowledge. I also encourage my friends to stand up against abuse so that they can protect their children and families from abuse.

Let's share what we learnt with others

By Mooketsa Zuleni

I AM from Kgaphamadi Ward in Ghanzi and I started Gender Links training in 2013. I experienced abuse from my boyfriend who forced me to have unprotected sex even though were both HIV positive because he said it was too late for us to use protection.

After attending Gender Links training, I learned a lot about abuse. I was taught about different types of abuse and where I could go to get help like from the police, BONEPWA and Gender Links. I really have learned so much from the training even if I am unable to effectively tell my story.

I have not yet started my own business but I have realized that if we as women could make our own living we would not go through abuse because we would not depend on men for our sustenance.

I have understood so much from business training even though my business is very small as I sell sweets and airtime. The situation is better because I now know where to go when I want to access programs or get guidance. I suggest that you continue giving us this training because it is helpful.

What I can say is that organizations such as Gender Links are helpful and we should take them seriously and learn from them and share what we have learned with others. To the survivors of abuse I can say that they should approach relevant authorities for assistance.

Find ways of getting out of abuse

By Khutsanyana Lemphorwana

I STARTED TO ATTEND Gender Links training in 2013. I am an orphan and according to the abuse I went through I believe that there are other orphans out there who are going through the same abuse that I went through.

Abuse is affecting us because it is committed by our relatives so we do not get a good upbringing and this is painful and it affects our education.

In business training I have learned about budgeting, market research and record keeping. I am where I am because of the training I received from Gender Links. I have made progress and I am not afraid of anyone. I am able to go to council offices to collect forms for tendering and complete them by myself.

Concerning people in my story, the situation has improved, I feel that I am regarded as part of the family and we do communicate well.

To the women who are being abused I say that they should not give in to abuse, they should find ways of getting out of it.

It is up to us to fight abuse

By Dixao Tsau

I AM Dixao Tsau in Gantsi. I attended Gender Links workshops on the 13th of November 2013 and I learned about abuse and also about how to improve life after being abused.

I learned about different types of abuse and also learned business skills. I had gone through abuse that had left me in misery. But after training my emotions subsided and I spoke to the social worker and asked for help. She helped me by paying school fees for my children and to provide other things that they needed.

I went to see her again when Poverty Eradication program came into effect, because she knew the problems I was facing and she introduced me to Gender Affairs to apply for assistance and I was given a tuck shop. Unfortunately it is not working at present.

When the Mothers of All came about I was fortunate to be one of the beneficiaries and I was taught how to make jewelry from newspapers and magazines. The jewelry helped me to have an income and though I cannot achieve my dreams from what I make from the business presently it does take me a long way.

Training has been very helpful because I used to think that being abused is part of a normal life and I was afraid to get it out in the open because I was ashamed. There are different types of abuse such as emotional abuse which is very bad because when you are going through it people may think that you are just making excuses while you go through a tough time. There is physical abuse which is easy to observe because there are wounds, bruises and scars that people can see.

A lot of change has come into my life because I now have my own income and don't depend only on my partner for livelihood which had started the abuse in the first place.

Gender Links also trained us on business skills. So I decided to save some of the profit from the jewelry business start a tuck shop and also to buy and sell clothes plus anything that can bring an income so that I can make enough to pay myself a salary.

I also wish I could rear cattle but I still don't have enough money to do so. I continue to apply for government programs and I believe that I shall be fortunate to be granted one. I also sell sweets an airtime to meet the children's needs.

I did not have any hope that my emotions would ever go down but after coming into contact with Gender Links I realized that my challenges were better than what other women faced.

Programs that are available in my village which help a lot in issues of abuse include a support group and a drama that focuses mainly on abuse. These programs need financial support to continue being able to help those in need.

Being able to put yourself in the survivor's shoes is very important because you make her to relax and to talk about her problems. This enables you to make her look at the results of being abused and to advise her on how she can get out of being abused and her where she can access help.

My fellow Batswana abuse is a big challenge, it is up to us to stand up and fight it so that we can live a life full of happiness, respect among men and women.



These programs need financial support to continue being able to help those in need.

Goodhope "I" STORIES



Have ambition and desire

By Laone Ikaneng

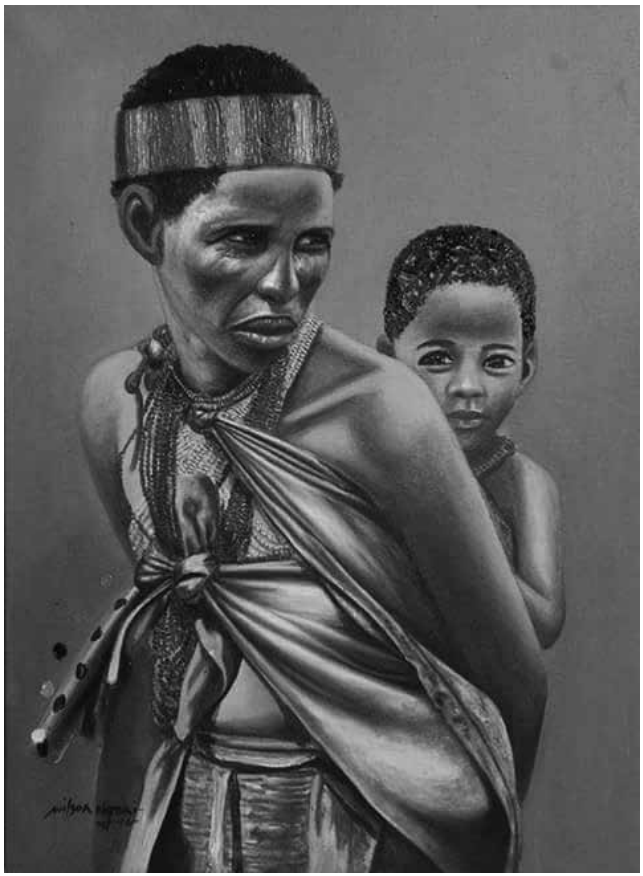
I WAS born in the small village of Mathubudukwane in the Kgatleng district. I met the Gender Links people in the year 2014.

I was emotionally and verbally abused by my ex-boyfriend who used to use foul language against me. The training helped me to see abuse in all its forms and make me to stand on my own and not to depend on anyone.

I started a business selling clothes and now I am able to support myself and my family without looking at someone to provide for me. My business is doing well I travel outside the country to buy goods and sell them.
From my profits I started to sell chickens to people and that side of the business is growing faster. My life has changed for the better.

I have realized that it is very difficult for people to talk about abuse or about any problems they may have but I have helped a woman who stays next to me when the father of her unborn child was abusing her. I even helped her to take action and now she is happily raising a beautiful boy.

To people out there you should learn to love yourself before you can start thinking of loving someone else. Make sure that you have ambition and desire before you even think of making someone happy.



I have registered a company and I am selling Table Charm products.

My life is my responsibility

By Matlholaadibona Kedibonye Ketlhalefile

MY NAME IS Matlholaadibona Kedibonye Ketlhalefile. I am a young lady aged 27. I started participating in Gender Links workshops in June 2014. When I first attended the workshops I had personal problems.

I lost my mother when I was fourteen years and stayed with my father and elder siblings, we are a family of seven and I am the youngest. My mother looked after us and when she passed away the situation at home became unbearable. I started looking for friends and what could resemble a family for me from around the village. Attending school became difficult because at times there was no food at home. And what I had thought was a solution became my living hell.

I started a love affair with a man who was eight years my senior and this man abused me a lot. He behaved as if he was my father, mother and older siblings all rolled into one because he took care of me and could not let anyone tell him how to treat me.

So I started drinking too much in an effort to reduce the stress in my life.

Sometime in June 2014 I met a friend of mine who told me about Gender Links and how they could help me get out of the situation I was in.

I met the facilitators from this organization and told them about my problems and they gave me skills of self motivation and how to start my own business. I followed their guidance and at present I have applied for a Youth Development Fund and I am busy gathering all that is needed to access funding to start my business. There is peace at home because I have changed and no longer drink or go clubbing.

I thank Gender Links a lot and encourage those who still feel ashamed to talk about their problems to come out in the open and they will be healed. This will help us to built a strong nation. I am wiser and I have learned a lot from my challenges my mistakes.

Business skills have changed my life

By Ntebang Letlhokwa

MY NAME IS Ntebang Letlhokwa, I am a lady aged 42 years and I was married to Buti Lotlhokwa in 1996. Our marriage was happy at first but then things became bad.

When we got married my husband did not drink. Then he started drinking and things became different. He would come home late and drunk and did not want me to ask where he was if I did he would beat me. At month end he would not bring his salary home instead he would say that it got lost. We always had no food and we practically starved but if I complained he threatened to take me back to my family and this made very unhappy.

I told his parents what was going on and they called him. I related my story and he did not deny anything. They reprimanded him and there was a bit of an improvement. During that time I met some ladies who invited me to join their church. I talked to my husband about going to church and he agreed so we attended church and he even stopped drinking and our lives became good again.

I started attending Gender Links workshops in 2014. I was taught a lot about abuse and that when you are being abused you need to see counselors for advice and guidance. When I started business training I did know anything about business but they taught me a lot of business skills that have changed my life and I feel confident that if I start a business it will succeed.

To the survivors of abuse I say that they should get in touch with social workers, the police, chiefs and apply for government poverty eradication programs so that they can be start their own businesses.

I thank Gender Links for the training they gave me.

Stop being victims of abuse

By Kealeboga Bogogi

I AM A LADY of 24 years and my name is Kealeboga Bogogi. I stay in Good Hope. I started participating in Gender Links workshops in May 2015 and attended all sessions because I realized that they were very important. They advised us to take action, end the violence and become entrepreneurs.

When I enrolled in the Gender Links training I was going through two different forms of abuse. There was the abuse I was experiencing from my family and another one being committed by the man I was having an affair with. This man played with my feelings and put me through emotional abuse. He was married and whenever I suggested that we end the relationship he would threaten me and whenever we met he would beat me.

While going through this situation with this man, at home I would find a different form of abuse from my family. Sedimo Arone who was my uncle did not want his mother, my grandmother, to help me in any way. If my grandmother wanted to pay my school fees he would fight tooth and nail to prevent it. My mother and father had passed away and they did not have a share in my grandparents' inheritance.

Gender Links taught me how to boost my self-esteem and I also learned business skills. Now I am a different person thanks to Gender Links and I am at a point where I am waiting for the Youth Development Fund or any organization that can fund me to start my gym room.

I have learnt how to identify a business by identifying the needs in my community. Gender Links encouraged me to start a business. I realized that there is a link between gender based violence and economic empowerment. My life has changed since I ended the violence and I am free because I have broken up with the dude and unfortunately Sedimo, my uncle, has passed on. I have my own plot and my plan is to build on it.

Since I have been trained by Gender Links there is a difference in my life and even though I have not yet started a business, I talk to other people and advise them to end the violence in their lives by getting in touch with social workers from our community. I tell them that they should stop being victims of abuse and be survivors.

I think Gender Links should continue teaching people about gender based violence and entrepreneurship. People who are trained by Gender Links have an opportunity to educate other people. I am forever grateful to them, let's end gender-based violence and start businesses to make a living for ourselves and for our families.

I found means of supporting myself and family

By Matlhogonolo Dirang

I SEND GREETINGS to everyone who will have an interest in reading my story. I am a young lady of 33 years from Papatlo in the Barolong Farms and my name is Matlhogonolo.

In 2014, I started to attend Gender Links workshops that teach about different issues that affect people's lives.

Before I came across this training I had gone through an abusive relationship but did not know where to go for help. I was experiencing an emotional and sexual abuse that was so bad that I finally had to end the relationship particularly because the man I was having a relationship with was threatening to kill me then kill himself. I had no one that I could reveal these things to until I came across Gender Links.

I found Gender Links training so useful that I decided to take action and stand up and find means of supporting myself. We learnt about different forms of gender-based violence and how to deal with them. I was trained about how to start a business as a woman and how I can make it grow.

I started a business doing laundry in the homes of some employees. I had a certain number of people that I did the laundry for and the income was quite comfortable and helped me to make ends meet. It also provided me with pocket money and I could buy anything I wanted without relying on anyone. In our village there is a serious water shortage, and sometimes my business suffers because there is no water but I don't give up and whenever water is available I continue with my business. At present my life is much better than it was before and I have met someone who is full of love and supports me in my business venture.

There are organizations in my village that help to address issues of abuse such as Humana People to People. I also counsel people who come to me with challenges relating to abuse. We want Gender Links to grow big and that other people can attend the workshops like I did. I want to say to people who are being abused that they should stand up and look for help.

My last words is to thank Gender Links for what they are doing, it is indeed a great job. Personally I have learnt a lot from them and I promise that they will see the results of their efforts in time.

There is life after abuse

By Lillian Moloi

I AM A LADY of 60 years of age. I am from Kanye and I started to attend Gender Links workshops in 2014 as a volunteer.

I learnt a lot about different forms of gender-based violence like sexual abuse, physical abuse, and that life goes on after being abused. This has boosted my morale regarding all that I faced after being abused. I learnt that life is like a wheel it keeps on turning and prayer is the way and the truth.

I met my partner in 1980 when I had one son and over the years we had five children. In 1992 we got married and after that my husband started drinking and used all the money without caring whether he had paid school fees for the children or not. He would go out saying he was going to look for money but he would go and drink and when he came back he would beat me and I would escape to his mother's place. When he was asked what the problem was he would say that he beat me because was he had been drinking.

He continued abusing us even when my children went to senior secondary school and by the will of God they completed their secondary education. In 1998 my husband joined the Zion Christian Church and he stopped drinking and the beating also stopped.

In 2005 my first son from the previous relationship started emotionally abusing us saying that he wanted to meet his biological father because my husband was not his father. We realized that he did this whenever he had been drinking. He took us to court and we took the matter to our elders where we had the opportunity to talk to him at length and he listened and dropped the case.

Having a business is very important in life so I started to sell sweets in order to have an income and this changed my life a lot.

There are organizations like Emang Basadi in my village and they help people to share their stories about the abuse they experience and to report it if they are still being abused so that they can live freely.

I can tell people that if they are being abused they should take action while there is time to stop the killings that may occur if the abuse continues. Being abused is not the end of the world.

Gender Links got us out of abuse

By Dorothy Kealeboga

MY NAME IS Dorothy Kealeboga, I am a young woman of 27 years old from the Kweneng District and I started participating in Gender Links workshops on the 11th of June 2014. I was introduced to Gender Links by Humana People to People.

I have experienced what I can call the abandonment of a baby type of abuse. I was in love with a man who got me pregnant when I was 22 years and when I told him that I was pregnant he denied that he was responsible and abandoned me.

In the course of time I met someone who looked after me and my children. I also became aware that I had been abused by my former boyfriend though I did not know it at the time. I then went to Humana People to People to ask for help because I did not know what to do about the abuse I had gone through. They counselled and gave me guidance and I felt better. I was attended to by a God fearing and loving lady.

And that is how I got out of the abuse and I shall never allow myself to be abused again. Gender Links has taught us where we can find organizations that can help us to get out of being abused and these includes, the police, Women Shelter, Childline, chiefs, relatives, social workers, Sbrana Hospital, Lifeline, YWCA, Emang Basadi, Humana People to People etc.

Entrepreneurship training has changed my life because I have learnt about things I never knew related to business such as Business Basics, Understanding Business Basics, Different Type of Business, Market Research and Market Gap, Business Ideas etc. The way I relate to people in my story has changed and is better because I am no longer being abused. I am now able to help those who are still experiencing abuse and I have realized that there are worst situations of abuse than the one I was in.

Programs that support survivors of abuse in our village that I have mentioned can be improved by talking about abuse at gatherings, at government departments and kgotla and getting ideas about how it can be stopped.

I can tell people who find themselves in abusive situations that life is like a precious glass, if you keep dropping it, or you allow it to be knocked about by things it will break and that will be the end. Let us not allow abuse in our lives, let us go where we can get help to end it. Let us stand up and take relevant action about our lives and let us not lose hope.

My last words are that I want to thank Gender Links for getting us out of the quicksand of abuse. I also want to thank the facilitators who taught us what we did not know but was adversely affecting our lives. May God bless you and may you continue teaching those who are unaware of the dangers that are hiding in their relationships and homes. If it were not for you I would not be where I am today.

Jwaneng "I" STORIES



Report abuse when it happens

By Dipotso Ketshabile

I AM from Kanye at Sebako ward and I attended Gender Links workshops in 2013. My husband abused me and in the end he divorced me. I got custody of the children. He then appealed, was successful and was awarded the custody. He now wants me cancel the maintenance award.

Gender Links has taught me that when I have challenges in life I should not give up and I also should not look down upon myself. Business training has changed my life because I was able to start a business that sustains my family and me.

Regarding people in my story there is not much change, things are still the same and my ex-husband has even stopped the children from visiting me though he knows very well that I have health issues. There are no programs to support survivors of abuse in my village except the women's committee for the abused.

People who are currently abused should not give up. They should do something that will make their lives better. They should report abuse otherwise they will end up losing their lives.

Let's save our nation

By Tharabololo Bothokwa

I am a woman of 50 years and I am from the sub-district of Tswapong called Bolelang. I started participating in Gender Links training in July 2014 through the assistance of social workers after I had gone to them for help because I was being abused.

I am a married woman but my marriage is a disgrace because my husband calls me terrible names such as witch, dog, servant and destitute. He beats me in front of my children and uses foul language at my parents. If I go to the District Commissioner or to any relevant authority to report him, he denies everything. He does not give me housekeeping money instead he buys groceries and when I eat the food he bought he says 'I am a toilet pit.'

Gender Links rescued me from this situation when I participated in their training. They also taught me how to start a business by making a business plan. I am now a businesswoman and I live happily. I have helped other women who still hide the fact that they are being abused to take action against their abusers.

Even though I had fled from my home to my parent's home, I live peacefully thanks to Gender Links.

This situation has changed my life a great deal because I now pay school fees for my children and this makes me feel really good.

Programs that are available in my village are from Emang Basadi and Gender Links and they help women a lot.

I can say to people who are still being abused that they should stand up and form support groups to help other women and men to get out of the dark and save our country Botswana and its nation.

We should not condone abuse

By Kgomotso Pule

I'M a woman of 42 years and I come from Bobonong at Mabeleng ward. I started attending Gender Links training workshops in 2013 in Jwaneng.

I have told a story of how I went through abuse in my marriage that brought about a diagnosis of high blood pressure and at times I felt like I was losing my mind. My husband beat me all the time and swore at my parents and cheated on me.

In the end I took action and got in touch with Gender Links, they counseled me and that made me feel better. Then I went to High Court to end my marriage because the situation was not getting any better.

From the Gender Links training I learned that we should not condone abuse.

The business training I did taught me a lot and this has improved my life a great deal because I have started a tuck shop and it is providing an income for me.

Passion killings have gone up in our village as a result of gender-based violence because there are no programs for survivors of abuse except for social workers who are not very effective. So I encourage people currently being abused to stand up and find out about programs relating to counseling so that they can find ways of dealing with their situations.

Abuse comes in different forms

By Rosina Lekang

I am from Marobela ward in Serowe and I am 60 years of age. I attended Gender Links workshops in 2013 and did 'I' Stories Phase 1, 2, and 3.

I experienced abuse from my grandchild whose mother is no longer with us. He was so disobedient and always got my family and me into trouble. I finally took him to a social worker and they counseled him. After counseling he changed a lot and we are now living a normal life.

I have learned that I should not give up in life and should do everything to the best of my ability. Also in business I should have faith that I shall make it. Business training has changed my life a great deal because I have business skills and I can start my own business.

In relation to my grandson he is a different person, and he pays attention when I talk to him. He is working now and sometimes he gives me money for housekeeping whenever he has made more money.

Programs are available in Jwaneng and I have just been given equipment by the Poverty Eradication program to do beadwork as a business.

People who are currently being abused should know that they are not alone abuse comes in different forms and affects other people. They should not give in they should look for help from social workers to get guidance to live better lives.

My last words are that I thank Jwaneng Town Council and Gender Links a lot for opening our eyes through the business skills we have learnt.

Wish Gender Links gave certificates

By Gokatweng Mmui

I AM A LADY of 48 years and I stay in Jwaneng. I first came into contact with Gender Links in 2013. At that time my heart was breaking and they healed me.

I have met my partner in 2001 and I lived my life in anguish as my partner put me through emotional and physical abuse, he had really taken away my life. I had given up and had a low-self esteem.

After some time he stopped drinking and joined a church and to my total disbelief our life became better. Then in 2013 I got into contact with Gender Links and they taught me about gender-based violence and business skills. This made me very happy because it felt like I had truly met my savior.

After business training I felt confident and good about myself because I had learnt so much. I was taught about market research, business plan, cash flow projections etc. Gender Links has motivated me a lot about making a living that I find myself always on the look out for business opportunities. These days I feel that whoever cannot find means of supporting themselves and their families is not looking hard enough.

I am quite content with my life these days because my children and their father give me a lot of support in running my business to a point where they sometimes buy me stock for my perfume selling business. I know that I have business skills and wish that Gender Links could award us certificates for participating in their training. This would enable us to work with social workers to teach people who find themselves in situations that we have survived and this would bring hope in their lives.

We have gone through training but we have trouble getting funding so that we could start our own businesses.

Use Setswana for application forms

By Ngoni Shandulane

I WAS BORN in 1966 in the village of Maitengwe and I stay in Jwaneng. In 2013 I started attending Gender Links training workshops. I realized that I was one of the abused women after attending Gender Links workshops.

I got married in 1979 then my husband left me at our home village to go and work in the town of Jwaneng.

After about ten years, I observed that my husband had changed and I did not understand his behavior. After we had three children he started to show his true colours, he stopped supporting the children and this made my life very difficult because I was not working, he even stopped his visits home. His parents ignored my requests for intervention and this led to our divorce whereupon he married the very lady he had been having an affair with. After the divorce he did not support his children despite being ordered to do so by the High Court.

After going through Gender Links training I came to realize that what I had gone through was not the end of the world. I also had to find a way of supporting my children. I started looking for laundry jobs to make ends meet and I also wove baskets and sold them to create an income as I have been taught by Gender Links and this helped to make my life and children's life better.

What still bothers me is that my ex husband and I do not have good communication channels concerning our children who are now young men and are ready to get married but we are not able to sit and discuss such topics because we do not have good relations.

I stay in Jwaneng where programs that support survivors of abuse are available but we are unable to access them because when we go to the offices in pursuit of these programs, the employees make us feel that we are wasting their time because of our inability to read or write.

What I can advise people who are currently being abused is that they should not be impatient, they should stand on their feet and report abuse in all its forms. They should not feel ashamed to bring out into the open the abuse that they are experiencing. Keeping silent about abuse may result in killings and injuries.

My last words are to ask that government should accommodate people who do not read or write because it is difficult for us to access programs that are offered. Also could application forms be written in Setswana because we do not understand the English language in which the forms are written.

My business did better after training

By Bontletse Sefiso

I AM 47 YEARS of age and I come from the village of Thamaga. I started participating in Gender Links workshops in 2013 in Jwaneng.

I told a story about how I was abused by the father of my child who sometimes stayed up to two months away from home and would not help in any manner with the raising of children. Whenever he turned up he would be in a fighting mood and at times would demand money from me while he never brought any home. He cheated me with other women and when I complained he beat me. In the end I left him because I realized that being with him was not taking me anywhere.

I took action and met with Gender Links after I was told that they were coming to Jwaneng. They counseled me and I was so motivated that I resumed doing the laundry business I had started before. I noticed that the business was doing better since I attended the training.

Gender Links taught me a great deal in business skills. I was taught what to do when I wanted to start a business and what to do to in order to grow the business.

I advise my fellow Batswana that government is giving us grants to start businesses to help us not to rely on people who abuse us. There are people who can help us to end the abuse if we come out in the open and talk about our challenges rather then being ashamed and choosing to be silent.

My last words are 'fellow Batswana let us stand up and commit to end abuse that is affecting us especially women. Let us have a vision of no abuse to our children.

The way I relate to people in my story changed a lot because in the end I cut all ties with them and I have a good relationship with my family and we lead a peaceful life.

I say to those who are currently going through abuse that let us talk about abuse with people who are close to us to get to the bottom of our problems.

All abuse must be stopped

By Olorato Samson

I AM A LADY OF 45 years and I started attending training by Gender Links in 2011.

Regarding the story I had written, I had applied for a residential and masimo (lands/farm) plot. But I had to go to court and to see the District Commissioner four times before the case was finalized and I won it. I do not have good relations with my husband, children or in-laws. As a result I did not change my surname to theirs because we were married out of community of property. I was awarded both plots and I eventually sold the masimo plot to make ends meet.

I have learnt from my Gender Links training that I have to take a stand and do something to make a living for myself.

The way I relate with people in my story has not changed at all but I am hoping that with the passage of time things will be different and we shall live at peace with each other.

I think the programs can be improved by offering more training to people to try and get them to rely on themselves.
I can say to people still being abused that they should come out in the open and attend training from organizations like Gender Links so that they can be counseled.

My last words are stop all types of abuse against women, men and children. Let us stop abuse.

It is up to me to stand for my rights

By Tebogo Montsamai

I AM ORIGINALLY from Molepolole and married in Thamaga at Phuting ward. I started attending Gender Links workshops in 2013 in Jwaneng.

I came into contact with Gender Links because I was being abused by my husband of ten years. In the course of our marriage my husband beat me a lot and I always reported him to our parents, District Commissioner and finally to the social workers. They tried to bring us together but failed and I went to see them from time to time and finally they arranged that I meet with Gender Links then I attended their workshops for gender-based violence and business training.

Gender Links training taught me that I should not look down upon myself or have low self-esteem because I was being abused. They counseled me and taught me that I should not think that people were talking about my challenges. I was taught to be enthusiastic and not to feel ashamed of my situation. I accepted that I it was up to me to stand up for my rights.

I feel that my life would change for the better if I could continue with my business of rearing small stock. I had started the business by buying some goats but my husband who was supposed to look after them since he was not working at the time sold them all. He then moved out of our home.

The situation got worse and I was contemplating to divorce him when he suddenly got ill and passed away. I paid for all the funeral arrangements without being helped by his family despite the fact that he had abused me.

Programs are available in my town but they are meant for people who do not work so those of us who work do not qualify.

Batswana, gender-based violence is there and alive and if you find yourself being abused you have to stand on your feet and report or go to relevant authorities instead of keeping quiet about it otherwise you may end up as a cripple or worse.'

Batswana, let us stand up and take action, let us not expect to be helped let us also help ourselves, abuse is not good.


Wilson Ntsie

Don't think that abuse happens to other people

By Baone Moreti

I STARTED ATTENDING Gender Links workshops in 2013 in Jwaneng.

The experience I wrote about in my story was about how gender-based violence was not going down in relation to how if affects women. I showed how men were ill-treating women and how women were tolerating that and not taking action.

Before I came into contact with Gender Links I had given up, I had lost hope and did not think that I could ever find help anywhere. I heard about Gender Links from the social workers and when the opportunity came I attended all the phases of their training.

I knew nothing about business training but I learnt that business can have challenges and it needs love and patience to succeed.

I have changed a lot in the way I relate to people in my story and I made a pledge to myself to forget the past and get on with my life.

In my village we have formed a gathering for women who have gone through challenges of abuse and we share ideas of how we can overcome them. We also do crafts to create an income for our children. I think government should help women by improving programs and increasing times of training schedules.

I say to people who are still being abused that, it is your life, don't tell yourself that when someone abuses you it means that he has control of your life, some people end up as cripples while others have lost their lives.

My last words are to give courage to women. Let us stand up, training is available so let us attend it. Don't think that abuse happens to other people. You can become a cripple when you live with abuse.

I was taught to sustain myself

By Gaboratanelwe Dinkwetse

I AM FROM the village of Mmathubudukwane and I started to participate in Gender Links training in 2013.

I have written my story of being abused by the man I lived with who used to beat me whenever I complained that he had other girlfriends. I carried on because when I told him that we should end our relationship he would become violent and even have sex with me without using a condom only to find out that he knew that he was infected by HIV. When we finally went to test for the virus together I found out that I was also positive.

When we started our relationship we had tested negative for HIV and now he said that he had managed to get what he wanted meaning that he wanted to give me the virus. Thereafter, he told me that I should get on with my life because he did not want me anymore. But by the grace of God I met someone and we are still together and our life is good.

Gender Links training has taught me that I should not accept anything that I don't want, if I cannot stand the heat I should leave the fire. I should take action before it is too late and also that I should look for ways to sustain myself.

My last words are to say to people currently being abused that they should take action and access programs that are against abuse even if they have to get them from outside our village so that they can be counseled before it is too late.

Business training has taught me a lot because I now have knowledge about how to run a business even though I have not yet started one.

In my village gender based violence is high because we don't have guidance and programs that are against it. I think what can be done to improve the situation is have access to programs that fight abuse.

Rely on your business skills to support yourself

By Dikabelo Rammidi

I AM A YOUNG LADY of 29 years from the Kgalagadi sub-district called Inalegolo. I started attending Gender Links training in 2013 in Jwaneng

I have told my story about my children's father who had physically and mentally abused me. He was not honest because he had impregnated me then denied responsibility and went around telling his friends and mine that he was not the father of my child. This caused me so much anguish that I gave birth to a premature baby.

But in the end I got into contact with organizations that offered counseling like Gender Links and social workers. Gender Links offered me business training and I was also taught about how to take action against being abused. When my boyfriend realized that I was attending Gender Links workshops and after reading my story in the 'I' Story booklet of 2013, he sat me down with his parents who were also abusing me and apologized to me. I realized that indeed he wanted to change and I forgave him.

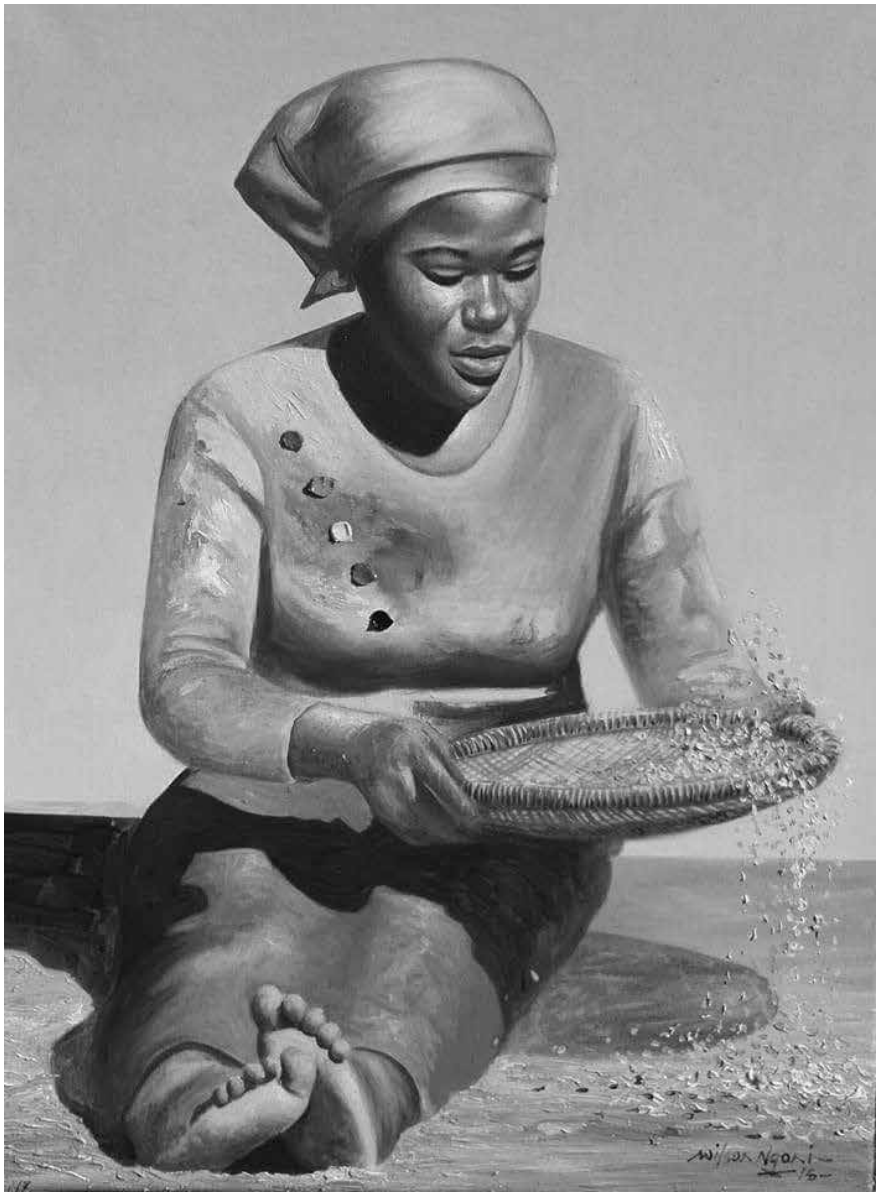
What I have learnt from Gender Links training is that I must stand on my own feet and find ways to make a living and to fight against abuse. They have given me business skills to run a business instead of relying on someone to support me. Placing one's life in another person's hands causes abuse.

In our village the situation regarding abuse has gone up because we do not have programs that help people who are being abused. We only rely on social workers and have no access to guidance on how to end abuse and how we can find means of earning our own money instead of relying on our boyfriends for financial support.

I wish Gender Links could go around the whole country advising and teaching people about the dangers of gender-based violence. Regarding business training Gender Links has given me the greatest gift that no one can ever take from me.

My last words are that we should get away from false friends and I encourage women to associate with programs that fight against abuse and also to seek God's intervention because he is the only way to peace and everlasting love. If you have accepted him as your Lord and Savior you will have eternal life. Abuse is the program of the forces of darkness.

Kanye
"I" STORIES



Let's fight this evil sickness

By Boitshoko Phenyo

I FEEL REALLY COMFORTABLE not to give my real name in telling this story. I have gone through gender-based violence and I want to relate my story of how I was abused.

I have started attending Gender Links workshops in 2014 and through this training I have learnt a lot and overcame my journey of being abused by my husband-to-be by attending the workshop. I am living a positive life whereby I am raising three children and I have even explained to them what had happened.

My focus during the journey of gender-based violence was to raise my three children, being a role model to them. My first-born is a magistrate, the second one is a teacher and the lastborn is training to be a pilot, he got 46 points at Form V.

I thank God in all these achievements because they are in regard and in respect to him. I am living my own life and we attend the same church.

The training helped me a lot to overcome all this and I have even decided to join a Non Governmental Organization like BOCAIP (Botswana Christian Aids Intervention Program), as I have changed my career of Internal Auditor to Social Worker.

During my spare time I started a catering company and bought six chafing dishes, a jumping castle and ten chairs and two steel tables. I then tendered to cater for Mantshwabisi Desert Race where I raised the sum of P8000.00 and the profit was P3000.00 from the total cost.

I am now attending support groups like Bomme Isago and in most cases I am invited to present some of my experiences by the S & CD workshops. At church I lead in programs like how to deal with gender-based violence.

It is even empowering to be a motivational speaker in gatherings where you talk about how to take life's failures and disappointments and turn them into opportunities and to remain focused on what you want to accomplish. All this is worth learning and after attending the workshops I always say to myself that I have built my self-esteem and I see myself in an essentially good place.

Where I am today is a result of what I was thinking yesterday. I have realized that we live according to our thoughts. Though I always tell myself that I cannot be everywhere at once I certainly cannot achieve everything at the same time. So as a smart woman I don't compete, I collaborate because there is so much strength in numbers when someone collaborates and apply their mind a lot can be achieved and I am a self-driven woman.

My advice to other people is to speak out about any abuse that they are experiencing and to report such evil things that are happening in our societies. People live in fear or shy away from telling others about what they are experiencing in their lives.

My last word is, 'let's fight this evil sickness'. God bless whoever comes across my story.

Rescued from a pool of abuse

By Kaitlhoka Kaebona

I STARTED ATTENDING Gender Links training workshops in 2014. Experience has taught me that being HIV positive can be a big challenge to your family and to the society in which you live.

Gender Links has taught me that accepting my status is the first step to living positively as well as protecting myself during sexual activities.

Business training has changed my life because as a tuck shop owner I was never careful about how I used my money. But now I know that I must save the money that I make every day.

My life has improved a great deal after attending the workshops and I have learned to live at peace with my family and neighbors.

I think women should be encouraged to attend support groups such as Bomme Isago so that they can learn how to cope with life challenges by sharing their stories with other women.

To victims of gender based violence I say that Gender Links doors are open and they welcome you to be healed of wounds and pain.

I wish to thank Gender Links for rescuing me from the pool of abuse.

Any form of abuse must fall

By Pholoso Keobone

I STARTED ATTENDING Gender Links workshops in the year 2014. The abuse I went through relates to the poor upbringing I got from those who raised me because I was not raised by my parents. In the end the abuse stopped as I stood up for myself and became emotionally strong because of the encouragement I got from Gender Links.

I learned that when you have not yet reached your expectations you should not give up, you should keep on trying and in the end you will succeed. The business training I received from Gender Links brought a change into my life as I learned how run a business. I am able to keep records for my business, to compare my business with my competitors and to know if my business is growing or not.

There are support groups such as Bomme Isago where we share our experiences of gender-based violence and where we address issues with one voice without fearing anything.

I encourage those in abusive situations to inform authorities such as chiefs and he police. My last word is that let's stand up against abuse and let's all fight it any form.

I live a better life

By Gorata Phefo

I AM FROM KANYE and I started attending Gender Links training is 2014. The abuse I went through was that I had to leave school and work for my relatives as a maid. My parents were no longer together and this made my life really bad. My relatives send me to masimo to harvest crops and I was still just a child and I also had to look after their babies. At that time life was not enjoyable at all.

Through Gender Links training I was able to start my own business and to save money. I also learned how to protect myself in case I came across an abusive environment. The situation is better and now I live a better life.

In my village there are programs such as LIMID for agriculture, Gender Affairs and Poverty Eradication. I received assistance through the Poverty Eradication program. I have a backyard garden, and I breed Setswana chicken and I am already selling them.

To those who are being abused I say that they should stand on their own and participate in the intervention programs in order to live a better life.

Don't sweep abuse under the carpet

By Alio Matlhabaphiri

I AM A YOUNG LADY of 30 years from Thamatlhogo in Kanye. I have three children, two boys, Thabo who is seven years and Thabiso who is five, Kgalalelo is their sister and she is three years old. I am a single parent, unemployed and I'm living with their stepfather.

I started attending Gender Links workshops towards the end of 2014. My neighbor invited me because she had witnessed several times how the man I was living with was abusing me both emotionally and physically in the presence of my children. I attended the workshops and we were taught about the different types of gender-based violence and that one could report the abuse to the kgotla or to the police. They encouraged me to report that man because he always raped and beat me then he would spend the night out sleeping with other women.

I realized that gender based violence could result in death or with a crippled victim because the abuser can use anything harmful to beat one were with. Gender Links training was very useful to me because I now have my own business. I have registered it and have a certificate. I was taught to do a business plan and that with it I could borrow money from institutions like CEDA, and other banks.

Having my own business means that I can now afford to buy toiletries and food and I don't have to ask anyone for help like before. I feel very happy because if it was not for Gender Links I would probably be dead, killed by the man who was abusing me.

Business training has changed my life a lot because I now teach some of our young business trainees. Some have already started growing and selling vegetables. Having business skills has contributed in bringing a positive change in my life and people in the neighborhood have learned that having your own business is beneficial because it provides an income that makes it possible for one to look after their family.

I would like to tell victims of gender-based violence that they should stop sweeping things under the carpet and should report the abuse to the police, kgotla and social workers to avoid unnecessary deaths. Abuse also causes children to be inattentive at school and this results in poor grades. Sometimes an unfortunate victim of abuse may end up committing suicide without realizing that help is always near.

My last words are that I thank my neighbor who has helped me to get out of the abusive situation. I cannot forget Gender Links for offering me such a good opportunity and for getting me out of the abuse. I thank you profusely.

Be an example to others

By Tsitsi Botabotswe

I AM A LADY FROM KANYE and I started attending Gender Links workshops in 2014. What I have realized about gender based violence is to know how I can confront it, where I can report it, how I can prevent it and where I can get help. I have realized that to make it in life I need to be myself, patient, productive, strong and progressive in my hopes, dreams and aspirations.

I attended all three Gender Links workshops and I learned a great deal. I reached the conclusion that what has been making it difficult for me to accomplish things has been laziness and impatience because there were a lot of times when I did not feel like knitting because I felt impatient that it took time to finish an item. But nowadays I work so hard, my main aim is to see my business grow so that it can sustain my family.

Going through training has changed my life because I run a hair salon from home; I plait hair, cut it and relax it. I have learnt a lot and I am where I am today because of it.

There are programs in our village such as LIMID and Poverty Eradication, which have helped many people to make a living. One only has to work hard to succeed.

To those who have been abused I say; 'stand up and fight abuse, don't look down upon yourself, don't despair, be yourselves and enroll into government programs and work hard.

My last word is, be ambitious and have a vision to make your own living so that you can be an example to other people.

In 2008 I met and fell in love with a man and at first everything was so good. Then I fell pregnant and this man started ignoring me and treating me badly as if I was not carrying his child. I went through pregnancy without him giving me a second thought but my parents and my older sibling looked after me at confinement.

My older sibling used to counsel me all time but in the end I went to Leseding Counseling Centre and went through training. I met other people who were in the same boat and sharing stories with them gave me comfort.

I now live happily without any heartbreak, I am raising my children alone because I have broken up with that man since that time.

It's high time abuse is stopped!

By Lorato Selonyana

I AM FROM Lokabing village and I attended all Gender Links training workshops in 2014. Through these workshops I learned about one type of abuse that I never thought was an abuse. I was abused by my stepchildren and I ended up reporting them to the police and the kgotla.

I learned about all types of gender-based violence and also about gender equality. I was taught about starting a business and how to run it and I want to run my business the way I was taught.

My life has changed as I have started a business doing small stock. I feel that I should teach other people what I learned from my training. I should alert them not to tolerate abuse and tell them about benefits of starting a business.

I no longer go through abuse and the people in my story respect me a lot because the law has taken its course and measures were taken against what they had done.

There are many places where people can go for help when they are being abused. There are relatives, police, kgotlas and social workers. The thing is we do not utilize these services because we do not understand what abuse is.

To the victims to abuse I say that let us report crime and get out of being abused and when you see someone living in an abusive environment show them the way.

My last word is that let us stop abuse, let us start businesses in order to have better lives.

Let's invite men to our meetings

By Lesego Dikole

I CONFIRM that I do not have any problem using my real names in my story.

I am from Taukobong ward. I was married but my husband passed away and I did not have any resources to raise my children and to put them through school.

My husband and I had a home in Morolong ward in Moshana village. When I found myself in this situation after he had died, I decided to go back home and that is when I encountered problems from my family and relatives.

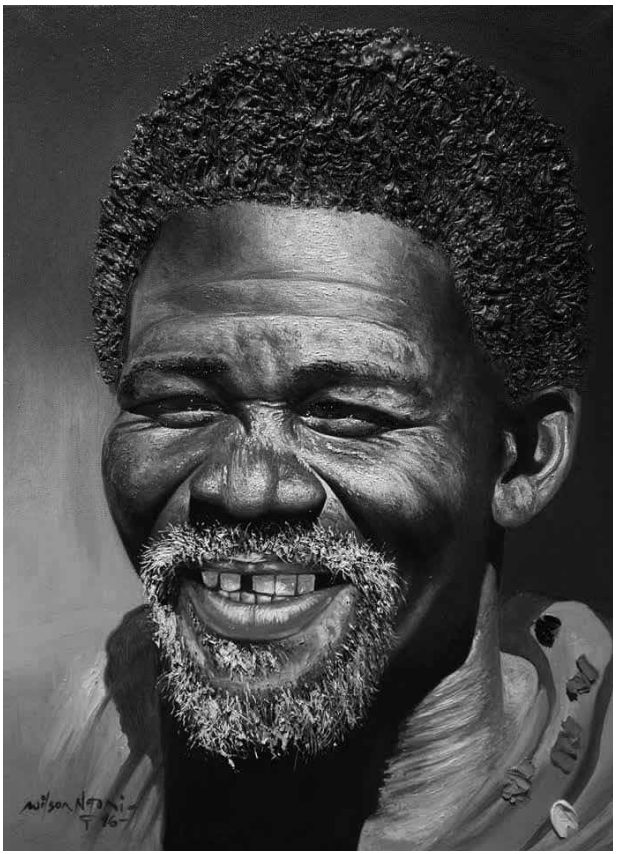
I then enrolled in Gender Links training workshops in 2014.

I have found Gender Links training very useful because I was taught about different types of gender based violence and I was grateful as I did not know that being emotionally tormented was actually abuse.

I was also taught about how to start a business and I was grateful about the lessons even though I have not yet started running a business due to financial constraints.

There are programs such as family health and social workers. I think the programs that address abuse can be improved by inviting men to our meetings to talk about how we can stop abuse.

I thank Gender Links for the training I have gone through and suggest that they should not take long before visiting us. I suggest they should visit us monthly or weekly to motivate us.



I think the programs that address abuse can be improved by inviting men to our meetings to talk about how we can stop abuse.

Training has changed my life

By Kekgabile Magosi

I AM A YOUNG LADY aged 29 from Ledubeng ward near the Guest House and the Village Park. I started attending training in 2014 at Lesedi Counseling Centre.

I later attended Gender Links training because of the abuse that I was going through at home. I was being abused by my grandmother by chasing away my boyfriend who is the father of my first child. She emotionally abused us and would sometimes tell me that she did not kill my mother, at other times she would not even give me food. But nowadays the abuse has stopped and we are living peacefully with the old woman.

Since I attended Gender Links workshops I have felt spiritually healed because though I had initially been counseled by social workers I did not get much benefit. After I attended Gender Links training I started a small business that provides an income for my children and me and it is doing well and I am happy with it.

Gender Links training has changed my life because I have now became patient in growing my business and I want to start another one because I have business skills to run both of them.

The way I was used to live with people in my story has changed a lot, we now live happily and even give each other advice that we benefit from.

Lesding Counseling Centre offers counseling services to people and after the experience of my abuse was over, I took one of my younger siblings to be counseled and she is doing very well.

I can tell those who are still living in abusive relationships that they should not sit and do nothing, they should stand up and attend programs so that they can be given relevant advice and enroll with Gender Links workshops because their training is enlightening.

I also want to say to Gender Links that, 'if you did not give me advice and life skills I would still be going through a hard time.' I no longer have low self-esteem, I am putting all my efforts in growing my business and the tuck shop I have started is doing very well and I am going ahead to start another business.

I was not an isolated abuse case

By Tshwaro Batlanang

I AM A LADY of 49 years from Sebako ward in Kanye. I experienced challenges of abuse for a long time after I got ill in 2007. The abuse came about after I suffered paralysis on one side of my body. My mother wanted to chase me out of our home because I was no longer working. I told her that I should leave home only after I had built my own home. I was given medication for heart condition for three months because I could not cope.

In 2013 after I had gotten in touch with Gender Links I started to accept my situation after I realized that I was not an isolated case of abuse and that abuse was being experienced all over the country.

I have learned how to do a business plan because I realized that abuse focuses on women mainly because they financially depend on men and that is why they are abused. I also learned about market research, how to handle cash in the business and to record all incoming and outgoing cash.

My life is better now because I have started a business selling floor polish. I make enough money for bus fare for my child who goes to school.

Regarding people in my story, the situation is better than it was before.

I wish you would come to my village and hold these workshops in order to stop gender-based violence. LIMID is one of the programs available in the village.

I would like to ask victims of gender-based abuse to approach organizations that can counsel them.

My last words are that I would not be here if it was not for Gender Links. I have found myself through Gender Links.

Do not be afraid to speak out

By Sekaku Sakoko

I AM LADY of 43 years and I stay in Kgodisa ward in Kanye. I started to attend Gender Links training workshops in 2014 and I have discovered that being abused is not the end of my life.

I had written about the father of my children and how he refused to help me with their upbringing. I finally decided to see social workers and they listened to my problems and have offered to buy school uniform for my kids. Their father is a habitual drinker and he is not working. I do piece jobs like laundry for people and also work at Ipelegeng to sustain my family.

I learned from the workshop that there are different types of gender-based violence and that victims can report the abuse to Gender Links, chiefs, the police and at Bomme Isago.

I was taught business skills as well as how to run a business. I have learned that when I want to a start a business I can borrow money from relevant institutions. My business skills have been sharpened and I now sell sweets, candles and matches from home.

My situation is fine now and whenever I see the father of my children I do not care because he is the one finding life difficult. He no longer checks on the children because he feels ashamed but I would never stop him from seeing them.

Programs that are in our area are from Emang Basadi and social workers. I think it would be better if you can arrange for us to meet with them so that we can discuss these issues and reach out to everyone.

I would say to people who find themselves in abusive situations that if you find that you are facing challenges, do not be afraid to speak out or to report the matter



I learned how to fight abuse

By Seanokeng Kentsenae

I AM A RESIDENT of Kanye and I enrolled in the training workshops for Gender Links in 2014. I was abused by a man for the past two years until I took a decision to break up with him after going through Gender Links training and now I am free from abuse.

I have learned a lot from the workshop including how to fight abuse. My feelings have stabilized since I attained business skills training from Gender Links and I feel that I can help those who need advice in my village. At present I know a lot about business. I know that I cannot start a business without doing a market research and that I should do a business that I am knowledgeable about because that is the one that would be profitable to me.

I no longer have problems because I have ended the relationship with the man who was giving me problems. Organizations and programs, which can help fight abuse are available such as Lesedi Counseling Centre, Bomme Isago BOFWA, our chiefs, churches and social workers.

I say to survivors of gender-based violence that whenever you witness abuse whether it is in your family, or to you personally or to your neighbor please tell people who can help to address it. My last word is that, being unaware of programs that can help address problems that affect our lives is not good. I also say to Batswana do not allow yourselves to live with gender-based violence.

Enough is enough. It's time to stop abuse!

By Botshelo Rammutshu

I STARTED TRAINING with Gender Links in 2014. I am an unmarried mother and I live with the father of my child who has promised to marry me. This man is working but he does not support his child or me.

We have struggled to breed cattle and even built a two-and-half roomed house together. He then moved to our house and left me at my parents' home. I have always held the hope that one day we will get married but I have given up because he no longer talks about marriage or visit us. It looks like all my dreams have vanished into thin air.

I have learned that there are authorities that I can approach for help when I am in an abusive relationship such as the police, social workers and parents.

I have also been taught how to start my own business and be able to sustain my family and me. I was taught that I could approach institutions such as Gender Links, CEDA, Poverty Eradication and Gender Affairs department to get financial assistance whenever I want to start a business.

I was taught business skills like how to run a business and get customers. The workshop has taught me a lot because I had already given up on life thinking that I have failed but now I have realized that I can make it because I have skills; I know which type of business I want and how to tell if my business is progressing or going down.

My situation regarding my partner has gotten worse even though our parents have intervened a lot of times imploring him to take up his responsibilities but there is no change. I have now resolved to leave him because it is not the end of the world if I am not with him. I have hope that I will manage without him. God will help me, my business will flourish and I will be able to take care of my children.

Programs that are available in my village are the police, social workers and neighborhood watch. These programs can be improved by taking strong steps against perpetrators and also by increasing jail sentences.

I can advice victims of gender-based violence that keeping silent about abuse is not the answer. They should stand up and ask for help from relevant authorities and not to wait until the situation is beyond control. They should not feel ashamed, enough is enough, it is time to stop the abuse.

My last words are that I am thankful that you have given me back my life, I had lost hope and had no regard for my life and I even thought that death was better than the life I had been leading. This was because my age mates had made great progress in their lives and I had felt like a failure as I had nothing to show for being alive because I had been almost like a beggar.

Gender Links I thank you very much because I can see where I am in life and where I am going. You have helped me to realize that my dreams are alive. I pray that you keep teaching people life skills because you can save a lot of lives.

Grateful to live a normal life

By Bogaufi Setlhare

I AM A 25 YEAR-OLD LADY and I stay at Loduleng ward in Kanye. I participated in Gender Links workshops in 2014 at Lesedi Counseling Centre.

My brother raped me when I was just a child and I got infected by HIV. After that I enrolled for Gender Links training, was counseled and I felt better. I found women who like me had gone through abuse and this taught me that I must stand up for my rights..

My mother gave me a lot of support and love and I was grateful that I am able to live a normal life.

I learned so much from Gender Links. That I must be open about being abused so that I can access intervention programs that are available.

I had wanted to start a gas delivery business but could not because I did not have start-up capital but I will not give up because I have gone through Gender Links training and have learned that I should save money towards my goals.

I am not being abused anymore and I am fine and living with a lot of love.

Lesedi Counseling Centre helps people by counseling them and I wish our government could expand what Lesedi is doing by extending the buildings so that everyone who is being abused could be accommodated for a few days whilst going through training and counseling.

I say to those who are experiencing abuse that they should stand on their own feet and ask for help from relevant organizations such as Emang Basadi and go through counseling sessions.

Kgatleng "I" STORIES



Take action when you are being abused

By Kesitegile Loapi

I am a woman of 51 years from Mabudisa ward in Mochudi. I have three children and three grandchildren.

I entered into holy matrimony with Raboroko Ramatlapa in 1996. We were married for 15 years and during that time he beat me and used foul language at me in front of our children. He stole some of our property and sold it, sexually harassed the children from my previous relationship and also abused alcohol.

I started participating in Gender Links workshops in 2013. The training was very helpful to me. They counseled us and taught us how to run a business and we went through different modules of business training. We also wrote stories for the 'I' Story booklet in 2013 from all the districts in the country.

I have realized that when you are being abused and you don't speak out about it you can end up doing things that are not acceptable. What I have learnt from being abused is that if I don't take action no one can help me because I am the one experiencing the abuse.

Since I have gone through Gender Links training, I took action and when Gender Affairs department opened doors for their programs, I went there and took their forms filled them out while liaising with Agri-Business to help me when I got stuck. I am feeling high and hopeful.

I was able to give help to other children who were being abused until they found help from social workers. I also help out by giving advice and guidance and also teach others about life challenges.

In my village there is no organization dedicated to people who are being abused.

People who are in the same situation as me should see social workers and to look for help from different authorities.

Break the silence

By Nomvula Polokwane

I AM A 55 years old and I attended training by Gender Links in 2013. I got married when I was 23 years old and at the beginning we were happy and discussed everything that concerned our lives.

When I was in the fifth year of my marriage things started to change. My husband started to sleep away from home and had children outside marriage. I was not supposed to question that. I remember one time when he beat me in front of the children, naked after I had just had a bath. Another time after he had slept out, he came in the morning and found me all ready to leave and visit my parents, I asked him where he had slept. He hit me on the head with an axe, punched my face with his fists and I literally ended up with blue eyes.

I remember one other time when I thought about committing suicide and leaving my six month old baby. He had beaten me so badly and threw me out of a moving car and some Good Samaritans picked me up took me to the hospital. When I arrived home from the hospital he raped me while still having all those wounds. My life changed for the worst, we had a bar and restaurant business and he sold it without telling me anything. My children and I became poor and he no longer stayed at home with us. I could not go out of the house because I was afraid of meeting people and my children had to take me to a social worker.

Gender Links business training changed my life. At first we did the business plan and I took first prize in the competition that was held. I sold earrings to earn an income and later I found a job to supplement my income. At present I have registered a business name, I have a trading licence I shall be operating from home and the health officers and the physical planning officers have already inspected my home and me as I would be handling food.

During training I was informed that it was possible to start a business with little capital. The facilitators arranged that we meet with different authorities like WIBA, LEA and Gender Affairs so that we could ask for financial assistance and guidance. And in the very near future I shall start my business.

I could say that my life has changed because my husband passed away after he divorced me. My children are giving me a hard time and I have a heart problem but I believe that regardless of everything my dream will come true. And I think my life is better.

The ladies with whom I participated in the Gender Links training have formed an organization that support survivors of gender-based violence in relation to our experiences of abuse. We want them to know how we have survived and that they too can make it through our support and love. We believe that with support from the survivors, chiefs and social workers they should take this organization serious.

I want to point out that a survivor should not settle for being physically handicapped, having bruises and wounds and being ill and regretful. They should take action because most of the time we are afraid of what people will say. Join organizations and break the silence.

I can't stand abuse of any kind!

By Sepheretlhwane Keikhuditse

I FIRST ATTENDED GENDER LINKS workshops in 1998 when I openly disclosed and was interviewed by newspapers about how I was abused by my then husband.

I was married to a man who used to swear at me and beat me with his hands and anything else that he could lay his hands on and he would do that even when I was pregnant. My left eardrum got broken because of these beatings.

He did not care if we had food in the house and it was upon me to see that the children were fed. In time I met with Gender Links and I learnt how to deal with abuse and move on with my life.

I attended their business training and started a tuck shop. I am in the process of starting a catering business. I was taught a lot about business skills and it made a great deal of difference in the running of my business. I worked hard and did not have time or desire to think about relationships but with the passage of time my emotions subsided and I met someone. I told him how I couldn't stand abuse of any kind and because he had also gone through it we understand the situation and live quite well.

In Mochudi in the Kgatleng district there are no organizations that focus on abuse. Motsweding Rehabilitation Centre focuses on disabled children and put them through school while Stepping Stones deals mainly with abuse directed at young people.

I can tell people who are being abused to go out in the open and talk about abuse, they should not keep abuse a secret.

My last words are that if government could take women organizations like Gender Links seriously and offer support to their employees who volunteer to go around the country, teaching women about the dangers of keeping abuse a secret, that would go a long way. If facilitators could be given the help they need it would help a great deal. I have hope that God will help organizations such as Gender Links to grow from strength to strength.


WILSON NTOMI
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Be in control of your life

By Masego Mpilo

I AM A RESIDENT of Rakwapa ward in the Kgatleng district and I am 47. Gender Links is a reliable organization that I got into contact with in February 2013.

After the dark and stormy experience that broke my heart and left me in total anguish I write my story with a smile on my face and joy in my heart because there is no more abuse in my home. Marriage is a gift from God and it should not be tainted in anyway. But bad people my sisters-in-law, planned to break the love, peace and support that my husband and I have enjoyed for over 24 years.

All of a sudden my husband changed and began to see me as a witch who brought traditional doctors into our home. All types of gossip turned a man who used to be my friend against me and he believed all that his sisters said about me. Chaos ruled the day and I found myself alone with my marriage broken and I felt defeated.

I am writing this story filled with happiness, peace, love and the spirit of forgiveness as Gender Links took away my anguish through training that taught me to love myself, to accept who I am, to stand up for myself and to be in control of my life.

Gender Links also taught me business skills. I learned how to start a business, to market it, to do bookkeeping and the biggest lesson was budgeting because I previously knew nothing about it. I have not yet started my business but the little I make I am saving so that I can start my dream of breeding chicken.

My marriage has gotten back on its feet. My husband finally saw the truth and asked for forgiveness concerning what has happened and I forgave him and our home has returned to its glory, our children are well looked after, all is good and I thank Gender Links.

Programs are available, it is just that people are ashamed to be open and to go and ask for help. As survivors of abuse we have formed an organization called Thuba Nkgwana (literally meaning break the clay pot) to help sensitize people about gender based violence. I advise people who come to me for guidance that they should stand up for themselves and not allow anyone to mess up with them, they should stop the abuse. The situation can improve if all forms of abuse are reported and by helping those who are afraid to speak up.

It is painful to see the situation getting worse as men, women and children are being abused especially those who cannot fight back that is, women and children.

In conclusion I thank God for getting us to meet Mma Ntsabane, a brave hardworking woman who showed us that we have the means and strength to stand up for ourselves.

Do not rely on men

By Khandile Wandile

I AM 41 YEARS OLD, I have six children, am a single parent and I am self-employed. I got into contact with Gender Links in 2013 and I started participating in their training in the same year.

I grew up in an abusive environment because since I was born I never met my mother, I was raised by my grandmother until she passed away. I went to stay with my aunt who drank a lot and would say very hurtful things to me. My father worked in South Africa at the mines and my mother was a Mosotho national. When he came home he brought another Mosotho woman he had married.

When my father came home I had just completed Standard seven and was doing Form one at a junior community secondary school. The situation at home became unbearable, I was living in so much abuse that I left school and ran away from home.

I met a man and stayed with him, not because I loved him but because I needed a place to stay. But then I got pregnant and had a baby boy, and as is Setswana culture the man I was staying with went home to my father to tell him that he had a child with me. But my father told him about how I ran away from home and never completed my studies.

I then got pregnant again and things started to change. The man started abusing me beating me and saying horrible things to me and in the end he took my children and we broke up. After that I could not hold onto any relationship until I met a man with whom I had a disabled child. Unfortunately, he committed suicide. Thereafter I had several relationships and encountered abuse in all of them but none worked out.

I thank Gender Links for the training. It has taught me that I have to face problems and that nobody can get me out of situations except if I take action. I learnt that I should accept myself and to confide to those I trust when I have problems because that would counsel me. Being counseled is good because it makes problems easier to handle.

Business training has changed my life because I am able to make a living for my children and me and I do not depend on anyone. I have learnt that when I run a business I must be patient and strong and that business must have a profit, I must record money that come in and that goes out. I should know what I want to do to make the business to grow and that I will have business challenges and how I can overcome them.

Nothing has changed in the way I relate to the people in my story, but I am happy that I have accepted the situation because if anyone tries to abuse me I just turn a blind eye to them instead of taking whatever they are doing to heart and this also goes for the man I am staying with.

I don't know any programs in our village that can help people who are still being abused except government poverty eradication programs. I like encouraging women to stand up and start their own businesses.

I want to encourage people currently living with abuse to stand up and stop thinking that being abused means it is the end of their lives. They should approach social workers and ask for counseling, they should talk to others about their problems. Women should stand up and start their own businesses and not rely on men.

My last words are that I want to encourage women especially survivors of abuse to accept their situation and not look down upon themselves. I wish they would go into intervention programs so that they can make their own living also to visit Gender Links offices.

Let us fight this monster together

By Mable Dintle Lebekwe

I AM A 53-YEAR-OLD WOMAN from Mabodisa ward in Mochudi. I started attending training by Gender Links in June 2013.

I got married on 10th December 2010 and by 2012 I experienced financial and emotional abuse including being a stepmother to the children from my husband's first marriage. The situation at home started to change when my stepdaughter moved in with us.

After my stepdaughter moved in my husband became different, he stopped buying food or giving me housekeeping money, he did everything with his daughter. She started looking down on me and using foul language at me and generally disrespecting me and when I told my husband he would not take any action. He even started sleeping out and in the end I went to seek advice from the social workers. I learnt that being abused is not the end of the world and with help from Gender Links and social workers I went through counseling and felt like a new person, confident at peace with myself.

Business training helped me a great deal and I started my own business which got me out of the needy situation I was in. I was taught how to do a business plan, keep records, to tell if the business is progressing or going down. I managed to start a business selling fruit trees, ornamental trees and shade trees and I run my business from home. I attended a Flower Arrangement course and have registered my business and it is called Dintle Products and Backyard Nursery. I have also registered another business, Angels Nanny House, and my dream is to run a nursery school.

My relationship with people in my story has changed a lot after the Gender Links training and I am emotionally healed, I now stand in dignity within the society. There are a lot of programs that support survivors of abuse like Gender Links, social workers, Bakgatla Bolokang Matshelo, the police, hospitals and clinics, Stepping Stones and Men's Sector. I can tell people who are currently being abused that they should not keep quiet but should come out in the open and look for help and guidance.

My last words are that abuse is animalistic, it can kill and it can affect a person's mental state. Let us stand up and fight this monster. I thank Gender Links for the good work that they are doing as they go around the country counseling people and rebuilding them. May God bless them.

For every season, there is a time

By Sebati Taunyane

I AM A RESIDENT of Boseja ward in Mochudi and I am 35 years old. I got married in 2001 to Stanley Taunyane who is 44 years and we stay in Mabodisa ward. We were blessed with two children.

My married life was not pleasant because I was being abused. My husband beat me all the time and I was always running away from our home.

I came into contact with Gender Links in 2013 after I had told a social worker my story of living in abuse and that is how I ended up in their workshops.

At the beginning of training I was always stressed out trying to figure out if life was worth living but as I continued to take part in the program it occurred to me that this is where I will find answers. I learnt a lot from the different phases of training and this has changed my life a great deal and I am not experiencing abuse anymore.

I found business training very interesting and I love it. It taught me how to run a business, to do stock taking and balance it, that I should know if business is doing well or not, and that I should save my profit in the bank. I took action and registered a company name; Imone Holdings.

What I loved most is the lesson about how to do a business plan. Armed with this knowledge I went to the offices of Youth Development Funds and got the forms. I managed to fill in their forms submit them and I am now waiting to hear from them.

My life has changed and I am living a peaceful life, the abuse is gone and my eyes are dry as there are no more tears. I am a woman of substance and I am having a good life with my children.

There are no programs for people who are living in abuse in fact many of them are ashamed to come out in the open and talk about it. I can tell them that they should not take abuse personal, it can happen to anyone. They should accept themselves and know who they are and what they live for and they will find a way to make their lives and their children's lives better.

I thank Gender Links for teaching me so many things, and I believe that by 2017 I shall be living a better life than the one I am living and as the Bible says "for every season there is a time." Thank you Gender Links' facilitators and the social worker who introduced me to this organization, if it was not for you I would still be a victim of abuse.

And the word of God says it all in Revelations: 22 vs 12.

Time to start a business

By Lesedi Baratwa

I AM A WOMAN of 45 year-old and I come from Ramasilela ward in Mochudi. I started attending training by Gender Links in 2012 in Mochudi.

I experienced abuse from the man I was living with. He used to swear at me so badly that it affected my children and neighbors. My life was so difficult that I could not eat nor sleep and I called our parents to come and help. They came and it was decided that I should move back to my home. He took our matter to court and that took about two years to settle.

I think that the situation is better even though my children live in danger.

I have learnt a lot from the business training. I was taught how to start a business, how to market it in the village and in shops and how to make profit and save it in a bank and how business can sustain my children and I. I also learnt how I can help other people in my neighborhood.

The way I relate to people in my story has not changed much because the man still drags me to court. There is not much change as I don't know what he wants because I don't bother him as we stay in different places.

Programs in our village are very few and we don't really know what they provide.

I can say to people who are currently being abused that they should apply for intervention programs and to start their own businesses.

I am very happy to find myself in the situation I am presently in, I also thank Gender Links for their advice and guidance and their training which has developed me to an extent that my children wish that I could start a business.

Keeping abuse a secret is very dangerous

By Temo Pule

I RESIDE IN PILANE village in the Kgatleng district but I originate from Kalamare. I started attending Gender Links program in June 2013.

What I have realized about my life is that I am no longer being abused, I live a happy life and I am not afraid to talk to people anymore. I applied for one of the government intervention programs and have been successful.

I have benefitted from business training and learnt how to start a business, to run it and to market it and to register it. My life has changed a great deal because I am able to sit down before month end and do a budget

I have gone through an abusive relationship where I was sworn at, beaten, left without food for my children and me and I had no means of creating an income to sustain my family. I am just thankful that I have participated in the Gender Links program because it has changed my life and I am very grateful.

Programs that are available in my village can be improved by providing equipment that people have requested and making sure that the government departments like Gender Affairs are easily accessible.

People who are being abused should come in the open so that they can be counseled by social workers and Gender Links and also to talk about the abuse because hiding it is dangerous. So as far as I am concerned people who are currently being abused should be encouraged to engage with authorities so that they can live a better life like anybody. And I can also tell them to share ideas with other people or with neighbors because this can set them free.

My late husband committed polygamy

By Dipogiso Semausu

I STARTED attending Gender Links workshops in 2012 in Mochudi. I wrote a story about my husband who physically abused me, did not allow me to go to church, did not want me to visit or be visited by anyone. I did not even know our neighbors and the children were not allowed to play with children from the neighborhood

He chased me out of our home in Gaborone and asked another woman to stay with him. He eventually sold the house and took all our furniture and property in Gaborone to where he was staying with the other woman. Then on the 24th November 2015, he committed suicide while staying with the same woman.

He had registered all our properties in that woman's name including the house that he bought after selling our Gaborone home. He had committed polygamy by marrying the other woman while still married to me and even denied that our children were his and had wanted to take them for DNA tests to confirm that.

I did not participate in all the phases of the program so I do not know much about programs that are available in our village.

I can advise all the people who are being abused to engage with the social workers and women's organizations that focus on abuse to ask for guidance and help as well as to go through counseling.

My last words are that to me it looks like Gender Links is not doing enough to make sure that everyone who attends their workshops knows when the next training will be and that when Gender Links is not there how do these they cope. I am saying this because I did not know about this training. I also used to go Women's Shelter in Gaborone trying to get help but I felt that I was not sufficiently attended. They said they would call me but up to today they have not called.

The last time I went to Gaborone was in 2014 and I have forgotten the date and month.

We are not the only people faced with challenges

By Modiegi Monare

I AM A LADY OF 53 YEARS of age and I am not working. I attended Gender Links trainings in 2009 and 2010. I was trained by Mme Kedibonye Ntsabane in Kgatleng and the social workers; Mma Kolaatamo, Mma Montlhe, Rre David Kedise. In 2012 I was with Mme Matlhabaphiri, Mme Lesejane, Rre Terence Tsele and Queen Mfolwe and the facilitators were Keletso and Botshelo.

In 2015 we went to Rasesa Lodge to upgrade our training and we were with Mme Matlhabaphiriand Rre Terence Tsele, Rre Lebotse, Thato from the Department of Trade and Licencing, Rre Mothusi from CEDA and they were invited by Mme Gomolemo Rasesigo and Botshelo.

We are thankful for their training because it has given us knowledge and we are going to teach others about abuse. We also realized that we are not the only ones affected by these challenges because everywhere you go such as at schools, churches, workplaces and even the Social and Community Development are not spared.

A while ago I requested school uniforms for my children from the social workers but I have not yet been helped, but I have been referred to some officials to help me but that has not worked.

Please help me about what to do because I do not know what I should do. I do not have resources to sustain my children and I want to know how Gender Links can help me because I do not even have a business.

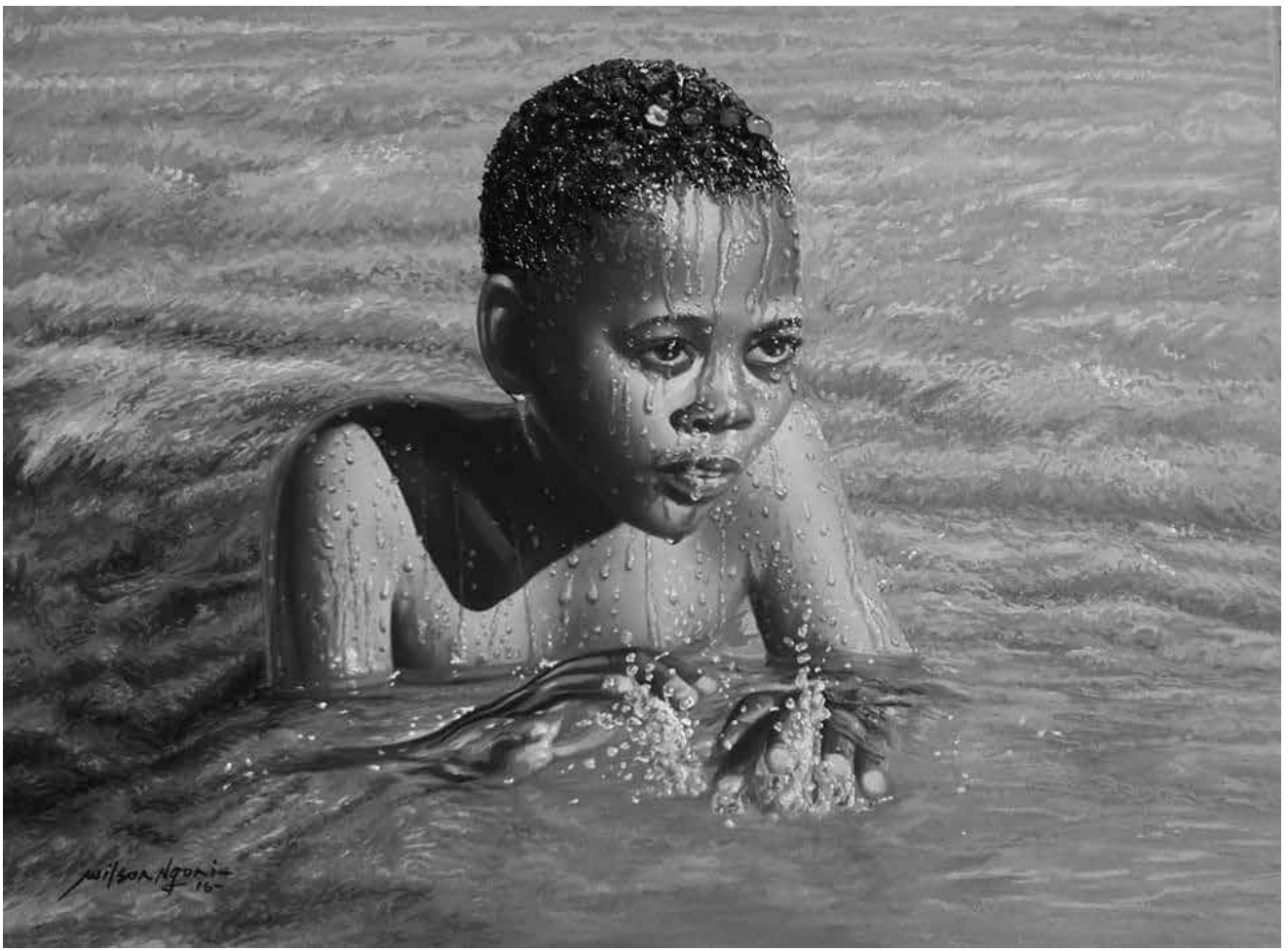
Programs in our village are, Stepping Stones, Bakgatla Bolokang Matshelo, social workers, Cluster, Social and Community Development, Church leaders, Women Against rape, police, Gender Affairs Department, customary court and Gender Links.

I can tell them to go to organizations like Gender Links where they can get help as well as Stepping Stones.

I thank you for your training and to all who have managed to attend this training.

Thank you and God bless.

Lobatse "I" STORIES



No more abuse, I am in control

By Linki Ditiro

I WAS 40 YEARS OF AGE when I started attending Gender Links training workshops in Lobatse in 2013. I have been living in an abusive relationship without realizing that the man whom I loved so much that even when he treated me badly I thought it was because of love, was actually abusing me. I was also afraid of him because he was much older than me.

He did not allow me to visit my friends, he wanted me to just stay at home. Whenever he found that I was not home he would beat me accusing me of leaving his child alone. But he would have been with the woman he was having an affair with and with whom he stayed. He continued abusing me while he stayed with the other woman. His parents came and discussed this matter and they concluded and resolved that the woman be chased out of his house and I was asked to move in.

Our relationship got better when I was staying at his place but his aunt started swearing at me and called me names saying that the house we were living in belonged to her. The situation got so worse that she refused to let me use the toilet or have access to water. It was so bad that I thought of going back to my mother but hesitated only because I had no means of making a living. But in the end I decided to go back home even though I knew it would be tough.

After some time I got into contact with Gender links through their association with Bomme-Isago. I learned a lot from Gender Links, like the different types of gender-based violence. I also learned that there are other forms of abuse other than physical abuse. I realized that my boyfriend had been abusing me while I had thought that he loved me and that as a woman I had to stand up for myself and make my own living and not expect someone to provide for me because he will only end up abusing me.

The business training workshop that I attended taught me how I can run my own business, how I can determine if my business is growing or not and how I can save money. I have no doubt that the business I am about to start soon will be will be successful.

I learned that I should never give up and this has encouraged me to go for sewing lessons, which I have now completed. I have applied for assistance from the Poverty Eradication program they have promised to help me in the very near future. While waiting for the materials from the council, I have been allowed to use one of the sewing machines at the training school to sew some clothes and this is helping to improve my livelihood. I am saving money from my sales so that I can buy some of the things that I will need when I open my business instead of just waiting for the materials from the Poverty Eradication program.

Since I came into contact with Gender Links I feel that a huge burden has been lifted from my shoulders because I can see that my future is bright, I can see the direction which my life is taking and I feel certain that my dreams will come true. I am already thinking about more ideas that can improve my life. I ended my relationship with my boyfriend and his family and now my life is free and enjoyable.

I have sworn to myself that even if I can start another relationship I shall never let anyone treat me badly. I know my rights now and I shall never condone abuse because I know what I want from life,

Programs are not really accessible in my area but they can be strengthened because most people don't know about abuse and that it can end up claiming someone's life. Young people also rely a lot on working for Ipelegeng only without any plans for the future. I want to encourage people not give up in life, to think about what they can do to improve their lives and to refuse to tolerate abuse. Perpetrators should also be taught not to abuse their partners, that abuse has no place in our world.

Women are the future of life, they are the backbone of the society and they are nurturers so they should not permit any form of gender-based abuse. Women should take control of their lives and make a living for themselves. They should not give up, they should not look down upon themselves and lose hope because then they will end up giving in to abuse that can lead to a life of misery and poverty.

I thank Gender Links a lot, may God bless you, continue with the good work that you are doing in our societies. I am personally what I am because of you and I want to end up by saying 'no more abuse I'm in control of my life'.

I know my stand and my rights

By Kedumetse Maele

I STARTED ATTENDING Gender Links training workshops in 2012. A man named Tlamelo Kochane in 2010 abused me. This man treated me very badly but I could not a leave him because he took care of me.

I heard about Gender Links and when they came to Lobatse Town Council I went there to meet them. I then enrolled for their training and shared my story with them and by then I realized that it was easy to end the abuse. I made a decision then and ended the relationship with that man. The business training I attended changed my life a great deal because I was able to make my own living and did not depend on anyone. I was helped by the social workers through the Poverty Eradication program and started a catering business and at present I am my own boss. I have my own business and my life has changed for the better.

There are no government programs in the sub-district where I live and we only have access to assistance through the council in Lobatse. We wish to form our own organization back home for women who are faced with issues of domestic violence because we are aware that there are a lot of women who are affected and need help.

I wish to advise all people living in abusive relationships to get out of oppression break the silence and seek help from relevant organizations so that they can live peacefully and happily. I end up by saying that I wish to see more women living in peace like me, standing up for themselves and fighting for their rights. I know that no one will ever abuse me because 'I know my stand' and my rights.

I feel dignified and confident

By Ntebo Raselepe

I AM A MOTSWANA woman aged 47 and I am a member of Bomme Isago. In 2013 Bomme Isago arranged for me to attend the Gender Links training.

I was abused by my siblings because of the house that my parents gave me in 1978 when they divorced which they registered in my name. My siblings have been fighting to get the house from me and used foul language and called me bad names. Whenever I was not home they would go there and insult my boyfriend and told him bad things about me.

In 2008 they all wrote a letter stating that they agreed to transfer the registration of the house to our elder sibling. They signed it, put their ID numbers on it and demanded that I do the same but I refused. And they never gave me any peace.

My first and second born siblings were the ringleaders in abusing me. The first-born had a house in Mogoditshane, which he sold. The second-born sold two of his plots that were in Kanye and someone told me that he was asking him to buy the third plot. They had wanted to sell the very house they were fighting me for and could not succeed because they needed a letter from me to facilitate the sale.

I don't want them involved in anything concerning my house because that makes it difficult for me to renovate it and I am tired of being abused by them.

In 1999, the Council in Lobatse called me and told me that the house was dilapidated and needed to be renovated. I then set up a Chibuku depot and sold chibuku and I managed to repair the doors and windows and to connect electricity from the sales. They used the electricity with me but never paid anything until the bill was so high that the electricity was cut off.

Whatever I try to do to make a living my second born sibling always somehow sabotages it. Like when I erected a wooden shed for making fire, she would take the wood the shed and burn it, or when I made a vegetable garden she urinated and poured dirty water on it. When I clean the yard she throws rubbish on it and there are places on the yard where she does not want me to go. She puts dangerous things there to hurt my children and me. In the early hours of the morning she would make fire at the back and in front of the house burning and chanting very evil things against me that he want my children and me dead.

I pleaded with my sibling that we should make peace between us, and told her about the poverty eradication programs that she can participate in because she knows how to knit. But she was not interested.

Gender Links taught us about different forms of abuse.

They encouraged us to start our own businesses in order to get out of abusive relationships. They taught us about women's rights and that as women we should do jobs that are normally allocated to men, such as car mechanics, connecting electricity, ploughing, rearing cattle and goats.

We were taught about business training and learned how to do business plans, business management, advertising through flyers, billboards and having business cards. We learned how to keep business records such as receipts etc.

The training has calmed my emotions and gave me confidence and wisdom to start a business to sustain my family and me. I now focus on making jewelry from beads and this takes all my concentration because beadwork needs a lot of attention so I don't have time for anything else.

The abuse still continues but I think my abusers are afraid of me because they have taken to indirectly throw insults and taunts at me but I just don't respond to them. I feel dignified and confident as I go about my business because I know my rights. Gender Links has taught me to stand on my own feet and I have made great progress in my life. I feel really proud of myself.

Gender Links has helped me a lot because after training I went to Lobatse Town Council and applied for the Poverty Eradication Program, fortunately I was successful and I have started a beadwork business and have registered it.

My business is doing well, I participated in the trade fair and my jewelry won an award. Gender Affairs has invited me to be part of the fair to be held on the 27th June to 3rd July 2016 in Gaborone. This has given me a lot of encouragement and confidence because a lot of people will see my products and know about me.

There are poverty eradication programs that assist survivors of abuse. I think these programs could be improved by asking beneficiaries to list all the equipment that they need to start businesses instead of Gender Affairs making the list of what to buy for us. This means that we would be able to buy the most important items first and that would enable us to start operating.

I wish to say to survivors of abuse that they can make sustainable lives for themselves, all they have to do is to stand up and take charge of their lives by starting businesses. They can go to The Council and CEDA and ask for assistance. They should also join organizations like BAPR and Bomme Isago to be counseled and offered guidance.

I commend Gender Links for the good job that they are doing by training us and making it possible to meet with other survivors from different regions of Botswana. This has made it possible for us to meet each other and to share ideas about how we can improve our businesses. May God bless all of us.

Don't stay in an abusive relationship

By Kabelo Gorata

THE GENDER LINKS TRAINING workshops that I attended were in 2012. I was in an abusive relationship with a man that I met in 2002 called Kabelo. This man physically abused me to the extend that I was crippled in one arm. Then I came to know Gender Links and they taught me about gender-based violence and what causes it.

For women to find themselves being abused is because most of the time they cannot find work and often find it very difficult to cope. That is why when they meet a man they think will help, they get into a relationship and in the end he abuses them because they rely financially on him.

What I have learned from Gender Links is that women should not accept to be abused because they want men to do things for them. When you realize that you are being abused you must get out of the relationship and find something you can do to make a living for yourself and your children.

After attending the training I found that it was useful to me because it uplifted my morale and ever since I participated in the Gender Links workshops I have been living a peaceful life up to the present time. This is because I am not being abused by anyone and I have my own business of selling sweets and they provide a livelihood for me.

The business training has changed my life in many ways. For instance, I did not know that when in business you have to figure out if the business is making a profit or not. I was taught that when in business you have to know how much you paid for your stock and to make a mark up that will ensure that you make a profit. I was also taught that I must save my profits in a bank so that my business can grow and this would enable me to create jobs for other people in my area so that they can make their own living to avoid getting in to abusive relationships.

Regarding the man in my story I have found out that because I know about domestic violence my situation has improved a lot and I wish to thank Gender Links because if it was not for them I might still be in an abusive relationship. There are no programs for gender-based violence in the village where I live. I have taken it upon myself to tell them about Gender Links so that they can enroll and be trained and benefit from the programs. This is because they always ask me where they can access the programs that have changed my life so much.

I wish to say to people who find themselves in abusive relationships that they must stand up and engage with organizations that are similar to Gender Links so that their lives would become better, they should not stay in abusive relationships when they can be helped.

My last words are to thank Gender Links a lot because they have helped me and they should continue helping a lot of people like me. I also request that a women's organization be set up in my village so that we can meet, share our stories and teach each other about domestic violence because women in my village really wish to know more about programs for survivors of abuse.

I started a business to end abuse

By Bakae Malebeswa

I AM A RESIDENT of Lobatse and I started participating in Gender Links training programs in 2014. A man called Dicks abused me in 2010. He was very jealous and did not like it when I talked to other people especially men. He would call me names like bitch and said I talked to those men because I was sleeping with them. I was always miserable I afraid of talking to people because I did not want to provoke him as he provided for my needs

I came to know Gender Links and they taught me about gender-based violence and its effects. They taught me that being abused was the result of being financially dependent on my boyfriend since I was not working or earning money in any way.

I learned from Gender Links that as I woman should not allow anyone to abuse me, I should not allow any man to look after me, I should make a living through having a small business so that I can be independent.

Gender Link motivated me and I realized that I could change my life for the better so I started selling clothes, perfumes and earrings.

I knew that I had to make a living in order to end my relationship with my boyfriend. I continued doing my business and I am now free from the abusive relationship I was in and I now see a better future.

I wish there was training such as the one I went through with Gender Links in my village so that a lot of people affected by abuse could go through it. In my village there is cooperation of the police, counselors and social workers all working together with Gender Links to educate people about gender abuse and to empower them with business training.

Gender abuse is not good in people's lives, it is dangerous and it needs to be addressed while there is time.

I learnt not to tolerate abuse

By Nametso Moringa

I AM A RESIDENT of Lobatse at Peleng East and I started participating in Gender Links training workshops in 2013.

The man I was in love with liked beating me up. He once found me sleeping at his home and asked me where his food was and I told him that I did not cook because there was no relish. This started an argument and he took out his belt and started beating me with it.

His brother came and tried to pacify him but he took me to the hill and continued beating me. His brother called the police, they came and tried to talk to him but he fought with them as well. The police then called the soldiers and they managed to pacify him and we were all taken to the police station where he was charged with assault.

I have learned from the Gender Links training that I should not tolerate abuse no matter how much I love someone. I should talk about all the challenges that I face to friends, relatives and social workers so that they can help me.

I ended up breaking up with my boyfriend because I did not want to be abused and I wanted to be safe. I am now happy and I even attend church.

I am volunteering at BAPR, where we go around the village teaching people about gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS.

I tell people that they should not live in abusive relationships.

Gender-based abuse is not good at all and I thank Gender Links for the training I attended.

Gender Links healed our souls

By Boikgantsho Kesupile

I stay in Woodhall 2, Lobatse and I started attending Gender Links training in 2013. My friend invited me because I always told her about the tough environment I was living in.

My troubles started in 1995 after I had given birth to my first child. I had stayed with my boyfriend before he started working, got pregnant while he was not working and before our child was born he got a job with BDF as a soldier.

Then everything changed, he started womanizing and if I complained I was a target for his fists. He looked down upon me because he was working and I was not and he did not care about the welfare of our child. He eventually impregnated his girlfriend and neighbor and ended up marrying her and so our relationship came to an end.

After this experience, I went back home and found that I had followed abuse in another form. My mother passed on and left us with stepsisters who were older than me and we stayed in a house that their father had built. One of my stepsisters always picked on me, telling me that we should leave their home and she really did not like my son. She ill-treated us beyond endurance.

The years passed and my son was growing. When he was doing Form 1, my sister who lived in Francistown took him to stay with her. But he also started his own brand of problems. He started smoking, drinking and not attending classes. His teachers always summoned me to his school, my sister's patience was tested, and the social workers had also given up on him. In the end I asked for a transfer for him to come back home but the situation did not abate.

In 2014 he also became a parent after impregnating a girl. At that point I gave in because otherwise I could have committed suicide. I took the matter to my uncles, and asked for assistance and they summoned him, talked to him and made him understand what the results of a disobedient child are. I also told him my own life story.

I am really thankful to Gender Links. I have been lost, without hope and in the darkness and grip of abuse. I was unable to make anything about my life, I was afraid to talk about my story of abuse with other people, thinking that they would laugh at me and label me as one who has no control over her life. But then my consoler, Gender Links, is here for me, wiping my tears and giving me hope for life.

Since I have met with women who have different challenges through Gender Links, I realized that I was not alone. And because we were all sharing our experiences of abuse we realized that some had gone through more hardships than others. This taught me that you should never hide anything that is bothering you.

It is very dangerous to hide challenges, because you can get stressed out and end up with conditions like high blood pressure or stroke or you can even commit suicide if you do not go through counseling. I feel honored to be a part of Gender Links because I no longer fear any form of abuse. You should not feel ashamed to talk about your about issues, you should not stay in a loveless relationship because of money. "Money can't buy love,' they say.

Even to a man who is a breadwinner, a rich man who looks after his family but who is abusive to his wife I say "NO", the woman should take a stand and refuse to be abused. Gender Links has taught me that I have rights and I should never stay in an abusive relationship, I should protect my life and be responsible.

My life has improved from where it was before I met Gender Links. After going through business training I have seen the light because I really like business but I did not know where to start. I have learned a lot from business training and there is a change in my life.

I have learned about a business plan, market research, profit and loss, advertising and it all makes me feel so happy to learn about things I did not know. Having a business is good and having a big business needs intelligence and diligence. Having a business is not about giving credit to friends, it is not about from hand to mouth, it is about opening a bank account and registering the business.

I am a different woman now and I dream of big businesses day and night, I see myself working with ladies of the Republic of Botswana.

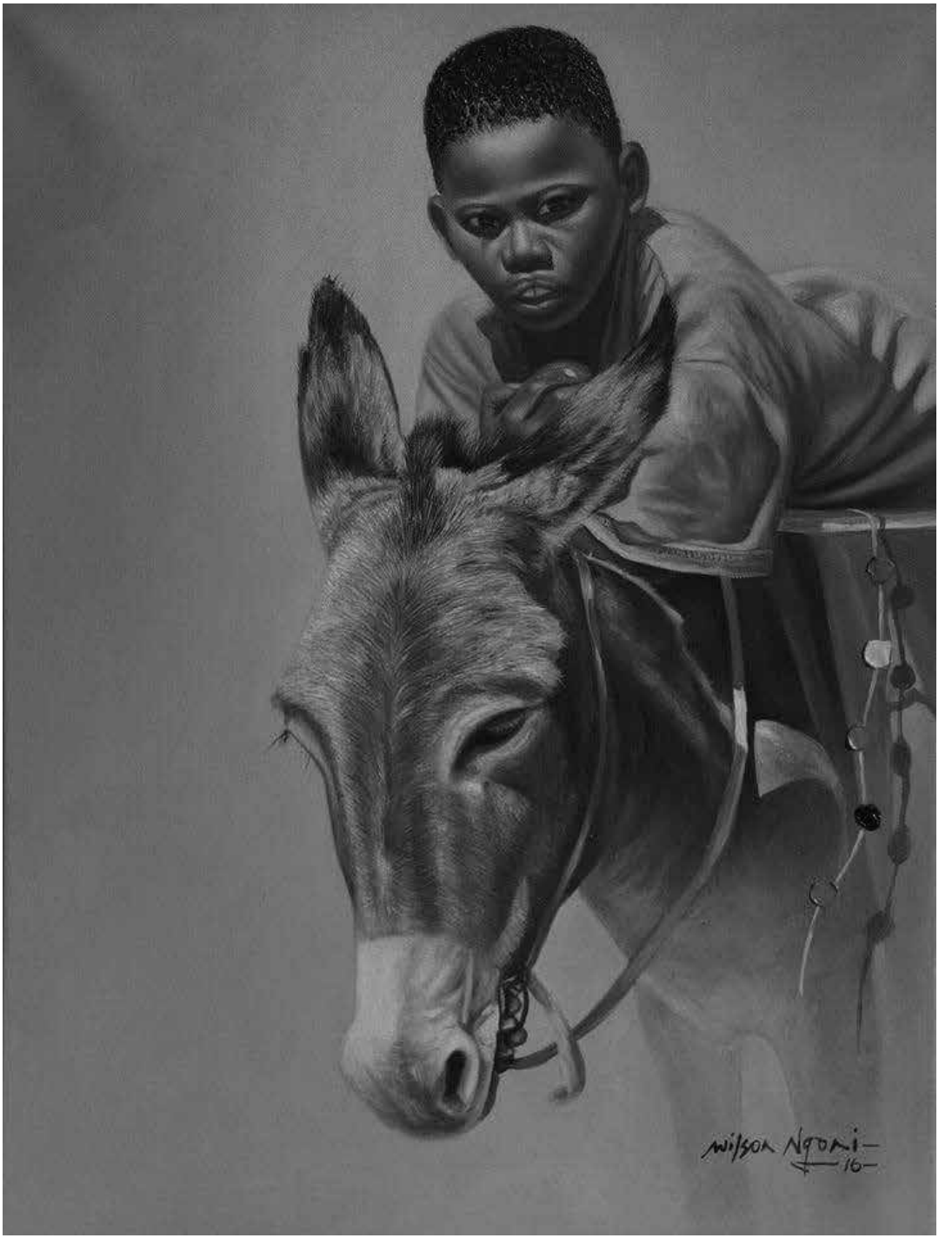
My situation regarding people in my story has changed. There is love and harmony in our lives and it is hardly conceivable that we are the same people from those years of pain and suffering. My son is at tertiary and he is 'The Best Student' in his class and in the whole school, well disciplined and obedient. I am in good terms with my sisters and we even call each other to check that we are alright.

There is access to programs in my area but women from that side are afraid to speak out about being abused, they are still secretive but we are doing all we can to explain the dangers of hiding abuse.

To the survivors of abuse I can say that they should come out in the open and talk about the challenges of their families, or at their workplace. They should not be afraid that their marriages will break up or that they will lose their jobs but they should be aware that life comes first.

It is important to stand on your own feet when life becomes intolerable. Beware of the dangers of abuse, know your rights. Gender Links, government employees, relatives, friends are there for you so tell them about your problems.

My last words are that I thank Gender Links for their training workshops that have sensitized us about gender-based abuse. We commend you about all messages and advice that have healed the souls that have been broken. We are what we are through Gender Links and we shall continue helping those who are still victims of abuse.


WILSON NGOMI
16

I have a right to live a normal life

By Thato Gaobope

I AM A YOUNG LADY of 32 years and I come from Lobatse. I enrolled and attended Gender Links training workshops in 2014.

I was in an abusive relationship with a man I was in love with and he abused me emotionally and sexually. I was emotionally battered because he accused me of cheating on him and he did not want me to work because he said I was meeting other men. I came into contact with people from Gender Links and they helped me to attend workshops on gender-based violence.

The Gender Links workshops helped me a lot. I was taught not to allow anyone to abuse me because I have a right to live a normal life just like anybody else. I have participated in business training so I can make a living on my own without relying on relationships because doing so always leads to being abused.

In business training I was taught about a business plan, what it was and how it helps in setting up a business. We learned about market research, how to register a business, how to market a business and about opening a bank account.

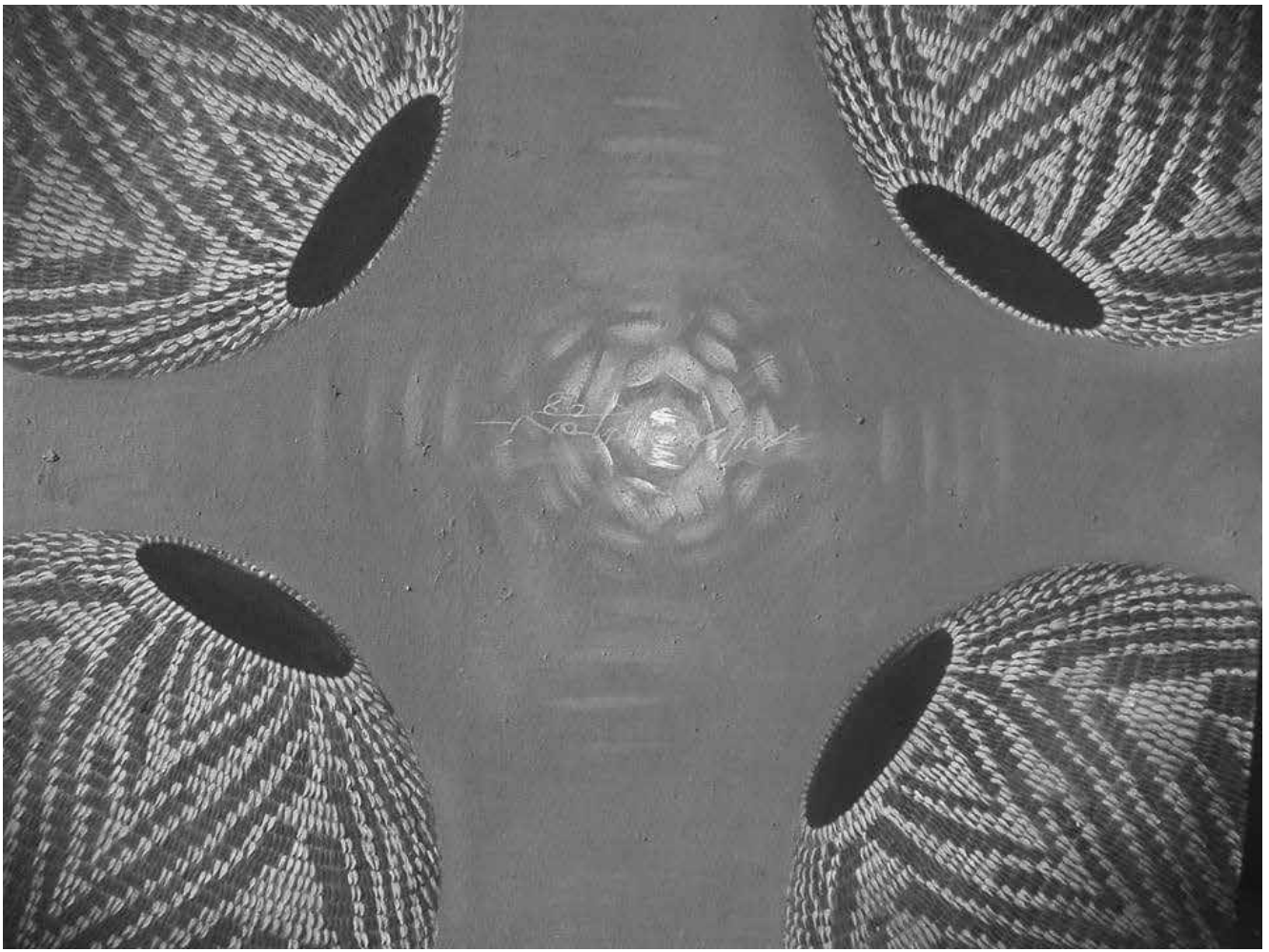
Regarding relationships things have changed because I took a decision to end the abusive relationship I was in and I don't let myself be abused in any manner.

Programs that I know of that can help victims of abuse are Poverty Eradication and doing business with the assistance of Gender Affairs department. I think the Poverty Eradication program can be improved by ensuring that there are enough funds to buy equipment needed for the business.

I can say to all survivors of abuse that they should not be impatient, they should stand up and make decisions for themselves, join organizations that deal with gender-based violence such as Gender Links. They should also take a stand to report the perpetrators because it is illegal to abuse other people.

Maun

“I” STORIES



I am free and at peace

By Bontle Segolo

I AM A 42 YEAR-OLD WOMAN living in Kubung Ward in Maun. I started school at Bonatla Primary School in Maun. In 1996 I went to stay with my elder brother and his wife in Selebi-Phikwe and attended Segomotso Primary School. We stayed at his place in New Stands and everything was good.

In 1997 things began to change as I would be woken very early in the morning to do the dishes and sweep the yard. Sometimes I would go to bed at around 12h00. In the morning I had to bathe my nephew who was in Standard one and get him ready for school. I would end up being late at my own school, and my performance in class became very poor.

After school at around 4 o'clock I had to make a fire and bake bread, some of it was sold to mine employees as they passed by our home from work. I did not have time to pay attention to my studies.

By 1998 when I was doing Standard 7, my schoolwork suffered a lot because I was paying very little attention to it because of all the work I was doing at home. I told my brother about all this but he took no notice of it.. There came a time when I would sleep in class and when the teacher asked me why that happened, I told him that I was not happy at home and he asked me to ask a parent to come and see him at school.

My sister-in-law went to see the teacher and she was told her that I was always late for school and my grades were poor. The teacher gave me an opportunity to say something about my case. I explained that at home I was not given time to do my schoolwork because I woke up very early in the morning and slept late at night. My sister-in-law was not happy with me for saying all that to the teacher and said that I was rebellious.

One day a gentleman came to visit. He said he has had come to see me because since I came to Selebi-Phikwe he had never had time to come and visit. He said that he was my mother's relative and upon hearing this I cried bitterly, feeling really broken hearted. When he asked my sister-in-law what was wrong, she just said that I was defiant and rebellious.

My Standard 7 results were very poor. I got a Grade D, and could not proceed to junior secondary school. My brother could not afford to pay school fees for a private school so I could not go for further studies.

My brother's home was a shebeen where liquor, cooked meat and other goods were sold. After failing Standard 7 I met a man who used to drink at our shebeen and I had an affair with him. I started going out to nightclubs and drinking.

Then in 1991 I fell pregnant. At first I was not aware that I was but my boyfriend had noticed and when he asked me I denied that I was. But I was indeed pregnant and I felt really bad so I stayed at my boyfriend's place.

My brother was not happy about moving in with my boyfriend and wanted me to go back home. By that time I had a baby and my boyfriend did not want me to go back because he wanted to look after me and our baby at his place.

In 1992, my brother's wife passed away and she was buried in Molepolole, her place of birth and her relatives took the children. My brother also became ill then lost his job and he had no one to take care of him. His life changed for the worst and he had to go back home to Maun but unfortunately he also passed away.

I felt that though I had lost my brother I was no longer living an abusive life, I was free and at peace.

I enrolled for Gender Links workshops in 2013 and attended all three phases of the training. From the training I liked learning about business skills including marketing. I could not cope with the other phases because of my lack of understanding of English. I discussed this with the facilitators and they helped me.

I am not working at the moment but I have approached the social worker and she has submitted my name to the District Commissioner to attend a workshop and I am waiting for their response.

Even though I feel that I have lived an abusive life with my brother, I am now free and live peacefully. Since I engaged with Gender Links I have managed to be at peace with myself. I am now able to spend time at home just like any normal person. I attend church and also sell oranges and other goods to make a living.

I tell my friends and relatives about how Gender Links has helped me to be where I am and they see me as someone who has a vision. I intend to apply for government assistance from institutions such as CEDA, Poverty Eradication Program and Gender Affairs Program.



I am now able to spend time at home just like any normal person. I attend church and also sell oranges and other goods to make a living.

I don't depend on anyone

By Tshego Masimo

I AM A 43 YEAR-OLD married woman and I was abused by my in-laws. In March 2013 a family member of my parents-in-law passed on. It was then decided that the groceries for the funeral be stored at my house and one of my in-laws would help to keep an eye on them. I performed all the duties regarding the preparation for the funeral diligently.

Then after the funeral when the clothes for the deceased were supposed to be washed we found out that there was no washing powder. My mother-in-law insisted that the washing powder was bought and if it was not there then I must have taken it because I could not afford to buy it since her son who is my husband had been admitted to hospital.

I then asked the people who had bought the groceries to bring the receipts so that we could check to see if indeed the washing powder was bought and it was discovered that it was never bought. My mother-in-law was asked to apologize to me but she refused.

So as far as my mother-in-law is concerned I cannot not do anything right, if I did the right thing she never acknowledged it and even when I was ill she never felt sad. But her son, my husband had been operated on and the doctor had advised that he should not do anything strenuous.

I feel challenged because in my home I perform duties of both a man and a woman but my mother-in-law does not appreciate this. My husband has no problem with our situation. The problem is with my mother-in-law and I don't know why she is like that and the worst thing is that we don't have a home of our own so we have to stay with her.

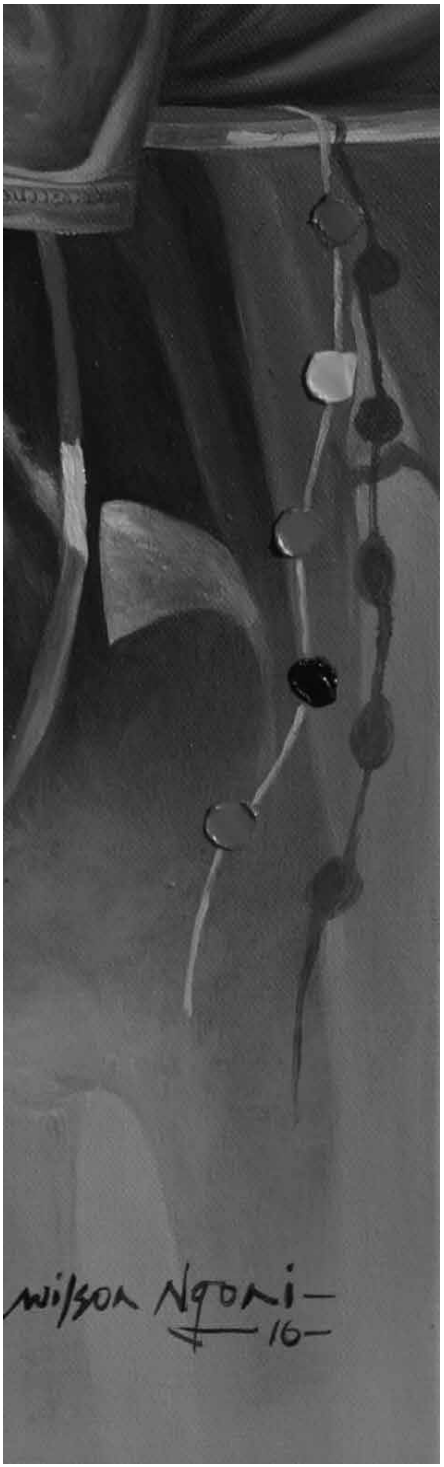
Later in 2013, I attended Gender Links workshops where I learnt a great deal
about abuse, doing business plans and 'my tree of life'. I feel proud about all that I have learnt including how to start a business.

Starting my own business and how to run it has changed my life. My livelihood has improved a lot and I am now able to pay school fees and other obligations and also to save money in the bank. I don't depend on anyone financially because my business provides all that.

My situation has changed and there is no more abuse from the people in my story, we live peacefully and that is all that I have always wanted.

Now I want to say to those who still live with abusive people that they should attend Gender Links workshops to learn how to fight abuse and to learn about programs that can make their lives better.

I thank Gender Links for their workshops and programs that have made my life better.



Confide in others, don't be afraid

By Amantsi Masego

I AM A MOTHER of five children two girls and three boys, am 44 years of age and was I legally married. On the second year of marriage my husband did not allow me to work, or permit me to visit my parents.

He also beat children when they played with other children in the neighborhood. If I had visitors there would be a fight and he expected me to identify footprints in the yard.

When I realized that the situation was not getting any better I went to the District Commissioner and reported him. My husband was called and he was reprimanded but he continued with the abuse. I continued reporting the abuse to the authorities but it did not help as he was beating the children all the time. In the end I took my children and went back home to my parents.

He went to the authorities and reported that I had gone back to my parents and they summoned me and asked why I have gone back. I told them all that was happening in our marriage. My husband was told to go and think about what he wanted to do concerning our marriage and he said that he would let them know his decision.

Meanwhile, my children and I went back to live with my parents and we were very happy and the kids were able to play freely with their friends and that is how the abuse in my marriage came to an end.

I want to say to all women who are facing similar challenges that they should not be afraid to confide in others about their situations and that they should report all forms of abuse.

Have skills to start a business

By Relosika Nageng

I AM A RESIDENT of Kubung ward in Maun and I started attending training with Gender Links in 2013 and 2014. My experience of abuse was through the man I stayed with. He treated me very badly, was insanely jealous and did not trust my female friends because he thought they were capable of pairing me off with other men.

I remember one time while I was relaxing at home and he asked me to go for a walk with him in the nearby bush. He did not show any signs of anger and seemed quite calm. As we walked about he asked me who I had been talking to during the day. As I was about to reply that I had not been talking to anyone, he suddenly started beating and kicking me. Then he tied me to a tree and continued beating me until he felt content.

He eventually untied me and said we could go back home. My body was battered and painful and I was dragging my feet with difficulty afraid to call for help because that would have indeed brought about my death.

When my parents were still alive they used to ask me why I did not end the relationship with a man who was so abusive. I used to say that he will get better it was just that he was driven by drinking to do all that. I only came to realize in the end that he was just a bad person.

Whenever he gave me money, he would later demand it all back. I could not use his money, I was like a bank where he deposited his money then draw it all back. I knew that if I used it he would surely kill me.

In the end I realized that I could no longer stay with this man. I went to the kgotla and asked them to help me to break up with him, they did and the relationship ended. In 2013 and 2014 I attended Gender Links workshops and that is where I learned about the abuse I have just described. I also learned that there are other types of abuse such as the abuse of orphans and of women abusing men.

What I have learned from the business studies cannot change my life at this stage because I do not have money to start a business. But at least I have learned that to start a business I need to have a plot, and I also that when I run a business I should treat my workers decently and have good customer service.

I think that intervention programs such as Poverty Eradication and those that Gender Links offer can work better if beneficiaries were given things that they need all at once rather than being given some items to start projects and then having to wait for the rest of what they require. In conclusion I would tell people who find themselves in abusive relationships to go out and seek help from social workers, courts and relevant organizations such as Emang Basadi.

I am also thankful for the lessons I got from Gender Links because I am now equipped with knowledge to start a business. Please continue doing the good job and may God bless you.

Don't show love by being abusive

By Sally Nairobi

I AM FROM DISANA WARD in Maun and I started attending Gender Links workshops in July 2014. I grew up being abused by my mother whom I did not know until I was 12 years old and my father who is blind is the one who raised me because my mother does not stay with us.

My parents do not see eye to eye and their differences have affected us. If we visit her she treats us differently from her kids who stay with her and are not my father's. I grew up faced with many challenges including being in confinement and cared for by a blind man. When I went into confinement my mother came to our place and after one week she started coming home very late at night expecting to find food that I cooked even though I had an infant to take care of.

But I have learned a lot from the Gender Links workshops including;

- The fact that I should never give up, I should have a vision and work towards attaining it; That abuse should not be kept a secret and should not be tolerated.
- That if I notice abuse from my neighbors I should report it and not say that it is none of my business.

I have been taught business skills and where I can access government programs such as SMME, CEDA, Poverty Eradication and others and also that;

- I have to register it and choose a business name, business plan and register a company.
- If I am going to operate from rented premises I need to have a title deed or lease.
- Where I should go to get money to start a business
- I have learned that some businesses cannot be operated from home.
- I should not employ foreigners who do not have permits.

Business training also taught me that;

- I should know people I am in competition with and what they do; I should know their prices and to try and make mine better; I need to know my customers and what they want and how I am going to take my products to them; I need to know how I am going to advertise my products, through business cards, samples, newspapers or catalogues.

The way I relate to the people in my story has not changed at all it is just the same. In my village there are organizations that intervene in matters relating to abuse such as BOFWA, Gender Links, Emang Basadi, Ditshwanelo, Police, Churches and others. These organizations are very good because they help people who have challenges to open up and talk. People who are abused should speak out about it because no one can show love by abusing another. If you are being abused you should report the matter to the police immediately. I thank Gender Links for teaching me so much. I have learned about a business plan and a market gap.

I have applied to the Poverty Eradication Program to start a sewing business and I have been given sewing machines. I have not yet started sewing because I am still waiting to be given the materials. I have also applied for the business name for my business from the Registrar of Companies and I am waiting for their reply.

Empowered to open a bank account

By Nelly Mario

I AM A LADY of 34 years from Xakao in the northwestward of Mogotho in Maun. I am a second born child of Samson Mario and Duba Mario. I started participating in the Gender Links workshops in July 2014 in Maun. First I was taught about abuse and learned what abuse meant, examples of abuse, and how to stop it. After that I did business training.

I then realized that I was actually being abused because my boyfriend, Logang beat me a lot. Logang often beat me particularly when he wanted sex and I was having my periods. Whenever I tried to explain that I did not want to have sex when I was menstruating, he never wanted to understand.

Gender Links taught me a lot, including the fact that no one should be abused especially women. After learning about physical abuse I took the advice from Gender Links that I should never to give in to abuse. So I went to see the social workers and they counseled me and this has helped me to end the relationship with Logang in September 2014. Since then I am at peace and happy.

I learned so much from the Gender Links business training and I was empowered with the knowledge of saving money that I have opened a savings account with one of the banks in Maun. I have also learned the expertise of marketing my business effectively.

Since I broke up with Logang I experienced a positive change in my life. I have changed for the better and my neighbors also give me tips about how to succeed in life. If I feel down they encourage me to go on and because of this I have a lot of hope that I will achieve my dreams for the future.

Unfortunately the village of Xakao is still lacking behind regarding having organizations that offer services to survivors of abuse. I think that it would beneficial if a counseling program could be offered to the residents of the village as well as to do training on gender-based violence. By so doing these programs could reduce the incidents of gender-based abuse as well as to enhance the health of the people.

I want to advice all survivors of gender based violence that they should not tolerate abuse, they should know that there are different organizations where they can go for help. And these include Social Security Department, Gender Affairs and Women Against Rape.

Gender Links gave us wings

By Montsho Matlala

I AM A young lady of 36 years and I am from the Northwest district. I started attending Gender Links training workshops for the last three years including this year, 2016.

I have realized that gender based violence is something that one cannot ignore once they have knowledge about it. Gender Links has taught me a lot of things that I can never forget like living with people who show you how they want to be treated, to love others and to share what you have learned with them.

Going through business training has changed my life because I now know a lot about business and have no need to ask anyone for assistance anymore instead I can assist those who want to start a business.

The abuse by my mother and younger sister still continues and it looks like it is getting worse. My mother encourages her to use foul language at me the way she wants and sometimes I get angry.

They reported me at the kgotla and to the social worker saying that I am bullying my sister despite her being disabled. I am also accused of cooking the food my sister gets from the disability program and not giving her any. I was sternly warned that if I did not stop doing that I would be prosecuted.

The programs that are available in our village could help people who are abused if the social workers and the police could be supportive by giving ongoing advice and if they improved their service delivery.

I told people who are being abused that I am living in the abusive environment everyday so they can come to me and I shall give them lessons on how to survive the situation.

My last word is to thank Gender Links for giving us so much knowledge and skills and that we are also sharing it with others.

My business is doing very well, it provides me with good profits and this has enabled me to move from selling under a tree at home and I am now selling my products at the mall and have a registration certificate.

I am an employer, thanks to Gender Links

By Gloria Kagoetsile

I HAVE BEEN TRAINED by Gender Links for Phases 1, 2, and 3. I have written a story about the abuse I experienced from the father of my child who had promised to marry me but instead left me and married another woman.

Gender Links training has made me realize that in life there are challenges that you have to face then put them behind you by seeking advice from people close to you. You can also go to organizations that offer counseling such as WAR etc.

During training I also learned that you can encounter situations that can become problems but you can avoid this by revealing them to your relatives, neighbors, or to a doctor, policeman, or to organizations like WAR, Gender Affairs and others.

In business studies, I learned about how to attract buyers by advertising in newspapers, notice boards, schools and weddings and that my prices should be competitive. Business training has positively changed my life. I now find myself having a good income that sustains my family and I have stopped thinking about negative things.

The man I used to share my life with is gone having married someone else but I am happy living with my children and my family. We can afford to put food on the table, buy clothes for ourselves and we are at peace.

Programs that are available in our village are Poverty Eradication and Ipelegeng. Poverty Eradication has helped to create businesses for many people such as bread making, catering, backyard gardens hawkers and street vendors and others.

I encourage people who are still in abusive relationships to ask for help from family, relatives and neighbors and also to enroll and participate in organizations that offer relevant services.

I also want to say that if you find yourself facing life challenges you should talk to people who can offer solutions such as family, police, social workers and organizations like WAR.

Regarding my business, I sometimes win tenders with help from the Poverty Eradication program to supply some schools with bread. When this happens I always hire two people to help me and this offers them an opportunity to earn some money. I usually pay them P800.00 per month for the duration of the tender while I would get P1000.00.

Sharing my story made me a winner

By Kebonang Masigo

I RESIDE IN KUBUNG ward in Maun and I have participated in all Gender Links training workshops. I wrote a story about the abuse I went through when my relatives refused to give me the inheritance my mother had left for me. When my mother died her sister looked after me.

After some time when I asked her to hand over the inheritance she said that I was still too young to handle it. At that time even though I felt that I was old enough to take over my inheritance I decided to let it be and stopped asking.

I have learned a lot of things that I did not understand before. We were taught about what gender-based abuse was and I learned about forms of abuse that I did not regard as abuse.

Business training has helped me to look at things differently and I know now that if I want to buy anything I must budget for it. I have decided that I want to start my own business.

The way I relate to people in my story is now changing, because they are no longer saying I am too young and they have given me part of my inheritance. I think they will eventually give me all of it.

There are organizations in Maun such as WAR that help people facing gender based violence but I think it would be better if they could visit those who are affected at their homes and teach them about abuse.

I can say that people who are abused and who are hiding it are simply wasting their time by remaining silent. They should enroll and participate in the organizations that will educate and empower them.

I want to say that I encourage those who have enrolled in the organizations to continue learning and for our facilitators to continue training us.

Gender Links opened my mind

By Maitemogelo Kebontshitswe

I AM A YOUNG WOMAN of 33 years from Matlapana ward in Maun. I started Gender Links training workshops in July 2014. I was first taught about different types of gender-based violence that I did not know about and this opened my eyes.

We were also taught business studies and learned how to earn a living because most of the time women end up in abusive relationships because they cannot financially support themselves. So what I have learned from Gender Links training is that I have been living in an abusive relationship without being aware. My boyfriend Setena Letamo and his family have been emotionally abusing me by swearing at me and calling me names and this had made my life really miserable.

The training has helped me a great deal because I believe that the abuse has subsided. I have been counseled and given advice. I can now make a living for myself because I was trained about how to run a business. I have realized that I cannot give in to challenges and this has motivated me and even though the abuse still goes on it is not as bad as it was before.

I have also learned a lot from the business training though I have not yet started a business because of lack of money. This was partly because I spend a lot of time at home without going out to find information about programs that can help me start a business.

The situation concerning the relationship I have with my boyfriend that I shared in my story, is getting better the problem is with his family who still continue with the abuse. My boyfriend is no longer saying hurtful things to me and this is encouraging me to do all I can to end this abuse and I believe that I can.

There are no intervention programs that can end gender-based violence or encourage people to start their own businesses in my area. The biggest problem is that people tend to be lazy and full of excuses, they do not make plans for the future. So if you try to talk to them about these issues they think that you just want recognition. I think that they need to be encouraged so that they can understand and be motivated to want to participate in development issues.

I encourage people who are still being abused to stand up and engage with social workers, the police, Women Against Rape (WAR) and other organizations to help them to deal with their problems and to end the abuse.

I want to thank Gender Links for all that they have taught me because they have opened my eyes and mind regarding gender-based violence as well as starting a business. I am now able to do things for myself without relying on anyone and even though I have not yet started a business, I know ways of doing it and also in my mind I see that the abuse I was subjected to has come to an end.

We are living peacefully

By Tebatso Lapologang

I AM A LADY OF 42 years from Sanyedi ward in Maun and I started attending Gender Links training workshops in 2013. I started being abused in 1996 by the father of children. He drank excessively spent nights away from home and did not look after the children and if I complained he beat me.

Our children became rebellious and did not attend school properly school because of the situation at home. He continued with his behavior until I reported him to the police. The children have grown up even though they are still not working but we are living peacefully and their father and I communicate without any problem.

I first learned about sex and gender at Gender Links. I was taught that sex refers to the biological make-up of men and women, and gender mainly refers to duties and responsibilities that they perform in the society.

I have been taught that there are three types of gender-based violence; physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

I also learned about how to start a business and though I have not yet started one I know that starting a business requires; project description and project objective and these help to make me think about my business.

There are organizations such as WAR, Gender Affairs department in my village which advice those living with abuse not to give in but to seek advice from the police, social workers and others.

May Gender Links grow in leaps and bounds, I wish you all the blessings and may God be with you.

I have been given a laundry machine even though the preparations for installing it are not yet done. I am selling food to make money to facilitate the installation of the machine. I am also in the process of registering the business to enable me to access financial interventions.

I slept in white sheets

By Kabelo Mpho

I am a disabled person and also afflicted with Down syndrome. I attended Gender Links training workshops in 2014 and 2015. I have lived through abuse from 2006 up to the present time. One of my relatives does not like me at all to a point where she would sometimes take my blankets and hide them under the chairs. Other times she would take my body lotion, mix it with sand then throw it at me. She did all these things because she was unhappy that I had inherited everything.

I wholeheartedly like attending workshops, the only problem is that I tend to be slow and find it difficult to understand during sessions. I am able to read and write and the only problem is that I do not quite understand Maths but now I am able to do additions. Business training has changed my attitude because I know that as a youth I must stand on my own feet and engage with social workers to find out about available programs. I know that I should never look down upon myself.

I feel that my situation is getting better and I don't feel any pain but sometimes I think about doing bad things. My situation is so bad that I wish I could leave home and go and stay with wild animals because I feel that no one can stand the pain that I have to endure. It has gotten to the point that I am even afraid to face other people. As far as I am concerned, I wish that there could be a home where all the abused people could stay together with their children. A place where we would be fed and clothed and have no contact with people who abuse us.

I also wish to tell people who are being abused that we should go to the social workers and tell them that we have decided that we should be removed from our families so that we can stay by ourselves.

To Gender Links I say that I wish all the best to you because you have rescued us from where we were kept away from the public view. To see myself as a disabled person being able to attend your training was a real blessing. I loved your training on gender based violence as well as being taught Maths.

May the good Lord guide you wherever you go because you have trained me with patience and love without any complaint. That you came to Maun to take us to Mahalapye to continue with our training and took us to the lodge where I slept in a bed with white sheets was so wonderful.

My last words are, continue with the good work and you shall be blessed.


Wilson Ngoni

I have moved on with my life

By Banyana Morula

I COME FROM BOYISI ward in Maun and I started attending Gender Links training workshops in 2013. I was staying with my mother at the cattle post but when it was time for me to go to school I had to stay with my aunt. I had to cook, do laundry for her and myself as well as attending school.

When I proceeded to junior secondary school my aunt still expected me to continue doing all those chores. I told my mother what was going on but she did not pay any attention because she said that my aunt could not manage to do the chores because of old age.

After attending the Gender Links training I realized that the abuse I went through at home was not that bad because I knew what steps I could take to deal with it. I have learnt what to do when I had problems in order to move on with my life.

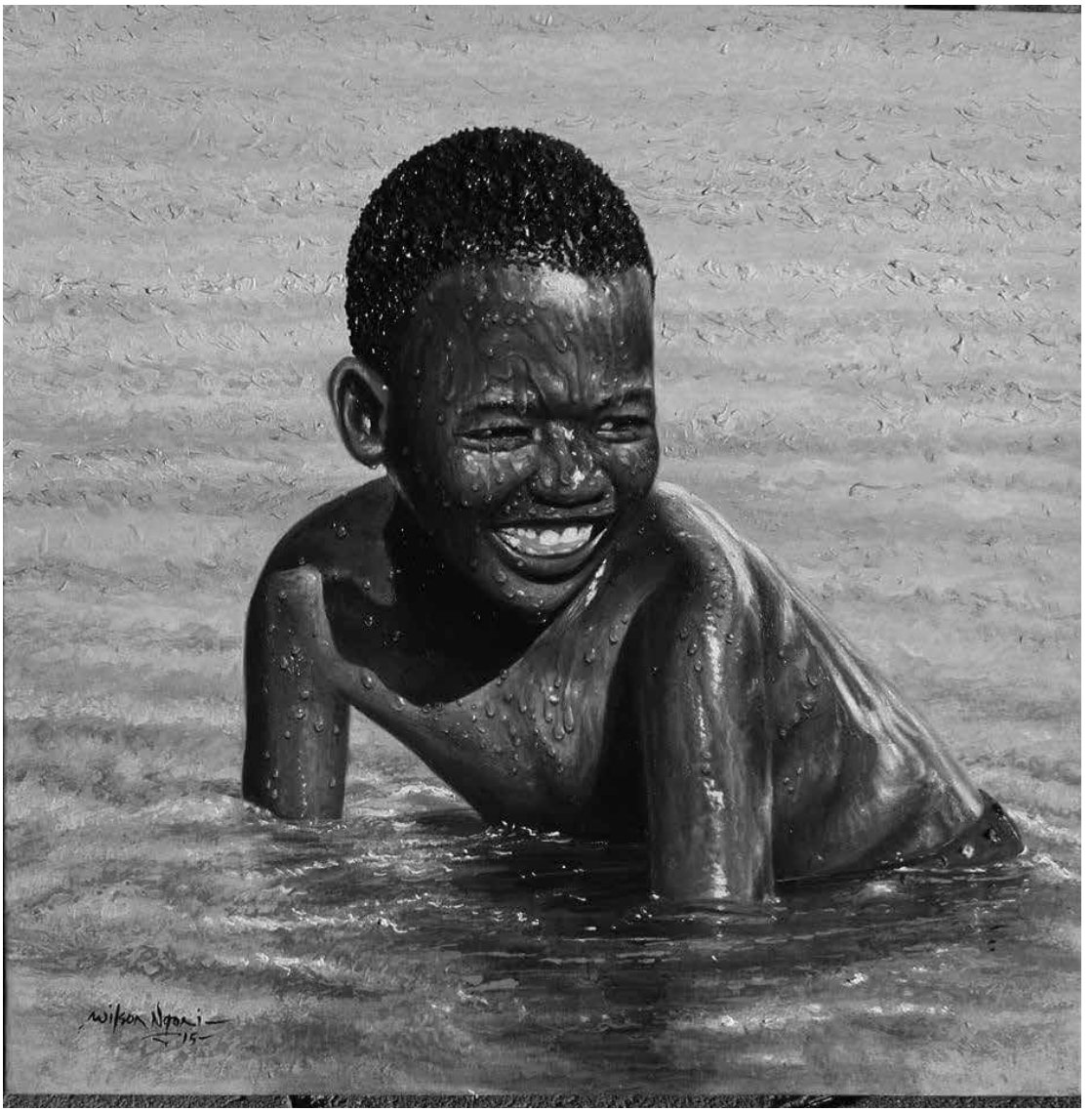
I realized that it was worthwhile having a business because I learnt what to do when I wanted to start one. I also realized that I did not have a bank account or other books of records but I have noted that it was important to have them.

Gender Links helped me a great deal and the abuse I was going through has subsided.

I have started a business growing flowers and although it is still difficult to penetrate the market I believe that I will make it in the end.

Serowe

"I" STORIES



Educate women in rural areas

By Munie Blackie

I WAS BORN and grew up in Serowe and got married first in Bokalaka. I was invited to attend a meeting on women abuse in 2013 at Serowe Hotel where we discussed gender-based abuse

Munie received very little support from her parents while at school and this forced her to fall in love with Blacki who was 20 years older than her. Then within a short time Blacki married Munie. She was so excited because her husband bought her beautiful clothes. She ate sweets and other various foods. Immediately after the wedding things took a different angle.

Blacki showed Munie his true colours, he started being disrespectful, coming home late and never wanted to be questioned. Once Munie when asked where he was from, he answered, "old as I am do you think I don't have women? Are you the only woman? And please don't ask me funny questions again or else I will teach you how a married woman should behave."

The following day one lady called Suzi came to Munie and Blacki's home and asked where Blacki's wife was. She pointed at Munie and asked "Is this your maid?" she then left. Then Munie asked her husband who the lady was. Her husband got furious and started beating her. "I told you not to ask me anything, you are a young girl, and soon you will know me."

This kind of life continued for months. Life was really horrible for the young girl but she could not do anything because her parents did not support this marriage.

Then Blacki decided to leave his work as a shop assistant and run his own shop. Munie thought life would be better when they were not in town. Then Blacki and Munie moved from town to his village Lerung. There they both worked hard and rented a small shop. Munie worked as a temporary teacher while Blackie was a manager in their business. Then they hired a girl called Gase to help in the shop. Gase helped to cook lunch but after a month she refused, when Munie asked why didn't she cook anymore she received terrible blows from her husband.

He said that he wanted to take his children, he quarreled with almost everybody. He went to the Education Officers shouted at them and wanted to know why his wife was hired without his permission and who actually hired her. They told him that it was unfortunate for him because there was nowhere in the employment forms where a husband has to sign for his wife to be hired.

The man caused lot of unrest to his lady that she decided to see the District Commissioner who then told Blackie to leave Muni alone and let her take care of the children. From the offices Blackie threatened to kill Muni but with God's mercy he did not do it. He then drove back to his home. Within a short space of time there was nothing in the shop, the van was also out of order and there was no money to repair it.

Things took a different direction, life changed for Blacki. The husband started writing letters to his wife requesting her to go back, he was apologizing for all that he did. She refused because she had felt the pain alone. It was painful because she had left the house she built, with all the furniture, clothes, house utensils and many other valuable things. But she was happy only because she was alive.

The training I attended made me aware that I am not the only one who has experienced some form of abuse. This has also shown me that there are those who cared and are working hard to make women aware. This also helps women to stand up and refuse to be abused.

Business has helped me to make sure that I make a market research before I start any business. It also taught me the importance of safely keeping records, receipts files and documents. I now know what to do to find out if my business is making profit.

My relationship has changed for the better. There are two projects in the village that are sponsored by Women's Affairs department. These really help unfortunate women. I suggest that one woman should be given money by herself and not five as is the case. I can advise victims of abuse to report any form of abuse to the relevant officers. I also advise them to make decisions before the worst abuse like death occurs.

I am thankful to Gender Links, it has shown how the organization cares. This organization should keep educating more women in rural areas where young girls are forced to marry old men. These workshops are so special, beneficial and informative. I wish I could be invited to help in the remote areas. I thank you very much.

My first time to attend a workshop

By Tebogo Lefatshe

I AM FROM the village of Mabeleapudi near Serowe. I started attending Gender Links training workshops in 2014. It was the first time in my life to attend a workshop like this.

I learned a lot about how to run a business, what a business is, and how running a business can help to enhance my life. I have learned about where you save money when you run a business and how you keep reinvesting your money into the business

I have realized after a very long time that I am being abused. I am just an ordinary woman and I don't interact a lot with other people. I have stayed at home and had a lot of children while my husband was always with other women. Whenever he came home all he did was to beat me and demand sex all the time. And all this was very painful.

I raised my children through difficulties but they went to school and are able to do part time jobs.

I learnt business skills. I am happy

By Senyetse Dintsi

I AM A YOUNG LADY of 31 years of age and I stay in Moswaanyane ward in Mogorosi. In the year 2014 I started attending Gender Links workshops. What I have realized at present is that I am no longer living in the abusive relationship I used to be in.

I was taught business skills by Gender Links and learned that when you run a business you have to keep records to find if your business is making a profit or not. Business training has changed my life but at present I do not have money to start a business that would sustain my children and me.

My situation has changed now because I am no longer living in abuse. There are programs in my village that have been set aside to assist people who are abused.

I sit down with victims of abuse and I tell them what to do to get out of it. I am thankful for the Gender Links training, they worked very well with us, and the only problem is that they left us without realizing how we live without access to money.

My experience with abuse is that my boyfriend always beat me and in the end I went to the police and they helped by talking to us, but I eventually broke up with him.

Let's talk to our parents

By Gosego Tladi

I RESIDE IN Marulamantsi ward and attended Gender Links workshops in 2014. I have decided that I should stop worrying myself and getting stressed out about someone who cannot help me in any way.

What I have learned from Gender Links business training has given me the knowledge to understand business records. The training has changed my life so much that these days nobody can cheat me as far as business is concerned. There is a lot of change regarding people in my life the situation is no longer the same. Programs in my village need accountability from authorities like chiefs, social workers and the counselor. I can tell people who find themselves in abusive situations that they should not keep quiet about issues like these because they may end up being killed or committing suicide.

My last words are that let's talk to parents when we have challenges. We should work hard and improve our agricultural production in order to improve our income. We should aim to do better than other countries.

I'm starting my own business

By Lorato Dinte

I AM A YOUNG woman of 39 years from the village of Shoshong. I attended school up to Form 2 and I have a daughter who is doing Standard 6. I have four elder siblings and one younger sibling.

I started attending Gender Links training at the beginning of 2014. I realized that the man I was having an affair with because he was married was abusing me. I decided to be by myself and to make my own living without having a man by my side whose only contribution was to abuse me. I learned a lot from Gender Links.

I attended a lot of programs that taught me about skills of starting a business as well as government programs such as LIMID. I already have a chicken house even though I have not yet started breeding chicken. The situation has changed a lot as I have broken up with the man I was with and I am already in the process of starting a business. I have realized that the programs in my village can be improved by giving people what they have requested so that they can make a living and end the abuse. Some people have long applied for assistance but they not yet been helped and they continue to live in abusive relationships.

I advice victims of abuse to visit organizations that offer guidance and counseling such as Gender Links, social workers and churches for help so that they may be able to leave the abusive situations. May God help them to get the help they need.

I have moved on

By Karabo Kabo

I AM YOUNG LADY of 35 years and I come from Ditimamodimo ward in Serowe. I have only one child. I started attending training by Gender Links in 2014 because I realized that I was emotionally abused. I was engaged in 2004 and after the engagement we started building our own home and there was no problem.

After completion of the house, he started having an affair and I found out. I went to his parents to report the matter and he was called. He admitted to having an affair and asked for forgiveness. And I forgave him. Then one time my fiancé told me that he does not know why I kept following him because we were not married.

Another time when I went to the house we were building, I found that he had sold some corrugated iron sheets and all our goats and that he had given our big tank to his girlfriend. I went to the police and reported what had happened and they told me that the tank belonged to my fiancé and not to me. I went to our parents and informed them and to ask for guidance but I got no help. That man now stays with the woman he was having an affair with and does not care about our child or me.

I attended Gender Links training and learned that I should not depend on a man to do everything for me, and that businesses are not meant to be run only by men and I that I could start my own business as a woman. Business training has changed where I was in life and today I am making a living by selling sweets and this provides us with an income. Presently I do not have problems even though the situation regarding my partner has gone worse as he now stays with the other woman.

I encourage victims of abuse to get in touch with organizations like Gender Links, Women's Voice and Women's shelter and ask for assistance. I think that a day should be set aside to teach people at hospitals, over radios that gender based violence is present in our lives.

I encourage women to go to social workers and chiefs and ask for guidance. I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to attend Gender Links training, I have moved forward from where I was.

New skills will grow my business

By Godiramang Phane

I AM A RESIDENT of a small village called Xamasere in the western part of our country. I started Gender Links training in 2013. I have realized that abuse is a bad thing especially when you are not aware that you are being abused and as well as being afraid to tell people for fear that he will beat you.

Gender Links gave me knowledge and I understand that abuse is not a good thing at all. They counseled me and my feelings have subsided and I am back to normal.

Business training has made my life better because I did not know that I could sell and save money at a bank in order to sustain my children and me. I did not know what I could do to make my business grow and Gender Links taught me the skills to progress.

I believe that when you have money you cope better with abuse than when you don't have any income.

I can now mix with other people and I tell them that Gender Links has changed my life and they also see the difference.

I can say to Batswana that if you are experiencing abuse get in touch with chiefs, social workers, the police, Gender Links, District Commissioner and counselors at churches.

My last words are, do not be afraid to report abuse to the authorities, go and get emergency help whether you are woman or man.

I was abused by a man who beat me and I reported him to his parents and they helped and the situation has abetted. Then his parents died and he started again and this time I went to the police and now it is better.

Attend workshops to learn to fight abuse

By Boitshepo Dira

I COME FROM THE village of Serowe in the Borobadilepe ward. I am a young woman of 29 years and I started Gender Links training in 2014. In 2012 I experienced an abuse committed by my boyfriend whom I stayed with and I realized that this was abuse because I was not working and did not handle any cash but I tolerated this situation as long as my children had something to eat.

In 2012 my boyfriend who was so jealous that whenever he saw me with my male relatives he would beat me saying that I was having affairs with them, abused me. He made my life such a misery that in the end I went to report him to the police and they helped me. I also came across Gender Links and they helped me to get out of the abuse.

Gender Links offered us training and taught us about different forms of abuse, what contributes to it and how to get out of it. We were also taught business skills and what I learned has motivated me. If only I could have access to funds so that I can start a business that would make a difference to my life because I know how to run one.

Regarding the abuse I went through the situation is so good that it does not look like I had those challenges.

Programs are available in my village but if an organization could be formed that teaches people about gender-based violence the situation would better since we already have offices for a social worker and the police.

What I would tell survivors of abuse is that there are organizations and training for issues of abuse so they should attend them and they should also ask for help from people who have gone through these challenges.

My last words are that I wish by 2030 all Batswana who are going through gender based violence would be free.

If you are abused, know where to report

By Neo Tladi

I AM A WOMAN of 50 years and I started my training with Gender Links in 2013 in Serowe. I got married in 1998 and we lived a happy life without any problem. After a while everything changed and he found fault with me over everything and would shout at me. I told our parents and they tried to make peace between us and it never really worked.

He became ill and I took care of him and eventually he passed on. That is how the abuse in my life came to an end.

I attended Gender Links workshops and I learned about different types of gender-based violence and where you can get help if you are being abused. During training my husband passed on so I could not attend other modules like business training.

In Serowe there are social workers who counsel women who are living in abuse.

I can say to survivors of abuse that social workers are available to counsel those who face challenges in their lives. They should also report abuse to the police .

I thank the facilitators from Gender Links for their training, they have made us understand that when you are being abused you can be helped.



I'm not the only one facing abuse

By Opelo Moipoledi

I AM A WOMAN of 41 years. I got married in April,1998 and the wedding ceremony was held in church. We lived happily with my husband, there were no problems and we have three boys. We lived our lives guided by God and diligently attended church.

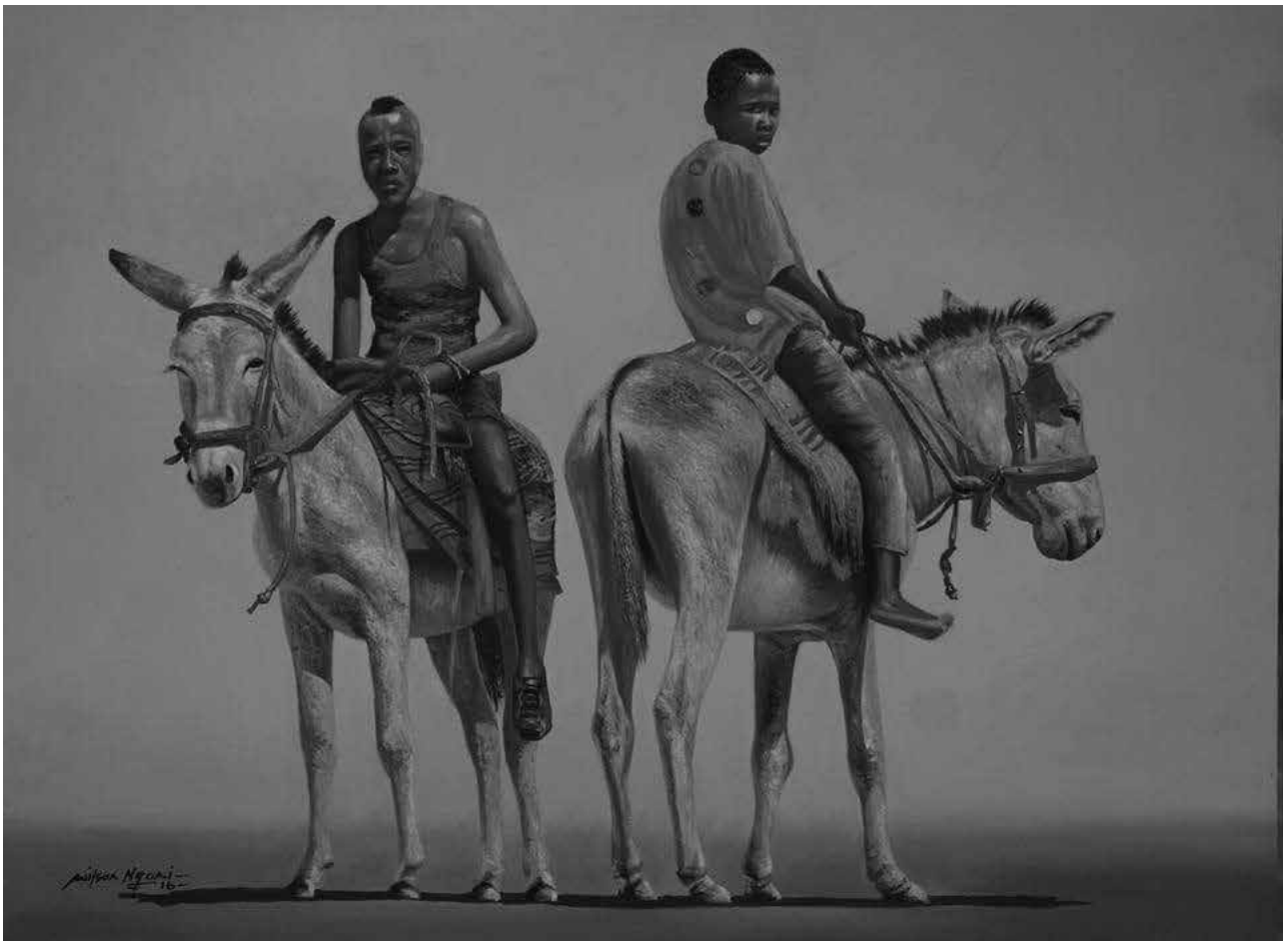
With the passing of time I suspected that my husband was having an affair and in the end I caught them. Our parents tried to intervene as did the District Commissioner and the elders at church but with no success. As I speak, the matter is at court and the woman was charged P40 000 for breaking our marriage.

She wrote to court saying that she was poor and could not afford to pay the fine. My husband asked me to forgive him and I wrote a letter to that effect and asked him to sign it and I took it to court. The hearing was scheduled for the 20th June, 2016.

I started attending Gender Links training on the 12th February 2014 at Serowe Hotel. The training helped me a great deal and made me aware that I was not the only one facing abuse. I have accepted my situation and I am moving on.

Many people are being abused but they are not coming forth about it and some of them are developing conditions like high blood pressure. I think they can be assisted by being trained at the kgotla and at other public places.
I have learnt business skills and know that I have to research about my business idea, to keep business records and to open a business account at a bank. Programs are available and me and two other ladies were given a 7m x 12m tent to hire out for events but the tents is too small for three people and we do not really see eye to eye and this is preventing any progress we could make.

I **say to people who still hide the fact that they are being abused that they should come out in the open. If don't come out you may end up with life threatening diseases like high blood pressure but if you speak out you will meet other people who also have similar or worse challenges than you.**



Now I can use a computer

By Seboko Serema

I COME FROM Marojwa ward in Serowe. In 2014, a certain lady from Serowe called Mmamosweu came to Mabeleapodi, got us into a group and told us about gender-based violence that affects women, men and children. I was taught what to do and where to go for help if I am being abused.

I went through all training and in 2014 I attended training about gender-based violence at the council in Serowe. I shared my story about how I was being abused by my husband and my mother-in-law. He used to beat me and when I told my mother-in-law about it she did not intervene instead she encouraged it. I even wrote a short story about them.

I learnt a lot from the business training, about saving money in a bank, where I can get financial assistance if I want to start a business. I was taught that I should have a business plan and how to use money in the business, that there should be a record of money coming in and out of the business. I learned that I should advertise my business on notice boards and Facebook and to make good quality goods that will attract customers. I know that I must have a monthly income from sales, record other income and have knowledge and skills and I must have good customer care.

I also learned how to use a computer and since I was trained by Gender Links my morale is very high.

I have not yet started a business but I believe that the business training I underwent will make certain that my business will be successful and I teach other people as well..

Regarding the people in my story, the situation is better because I made some money selling some of my harvest so life is not bad. At present life is better because I am no longer being abused as my husband and my mother-in-law are no longer alive.

I can say to people who find themselves being abused that they must get out of their homes and go to Gender Links and get help. Life becomes better when you are with them because they have medicine to heal all your pains.

My last words are that Gender Links helps by teaching you things that can get you out of abuse, the only problem is that they don't offer us money so that we can start businesses and escape from being abused.

To our government I say that people who are abused are crying out to you, we are saying that Gender Links should be given money that can assist us.

Survivors need support groups

By Ditiro Dintsi

I AM A WOMAN of 31 years from a small village called Mogorosi in the Central Sub-district. I have started attending training from Gender Links on the 28th of August, 2014 in Mogorosi.

In my previous story regarding my experience of gender-based abuse I talked about how the man I was living with was beating me and that I was always going to the police to report him and then I would ask the police not to prosecute him.

What I have learned from Gender Links is that when you are living in an abusive relationship you can find help and guidance from such authorities as social workers and the police.

Business training has change my life because I am now making a living by selling foodstuffs such as eggs, potato chips and peanuts and this enables me to buy food and to pay school fees for my children.

Regarding the abuse I went through I can say that the situation is better. But it transpired that my boyfriend is HIV positive and is taking ARV treatment. He has encouraged me to go for testing and I came out negative. He has now become very jealous and I believe that is because he thinks that I might leave him but I have accepted his situation and who knows maybe I also have the virus and it is just hiding.

In our village there is nothing much being done for people who have been abused apart from attending Gender Links workshops. I wish that survivors of abuse could form a group where we can meet and share ideas about how we can make our lives better.

I can say to victims of abuse that there are places where they can get help like from social workers, the police and others and who will guide them on how to handle abuse.

My last words are that I ask Gender Links to give us programs that we can use or they should start businesses for us so that we can earn a living. They always come and train us then go back and we are left with nothing. They should give us directions to follow in order to start the businesses that we have applied for because we have been waiting for a long time to get responses.

I am a better person

By Ema Amos

I AM A YOUNG woman of 39 years from Serowe in the Central District. I attended school up to Form 2 and I got a third class pass. I did not go further with my studies because there was no one to help me

I met an older man who raped me and unfortunately I fell pregnant. Since that day I never saw him again and I eventually had a baby. The man could not help me because we did not have a relationship and he just abused me by raping me. I could not tell my parents who the father of my child was because I did not know him. I have carried this painful and unfortunate burden for many years and during that time my child has grown and he is now at junior community secondary school.

I started the Gender Links training in 2014 at Phase 2 of the training. I continued with training till today because I realized the importance of the training and that they could take me somewhere. And they have made a big impact in my life.

What I realized concerning the experience of my abuse is that I had become very angry, and hated men and I always had bad thoughts and feelings thinking that all men were cruel and do not have the ability to love. I started playing with their feelings not caring about them at all.

What I learned from Gender Links is that abuse does not affect one person, it is not meant for only one person it affects the whole country and the whole world at large. For instance if you an employee is affected she will not be productive at work because she will have low self-esteem and will look down upon herself. Business training has changed my life because I have realized that I have business skills. I can grow my business and can open a bank account to save profits from the business at all times. I will help to it grow by telling people about it, advertising it in newspapers and by discussing ways of improving it with other people.

I was able to become a better person, I have changed and no longer use profits from the business, I have registered it and I am able to use the income from it for the needs of my child and family. Life is much better and filled with love.

I wish to meet and teach people about the dangers of gender based violence, that it does not affect women only and that men are also abused but the problem is that they do not want to come out and talk about it. I wish tell them that abuse should not be hidden it should be out in the open. People can be helped to get out of it and lead the life you want. I can tell people who find themselves being abused that abuse is not the end of the world, you can still realize your dreams and live your dreams.

My last word is to sensitize women and men that they should stand up an fight for their lives they are important in the society and in the country. They should feel free to talk about anything that happens in their lives.

I became a self-sufficient mother

By Semenogane Bokamoso

I WAS BORN in Maunatlala then I married Bokamoso on 4th November 1980. I started Gender Links training in 2013. I was being abused by my husband who was working but would not give me money. I was struggling to raise our children and sometimes my parents would help me out.

I wondered how I was going to cope. Then during one rainy season I decided to plough and planted sorghum, maize, sweet reed and beans. Whenever my husband came to visit I would ask him to help mend the fence as animals were getting in the field and destroying the plants but he would refuse and go out drinking instead.

When some of the plants were ready for consumption like maize and the sweet reed I sold them and made enough money to buy clothes and toiletries for my children. Then I harvested the rest of the plants and sold part of the harvest and kept the rest for our use.

When he came again for a visit I asked him for money to buy the kids clothing and he would say that he did not have money because he had paid rent where he was staying.

Then I decided to make traditional beer from the sorghum from my harvest and sell it and I found that it was good business and when my husband came I showed him the money I was making and he was amazed. I also opened a tuck shop and sold goods and I was able to pay school fees for my children and we led a good life.

My husband came home every December and when he came that time he gave me a little bit of money. And by then business was blooming and I even bought a female goat ended up with a kraal full of goats. So when he was home and saw all that I was doing he was ashamed of himself.

My husband was abusing me because all that time when he was working he never took care of our children and me and I never reported him to the authorities. I obeyed our culture and never made an issue of whatever he was doing outside our marriage. When he retired he came back home and he found that I had built a house and our life was good. I asked him about the people who were keeping him away from home and he had nothing to say.

From Gender Links I learned about gender-based violence. I have also learned business skills and this has helped me in improving my business to run professionally and profitably.

Programs that are avilable in my village are Social and Community Development and Ipelegeng.

I can say to victims of abuse that they should not hide that they are being abused, they should report the abuse to the chiefs to get help. My last word is that I thank Gender Links, it has taught me a lot.

My life is much better

By Mosidi Wapula

I AM FROM Mabeleapodi village near Serowe. I started attending Gender Links training in 2014 and it was the first time for me to attend such training.

I learned a lot about from the business training like what a business is, how I can start one, and how I should save money from the business in a bank.

I realized after a very long time that I have been abused. I was just an ordinary woman who lived at the cattle post who did not interact with other people and who most of the times did not even bathe.

I regarded myself as a woman who was only good for having loads of children while my husband stayed at other people's homes. Whenever he came home all he did would be to beat me up then demand sex again and again. This was very painful and my life was full of unhappiness.

With the passage of time, my children grew up though I had struggled to raise them. They found piece jobs in the village and whenever I visited them they encouraged me to come and live in the village and eventually I did.

I built a house for myself and things began to change as I started having ideas about how to improve my life. I began going to church and learned that as long as I am alive things can change for the better.




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A **woman** with a **voice** is by definition a **strong woman**. But the search to find that **voice** can be remarkably difficult
- Melinda Gates
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