

## Case Study: Umodzi couple from Mawgde village, Mangochi.

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Jackson Adam and his wife Margaret Kamwendo live in a small rural village in Mangochi district, Malawi. The couple has been together since 1981 and still have six of their children living with them. The couple is part of a Graduation programme, an anti-poverty programme, being run by Concern Worldwide in Malawi. Margaret, is a recipient of the programme which, similar to other Graduation programmes worldwide, includes monthly cash transfers for 12 months, business skills trainings, bi-weekly case worker visits to the household, and a capital transfer.

A novel element to this programme in Malawi is *Umodzi*, a set of couples' dialogue sessions that the couple attends. Over 12 months, participants comes together with other couples in their village to learn about and discuss issues related to a household budget, planning a family vision, gender roles, power dynamics and decision-making, parenting, communication and violence. Both Jackson and Margaret attended all 12 sessions.

One of the areas addressed in the Umodzi training is decision making. Margaret found the sessions very helpful in clarifying her role in decision-making. Before Umodzi, she would make suggestions but her husband would say, 'you cannot make decisions for me'. Umdozi addressed this issue, covering how both spouses have a role in decision-making. While Jackson remains the main decision-maker in the household, particularly on health care, family planning and childcare, now when Margaret makes suggestions, he considers them before making the final decision.

For Jackson, the most interesting learning he took away from Umodzi was on financial planning. He learnt that it is important to discuss it with his wife, so when Margaret receives her monthly cash transfer, they sit down, discuss and agree how to spend it. Margaret confirms this, though from her point of view, what changed as a result of Umodzi is that he no longer hides money from her. Instead, he tells her about money he has and together they make decisions about how to use it for the family. For her, the discussions about budgeting during the dialogue sessions has made things easier in their relationship.

Both Jackson and Margaret feel that the training has encouraged them to do more things together and be more united as a couple, and has brought peace to the family. He has also started to help more with household chores, including sweeping and childcare. According to Jackson, these changes have led others to admire him in their village.

Margaret is also sharing the learnings and changes with her children, drawing on the Umodzi sessions to teach them about respect and supporting each other in a relationship.

While the couple have not discussed what they have learned with others in the village, Margaret wishes that the whole village would be able to take part in such a training, "If the whole village was involved, there would be a great impact".