

Rose Msusa



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Rose is a Graduation programme participant who has attended 12 Umodzi sessions with her husband, Adam, with whom she has four children. Rosa lives in a rural village in Mangochi district, Malawi. Her husband also has another wife who lives in a separate household close by.

For Rose and Adam, their relationship has seen some significant changes since their participation in gender transformative dialogue. Previously, she took responsibility for all of the housework, most of the childcare and had little say in any household decisions. Through the sessions, she saw him accept that men need to consider the workload that their wives bear and support them with it, while she now feels better able to ask for his support by referring to what they learned in the sessions. While he still has the final say in household decisions, she has learned that women are also able to make decisions. Furthermore, he had recently taken one of his children to the health facility, a task that would have previously been reserved for a woman.

Rose learned that “for a good relationship there has to be respect”. For her, that means welcoming him when he comes home rather than just continuing with her activities. For Adam, this means that he no longer beats her. For Rose this was the most important part of Umodzi, as nothing had stopped the beating before. According to the culture in this area, men feel powerful over women but slowly there is a sense that they are more equal, which is reflected in how they treat their wives.

The couple are also cascading the effects of the learnings to their children, teaching their sons to help in the household, clean and collect water.

With all of these changes, Rose feels the family is stronger and happier.

However, making these changes has not always been simple. Men laugh at Adam and women laugh at Rose for their way of living but they feel that these are changes they committed to. They are strong in their belief that these are positive changes for their family and will continue with these despite the negative feedback from their community. They tell the people that mock them that if they had gone through the same training they would understand, "I wish the other families also knew about this as they don't realise how important this is for them and how good it is".

Rose passed on the learnings to her husband's second wife, but her husband has not reached out to any other men since they understood that what was discussed in the Umodzi sessions was confidential. However, the couples that participated come together to discuss issues even since the Umodzi sessions had finished, discussing issues such as respecting husbands and maintaining love in the home. By seeing for themselves the positive impacts that such changes have brought to their family, they are able to withstand the reaction from those that did not participate in Umodzi and continue to enjoy the benefits.