

DRIVERS OF CHANGE



Title: My life has changed and I can never go back

Quotable quotes

I know that I met Gender links because I was a GBV victim, but now I feel more of a survivor and it is like I have never experienced such thing in my life

I can't stop laughing when I recall my first interaction with Gender Links. We were in the conference at our council and we were told that we were going to write our stories about what happened to us. I was very nervous and had serious reservations as I had in my mind that after writing our stories they were going to be shared in the full house and honestly I did not want to write my story, I wanted to lie and I think somehow Me Ntolo saw that there was something wrong with me and she came to me assured me that there was no way that My story was going to shared and I started to relax and write the story of my life.

My name is Makananelo Rapuleng from Qacha's Nek one of the mountainous district of Lesotho. It is a very small but has scattered rural villages and the rate of gender based violence is very high and most cases in the villages are not reported because women are so dependent on men and they cannot imagine how life would be without their men. The very frustrating part of that district is because most people if not majority of them are illiterate and they are so much in to culture and therefore makes it very difficult for them to adapt to new things.

My husband used to abuse me very badly and sometimes I would even end up in the hospital because he would just beat me up without no reason. My councillor knew about my situation and one day told me about Gender Links, I attended the first meeting where we were asked to write our stories, though I did not want to write anything because I thought that they were going to read our stories in front of those people, but I finally wrote my story and I somehow felt healed and wished I could just see my husband at that time so that I could tell him that I have forgiven him. I went back home very happy and he wondered what I was going on where I was from because he realized that I was very different.

I attended all the three phases and was able to learn so many things that changed not only my life but family and community. When I attended phase two we were asked to draw up our business plan, and I did not know what that was because I had never heard it before, but our facilitators were very nice and explained everything to us. Even though I did not have a well running business I knew few basics in business. I was planting beans and after reaping would sell them to people at the villages, but I was told about marketing and how best can I advertise my business. I used to just get R20 profit for every bag, and honestly that was just too little as my husband is not working and we had children that were schooling. Our life was very difficult but I guess we somehow used to it but after the trainings I was able to make more money not because I increased prices but because I found more markets as I was able to advertise my product and get people to buy what I was selling.

Since I was able to market my business more customers were coming. Because during those trainings we were told how to use internet to market our business and since I did not have that fancy smart phone I would only sms to tell people when beans were ready and that's how my customers were able to know. I had to find two people to help me that I had to pay their salaries every month. Another thing that I was told at the workshops was that we should open bank accounts for us to keep our incoming money. it was my first time to have bank account and I still cannot believe as I had always thought it was only for people who have a lot of money. Those people I am working with have families and they are able to pay their children school fees and this is something that they could not do before working with me. It brings so much joy to see that I am changing people's lives.

I know that I met Gender links because I was a GBV victim, but now I feel more of a survivor and it is like I have never experienced such thing in my life. My husband has been very supportive through those trainings as he would sometimes accompany me to the trainings and he told me that he was really happy with the trainings because he could see that they were doing good to me. Before I attended those trainings I hated myself so much because I did not understand why my own husband was doing such things to me and I would even be very moody to my children, but now things are better because now if there is anything that needs to be talked about we sit down together as a family, talk and make informed decisions. My husband is now working very hard to form men's forum where they will be discussing issues that affect women and how best can men treat their partners in their families.



On the other hand I am thinking to extend my business even in other districts so that I can hire more women to help and I also want further my studies so that I can be able to even learn on business professionally.