



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

How Para-Legal Awareness Can Lead to Women and Girls Dealing Successfully with Rights Violations

HOW PARA-LEGAL AWARENESS CAN LEAD TO WOMEN AND GIRLS DEALING SUCCESSFULLY WITH RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

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List of Abbreviations

CA	Critical areas
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CERADI	Centre for Research and Development Initiative
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
FGD	Focus group discussions
IDLO	International Development Law Organization
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MSC	Most significant change
SGEMS	Support for gender equality among men scale
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VSU	Victim Support Unit

Introduction

Human rights are a fundamental right for every human being and are governed by principles of equality and non-discrimination. Women are, therefore, entitled to all these rights, including the right to be treated equally in every sphere of their lives without any discrimination. States have an obligation to address discrimination and to take positive action in the form of laws and policies for protecting and promoting women's human rights (UN General Assembly, 1948). However, millions of women and girls around the world are denied these basic rights, including the right to life (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Many women and girls are neither aware of their rights to equality nor the legislation that is designed to protect them from having their rights violated. Those who are aware and who can assert their rights are often ostracised by unjust power relations that exist in their community and society at large (Political Youth Network [PYN], 2018). It is essential that development intervention regarding para-legal awareness among women/girls does not remain at the knowledge level but is applied in a practical sense and translated into actions that challenge the violation of rights through gender-based discrimination and inequality. This process requires constant monitoring to examine the progress in the transfer of the new knowledge gained and to promote confidence among individuals and women's collectives in their ability to deal with rights violations.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), in partnership with the Centre for Research and Development Initiative (CERADI), implemented para-legal awareness training in rural areas of the Mchinji district in Malawi during 2019–22. The two organisations undertook a research study to understand the scope of women's empowerment in asserting their rights and in dealing with the violation of those rights after they completed para-legal training. The findings from this systematic investigation serve as evidence of the capacity and confidence generated among women and girls in challenging unequal power relations and seeking change in their gender relations. The study findings will be a significant factor in driving organisational effectiveness in promoting gender equality.

Objectives

This research had three main objectives:

1. Determine how women/girls who are made aware of human rights and legal services apply their new knowledge and skills and deal with violations of their rights.
2. Examine how the inter-individual processes of solidarity within organised groups support women/girls in their endeavours to protect themselves from violations of their rights.
3. Feed the results into the project strategy and programme design of the GIRLS Inspire initiative and have them serve as a credible reference for the initiative's formative/summative evaluation.

Literature Review

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) outlines human rights for all based on principles of dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” This implies that everyone is entitled to full enjoyment of their human rights and that nobody should suffer from those rights being violated. The UDHR further specifies that these rights are not subjective. They apply to all, no matter “the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty” (UN General Assembly, 1948).

Human rights violations are rooted in neither a single cause nor a single set of causes. They are highly contextual and often deeply interconnected, and some may even lead to additional violations. Major inequalities can endanger human rights, and economic inequality can be both a cause and a consequence of human rights violations (Aguilar & Saiz, 2016). Economic factors are deeply intertwined with political and social contexts in

two key ways: the distribution of resources and the functioning of economic structures. Individual psychological factors with exclusionary behaviours can also lead people to violate the rights of others. The role and position of an individual in a hierarchical power structure can determine or influence their behaviours. Additionally, the state may fail to prevent rights violations within a society or even intentionally violate citizens' rights (Weissbrodt & Finnegan, 2019).

States bear the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 (UN General Assembly, 1979) elaborates on the specific responsibilities of states to eliminate discrimination in political, social, cultural and economic domains of life. Bias on the grounds of sex normally disadvantages women and prevents them from exercising their rights in both private and public life. The state should not only deal with human rights violations when they occur but also prevent them from occurring in the first place. When violations occur, it is important to address the root causes and redress the injustices experienced because of the violations.

Civil society plays a crucial role in holding the state accountable for human rights violations. According to a report by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), civil society can help women and girls effectively deal with violations of their rights by providing them with access to justice. Civil society organisations can use various methods — including monitoring, reporting and advocating for change — to ensure that governments fulfil their obligations (Neff, 2017).

Social accountability mechanisms are an approach to building accountability that relies on civic engagement. In a public sector context, social accountability refers to a broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, independent media and civil society organisations can take to hold public officials and public servants accountable. These actions include practising rights advocacy, tracking and monitoring public service delivery, and establishing citizen advisory boards.

Without knowledge and agency, women and girls may not benefit from the laws and protections offered by the state. Agency and the resultant voices for self-advocacy are a measure of empowerment that recognises inequalities in power and leads women and girls to assert their rights and act to bring about structural changes in society. Women's empowerment is an unfolding process of changes in consciousness and collective power and is concerned with transforming power relations to achieve greater equality between women and men. This process includes overturning limiting normative beliefs and role expectations that keep women locked into situations of subordination and dependency and challenging restrictive cultural and social norms and the institutions that sustain inequity (Sen, 1997). Rowlands (2016) argues that empowerment must include the processes that lead people to acknowledge their own capacity, realise their full potential and occupy decision-making spaces. Such processes engage people in making sense of their relationships, assumptions and beliefs, practices and values, with potentially transformational effects.

This process of empowerment can usefully be captured in the metaphor of a journey travelled along pathways and through challenges, opening new vistas, expanding horizons and extending possibilities. This metaphor provides a more holistic understanding of the relational dynamics of power and positive change at various levels, in different spaces and over time (Cornwall, 2016). The Most Significant Change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that encapsulates this metaphor (Davies & Dart, 2005). It is participatory because several project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the types of change to be recorded and in analysing the data. MSC is used to provide information to help project staff monitor implementation processes and evaluate outcomes and impact.

The process involves collecting stories of change from participants, which explain how knowledge and skills gained from sensitisation and training have made a difference in behaviour, attitudes and practice. Stories can be collected from individuals over time or during focus group discussions, and participants select one story to explore further. The selected story, or Most Significant Change, is further analysed to understand the impact an

intervention has had on individuals and communities. Project staff and other stakeholders are only facilitators — only the participants can make a choice in this context.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypotheses

1. Increased knowledge of and skills in the use and application of human rights and legal services/tools among women and girls from marginalised communities increase their ability to respond to rights violations, which in turn enhances the efficacy of protective instruments of the state and reduces the incidence of rights violations.
2. There is a relationship between women's/girls' acts of dealing with their human rights violations and the outcome of their empowerment.

Research Questions

1. Does increased awareness of human rights and legal services/tools increase not only the number of women and girls who deal with their rights violations but also the likelihood that they will take action?
2. Do actions against rights violations contribute to positive changes in gender relations and reduce the incidence of gender-based violence?
3. What was the meaning (significance) to women and girls of what happened in the process and outcome of dealing with rights violations?
4. How do women and girls dealing with rights violations benefit from solidarity within a group?
5. What mediating and extraneous variables enable or restrict women and girls in dealing with the violations of their rights?

6. How do women's empowerment and confidence as individuals and members of a collective manifest in challenging gender relations and navigating power structures?
7. What lessons do women and their collectives draw from their experience of dealing with rights violations and working with state functionaries?

Methodology

Data Collection

The selected methodology sought to demonstrate causality between an intervention and an outcome of development. The field-based research adopted a quasi-experimental design to establish cause-and-effect relationships among variables. It measured the effects of the independent variables (knowledge of and skills in human rights and legal services/tools for the protection of rights) on the dependent variables (successfully dealing with rights violations and empowerment of women and collectives) towards a reduction in the incidence of rights violations.

A community scorecard was administered in each sampled location as a first step to collect data on the nature of human rights violations dealt with by women and girls who had undergone para-legal training. The quantitative approach was complemented with qualitative data collected from stories dealing with rights violations to identify important categories and inter-relationships. This combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches provided an in-depth understanding of the outcome and strengthened the credibility of conclusions about the effects of the intervention. This research inquiry consistently followed a set of guiding principles to corroborate the veracity of statements, ascertain the facts and protect the security and dignity of respondents.

Description of the Respondents

CERADI used a participatory approach by training community-based facilitators in human rights and domestic violence (including intimate partner violence [IPV]) in the 2019–2020 implementation year. These facilitators subsequently trained women and girls in their communities on human rights and legal awareness. One hundred twenty-two women who dealt with rights violations between 2019 and 2022 shared their stories of change. Of those, 13 were selected to participate in in-depth interviews.

Table 1: Respondents and Most Significant Change stories in the sampled locations

Traditional authority	Villages	Respondents	MSC*
Kapondo	Chiwoko, Gwirani, Kambanda, Nkhwazi	40	4
Kazyozyo	Kazyozyo, Katondo, Ndeule, Noti	40	4
Simphasi	Chimteka, Kachaje, Mando, Mdakwa, Mphanga	42	5
3	13	122	13

*Number of MSC stories identified through the study

Sampling

The sampling frame consisted of 94 locations in three traditional authorities, Kapondo, Kazyozyo and Simphasi, in Mchinji district, Malawi. A two-stage sampling approach was adopted to draw the sample using both probability and non-probability procedures. At the first stage, a sample size of 13 locations (14% of the total number of locations) was drawn by a simple random method. In the second stage, purposive sampling was applied, covering all women and girls in the target community in the sampled locations who dealt with rights violations in the reference period 2019–2022.

Description of the Instruments

Stories of Change. During focus group discussions (FGDs), participants discussed three points:

1. The nature of human rights violations dealt with by women and girls during the reference period, 2019–22.
2. The status of the results of actions in each of those violations according to three categories:
 - (a) *successful*, with reliable information specifying the nature of the actions that led to success in asserting a woman's rights,
 - (b) *in progress*, specifying what actions or processes are in active mode or
 - (c) *pending*, specifying actions (acts individuals have undertaken) and reasons (why are those actions pending).
3. The nature of obstacles encountered when dealing with rights violations.

Collectively, the group in each sampled location chose the story they considered most significant for subsequent detailed discussion.

Most Significant Change (MSC). This instrument had a threefold focus. The primary focus was on an individual's experience dealing with rights violations. Participants examined the factors that enabled them to take action against a violation, the change that happened, what it meant and, how it affected the life of the woman involved, and how she tackled the challenges that arose from taking action.

The second focus was on the collective experience. The participants discussed how the women's group expressed solidarity and how an individual's experience affected group and community behaviours and practices.

The third focus was on lessons drawn from missed opportunities and what individual women would do differently in the event of future rights violations. Given the sensitivity of sharing intimate exchanges between spouses, in-depth individual interviews were conducted instead of FGDs for this topic. The women were asked probing questions to elicit specific, detailed responses to general statements on the processes, outcomes and impact of dealing with violations of their rights. The choice of MSC was determined by a combination of factors: openness of the women to sharing details, common rights abuses that most women face, changed situations or visible change (before and after rights action), and a clear personal account of the issue and changes.

A local researcher collected the data from two target audiences: organised community groups and women who dealt with their rights violations. During group discussions and individual interviews, there was always a female project officer, normally the Gender Liaison appointed by the organisation, present. Discussions were conducted in the local language and translated into English during the transcription process.

Reliability and Validity of Measurements

1. The data collection tools were pilot-tested, and the feedback was subsequently used to revise their content,¹ construct,² predictive³ and concurrent⁴ dimensions to ensure the validity of the instruments in measuring the patterns of women's and girls' dealing with rights abuses.
2. Two key processes were conducted to ensure the data collection tools' reliability. First, an experienced in-country researcher with a high level of competency in fieldwork and in administering the data tools was selected. The researcher received orientation on the study design and use of the data collection instruments. After the translation of the questionnaire and discussion guide for the MSC and the pilot study, the researcher underwent reorientation. Both these processes contributed to consistency in administering the instruments and enhanced inter-rater reliability.
3. The purpose and objectives of the research were shared with all the respondents. The respondents gave their consent (verbal/written) to participate in the survey and agreed not to share stories they heard from other members during the discussion. They also consented to the recording of discussions. The researchers assured them that their responses would be anonymous, that they could choose not to respond to any question and that they could opt out at any point during the discussion.

¹ Appropriate content: Items are fair and representative of the entire assessment purpose and are of adequate quality.

² Measures the underlying theoretical construct that it is supposed to measure.

³ Measures forecasts about an individual's future performance. Such a measure must be technically adequate and of practical use.

⁴ Accuracy of criteria for predicting a specific/concrete outcome.

Limitations of the Study

The study analysis relied on information about rights violations and actions as reported by female respondents and confirmed by others during the FGDs, but this information could not be further triangulated.

Description of the Analysis

This was an explanatory study seeking to measure women's empowerment in dealing with human rights violations. Its research approach is based on social epistemology and social constructivism, both focusing on learning through social interaction. However, while social epistemology examines how individuals learn by interacting with each other, social constructivism is interested in how group interaction is shaped by cultural considerations. Since knowledge is subjective, the validity or usefulness of an individual's experiences is determined by the group.

Social constructivism is a theory that explains how people come to understand the world around them through social interactions and shared experiences. This theory has been applied in many different fields, including education, psychology and sociology. In the context of gender-based rights violations, social constructivism can be used to understand how gender roles and expectations are created and reinforced through social interactions and cultural norms.

The qualitative analysis was inductive and involved the following:

1. transcribing the data into important categories,
2. organising them into key themes,
3. identifying patterns, and
4. interpreting the inter-relationships between the variables — women asserting their human rights and para-legal awareness of human rights (see Annexure 1) — that emerged from the data.

The quantitative analysis involved descriptive statistics, using measures of frequency to summarise the data by listing responses to rights abuses and presenting the distribution

with simple frequencies and percentages and interpreting correlations related to rights violations dealt with, women's empowerment and para-legal awareness among women/girls (see Table 2).

Findings and Discussion

The findings revolve around the central theme of women/girls dealing with their rights violations after becoming aware of human rights and the changes and challenges that can arise from taking action. They are presented in terms of the following categories, using the research questions as a reference:

- a. Human rights violations dealt with by women and girls.
- b. Actions involved in dealing with rights violations.
- c. Enablers and challenges in taking action against rights violations.
- d. Changes delivered from women's actions against their rights violations.
- e. What did these changes mean to women who managed rights violations?
- f. Women's empowerment and confidence gained from training and rights actions.

Human Rights Violations Dealt with by Women and Girls

The women in the sampled villages dealt with 12 different forms of rights violations between 2019 and 2022. They most often experienced violations of multiple rights at any given time. Further, all violations occurred in situations that compounded the hardships that the rights abuse caused. The 12 forms are:

[design: please leave italic in the following list, or use a different colour of type to differentiate it from the main text in the list]

1. Girls being made pregnant (*includes refusal to marry, showing no interest in marrying, forced to marry the girl but deserting her later, forcing her to abort, marrying another woman, or perpetrator already has a wife*), leading to their dropping out from school.
2. Violence against women (*combined with marrying a second woman and deserting first wife or forcing her to leave home, forcing pregnancy after miscarriage, suspecting*

women's fidelity and insulting wife with intimidating comments, damaging the house, harassing a woman after she gave birth to a child with congenital defect, abandoning first wife and refusing to divorce her, thus destroying her second marriage).

3. Forced sex (*includes forcing sex during menstruation or against the woman's wishes, forcing frequent childbirths with resistance to family planning*) or denial of sex.
4. Extramarital relationship(s) and defending multiple sex partners as a male privilege and being violent (*includes leaving wife when she is sick*).
5. Control over farm produce and the income it generates as well as over a woman's earnings from labour/job or borrowing (*includes spending money on alcohol, neglecting children's school needs, causing them to drop out from school, and indulging in violence*).
6. Exploitation by a second husband (*includes using wife's resources and running away from the village, not taking care of her children from her first marriage, sexual abuse of a stepchild*).
7. Forced early marriage (*causing early pregnancy, dropping out from school, or forcing marriage when a boy and girl below the legal age for marriage are in a relationship*).
8. Denying women access to economic opportunities (*including access to land and farming or uneven distribution of land among siblings or pursuing small business for livelihood*) or participation in a village savings bank (Mkhonde).
9. Denying girls access to education (*includes denying girls but not boys access to higher education, forcing girls to work on farms*).
10. Denying women their right to political participation and decision-making (*includes leadership roles in local government, male supremacy, and subordination of women in the household*).
11. Raping a girl (*includes raping by old men or by a man living with HIV*).
12. Young unmarried women accused of having a relationship with men at work (*includes a woman beaten by three other women suspecting her relationship with their husband*).

The violations listed above primarily affect the right to equality, freedom from discrimination, marriage and family, the right to own property and the right to education (Articles 1, 2, 16, 17 and 26) as enshrined in the UDHR. These abuses fall within the definition of discrimination in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), which prohibits “any distinction, exclusion, or restriction, made on the basis of sex, with the purpose or effect of impairing the enjoyment by women of political, economic, social, cultural, or civil human rights on equal footing with men” (Article 1). They also converge with the key forms or critical areas (CA) of discrimination against women and girls identified by the CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action ([Beijing PFA], United Nations, 1995). They affect the advancement of rights of women and girls contained in the provisions of these two instruments with reference to equal rights for women to work, to access employment opportunities and to participate in entrepreneurship; the right to freedom from violence in the workplace (CEDAW, Articles 11 and 14; and Beijing PFA, CA 6); the right to education by removing all barriers that impede schooling of women and girls (CEDAW, Article 10; Beijing PFA, CA 2) or that restrict equality of political participation (CEDAW, Article 7; Beijing PFA, CA 7); personal and reproductive autonomy through freedom of choice of partners and the number and spacing of children (CEDAW, Article 16); and the prevention and elimination of violence against women as well as negative cultural attitudes and harmful practices against girls for their survival, protection, participation in society and development (CEDAW, Article 5; Beijing PFA, CAs 3, 4 and 12).

The forms of rights violations that the study participants dealt with reflect the forms of violence against women and girls that Human Rights Watch (2014, 2022) documented in Malawi, which include sexual abuse, being beaten, being thrown out of the family home and being forced to marry. The 2015–2016 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (National Statistical Office [NSO] (Malawi) & ICF, 2017) reported that 34 per cent of all women and girls have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, 20 per cent have experienced sexual violence and 42 per cent have experienced spousal violence. Married women also reported controlling behaviours from their husbands or intimate partners, such as insisting on knowing where they are at all times and being jealous or angry if they talk to other men. The survey also noted that 47 per cent of women and girls marry before their 18th birthday, compared to 8 per cent of men and boys. This latter point is confirmed by the adolescent birth rate in 2023, which was 118 births per 1,000 women and girls aged 15–19. This is higher than the global trend of 41 per 1,000.

There is ample research evidence that early marriage and early pregnancy are both barriers to girls continuing their education and are often a consequence of girls dropping out of school. Child marriage violates a range of human rights for girls and women: the right to bodily integrity and to be free from violence; the right to education; the right to decide when and whom to marry; and the right to the highest attainable standard of health. There was also evidence in the extant research for other forms of abuse from husbands — for example, having extramarital affairs that caused women great emotional stress, abandoning their families or neglecting to support them financially. In addition, some women and girls who were forced into marriage either left their marriage or were abandoned by their spouses, which left the women and girls with the responsibility of raising children, thus, making them more likely to live in poverty.

Entrenched social norms and gender stereotypes that condone the subordination of women and girls and violence against them have been found to drive systematic and serious violations of human rights against women/girls (Kontautaitė et al., 2018). Many communities view child marriage as being in the best interests of girls, and marriage in general is regarded as a means of protecting girls who become pregnant, as adolescent pregnancy is stigmatised in Malawian culture. Many girls are at heightened risk of child marriage when their parents perceive a risk of sexual violence in schools — for example, men in the community have been known to lure girls with gifts in exchange for sex. Girls have been threatened, verbally abused or thrown out of their homes when they refused to marry as required by their family. Power and authority in the home are customarily held by men and older women, and this can place young married girls at greater risk of abuse and violence.

Actions Involved in Dealing with Rights Violations

The most common action taken by women to address their rights violations was to talk it out within the household. They were strategic and tactical in harnessing their private time to share with their husbands the knowledge they gained from their CERADI training on human rights, gender equality, domestic violence and institutions responsible for the

protection of human rights and to not only educate them on rights violations but also motivate them to make changes in their behaviour and practices. The women allowed some initial resistance and non-cooperation, but if the behaviours persisted, they moved to:

- Confronting the situation of dominance (i.e., the husband claims that a man is the head, and a woman is the tail and should never wag the tail by arguing that the tail is as important as the head) and extramarital relationships (e.g., catching their husband in a sexual act with another woman),
- Asking parents or relatives from either side or both sides to intervene,
- Staying with their parents, or
- Involving the church in addressing the abuse.

As a result, some women and girls were able to bring harmony in their relationship and establish an environment of collaboration and respect for each other. The Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (NSO & ICF, 2017) confirmed that many women who experience violence seek assistance from their own families and in-laws.

The next common action was usually to take up the issue with marriage counsellors and chiefs' councils. Marriage counsellors are a formal traditional structure comprising male and female representatives. They are the first point of call when a marriage experiences conflict. These counsellors can help to resolve the reported abuses. If the dispute is not resolved at this level, women can then approach the chief's council of elders, which serves as a local court at the village level. However, because this is an optional step, people tend to bypass the council of elders. Some of the reasons for this are that their summonses and judgements are not enforceable, and at times, their efficacy is limited by aggressive and powerful individuals, which can lead to pending cases or limited change. Despite this limitation, both marriage counsellors and chief's councils played a significant role in addressing rights violations. In some cases, they helped to restore healthy relationships between spouses, and in others, they granted a divorce or separation with advice to seek formal legal services. However, such decisions may not be final, as it is not mandatory for individuals to obey the orders.

Table 2: Human rights violations — Responses by women and girls regarding how the abuse was resolved

Rights abuse	Response to rights abuse				Source of resolving the rights abuse					
	No action taken	Addressed	Progress	Pending	Household	Parents / relatives	Marriage counselor	Chief's council	Police VSU	Court
Impregnating girls, depriving them of education.	4	5	4	2	4	2	0	2	3	0
Violence against women.	3	16	4	3	7	1	6	5	3	1
Forced sex or denial of sex.		6	1		6	1	0	0	0	0
Extramarital relationship.	1	5	2	0	4	1	1	0	1	0
Control over income from farm produce and other income.	1	10	1	2	7	0	4	2	0	0
Exploitation by second husband.	1	3	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0
Forced early marriage, causing early pregnancy and depriving girls of education.	1	5	1	2	3	2	0	2	1	0
Denying women access to economic opportunities, including village bank.	1	13	2	2	9	1	2	4	1	0
Denying girls access to education.	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	2		0
Denying women their right to political participation and decision-making.	0	7	0	2	8	0	0	1	0	0
Raping a girl.	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Young unmarried women accused of having a relationship with men at work.	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	0
	15 (12%)	74 (61%)	19 (16%)	14 (11%)	50 (47%)	10 (9%)	15 (14%)	19 (18%)	11 (10%)	2 (2%)
Resolved					48	1	8		1	0
Divorced/separated					0	0	0	7	0	1

Fined/sentenced					0	0	0	2	5	1
Rights violations addressed by sources					48 (65 %)	1 (1%)	17 (23%)		6 (8%)	2 (3%)

Only a few women approached the police and its victim support unit (VSU) or the courts. Some approached the court on the advice of the chief's council. Victim support units exist at both the community and district levels to help women and child survivors of violence and to investigate the matter and counsel couples. The perpetrators were arrested and jailed for a few days and counselled. This changed the behaviour of some of the men, but others continued to be abusive and later separated from their spouses. Two cases were filed in the court. One man opted for an out-of-court settlement, and the other was ordered by the court to leave his wife and pay her maintenance (spousal support).

Overall, just under 90 per cent of the women (107 out of 122) took action to deal with their rights violations by using one or more of the above options. Seventy-four (69%) of them have seen the abuse resolved — they are either living happily again with their husband, who has changed his behaviour, or divorced or separated. Only 15 (12%) of the women took no concerted action against the abuse. The reasons for such a response are explained in research by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF (UNICEF Malawi, 2020). That study noted that violence against women is frequently viewed as a private family affair and only a few women report it. Thirty-six per cent of women in Malawi who experience physical or sexual violence never tell anyone about it, and 48 per cent never seek help. Moreover, despite progressive laws, policies and programmes established by the government since 2010 to promote the protection of and respect for women's and girls' human rights, women's rights in Malawi remain largely a challenge to enforce and protect due to poor implementation of the laws and gaps in them. Cultural attitudes that condone violence against women pose another major challenge in preventing rights abuse. Also, victims of child marriages may be unable to leave abusive marriages because of economic pressures and other social circumstances, which increases their vulnerability.

However, it was clear from the study findings that human rights training could enable many women and girls to know their rights under the law, where to look for help other than from their own families or traditional authorities, and that they could report abuse to the police and other institutions. Unfortunately, customary processes usually prioritise “family reconciliation” over prosecution, supposedly to maintain family unity and

community peace, which impedes the security of survivors and their ability to obtain justice for serious harms suffered.

Enablers for and Challenges in Rights Actions

Women's own desire or determination to end rights violations or find a solution to create a better future stood out as powerful contributing factors. This was evident from their choice to not run away from the problem but to deal with it with perseverance and no desire for revenge. Their decision to act in this way reflected a commitment to bring peace to the family, but it also meant that they had to ignore rumours about them, and provocations designed to make them retaliate to the violations. While it is likely that the women and girls previously negotiated with their husbands in order to address differences between them, the dialogues that the women and girls reported after they became aware of rights and laws show that they participated from a position of strength after their training.

The women and girls credited the training by CERADI for their awareness that they were experiencing rights violations and for their confidence in dealing with the violations. Furthermore, the meetings arranged by CERADI and attended by both the women and their husbands about human rights, laws to protect people from rights violations, and gender equality, as well as meetings with chiefs for solidarity, have contributed to a positive environment. Another equally important factor that the female respondents attributed to their confidence is the economic independence they gained through taking up income-generating activities (e.g., starting a business, goat or pig rearing) and accessing credit from their village savings bank. There appears to be a strong association between women's confidence in dealing with rights violations and their membership in a village savings bank group.

Other enabling factors include the presence and functioning of traditional (marriage counsellor, chief's council) and formal (police, victim support units) institutions in regulating action against rights violations and protecting the victims. The fear of police action and punishment inflicted on the men for inflicting abuse seems to have acted as a

deterrent for them. The women's belief in God and faith in the Church helps them deal with the abuse and gives them hope that positive changes will come. Conversely, the responses from parents, relatives, friends and neighbours were mixed. In some cases, women received positive and encouraging responses, while others felt intimidated or misled — for example, some women said that people pretended to be supportive of them but then took the side of their husbands. Furthermore, solidarity from women's collectives, beyond applauding the women's efforts, was not explicitly evident from the women's responses. However, one woman who experienced and dealt with abuse reported having provided guidance to a woman in a similar situation, and two successful married female entrepreneurs each inspired a women's economic initiative.

The challenges to taking action in response to rights violations varied. Most women were reluctant to lodge a complaint or register a case because they feared their husband would be arrested and felt anxious about the impact this would have on the family and children. Some husbands told their wives not to return home after making complaints, which worsened women's fear about taking action in some cases. Cultural norms and gender stereotypes that condone violence against women, including forced sex, accept that men can get angry and expect women to show patience have also acted as barriers to action. This was reinforced by relatives' taking the side of the husband, which discouraged women from acting on abuse. Relatives offered divisive responses, spread gossip about the women's intentions to assume control of the household, or raised concerns about, for example, a woman's late return from work or neglect of family responsibilities. Moreover, women trusted insincere apologies and promises that were soon broken. The women were also reluctant to seek help from institutions because the institutions were not aware of their own services that were available for protection from abuses or there was an environment of corruption; there was prejudice against women who made repeat complaints, and hearings for cases were often delayed. Other challenges were resistance from the husbands, sexual offers in the workplace and pressure from parents to close the case.

Changes that Resulted from Women Taking Action against Their Rights Violations

Women reported that their husbands developed an awareness of their abusive acts, confessed to them, apologised and actively changed their behaviour. They stopped insulting their wives and being suspicious of their actions. They also became sensitive to monthly periods and avoided sex during menstruation, refrained from sleeping with other women and stopped calling their wife *kamano* or *seven*, both of which terms symbolise abuse. Moreover, there has been a decline in violence and alcohol consumption. Such changes have set an example for other men who were exhibiting abusive behaviour. One example, in particular, demonstrates the depth and quality of the change in behaviour: a husband openly defended his wife when neighbours made adverse comments about her participating in business and returning home late.

Women reported that their husbands now recognise the importance of working together and sharing responsibilities at work and in the household, making joint decisions about selling farm produce and spending the income it generates. All the money from selling farm produce now comes into the family home. This change in how family money is managed has had wider-ranging effects. Some spouses now help each other financially with work-related expenses, and in one case, a husband invested in his wife's business. Husbands who used to neglect the needs of the family now assume responsibility by taking care of the children's school needs and other needs and avoid spending money on other things. In other cases, respondents reported improvements in their housing (e.g., moulded bricks, ironed sheets) or the purchase of other assets (e.g., motorcycle, sleeping mattress).

There is now a realisation that women, as well as men, can participate in business. Women reported that their husbands no longer object to their attending village bank meetings or skills training. They can now take up supplementary livelihood activities (e.g., goat or pig rearing) using credit from the village bank. These initiatives enhanced their economic independence and contributed to their ability to access markets and learn the skills they need to be successful in business. If couples quarrel, they resolve their differences through discussion. The girls who became pregnant as a result of being abused went back to school

after their child was born. One respondent reported that her husband decided against having a second marriage.

All these changes converge with the provisions of shared responsibilities in sexual and reproductive behaviour and household work outlined in CEDAW (Article 5) and the Beijing PFA (CA 3). Furthermore, the pattern of changes that women reported among their husbands as a result of the actions they took against their rights violations converge with the 16 items listed in the support for gender equality among men scale (SGEMS), which uses a Likert Scale to measure men's attitudes towards and support for gender equality.

Validated scales that measure attitudes towards gender equality.

1. *A woman should have the same job opportunities as a man (Morgan, 1996).*
2. *Women should have as much sexual freedom as men (Larsen & Long, 1988).*
3. *Increased engagement in childcare; avoiding violence (Anderson, 2009; Cihangir et al., 2014).*
4. *I feel responsible for sharing household chores with my partner. I make all the important decisions together with my partner. I would consider taking care of the child (Sudkamper et al., 2019).*

Meaning of These Changes to the Women Who Dealt with Their Rights Violations

Two of the most common responses to the question "What does this change mean to you?" were peace in the family and a sense of relief. Both responses contain diverse references to the women's changed situation. They communicate moving away from a painful life (one woman referred to previously having suicidal tendencies), no more yelling and quarrels, being free from bitterness, and not being embarrassed around neighbours because of frequently packing up to stay with their parents after fights with their husband. The women also have economic freedom with control over their earnings and not living with the threat that their husbands will take them away.

For some women, the changes also brought a sense of self-worth and a sense of self-reliance rooted in confidence that developed from setting an example for dealing with rights violations, transforming relationships between spouses and accessing institutional services. This change manifested in multiple ways, including being able to independently

manage a business, maintaining a family even if a husband was dead or absent, and making independent choices about buying underwear and informing their husband about the purchase later. For girls, it meant focusing on education, being self-reliant and moving away from harmful relationships. The girls very much want to go back to school so that they can get a job and live a better life.

For some others, the change meant a “healthy home,” with husbands returning home in a timely fashion and spending more time with their wives, enjoying their family responsibilities and caring for their family, not beating their wives or taking their wives places on their bicycles. It also meant having sex regularly by mutual agreement and sharing household chores. This change is about knowing that there is enough food for all family members, and that the family can meet the children’s school needs, access healthcare outside their village, use soap, apply oil, wear good clothes and look good. However, a few women seem to be apprehensive about their husbands’ ability to sustain their changed behaviour.

Some women attribute the change to their ability to influence other women in dealing with rights violations. For example, some women who participated in the study helped two women deal with neglect after their husbands married a second woman and helped another woman practise joint decision-making.

Empowerment and Confidence Gained by Women from the Training and Rights Actions

The human rights training conducted by CERADI could build critical consciousness among women and girls about inequalities. To date, it has stimulated indignation about injustice and generated the impetus to act together for social change. Empowerment of the women and girls who participated in the study became an unfolding, iterative process that was fundamentally about shifts in power relations and women’s capacity for self-expression (Jancar-Webster, 1995; Sen, 1997). There is clear evidence of the development of “power within” and “power to” among women who are, or have been, affected by the dynamics of

domination and internalised oppression and are now showing that they have the capacity and the right to act and the influence to create change (Rowlands, 1997).

The shift in consciousness could facilitate women's engagement with culturally embedded normative beliefs that lock them into situations of subordination. To date, it has involved understanding gender, power and change, changing notions of what a woman or a man should be or do, and challenging unjust gender relations. This change is also about enabling women to critically examine and question prevailing beliefs about themselves and others and then using their expanded understanding to inform an analysis of what needs to change and how they can be part of the process of social change (Cornwall, 2016; Rao et al., 2016).

Such a process of empowerment is rooted in "the personal is political" paradigm and underscores the importance of individual consciousness in terms of expanding women's sense of their own possibilities and critical recognition of the societal dimensions of discrimination and subordination. Fundamental to this process is to have women engaged in thinking differently about their situations, relationships and horizons. The women who participated in the study point to this paradigm evolving. However, their actions to tackle injustice and inequalities must now include engaging with other women to exercise "power with," which would then become "power for" positive social change. A growing body of evidence confirms the significance of women's organising as a force for positive change through both grassroots mobilisation and their influence in securing laws and policies that promote gender equality (Cornwall, 2016; Htun & Weldon, 2018; Kabeer, 1999; Rowlands, 1997).

Lessons Learned and Pointers for Action

Moving Beyond Training

This causal research on para-legal awareness in enabling women to successfully deal with rights violations sheds light on the conditions that produce human rights violations and enablers that facilitate actions against them. The study produced ample evidence that the

training on human rights made a difference in the lives of women/girls. Applying this knowledge inaction against rights violations speaks to the quality of the training. The issue was close to the women's hearts, as it reflected their experience of day-to-day life. However, no follow-up on the training was evident in the field inquiry. It is important to recognise that human rights training requires going beyond structured inputs to understand its application in the real world, grapple with difficult issues and confront internal biases. This next step requires organised opportunities for communities to share and reflect on their experiences that could translate into formulating communities of practice. Such a resource has the potential to inspire other women/girls to act against their rights violations.

Promoting Group Consciousness and Solidarity for Actions against Rights Violations

Individual consciousness about human rights, resistance to abuse and determination to address rights violations were conspicuous in the study and deserved to be acknowledged. However, the inter-individual processes and group solidarity were less robust and largely manifested as an appreciation of efforts after individual women and girls dealt with rights violations. This gap needs to be examined closely, considering two inherent issues. First, the challenges women and girls face from within their community to their rights actions in the form of non-cooperation guided by cultural norms. Second, there is ineffectual redressal from institutions responsible for protecting rights. Neither of these issues can be handled by individuals alone and likely need group action. Women's organisations at a local level are a significant resource but seem to serve as an economic instrument and not as a solidarity group for rights actions. Placing a deliberate focus on promoting group consciousness by harnessing individual consciousness could promote solidarity within the community.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" (Margaret Mead, anthropologist).

“People do not take on group roles uncritically but do so only after they have internalised them as part of a social identity that is shared with other people” (Reicher & Haslam, 2006).

Capacity Building of Protective Instruments

Women and girls need a responsive and supportive system in place so they can report rights violations and have them resolved effectively. Despite the limitations of enforceability, the traditional structures/institutions (marriage counsellors and chiefs’ councils) were a source of support to women and girls dealing with rights violations. However, these structures’ ability and objectivity in dealing with rights violations would benefit from improvement to help women and girls trust them enough to access their services and harness their full potential. CERADI’s initiative of holding a meeting with chiefs for solidarity was a good start but must not be a one-off event. The victim support units of the police are ineffective and do not inspire confidence among women and girls. It would be helpful to consider engaging systematically with all these institutions to build capacity and equip them with the skills they need to support women and girls in reporting and resolving their rights violations.

Evidence-based Public Advocacy on Human Rights Violations

As part of their international obligations, most governments have reviewed and formulated policies and laws to promote gender equality and advance women’s rights. Malawi, for example, adopted the *Gender Equality Act 2013*, the *Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act 2011*, the *Childcare Protection and Justice Act 2010* and the *Legal Aid Act 2010*. These new laws represent a solid start in terms of change, but they are only a start. The evidence base on rights violations and the efficacy of protective instruments must be harnessed and used to shore up and enhance legislative processes as a voice of the community and civil society.

Reinvigorating Monitoring Systems

The field researchers faced significant challenges regarding data collection due to poor documentation and information systems during the project. This created confusion over the choice of respondents outside the reference period (2019–2022) when para-legal training was held (2019) and rights actions were undertaken by women (2019–2022). The lack of a database led to the inclusion of respondents from outside this period. Such a situation has implications for the M&E processes. Therefore, systematic databases and documentation processes are required for effective and focused monitoring of the project's results. For example, significant stories of change that have the potential to be used for shared learning must all be carefully documented; the community report card must record not only the actions against rights violations but also the local measures adopted to handle the associated challenges of those actions. Furthermore, institutions that are leading the process must be respectful of the sensitivity of the issues and the privacy of individuals and must accommodate these points when they are establishing and implementing processes.

Annexure 1: Summary of Analysed Data from Transcripts

Nature of rights violation	Actions	Changes	Enablers	Challenges	What does impact mean to a woman
Husband having an affair with three other women. Indulged in violence when wife confronted him about this issue. Takes control over wife's borrowing. <i>(Simphasi TA)</i>	Raised the issue with husband. Referred to rights and laws learnt. Refused to return from parents' home. Approached Church.	Reduced going to other women. Reduced violence.	Awareness of rights, protective laws and domestic violence. Presence of NGO and its perceived action against violence. Fear of punishment. Victim support unit at police station and penalty levied.		Peace of mind to me and in the family.
Miscarriage — calling her barren woman. Forcing immediate pregnancy. Married second time without her consent. <i>(Kapondo TA)</i>	Her choice to accept him back and forgive. If not working would approach victim support unit.	Husband came back as second marriage did not work for him. Working together.	Awareness that women and men must share household chores. Awareness that when abused, can complain to other organisations. Men frightened by government visit when abuse occurs.	Relatives' support for husband for another marriage. Fake apology. Threat not to return home after making complaint. Remain silent without action — worried about children's future.	Great relief and joy. Moving out from attempted suicide. Working together.
Violence with suspicion when travelled outside or returned late from fetching water or attended a meeting with another male member. Forced sex during menstruation period. Ignoring ideas or	Dialogue between spouses with focus on measures to manage issues at hand for future of children. Couples meeting by CERADI on gender, rights and abuses in marriage. Sought intervention from relatives	Husband's realisation of his abusive acts. Recognised importance of doing together. Joint decision-making. Not objecting to woman attending group meetings, and training as mechanic.	Self-desire to end problems for better future of children with care of both parents. Patience and perseverance with no act of vengeance. CERADI training. Supportive friends and neighbours. Belief that changes are possible and a	Discouragement and misdirection by others. Husband and relatives blaming woman's intention to assume power and pulling down husband. Cultural norms. Unaware of support services for protection from rights abuses.	Sense of relief from a painful life. Peaceful and not overburdened with changed home environment. Now a leader at church services. Happy using soap, applying oil and wearing good clothes. Living example of change and non-abusive

Nature of rights violation	Actions	Changes	Enablers	Challenges	What does impact mean to a woman
participation of wife in making decisions. <i>(Kapondo TA)</i>	and chief council.	Less aggressive and more friendly husband (no more calling by <i>kamano</i> or <i>seven</i> that symbolise abuse). Better food, clothing, physical appearance.	person can become perfect over time. Faith in God.	Chief frightened to advise her aggressive husband.	relationship between spouses.
Husband not willing to take care of child born to his wife from her first marriage. Sold maize yield to marry another woman when wife was sick. Claimed that he can have multiple sex partners. <i>(Simphasi TA)</i>	Reported to husband's parents. Approached marriage counsellor and chief's council for intervention but it did not work. Complaint lodged with the police. Connected to activist organisation working on marriage abuses.	Husband dropped his proposal to marrying second woman. No more sleeping with other woman. Husband realised and confessed his wrong doings. Set an example to other males, who indulge in abusive behaviour. Joined church. Behaving as a responsible person and takes care of stepchild.	Friends persuaded and counselled husband. Friend gave bicycle to go to police station.	Fear of arrest of husband constrains approaching the police. Neighbours discourage to register a compliant.	Hopeful that changed behaviour sustains. Become aware about organisations that give support in addressing abuse.
Not supporting wife to do business as a livelihood and suspicious of her late return from market. Second marriage. <i>(Kapondo TA)</i>	Shared the learning from CERADI training on women's economic development. Shared the knowledge in the group for others on rights, gender equality and violence. Perseverant efforts despite	Realisation, apologised and promised to change his behaviour. Stopped suspicious acts and also taking away her earnings from sale of tomatoes in market. Share the earnings from marketing	Self-determination to end the abuses and hope for better future. Honest relationship. CERADI training on human rights and on women's self-reliance. Solidarity and encouragement of the women's group.	Peer influence. Gender stereotypes that man would get angry, but woman should have patience.	Sense of self-worth. Peaceful that I have control over earnings to meet my family needs and there is no threat of husband taking away earnings. Confidence to set an example to deal with abuse and transform the relationships.

Nature of rights violation	Actions	Changes	Enablers	Challenges	What does impact mean to a woman
	husband's initial non-cooperation or threat to desert her.	farm produce and meet education expenses for children (two children in secondary). However, continue with second family.			Could influence two more families to deal with abuses (married second woman with three children but did not take care of them).
Violence — spending farm income on women and alcohol and ignoring household needs. Stay away from home and return after exhausting all money. Not allowing wife to do business as a livelihood with comments that she would be into prostitution and threatening her to leave home. <i>(Kazyozyo TA)</i>	Shared her learning from the training. Coaxing in bedroom. Shared with parents. Reported to the Church for intervention. Staying with parents and away from husband for some time.	Husband stopped going to bar and consuming alcohol. Both involved in independent livelihood — husband in business and wife farming. Way of life changed in the household with joint decisions on use of their income.	CERADI civic education on human rights and domestic abuse. Father's motivation to be courageous and deal with the problems. Ignored provocations of husband's concubines that she must leave the home. Continued her efforts with belief in God.	Initial non-cooperation by husband to learn, arguing that CERADI did not give him wife. Takes her back from parents' house saying there was no issue. Other women encourage her to leave husband and remarry. Not responded to her messages for dialogue but asked her to come to bar for talk.	Peace-of-mind. There is no more yelling at me. Sense of relief from embarrassment with neighbours as there is no fighting and packing up to go to parents' home frequently. Influenced an unmarried woman, who translated joint decision-making after her marriage.
Spend farm income on women, married second time and depriving sex and sent her out of the house. <i>(Kazyozyo TA)</i>	Village community intervened. Approached chief's council, marriage counsellor and relative. Complaint lodged with police — husband arrested and released after	No more beating wife. Equal attention and love for both wives. Responsible use of family income. If quarrel, resolve the difference with discussion	Group members applauded her efforts. Supportive police. CERADI training on gender, sharing household chores and domestic abuses. CERADI meeting with	Husband's resistance, arguing that CERADI cannot speak for his house or cannot make things work in his marriage.	Relief that there are no more hurt feelings and quarrels. Confidence in dealing with rights abuses and seeking support from police.

Nature of rights violation	Actions	Changes	Enablers	Challenges	What does impact mean to a woman
	three days with a promise for changed behaviour. Stayed with parents. Corrected mistakes — washing his clothes, doing what makes him happy.	among themselves.	chiefs for solidarity.		
Husband refuses to allow wife to do business for a living, saying it is man's job and harassment that it is like prostitution. <i>(Simphasi TA)</i>	Sharing the learning from training bit by bit. Open discussion. Perseverance in persuading husband. Tactical in using their private space/time. Promoting joint decisions. Started pig rearing as another supplemental income source.	Realisation in husband that woman too could do business. Ambitious and focused in working for better future despite many challenges. Collectively decide family spending. Working together in farm and household. Both boys and girls share domestic chores equally. Meet each another's requirements of money for work. Husband supplements investment to wife's business.	Self-determination to deal with abuses. CERADI training on gender, human rights and women's equality. Open sharing and loving relationship between spouses. Husband defends wife when neighbours make negative comments on her doing business. Self-confidence to protect from sexual harassment at work. Capital available from village savings bank. Inspiration from other successful married female entrepreneurs.	Neighbours' prejudices on women doing business (looks down on husband, takes charge of household). Raising apprehension over late return from work and negligence in family responsibilities. Sexual offers by others at workplace. Pregnancy. Potential danger of undermining communication with husband. Sense of insecurity. Self-limitation to approach institutions for support. Corruption in protective institutions. Husband continues abuse even after punished by institution. Prejudice on repeat	Self-confidence in managing business independently. Sense of self-reliance to manage family even in the absence of husband or unfortunate death. Satisfaction that there is enough food, could meet children's school needs, and access health care outside the village. Ability to make choice in buying her own clothing including undergarments from vendors and inform husband later. Hopeful of continuing business after delivery of child.

Nature of rights violation	Actions	Changes	Enablers	Challenges	What does impact mean to a woman
				complaint that wife is the problem maker.	
Having sex with other women and denying wife sex for long time. Gets angry when enquired and beats. (<i>Simphasi TA</i>)	First attempt to settle the abuses through mutual discussion. Reported to marriage counsellor. Change was temporary and abuse continued. Approached victim support unit — husband fined and counselled (explained penalisation in case of neglect of and violence to wife). Sensed the evil intentions of husband's relatives and stood her ground.	Changed behaviour — returning home timely, having sex regularly with wife and stopped going to other women and stopped beating. Husband feels responsible to needs of family members. But unsure if it will remain once crop is harvested and there is income.	Determined to find a solution to stay together in peace. Love for him and not willing to search for another man. Guidance from another woman who had experienced similar abuse and dealt with it. Encouragement of friends to access VSU and their solidarity in her efforts to deal with backlashes.	Husband's relatives advised against going to VSU but stay away from husband for some time, which would have eased him to get married again. Rumours spread that wife wanted to arrest her husband. Danger that VSU may turn wife guilty. Thought of separation but limited by concern for future of her three children.	Peaceful. Enjoying the caring of husband and his responsibility to family. Husband not beaten me since 2020. If abuse repeats and he marries again, I may accept to live with his second wife.
Husband's control over sale of farm produce and spending of money on women with little attention to family needs. Fighting and physical violence when enquired about the money. Slept without sex for many	Went to parents' home for two weeks. Sleeping on different beds. Hit him back with a tree branch but it did not work. Reported to marriage counsellor – husband admitted his mistake and promised to change. But abuse	Gradual change after reporting to two marriage counsellors. Brought home money after selling this year's farm produce and planning its spending together. Bought motorcycle and sleeping mattresses.	The Sister and cousin of her husband were constant support while dealing with abuse.	Frightened about their husband getting arrested and their family suffering for meeting needs. Not shared with anyone in the group for fear of intimidation.	Peaceful life – husband spends time at home and shows love for family. Stopped beating me. Spending time together. Having sex when we wanted. Satisfied that change has taken place.

Nature of rights violation	Actions	Changes	Enablers	Challenges	What does impact mean to a woman
nights. Children suffered due to parents' fighting. <i>(Kazyozyo TA)</i>	continued next season. Reported to marriage counsellors of both villages - husband and her parents.				
In relationship from school, got pregnant to get boy's mother accept their marriage. But boy and his mother denied this. Girl was in standard 8 and could not continue her education. <i>(Simpfasi TA)</i>	Girl's mother reported it to boy's uncle. Issue referred to chief — boy denied. Approached Mchenga, organisation working on child protection on the advice of chief. Mchenga summoned the boy and held three meetings. Boy first accepted their relationship and sex but complained she had many boyfriends. Later he accepted the responsibility for pregnancy. Since the girl was only 17 years, the boy was asked to provide monthly maintenance (K5000 + clothes + a tin of maize).	Boy provides maintenance to girl.	Support from mother. Services of Mchenga.	Neighbours discourage that boy's mother is troublesome.	
Husband is an alcoholic, indulges in violence with	First thought of running away from home but	Great change — stopped alcohol, beating and	Support from brother and uncle.	Neighbours advise her to go for divorce.	Peace of mind — husband takes me on his

Nature of rights violation	Actions	Changes	Enablers	Challenges	What does impact mean to a woman
<p>beating and abusive words, takes no care of family. <i>(Kazyozyo TA)</i></p>	<p>realised it does not serve any purpose. Approached marriage counsellor. Involved relatives and sent ultimatum to husband. Sought help from Church. Holding dialogue with husband.</p>	<p>insulting wife, goes to church. No more spending money unnecessarily. Working together and sharing household care work.</p>		<p>Fear of arrest of husband if complained to police. Self-guilt feeling.</p>	<p>bicycle to other places. Free from bitterness and pain.</p>
<p>Young girl of standard eight impregnated by a married man luring her with candies and gifts in exchange for sex. He married her but not continuing support. <i>(Kapondo TA)</i></p>	<p>Local NGO picked her from marriage as she was too young. Man was asked to meet her expenses until the delivery of child.</p>	<p>Went back to school after delivering a child.</p>	<p>Mother refused her to stay in marriage as she was too young, and the man already had wife. Mother has promised to take care of her daughter's child.</p>	<p>Did not complain to police, believing his false promises. He later stopped supporting her except for school fees.</p>	<p>Just want to focus on education. Education could give several opportunities for me to be self-reliant. Learnt a lesson about dangers from men.</p>

Annexure 2: Data Collection Tools

Community Scorecard

Name of the location:

Date:

Name of the researcher:

Right and nature of violation dealt with (Reference period 2019–2022)	Current status			Challenges (specify)		
	S	P	Pg	1	2	3

S = Successful. P = Progress. Pg = Pending

Guidance notes:

Collect human rights violations dealt with in each sampled location as the first process.

1. *Right and nature of violation dealt with: Please specify the right and the nature of violations, including the period it occurred – start and end date. **This must be very brief and not elaborate.***
2. ***S = Successful:** Information on success must be **authentic and correspond to the rights violation** dealt with. Specify the nature of actions that lead to the success.*
 - ***P = Progress:** Specify what actions or processes are in active status. **Give as bullet points – maximum 3.***
 - ***Pg = Pending:** Specify actions that are pending and why (reasons). **Give as bullet points – maximum 3.***
3. *Challenges: Specify the nature of challenges – **maximum 3.***

Most Significant Change

The focus on processes, outcomes and impact could help in understanding the nature of changes in women's lives. This will further reflect on two other dimensions: (a) what the processes and outcome of their action to deal with rights violations mean to them, and (b)

the nature of group processes that expressed solidarity with individuals' action against rights violations. This information from the MSC will provide the qualitative dimension of the change.

Focus group discussion.

Name of the location:

Date:

Name of the researcher:

Key Questions:

1. From among the stories of change shared, which one do you think was the Most Significant Change?
2. What are the reasons for you to think it is the most significant?
3. How did the experience of MSC impact your behaviour and practice? Or what changes did it facilitate in your household and the relationship between you and your husband?

In-depth interview with on individual Story of Most Significant Change

Name of the respondent:

Name of the location:

Date:

Name of the researcher:

Key Questions:

1. *Which of your rights got violated (specify the nature of the violation)? What were the processes, and who was the perpetrator? How did it affect you?*
2. *What was the change achieved?*
3. *How did this change come about (what processes or causal mechanisms were used)?*
4. *What factors enabled you to take this action? What has contributed to you to act against rights violations?*
5. *What were the restricting factors? How did you tackle them?*
6. *How did this action against rights violation personally benefit you? How did it change your life?*
7. *Has any of your community women been inspired by your experience? How?*
8. *How did your women's group support you in your endeavour of asserting your rights?*
9. *What were the missed opportunities?*
10. *How do you do it differently if any other rights violation arises?*

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