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**PIK SUCCESS
STORY
OF THE MONTH**

Mitigating Violence through Dialogue: One woman's resolve to make a difference

Domestic violence is characterized by patterns of behavior which involve the abuse by one person against another who are in an intimate relationship, marriage, cohabitation, or within a family. Within this set up forms of violence include physical, emotional, verbal, economic and sexual abuse.

In Burnt Forest, Uasin Gishu County of Kenya, like in many other communities the various forms of domestic violence are rampant mainly among couples. According to Beatrice Kimani, a resident of this area, who is a trained teacher and counselor, wife battering is quite a common occurrence despite efforts to create awareness on the health effects and socio-economic burdens this act has on the individual and the whole family.

“Since mid 2014, we have been encouraging couples affected by domestic violence to dialogue as a way of settling their differences amicably instead of using violence or force,” informs Kimani, who is also the network coordinator for Rural Women Peace Link, a partner of Peace Initiative Kenya Project in the area. Kimani further mentions that many families have been affected by violence and it seems to be worse for those in a cross cultural marriage. “The dialogue forums were started so as to integrate all community members from the different tribes in the society,” says Kimani.

Kimani is also a beneficiary of a 5 -day Gender Based Violence (GBV) Emergency Response and preparedness training under the PIK Project held in February 2013. A total of 35 participants were trained on practical interventions and best practices when responding to GBV.

According to Kimani, she has been using the knowledge received from the training when holding the couple's dialogue. The dialogue entails personal meetings with the affected couples and holding talks with them to understand what their problem is about, guide and counsel them on issues raised and work together with them to come up with solutions that will bring peace in the home and community. “We also do follow up to check on their progress and show solidarity for people who choose peace as opposed to violence.”

Kimani notes that women are leading in the dialogue and their efforts were positive. “We started in early 2008 as a group of three women at the grassroots level to solve conflicts that existed among different warring groups in Burnt Forest, which was one of the most affected areas following the ethnic and tribal bloodshed that engulfed many parts of the country following the disputed presidential

results in December 2007,” Kimani explains.

She adds that now, with support from PIK Project through RWPL, her group not only holds dialogue forums in Burnt Forest but has also spread out to other counties in the North Rift like Nandi and Trans Nzoia to address the same issues. Kimani and her group have reached over 100 families within a period of one year and they are happy that in most of these areas, peace has been restored as partners are now dialoguing instead of engaging in violence.

Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) - a local organization supported by USAID and International Rescue Committee (IRC) under Peace Initiative Kenya Project- works in Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Trans Nzoia Counties and implement programs that empower women and men at the community level to ensure that peace and zero tolerance to gender based violence (GBV) starts at the household level.

“We sensitize communities on GBV, its root causes, effects and how the survivors can access services like health, legal and psychological support,” says Fred Yego, the PIK project officer at RWPL. He adds: “We are always making use of the feedback from the community to advocate for GBV interventions from various stakeholders including the County government.”

Yego says PIK project is helping to end stereotypes and negative cultural practices. It is also at the fore front in creating awareness among communities on the importance of reporting GBV cases, which has helped survivors to break the silence and access medical, psychosocial and legal support.



Beatrice Kimani facilitating a GBV forum

