

## **“I was made to believe that women are married to be beaten!”**

“When my husband first clobbered me, I thought it was because he was drunk. He proved me wrong when he made it a routine to beat me every week, then every day. It was humiliating!!” says Jennifer, a 34-year old mother of four boys.

Like Jennifer, hundreds of women are battered by their spouses every day but keep silent. “I could not tell anybody. I once talked to my mother in law and I don’t know how my husband knew about our conversation. That night I was thoroughly beaten and slept with two of the boys in the farm,” adds Jennifer, nursing a black eye.

In April she was one of eight women who joined GEMINI’s Family Violence program. The program seeks to sensitize rural women on their rights, provide them with psycho-medical assistance and link them to a support group that provides all round counseling and provides a forum for sharing experiences.

“This is my second home!” Dorothy, another beneficiary, enthuses. “I feel I can now face my shame and overcome the indignity of being a family violence statistic.”

The program involves monthly meetings among violence survivors. Dubbed “**Speak Out**”, the sessions empower the women with information and skills on their rights, strengthens their communication skills and encourages them to speak out against gender-based violence.

Since January, the program has recruited 85 women, all survivors of family violence. “The ability to recognize violence as a human rights violation is the first step in addressing the issue,” says Emily Cheptoo, GEMINI’s Project Officer.

With GlobalGiving donations, we have been able to strengthen rural women’s understanding of violence and enabled them come out in the open to report such cases. In May and June, we launched a public campaign that reached 320 men in the community and sensitize them on women rights.

“I had no idea that this is a criminal offence punishable by law,” observes Isaac Ajon, a village elder in Moi’s Bridge. “In most communities, we have been made to believe that women are married to be beaten by their husbands,” he said during the campaign.

GEMINI’s long-term goal is to change such perceptions among rural communities by replacing these misplaced stereotypes with accurate, gender-sensitive information. Eventually, we hope that men, especially those deeply rooted in archaic beliefs, will be converted and begin to support marginalized women’s rights.

GEMINI would like to thank each one of you for your continued support. We believe with your backing, we will be able to reach to an estimated 1,200 women who are quietly suffering the disgrace associated with family violence.

We always look forward to your encouragement, comments and feedback on any of our projects.