



Small Beginnings But Big Dreams

Nontsikelelo Nzima - DREAMS Facilitator Isizinda Sempilo - Orange Farm

My name is Nontsikelelo Nzima, I am 21 years old. I live in Orange Farm Township. I became a DREAMS ambassador after ISO approached an organization I was volunteering with. That's when I started my training as a facilitator. After that I became a DREAMS ambassador.

I attended workshops and camps. This is where I got empowered as a young woman to be able to empower other young women like me. As young women, we are the ones who are more vulnerable to HIV and abuse. You would meet a girl who says they have no choice but to date older men because they need someone to look after them and their family. Often the girl would later find that she is HIV-positive or pregnant.

There are other young women who drink every weekend. When you ask them the reason they say it is just for the 'vibe.' When you dig deeper, that is when they open up and tell you that they are being raped by someone close to them. Another family member usually knows but does nothing about it because these men are bread winners. We have intervened in a number of these situations and tried to help find solutions and do referrals. We have also worked young men who are gangsters who didn't know how to get out of that life.

There is also a lot of violence, drug abuse and gangsterism in my community. DREAMS has a partnership with SANCA where we refer young people who are drug addicts and who want to quit. They get rehabilitation assistance there.

Like so many other young women, DREAMS has given me the opportunity to be able to stand up for myself and not depend on a man. 🙏

I wish that men could start respecting us as women.

When I started dating I was with a guy who was 10 years older than me. I was still young playing tins with my friends. When he would come, I would have to stop playing and stop being a child and act like I was older.

Even though we had sex, it was not enough for him. He used to put pressure on me to come and sleep over at his place. I would tell him that my mother wouldn't allow that. He would tell me that I was too old to listen to my mother.

At some point my ex-boyfriend wanted us to have a baby. I refused because I looked at my family background. It wasn't good. My father had passed away, my mother and sisters were not working. I wasn't working either. That is when he got someone else pregnant. When I found out, I left him. It was only later that I realized how he was taking advantage of me because I was much younger.

My dream is to see change in the lives of young people like me in my community. I've always wanted to be a lawyer but since I started this work, I think being a social worker would suit me better. I see a lot of



Ntsiki Nzima third from left

young women throwing themselves at older men because they need money and in the end that leads them to getting HIV.

I am the bread winner at home. My mother also recently passed away. I have to look after my sisters. My situation is challenging. But thinking of DREAMS camps, being an ambassador, and of other people's stories, is what keeps me inspired to continue. Some people lost their parents long before I lost mine. So I learned that if they could live so could I.

The challenge that we face is that when we refer young people to clinics, they sometimes find older nurses who would judge them. They tell them about their own children who are at university while the young people asking for services are busy with sex. At least we are able to distribute condoms. We take them to places like taverns, clubs and other places where young people are.

Many pretend to know how to use them even when they don't. You ask a guy if they know how to use a condom and they would say, yes. Then you ask them to demonstrate and that is when you see them struggle. So you show them.

It's important for us as young people to have the correct information. I grew up being told that a baby came by helicopter from heaven. I didn't know that a baby was born and how the process worked. One day I will have kids and teach them differently. They should know the correct information. They must have a different upbringing and a better childhood. Unlike me, they shouldn't grow up picking, 'umbhido' in the field so they could eat at night. They should not have to survive on pap and onions daily.

DREAMS has already made some of my dreams come true. I have managed to meet Oprah Winfrey who is my role model. I still have many other dreams and the future looks bright.

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