Young Women's Voices

…young women's stories of change…

Message from the Editorial Team…

Welcome to the third issue of *Young Women's Voices* bulletin. The bulletin tells stories of Young women across Southern Africa welcoming positive changes into their lives. It connects groups of young women across Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland, providing a platform for their stories. Other people may also be interested to read these inspiring stories, but *Young Women's Voices* is mainly for ***You,*** young women working hard in your communities.

This issue is special because it recounts stories told by different young women in Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland. The stories and words are from the hearts and lips of amazing young women determined to better their lives, and it is our hope that you will be encouraged and motivated by their descriptions of change.

Making life changes is not easy and neither does it happen instantly; it is a process that requires commitment. Young women across Southern Africa are now starting to believe that their lives are important, and are consequently making significant changes in different areas. Some are choosing to forget the mistakes they may have made in the past and are now working hard to make a better future for themselves; others are developing new skills, networks and starting businesses; others are improving their self-esteem and confidence levels; many are learning to love and protect themselves.

All these changes require hard work and resilience- Never giving up! You will read stories of young women describing different challenges they may have experienced in their lives and their determination to take control of their future. You will be inspired by young women describing their choice to change their lifestyle and create a positive life path for themselves and those they love.

This issues aims to recognize and applaud such courageous young women. We thank these young women and many others for inspiring us with their stories.

Editorial team,
Young Women's Voices

I had no hope in life

At first I was not interested in starting any business. I did not do well at BGCSE so I did a course on secretarial studies. I have been looking for a job but I couldn't get one I have a baby boy. I got pregnant when I was writing my final exams on the secretarial course and I did not do well. Therefore I had no hope in life; I also had no idea that I could start my own business up until Quinta (CIET coordinator) approached me.

Now we are running a business. We are frying fish and selling it to the community; we also sell fresh fish. I never thought I could do a hands-on job, I was looking for an office job.

20–year-old woman
Botswana

An amazing journey

FW made me stop being lazy. I gained courage and became brave to start something to make my life better. At times the little things that I started failed because I was on my own; working as group has made work much easier. I had a small business of selling fruits and chips that I had closed down for sometime but after the workshop I decided to stop being lazy and re open my business. I am currently thinking of building a small structure at home and start a salon there. The workshop helped me a lot now I am much more open minded and daring when it comes to business ideas. I disclosed my status for the first time with the group during the life path exercise. I had not even told my daughter about my status. I feared that she would not understand but after the workshop I found courage to tell her. I feel much lighter, comfortable and much happier. This has done good to me in a way that I cannot explain.

I really see the difference in my life. If CIET never gave me the opportunity to make my life better I would not be where I am today. FW gave hope and change in my life in a positive way. I dream big everyday and want to change lives of others with the help that CIET offered me.

28–year-old woman
Swaziland

I am not useless

I have gained a lot of knowledge; personally and on business. I used to have a very low self-esteem; I never thought I had any value. My mother passed away when I was young; I grew up with my grandmother who was very abusive. She called me useless everyday and told me that I will never finish school. She used to tell me that I must just get a man to give me a baby and that will make me useful. I first fell pregnant at 19 and unfortunately had a miscarriage. I again fell pregnant in 2009 and gave birth to a boy. When the baby was a few months old, I attended the CIET training. I used to enjoy the sessions and was so sad when the training finished because those were some of my happier days. Meme Jeany used to tell us that we must respect ourselves and that we must not believe or allow people to destroy our lives. That message stuck with me because of what I had gone through as a child.

"My child and I will never go hungry....I now I have value and can be someone in life..."

I now know that, instead of depending on someone to take care of me, I can get assistance in opening up my business. I have the basic skills and knowledge to run a business. My child and I will never go hungry. I am also very hardworking and can do anything if I get the necessary assistance.

I know I am not useless like what my grandmother used to tell me. I know I have value and can be someone in life. With the skills I have gained, I can better my life and that of my child.

25 –year-old woman
Namibia

Facing my fears

When we were at the workshop we talked about being able to talk to people to get what you want. Now I am able to stand before people and encourage them to buy our product. I can now sell products to anyone; I do not discriminate. I used to be a shy person.

We once went to Mantambe High School, which was my former school. One of the things that made me scared was that I dropped out of school because I fell pregnant. This made me very embarrassed, I was not able to stand before my former teachers.

However, having gone through the focused workshop I was able to stand before my former teachers and sell our products. Now I have a good relationship with one of the teachers and am able to chat with her freely over the phone. She orders her polish from me most of the time. I see my dropping out situation as a past experience and a learning curve.

This story is significant because it changed my life. I am not shy anymore, I am able to talk before people and I am able to be free even in front of strangers.

22 –year-old woman
Swaziland

Stopped feeling sorry for myself

I did not complete high school and this made me really miserable. But attending the training really gave me a new lease of life. I got encouragement to stand up and stop feeling sorry for myself. When the other girls dropped out, I decided to start with my own business. I got N$500.00 from my uncle and aunt and travelled to Oshikango and bought a few items. They were sold out very quickly. My business is doing well and I am really happy.

I got the courage to stop feeling sorry for myself and start my own business.

21 –year-old woman
Namibia

Clips of change…

We started a vegetable garden. We stopped when it got unbearably hot. We will re-plant soon as the temperatures are dropping. We are in the process of sourcing operating space for a nursery school. Individually I put through a proposal for a gym last year. It was declined and I am re-applying again this year.

26 year-old –woman from Botswana

We are running a small take away business (a group of two young women): selling chicken, potatoes, raw and boiled eggs, meat and soft drinks

25-year-old woman from Namibia

The group started off by trying to run a salon, but things did not work out because we had problems with working equipment and regular people to work the salon. We then ventured into making "achaar" and running a pre school at the community youth centre. Pre-school is called Bright Angels Pre-school. Both are running well. We have 10 pupils at the moment and are expecting more to join in 2nd term. We have evenly distributed the workload amongst ourselves. We are still trying to get donors to help us furnish our school and buy toys for the children. We have great support from the elders of the community and we are proud products of CIET.

A group of young women calling themselves "ladies miracle" in Swaziland

I am now running my own business. I go and buy clothes, shoes and bags from Oshikango in Ohangwena region, and then I go and sell in the villages because there are no shops.

21-year-old woman from Namibia

Sweet success

The most significant change that CIET brought in my life is being an independent woman as I am today. When the group was not doing anything, I decided to start a small business of my own. I am currently baking muffins from home and I supply the local shops with muffins. I got this idea because of CIET; thank you for opening our eyes. The muffin business is doing quite well, I receive a lot of orders a day. I really learned how to run a business and now I am incorporating everything that I was taught by CIET. I will still continue with the project, when the bakery opens, and I can perhaps share my skills with the rest of the group.

Because before I attended the training I was waiting for my father to do everything for me but after the training I knew that it was time for me to stand up and do things for myself, rather than wait for my dad. I was never into business but now I am looking for more business opportunities.

20 –year-old woman
Namibia

Moving from a hopeless life

I was living a hopeless life. I failed my form 5. I misplaced/lost books at school, and owed the school 2800 pula. I had no one to pay for me. My mom passed away in 2001. I learned a lot in FW, I managed to open my own tuck-shop by the Senior School main entrance. I am selling sweets. I save the little money I get. I have managed to save 600 pula so far.

I want to pay for the books, get my certificates and start looking for a job. I never thought I could make money and manage to save money for the books that I owe.

18 –year-old woman
Botswana

Never give up

There has been a LOT of change in my life. I was never business minded; it is like I am a completely new person. I have since been very entrepreneurial and have started selling sweets at home. I put through proposals to the Department of Youth TWICE in two consecutive years; one for dog breeding and the other for a gymnasium. Both of them got declined but it doesn't bother me a bit. I will be re-submitting this year. I have learnt and realized that a person can lift her/himself up and it is our individual responsibility to do that. I have created a name for myself in the village and people now know me- for good things.

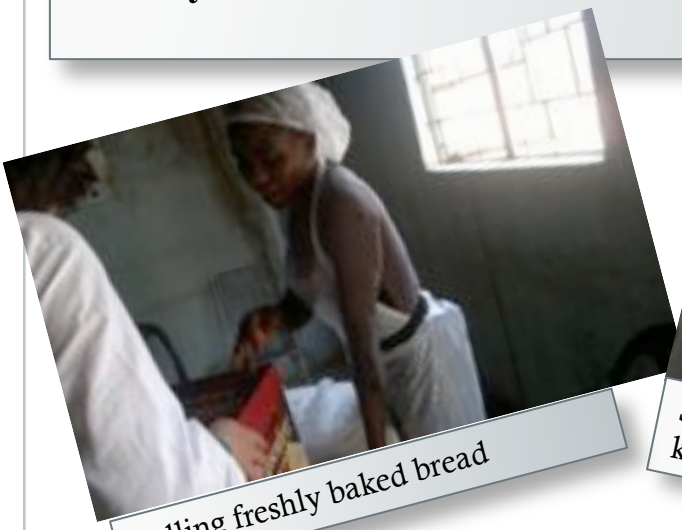
It is like I am a completely new person…I am going places I never knew existed….

There isn't a place I haven't been to when I was doing market researches for the two declined projects. People continue to show me support, they ask me how far it is going and what I have managed. It has been a good change in my life.

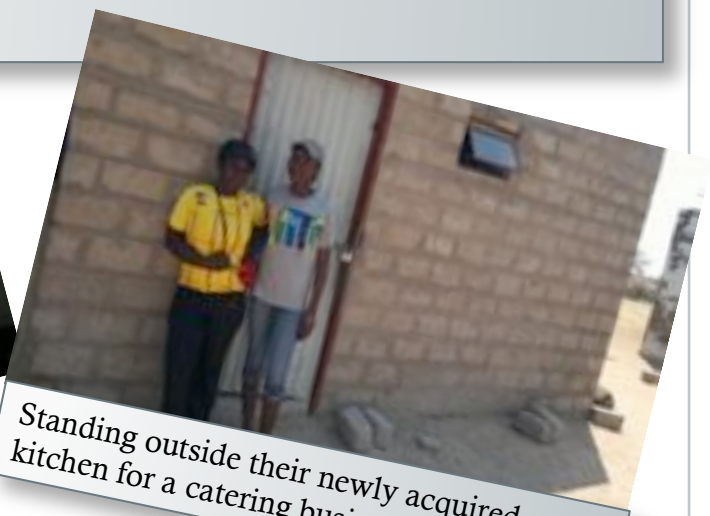
I am going places I never knew existed.

26 –year-old woman
Botswana

Gallary

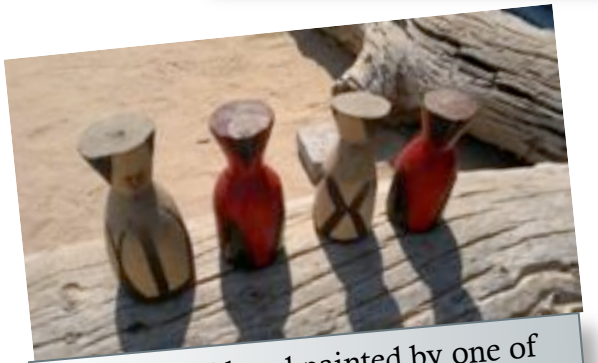


Selling freshly baked bread



Standing outside their newly acquired kitchen for a catering business

Focus Workshop



For sale and hand painted by one of the young women in Namibia

Making "Achaar" (pickled vegetables) for sale

A person among other people

Being part of FW has helped me in a number of ways. I used to be a very reserved person who was very bad in a group setting. I have since been a lot better in dealing with people in a group. I am also a very shy person and found standing in front of people to speak very difficult. That has changed as well; it is not exactly where I wish for it to be but it has got better. I have also received the zeal to do something about my life and utilize government programmes. I am currently applying for the grant where I will be issued with chickens to breed at home. I am collecting required quotations to receive the grant. I so far have collected three for the construction of a chicken house. I am facing challenges and delays in finding quotations for building bricks and river sand. The next batches of quotations I will be sourcing are those for vaccines and feeds. My eyes have been opened.

25 –year-old woman
Botswana

I can better my life

When I joined the workshop I was unemployed. I wanted to start my own business but did not have many ideas. After the workshop I learnt how to save for my little business and began to plan for what I really want. I learnt that success is not in the big monies but in every little effort that I put towards making myself better. Selling vegetables has taught me to save and manage my own money. Now I still dream big; supplying food hampers. The activities that we did during the workshop were practical. I learnt how to communicate with people and dealing with customers.

This was a great change. I am no longer the same. Now I am able to raise my children with the little money I make, I am less dependent. I have started my journey to greater heights.

21–year-old woman
Swaziland

Found my confidence

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25 –year-old woman
Otse Botswana

No longer the same

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31–year-old woman
Makhosini Swaziland

The creation of this newsletter has been made possible with the great support of the CIET team Southern Africa (Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland), and the willing young women in communities who volunteered to share their stories.

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