

# SUCCESS STORY

## The Proud Fisherman

### REACH program changes Malawian fisherman into more of a family man



Photo Credit: Pact

*Jeston Masimbi, a young fisherman who transformed his life due to Pact's intervention.*

*As part of REACH, more than \$10.5 million in sub grants have been provided to 24 Malawian civil-society organizations operating in 19 of the 25 districts of Malawi working with a wide range of HIV/AIDS services.*

It is said that fishing is one of the hardest jobs on earth. For a fisherman in Malawi, spending hard-earned money is the sweetest reward for days of exhausting labor. Many spend this money on girls, as Jeston Masimbi once did. He was a young fisherman whose father owned a lot of fishing nets, making Jeston a wealthy man in the village.

"I had been married since 1987, but I wasn't faithful to my wife," he said. In 1992, he decided to add another wife but still went on with his extramarital affairs. After fathering eleven children, Jeston ended his ways in 2008 when the Society for Women and AIDS in Malawi (SWAM), sponsored by Pact's REACH program, introduced the door to door HIV Testing and Counseling in Ndomo, Nkhoskhota District.

Community leaders chose Jeston as a peer educator, and that was when he decided to change his behavior. Jeston decided to take an HIV test without telling anyone. He was overjoyed when he tested negative, and advised his two wives to take a test as well. Jeston said that he was ready for any result, and if he had been positive, he would have told both his wives.

Christina Mapunda, Jeston's first wife, said she knew about her husband's extramarital affairs, and that they were a source of their quarrelling, although he promised to change his behavior. She was advised to take the test, especially considering his infidelities. "I was ready for any result," she said.

Jeston is now the chairman of the peer educators in Ndomo, and he thinks that fishermen are exposed frequently to HIV/AIDS, as they always have money and most of their customers are single women who travel from neighboring places to purchase fish.

He is now at the forefront of educating his fellow fishermen on issues concerning HIV/AIDS, but admits that it is difficult to reach all of the fishermen as they tend to be very mobile.

Jeston now has other work aside from fishing. He can also proudly stand out from the crowd and declare that after a busy and tiresome day, he spends time happily with his family. No more girlfriends, no more showing off, and definitely no more risky behavior.