



## DREAMS Innovation Challenge *Silence Speaks – Grantee Stories*



**Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS-Free Mentored Safe**





# Funds Manager for DREAMS Innovation Challenge

## *Silence Speaks – Grantee Stories*

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**Submitted to:**

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**Cover photo:**

Photo courtesy of Redempta Mwende. Redempta works with the African Centre for Women and Information and Communication Technology's DREAMS-IC project.

**Disclaimer:**

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Silence Speaks is an initiative created by [StoryCenter](#), which helps individuals and organizations use storytelling and participatory media for reflection, education, and social change. Silence Speaks helps convey first-person narratives of struggle, courage, and transformation and works to ensure that these stories promote gender equality, health, and human rights around the world.

JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. partnered with StoryCenter in November 2017 to help DREAMS-IC grantee staff tell stories (as written pieces, photo essays, and short videos) about their work in local communities and then implement storytelling and photography projects with the youth they serve.

The initiative included a series of three webinars:

- Orientation to the use of personal storytelling and participatory media approaches to address girls' vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.
- Two-part training on mechanics and ethics of developing spoken, written, and photographed personal stories.
- Story-sharing, including the process of developing community stories through the Story Circle format and guiding the process of facilitator/participant feedback.

46 grantee staff members who participated in the webinar series developed personal stories and were invited to apply for a five-day, intensive digital storytelling production and facilitator training session in Kenya. Twelve were selected to participate in the workshop, during which they developed short, personal digital stories about their work and prepared to lead storytelling and photography projects with their DREAMS-IC beneficiaries. All participants received follow-up technical assistance to conduct community-based storytelling and photography projects with young people.

This compilation includes personal stories from the 19 grantee staff members who gave consent to publish their stories after the webinar series. It also includes transcriptions of the 12 digital stories that were created during the workshop in Kenya. A playlist of the digital stories may be viewed on YouTube at <http://bit.ly/DREAMSstorytelling>.

Please note that the stories elicited from the youth Story Circles are being edited and will be submitted separately.






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## DREAMS Innovation Challenge Silence Speaks

### When Silence Is Not Golden



Watch the video here: <http://bit.ly/DREAMSChishimba>

By Chishimba Kasanga. Chishimba works with DREAMS Innovation Challenge grantee Lubuto Library Partners in Zambia. Lubuto Library Partners uses public libraries in Zambia as a gateway for scholarships, referrals, mentorship, reproductive health programming, and community engagement. She is also an official DREAMS Ambassador for adolescent girls and young women in Zambia.

I was 11 years, too young to know much about sex but old enough to have breasts. I was at home with my baby sister and my 23-year-old cousin. My parents were at work.

I was alone in my room when my cousin walked in and started fondling my breasts. I was terrified! There he was, someone I trusted and looked up to, shamelessly enjoying himself. He said, “Do not tell anyone.”

When my parents came home that evening, I was afraid of causing conflict. How could I tell them he had touched me in ways I hated? I had no witness except a 3-year-old who could barely construct sentences. So I kept quiet.

It happened again the next day, this time lasting longer than before. Still, I remained silent, fearing the consequences of speaking out. I wondered, “Will anyone believe me? What if he comes back again? When will this end?”

Even though I wanted to just forget about it, I couldn’t bear the thought that my cousin might do the same thing to my sister. I finally found the courage to tell my parents the truth. Much to my relief, they believed me.

When confronted, my cousin denied everything, saying, “Why would I touch her? I am old enough to have any lady I want, so why would I waste my time with a child?” But a year later, he finally admitted it.

Today, I am committed to helping fellow survivors and bringing public attention to the realities of sexual abuse. I’m now mentoring adolescent girls and young women, helping them find inner strength to challenge and overcome abuse and discrimination. It is so important for them to feel safe speaking out, so justice can be served.

This story was produced in collaboration with StoryCenter's Silence Speaks initiative ([www.storycenter.org/silence-speaks](http://www.storycenter.org/silence-speaks)) and JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI), and funded by a grant from the United States Department of State (DOS), as part of the DREAMS Innovation Challenge. The opinions, findings, and conclusions stated herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of DOS or JSI.

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