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MEDICINE



Ninajiamini (I have confidence)  
Understanding the transformative effects of a  
participatory intervention in the Maisha Intimate Partner  
Violence (IPV) Trial in Tanzania

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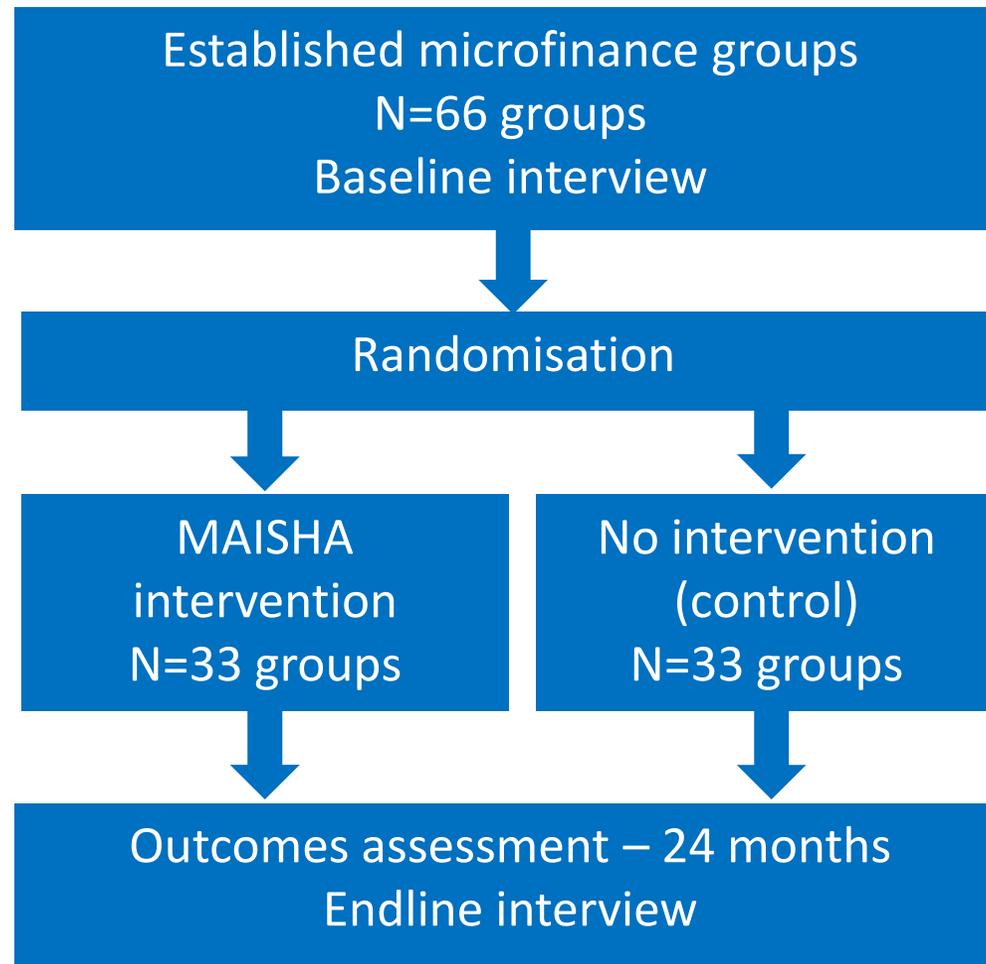
**MAISHA**

# MAISHA Study in Mwanza, Tanzania

- MAISHA is a mixed methods study evaluating an intervention to prevent women's experience of intimate partner violence (IPV)
- The CRT 01 cluster randomized trial was conducted among women in 66 microfinance groups in Tanzania, to evaluate the impact of an intervention (gender training) on IPV
- The intervention involved 10 participatory training sessions delivered to women in their microfinance groups

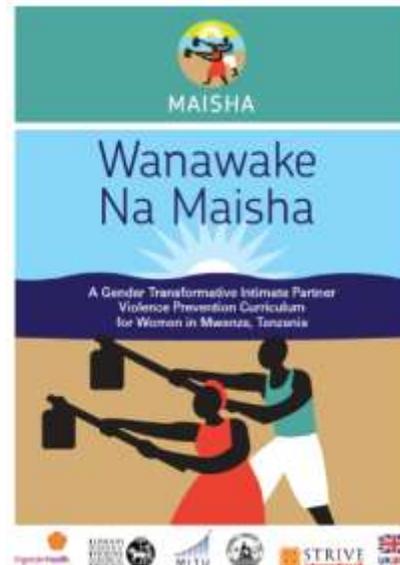


# Maisha Trial Design



# Maisha Intervention

- Empower women
- Prevent intimate partner violence
- Promote healthy intimate relationships
- Participatory and reflective



# Participation in the Gender Training

10 sessions over 20 weeks

1. Understanding gender
2. Gender boxes
3. Healthy/unhealthy relationships
4. Power and control
5. Negotiating roles
6. Communication
7. Violence
8. Setting personal boundaries
9. Conflict resolution
10. Empowering change



Around 70% participated in at least 7 sessions

# Results

- Violence
  - physical violence was reduced by a third
- Attitudes and beliefs – women less likely to:
  - accept violence
  - believe a woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together
  - believe violence to be a private matter
- No impact on sexual violence or emotional abuse

## A social empowerment intervention to prevent intimate partner violence against women in a microfinance scheme in Tanzania: findings from the MAISHA cluster randomised controlled trial



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### Summary

**Background** Globally, about 30% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, from an intimate partner during their lifetime. Associations between poverty and women's increased risk of intimate partner violence have been observed. We therefore aimed to assess the effect of a violence prevention intervention delivered to women participating in a group-based microfinance scheme in Tanzania.

**Methods** We did a cluster randomised controlled trial among women taking part in a microfinance loan scheme in Mwanza city, Tanzania. A microfinance loan group was only enrolled if at least 70% of members consented. We randomly assigned the microfinance groups in blocks of six to receive either the intervention (ie, the intervention arm) or be wait-listed for the intervention after the trial (ie, the control arm). Women in both arms of the trial met weekly for loan repayments. Only those in the intervention arm participated in the ten-session MAISHA intervention that aims to empower women and prevent intimate partner violence. Given the nature of the intervention, it was not possible to mask participants or the research team. The primary outcome was a composite of reported past-year physical or sexual intimate partner violence, or both. Secondary outcome measures were past-year physical, sexual, and emotional intimate partner violence; acceptability and tolerance of intimate partner violence; and attitudes and beliefs related to intimate partner violence. These outcomes were assessed 24 months after the intervention. An intention-to-treat analysis was done, adjusting for age, education, and baseline measure of the respective outcome. The study is registered with ClinicalTrials.gov, number NCT02592252.

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See Comment page e1304

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# History and critiques of gender training

- Foundation in consciousness-raising workshops that emerged from the feminist movement in the 1970s in the global north
- Based on a critical perspective where women perceived that **their oppression and the structures of their oppression** need to be transformed, and working as a collective was an important way to start that process
- Drew on Freire's theory that the oppressed perceive that **the system is the site of oppression that needs to be transformed** rather than individuals within it (Freire 2003)

- Gender training' implemented in the development sector following the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995)
- Seen to be a transformative process that aims to provide knowledge, techniques and tools to develop skills and changes in attitudes and behaviours
- However, criticised for supplanting the work of feminist movements and implementation in a hierarchical way via international gender experts to non-Western contexts

# Agency and an Epistemological Lens on Change

- Hidden elements of oppression
  - Violence against women as a product of oppressive social norms is “embedded in the **unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols**, in the **assumptions** underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following these rules” (Iris Marion Young 2011)
- Hidden elements of agency
  - Agency includes the “more **intangible, cognitive** processes of **reflection** and **analysis**” (Pells et al., 2016)

# Longitudinal Qualitative Study

# Methods

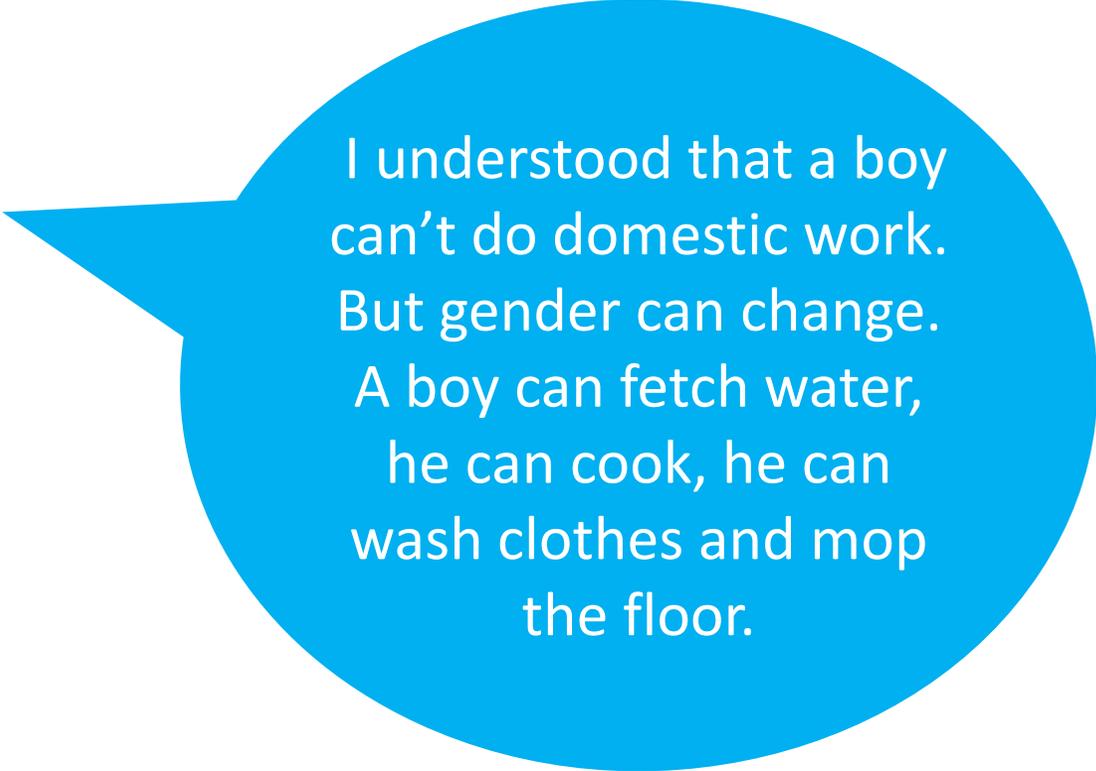
- Social Science team within the trial (anthropologist and sociologist)
- Aim of the research was to explore in-depth, and over time women's experiences of IPV and the gender training
  - **18** women attended in-depth interviews – before the intervention, immediately after intervention and 24 months after intervention (total 54 IDIs)
  - **9** microfinance groups attended focus groups discussions - before the intervention, immediately after intervention and 24 months after intervention (total 27 FGDs)

# Themes

- Articulating Gender Oppression
- Engendering Change
- Engendering Change for Others

# Kufahamu: Articulating Gender Oppression

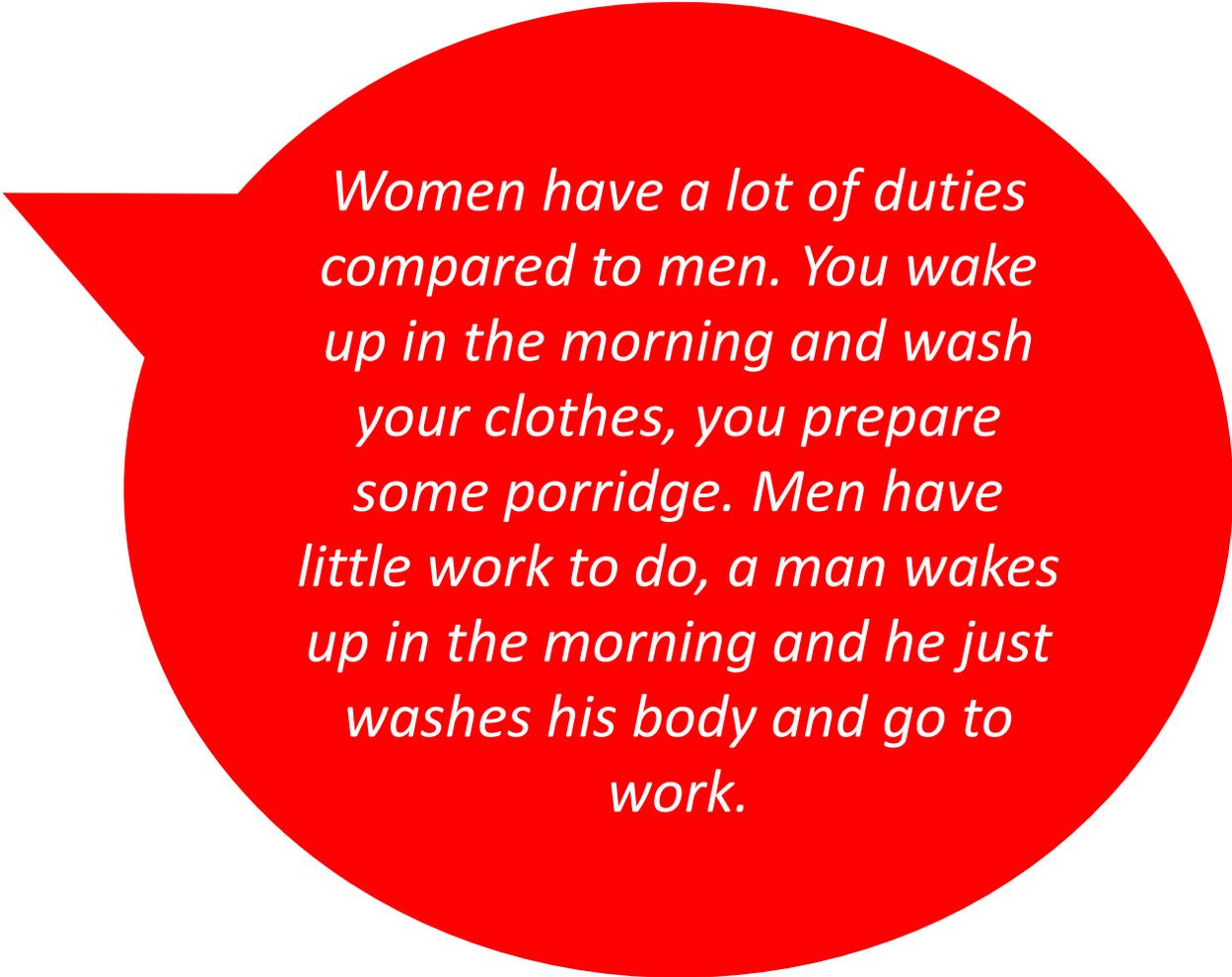
- Understanding gender as a social construct



I understood that a boy can't do domestic work. But gender can change. A boy can fetch water, he can cook, he can wash clothes and mop the floor.

# Kufahamu: Articulating Gender Oppression

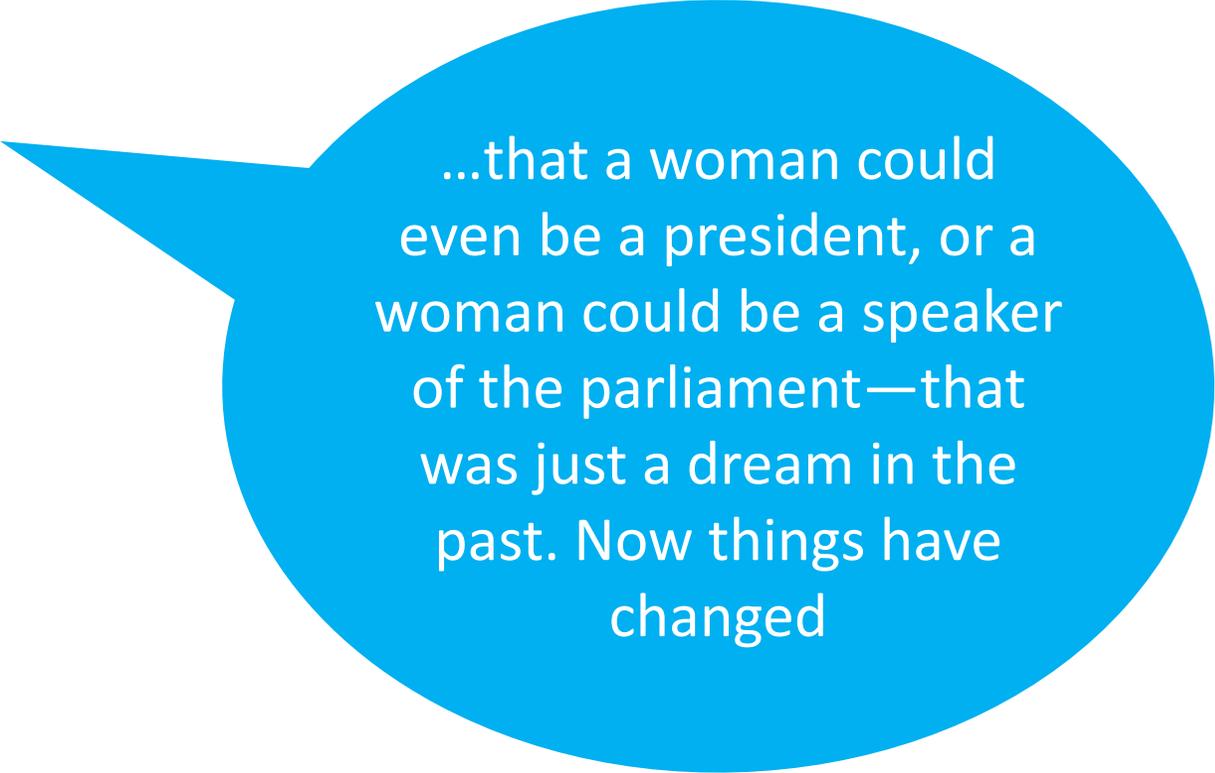
- Oppressive gender norms



*Women have a lot of duties compared to men. You wake up in the morning and wash your clothes, you prepare some porridge. Men have little work to do, a man wakes up in the morning and he just washes his body and go to work.*

# Kubadilika - Engendering Change

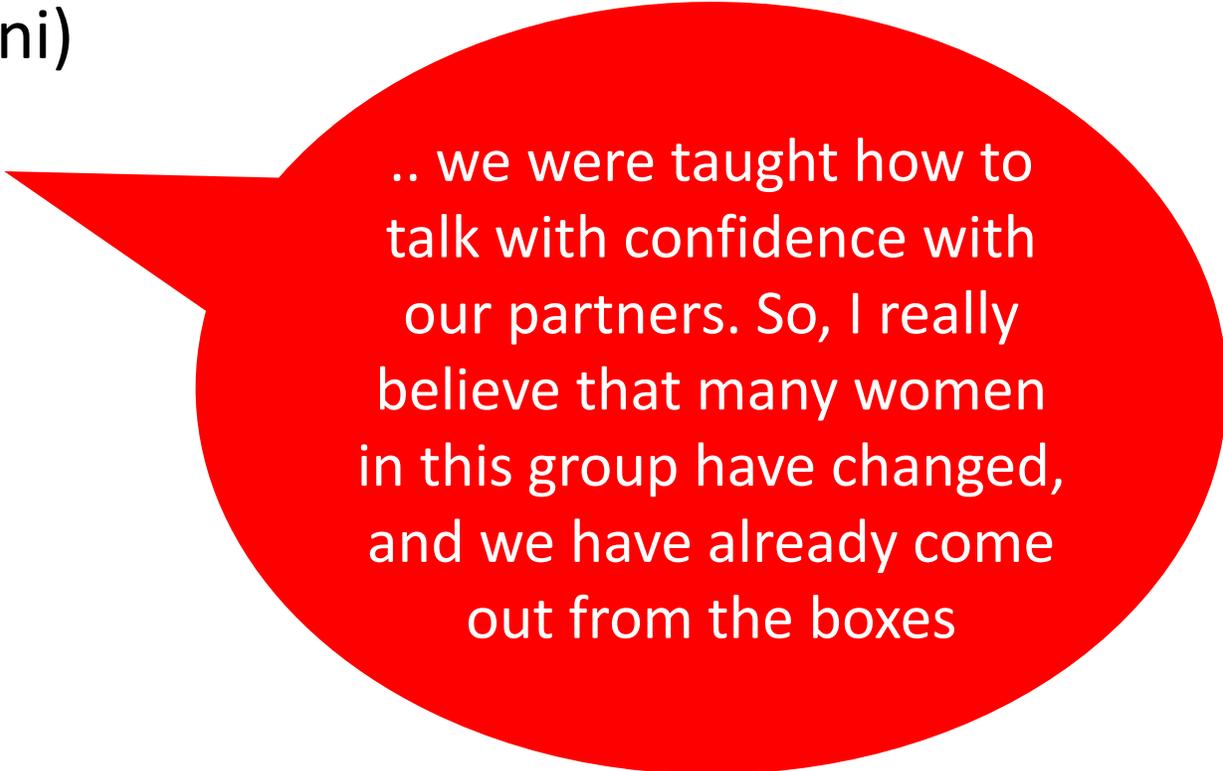
- Challenging gender norms



...that a woman could even be a president, or a woman could be a speaker of the parliament—that was just a dream in the past. Now things have changed

# Kubadilika - Engendering Change

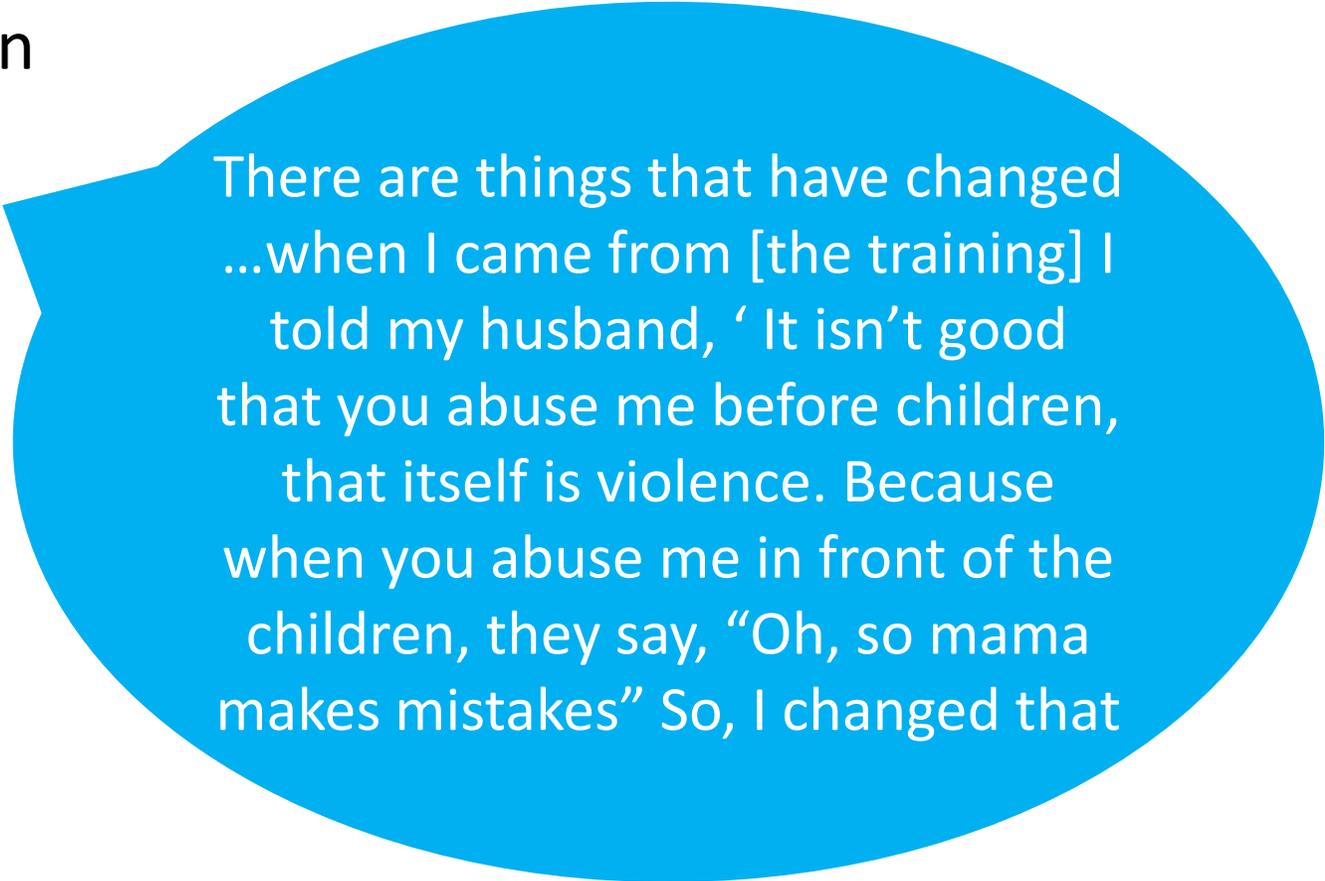
- Gaining Confidence (Kujiamini)



.. we were taught how to talk with confidence with our partners. So, I really believe that many women in this group have changed, and we have already come out from the boxes

# Kubadilika - Engendering Change for Others

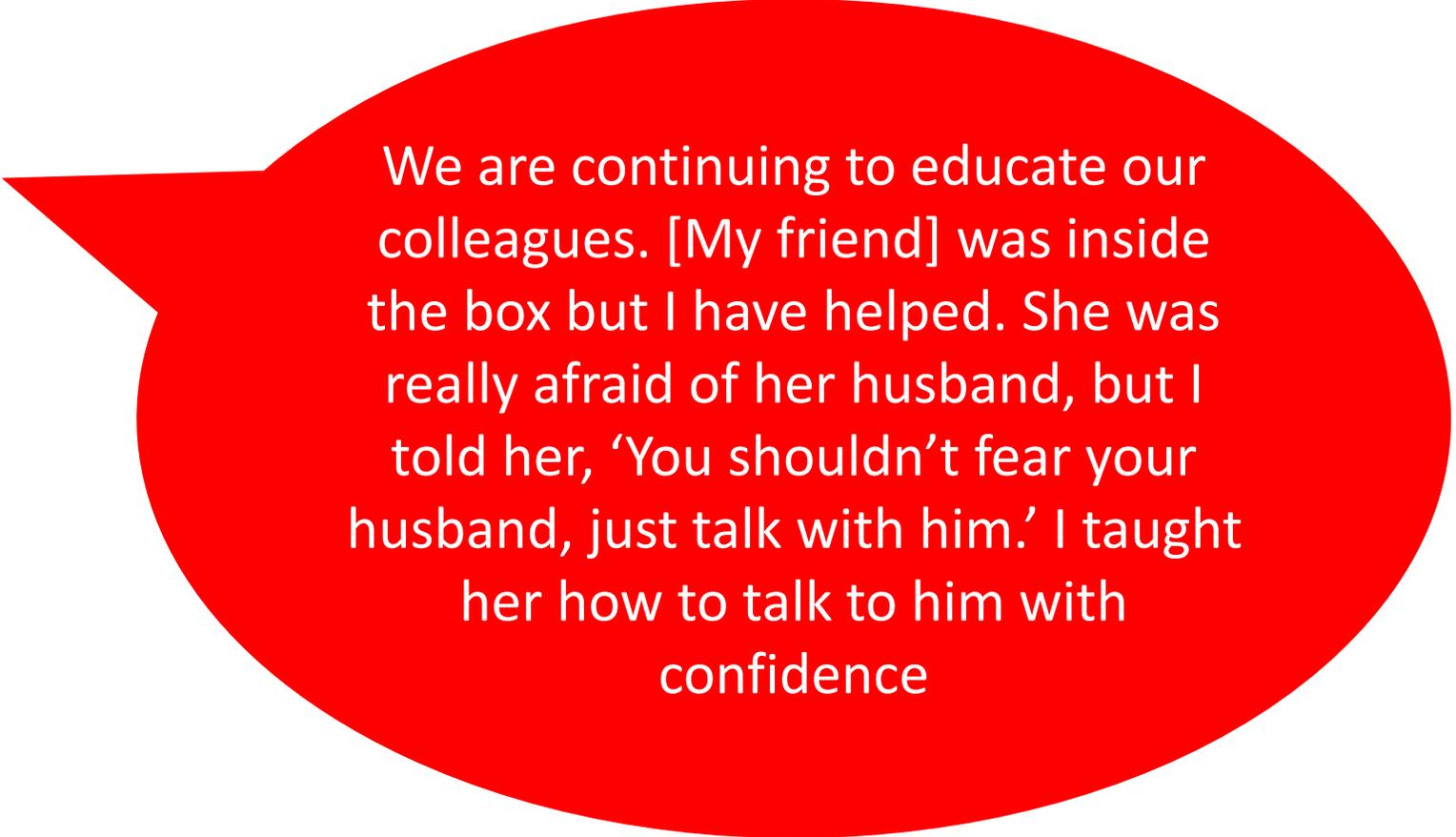
- Improving communication through conflict management and boundary setting



There are things that have changed ...when I came from [the training] I told my husband, ' It isn't good that you abuse me before children, that itself is violence. Because when you abuse me in front of the children, they say, "Oh, so mama makes mistakes" So, I changed that

# Kubadilika - Engendering Change for Others

- Challenging gender inequalities for other women



We are continuing to educate our colleagues. [My friend] was inside the box but I have helped. She was really afraid of her husband, but I told her, 'You shouldn't fear your husband, just talk with him.' I taught her how to talk to him with confidence

# Summary

- Our findings align with Cornwall's (2016) assertion that “where empowerment initiatives include a dimension to actively engage women in critical, conscious, reflection on their own circumstances... there can be a marked enhancement of a programme or project's transformative effects”
- The gender training enabled women to
  - to articulate their own experiences of the injustice of gender norms and male oppression in Tanzanian society
  - gain confidence and skills to be more effective agents of change toward violence prevention with their partners, children and neighbours

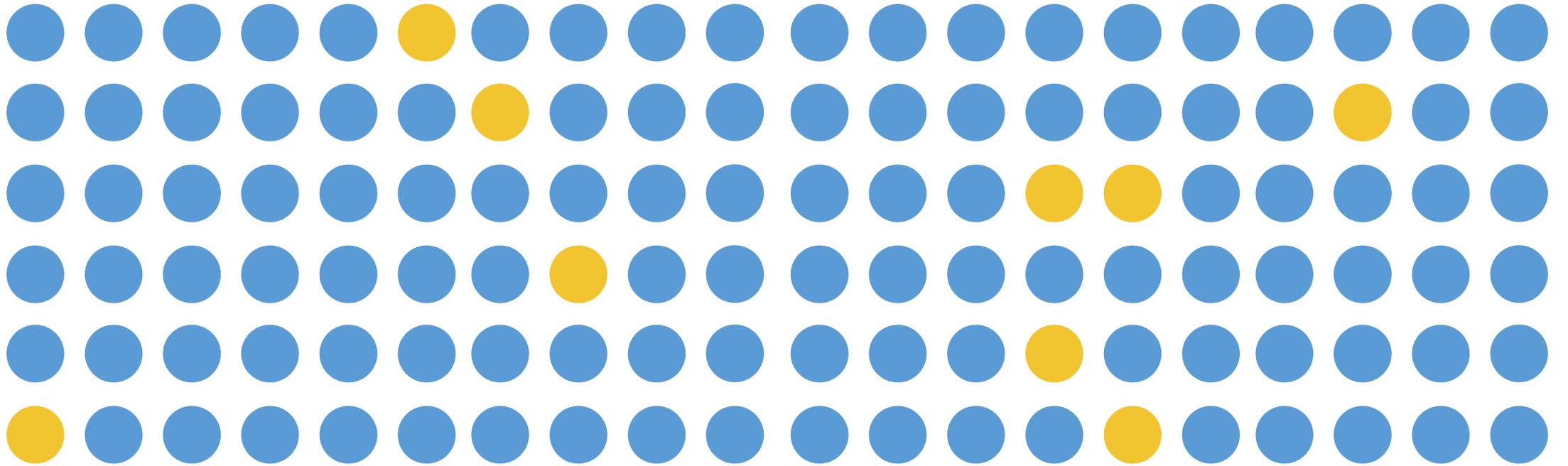
How does change happen in  
conversations?

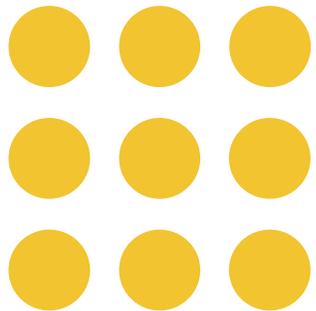
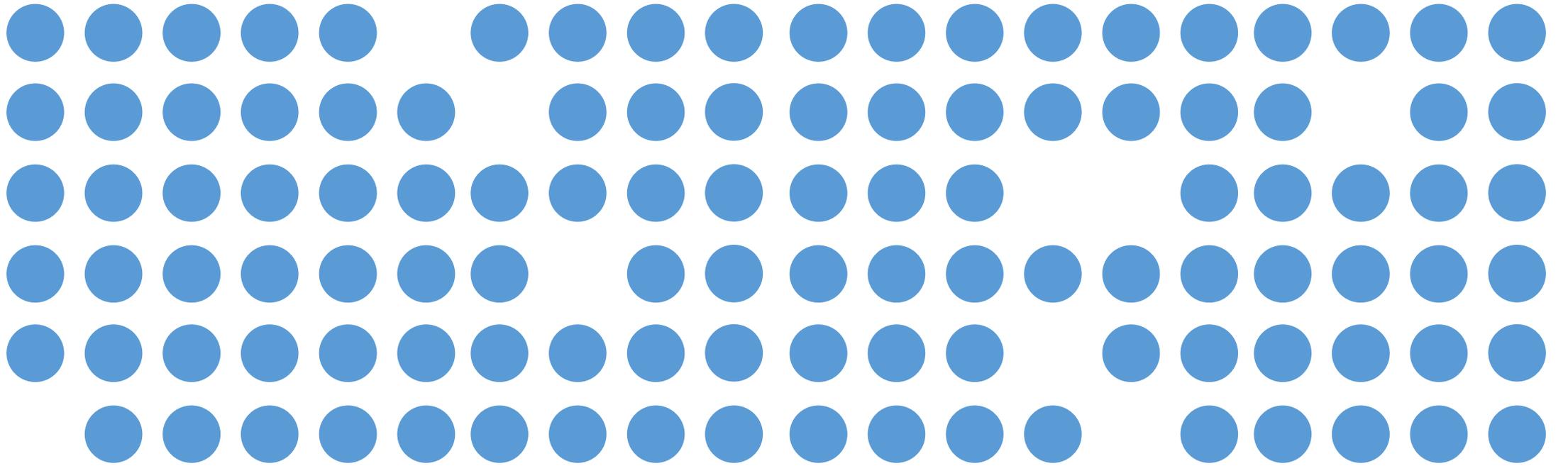
# Epistemic Injustice: Ethics and the Power of Knowing

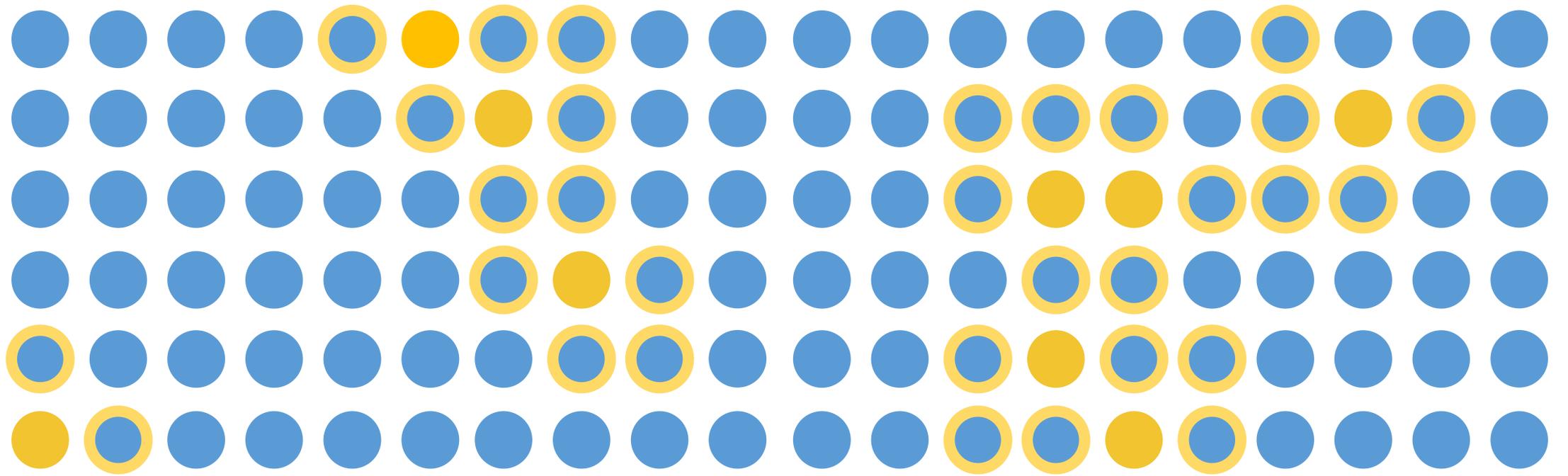
Miranda Fricker (2007)

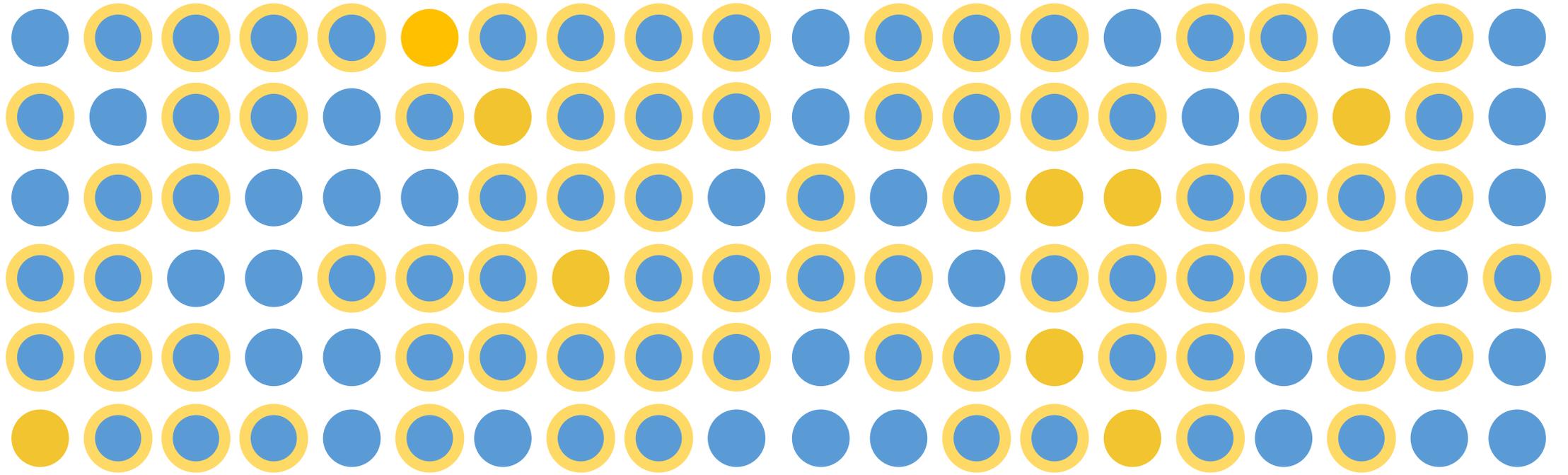
**Hermeneutical  
Injustice**

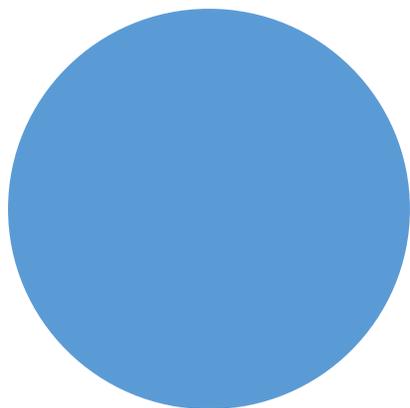
**Testimonial  
Injustice**

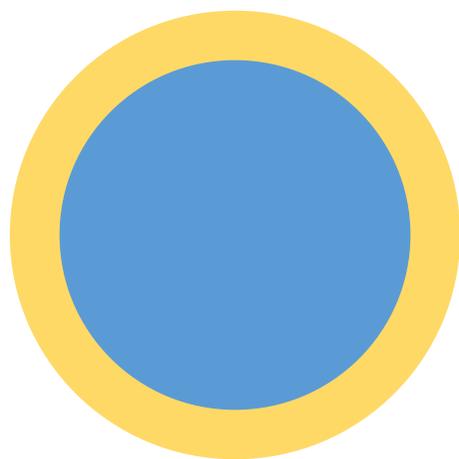




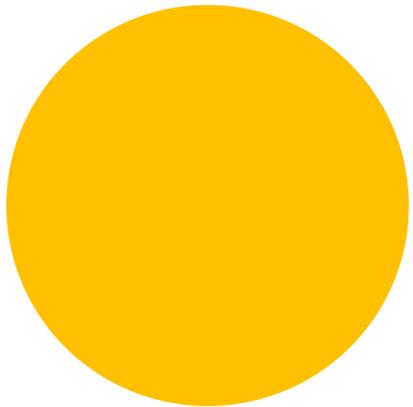








What is this person's role in this change process?



# Conclusions about gender training

- Does not erase the broader structural inequalities in which women's lives are situated
- Should be part of any change process towards gender equality at institutional, societal and individual levels, especially when it can be “harnessed as a catalyst for disjuncture, rupture and change” (Ferguson 2019)
- Attention should focus on power relations at all stages of the gender training process - who commissions, who designs, who implements and who evaluates (Ferguson 2019)
- The change process engendered by the MAISHA gender training may be a catalyst for strengthening feminist movements in Tanzania

# MAISHA team

## Senior Team

Shelley Lees  
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Enos Mbata

