

Regina Soka's 2014-2016 LIN Journey

In March 2014, when I was the vice president of National Organisation of Nurses and Midwives in Malawi, I received a communication from NONM secretariat that I have been selected to be part of the four member Malawi team to participate in the 6 country Leadership in Negotiation (LIN) workshops organized by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and supported by Vardforbundet and Union to Union. I participated in all the workshops that were held in Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland, Uganda and South Africa. Many topics were discussed during the five workshops including communication, nursing ethics, negotiations, making a conversation, self-reflection and many other topics.

Knowledge and skills have been internalized from these workshops and have affected me positively at the personal, professional and union level. The friendships that we made are helping us to link and learn from each other. On a personal level, firstly, the designing of the mini projects throughout the three years has helped me to problem solve as I use the skill learnt in organizing my thoughts when I am dealing with situations; the self-reflections and the role modeling that we had, strengthened my personal dream of self-reliance and entrepreneurship. During the workshops, it was emphasized that everything is possible and after the 2014 April workshop, in May 2014 I got a loan from the bank, bought a plot, built a house and now I am building a fence on a 2 acre plot of land in Lilongwe city. Indeed I am going towards self-reliance as I no longer pay house rent. Secondly, the knowledge, skills and attitude gotten through the workshops gave me the confidence and helped me to get a good job with an international organization (Options Consultancy) in December 2015. During the interview, I used the skills learnt during the "making conversation" lesson, I felt so confident, maintained eye contact and instantly knew that I got the job which I did and is well paying and is helping to support the achievement of my personal goal of self-reliance. Thirdly, the travelling to different countries has exposed me to know how developed other countries are compared to our own. The travel has strengthening the will in me to think bigger in supporting our country to move out of the poverty trap.

As a nurse, currently working as a planning, monitoring and evaluation specialist at the Central West Health Zone. The skills that I have learnt have, firstly, given me the confidence in dealing with other people, communicating, negotiating in difficult situations and managing to have a win-win situation. The ethics training reminded me on how the nurse has to deal with the people, the practice, the profession, and the co-workers. As a nurse, I meet dilemmas as I deal with people in my duty as a supervisor and I use this knowledge in dealing with such.



As a union member, the workshops provided a platform for my contribution to the union. The workshops enlightened me on union issues like the issue of recognition agreement which we discussed at our union. This helped us to have the government agree to our check off system which has now started hence improving sustainable retainment of nurses and collection of subscription fees. Secondly with the encouragement, support and empowerment from the LIN members, I gained the confidence to run for the presidents' position. The election and campaign was tough, with four contestants, 2 men and 2 women, and at the end, a woman, my mentor, Dorothy Gillian Ngoma was the victor, "tough luck indeed".

In terms of the impact of the LIN project on our union, it is noted that, as the ideas that the LIN team were bringing to the Union were being adopted by the NEC. The ideas were mostly on recruitment and retainment conceptualized

in the mini projects. By the end of three years, we had seen an increase in the recruitment and retainment of members as recruiters are recognized and rewarded. The union has managed understanding with in built student government has started implementing a check off system which will increase the union membership base and finances. The zonal level has also been strengthened by being provided with resources for its operations including member recruitment.

Figure 1 Regina Casting Her Vote during the 2014 BGM Elections

to sign memorandum of nursing colleges on having an recruitment system. Lastly

After getting all these skills from the LIN project, the journey continues as I am being encouraged to take the Secretary General position coming in the near future so that all the lessons learnt are synthesized and put into good use for the sustainability of the organisation.