



## NO MORE: Gender based Violence and learner pregnancies in Namibia

### [Survivor's Story] Title: Battling with Trauma

It has been a difficult month for everyone. I saw Mercy twice when we were working on her I-story. At this moment we are all worried with the new development that have been taking place in this world. The world has come to a standstill because of COVID-19, a virus without a cure which spread throughout the whole world. As we both went through the i-story, I promised Mercy a phone call due to the lockdown, as we will not see each other soon.

Mercy, born in Windhoek, was raised by both parents. In her 11th grade the family moved to the southern part of the country. She returned to Windhoek for tertiary studies. Through- out all the years, she managed to build friendship with other students and was used to a quiet and peaceful life. One day Mercy woke up with her life changed, her world turned upside down. from that day she was pretending and made everyone believe that she was a happy person. In the middle of her degree Mercy was sexually abused, she was raped by someone close to her. "I quickly forgot what happened to me, but deep inside me, I was hurting. My emotional trauma caused me to react with denial, which led me to ignoring my feelings and pain" narrated Mercy. She went through a lot of emotions until she could no longer handle the situation. The fact that the perpetrator is still out there without being brought to book is the hardest thing she is faced with. Mercy became so angry with herself and felt that she failed by submitting herself at some point to the perpetrators request, knowing very well that she was not obliged to and had a choice not to. Mercy's confidence and self- respect had deteriorated. "I hate the fact that I did not fight hard enough for myself , and wish I could have handled the matter differently, the fact that this guy that took my joy away was breathing freely after what he had done to me" narrated Mercy.

Mercy's experience was the main factor which influenced her career choice. She wanted to study something which would allow her to understand the human behaviour of an individual. For some time, Mercy's memories became so conscious, because she had to walk past the place where she was raped every time she went to college. She was depressed to a point where she did not want to live anymore. "I was mad at the world that in the eyes of everyone I was being judged about my wrong decisions without them seeing beyond it, as to what exactly triggered me to get to the beast that I had become. I became depressed because for some reason I felt the whole world was against me. I was sort of living a double life" said Mercy

During the day, in the presence of people, Mercy would wear strong and fearless personality, with the aim of confusing people to make them think she was at her happiest stage of life." Deep down I knew I was the opposite of all these attributes. On the other hand, at night, I cried myself to sleep each single day" narrated Mercy. During the years of studying Mercy felt dejected and lonely, with no one to confide in. This forced her to engage herself with the wrong friends and relationships, so she could feel some sense of love and belonging. She was then exposed to alcohol abuse and used it as an excuse to numb her pain and forget about her problems. "At that point, I developed an absurd mentality of blaming my family for my pain and decided to cut them all off. I then made myself believe that my new friends were my family, even though I knew that they did not really have a positive impact on my life. It was at that time that I started losing focus to the point of missing classes and got as far as not showing up for exams. Things even became worse when I moved out of my parents' house to live on my own.



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Mercy faced so many challenges moving from one place to another, living on the streets. Her anger and pride rebuked her from accepting or asking for help from the family. She made it clear that they should not bother looking for her.” There were even times I would have nothing to eat at all and lost most of my belongings. I rendered myself even more useless than ever, so I totally gave up on myself to the extent of attempting to commit suicide” narrated Mercy.

Mercy became very rebellious and disorganised. She ended up failing and eventually dropped out of school. She was not happy about how she handled her trauma and the decisions she made in the past.” I developed an intense dislike for men, but as a way of comforting myself I found myself, getting into multiple relationships for the wrong reasons. My aim was to lead them on and then break their hearts because I did not want to be the only one with a broken heart. In my eyes everyone had to feel pain, so I could start feeling better about myself. This was because I felt every man was to be held accountable for the pain I endured, for this reason they should feel that pain too. Little did I know that I was just depreciating myself and hurting myself more” narrated Mercy.

Mercy is thankful to God that she made it through although she will have to live with the mistakes she made. “I have been through such a dark place and I would not wish it upon anyone, thus, I would like to tell my whole story to empower young women out there not to take the same road that I took as a way of fighting their trauma. I have gone back to college this year, so that I can do even better than before. With my life story, personal experience and knowledge I believe that I can help save a life. My story and motivation behind it would touch the next girl's heart who will find herself in a similar form of exposure to be strong and to seek help, speak out and avoid the wrong decisions I made. I would like to empower women to grow emotionally to stand up for their rights without any shame and fear and most essentially not to subject themselves to silence” narrated Mercy. Mercy battled with her trauma and chose to never give up on herself.

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**Regain Trust empowers survivors of Gender Based Violence through psychological therapy sessions, one on one and group sessions. The intervention process helps and empowers survivors to open up and speak out about their experiences. Awareness campaigns are done through public dialogues, media campaigns and trainings. The organization advocates for a holistic approach to address GBV.**

**Regain Trust and (FES) Friedrich Ebert Stiftung with co-funding from the European Union are implementing a project that will contribute towards National efforts to address Gender based Violence and Learner Pregnancy in the Khomas, Erongo and Northern Regions. The project titled “Survivors Speak Up!” seeks to Increase and enhance the delivery of prevention, psychosocial, health, legal and protection services to reduce the prevalence of GBV & LP.**

**Find upcoming events and more information about Regain Trust on our website and Facebook Page.**



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