



NO MORE: Gender based Violence and learner pregnancies in Namibia

[Survivor's Story] Title: I broke the cycle of abuse

Veronica is an older lady who is now in her 60s and was born in Windhoek. She was married in her early years whilst still a teenager. Like the generation of that time, being married was envied by all the girls in the community, as every girl was supposed to be a wife to be respected. "In my culture, being a married woman came with a lot of respect" said Veronica.

Today Veronica is a grandmother and it makes her happy to be around her grandchildren. Reflecting on her teenage years, she expresses how abuse can be toxic in a manner that can affect one generation and spread to another. She grew up in an environment where secrecy was top priority. "My mother was born in the North. She would wake up looking good every day. She would put a smile on her face regardless of what she was going through" narrated Veronica. Veronica grew up viewing her mother as the strongest person in the family. "My mother was a strong woman. I can't imagine what she was going through everyday" said Veronica.

"Seeing myself as a married woman was the greatest thing I ever wanted. I was also looking forward to starting my own family" narrated Veronica. As Veronica become a young woman she got married. "I was immersed in love and at the beginning there were a lot of things I did not pick up. The red flags of abuse from my father were now showing up in my marriage" said Veronica. Veronica's mother got conditioned into the situation and decided to live with it. "My mother was not happy, even though she pretended to be. She was experiencing abuse every day, but it was never discussed or being talked about until we were old enough to see what our father was doing, on our own. For my father it was normal to abuse our mother. As brave as she was, everything was swept under the carpet. She had to endure the abuse all the time" narrated Veronica.

Years passed and Veronica started to see the dangers of abuse. She was tired of being beaten by her husband. "I tried to keep it a secret, just like my mother used to. For years I was lying to myself that it should be normal to live in an abusive relationship. My siblings and I had only seen that one side of the family life. I was already conditioned to accept a life of abuse. My husband was an abuser. I tried to keep it a secret but unfortunately, I could not take it anymore. I went and told my mother about it. My mother was telling me that is what marriage is all about. Divorce is something that most families do not want to hear about. There is a lot of stigma when someone is being divorced and their family is often unhappy.

It takes more strength for the survivors of abuse to give up and start afresh than to stay. It is not easy for survivors to share their stories either."

Veronica took that step forward and decided to take her future into her own hands. "I wanted to be a role model for my children. I realized that I only put up with the abuse that long because I witnessed it myself when I was a child. When I thought that my children would go through the same situation in the future, it gave me the strength to leave. I hope that I managed to teach them that accepting abuse because you are scared to



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leave your partner, or thinking that this is what marriages is supposed to be like, is not right and that divorce is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sign of strength.”

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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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