



NO MORE: Gender based Violence and learner pregnancies in Namibia

[Survivor's Story] Title: Unexpected changes of a teen mother

Maria observed her body changing. Very confused and puzzled, she went to the clinic for a pregnancy test, which yielded positive results, despite her and her boyfriend using protection. "To my surprise I was informed that I could be 5 months pregnant. I panicked when I got the news and told my friends. I feared how to break the news to my mother who was a single mother of 4 and a domestic worker. I was still in school, in grade 11 and my world came to a standstill because I realized how disappointed my mother would be." narrated Maria.

Maria and her friends were weighing option to get rid of the pregnancy, before her tummy would be big enough for her mother to figure out what's happening. One of Maria's friends pointed to someone who does backdoor abortions and confirmed the price. In the meantime, Maria informed her boyfriend that she was pregnant and that she wanted to get rid of the pregnancy and needed him to pay for the abortion. The boyfriend immediately shot down the idea of Maria having an abortion and refused to give her the money. "We broke up shortly afterwards. My friends and I decided to make another plan to pay for the abortion as time was running out.

I remember going to school, with my tummy showing and how some kids at school would look at me in a funny manner and gossip about my growing tummy. It was the most uncomfortable experience, I would not say I was embarrassed of being pregnant, I just did not like the attention that I was attracting, because I was a very reserved & shy girl" narrated Maria. Until one day, after assembly, the Head Of Department instructed all the grade 10 to 12 girls to stay behind. At that time there were quite a significant number of girls who were pregnant at school. "When it was my turn to be searched, I refused to be touched. The female teachers then started body searching, to see who was pregnant. The principal threatened to call my mother and inform her that I was pregnant. That is the day I dropped out of school because I feared my mother finding out. The embarrassment & disappointment started kicking in" narrated Maria.

Soon thereafter it was school holidays and Maria's mother left her alone at home and she travelled out of town for a few days. Maria then used that opportunity to do the backdoor abortion with the person her friend referred her to. By then she was 6 months pregnant. The abortion attempt failed and she ended up going into labour. Maria was rushed to the hospital and gave birth to a premature baby girl who weighed 800g. "I was not allowed to hold the baby because the doctor feared that the baby would not make it, since she was not fully developed yet. At this point I'm in complete shock, of having given birth and I was so confused and did not know what to do" narrated Maria. The next day Maria was discharged from the hospital and informed that the baby was premature and had to stay in the incubator until her full term of 9 months. "I was advised to do daily visits for the 3 months to follow while my baby was in the hospital. But after I was discharged, I left the hospital and decided not to go back" narrated Maria.



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Maria's mother suspected that something was off about her when she returned from her trip, but she denied the pregnancy rumours. "I kept my baby a secret for 3 months, nobody knew, except my friend. At the hospital I did not leave my correct details, so the hospital could not reach me. Those 3 months while my baby was in hospital, I tried to live a normal life, but deep down I was tormented by what I did" narrated Maria.

Maria's secret was safe, until she and her friend had an argument about why she was keeping her baby a secret. Her friend decided to tell her mother who then confronted her daughter. Maria told her mother the truth upon which they went to the hospital to get the baby. By the time they reached the hospital, an adoption process was underway, and the baby was promised to a family who wanted to take care of her. The hospital tried to reach Maria but to no avail, for nearly 4 months. "When we entered the baby ward and were taken to the room where my baby was sleeping, I immediately recognized my baby without anyone pointing her out to me. That was my first-time laying eyes on her. She had the cutest chubby cheeks and I instantly fell in love with her. On our way home from hospital reality hit me that I actually became a whole mother and that was the moment my life took a totally different and unexpected change and I experienced radical transformation. Mentally, emotionally and psychologically I had a shift and my life has never been the same" narrated Maria.

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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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