

From the Classroom to the Courtroom

Mozambican civil society teaches one educator a lesson about sexual abuse

Teachers around the world wield incredible power to positively influence the young lives with which they are entrusted. However, quite unfortunately, they are also able to abuse this power. Like many children, fourteen-year-old Angelina (name changed to protect her identity) easily fell victim to sexual abuse at the hands of her teacher. With help from a gender-based violence prevention program supported by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, through USAID and Mozambican civil society organization ANDA (Associação Nacional para o Desenvolvimento Auto-Sustentado), Angelina was able to identify the abuse, prosecute her abuser, and pursue an education free of harassment.



Born into a poor family in rural Mozambique, Angelina dreams of becoming a nurse and one day providing a better future for her children. However, Angelina's family struggles with basic amenities needed to survive, and are unable to provide her with the uniform she is required to wear to school. Angelina has managed to stay in school through personal entrepreneurship; by selling eggs on the side of the road, using her small profits to help cover the costs of her education.

Angelina feels safe once again to participate fully in school life. It was at school that Angelina learned how to identify the sexual abuse to which she was being subjected. Angelina's school participates in ANDA's "Ngatitchinge Maitire"- meaning "Let's change behavior"- HIV prevention program. The program, which targets students aged 12-24 in two districts of Manica Province, engages participants in discussion and debate sessions designed to change perceptions and behaviors related to HIV risk. To that end, several sessions address the topic of gender-based violence (GBV).

When Angelina's group began discussing GBV, Angelina started to cry. Upon being prompted by the facilitator, Angelina disclosed that her teacher had repeatedly summoned her to his house, where he sexually assaulted her.

"He kissed me, saying that I was beautiful, but that I couldn't tell anyone [what he had done,]" Angelina recalls. The teacher also promised continued financial support in exchange for Angelina's compliance and silence. When Angelina described the abuse to an older friend, the friend urged Angelina to let the teacher do whatever he wanted if he was going to let her pass her classes and give her money. With no support, or understanding of her victimization or rights, Angelina continued to suffer sexual abuse at the hands of her teacher for an entire year. "I had never heard anyone talk openly about sexuality or sexual assault before," Angelina explains. "Where I'm from, a woman or girl doesn't reject it when an older man touches us, because we think he wants to marry us later."

With Angelina's consent, the facilitator from ANDA immediately reported the abuse to the school and district authorities. School authorities began disciplinary proceedings, while representatives from a government social protection entity initiated criminal prosecution. The teacher's contract was rescinded, he was required to pay Angelina approximately \$500 in damages, and the criminal prosecution is currently on going. These victories were achieved thanks to great persistence from the ANDA team, who learned how to navigate through and advocate with multiple systems to effectively seek justice for Angelina.

"We learned that, gradually, it's possible to resolve these types of situations through the participation of all key entities," says ANDA Facilitator Idália Janete. "Over time, it's possible to create schools free of sexual abuse and assault."

Furthermore, the outcome of the case provides powerful motivation for other students to speak up about abuse, and a strong deterrent for potential perpetrators of such abuse.

"Angelina's case will give other girls the courage to say 'no' to and speak out about sexual assault and violence," says ANDA facilitator Idalia Janet. "And perpetrators will now feel afraid."

ANDA is one of 37 Mozambican civil society organizations that has received grants through the Capable Partners Program (CAP), implemented by FHI 360, in Mozambique. Supported by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through the United States Agency for

International Development, CAP provides leading civil society organizations with grants and intensive technical assistance in organizational development, program implementation and financial management. Through this support, CAP helps Mozambican civil society organizations expand their critical role in Mozambique's HIV/AIDS response.