

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, they are also able to abuse this power. Like many children, fourteen-year-old Angelina easily fell victim to sexual abuse at the hands of her teacher. With help from a gender-based violence prevention program supported by USAID through 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.



Angelina (not her real name) feels safe once again to participate fully in school life.

Born into a poor family in rural Mozambique, Angelina dreams of becoming a nurse and providing a better future for her children. However, Angelina’s family struggles to survive, let alone provide her with the uniform she is required to wear to school. Angelina has managed to stay in school by selling eggs on the side of the road, using her small profits to help cover the costs of her education.

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” 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 in-process. 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 USAID, 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.

Helping One Grandmother Find her way Out of Darkness

In 2003, the life of Magrete Secreta and her two grandchildren was turned upside down. Immediately following the death of her husband she was stripped of all of her worldly possessions. Per custom in Chinhambuzi (Manica Province) where Magrete lives, her husband's relatives arrived on her doorstep to "take back" everything Magrete and her husband had worked so hard to accumulate during their marriage.

They took her house, her goats, and her chickens. She was left without home, food, or even cooking utensils to prepare the daily meal. Gone was everything she had built together with her husband, and everything she used to care for her two young grandchildren—youth she had cared for since their mother died of AIDS years before. Magrete was left destitute and depressed.

Although a local community leader took pity on Magrete and her grandchildren and found a place for them to stay, the family quickly moved back to her land – all that she had left – due to the poor conditions of the place where they were staying. There on the farm Magrete built a tiny cabana for her small family.

It was in this little cabana that ANDA (Associação Nacional para o Desenvolvimento Auto-Sustentado) found Magrete and her granddaughter and grandson in 2013, when the organization was identifying families to participate in an OVC project funded by USAID/PEPFAR through CAP Mozambique. Magrete's economic situation had not improved much in the 11 years since her husband's death, and at 71 years of age with increasing responsibilities for her grandchildren, her emotional state had continued to decline. The family ate 1-2 times daily and the children did not have enough money to pay for school materials or uniforms, pay the fees for identification documents in order to sit for exams, and purchase miscellaneous items required throughout the school year. Since the local school was far from Magrete's farm, the oldest grandchild missed many days of school.

It was also discovered that Magrete was not receiving the social security payments she was entitled to, even though she had attempted to register through the government system multiple times. Magrete had high blood pressure, was of poor overall nutritional health, and depressed. She needed those social security payments for basic survival.

ANDA immediately stepped in to take action. The organization negotiated on behalf of Magrete and her family with local leaders and the new owner of Magrete's former home, and succeeded in winning back the portion of land where Magrete had successfully grown plants and fruits in the past. She was able to cordon off that land and use it for her personal use.

ANDA provided Claidi and Doroti, Magrete's grandchildren, with school supplies and uniforms, and secured identification documents for Claidi so that he could sit for his exams. ANDA staff members accompanied Doroti to school and helped her with her homework. ANDA succeeded in getting

poverty status for both children, as well as finally getting social security benefits for Magrete. Magrete's family was slowly beginning to see the light after so many years.

ANDA visited the family on a regular basis to provide psycho-social support, homework support to the children, and just check in with the family. Magrete participated in the OVC project's agricultural demonstrations, where she learned to grow vegetables and other products to supplement the family's diet and increase the nutritional quality of their meals.

Magrete began participating in a savings and loan group sponsored by the project, which enable her to grow and sell vegetables. With profits from these sales, Magrete has constructed a small hut for the family, as well as a barn to store goods. The family is now eating three meals a day, and Magrete feels hopeful about the future. She even returned to grow fruit on her old land.

“Before ANDA came to help we only ate one or two times a day, which means that we were poor. Because of everything that happened in my life in the past, I was depressed. But ANDA helped me become hopeful again, and I am proud of the things I have done.”

Claidi now lives in Manica with a family that ANDA helped identify to take him in during the school year. The school near Magrete's home does not reach the 11th grade, so this was Claidi's only chance to study. Both children have identification documents, which creates more stability for them and allows them to participate fully in school. Doroti helps her mother with the farming, but attends school full-time.

“My life was so very hard before, and I was exhausted by all of the suffering,” says Magrete. “I was sad about how little I could do for my grandchildren. Now I feel better that I can provide them with food, an education, and a home that they can feel proud of.”

Note: ANDA received a grant from CAP Mozambique/FHI 360 in 2012 to provide services for OVC and their families in Manica district, Manica province. CAP Mozambique has also provided technical and organizational capacity building for ANDA and 38 other local organizations to strengthen the contribution these key stakeholders play in the fight against HIV/AIDS. ANDA is one of eight organizations that have “graduated” and been recommended for direct funding from USAID.



Caption: Magrete's former house, in a state of major disrepair.



Caption: Magrete's new home, built with the profits of selling vegetables and participation in a savings and loan group.