

FROM TRAUMA TO HOPE

IN MAY 2015 A TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY WAS LEFT DYING NEAR A ROAD LEADING TO OTJIWARONGO. A STRANGER BROUGHT HIM TO A NEARBY HOSPITAL WHERE HE RECEIVED MEDICAL TREATMENT. THE MEDICAL COSTS WERE EVENTUALLY UNAFFORDABLE FOR HIS FAMILY SO THAT A YEAR LATER THE BOY HAD NOT RECEIVED THE TREATMENT NEEDED FOR HIS PHYSICAL HEALING. IT WAS ONLY AFTER HIS FATHER'S LAMENT APPEARED IN THE NAMIBIAN NEWSPAPER OF 6 MAY THAT HELP STARTED POURING IN FROM VARIOUS CORNERS THAT THE BOY TRULY STARTED ON A PATH TO RECOVERY.

What do you do when your teacher's brother tells you your father sent him to walk you home? You are ten years old, you just finished watching a game and felt perfectly capable of going back home by yourself. But you agree because you are young, respectful and because you cannot imagine the evil in the hearts of trusted adults. Only 200m from the sports field where Carlos* (not his real name) had just enjoyed an adrenaline rush, excitement with other sports enthusiasts and where life seemed so much fun, his vouna life would be brutal-



ised and he was left to die.

Who are these men who are taller, stronger, faster and probably capable of chatting up a woman – or another man – to sleep with them? Did the gang-rapers ever consider having sex with each other – as consenting adults – or is it the brutalisation and violation of an innocent life they crave? And how is it that they would do something like this in a group, witness each other's nakedness and bestiality while their victim's cries for help plead with their consciences?

According to Carlos, the gangleader wanted him dead after the foul deed. "He said it would be better to kill me because I knew who he was," the young boy said. After sexually assaulting and beating the 10-year-old boy almost to death, they left him for dead until someone thankfully found him and took him to a nearby hospital.

After returning to school, Carlos could not sit for long without complaining about intense pain, he had developed a distinct odour which led to stigmatisation and bullying from fellow pupils and to further traumatise him, he had to face his teacher who constantly reminded him of the brother. All these factors caused the boy to stop attending school.

A year after the incident the boy still suffered from serious injuries and the family had become desperate as they could not afford medical treatment for him. The father decided to seek help and speak out about his son's case. He approached the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare where she was referred to Regain Trust. In seeking assistance from the wider public, Regain published an article on 6 May 2016. Support started coming in from the community, churches and individuals. Carlos is now receiving individual tutoring from an experienced teacher in preparation for returning to school. He receives treatment from a health specialist and other state doctors. Both the Office of the Ombudsman and Interpol are also working on the case.

According to police statistics, 814 Namibian children were abused, either physically or sexually in 2014. Statistics from the Gender-Based Violence Protection Unit (GBVPU) of the Namibian Police indicate that 51 children were raped between May 2014 and May 2015 in Windhoek alone.

Sexual abuse of children is one of the most vicious crimes conceivable and speaks of the severance of a conscience that enables such torment of another human being.

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