

Learning by Ear 2009
Children's rights and working for peace series
Episode No. 5: Violence and abuse, the right to physical integrity
Author: Valérie Hirsch (South Africa)

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Children's Rights Series
05 The right to physical integrity

Subject: Violence and abuse, the right to physical integrity

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	Women	Men	Age	
IN/OUTRO	X		Unimportant	
Narrator		X	Ca. 25	
Yolanda	X		16	English
Pastor Schroeder		X	28	English
Engelo (Yolanda's mother)	X		adult	English

LbE soundtrack

INTRO:

Hello everybody and welcome to the fifth episode of our Deutsche Welle Learning by Ear series on children's rights and working for peace. In today's program we're going to South Africa to meet Yolanda. She's a teenager who has been sexually abused twice. Each time her abusers tried to make out that Yolanda – the victim – was to blame. Listen carefully...

Musical interlude

Narrator:

Yolanda Combrick is South African. The 16-year-old is also very pretty. She likes to talk and laugh. She is a white Afrikaner and lives in a modest house in Johannesburg.

In March, 2008 Yolanda was abused by her maternal great uncle – a 64-year-old man. He found her in the bathroom:

1. Yolanda assault uncle 1'06'' (English)

The Saturday night, we had a family party and my cousin came to me and told me that my uncle wants to smooch me. I take that as a joke because hello ! So I did not believe him. Only the next day, it happened. When he stopped me and grabbed my arm, he started to touch me on my boobs and he wanted to undress me, and he put his hand on my... on my everything and I started to tell him “ no please don't do it !”. Luckily my mum called me and he left me and that was finished. What happened with my uncle, I just felt that God is very angry with me that I did not defend myself, so I don't know. And then I realized it was not my fault, it was not me!

Narrator:

Yolanda did not tell anyone about this assault except a cousin. She was scared of her uncle and her family's reaction.

A new drama was needed for Yolanda to speak out. On 1st January 2009, she was on holiday, camping with her family. She had made some new friends, including a 19-year-old boy. One day, he asked her if she wanted to sleep with him. She refused. The next day she was at the swimming pool with the other teenagers. She went to the toilet and the boy followed her. He said he wanted to talk to her. She told him to wait for her in front of the door:

2. Yolanda rape narrative – 56' (English)

When I was in the bathroom, he pushed the door and I tried to stop it but he came in and then he raped me. And afterwards, he told me that “Did you enjoy it?” and well like every girl says “yes, I enjoyed it”, and that is what I said because I do not know if he is going to kick me, I did not know, so I just said “yes, I enjoyed it!”. And afterwards he told me that he is going to tell everyone who is also camping there that it was my decision, that I wanted to have sex with him and that he isn't the guilty one. So well I was angry, I was sad, I was more scared that I was. Sometimes I ask myself “Why did it happen to me?” I wanted to blame myself but it was not me.

3. Atmo church

Narrator

It took Yolanda a week to confess to her church pastor. She finally found some comfort. Since then, she has been visiting a church psychologist every week and also a therapist from a centre which campaigns against sexual abuse.

Thanks to this support, Yolanda was able to tell her mother about the abuse she had suffered. But her mum did not believe her at first:

4. Yolanda « mum's reaction » (English)

My mother does not want to understand. She doesn't want to believe the one with my uncle and she says I was like attracting to the guy, I wanted that he wanted to rape me. And I did not! I was myself and I also want to be friends with everyone there and I tried and he just wanted more. My mum does not want to trust me, she does not trust me at all. I hope that the relationship with me and my mum is gonna grow but it is going to be difficult. She said that she loved me very much but my father, well, he never told me that he loved me, never! And I think maybe that's why also I want to be loved with my relationships with guys; I wanted to be loved like that.

5. Atmo Yolanda+mother

Narrator

Engelo Combrick, Yolanda's mother, is conventional. She would rather keep silent about what happened to her daughter than disturb the balance in the family. She even accused Yolanda of lying at first.

6. Engelo- mother (English)

It was very shocking when I heard the news. With my uncle, I am very shocked. I am very, very shocked. You know I could not in the first place believe her. And I told her that even if it is so that I have to believe you, we have to keep it for ourselves. Because it is my uncle, my husband does not even know. My parents, where we stayed, do not know. I am very scared if they have to find out the whole truth. I do not know what to do in this case. That's also one of the things I know is my marriage is going to be a hell of problem because we have helped my uncle a lot, food, everything and how could it be that the child he chooses is daughter to hurt us in this matter. My husband is a very aggressive person; he can get cross like getting murder, if I can say that. So I am scared off when these things is going to come out by then, even my parents, my in-laws, actually, it is gonna make very difficult to me.

7. Turn up Atmo Yolanda+mother

Narrator

Yolanda is also worried about her maternal family's reaction. But her therapy has convinced her that she was right to talk, if only to prevent other girls from having to go through the same thing. The victims of sexual abuse are always traumatized. Reactions differ but doctors have identified three post-assault phases. First of all, shock, a phase in which fear predominates. Secondly comes readjustment, in which a victim gradually takes up his or her daily activities, and finally integration, which can take a long time – the phase in which a victim gradually refinds a psychological balance and readapts to community life.

8. Yolanda family reaction (English)

Now I can speak about it but a few months before, I could not. While right now I am still a bit nervous but I just want to tell everyone that these people are very very bad. Well I know the family is going to be mad at me because this uncle is so genius in their eyes. I think that my family is going to be so mad that they do not want to be involved with me anymore. Like I say, I do not have to blame myself, it is not my fault but I think they are going to believe my uncle and not me because I am a child and he is a grown up man.

9. Atmo Yolanda+pastor

Narrator

Yolanda has been gradually able to get over the pain thanks in part to pastor Werner Schoeder. The priest, who is only 28 years old, also looks very young. This is maybe what helped him win over the young girl's trust. He has become her confidant. The pastor has guided the young girl through this difficult phase. He knows from experience that when a child is the victim of sexual abuse the parents are often the last to find out. Yolanda hasn't spoken to her father for two months:

10. Pasteur Werner Schroeder –1'21'' (anglais)

She was afraid to speak at home. So she actually spoke to no one except a niece and then spoke to us at church. I am glad we were there. I am also sad it took so long. It is not fair having to deal with all this on your own for so long, especially if there is help available. I can also say there has been an improvement in her personality since we started until now. I think there is a lot of work ahead especially for normal relationships with the people around her. I think Yolanda still needs to learn on trusting people. She is a very kind young girl and very bubbly as well. Her personality is really alive. That has had the effect that when she is just a normal friend with another teenage boy he will think listen there is an opportunity for me for a relationship here. They fall in love with her quickly and I have dealt with a few broken hearts on her behalf but I think that the mentor will help just teach her those boundaries and for her, not doing certain things, or not becoming so close, or not trusting so easily.

11. Atmo church

Narrator

At the beginning of the year, the therapists managed to convince Yolanda's mother that her daughter was telling the truth. Yolanda then went to the police to lodge a complaint against her uncle and against the boy who raped her. She will never be able to forget what happened to her but now she has found the energy to fight - for justice.

Atmo: singing in church

OUTRO:

This report from South Africa was written by Valérie Hirsch. Learning by Ear is over for today, but you can listen to the programs that have already been broadcast by Deutsche Welle by visiting our website at www.dw-world.de/lbe. Don't forget to tune in next time!

End music