



Penelope Machipi, CAMA member from Samfya, Zambia

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I am Penelope Machipi. I am 28 years; I am from Samfya in Zambia.

Let me share a little bit about my experience: When my parents died I had no one to support me to school. I was lucky that Camfed came to my rescue and supported me through my secondary school.

Education has given me a voice and has helped me to make informed decisions. I use that voice now to make documentaries on issues that are rarely discussed in our community. As a person that has dropped out of school, I know the heavy pain that girls carry. As a film maker, I document what girls go through when they are in school. They struggle to pay school fees. They end up sleeping with men. They drop out of school and marry off early. It is so painful that these girls have dreams and ambitions like any other girl, but their dreams are shattered by poverty and vulnerability.

I am part of a group of film makers. We decided to explore the issue of domestic violence because we saw it happening in our community, but people were afraid to talk about it. We wanted to break the taboo that women were not supposed to talk about certain issues. We wanted to give women a voice. We wanted to speak on behalf of other vulnerable women who cannot speak on their own. Some women are victims of gender based violence but they don't know where to report. They don't know what to do. We wanted to let women stand on their own and bring about a platform for women to speak on this and the issues that are affecting them.

So we made the documentary called "Hidden Truth," a film where women tell their stories. I discovered that most of the women who stay in abusive marriages are not economically independent. Some women are slaves to their husbands because they don't know their rights. The film has been screened in schools and communities, all over Zambia. The communities' reaction is so good. I have seen the issue of domestic violence being discussed on national platforms. I have seen women come forward and opening up about their experiences, so others can learn.

Education has given me an opportunity to speak on behalf of these vulnerable women who can't speak for themselves. I am able to read and write because of education. I am able to speak fluent English because of education. I am able to collect stories. Direct a film crew. Speak at international platforms. All because of education.

I want to tell you that even a rural girl in Africa, once given a chance, can make it because we have the same dreams and ambitions as any other girl. I always remember what my teacher Mrs. Nkoma in grade 10 told me that "the sky is not the limit; you can still make it." I didn't believe her at the time, but I am just starting to believe now when I'm seeing the change that has been happening in my life.

Education is the key to end poverty. When you educate a girl you educate the whole nation.