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Testimony from Topu Honis Victim

February 21, 2021 By Zevonia Vieira, Neon Metin Team



Video of testimony: <https://youtu.be/A11gtnehwd0>

I went there in 2003 (or 2013 illegible). I was still very young. I went there as an 11-year-old. I only left Topu Honi after I had finished university studies!

Why did you decide to stay at Topu Honis?

I went there because I heard people saying that they looked after children very well and the priest also looked after children very well! He looked after us like his own children. People in Ambeno knew him very well! He was a priest and he was good. He looked after children like his own!

What happened in the orphanage?

Those of us in the orphanage were fine. We were fine because all we knew was eating and going to school and sleeping. After school we were relaxed and slept in the afternoon. We (then) woke up and had a shower. We did not do any work. After we had had a shower we studied a bit until we had a meal at six o'clock. After the meal we prayed at seven o'clock.

How did you feel when you were in the orphanage?

I felt very happy because everything were good. Everything was very good but I felt sad because while I was there something wrong happened to me! While we were there we prayed every night at seven o'clock with the priest. Now he no longer a priest. He is a former priest. We all sat together to pray, girls and boys, we all sat together to pray. We (some of us) sat in lap. After the prayers we greeted him saying "goodnight" – "goodnight padre". After that some of us left. The one who sat on his lap she was the one who would go to spend the night with him in his room and on his bed. In the following night, there would be another girl. What happened to us, happened only to us girls. Not to the boys! Those of us who spent time with him, people who worked at the orphanage knew all about it. There was a list with our names on, (a list with) names by the door to his room. For example, tonight it is me. Tomorrow night there will be another girl. Or sometimes he saw us sitting together and he came in and chose who he liked for that night. He himself, the priest himself, would say tonight you sleep with me. Because we were so young, we couldn't say anything because he looked after us very well just like his own children.

He looked after us during our childhood until we grew up. Our parents could not afford anything. Our parents didn't give us food, clothes and money. He looked after us. So, when he was abusing us sexually we stayed quiet! All us girls went through it! When we went to his room he put rexon in our...??? on our body (Illegible). After that we slept and before that he said to us in Baikeno.... because this priest didn't like us to know Tetum. He told us to speak Baikeno. Everyday he spoke Baikeno with us! He liked to speak Baikeno... He said when you have finished your shower ... go to take off your clothes... he liked to say this... when we went to his room he took our clothes off, before we got into bed he took off our clothes. He also took his off. We slept together on one sleeping mat. I slept with him as wife and husband. He told us to hold/touch his ... (bleeps) he touched ours and put his hand in our ... (bleeps) he put his... in our mouth. After that he put it in our ... (bleeps) when he felt that he was going to ejaculate (his sperm was about to come out) he said I'm pulling out otherwise you'll get pregnant. When he slept with us he told us that nobody should know. He locked the door and closed the windows. He locked all of them.

After lunch time we also slept with him. One girl on one side and another girl on the other side. We slept to keep him in company... when we had shower, we girls, it had to be him who showered us. "Mama Asrama" (the ladies) at the orphanage gave showers to the boys! He didn't give us shower when he was away to say mass in other places like the districts of Leokole, Bukole and Buni'u. While he was at the orphanage only he would give us shower. "Mama Asrama" gave showers only to boys.

Everything that happened to us all, "mama asrama" at the orphanage knew it. They knew it because if we did not sleep in his room "mama Asrama" got upset and said that you must go and sleep with him because during the prayers he has chosen who is going to sleep with him. I don't like this bad thing in my life. Because this (bad thing) happened to me while I was very young, when I was eleven years old!

What about the boys/men? Did they know about this?

When this was raised and made known to the public they knew. They told us girls who slept in his room ... those of us slept in the room, they threatened to beat us up. That's why some of the girls do not speak out because they are afraid of being beaten up by men.

What about "mama asrama"? (Ladies)

These ladies knew it. Because when we didn't want to go (felt lazy) about sleeping with him, they (the ladies) they were the one who called us to go. They knew it. When they say that they don't know or pretend that they don't know they are lying!

Did sexual abuse happen to other girls?

We girls at the Topu Honis orphanage. we all suffered. Only the boys escaped!

For how long did you suffer sexual abuse?

It happened when I was 11 years old. Five years ago.

After the sexual abuse what did you decide to do?

I decided to speak out because this happened to me when I was very young. And I don't want this to happen to my little sisters or to my little sisters all over East-Timor.

How do you feel now?

I feel bitterness and shame I speak out... as an example to my little sisters. If it happens don't hide. My recommendation? I would like the government to help us girls (victims) to have justice done!

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