



## Human Trafficking in Kenya

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### Introduction

Human trafficking is the trade of men, women and children for the purpose of exploitation. This is just a simple definition drawn out of the complex definition from the Palermo Protocol that is adapted by our country. HAART Kenya was founded to combat human trafficking in 2010 after the founders realized that Kenya did not have any institution that was fully dedicated to fighting this crime in Kenya. Most organizations at that time and even now only focused on human trafficking as a component in one of their projects. HAART is the only organization in Kenya that exclusively focuses on counter-trafficking work.

HAART has continued with its initiatives to fight human trafficking by involving itself in different activities like creating awareness to the general public, assisting victims of human trafficking, Policy and cooperation with different stake holders and finally involving itself in the prosecution of perpetrators. This strategy is an adaptation of the UN three P's strategy of combating human trafficking

Kenya is placed on Tier 2 and as a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking (**2015 Trafficking in Persons Report**).

### Prevention

HAART has continued with its initiative to create awareness about human trafficking and what people should do in order to migrate safely whether internally or externally. This year we were able to include survivors' stories in the workshops. We had different survivors sharing their stories to the participants and this had a huge impact on how the information was received. We had most of the participants breaking down and having empathy for the survivors something that was not happening when we just shared case studies. Victims were mostly blamed for not having been aware that they were dealing with criminals. They were labeled as being naïve and ignorant of what was mainly happening in the Arab states. We also managed to have different duty bearers attend our awareness sessions. This provided a good forum for the public to get into a dialogue with their leaders and get to understand why the public was feeling frustrated from the work of the duty bearers as the duty bearers tried to explain what they were doing and their limitations. We have had many cases being reported to these offices and action being taken and this really makes us understand the impact our work has on the community. We have widely used the social sites and our website to inform the public on human trafficking and also get referrals of victims and even assist people who are stuck in homes or other situations but have access to the internet.

We also had a project called Arts 2 End Slavery which used art as a tool for creating awareness about the different facets of human trafficking. The project brought together more than thirty artists who volunteered for the project and produced more than forty pieces of art. The art included paintings, photographs, sculptures and even performing art. Visit (<http://a2es.org/>) for more information on the project. The exhibitions started in May and ended with a commemoration of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on 30th July. We reached more than 1500 people through the events, developed new partnerships with more than 10 organizations, and held the first conference on human trafficking bringing together stakeholders from both government and civil society and IGAD just displayed the art pieces in a regional consultative meeting on Migration in Djibouti. We have had many more major outreaches and participants never fail to say that greed and selfishness is what is destroying humanity.

### Protection

HAART has been able to assist 172 adults and 33 minors with 172 being cross-border and 34 being internal trafficking cases. In December 2014 we were involved in a major rescue of thirty three women (two had infants and one was pregnant) who had been trafficked to Libya for forced labor with the help of the ministry of foreign affairs and IOM. The women are settled now and still come for counseling sessions with our therapist after they had received financial support with most of them also being in need of medical support. This year we received more people who were trafficked internally and most of the cases involve children. Cases of young boys being trafficking to join the Alshaabab militia group in Somali are a worrying trend. We found out that some youths are either kidnap or lured to join the militia from a needs assessment we conducted in the western part of the country. The social media is also being used by traffickers to recruit victims of trafficking. Organ removal mainly for witch craft in our country and the current allegations that the human skin is being used to make handbags has left many worried after several cases of people missing their organs have been reported in different parts

of the country. Early child marriages for young girls seem to be thriving in many communities in the rural and urban areas. One of the girls that had escaped from her parents because of being forced to drop out of school and be married off wrote this letter to my colleague and I.

*Hi Winnie and Hannah, I hope you are fine. How have you been since we departed? The main thing for me to write this letter to you is just to say hi to you. Secondly, I would like to thank you for accepting my humble request. Sincerely, I will never let you down in my life. I will assure you that I will study for two nice years in high school smart. Passing my exams with flying colours without any obstacle on the way and joining one of the best universities in U.S.A if not university of Nairobi. Since form one to date I have been scoring B+.B, B- due to those problems, but for now I will work smart for an A.*

*CVM (career, vision, mission)*

*CAREER: To be an engineer*

*VISION: To be where no one has ever been in this world*

*MISSION: To help the needy*

*VISION 2025: my own car*

*So dear, I am kindly requesting that you help me where possible. Thank you and may God bless you*

*Yours faithfully*

*Mercy*

The letter is really moving and it shows what one taking action can have a huge impact in a person's life. She wrote this letter two days after we had rescued her and she is currently back in school and we hope her dreams will come true with this second chance that she has been given in life. HAART is hoping to have a shelter for women and girls and children when we have emergency cases by the end of 2016. Mercy's case clearly shows how important a shelter is to survivors of human trafficking. We are raising funds through crowd funding in Poland and you can help in that through the following site (<http://zbudujfreedom.pl/>).

In September 2014 the government passed the Victim Protection Act which improves support to trafficking victims, including the establishment of a fund. This funding remains inadequate in light of the significant trafficking problem in the country.

### **Prosecution**

We have been successful in assisting the police in prosecuting three traffickers in Kenya with five other cases still in court. All these cases are on child trafficking. In most of the cases prosecution is not possible because of the fear that has been instilled in the victims. Threats are used either on their lives or their families' lives if they dared share on what had happened. It is even worse when the perpetrator is a family member or a relative to the victim. Most of the time in these cases the family is not willing to testify in court. We believe that with more awareness on the crime to both the government officials and the general public we will have more cases being taken to court.

### **Policy and cooperation**

HAART has become a member of several other networks and partnered with other likeminded people namely; IOM, Ministry Of foreign affairs, Deutsche Gesellschaft fur international Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Austrian Embassy, HopeNow, IDAY, Coalition against child detention, United Nations office on drugs and Crime (UNODC), COATNET, Misereor, Mixed Migration Task Force, Complaints referral partners Network (KNCHR) among many more others. We also created our own network of volunteers from different organizations and key informants working at the grass root level. These networks and partnerships will help us in the referral of cases of victims and will greatly help us in the implementation of our activities. Partnerships made in different programs and projects made our work to even have a greater impact in the society.

### **Way forward**

1. We all have a role to play to end human trafficking
  - One can donate money to initiatives that are geared towards ending this crime.
  - Some of us we can volunteer our time to such institutions and offer our skills and time in fighting human trafficking.
  - Sometimes just being cautious and making sure you don't fall victim to human trafficking surely helps in reducing human trafficking.

- We all need to create awareness and inform all people from all walks of life on how to prevent themselves from being trafficked and on how to migrate safely.
- Inform individuals that they are victims of a crime when they are exploited by a trafficker and we have the law which supports them and that they can get assistance from different institutions.
- Reporting cases of human trafficking to the authorities whenever we come across them. This will also greatly help since we will have records which can show statistics of trafficking cases from different regions and countries.
- Inform the society on how to handle survivors of trafficking once they come back to our communities. What they need is love and support and not feel that for them not to have come back home with lots of money makes them un useful to the community.
- 60% of the world population constitutes of the young people and they are also the biggest supply in the trafficking chain. Given our big number if we could all come together to reduce the demand for trafficked people then this crime would be reduced by a big percentage because without the demand then the supply won't be necessary for trafficked people.

2. We need to form a network that will be effective in communicating on what needs to be done to fight human trafficking in different parts of the world. What needs to be done for this to happen;

- A team has to be selected to be in charge of communication and updates to the group. Contact people that the group could always rely on and that can represent the team whenever called upon.
- We need to be able to understand what is happening in each country in regards to the fight against human trafficking from updates from individuals from the different regions.
- Have a work plan on what we want to grow to or what we exactly want to do. (work plan and breakdown of activities)
- We need to come up with a platform where we can all be able to link and share ideas from our best practice in our areas.
- Regular online meetings like thrice in a year or whenever a need arises for the team to have briefings or short meetings.

We all have seen how our fathers and brothers become protective of their daughters or sisters whenever a boy or a man tries to get into a relationship with them. They will go to all lengths to ensure that the boy has the right intentions. If the world would get rid of its greed and have love for everyone as the fathers and brothers do then this world would be a better place. With the youth being the future for tomorrow let us become the change we want to see. You will do everything to protect your child, brother, sister, let's do the same to all the other people because they are someone else's brother, daughter and child.