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*All names used in this brochure have been changed to protect from the privacy of survivors.

Foreword

At any given moment, women, men and children all over the world are being exploited by criminals who trade in human beings. The victims of this hidden crime need our help. In 2010, the General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UNVTF) was established as part of this global effort to address trafficking in persons.

Managed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the mandate of the Trust Fund is to provide humanitarian, legal and financial aid to victims of trafficking in persons through specialized non-governmental organizations. These NGOs provide critical assistance to victims including shelter, health services, education, vocational training and psychosocial, legal and economic support.

The women, men and children whose stories are told in this document are a living testament to what the Trust Fund has and can achieve. With support from its partners, the Trust Fund can make a greater impact in assisting survivors of human trafficking and preventing others from becoming victims. The Trust Fund calls for international unity and concerted action to end this heinous crime and assist those harmed by it.

Member States, the private sector, civil society organizations, foundations and individuals are urged to contribute generously to the Trust Fund. Your donation will help the victims and survivors of human trafficking recover from this crime and help rebuild their lives. Every contribution, no matter how small, can make a real difference in the lives of human trafficking victims and survivors. The Trust Fund welcomes your support.

Victim-Centred Approach of UN Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking

Trafficking in persons is a global phenomenon that is closely interlinked with human rights violations, migration, gender imbalance, violence against women, poverty and social exclusion. Through its small grants programme, the Trust Fund supports actions by specialized grassroots non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world that provide direct assistance to victims to give the most vulnerable a new beginning.

Those who have been exploited by human traffickers have varying needs and require different types of assistance to ensure their social, physical and psychological recovery. But the common need of all trafficked persons is to be recognized as a victim of a crime, and not treated as a criminal, even when they may have been forced to commit crimes. The Trust Fund thus emphasizes a victim-centred approach that aligns with the “3P” paradigm of “Prevention”, “Prosecution” and “Protection”, formulated under the Trafficking in Persons Protocol¹. This paradigm serves as the fundamental framework used by governments around the world to combat human trafficking.

It seeks to guarantee the rights of each individual victim. Your support can provide assistance to victims such as:

- legal support and prosecution assistance
- medical treatment for physical and mental abuse
- shelter and a safe haven
- vocational training and life skill support for economic empowerment
- schooling and education
- rehabilitation and reintegration

We are pleased to share the stories of some of the many women, men and children who have gained a second chance at life thanks to the effective and compassionate work of our NGO grantees. Their names have been changed to protect their identities, but their stories are true, and they highlight the diverse forms that human trafficking can take, particularly as emerging forms of exploitation continue to arise. They remind us that stories like these can happen to anyone anywhere in the world.

¹ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

Fundación Levántate Mujer

Bolivia

▶ Fundación Levántate Mujer in Bolivia works with socially vulnerable women, girls, boys and adolescents to help them overcome situations of trafficking, poverty, vulnerability and inequality, toward a society free of violence. As part of its “new life” project in its Sartasim Kullakita Shelter, the NGO assists female survivors of human trafficking.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-funded project provides multidisciplinary assistance to female victims of sexual exploitation through its intervention model: ‘A journey towards life’, facilitating reintegration and rehabilitation services for young girls.

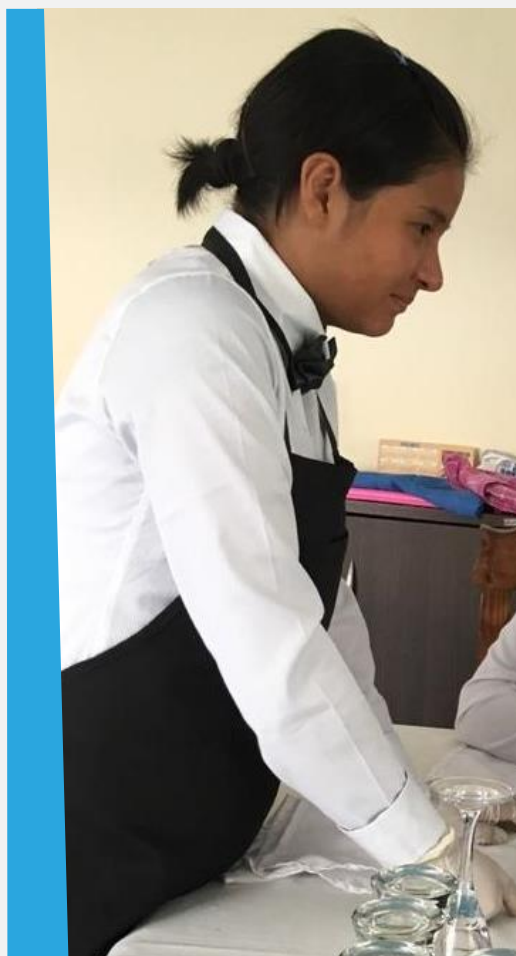
Anna’s story

Anna, 18, grew up with her mother and grandmother in Bolivia. Her father abandoned the family when she was a child. Anna filled the void of her father’s absence through socializing with friends. However, these friends were involved in unlawful activities and introduced Anna to alcohol and drugs.

One day, her friends and 20-year-old aunt, invited Anna to a venue where they told her she could make money easily by working as a “lady-in-waiting” in the evenings. Unbeknownst to Anna, she was forced to have sex with strangers, as soon as she entered the venue. This frightened her as she felt she had entered a world of darkness. Her abusers threatened her with hurting her family if she spoke out and ordered her to remain silent. Anna kept quiet to protect her aunt.

Eventually, a police officer freed Anna from her nightmare and she was directed to the shelter at NGO Fundación Levántate Mujer. Once Anna arrived, she received support and protection from the NGO, and was able to discover her inner strength to overcome her ordeal. Through the work of the UNVTF-funded NGO, Anna realized her full potential, abilities and capacities. She regained her self-confidence and most importantly began to learn to love herself.

Anna currently lives with her grandmother and mother and has regained their affection and confidence. Her aunt still immersed in unlawful activities no longer lives with the family. Anna says her aunt will not change, so instead Anna decided to change and continue her studies. Soon, she will complete her high school education and begin a technical career as an executive secretary, with a goal of entering the police academy.



“ I feel happy to get out of the darkness and feel that I can fly again with my own wings. I appreciate what I have and that I almost lost it all, including my dream.

Corporación Espacios de Mujer

Colombia

▶ Corporación Espacios de Mujer is an anti-human trafficking NGO based in Medellín, Colombia. It provides trafficked victims with psychosocial assistance and necessary support to help survivors reintegrate into society and lead autonomous lives. It is also active in raising public awareness to prevent human trafficking and ensures victims receive comprehensive services.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project assists victims arising from armed conflict and external trafficking through the provision of psychosocial care, educational and vocational training, for the restoration of their rights.

Angela's story

Angela is a 28-year-old woman with two children aged eight and two years old. Angela comes from a very poor family and has many debts. One day, a former schoolmate contacted Angela on social media and told her that she was working and earning a lot of money managing a restaurant in a foreign country. The friend offered Angela an opportunity to come to work with her and a paid travel ticket.

After receiving a bank deposit from her friend to finance the travel, Angela arrived in the new country. Upon her arrival and collection, Angela's passport was taken from her. Under physical and psychological threat, Angela was taken to a hotel and forced into prostitution. After four months of exploitation every day and night, without any possibility of leaving the room where she lived and received clients, Angela finally escaped and caught a return flight to Colombia with the help of the local police.

Angela recounts her experience: "In [that country] aberrant sexual practices added to the demands imposed by my traffickers and clients; physical and psychological assaults were frequent and they beat me. In a fight, my trafficker removed a fingernail."

Upon arrival in Colombia, Corporación Espacios de Mujer supported Angela through its reintegration programme that included empowerment, counselling and psychosocial support, job training, legal advice and financial aid to start a clothing marketing project. Currently, Angela is living in Medellín with her grandmother and her two children. Thanks to the support provided by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund, Angela is socially, economically and psychologically stable and is dedicated to telling her story, in order to prevent and sensitize young people and vulnerable groups about the traps of human trafficking.



Freedom Foundation

Nigeria

▶ Freedom Foundation's 'Genesis House' programme is a residential rehabilitation centre for young females who have fallen victim to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. This initiative is designed to proffer an effective solution to the alarming and growing trend of sexual exploitation, trafficking and commercial sex work among young females in Nigeria.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-funded project provides support to trafficked female victims and refugees for sexual exploitation to be effectively integrated back into society and equipped with the capacity for economic self-sufficiency and self-determination.

Augusta's story²

Augusta, aged 23, is a young woman born and raised in Nigeria. Her desire to explore economic opportunities for a decent life drove her to seek support through every means possible, unfortunately leading her into the arms of a human trafficker.

Augusta was convinced by her trafficker that travelling to Italy was an assured means to a decent life. She was also promised a legitimate job that would require her to cater for children and households in Italy. Based on this promise, Augusta began her journey to Italy. Unbeknown to her, Augusta was about to be trafficked into forced prostitution.

² The following image is used for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the victim.

After being forced to work as a sex worker for some time, Augusta presumed she had raised enough money to pay off her debt and continue her journey to Italy. Unfortunately, this was impossible as Augusta was again forced to continue working as a sex slave to buy her freedom under a new benefactor. This experience led to another horrible ordeal that fortunately resulted in Augusta being rescued and returned to Nigeria by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). The organization referred her to Freedom Foundation for rehabilitation under the Genesis House programme in 2018.

Today, Augusta stands as a graduate of the Genesis House rehabilitation programme, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund, where she received intense counselling, therapy, social education, vocational job training and job placement assistance towards economic self-sufficiency. She now works with Branche Fashion Home in Lagos Nigeria, as a Fashion Designer.



Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World)

Tunisia

▶ Doctors of the World (DoW) in Tunisia provides medical, psychological and social services to migrants including victims of human trafficking. The NGO works in strong collaboration with partners and refers potential victims to the anti-trafficking national institute which grants legal recognition to migrant victims. DoW also provides medical services and health promotion trainings to victims.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-funded project provides access to health care services for survivors of human trafficking in Tunisia in its medical, psychological and social reception centre.

Carol's story³

Carol, age 33, left her country because she was not able to earn a decent living to support herself and her children. She was told that in Tunisia it would be possible to earn a decent salary, so she decided to give it a try. Carol was contacted by a “brother”, an Ivorian man living in Tunisia, who offered her a job. He sent her a ticket to travel to Tunisia and proposed to host her before she started the new job. Upon her arrival in Tunisia, the Ivorian man sent Carol to a Tunisian family to commence her new role. However, the family confiscated her passport and she was forced into domestic servitude. Carol had to work every day for five months without being allowed to leave the house. Finally, when the family allowed her to leave, Carol was alone in a foreign country and obligated to go back to the Ivorian man who sold her. He raped her repeatedly and she became pregnant.

³ The following image is used for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the victim.

Carol arrived at DoW's centre for pregnancy follow-up. For three months, DoW's social and medical staff supported her. She was oriented to DoW's partner organization which provided her with accommodation and safety. DoW staff reported Carol as a potential victim of trafficking to the anti-trafficking national institute. Carol was deeply affected by the physical and emotional trauma she suffered and required psychological care. DoW provided her with psychological assistance until she left Tunisia. Following her ordeal, Carol returned to her home country to be close to her family. She will soon give birth and hopes to develop her business thanks to the social and economic reintegration programme that was provided by DoW, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund.



Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL)

Uganda

▶ Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) is a local NGO in Uganda that provides direct assistance and protection to survivors of human trafficking through protection, partnerships, awareness-raising, livelihood vocational skills courses and aftercare services. This includes medical care, temporary shelter, food, counselling and life skills training. UYDEL conducts home tracing and reintegrates survivors of human trafficking with their families and into safe communities to prevent relapse.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project rescues, rehabilitates and enhances socio-economic livelihood opportunities for survivors of human trafficking. This project empowers survivors with knowledge on their rights and life skills. Moreover, it reintegrates and reunifies survivors with their families, and fosters independence.

John's story

John is a 17-year-old boy. He originates from Mbale District in Uganda. John grew up in a polygamous family with over 15 siblings. In this situation, his father was unable to provide him with the necessities to survive. This led John to drop out of primary school. Due to such a dire situation, John was forced to run away from home and became a homeless street child in Mbale. One day on the street, a man approached John and offered him a job as a shop keeper. "I was so happy to hear about that opportunity and I immediately accepted without even questioning the amount of money that I was to be paid". When he reached Kampala, the man made him a scrap collector and he was forced to turn over all the money he made to his boss.

“Sometimes he even engaged me in criminal activities for money”. John fell victim to forced criminality. He was only able to exit his situation after being referred to the UYDEL rehabilitation centre in Masooli for support by a community local leader.

There, John attained motorcycle mechanical skills. After reintegration with his family, his mother was able to link him to a motor vehicle garage where he is now employed. John received support services from UYDEL, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund, including psychosocial support and life skills training which facilitated his recovery and assisted him with his day-to-day living. He can now relate well to other people at his workplace.



“ I was able to adapt to the conditions in the motor vehicle garage because of the skills I had attained in the motorbike mechanics class at UYDEL. I am now able to feed myself and support my mother and siblings with some money and I am working to own my own garage.

Willow International

Uganda

▶ Working collaboratively with government and partners, Willow International aids in the rescue of human trafficking victims and restoration of survivors. Through its partnerships, Willow provides legal aid to those in its care, disseminates information throughout Uganda, educates and empowers communities to prevent trafficking, and advocates for the strengthening of the criminal justice system.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project identifies victims of trafficking among migrants and refugees, and provides access to legal aid, psychosocial support, essential medical assistance, as well as family reunification and repatriation.

Olga's story⁴

Olga, a nine-year-old girl, currently resides in Willow International's aftercare shelter. Olga was adopted by a suspected paedophile who picked her up from a police station at the age of three. The suspected paedophile (Gary) acted as a father figure, so young Olga was oblivious to the fact that he was simply biding his time waiting for her to develop physically so that he could begin sexually molesting her, like her fellow housemates.

During therapy at Willow International, it was discovered that Olga was so traumatized from the abuse she suffered, that her only childhood memory was that of her mother in a pool of blood outside

⁴ The following image is used for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the victim.

their house. She could not remember her father or stepmother, and vaguely recalled a lady named “Big Rose” that helped Gary develop a fake NGO – a house of horrors – to traffic and molest children daily.

Thanks to the (UNVTF) Trust Fund grant, Olga and other survivors were provided with the necessary care and protection at the NGO’s shelter to facilitate their recovery. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many survivors subject to trauma, were fearful of dying from the virus. Fortunately, staff educated victims on suitable hygiene practices and on prevention. The diligent care provided by the NGO throughout the duration of the lockdown spared each survivor additional pain and suffering.

Olga continues her rehabilitation at Willow International. While she misses school and playing with her friends and studying, she has enjoyed being at the shelter. She rests safe and sound and has worked through some incredibly difficult trauma. Olga has finally been able to cultivate a positive outlook for her future. Most importantly, she is happy and healthy.



Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS)

Bangladesh

▶ Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) is an NGO that promotes multi-disciplinary action and research aimed at burgeoning socio-economic development for women, men and children. The Centre was established in April 1994 to develop pro-women policy planning in Bangladesh and its implementation in a meaningful way.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project provides direct services and essential assistance to survivors of trafficking in persons including rescue, repatriation, healthcare, psychosocial counselling, shelter, food, clothing, recreation, legal aid, family integration, skills training and job placement. Survivors include women, men, girls and boys rescued from bordering areas of Satkhira district or repatriated from India.

Anuradha's story

Anuradha, aged 13 years, used to study at school. She lived with her family in Khanpur village situated at Tala Upazila in Satkhira district, Bangladesh. One day, an unknown woman abducted Anuradha. Her friend immediately informed her teacher and the police of the incident. The villagers were able to locate and rescue Anuradha and she was admitted to the government hospital at Tala Upazila. Three days later, she regained consciousness. Her parents took her home, but she was so depressed that she did not want to talk to anyone about her ordeal and stayed home alone all the time. The Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) was informed of Anuradha's case through its call-hotline number. The NGO visited her house and brought Anuradha to its transit shelter home for victims of human trafficking.

During her stay at the shelter home, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund, Anuradha received psychosocial counselling for her recovery from the traumatic experience as well as a general health check-up for her physical and mental well-being. She was provided nutritious food and clothing during her short stay. Following her recovery from the mental stress and anxiety she was suffering, Anuradha was reunited with her parents.

Today, Anuradha is quite happy living with her parents and siblings. She recently received three days of training on duck rearing from CWCS. By selling duck eggs, Anuradha can afford to fund her education expenses and buy clothing for school.

Anuradha is now a volunteer at CWCS and is creating awareness in her community to combat this heinous crime.



The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)

Cambodia

▶ The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC) is a human rights organization that provides direct assistance to victims of human rights violations, including trafficking in persons survivors. ADHOC also conducts awareness-raising activities on safe migration for better protection of victims and potential victims of human trafficking.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project improves access to justice for human trafficking survivors through the provision of legal support and compensation for victims as well as essential services including repatriation, travel, basic needs, referrals, and reintegration support.

Mony's story

In 2013, Mony was approached by a female broker who persuaded her to marry a foreign man for a better life. The broker offered her father USD 800 to marry her daughter off and promised that more money would come so that the family would no longer need to worry about their future. Concerned about the safety and well-being of his daughter, Mony's father refused. However, Mony knew her parents were heavily indebted and desperately wanted to help them. She contacted the broker a few days later to accept her offer and travelled with the broker to Phnom Penh where she applied for a passport under her older sister's name. Unbeknownst to Mony, she was about to be trafficked for sexual exploitation. Upon her arrival in the capital city, she was forced to engage in sexual intercourse with a stranger. She was then escorted to a foreign country, where she was sold into the sex trade.



After struggling for two years to try to rescue his daughter, Mony's father learned about ADHOC and sought assistance from its Kampong Cham provincial office. ADHOC accompanied him and assisted in filing complaints with the Anti-Trafficking Department of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, as well as with Kampong Cham provincial court to have the broker arrested and prosecuted. ADHOC provided free legal representation to Mony's father.

Despite relentless efforts, it was extremely challenging to contact and locate Mony. In 2020, Mony finally escaped and returned to her parents' house. She told them that in order to escape sexual exploitation, she had to marry one of her clients. She also informed her parents that she had left a son behind.

Upon her return, ADHOC provided her with social assistance, including the provision of basic needs-support. Mony was able to join legal proceedings started by her father to enable her to seek justice and reparations. As a result of the legal support provided by ADHOC's lawyer, the broker was arrested, prosecuted, and convicted of human trafficking. The broker was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment and ordered to pay compensation of 10 million Cambodian riels to Mony.

Friends-International

Cambodia and Thailand

▶ Friends-International (Friends) is an international social enterprise working to build a future where all children are safe from all forms of abuse and can become productive citizens of their countries. Friends works in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar and with partners around the world, providing comprehensive social services to marginalized urban youth and families.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-funded NGO runs a support programme for migrant and trafficked children in Bangkok and at the Thai-Cambodia border. Working in government centres, on the streets, and in communities, each year the NGO assists close to 2,000 children to help them secure their rights, repatriate safely and reintegrate into family and education sustainably.

Bopha's story⁵

Bopha dropped out of school at eight years of age when she migrated to Thailand with her parents and grandmother. In the Poipet area of Cambodia, her hometown, jobs are scarce. As a result, Bopha's parents could not make ends meet so they decided to explore opportunities in Thailand, across the border. Soon they began working illegally in forced labour as construction workers in Thailand. After three years, Bopha's parents were arrested at their workplace and deported, without their children. Bopha was left behind with her younger sister and grandmother and forced to beg to survive.

⁵ The following image is used for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the victim.

A few months later, they too were arrested by the police and placed in a government centre awaiting deportation.

All three were eventually deported back to Cambodia. When they were found at the border, Friends-International's cross-border programme, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund, took care of them, helping them to reunite with their parents safely. Friends referred Bopha and her sister to support services for school enrolment and supported her parents to secure employment. Both girls are now safe and benefiting from education and a stable living situation.



Rescue Foundation

India

▶ Rescue Foundation is an NGO dedicated to servicing the most exploited sections of society, including victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation through the provision of comprehensive interventions, such as rescue, rehabilitation, repatriation and reintegration to address physical, psychological, social and economic needs of female survivors.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project identifies, investigates and rescues missing or forcefully trafficked girls for sexual exploitation in India. It rehabilitates all rescued girls in its protective shelter and successfully repatriates and integrates victims, ensuring they are equipped with life-skills to become self-sufficient to re-enter society.

The story of two sisters, Farzana and Samira

Farzana, 14, and her sister Samira, 15, lived in the slums of Mumbra, a satellite semi urban area on the outskirts of Mumbai City. Their father was a cab driver and their mother was a sex worker. One day, against their will, the girls were trafficked by their mother for sexual exploitation. Thanks to Rescue Foundation, the girls were rescued from the outskirts of Mumbai City and placed in the NGO's Boisar Protection Home in the State of Maharashtra. At the time of their rescue, the girls' mother was arrested for trafficking under the Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act in India. The girls testified that it was their mother who transferred them over to their trafficker for sexual exploitation.

The girls never knew that their mother was a sex worker until they were rescued. Rescue Foundation helped the sisters secure legal rights to visit their mother at the Prison in Mumbai with the help of the Child Welfare Committee and the Court. The sisters were able to visit their mother every three months, at their request. This was facilitated to preserve their relationship with their mother.

Since both of the sisters had dropped out of school after seventh grade, Rescue Foundation provided them with online training courses to continue their studies.

Both girls excelled in tailoring and bag weaving which was part of the vocational skills-training programme at the NGO's Boisar Home. They participated in all the activities and quickly adapted to the Home.

Farzana returned to her father's home when she turned 18 years old in 2018 and Samira returned in 2019. Rescue Foundation continues to monitor their progress and maintains a follow up each month through phone calls with the girls. The girls visit the home at Rescue Foundation every three months with their father.



Raksha Nepal

Nepal

▶ Raksha Nepal is an NGO working to provide assistance to sexually exploited girls, women and their children. Its main objective is to protect those women and young girls working in the informal entertainment sectors from trafficking and sexual violence by enhancing their knowledge, awareness and socio-economic status.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project provides age-appropriate functional and financial literacy training to female survivors, as well as enterprise development training for women aged over 18 years. This project facilitates re-integration into society and provides shelter, counselling and medical aid.

Anita's story⁶

Anita is a woman who runs her own meat-shop enterprise in Nepal. She is in her late 20s and earns a decent living wage. But it was not always like this for Anita. When she was a teenager, she became a victim of sex trafficking and violence after she accepted a job that she was told would be in the hotel business. Little did she know that she was about to become a sex worker and a victim of forced prostitution.

⁶ The following image is used for illustrative purposes only and does not represent the victim.

After a few years, Anita was able to escape with little savings in hand. With strength and courage, she managed to open her own meat shop and tried her best to forget her past and move on. But the business was failing. She was not skilled or educated, and she began to lose hope.

That was, until she started attending a training in entrepreneurship development course delivered by Raksha Nepal, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund. During the training, she was extremely interested and asked a lot of follow up questions. After a year of training, she is still in regular contact with the Raksha Nepal course leader and comes to her with business and non-business-related questions.

With the training and innovative ideas suggested during the course, Anita's shop now runs very well. Each month she makes profit of 30-40 thousand Nepalese Rupee (NRS). Thanks to the (UNVTF) Trust Fund grant, she has a stable income and looks after her family as well. Now, instead of waiting for customers to come, she provides home delivery services to increase her sales. She also sells spices and other complementary goods alongside the meat. Anita is now a happy, independent entrepreneur living with her family as a result of the assistance she received.



Blue Dragon Children's Foundation

Viet Nam

▶ Blue Dragon Children's Foundation offers children and families in crisis the chance to turn their lives around, providing practical solutions to the daily problems that are keeping poverty alive. Blue Dragon also represents victims of trafficking in court and provides them with all the services needed for their recovery, including psychological and medical attention, education and career preparation and long-term care.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project conducts operations to rescue victims from trafficking and exploitation situations, provides legal advice and support for survivors of trafficking to facilitate their repatriation to Viet Nam and their home communities, and enables survivors of trafficking to make statements to police about their experiences and assist in the arrest of traffickers in a victim-friendly environment.

Lan's story

Lan is a hard-working university student in southern Viet Nam. Ever since she started college, the 21-year-old has been balancing classes and part-time jobs. It wasn't easy, but she managed to get by, that is, until the COVID-19 hit.

When Viet Nam started putting in place social isolation measures to contain the spread of the virus, many businesses had to close, and many jobs were lost. Like many others, Lan lost her part-time position. Several months passed and Lan's money was running out. Some nights, she would go to bed with an empty stomach, as she could no longer afford to buy food to cook for herself.

When the restrictions were lifted, Lan desperately needed to find work, and this made her an easy target for human traffickers. When she was offered a position as a waitress in the outskirts of the city, Lan saw it as an opportunity to finally fill her belly and pay her bills and she eagerly accepted. But there was no such job. The cafe was actually a brothel. Lan was not their employee; she had been sold. She had fallen prey to human trafficking.

During the three long and horrific days Lan spent at the brothel, she had to fight to protect herself. The moment she saw a chance to call for help, terrified but brave, Lan seized it. After learning about her situation, Blue Dragon Children's Foundation coordinated with the local authorities to set in motion a rescue operation. Within 12 hours, Lan was set free and the brothel, shut down.

Lan is now safe and recovering from her ordeal. Blue Dragon Children's Fund will be by her side to provide her with everything she needs to heal and get back on her feet.



Cooperazione Internazionale Sud-Sud (CISS)

Italy

▶ CISS works with partners through international cooperation to provide support to marginalized population, such as immigrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking among large migration routes.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project provides accommodation, legal, psychological and sanitary assistance to female victims of human trafficking transiting across Sicily. The project enhances the opportunities for female victims of sexual exploitation to recover and experience a reflection period before entering into long-term protection programmes and reintegration processes to build a new life.

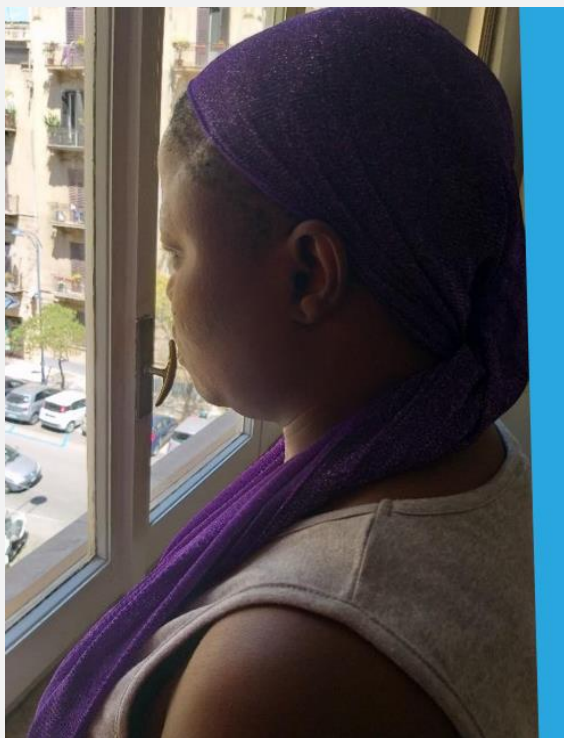
Favour's story

Favour is a victim of sexual exploitation. She was provided refuge in the Cooperazione Internazionale Sud-Sud (CISS) shelter created by the PATH project, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund, after her arrival in Italy. When CISS found her, she has been trafficked repeatedly over many years. On a number of occasions, Favour had been betrayed in intimate relationships and exploited.

At the time of her first arrival in Italy, she was convinced by her boyfriend to travel to Spain. However, she soon discovered he was already married and so she tried to flee to Germany. Subsequently, she was sent back to Italy by the authorities where she requested asylum. Her request was denied. After years of appeals, she received the subsidiary protections.

In Sicily, she entered into a new intimate relationship with a fellow countryman who was working illegally as a driver. She soon became a victim of forced begging and fell pregnant.

As Favour's son grew older, he witnessed his mother intoxicated and crying several times to escape her anxiety. Favour could not find the right words to tell her son that his father went to jail in Spain after being charged with drug smuggling.



Today, Favour and her son are safe. She is very happy living with her four-year-old thanks to the support received by CISS. Following months and years of psychological distress and health problems, Favour feels strong enough to start a new life with her child. Her primary desire is to build a future for him. She is making the effort to study Italian and has made it a priority to enrol her son in school. She is practicing cooking and taking care of her space in the shelter which now, after months of reflection, she is ready to leave. The psychological counselling sessions and the non-formal education laboratories provided by CISS have helped Favour to recover her self-esteem. Her subsidiary protection has been renewed and she successfully registered her son into language school where he will soon learn Italian. Favour secured a job in a hotel. She is moving ahead with courage and determination.

Institute for Democracy

Republic of Moldova

▶ The Institute for Democracy's Centre for Legal Assistance and Center for Psycho-Social Assistance provides victims and survivors of human trafficking in Moldova with legal and psychological advice and counselling services. It raises awareness among the authorities and the general public about human trafficking and advises how best to assist those affected by this crime. The Centre also operates a phone hotline for trafficking victims.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project provides legal assistance and psycho-social support for trafficking victims in the Republic of Moldova. The project team also promotes collaborative partnerships among NGO service-providers to combat trafficking.

Alexander's story

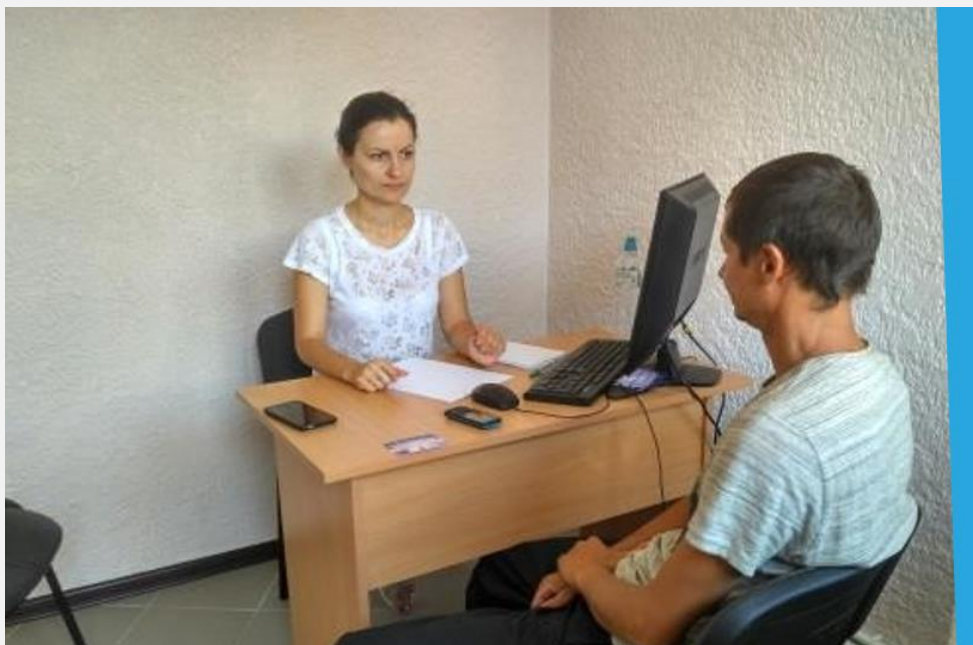
In 2015, Alexander became a victim of forced labour. His acquaintance, Iliia, invited Alexander to work taking care of the lake and promised him a salary of 1500 Romanian leu per month, as well as accommodation and catering. However, after several months of work, he failed to pay Alexander.

Alexander was forced to stay working at the lake until spring with nothing to eat and no communication with anyone. In spring, Iliia told Alexander that he would not receive any money and threatened his life. Alexander tried to escape and left to work at another nearby lake, but Iliia and his friends found him. One of the men grabbed him and pushed him into a car. He was brought back to the lake, pulled out of the car, pushed towards the lake and threatened with drowning.

Alexander was forced to work for Ilia for two more months. Alexander was scared for his life and decided to run away once more. He escaped to the nearby lake, explained the situation to locals, and asked those who found him to hide him. Later, he was told that Ilia and his friends were looking for him in the village and by the lakes.

He soon learned about the work of Institute for Democracy who provided him with psychological assistance. The project team helped Alexander write a legal complaint to the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Moldova.

As a result of the assistance provided by the Institute for Democracy, the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Moldova initiated a criminal case against the traffickers who violated Alexander's rights, in accordance with Article 165 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova on human trafficking. Alexander is now on the road to recovery thanks to the efforts of this NGO project funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund.



Caritas Ukraine

Ukraine

▶ Caritas Ukraine's social service programmes provide reintegration assistance for Ukrainian migrants and render direct assistance and seminars to human trafficking victims. Moreover, its soup kitchens at the regional Caritas organizations feed hundreds of disadvantaged individuals every week including victims of human trafficking.

▶ Impact

The UNVTF-supported project provides psycho-social and first aid assistance to the survivors of human trafficking and helps them to apply for the official state legal status.

Sem's story⁷

Sem was trafficked for labour to work in a foreign country. After two weeks of working 13-14 hours every day without any days off, Sem was told that he would soon be transferred to a good job. But it never came true.

Sem wanted to return home as the working conditions didn't improve and his health started to fail. He was told that he had to finish the work in order to be paid. Without any other job prospects in Ukraine, Sem had no choice but to stay.

A month later, he received payment equivalent to about only 125 USD for all his hard work. Sem wanted to contact the police, but the employer told him that he would be deported or imprisoned due to his irregular status. One week later, Sem ran away.

⁷ The direct service provider in this case is Caritas Kharkiv, which belongs to the network of Caritas Ukraine.

His physical and psychological condition significantly deteriorated. He had problems with his back and stomach from the forced labour conditions. His financial situation was critical because he had nowhere to live and no means of subsistence.

Sem came to Caritas for legal aid as a victim of labour exploitation. He received assistance in drawing up legal and financial documents for pension accrual, received food and psychological support. Sem was assisted by the NGO, funded by the (UNVTF) Trust Fund, to try to establish his official legal status as a victim of human trafficking. The resources of state structures, local community and NGOs were mobilized to help Sem with reintegration.

After the receipt of social assistance, Sem has found the strength to go back to normal life. He has found a job on a farm, as an electrician, as well as a residence with the support of Caritas Ukraine. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, Sem lost his job again. But he now has the means for living in the form of a pension. Caritas continues to assist him with legal aid, food and medicaments.



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HAVE A HEART FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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