



RAW

Testimonies. No more no less

CHILDREN SURVIVING PROSTITUTION

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This book has been published by ECPAT France in association with Undugu Society of Kenya (USK), UYDEL (Uganda Youth Development Link), FSCE (Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment) and Kiwohehe (Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization).

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Interviews conducted and edited by Anko Ordonez (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) and Stéphanie Tesson (Madagascar) with the post production assistance of Alexander Schulz Steckman and Ambre Guichard.

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This book is dedicated to all the girls and boys that fight to survive every day.

FOREWORD

“How many children are victims of sexual exploitation in the world?” This is one of the first questions that we are asked when we expose this issue. The truth is often embarrassing. There is no precise number. In the sector of child protection, the most widely accepted number is that of 2 million victims each year.

But this question, which can seem so important to certain people, is quite far from being a priority for the young men and women stuck in situations of sexual exploitation. For them, every morning, when they wake up, the question is rather much like the following: “how can I earn enough money to eat, to find shelter and to find clothes?” While we try to understand the breadth of sexual exploitation every year in each country, these young men and

women try to understand how to survive every day, every abuser.

These two points of view should meet in the middle, because the global understanding of the problem would have no basis without a concrete understanding of each case. This is the work the numerous organizations and institutions strive to do every day. The social workers know very well the factors that influence certain teens to fall into the plight of sex work. The more they are familiar with these factors, the more they know how to confront and prevent these factors, as well.

The voices of these children cannot stay isolated in the specialized realm of child protection. Their voices must be exposed to the public for the simple reason that

we all have the responsibility to construct a fairer, more just society for all. We should all understand and assume that in countless cases, it would be too simple to look for a single culprit for the suffering or even a single solution for every problem. Poverty, school drop-out rates and lack of education, the patriarchy, domestic violence, exploitation, corruption and social indifference are the main factors that feed the sexual exploitation of children.

We know that the sexual exploitation of children is present everywhere in the world. No country is an exception to child prostitution, sex trafficking, or other sexual threats against children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989 is a piece of legislation ratified by almost all countries. The intentions are good, but the responses stay insufficient. These responses have to do with us.

Therefore, the next time that you think about these young victims, ask yourself: “what can I do to help them?”. Regardless if it's 2 million, or one child, they will appreciate your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Mbengue', on a light-colored background.

Catherine Mbengue
ECPAT International
Coordinator for Africa



INTRODUCTION

The book of testimonies that you are about to read retraces the lives of 16 adolescents and young adults who have survived prostitution. Yet, it is not just related to prostitution. These teenagers raise questions about our society regarding the following situations: girls who do not have access to school, women rejected by their husbands because they do not give birth to boys, isolated children that communities refuse to protect, men who do not take care of their children, adults that treat children like slaves... Their stories are just as poignant as they are disturbing. Poignant; because at their age, they have already battled the flames of hell. Disturbing; because the immense majority of states have engaged since 1989 to respect the rights of children. Yet thousands of young men and women live, survive and often perish in the same circumstances. On all 5 continents.

The young women and men that testify in this book are between 16 and 21 years old. They participate in social rehabilitation and reintegration programs from the local organizations Undugu Society of Kenya (USK), UYDEL (Uganda Youth Development Link), FSCE (Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment) and Kiwohede (Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization).

All these teens and young adults opened up voluntarily and achieved the immense courage necessary to describe their experiences and their most personal dreams. In order to protect their identity and to be able to speak in full liberty, they have chosen their own pseudonyms. Also, always based on common agreement, the photographs were taken in a way so that each young woman or

man is unrecognizable. Each testimony was recorded in the daily context of each young woman or man. Said process took place in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and in Madagascar. Each interview took place in individual fashion, and consisted of three individuals: the interviewee, a social worker to which the teenager has given his or her trust, and a person responsible for asking questions to guide the interview. Before each interview, the team took the time to explain the permanence, and to assure the conditions of anonymity held in place for protection, and the possibility to stop the interview at any moment where that individual didn't want to respond to questions too painful to answer. It is important to note that each extract published in this book was spoken, out loud, by each interviewee. No content was added afterwards.

This book of testimonies has firstly allowed a voice to be given to these young women

and men. The interviews were sprinkled with tears, but also with laughter. Rarely listened to, or often cloaked in shame by the past, these young women and men found the freedom through their words to express their feelings, to assume their past, and to construct their futures. This book is also a way to raise awareness about the necessity and possibility of helping society's most vulnerable populations. Each account shows that solutions are possible, and that society, as well as public powers, can (and should) play an essential role in the hope they offer to young women and men. Finally, this book is also a way, of course in a rather modest way, to encourage other teenagers to escape silence and suffering by going to local organizations that make tangible such admirable work.

Read each word. Follow each sentence. Feel the personality of each of the young women and men. This book breathes life, because their desire to speak is above all a desire to live.



HELINA (19 YEARS OLD - ETHIOPIA)

I started working in prostitution when I was 14. It was in Addis Ababa. My family could not make a living. They were struggling to help me to go to school. I wanted to help my parents. They still do not know that I have been involved in prostitution. I always told them that I was working at a hotel washing dishes.

When I was in 6th grade, I was 14 at that time, I had no money to have lunch at school while other students were eating. A friend of mine that was living in the neighbourhood knew about my situation. She suggested that I work in the streets. She said I could earn enough money to afford lunch for my two younger brothers and sister. She gave me some advice and also gave me some clothes. I stopped my education

« The first time I went into prostitution was also the first time I had sexual intercourse with someone. »

and I started to work in prostitution at night.

The first time I went into prostitution was also the first time I had sexual intercourse with someone. I was standing in the street at night and he asked me why I was standing there. I feared communicating with the man

but in the end I got 600 birr (25 euros). I didn't know my first client. I was very happy to receive that amount of money because it allowed me to buy enough food for my family. When he gave me this amount of money I knew that I was going to be working at night again. So I met my second client the night after. Regarding the price, I negotiate with the clients. When I have nothing I would only ask for 200 birr (8 euros), this was my final offer. All my clients were Ethiopians, I never

met a foreigner. For almost three years, until I was 17, every night I had a client.

I have had problems with the police. When we saw the police, we would run away and hide somewhere. Policemen used to insult us because they do not want to see us in the streets. Once, some policemen agreed to pay me and my friends money in exchange for sex, but when they finished they refused to pay us. I was afraid to make a complaint at the police station, I did not want to expose myself. Until now I was not aware that a client of child prostitution could be prosecuted in Ethiopia.

The first thing I wanted to do at the shelter was to get some rest. I needed to rest. I wanted to sleep for a full day. It took me two weeks to really get to know the other children living at the shelter and to learn how to communicate with them. When a new girl

« The first thing I wanted to do at the shelter was to get a rest. »

arrives at the shelter, the social workers show her the sleeping room and give her linens and clothes. They also read the rules of the shelter to the newcomer. We all live together, we all support each other.

Five years from now, I want to open my own beauty salon and run my own business. Before arriving to the shelter, I was not like this. I used to insult people and I did not respect myself. Now I have the confidence that I can live in harmony with the community. In order to prevent young people to enter prostitution, I would tell them that sex work is the worst kind of living. Instead, you can, for example, work as a maid, or learn professional skills. Even when you are desperate, you can still make the right choice in life.





RACHEL (17 YEARS OLD - ETHIOPIA)

My grandmother raised me since the time my mother died when I was little. As for my father, he was Eritrean. My grandmother told me that the Ethiopian government deported him during the break up between the two countries. I remember him but I never heard from him since he left. My grandmother passed away seven years ago.

When she died I moved to Addis Ababa to my uncle's house. His wife didn't like me. She didn't want me to live in their home. I decided to leave the house and contact a girl I knew from my hometown. Together we worked in a construction site but it was too hard, I felt pain and I couldn't manage to work there anymore. I started to work as a café waitress. This job only lasted three months because the salary was too low. I couldn't

even cover the house rent and some food. I was earning 500 birr (21 euros). My friend and I were sharing a room at 300 birr each (12 euros) so after paying the rent I only had 200 birr left (8 euros).

« I started to work as a café waitress. The salary was too low. After paying the rent I only had 200 birr left (8 euros). »

This is when I entered prostitution. I started to work in a hotel. A friend introduced me to the owner. I was living and working there. It was hard to start that kind of work but once you are involved in it, you don't think about it. When a customer arrived, he could choose one of the girls, and move to a room. The client would pay for a room – this is how the hotel makes a profit- and then would pay the girl. There were six or seven girls working and living there. All the girls were constantly fighting to get a client. The clients

could be anyone. Some of them owned cars and others were just labourers. I could meet two or three men in a day and earn between 200 and 300 birr (8 and 12 euros) per client. I hated that work. I also worked on the street. It is difficult because sometimes it rains and it is cold, and there is also the police, even if sometimes policemen help us when customers are violent with us. Some customers hit us or insult us. I have never used drugs but I used to drink beer and gin, it helped me forget everything.

*« In this kind of work you
don't see a tomorrow.
But now I see a future. »*

Here, at the shelter, I receive a lot of help and support, it goes beyond words. It is easy to live here. I never thought that people could understand me but people here listen and understand. Before being here I have never enjoyed holidays like Christmas or New Year's Eve. But here, we cook and celebrate all together. I feel as if I am in my own home. For the first time of my life I feel as if I am part

of a family. Before that, I was hopeless and desperate about the future and I didn't have a nice vision of myself. I was always asking God why I was living alone in this world, why I had nobody to support and help me. I lost everything in my childhood.

In the future I see myself working in a job that I have learnt at the training skill center. I also see myself helping other girls that are suffering like I used to. Especially young girls, as all they see is the money they can get from prostitution. They don't see what is behind all that. When I was involved in prostitution, I didn't save any money, I spent it all. In this kind of work you don't see a tomorrow. But now I see a future. I don't want to go back to this situation. If it is God's will, in the future I would also like to have a family, and two kids, a boy and a girl.





MERON (17 YEARS OLD - ETHIOPIA)

I want to share my story and my feelings because it also helps me recover from this burden. When I was in school I had a boyfriend and I got pregnant. I was 16. I didn't plan to be pregnant, it was an accident. At that time I knew nothing about contraception, nor HIV. After 5 months I realized I was pregnant. I used to wear jackets and clothes that could cover my belly. My sisters didn't know about it either. In Ethiopia, it is considered a taboo to talk about sex and contraception within the family. This is something that should be taught so that children can protect themselves.

I ran away from my family before someone realized I was pregnant. I was not absolutely sure about their reaction, it never happened

before in our family, but I thought my family would have insulted me and chased me out of the house. I got scared, so I preferred to leave. I told my boyfriend I was pregnant but he was so angry at me that he left me alone with my pregnancy. So I ran away, I rented an apartment and I started engaging in prostitution while I was pregnant.

« In Ethiopia, it is considered a taboo to talk about sex and contraception within the family. »

There are many girls that are pregnant and engaging in prostitution at the same time. Some customers even prefer pregnant prostitutes but I don't know why. I was really suffering at that time. I was not feeling good at all. I gave birth at the hospital, where nurses treated me for free since I had no money.

I continued to do sex work since I had to

pay for the rent and get some food for my little girl. I could get 300 birr (12 euros) from a client which was a good amount for me. The minimum I would accept was 150 (6 euros). I met all kind of clients: young, old, fat, drinkers... As for me I was also drinking, mostly beer. Many times clients would punch me. I think men are more violent towards prostitutes than they are towards other women. Just because we were prostitutes, men did not respect us; they beat us and insulted us. We had to deal with all that in order to survive.

I never had a problem with policemen because I was very careful not to meet them. And despite the law, I have never seen a man arrested because he was sleeping with an underaged prostitute. I have never heard about such a case. Because I was involved in prostitution and I was willing to do it, I never wanted to send a client to jail. But now

« I think men are more violent towards prostitutes. »

that I am no longer in prostitution I advise men not to sleep with underaged girls. There are grown-up ladies for that, even though I don't want anybody to be a prostitute.

I arrived at the shelter 5 months ago. At the training skill center I specialize in men beauty, mainly hairdressing. Today I cut the hair of two men. At the end they were happy with the result. They even gave me tips. I like it very much. In three days I will complete my training and my teacher will help me find a job. It will be my first job. A hairdressing salon is a good business. I will work seven days a week, so every day. I will have one free day per month. It is ok, I have to live.

I don't want my daughter to know about my past life so maybe one day I will move to a place where nobody knows me. I want to be a role model for her.





AKINYI NYANAM (17 YEARS OLD - KENYA)

When I turned 3 years old, my parents divorced. My dad chased my mom because he wanted more boys. One boy was not enough. It is something cultural. In our community, the more boys you have, the more people will carry your family name in the future. Boys can also get better jobs and bring more money to the family. My grandparents, from my father's side, were putting pressure on him and they told my mom that if she had no more boys, she could not stay in the house. My brother was the third one and after him another girl was born. So in the end, my father became angry and chased my mom. My brother, sisters and I had to stay with my father. But my mom's parents came to claim for us and managed to take us back to our mother.

« My dad chased my mom because he wanted more boys. It is something cultural in our community. »

But when I turned 14, school fees for entering secondary school became an issue. Between the new uniform, new shoes, higher admission fees and school books, it was too expensive. Even though it was a public school I had to pay between 50,000 and 60,000 shillings (between 445 and 530 euros) to be able to access secondary school and get the material needed. My mom was not able to raise that money. Life became hard when she became unemployed. I had to quit school.

In order to bring some money at home, I started commercial sex a few months later. I finally joined some friends and schoolmates that were already in prostitution. We were going around the market and other hotspots like Westlands in the evenings. I used to follow my friends to these areas and

when someone got two clients she would pass me one. I had my first client at 15.

When I was in prostitution, my self-esteem was very low. I felt like trash. I had to sell myself to any client that would need a girl. If you got a good client he could pay you 100 or 150 shillings (90 cents or 1.30 euros). I would have accepted any money because I was in need. You took what the client would give you. If the client wanted unprotected sex I would refuse and leave him. But once, I did have unprotected sex. I was afraid of getting an STD but at that moment I badly needed the money. White clients would usually pay more but if your English is not good, the client can use it as an opportunity to pay you less money. Westlands is an area full of white clients. But you could not rely only on white clients. Most of my clients were Kenyans. Standing by the road, outside the bars, policemen would arrest me and

*« Now as a peer educator
I can raise my voice to
the community. »*

my friends just because we were looking for clients. I have also been beaten by the police. Because I was under 18, I was once sent to a juvenile court and then interned for 4 months in a juvenile institution. My mom never found out because I told her that I was going to stay at a friend's home.

It has been three years that I have started the rehabilitation program. Since the organization paid the fees and the material, I managed to enter into secondary school. That's how I learnt English. I still have one more year to complete secondary school. Now as a peer educator, I can raise my voice to the community and people will listen to me. When you are illiterate, and a sex worker, you are discriminated against the community. Now that I have passed these training programs, my life has changed. There is no possibility to return back to prostitution.





KANINI (21 YEARS OLD - KENYA)

My two sisters and I had to leave our house because our father-in-law was physically abusive. He was very violent towards us. He was also regularly trying to sexually abuse us. I have two brothers as well, but they didn't leave the house with us. They stayed there with this man and our mother. My mother knew the sexual advances her husband was making towards us but she said nothing because the man was feeding us all. He used to beat her as well whenever she tried to talk about these matters.

So one day my sisters and I escaped to Nairobi without telling our mother and since we knew nobody in this city we settled in the streets in the area of Westlands. Upon our arrival to the capital, I was 12, my younger sister 9 and the oldest one 22. We were

living by scavenging through garbage to find food. We also had to beg for money. Some of them would give us around 50 shillings (45 cents of euros) and others would give us expired food.

My older sister managed to be hired as a domestic assistant so she moved to a house owned by an Indian family. Once her job was secured, she took our youngest sister with her because she was very sick. But they refused that I joined my sisters. I was finally left alone on the streets. I was going to turn 13. I met prostitutes on the street. They were harassing me, even beating me, and telling me that there was no point to beg for money when I could simply join them and start to do commercial sex in order to earn more

« My father-in-law was very violent and he was also regularly trying to sexually abuse us. My mother knew it. »

money. I met my first client when I was 14. He was Kenyan. It was also my first sexual relation. It took place in Westlands. I felt like entering into a risky business without having any idea how to be safe. This client gave me 200 shillings (1.80 euros). I was going to the streets every night to look for clients. The idea was to make as much money as possible. I could go even with four clients a night. That was a good night. A good client would pay 500 shillings (4.5 euros). In commercial sex, everybody has its own spot.

I was in prison for six months because of prostitution. I was 16 but since I did not have a birth certificate or an ID, I was sent to the adult prison, a female prison. Life is hard there. You wake up very early in the morning, you clean and you work a lot.

I met Undugu when I was working at night.

« I was in prison for six months because of prostitution. »

Their social workers approached my friend and I. At first, we were skeptical. But we accepted to be part of their project and we soon started to feel some hope. Undugu has been very beneficial to us. We have really seen our lives changing because we have learnt a lot of things that we did not know before, especially regarding reproductive health, family planning and the importance of taking care of our children. I have a baby. She is 4. Through Undugu, we have been encouraged to create girls' associations. So we meet once a week and we discuss our issues and try to solve them. We are twenty girls in my association.

I am still doing commercial sex work because I need to earn some money. But I have reduced it. I meet one or two clients once a week, usually on Fridays when I don't have money to make it to the end of the week.





MAYA (17 YEARS OLD - KENYA)

My father died in 2012. We were living all together, my parents used to fight a lot, and when he passed away I started living alone because my mom was just staying at home drinking alcohol. My parents were both alcoholics. They were already drinking when I was born. My father used to sell flowers and with the money he earned he would buy alcohol in order to resell it and earn more money. He and my mother would drink part of the alcohol. When adults drink, it is because they don't want to face their responsibilities, like taking good care of their children, bringing them to school, giving them food and clothes... My mother never went to school; she doesn't know the value of schooling. I have been in school but in 2012, when my father died, I dropped out. I tried to find a sponsor to pay

« My parents were both alcoholics. When adults drink, it is because they don't want to face their responsibilities. »

for my school fees but I couldn't. A sponsor is a person that is willing to pay for your education. So when I left school, I entered prostitution so I could earn money and bring some food to my siblings. I was 14 when I started being involved in prostitution.

I came to the conclusion that I could do the same thing that the girls were doing in my area, which is commercial sex. They introduced me to this type of work. They told me that prostitution is a good thing, that I could earn as much money as them. So I thought I should try it. We went to a street called Koinange that is known for being a place of high class prostitution. The first time was hard. It is very hard because you are not used to doing this type of work. I only knew how to beg and

when you get a little bit of money you go back home. But in prostitution, the person removes your clothes. The first time was the hardest. It was my first sexual experience. My first client stopped in his car and talked to the girls. They said I was available so I got into his car and we went to his house. He was living alone in a kind of lodge. He was a white person around 40. He is the only white client I have ever had. I don't know where he was from. You don't ask a lot of questions. It is work, you go, you finish and you leave. You are not there to make friends with anyone.

« I have stopped prostitution but some boys are still insulting me. »

I was at home when my friends told me that a group of social workers from Undugu were coming on Wednesday to encourage girls to quit this type of work. I thought "let's see if it is a good idea and if not, I continue with my work". So I met Jane, a social worker that told us that prostitution is not a good solution.

But she understood that we were doing it because we did not have food, a shelter or clothes. Jane is like a mother. She is a good person. I can tell her everything so she can advise me. The first Wednesday, when I attended the session organized by Undugu, I thought they were lying and that there was no solution. I sat down and thought about all of it. And I decided to attend another session the following Wednesday. I realized that the organization was offering many different kinds of training programs such as catering, hairdressing, cooking, mechanics...

Even though I have stopped prostitution, some boys are still insulting me and calling me "prostitute". Some men are good, others are bad. I had a boyfriend recently. But I was not in love with him. Love is something that you feel for each other. It is an emotional thing.





MARGARET (21 YEARS OLD - UGANDA)

I have two siblings. My parents died when we were very young. I never had the chance to meet them. We grew up with our grandmother. We didn't have the chance to go to school. When I was 10, my auntie took me to another city called Jinja and she promised she would take me to school. When I arrived there, she didn't take me to school but to her house to work as a housemaid. She was mistreating me and she never paid me any money.

I was 10 when I started to work in prostitution. When I was living with my auntie, she would give me her clothes. The clothes were too big. Men started harassing me when I was 9, even before I had breasts. The clients I met in the streets used to give me the money so I could buy panties and

« My auntie didn't take me to school but to her house to work as a housemaid. She never paid me any money. »

clothes. I was paid between 2,000 and 5,000 shillings (between 50 cents and 1.35 euros). I couldn't go to school. My auntie didn't want to pay me fees. She was always bringing back the issues of my parents. She never felt responsible for my education. She would say things like "I am not the one that killed your parents" and she would beat me. So I finally decided to leave.

I then met a man that got me pregnant. He didn't care about me so I went to ask some help from my brother. But my brother tried to force me to have sex with him while I was pregnant. I left his house and went to see my auntie again because I had nowhere else to go. My grandmother was dead. Once there, a few days after my arrival, I gave birth. A few days later, my auntie's boyfriend

raped me. I didn't report it to the police because I was afraid that my auntie could chase me from the house. She was already mistreating me and I feared her reaction. But once she knew she pushed me to get married to him. I accepted because I had a baby. People were insulting me for marrying my auntie's boyfriend. It really got worst when he took my phone and all my money. I finally left my husband and took my baby with me.

I sometimes work in a hairdressing salon. I got to the vocational skills center of Uydul one year ago. I learned hairdressing and I have also increased my self-esteem. Now I can speak in front of people. And now I have less negative thoughts than I used to have. Even if I have many troubles at home, when I come to the center and share some time with my fellows, I feel much better. I can also give advice to the girls that are facing a

*« I learned hairdressing
and I have also increased
my self-esteem. »*

similar situation to mine. I come to the center from Monday to Friday.

I stopped prostitution when I met the man that I am living with now. I feel better now also because I live with a man now—faithfully. When I have money, my children go to school but when I don't, they stay at home. What makes me very happy now is the fact that I have vocational skills and this is something that can help me to get my own income. I see myself having my own beauty salon. I am confident that I will make a lot of money because I know all hairdressing skills. I will be able to open my salon when I have enough capital. For that I will need 2 million shillings (540 euros). It will be a women's salon. If I open my salon, I will be an example for other girls. They will see how good I am doing even if I never went to school.





SHANITAH (19 YEARS OLD - UGANDA)

My mother got pregnant while she was at school. She had to go back to her parents' house. It is common for young people to have kids in Uganda. I have a baby too, it is a boy and he is 10 months old. My parents lived in separated houses. I was 6 when my mom died from heart disease. After the burial, it was decided that I had to live with my father. My father wouldn't have been a bad parent but because of the influence of my stepmother he refused to pay for my education and he didn't really take care of me. She used to insult me, and even once, she threw hot milk on my legs. I still have the scars. I was 7 years old when that happened.

These mistreatments went on until I was 9. I escaped and tried to find my grandmother's

house. But I failed because she was not living at her place anymore. I had to live in the street for few days until a stranger took me. He brought me to a house where other children were living. He was using them to beg on the street. He used to give them dirty clothes and send them to the streets. I stayed nine months there.

« My father wouldn't have been a bad parent but because of the influence of my stepmother he refused to pay for my education. »

One day, a man we met in the street advised me and three other kids to flee that place. He asked us to follow him in a car and we travelled to another city called Busia. That night, we arrived to an enclosed place. Then, a group of four men came and took us to a room. We were asked to sit on the mattress that was in that room. They asked us to undress and I started to cry. I couldn't do it. They told me that they already

paid the money so I had to do it. They forced us to undress and they sexually abused us.

I was 10 years old. I will never forget that moment. I felt a lot of pain. I also had an infection because of injuries. Exploiters deserve death because they expose you to death. I used to share another room with other girls in this confined house. It was a big house. Every day, we had to move to the main room where we were forced to meet men. Then, they would enter this room and abuse us.

This situation lasted for one year. One day, another girl told me: “we must escape, let’s just go”. One day, after meeting the men, we pretended to go back to our room but we ran away. We ran, passed the border and entered into Kenya. We managed to cross the border without any ID in exchange for having sex with the policemen. It was the

« We managed to cross the border in exchange for having sex. »

only way to cross the border.

On the other side, we rented a house, with a single room. And we continued with sex work. The other girl was older than me. I was 15 when my friend died. One night, it was late and she went out to buy some food. On her way she was gang-raped and killed. Neighbours came to find me and told

me she passed away. It was a very sad moment. I paid for the burial. The police never found the killers. After that, I went back to Uganda. I accepted to marry a man I met even if I was still young. But this man was not satisfied with me from a sexual point of view. He mistreated me so few months later I escaped.

I was pregnant even if I didn’t notice until few months later. I took a blood test since I was pregnant. I was tested HIV positive. I am not sure but I think I got it from a customer. I started

to use condoms at that moment. Before that I never used any protection. I also started to take medication. But at the beginning I didn't want to take any treatment, I didn't want to accept the situation. If people know about your HIV status, they start to stigmatize you. They keep their distance. That is why I never told my HIV status to anybody, only to the social worker from Uydel.

My pregnancy was complicated. It was a cesarean operation. I breastfed the baby for six months and at a medical check-up, doctors found out that the baby had also contracted the virus. He later died. I was 16.

I continued sex work but this time I used condoms. One of my clients wanted to marry me. We had unprotected sex and I got pregnant. After that, he abandoned me. He just disappeared. My second baby is healthy and is not infected by HIV. We do medical

check-ups from time to time.

On television, I heard about an organization that was helping young people engaged into prostitution. I then visited Uydel's center. The first day I arrived at the center I told my story to a social worker. This social worker became like a mother. She registered me and offered me to participate to vocational skills sessions.

I started hairdressing trainings.

I have been here for 8 months.

Sometimes I work at a beauty salon when they need help. If

a client pays 20,000 shillings

(5.35 euros), I receive 5,000 (1.35 euros). It is not a lot because I am still learning.

I have learned that in life, you can always get a second chance. The training program gave me hope. I have a better life now. Now I am independent and self-reliant.

« I have learned that in life, you can always get a second chance. »



ESTHER (19 YEARS OLD - UGANDA)

I was living in the city with my parents, but later they moved to the village because we were not able to pay for the rent. They went back to the village and left me behind with my brother. I was like 7 years old. I moved to my uncle's house. I went to school up until I was 15. I stopped school because of the money. We pay like 200,000 shillings per term (54 euros), which is like three months. But by that time our uncle told me that he was tired of paying for my school fees.

When I stopped school, I first engaged with one of my cousins. So it was kind of incest. He promised that he would provide me with anything I needed. He took advantage of me. He was violent, he told me what he wanted and how we were going to do it. I felt

« My family abandoned me because they think that girls are not of any value. It's a tradition, they value boys. »

sick, but he continued to do it. It happened several times. My first experience was horrible and painful. Later on I revealed to my uncle what happened, but he told me I was a liar. Nobody in my family cared when I tried to talk about it. My parents neglected me, so nobody cared. I lacked everything, I lacked basic needs, clothes, pads, underwear, food... Even my uncle was not concerned.

My family abandoned me because they think that girls are not of any value. It's a tradition, they value boys most because they know that men "add" onto the clan. It's a traditional value.

My friends encouraged me and pledged they would support me. They told me they're

going to teach me how to look for money. They were sex workers. I was enticed because they told me on a typical day, I could earn 50,000 shillings (14 euros). At the time it was a lot of money.

The first client was brought to my house where I had been left alone. The girls told him that I was inexperienced. The client said « ok, I prefer that ». The client promised to pay 20,000 shillings (5.40 euros). I was excited about the payment. The client asked me if I liked the payment. I accepted it. He said « don't worry it won't take a lot of time ». The girls went outside of the house. My only fear was that the man was old. I was still underage. I was used to it because of my cousin but my fear was that this man was too old.

That night, I couldn't sleep. I felt guilty, like I committed a crime. I couldn't believe I

« I felt guilty. I felt like it wasn't the client who committed the crime. »

had done that. I felt like it wasn't the clients who committed the crime. I also felt that my friends were responsible, because they kept encouraging me. I was 15 when my uncle abandoned me and also when I started the prostitution. I still sometimes do it, I haven't completely stopped. But I have reduced the number of hours and clients. I used to drink alcohol to be bold in the sex work, it would make me less scared, and more confident. Usually it was a local spirit and beer. I tried to use other drugs, like marijuana, but one time I took a bath with my clothes on and almost went mad. So I didn't do it again. When I was 15 I also got pregnant and got an abortion at 5 months.

The social workers have helped me come from my past life experience to where I am now. I'm going to save money to start a hair salon, to be independent. Hairdressing earns more than the sex work.





TREY (18 YEARS OLD - UGANDA)

My life was not good. There were many issues. Regarding the situation of youth nowadays, some must leave school, some of them have nowhere to stay, and in many cases parents are dead. My mother died and I don't know my father. For me, both are dead. A lot of young people have lost their parents.

I used to stay alone. I used to get opportunities at different construction sites as a labourer. And sometimes I would go begging on the streets. I also used to get sugar mummies. You give them sex and they give you money. They have family but many of them were singles or widows. They all have money. I was 15 when I met them for the first time. It is common here. A friend took me there. I was scared because

« I used to get sugar mummies. You give them sex, they give you money. Many of them were singles or widows. »

it was my first intercourse. I used to receive 10,000 or 20,000 shillings (2.60 euros and 5.35 euros). The amount depends on their satisfaction. If she is happy she would give 20,000. They want to have sex or to taste young men and how softly they do it. They prefer young boys aged from 15 to 20.

After my first time, I was disappointed in myself because I never thought about doing it. I did it because I needed the money. I was not interested in those women. I wanted to get something to eat. I have done it around 20 times. I always used condoms. I was afraid of getting a disease. I heard about HIV and other diseases through friends, on radio and even at school when I was still attending. But I was not afraid to get them pregnant because

I thought I was too young to get someone pregnant. I was going to a bar, sit on a table and then a woman would come for me. Women knew where to find us. In Uganda there is male and female prostitution. It is more difficult to detect male prostitution. That is why there are specific places for young boys who are involved in prostitution. They don't stay openly on the streets. They stay in bars where women go to find sex in exchange of money.

I was helped by UYDEL social workers. It was God's blessing.

I stopped prostitution because it was a condition in order to access UYDEL's training center. I chose plumbing, it was my dream. It gives a lot of money. I have started the training almost a year ago and in few weeks I will have graduated. The social workers told me that I can be someone in life, that I can achieve many things. I have contacted plumbers that I met at the training center. I

« I am hopeful. I never imagined that one day I could be graduated. »

asked them for opportunities. That is how I secured a job. Now I am paid 20,000 shillings per day (5.35 euros). My manager is paying school fees for my young brother. I also bought 3 acres of land and I have planted maize. My auntie stays there and takes care of it. I also go there on weekends.

I never told my story to friends. I am too ashamed. But on the other side, I feel relieved sharing my story with people who supported me to get out of this lifestyle. When I remember my past lifestyle, I feel disappointed, depressed and sad. But now I am hopeful, I will never go back. I am a completely different person. I feel happy because I never imagined that one day I could graduate. I can't even sleep; I am waiting for my graduation. I will invite my girlfriend, friends and also few relatives. I have a girlfriend since two years ago. I want to marry her and have children.





BOKE (20 YEARS OLD - TANZANIA)

Before completing schooling my dad passed away. I was 15. My mother was not able to pay for my studies. My uncle said he would take care of me. My mother was living in another city with my siblings. But after moving to my uncle's house I didn't go to school. Instead, I was basically his houseworker. One week after arriving I was given very difficult tasks to do. The situation was bad. I had to sell small bags on the streets in the morning, and at the same time I had to deal with all the domestic work at home: cleaning the house, washing dishes, cleaning clothes for the whole family, in the family there were 7 children, fetching water which was at a distance from where I was staying.

At my uncle's house, to get food was a

« After moving to my uncle's house, I didn't go to school. Instead, I was basically his houseworker. »

problem, so I had a boyfriend who helped me. Sometimes he would bring food to the street where I was selling water. I had multiple partners, because he was not giving me all of what I needed, he was not fulfilling my needs. So I had to have more than one partner, I had two or three. I had to meet one at least once a day. I had time to get out of the house, it was an opportunity for me to go do my things and come back home. These were boys who had rented homes, so I would go to their place, we would do our things, and then I would get out. I had to be very careful that they didn't know about each other. Among them, I loved one, but he didn't love me. One of them was forcing me to have sex with him without protection, because he said « if you are mine and I am yours there's no point in having sex

with protection ».

In Africa, if you have more than one partner, you are considered a prostitute. There are so many types of prostitution. There are types where it's a business.

When I met the organization Kiwohede, I got tested for all STDs and then I felt like I was safe, and there was no need to see again those boys. Here, I got food and education. And for a while I was living in a shelter. Then, the organization gave us housing. We were 4 girls. They gave us a starting kit of business. We started to sell food at the market. And then after one year, we divided the money that we earned and started individual businesses.

I found a house to rent. I bought a TV, a mattress, and small things for my own room. So I started my life. For now, I do tie-dye, I

make it myself. You buy a plain shirt, and then you decorate with things, animals... I decorate all myself. It costs 5,000 shillings (1.35 euros) for this one to make, and I sell it for 15,000 (4 euros). I don't have a bank account, I use a mobile account. I can transfer money from my mobile account into another one. We do that a lot in Tanzania.

« I have a business, I have skills, I can survive on my own now. »

I have a boyfriend. We're planning to get married! We have been living together for 3 years now. He loves me, and we love each other, and even when I need help, he helps me. I am proud of myself, because nowadays I can have food, I don't need to ask people for things, I can do things on my own. If I need to go to the hospital I can pay for my medication. I have confidence in myself, because I don't depend much on my boyfriend, and I'm capable of doing business on my own. I have a business, I have skills, I can survive on my own now.





CHUMA (20 YEARS OLD - TANZANIA)

I fell into bad behaviour. I got pregnant from a man that used to help me with school fee money. The boy was almost 20. I was not in a relationship, I was not in love but I was just getting favors from the boy. It was just an exchange, I was not dating, it was just that I needed money. I got pregnant because I was not using any kind of protection. For those years, I didn't know what protection was. Now I do, but before, I had no idea. I discovered I was pregnant because when I would go to school I was getting morning sickness, so I used to sleep in class in the morning.

Personally, I knew I was pregnant, but I was afraid to tell my dad and stepmother because I was afraid of getting kicked out.

« I knew I was pregnant, but I was afraid to tell my dad. When he realized it, he started beating me over and over. »

They discovered something was wrong with me, so they brought me to the hospital for testing, and they discovered that I was 4 months pregnant.

When we got home, my dad started beating me over and over. He was beating me with a stick and I lost consciousness, and he kept beating me. The stick broke. When I gained consciousness I found the time to run into my father's room and I locked the room. The neighbours came to rescue me from him.

He said « ok, fine, but she has to get out of my house ». It was midnight, so I took my clothes, and I went to the house of the person responsible for impregnating me. It was not ok. It was not right. My father should have sat me down politely, and kindly asked me to

talk with him. I forgive him because he is my father. Even the boy refused to help me, and he kicked me out the same night. After that, I went into my mother's house.

One month after giving birth, my baby died. The baby was sick, but because I was young I didn't know what was wrong. When you would look at her skin, the skin looked like the skin of an old person. At the hospital, the child was taken to a special room, where doctors used oxygen. The following morning the child passed away.

Later, I participated in sex work, it was for a short time. Maybe one month. It was just one month, because there are things you have to do because of tough times. My friends convinced me to join them. I was like 13 or 14. We were just standing on the street. The clients knew where to find us, because we were standing on the road. Our customers

would come and we would walk by foot, or by motorcycle, depending on the type of client, to a house. That's where we would go and do our things. If I went with a man for 2 hours, I was given 10,000 shillings (2.70 euros). For 3 hours, I was given 15,000 (4 euros).

I wanted to buy the same things my friends had. Dresses, gowns, a phone. So sometimes I would find someone to do my hair. I felt like I was curious to make my hair look beautiful like others. I needed the money, but it was also about social status. I wouldn't do it again. I don't feel comfortable about talking about what happened because it was not a good behaviour.

I wish this year to get facilities where I can start my own business. I want to teach people the skills I have, like tie-dye, sewing, decoration...

*« I needed the money
but it was also about
social status. »*





FABRICIA (18 YEARS OLD - MADAGASCAR)

I had to leave school in 6th grade, I was 13. I was really sad, since I loved learning. I wanted to be like other children. But my mom didn't have any more money to pay for the school fees.

Then I started working in the streets, with other girls who weren't in school. We would walk around wherever, and we met women who worked as prostitutes. They looked like they had a lot of money, which attracted me immediately. I said to myself, it would be easy to earn money like this. But the women didn't tell me the truth about their lifestyle.

The first time I went out as a prostitute, it was a friend who brought me to a place where we could get a lot of money. She took me

to a room where there was a client. I don't remember him. But I remember that he gave me 2,000 ariary (60 cents in euros) which is really not much. I was naïve. That's not even enough to buy rice. But I decided to continue in order to earn more money.

« I said to myself, it would be easy to earn money like this. But the women didn't tell me the truth about their lifestyle. »

At first I didn't have a lot of clients. I would show up every day, changing streets each day, even sometimes going into bars. I remember that I would often cry. I wasn't happy; especially when I would see my friends go to school. Then I got used to it.

One day I became pregnant, I was 16 years old. My mom said nothing. I didn't want to keep the baby, I didn't want to have a child. I wanted to be like my friends. Now I regret

not having had the baby.

One year later, I went to ECPAT. It was a neighbour who suggested I go to their office, she told me that if I wanted to go to school, they could help me. It was an easy decision, because I really wanted to study. I began a course for cooking and pastry making, which is really what I want to do in my life. I learned how to make fried rice, cakes, and especially surprise-cakes, which is my favorite to make!

Since being with ECPAT I have slowed down a lot with the sex work, and I would like to stop completely. Time to time I return to it with my sister, who is a prostitute. She tells me to stop, but sometimes I lack the money. When I do it, I feel ashamed. I'm afraid of falling back into it. Because of my area, a lot of my neighbours are in sex work; the neighbourhood is dirty, the people fight, there's gambling in the streets. If I ever meet

a girl who wants to start doing prostitution, I'm going to tell her that it's bad.

Today I have changed, I don't dress the same, and no longer I speak the same way. My process of ending sex work is the thing for which I am most proud of. Also, the people in my neighbourhood don't speak about me like they did before; they no longer say mean things. Before, they scorned me, and that hurts.

In a couple years I hope that I will have stopped completely. I will dress well, I will work in a pastry shop, and I will live in a neighbourhood that doesn't have a brothel.

« Ending sex work is the thing for which I am most proud of. »





NAM (18 YEARS OLD - MADAGASCAR)

My mother died when I was 5 years old. My father's sister was the one who continued to pay for my school fees, I was living with her. But when she got married and she had children, she stopped taking care of me. I had to stop school at the end of elementary school. Then, I started to work at peoples' homes. I did the cooking, the cleaning. I didn't like doing this job, they yelled at me all the time, they woke me up at four or five in the morning to work. I left because I wasn't able to continue to deal with the commands and the reprimanding.

My friends pulled me into the sex work little by little. I hung out with them, they gave me money. They also got me to start drinking and smoking. They told me "if you dress up

as a girl, you'll be very pretty, and you will earn a lot of money". I didn't know what to do, I didn't have any money. I told myself I was lost. One of my friends came to do my make up and give me a wig and clothes to dress up in. I was 16.

« My friends told me 'if you dress up as a girl, you'll be very pretty, and you will earn a lot of money'. I was 16 years old. »

The first time I was a bit stupid. When the clients gave me money, my friends took it from me. At first, I would always go with them. They profited from my naivety. I had to buy them alcohol, and give them money. Otherwise they would say I wasn't kind. Little by little I got used to it, and I started to go out alone. Every Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday I was in the 67th quarter, and Friday and Saturday I would go to Analakely. I suffered a lot from this life. I had to deal with the cold, the

mosquitoes, it was hard. Some of the clients were nice, but others were mean, they didn't give me money, they were violent, some of them hit me.

I tried to stop, but I didn't have money, I didn't even have anything to buy myself something to eat. I don't have family here in Tananarivo. I didn't speak about it to anyone. At first I thought I was going to be able to keep this secret. But everyone in my neighbourhood knew about it, I felt very bad. I didn't speak to anybody. When I was beaten, I stayed hidden at home. I would hide my bruises. I didn't know what to do. The clients were big, and I felt small.

When I met with ECPAT I was 17 years old, I was very motivated to learn a trade. I chose to do hairdressing because it's a trade that fits me. I like cutting hair a lot. The course was really good, I learned a lot. Now I would

like to work in a salon. And later I would like to have my own salon. I am proud of having completed the course. It was a surprise. I wasn't expecting it at all. I believed that I couldn't ever follow coursework, that I would remain a prostitute until the end of my life.

Thanks to the activities at ECPAT, I am more confident in myself, because I drink less. I am drunk less often, and the others don't take my money. I can control myself with alcohol, I am trying to reduce how much I smoke and drink. I hate the ones that pulled me into this, because they got me to start drinking and smoking, and it's hard to stop. It is also hard to stop prostitution completely. I continue sometimes when I need the money. But I really want to stop. When I have work, I will stop.

*« I really want to stop.
When I have work, I will
stop. »*





LINA (17 YEARS OLD - MADAGASCAR)

I became pregnant at 13 years old. I had to stop school and figure myself out, because my parents didn't have money. My father is a teacher and my mother doesn't work. I began to work for a family as a cleaning lady, I did the laundry, but it wasn't a regular job. After her birth, the father of my daughter helped me a little for the first few months, he would buy milk and clothes, he gave us a bit of money. Then he stopped helping me.

The money that I was making wasn't enough anymore and I began to go out with men who could help me. Only from time to time. Not every evening. I didn't go out with a lot of men, only when I didn't have money. Nobody told me to do this, it was my choice because my life was difficult. For me, prostitution wasn't

« The money that I was making wasn't enough anymore and I began to go out with men who could help me. »

something good. I know that some girls cannot cope with it and suffer, others love it because they earn money, and certain ones have found love through it. I didn't plan to do it, but I did it because I didn't have money. I didn't go out with a lot of men, I didn't change often, some of the men were regulars. My friends pushed me to do this.

I never spoke about it to my parents, I didn't speak a lot to my friends either. I wanted to talk to someone about it, but I didn't know who to talk to. In the neighbourhood the people didn't notice that I was sad. They said that I was lucky to go out with foreigners, but nobody knew that I was sad to the core.

One day ECPAT came to look for girls who

were victims of prostitution, who didn't go to school, who were in the streets and not with their families. I chose to do a course for haircutting because I love everything that has to do with beauty, braiding hair, doing nails, hairstyles... I am now doing an internship. The room isn't very big, but it has all the necessities. I hope that I will be able to find a job after my internship. And later, I would like to open my own salon.

I feel good nowadays, I find that my life is good. And I myself have changed. Before, I didn't speak at all, I didn't know how to communicate with people, I was a little closed off. Since taking the course, I have changed. I speak with everyone. I also stopped seeing my friends from before. They were older than me, and now I have begun to see friends of my age, it's better for me.

« I don't want that my daughter comes accross what happened to me. »

Today my daughter is two and a half years old and I already think about what she is going to become. One can't know what's going to happen, but I think that I'm not going to prevent her from going out with a foreigner, because it's a chance for her. It's destiny if she can go out with foreigners. And I will decide with whom she goes out, if he is good for her, and handsome, because a mother knows what's good for her daughter. But I am also going to encourage her to go to school until the end. I don't want that my daughter comes across what happened to me, I want that she succeeds in her life. I don't want a man to take her before she is 19 years old. I want her to study, because I didn't have the chance to do that.





TIANA (16 YEARS OLD - MADAGASCAR)

I loved school but I had to stop since my mom did not have enough money to pay for it. I had nothing to do during my days. Some friends came to see me and told me that they knew how I could make money instead of doing nothing. I refused, but they insisted that I listen to them. They told me “you have to meet up with some men, but we aren’t going to tell you more unless you come with us”. I thought I had to drink and sing in a bar. I wasn’t expecting anything else.

The first time I was very scared and I thought of leaving. I was scared they would fight me. I remember one client. He was pretty old. He was violent. He gave me 20,000 ariary (6 euros). I decided to continue. I was 14. I was working from 6 am to 9 pm every day.

« I thought I had to drink and sing in a bar. I wasn’t expecting anything else. The first time I was very scared. »

Sometimes I would find clients, sometimes not. I would go into bars, in the karaoke bars. I started to earn a decent amount of money, more than the girls that dragged me into it. They wanted me elsewhere. I was earning sometimes 10,000 (3 euros), sometimes 20,000 ariary per day (6 euros). I was using this money to buy fashionable clothes; I gave some to my mother, also. I told her I was working at peoples’ homes.

Multiple times I thought of stopping the sex work, especially when someone explained the risks to me: the sicknesses, and the risk of pregnancy. I was scared that I would become pregnant and catch diseases. But each time the girls were able to convince me to continue. I spoke to no one. I didn’t want to speak at all. I had

changed, especially my way of dressing, my way of speaking and communicating with others. I spoke badly, like a badly educated girl.

One day I will talk to my mom about the prostitution. For now she knows nothing about it. But I would like to get rid of the intense fury and fear that I have. I am so upset because of the prostitution. And also towards my mom because she didn't think about how she could earn enough for me to stay in school.

One day a friend told me to come to ECPAT, she told me that they could protect me. ECPAT allowed me to study and stop the prostitution. I'm very proud of it. At first I was scared to fall back into it, I was scared of the influence of the other girls. I tried to keep my distance from them, but often they would come to my house. I spoke to them,

« One day, I will have my own bakery. I've already dreamt it. »

and I said "I've changed, I am no longer the person you knew; someone is helping me and I've changed my life". Now the girls rarely come to see me. I want to tell them that they can't influence people like that. Later, I will explain to my children that prostitution is bad, that one has to study, because it's the only means of succeeding in life. You have to go to school until the end.

Today I have faith, I am on my way in life, I am no longer going to allow myself to be influenced by people like that. I also completed a course for pastry making. I know how to make cakes, madeleines, croissants. Especially the croissants. What I love is preparing the dough. Later, I'm going to work in a hotel as a baker. And one day I will have my own bakery, I've already dreamt it. And then I'll have my own home. I will also share my house with my mom.



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