

GloACT

Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and
the Smuggling of Migrants (2015 - 2019)

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Hear their voices. Act to protect.

Testimonies by victims of human trafficking from around the world

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This booklet contains a collection of testimonies from 15 victims and is being used to support GLO.ACT's "*Hear their voices. Act to protect.*" campaign. Testimonies enable us to reinforce that victims need to be placed at the centre of any strategy against human trafficking. The testimonies have been obtained from countries around the world, including from international organisations and civil society partners.

DISCLAIMER: This publication has been produced by the GLO.ACT team and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Male

I lived in the same district as Mr. B, who was well aware that I struggled to feed my family. Mr. B approached me and told me I could donate a kidney for 1200 Euros. He also promised me two 'bigah' land in Chitwan. He said that extracting one kidney would not make a difference to my health. I believed him and in June 2010 we made a long journey to a neighbouring country. We went directly to a hospital where I was admitted and kept for 15 days undergoing medical check-ups. On the final day of my stay they removed my one of my kidneys and I was immediately sent back to Nepal. I had no idea that having a kidney extracted in such a manner is a serious crime. After my return my health quickly deteriorated. I could not work and I was physically as well as mentally weak. Everything Mr. B had promised me was not provided apart from a very small sum of money. In April 2014, I came into contact with the Forum for Protection of People's Rights (PPR) and was provided with counselling and treatment support by PPR Nepal. After few legal counselling sessions by PPR's lawyer in my district, a First Incident Report was registered against Mr. B in accordance with the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007 which lead to a trial in the district court. In June 2014 the district court ruled that Mr. B should be imprisoned for three years.



Tikirit

I do not know how I got to be a wahaya (slave) in Niger. I know I became one when I was only 10 years old and lived as one for 15 years. A man called Amola owned me and we lived in his family village. I was his only slave and my clothes set me apart from his four legal wives. They dressed decently, while my clothes barely covered me. He used to come to me at night in secret for sex. My workload was heavy. I had to fetch water for all the family. I had to fetch water for over 100 cattle. I had to hull and pound millet and sorghum for food. I had to provide firewood for the family. I often had to prepare everything for and during large community gatherings for up to 40 people that took place in the fields during the rainy season. I had to wash up, keep the courtyard clean, prepare all the beds and look after the children. These were my tasks until Amola died.

Marcela

I was born in 1978, in Colombia, South America. At the age of 17 I became a single mother and even though I worked several jobs to make ends meet, my circumstances made me a perfect target for human traffickers. When my child needed hospital treatment a man loaned me the money to pay the bill and then offered me a job as a professional dancer in Japan. However, once I arrived in Japan my passport was taken away and I was told I would have to pay back \$50,000 by becoming a prostitute before I would be released. For 18 months I was forced to work as a prostitute in Japan. When I was able to escape, I returned to Colombia feeling afraid and hopeless. I did not receive any help. The physical and emotional trauma caused by my experience and the lack of assistance upon my return, initially led me back to a life of prostitution. However, tired of being a helpless victim, I decided to turn my life around. I wrote and published two books: "Atrapada por la Mafia Yakuz" (Trapped by the Yakuza Mafia) and "Lo que fui y lo que soy" (What I was and what I am) with the purpose of raising awareness about people trafficking in Colombia. I also formed an alliance with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in order to raise awareness about human trafficking in Colombia, and I created a foundation with my name that serves survivors of human trafficking. These days I live in the United States and continue to spread awareness about human trafficking, to advocate for greater services for victims, and to encourage partnerships between governments, organizations, and survivors.

Phengma

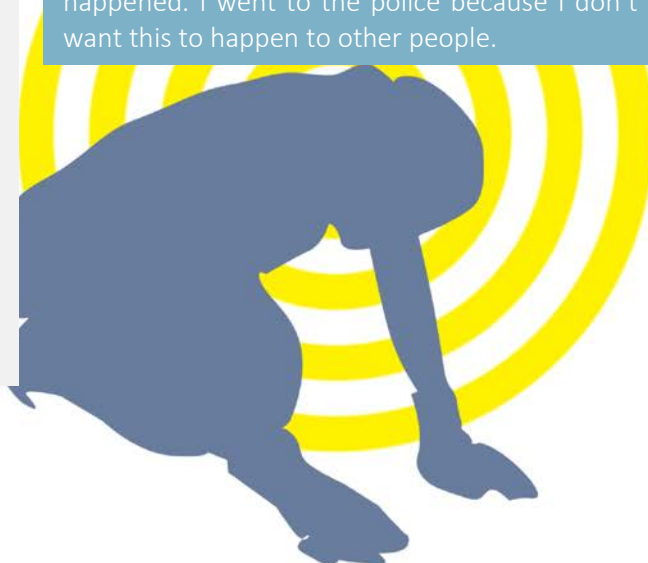
I come from a village in Savannakhet province. My family was poor so I had to leave school at grade 5 to help on the rice fields. I heard about a good job in Thailand, which would pay around 75 Euros a month plus food and accommodation. I was desperate to help my family so I took up the offer. Together with another girl I travelled to Thailand in a service truck. I worked at Mr. P's food shop but I was too slow so had to do housework for him instead. For seven days I laboured at his house. He beat me on the head and torso with a metal ice shovel every day. Or he would use a paddle. His wife would throw chilli in my face, pour cleaning liquid on me or repeatedly immerse my head in hot water. With raw bruises I was forced to work. I had to sleep outdoors on the floor. I was never paid. Eventually, some neighbours took pity on me and helped me to escape. Monks from a temple brought me to a hospital. I then spent almost two years in a shelter in Thailand before I was repatriated to Laos in 2014. I was successful in taking legal action against Mrs. P and received 500 Euros in compensation.

Wongani

I was a single mother of two. Life in Mzimba was tough. My only option was to go to South Africa where I hoped I would be able to make enough money to send some back home. I contacted a local transporter (smuggler), and offered to pay half the money now and the rest once I had arrived. The transporter understood and even told me he would be able to get me work as a domestic worker so I could pay my debts. I was happy to take the offer. Once the bus arrived, it was time for business. The manner of our once gracious and trusted hosts and transporters suddenly changed. They began to bark commands at the "unclaimed" women on the bus and ordered us to look presentable. They demanded we parade ourselves against the bus according to our height. I was in the middle of a degrading transaction – an active participant in a women auction. Without an explanation, total strangers began picking and bidding for us. It was clear the domestic work offer had been a bait, and the half owed including interest charged had to be paid in full. With no option, I was groomed by the transporter and became a prostitute – I had a debt to pay. In 2016, I featured in a documentary on the Malawian human trafficking phenomenon in South Africa, and I received a barrage of threatening phone calls from the transporters. I was terrified and went into hiding. I figured that I would wait for the controversy to die down before returning to Malawi.

Male

I had no job for so long and during one of my attempts to find work on the Internet I got a message from a man named Fedor. He invited me to Kiev. During our meeting I was offered to sell my kidney and travel to Costa Rica. I wasn't told that such an intervention could cause severe health problems. But I felt I had no choice. Fedor got me to United Arab Emirates first, where we went to the clinic to see if my kidneys were healthy enough and suitable for transplantation. After that I was taken to Costa Rica where I was immediately put in a medical facility. I was always under the close watch of Fedor and his guards. I did think about changing my mind but all along I felt that I couldn't really refuse to do it anymore. They were constantly reminding me that refusing such an "arrangement" could be deadly. After the operation I did receive some money. I was taken back to Ukraine by the guards and only after that did I fully realize what had actually happened. I went to the police because I don't want this to happen to other people.





Female

I had no life and it bothered me a great deal. I needed time to think about my life and just to be with my thoughts. Remembering my recent trip to India I went back there to cool off and get my bearings. I went to Manali and travelled to nearby villages for a month or so. One day I went into the mountains and all I remember is that I woke up in a cold dark space with my hands tied to the wall. I realized that I had been kidnapped, no passport, no money, no personal things, everything was gone. Several days passed and then there were men who would come to rape me. I couldn't do anything. My hands were tied. There was no bed, just the floor. The men who came in hardly said anything. I was given very little food, mostly liquids with a peculiar taste, maybe there were drugs in them. I was so afraid that they would transport me to another place, that they would just take me to some place, that I wouldn't be able to leave one day. I was so emotionally drained and sick. And then one day I got really lucky. The guard at the door was outside and he left the door unwatched. I started rubbing the rope and pulling. And finally the rope was torn; I pulled the door and ran. As fast as I could, I just ran in an unknown direction but as far as I could. After some time I ended up in a village and while walking around the market I heard some people speak Russian. I cried for help. They were Russian tourists; they helped me get to Deli. There I got help from one of their friends that helped me get to the Ukrainian Embassy, where I got travel documents and a ticket back to Kiev. I was finally home. Sick, broken and with no money but I was home.

Mary

I left Nigeria at the age of 17. I was completely alone and had no prospects at all. Some guy called Ben said he knew people in Europe and could help me find work. He offered to pay for my trip – 25,000 Euros. We were going to leave for Europe from Libya, but once I had arrived there I realized that Ben had lied to me. He showed his true face. He threatened to hand me over to someone else and leave me behind if I didn't do as he said. Then he raped me. I wasn't the only one. I was held in Libya for months in a house with not enough food and cut off from everyone. I wanted to flee, but I had nothing; no phone, no money. I didn't even know where I could have escaped to. When we finally got on a boat to Italy we had to be rescued by the Italian coast guard. From another girl I heard I was going to have to work as a prostitute. When I told the authorities at the reception centre my story, they placed me in a safe house for victims of sex trafficking. But now the people who paid for my journey back home are threatening my mother, asking for their money back. They told her I ran away, that she has to pay them back. If she doesn't, they say, they will curse me so I get deported. My life is still terrible. I feel like I'm in prison. The only place I'll ever be in is this room. I've been abandoned here and I can't tell anyone what's inside me. I'm so confused. I can't focus. I just want to be free.

Urmat

My sister and I lived with our aunt in a village in the region of Osh. Our family struggled to make ends meet and did not have a stable income. One day, I met a man who promised to help me. At night I left the house without saying anything to my aunt and went with the man to Bishkek. At Bishkek's Osh Bazaar, I started begging for money. The man would take my money away. I started living with other children in a shack near the Osh Bazaar. The man would beat us if we disobeyed him. Eventually, I was detained by police. A doctor inspected me and I was diagnosed with tuberculosis. I was provided with medical and psychological care in the Rehabilitation Centre for Minors. I was given new clothes and shoes, and provided with other relevant reintegration assistance.

Mark

I was unemployed. I had no income whatsoever and a guy pulled up next to me in a quite expensive car. He said as well as work he'd give me somewhere to stay, provide food for me and he'd pay me £50 a day. I jumped at the chance but soon he stopped paying me anything at all. Everyone at the site was working up to 15 hours a day, and it was very heavy physical work. There were a lot of broken looking people. There was no rest; every waking minute of each day was working somehow. There were, I'd say around 20 other workers on the site who were working for other members of my boss's family. They were beaten for the slightest thing or for not working fast enough. I've seen people attacked with work tools, with spades, with pick axes. They had their heads shaved and they made 15 men live in a horsebox. It was very much like a concentration camp. A lot of them were extremely hopeless; there were guys that had been there for five years or more. They'd given up all hope. They couldn't see any way to leave, they'd seen people try to leave in the past and every single time a day or two later, they'd be dragged back. At the time I was 24 years old, I have a decent education, I'm physically fit. It's a 'How could this happen to me?' sort of thing. It's really, really difficult for people to understand that it could happen to anybody. It just requires that somebodies' circumstances change, that things get worse for them. It could happen to absolutely anybody.

Cristina

My name is Cristina. I am 15 and I come from Romania. I lived there, and then went to England. I stayed with my little sisters and brother. I minded them; I was always at home with them. And then... one day, my mother married me off. A friend of hers came to our house and said he wanted to marry me. I heard this, and cried, and did all kinds of things not to marry him. She said: "it's my decision, you just live by it." My husband was 18. I was only 13 and couldn't do anything. He was mean. He didn't know how to act with a girl of 13 or 14. He acted as if I were a woman of 20 or 30. Then I went to Romania where they made my passport and stuff. After that I went to Spain. I stole and he stayed home. I never wanted to steal but I had to or he would hit me. He saw that stealing wasn't working in Spain, so we came to Belgium. I thought what I was doing was wrong and I wanted to stop. I got myself arrested voluntarily. If I hadn't done that, I wouldn't be here. They put me in a centre and I started to live a normal life. When I think about it all my heart breaks.

Ilyas

"I met a man at the unemployment exchange who offered me a job in construction in neighbouring Kazakhstan. The man took me and two others to a farm in Kazakhstan. When we arrived, we saw 20 other men and women from the Kyrgyz Republic working on the farm. Soon after arriving we were beaten up, threatened and forced to do hard labour for a month. We were given food and tobacco in limited quantities. After a month I was able to run away and get to the border. Two months later I went to the authorities. They opened a criminal case and sent an investigation request to their Kazakhstani counterparts. Kazakhstani authorities looked into the matter and concluded that there was no evidence to support the claim of human trafficking for forced labour.



Affoué

I had a good childhood but when I was 15 my father said it was time to go to Europe to study. The papers were taken care of, we got the tickets and they took me to Abidjan airport. A lady and a gentleman were waiting for me. All these years that I stayed with them I did everything. I had to serve breakfast at 5am and prepare snacks for the parents. Then I took care of the children: wake them, feed them, take them to school, do the shopping clean the house and make lunch. After lunch I had to take the children back to school and do any other chores and cook dinner. Sometimes they even woke me to wash the gentleman's car. They used to say 'if you go out don't tell anyone you have no papers'. I lived in constant fear. Whenever they said to do something, I did it. And if I didn't, I was told off. I slept in a cubbyhole. When I lay down my feet were going up. I wasn't getting paid. She said they were keeping the money in the bank for me. Then one day they said: "Affoué, we need your travel authorisation". I didn't know what this was but it meant I could never return because they had bought my tickets. That's when they said no, we never said anything about money in the bank for you. I started to rebel. Little by little, I understood with the help of friends and neighbours that I had to take things in my own hands, I stayed for 12 years, until I was 27. I felt so very hurt and betrayed. Every time I think about the wrong they've done me I feel angry, but then I think anger doesn't help. You have to move forward. Today I have a beautiful baby boy who makes me happy. My advice would be that human beings have to stop harming their fellow humans that slavery has to end. We are all human beings. We are all equal.



Sang

I am the youngest of six children from a village in Laongam district. In 2009, when I was 15, my mother passed away and my father remarried. I left school and, together with a friend, crossed over to Thailand to seek employment. After nine months of badly paid work on a farm and as a housekeeper, I was arrested and repatriated to my family. After two weeks I agreed to an offer of great work and was smuggled overland to Thailand. However, this was not the employment I was promised. I had to work for a person in Bangkok where I had to clean houses, work at wholesale stores and in construction. I was forced to work long hours with no days off; I was beaten and tortured; denied access to a phone and forbidden from contacting anyone. I didn't get paid. After six years, I managed to escape and found work but was always scared of the authorities. All employers took advantage of my situation and never paid me fully. Finally, with some assistance, I managed to go to the Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in Bangkok and was repatriated in 2016 but without any money. With the help of a charity, I found shelter in Pakse and was offered a family and community assessment as well as a health check-up and counselling. I am now working to become a hairdresser and hope to open my own beauty salon in the near future.

Theodora

I had a partner. We lived together. I lived with him for seven years, I had a child and I worked in a restaurant. When my mother- and sister-in-law were deported to Romania from Belgium, I saw the deportation orders and it said clearly they had been prostitutes in Belgium. She wanted - she forced - me to go and be a prostitute in Belgium. She used my son to threaten me. She had every means to take my son away. I worked in a bar dedicated to prostitution. Every Friday, I was expected to send them 300 Euros. I had to send them that in addition to gifts I would take to Romania. I couldn't accept it. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. I disgusted myself. Because I couldn't believe I was doing this. I couldn't recognize myself. I was a different woman from before. I wanted to get out, but I couldn't find a way. I managed to endure it because of my son. He is my heart, my life, my eyes; I have no words to explain it. You can never forget. Never. The wound may heal but the scars will remain for the rest of your life.

The logo for GloACT, featuring the word "GloACT" in a blue, sans-serif font. The "o" is lowercase, and "ACT" is uppercase. The logo is centered within a white circle, which is surrounded by three concentric yellow rings of varying thicknesses, creating a target-like or ripple effect.

GloACT

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