

Dar Hosea
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ANNUAL REPORT



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OUR HEARTFELT THANKS

ACKNOWLEDGMENT, APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE

The opening and running of Dar Hosea (DH) have only been possible through altruistic and generous organisations, and individuals, who continue to support and help us not only financially, but also through other contributions and donations. As with every other residence, the daily running of DH involves an endless list of financial expenses. To name a few, these include residence utility bills, maintenance, staff wages, and the provision of daily needs such as groceries, and materials for crafts which serve as therapy.



All this would not be possible without the benevolent donations and support of all our generous benefactors. A massive thank you goes out to all our esteemed sponsors, each and every one of them has made it possible to maintain the upkeep and daily running of our residence, which in turn made a difference to every individual of who makes use of our service.

It is through your considerate donations and kindness that we can open the doors every morning, where each person who steps inside is warmly and respectfully welcomed, whilst provided with that safe and loving environment which helps build the bridge towards reconnection to oneself, to loved ones, and to the rest of the community and society at large. All this is possible thanks to each and every one of you, and your immense generous hearts.

LIST OF BENEFACTORS:

Aid to the Church in Need

AME Health and Safety

APS Bank

Baked by Fran

Bits Consult

Carina Beauty Clinic

Caritas Malta

Casa Vini

Commandery of the Castello/Military and Hospitaller Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem

Commissioner for Domestic Violence

Dare to Be Malta

Drop in the Ocean

Farsons

F.E.M. - Female Entrepreneurs Malta

Forestals

Iklin Parish

Immaculate Conception

Jet Freight

Konfraternità tal-karità

Kunsill Studenti Universitarji

La Salle Athletics Club

Little Chef and Co.

Malta Food Bank Foundation

Midsea Publishers, together with editors and authors involved in the books by the name:

Arthur G. Vella - F'kollox Innobb u Nagdi

Millennium Chapel

Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights

Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations

Pembroke Parish

Perit Anthony Robinson and Associates

SIGMA Foundation

Sisters of Charity of St. Jeanne Antide

St Aloysius College

St George's Basilica, Gozo

St Jeanne Antide Foundation

TX Perfumeries

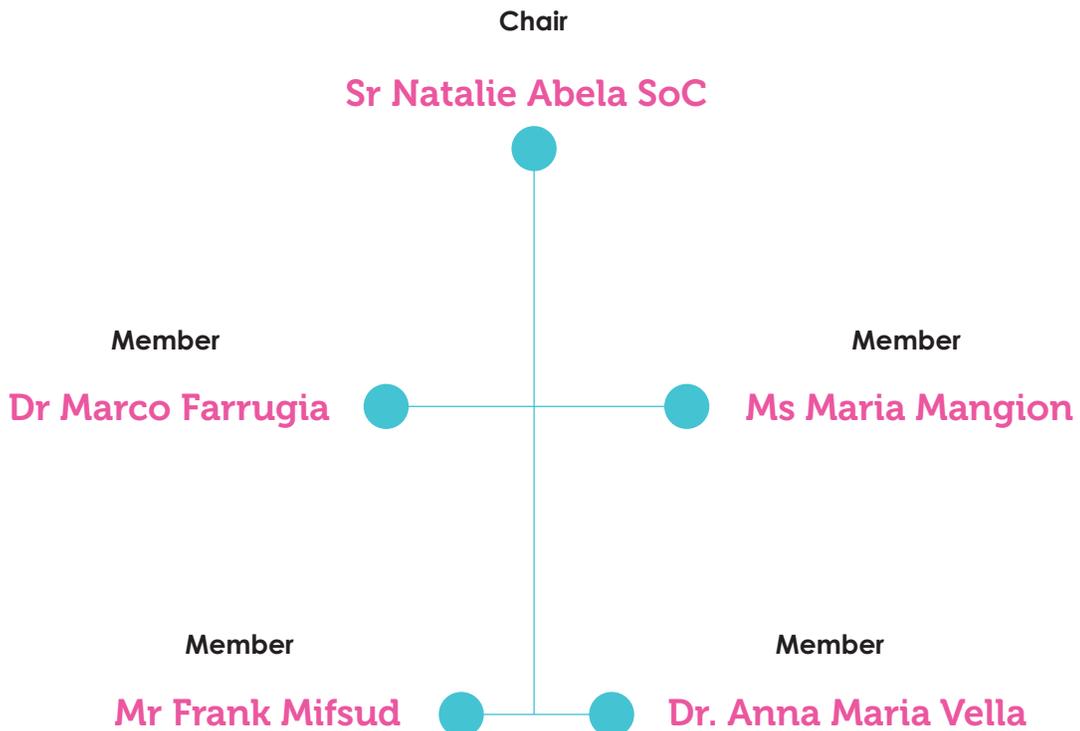
University of Malta Chaplaincy

THE FOUNDATION

- THE BOARD OF DAR HOSEA

DH is an NGO which was established in 2013 by the St Jeanne Antide Foundation through the IRENE Project, as supported by the EEA Start-Up Fund. Later in 2017, DH merged with the Association of the Friends of Thouret, a non-profit organisation within the auspices of the Sisters of Charity. The organisation is registered with the Commissioner for the Voluntary Organisations (Reg: V.O. 1365), and it is directed by a Management Committee comprised of the chairperson, and other founding members.

In 2021 these were:



DAR HOSEA -

A GLIMPSE THROUGH THE KEYHOLE



DH is a safe, tranquil, and welcoming residence which serves as a daily drop-in centre for women seeking refuge from abuse, violence, poverty, addiction, mental health issues, and any other harm and turmoil. Despite not being a residential programme through our

low-threshold drop-in services, we offer a comprehensive approach to our service users.

DH welcomes every woman and her child/ren with open arms, irrespective of age, race, colour, ethnicity, religious creed, disability, socioeconomic status, and political beliefs. This residence, which is the only one in Malta, was founded in 2013 with the aim of providing a safe space and refuge to women trapped in prostitution. It represents a safe home and offers a hospitable space, where anyone who enters is free from the shackles of judgement which is usually accompanied by prejudice against women trapped in prostitution. DH symbolises the warmth and love of a caring family ambiance.

BEHIND THE SCENES - A BRIEF CONTEXT TO THE EMERGENCE OF DAR HOSEA



The founding members in 2013 realised that in Malta, women caught in prostitution had nowhere to go if they needed help or support. It was easily noticed that numerous women were not only submerged and consumed by a vicious cycle of substance misuse, which was destroying their lives, but in parallel to these sufferings, these women were also trapped in a violent and harmful dark world of prostitution.

Every woman encountered, expressed how she was suffering physically, mentally, emotionally, and economically, in these two enmeshed worlds of addiction and prostitution

The compassion and respect that was offered by the first volunteers created a safe and protected space, where the women felt they could freely disclose their pain, and the dire realities they were living in.

These distressing and shocking experiences were the founding blocks for the creation of a safe environment for these women and many others like them. Such forceful narratives had set the context, that in turn inspired the founding members to open a drop-in centre for women struggling with such realities.



FROM A DIFFERENT LENS

- WHAT THESE REALITIES TAUGHT US

Through years of working closely with our service users, and through their narratives, we have opened our eyes to a reality which was obscured by various aspects.

These women's realities taught us to understand the darkness and pain that looms within the underworld of prostitution, They taught us to see what prostitution truly is.

We learnt that the reality behind prostitution is not the glamour that is so deceitfully portrayed by the sex industry across numerous social media platforms; not one that is advocated for by those in a privileged or powerful position, or by those who will connivingly benefit from the sex industry and the trafficking of women and girls (as these are inextricably linked). But the reality behind prostitution is extreme violence, a dark and dire underworld where the majority of women who are trapped, disclose horrifying and painful stories, where in order to survive both physically and emotionally, they must consume heavy drugs which help them dissociate from their authentic selves to endure the traumas.



"Jane recounted how the more people she served, the more heroin and cocaine she needed to take, as they acted as emotional blockers It's a crappy job and a vicious cycle. They need to stop taking drugs to stop prostituting themselves."*

(Extract taken from The Malta Independent: 'He picked up a brick and told me to be quiet or else, then he raped me' - former prostitute.' Article published 9th January 2022).

Link to article: https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2022-01-09/local-news/He-picked-up-a-brick-and-told-me-to-be-quiet-or-else-then-he-raped-me-former-prostitute-6736239619?fbclid=IwAR0LFPEI7qL8AtU0OeCY4r3zFpv9Y2f0UMq5fpwdQybMNFPCJmYob7p7_5l

This narrative resonates with the women attending DH, who also share the same experiences and the use of substances such as drugs and alcohol, as a coping mechanism.

Such harms and violence are not only manifested against the bodies of individuals caged in such trajectories, but also against their psyches, against their emotions, against their entire essence, until each person is fragmented. Due to the traumas endured in prostitution, individuals become shattered from their very own identity. This is a vicious cycle and as a result to the fragmentation, other factors such as mental health issues, addiction, poverty, and homelessness, commonly emerge.

OTHER FACTORS

- CULTURAL MISCONCEPTIONS OF SOCIETY

Regrettably, prostitution is also a result of a misogynistic attitude within our society, which is conditioned by a surrounding cultural context portraying women as mere sexual objects ready to commodify themselves for the sexual gratification of toxic men.

Such a misconceived perception serves as a patriarchal tool which is used to practice and maintain violence against women, and to exert power and control over vulnerable individuals. It is the core underlying concept of

violence against women and girls, and unless prostitution is tackled and seen for what it truly is - as harmful and exploitative-violence against women and girls can never be eradicated.

It is on the awareness of these diverse and broad realities, including the knowledge of the cultural context and how it is conditioning society, that the basis of DH is constructed, and a holistic approach to such factors are also identified and considered.



THE SYMBOLIC MEANING TO THE NAME

DAR HOSEA

Every soul is beautiful and precious:
is worthy of dignity and respect, and
deserving of peace, joy and love

At DH, deep reflection and significance is given to every detail as we recognise the importance to meaning and representation. Just like the creation of art through different mosaic pieces which when combined provide significance and uniqueness, so is DH created on symbolic representations, which when joined form and provide that distinct and meaningful experience.



This detail is also reflected in the name selected for this residence. This particular name is derived from the Bible, from the Book of Hosea in the Old Testament. Hosea, whose name meant 'salvation' was a prophet. It is written that Hosea was asked by God to marry a harlot, to love and respect her despite her infidelity. In this story, God tells Hosea: *'Go and marry a harlot. Love her and give her back her lost dignity'* (Chapter 2).

The name 'Dar Hosea' was inspired by this meaningful story, which also helped create the ethos and ideology of the organisation. As the name implies, at DH, every woman is loved and respected, is provided with all the compassion and support to regain her own self-worth and rebuild her shattered life due to the experienced traumas.

HEALING STEPS

- WEAVING THE FRAGMENTS INTO WHOLENESS

With the help of health care professionals and other experts from different fields, the objective is to provide a safe environment where traumas are identified, addressed, and resolved through compassion, love, and support, within society.



Through this comprehensive process, appropriate tools such as: counselling, therapy, reflection, crafts, and other inspirational and healing workshops, are provided to every service user to support and assist her reconnect with her inner core and restore that lost sense of authenticity. The aim is to assist every person who enters the residence to free themselves from the harmful cage that traps their essence, to rebuild trust and belief in themselves, and to be inspired in pursuing and reaching their true potential. The objective is to assist every individual heal her trauma and overcome barriers which hinder self-growth and self-belief.

Through small steps, together with the work provided by our dedicated team, every woman will be assisted to self-actualise and become whole on many levels, such as emotionally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Through this process, every woman could be able to move forward in respecting and accepting herself, embracing herself, whilst reconnecting with her lost self, with those around her, and within society.

A COLOURFUL TAPESTRY - OUR ENERGETIC AND COMMITTED TEAM

The strength and brightness of our team emerges from the rich and energetic diversity of our service providers. Like a bright colourful tapestry, the team is created from a pool of various individuals from different walks of life. We believe that it is the diversity of our dedicated and committed team that strongly benefits the efficient and effective running of DH. The multidisciplinary expertise of our professionals, such as doctors, social workers,





psychologists, counsellors, dentists, lawyers, and activists, the majority of whom contribute on a pro bono basis or according to referrals, interwoven with other volunteers who daily attend DH, are significant contributing factors to our residence.

The volunteers too come from different backgrounds, and their input is also greatly appreciated, and has a huge positive impact on our service users. They also run a comprehensive programme, from the daily preparation of warm homely meals, to ensuring that every meaningful occasion such as birthdays, Christmas, and other, is warmly celebrated.

Other therapeutic work our volunteers carry out with the service users include gardening, and creating hand-made crafts such as jewellery, cards, and candle making, amongst others.

The volunteers also continuously



engage in respectful and non-judgemental conversations which are usually found in safe spaces, whilst providing personal care. Furthermore, our volunteers are always dedicated to assist in reaching out to other clients outside the residence, whether at the Correctional Services Agency or in the own residence of the clients. Other volunteers include a dedicated professional team who contribute towards the administrative tasks of DH, whilst another dynamic team also assists in creating innovative ideas for fund-raising events.

A professional hairdresser has also offered her services on a voluntary basis to the women attending DH. Such services have also been beneficial in the process of regaining self-confidence and self-esteem amongst the service users. Such a strong team is key, and every member provides that energy which fuels the mechanisms with which DH operates. The successful functioning of our drop-in centre would not be possible without all these individuals, whose wisdom, loyalty, enthusiasm, dedication, and devotion, are all significant elements which fill our organisation with hope and inspiration, particularly each time we are faced with the horrific stories recalled by our service users. Whether experts in a professional field or filled with the wisdom and richness that life experiences offer, our team's diverse dynamics contribute to the brightness and colour which is manifested in the holistic and broad services we are able to offer. Our heartfelt appreciation and acknowledgement go out to each one of our team members, as without their commitment and dedication, we would find it more challenging and difficult to efficiently run the



UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

- COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS EXTRAORDINARY OUTCOME

Speaking about challenging and difficult times, we could not ignore sharing our experience that COVID-19 brought about. Despite facing many obstacles and hardships triggered by such unprecedented times, we also learned valuable and unforgettable lessons.



The saying 'there is no light without darkness' reflects our experience during this unusual period. The darkness symbolises the pandemic, whilst the light has manifested in the resilience and determination of our amazing team in creating a memorable day for our clients. This could have only been possible by the support of the 'Sharing is Caring' campaign which embarked on a project of collecting consumer vouchers as donated by generous individuals within our society to distribute to charities, NGOs, and those in need. Being recognised as one of those organisations, we too benefitted from such vouchers. However, one would not anticipate that we would be faced with yet another challenge. When the vouchers (mostly related to dining) were presented to the service users, most of them expressed how they felt uncomfortable and uneasy dining out, but rather expressed how they would prefer to attend somewhere together as one large family.

As always, trying to meet the requests of our service users, whilst recognising the emotional trauma the pandemic had added to their stressors, our brilliant team got together to brainstorm what could be done to transform such a wish into reality. And this reality was possible through exchanging the vouchers with the 'Sharing is Caring' team who understood the needs of our service users. They were kind enough to exchange the vouchers into the required ones which allowed us to accompany the clients for a full day at Splash and Fun.

This day was not only delightful and filled with enjoyment and merriment, but it helped our clients reconnect with their inner lost childhood whose innocence had been sadly robbed at an early age by exploitative abusers. The connection of the whole group in such an ambiance allowed for the outcome of a fun filled day, which also assisted the women regain a positive emotional approach which had been deeply impacted by the stressors of the pandemic. Whilst for many it rekindled a lost childhood, for others it brought about the emergence of new friendships, and serenity.

This amazing experience was reviving and nourishing on so many different spheres, as it not only served as a healing experience and reconnection through fun, but we also acknowledge the altruism and generosity within our communities through their donations, including the resilience of our wonderful team during such emotional turmoil as the pandemic brought, which despite the adversities, they were able to make this special day a memorable and healing one.



DAR HOSEA AND BEYOND

- OUR OUTREACH SERVICES



At DH we recognise the complex context which affects women and girls, and through preventive measures we act on how to prevent and combat any future violence from occurring. We also acknowledge that not every woman trapped in prostitution is able to attend our residence, hence we ensure that our services are not only provided within our premises, but we also offer outreach services where required.

These are various and include the following:



Prevention Services:

Primary Prevention Programme aimed at youth who are at risk of being sexually exploited, through the provision of sessions on positive sexuality and relationships.

Correctional Services Agency (CSA):

Weekly crafts sessions – these are prepared by the volunteers of DH and carried out with female inmates. Such sessions not only serve as a means of therapy for the women at CSA, but they also facilitate and enhance better communication channels between DH and the women at CSA. Alternatively, this approach facilitates assistance to women in prostitution attending DH, who are awaiting any pending court hearings leading to a prison sentence, so as to receive continuous support once in prison.

Individual sessions - staff at DH also carry out regular individual sessions with inmates, as a means of providing them with any required and additional support due to the obstacles which are experienced upon exiting prison.

Other Residential Services:

DH ensures in maintaining regular professional liaison with other specialised professionals and entities, including Mount Carmel Hospital (MCH) and rehabilitation programmes, in order to ensure a progressive approach for the well-being of the service users.

SAYING IT IN NUMBERS

- STATISTICS FOR 2021

Our statistics clearly indicate why DH is crucial and the need to maintain the running of this meaningful and essential residence. Considering the Covid-19 pandemic and the preventive health restrictions imposed, during the past year DH provided its services and facilities to the following:

Service users reached through the drop-in centre	48
Service users reached through services outside the premises	61
Service users' children	14

In total, 123 service users were reached through the services offered by DH, both inside the residence, or as required through outreach services.

The children of the service users also benefitted from our services through meals and other groceries which were either consumed at the residence or distributed by our staff at their private homes. At times, clothes and/or toys were also donated by DH. The children have also been provided with other assistance by our staff such as helping with home-works, or other learning techniques through the use of arts and crafts

THE NARRATIVES

- PROVIDING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING



Without underestimating the significance of numbers, as these provide an important figurative presentation of the number of persons who sought our services in the past year, whilst also provides the logistical underpinnings for the coming year, it is only through the voices and narratives of each woman, their different and unique experience, that we at DH learn about their traumas, their realities, including their determination and resilience. And it is through their experiences that we learn to improve ourselves in providing better tools for a richer and holistic service. The women's voices have taught us that every individual has different needs, and as such we always respond to meet those requirements accordingly. This is only possible through the compassion and care of our team, the enthusiastic and keen professional frontliners, together with the fusion of the diverse, committed experts and volunteers. With the different needs in mind, and the dynamics and skills of the team, we are able to provide a multidisciplinary approach through the services of our social workers, psychologists, doctors, and counsellors, who address each trauma from different approaches, and together work accordingly to assist each service user in her own particular journey.

Sandra's Journey

Sandra* describes how through the help and support of DH, her life changed on so many different levels. She was able to find her lost identity and reconnect with her authentic self, as this had been hidden and locked under a dark identity which had not reflected her true nature. She was also able to discover her actual dreams and work towards

achieving them, whilst succeed in joining the pieces of her scattered life.

As a means of protecting herself, Sandra had worn a totally different identity to her true nature, and as a result this had hindered her from personal growth and from achieving her potential. Raised in an environment where prostitution had been passed from one generation to the other, it was considered as a normality that every girl born in Sandra's family had no other choice, but to silently follow in this trajectory. As though through an unspoken pact, and as the women before her, Sandra's future had been silently decided. From an early age Sandra saw men abusing her mother. Witnessing different forms of violence from punters who raped, abused, harmed, and exploited her mother, who on several occasions woke Sandra up during the night to make use of her bed (whilst Sandra herself hid underneath it), led Sandra into a dark world of numbness and disconnection from herself. Every similar episode pushed her further in this dark abyss causing disembodiment from her own being.

Considering her mother as a representative of all other women, and due to the repetitive violent experiences Sandra witnessed, in her eyes, being a woman equated to being abused and exploited. Whilst being an abusive man meant being in control and in power. Hence, as a girl who grew into womanhood, Sandra perceived her own feminine identity as a threat to her own being. The traumatic and abusive environment she was raised in, further enforced such an ideation. Consequently, in parallel with the fear that grew inside her, she slowly learnt to dissociate from her own essence and blocked any feminine connotation which she felt made her a target to abuse.



As when in an unhealthy and detrimental environment, a stream dries from its water destroying all its organisms in the process, Sandra too slowly dehydrated from her own uniqueness, and ensured in destroying her identity. She did everything in her power to detach from anything that she believed made her vulnerable to abuse, she projected a toxic masculine image. Sandra shaved her hair, wrapped her body in extremely large and baggy clothing making sure to hide any feminine contours, practised rough and aggressive mannerisms, used profane language, and practised misogynistic attitudes. She constructed her world on toxic masculine traits as she had been taught as a child. This of course came at a price, as she did this only as a means of defending herself, and not because she felt she associated to such characteristics. This change in identity, and the destruction of her own authenticity caused her to dissociate from herself. To withdraw in her own closed world without any connection to the outside world, and worst of all, to herself. The fragments of her own identity were causing her great pain, as such she withdrew from any social connections, and fortified her isolated world with further toxicity and self-harm. This disconnection and pain led Sandra to experience a lack of will to live, and suicidal thoughts grew stronger by every passing day.

DH learnt about Sandra and her traumas, of her anguish, isolation, and disconnection from herself and the world, and immediately reached out to offer support. Numerous attempts were made to build a bridge with her, and offer any possible assistance, however due to the lack of trust Sandra had created, she would not emerge from her closed world. Initially she refused to answer her phone, and she would not show up for meetings she would have promised to attend, but at the same time she craved for help and support. It was through the strong perseverance of the social worker that the initial steps of communication commenced. Sandra and the social worker would meet up for coffee and talk about

Sandra's feelings, which often revolved around her strong suicidal thoughts. Through the compassion and care of the social worker, gradually Sandra learnt to reconnect with herself and talk about her dreams and life wishes. She spoke about her passion for pastries and her love for baking. She had always had this unsung melody inside her of becoming a professional pastry chef, however she had learnt to ignore and kill such a dream. As the bond between the social worker and Sandra grew, and through support and encouragement, the social worker managed to help Sandra reconnect and believe in herself, and together they would work on making this baking dream come through.

As always, DH promptly invested in Sandra's tuition for baking courses and found a sponsor to teach her. Through this exploration and love for cake baking, Sandra gradually started reconnecting not only with her dream by realizing it, but also with the outside world, and with her inner and true self. Like a butterfly emerging out of her cocoon, Sandra too slowly emerged out of the toxic attributes she had engulfed herself in and started embracing her authenticity. This led her to slowly embrace and accept her true identity, as she learnt that not every man she encountered would harm and exploit her. The joy she found in baking was reflected in her behaviour and attitudes. This happiness managed to shift her vision of the world and was manifested in the colours and designs she used to decorate her elaborate cakes.

Through the work of DH, and the respect, love, compassion, and empathy shown, Sandra felt safe, cared, and protected, and was thus able to achieve her own dreams whilst she was able to rediscover and reconnect with her own authentic self.



EXTENDING OUR SERVICES

- COLLABORATION WITH CONSERVATORIO VINCENZO BUGEJA - FEJDA



Two of our team members - a social worker and a psychologist, embarked on a project with Conservatorio Vincenzo Bugeja (Fejda), a home for young female adolescents with social problems aged between 11 and 18 years. Our members worked with 8 of these young girls who had experienced sexual trauma and were helping them rebuild their self-esteem and regain their self-worth. Due to early childhood neglect, these young girls were being targeted by sexual predators who recognised their vulnerability and were coercing them into sexual activity. Having suffered neglect, and poor attachment as children, these young girls would fall into such traps by predators, since they confused sex for love.

Having never experienced nurturing and caring love as children, they failed to recognise that they were being used and abused without proper consent, as according to them, being used for sex was perceived and mistaken for being loved.

As such, our social workers delivered workshops and training on a comprehensive sexuality education and delved into the issues of prevention and protection from sexual abuse, gender-based and intimate partner violence, consent, personal interaction, gender equality, sexually transmitted diseases, human trafficking for sexual exploitation, self-esteem, self-worth, attachment, relationships, and a positive approach towards sexual encounters.

These sessions served as a platform to raise awareness and educate these young adolescents to recognise any form of coercion and exploitation, whilst provide them with the tools to regain their self-esteem, as they had been struggling with such emotions due to these experiences.

CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT

- ACTIVISM, NETWORKING, CAMPAIGNING, EDUCATION,
AND AWARENESS RAISING



We acknowledge the importance of extending our services through education outside our premises. As such, several different initiatives were organised as a means of raising awareness on the realities encountered by our service users.

These included:

Talks and Sessions – We engaged in several talks and sessions within the community, including youth groups and social groups

Social Media – We launched advocacy campaigns to raise awareness regarding the hidden realities of the harms of prostitution and communicated how and why prostitution is a form of violence

Professional networking – professional networking was maintained with various other organisations, including round table meetings and participation in conferences and seminars

We collaborated with both local and international organisations.

FUTURE PROJECTS



We plan to continue being present among the general public through awareness raising and advocacy sessions, to educate people and break down stigma, ultimately benefiting our women.

We shall be organising the prevention programme with a different group of youth and women at CSA.

We are working towards launching a project that would be targeting the particular needs of migrant women. We participated in a number of meetings with the relevant stakeholders, and will continue collaborating with these organisations in order to ensure an effective project and service for migrant women

IN A NUTSHELL

Our years of services have not only provided us with further insight and experience but have enriched us with a deeper knowledge both directly from working with women in prostitution, and also through our commitment to continuous academic research, which reflect the narratives of our service users. The combination of these aspects has enabled us to provide a richer and stronger service. We are conscious of the complex and sensitive needs required by the service users, as such we are constantly committed to meet such demands and provide each person with her individual requirements. Being aware that many women may not be able to access our drop-in centre, we have also fully embarked on extending our services beyond our doors in order to assist and reach out to other vulnerable women when and where necessary. In parallel to our commitment within DH, we have also understood the significance of our work within the community, we feel responsible for increasing education and are dedicated to raise awareness. Each member of our devoted team continues to enthusiastically meet such demands both within DH, and within the community.

Our main goal is to offer a safe and protected space to women trapped in prostitution, a place where they could find refuge from any harms and violence. To assist our service users in rebuilding their fragmented selves through love, compassion, and support, and to restore trust and confidence in themselves. Our objective is for each service user to believe and discover her own true potential, and to regain her own self-worth. The journey with each person is extensive and challenging, however we are determined to never give up. The successful stories we have witnessed serve to fuel us with additional energy to continue our dedicated work with each person we encounter.



***All names used in this report have been changed to protect the identity of the persons concerned**