

terre des hommes



stops child exploitation

Stories of Impact

2022

UGANDA





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About Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is an international non-governmental organisation with a mission to protect children by preventing and stopping child exploitation, and by empowering children to make their voices count. Our vision is that children can flourish in a world free of all forms of exploitation.

Our vision and mission are inspired and guided by international human rights instruments and standards, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention, the International Labour Organisation Conventions and aligned with achievement of the SDGs, in particular Goals 5, 8 and 16.

Terre des Hommes Netherlands fights against the exploitation of children in four regions: Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. In Africa, Terre des Hommes Netherlands works in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Madagascar. Our work is focused on preventing child exploitation in all its forms. As such we work with communities, government,

private sector, civil society organisations and children themselves, at the centre, to address systemic and structural drivers that expose children to exploitation. We build the capacity of communities and local structures to effectively prevent, detect, report and respond to child exploitation; we purpose to address systemic and structural drivers of child exploitation. We also collaborate with other actors to influence strengthening of the legal and policy environment for better promotion and protection of children rights.

Over the years, Terre des Hommes Netherlands has been able to document various impactful stories of the support we have provided children through the projects and programmes that have positively impacted their lives. A few selected stories are detailed in this storybook.



We strive to do no harm and act in the best interests of children. To protect their privacy all identifying personal information (including names, locations and images of children) in this storybook have been changed.

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1

Every Child is ABLE!



Moses lives in a grass-thatched hut with his family of 6 in a village in Lokopo Sub County. Every morning, his parents go to the nearby trading centre to sell firewood in order to earn some money approximately 0.75 - 1.00 Euro per day to feed the entire family. Growing up, Moses spent most of his time at home, watching his siblings play as he looked on. He did not play much with his siblings and the children in the neighbourhood were never allowed to play with him.

Promising shift

Things changed for the better for Moses in September 2021. He was identified by the *Dwelling Places* project team that established community child rights clubs within Napak to strengthen prevention, response, reporting, and follow-up of child trafficking and sexual exploitation cases within the schools and neighbouring communities.

During one particular mobilisation exercise, Moses' parents were approached and requested to allow Moses to join other children for a Child Rights Clubs (CRC) training which was taking place in the community. At first, the parents were hesitant saying he would not be able to do much and that he

was also not used to being around many people. However, the school mentor and the Local Council member informed the parents that Moses was going to be supported adequately. The parents eventually accepted and the child was invited to join other children for the club establishment.



Growing Confidence

Moses had a hard time at first. He was shy and withdrawn, he was not accustomed to mingling with many children. However, with the support of the mentor and how other children cheered him to speak out whenever he was called upon, he was encouraged to participate.

The club chairperson supported Moses, especially during group sessions. To everyone's amazement, Moses opened up. He was very active and participated in responding to the views concerning children in his community, particularly views on children with disabilities. He highlighted signs of emotional and physical abuse for children with disabilities during the session. He also mentioned that children with disabilities are culturally believed to be a curse in his community and the traffickers would be less interested in them but they are definitely at risk of abuse in the community, specifically emotional abuse caused by the harsh words that people say.

Active Participation

This opportunity changed Moses' life for the better. He is able to attend the child rights clubs meetings where he receives training on child rights and responsibilities, how to identify signs of abuse in children and the referral pathways. He learned that all children have equal rights, responsibilities and they are all entitled to equal rights without being discriminated against. He also took part in a debate aimed at empowering the children with information and skills to build their self-esteem and their confidence to become agents of change in the prevention of child trafficking and sexual exploitation— including children with disabilities.

“I thank *Dwelling Places* for establishing a child rights club in my community. Through this club, I have been accepted; I am now being loved by people and children in my neighbourhood. Even when there are club activities like practising songs, drama on sensitization about child trafficking and children's rights, the club members consider me first and now that I know my rights and responsibilities as a child, I want to exercise them especially my right to education.”

A Spark Ignites

There has been significant improvement in his day-to-day life. He is now able to play and interact with his siblings and the children in his community. He is able to support his family with home chores like grinding sorghum and sweeping the compound cheerfully and he is not afraid to talk to any visitors in his home.

Through the inclusion of children with disabilities in the child rights clubs, children like Moses are able to feel welcomed, able and confident to pursue their dreams. The community members are now showing Moses respect and love unlike before when they could not even allow their children to play with him. He has been embraced through the club activities and the children are eager to take him from his home to go and start their engagements and still escort him home when they complete their activities. Participating in club engagements has sparked Moses' life. Describing his promising future, Moses states, “I want to be someone great in future so that I support and be the voice to the children in Karamoja, especially those with disabilities.”



2 Rescued from the Street Life

Barnabas stayed in a foster home that comprised 7 children in Moroto, Uganda. He was taken care of by a lady when he was only 5 months old since his mother experienced mental health challenges and could not give him the best care. His foster mother is a nurse, whereas his foster father does casual work in a hospital which earns the family a living. Both foster parents contribute to the well-being of the entire family. Barnabas' routine was normal and his life was good. He would wake up in the morning and help with household chores. Later in the day, he would play with his age-mates around his home.



Despite living a reasonably good life, Barnabas wanted a better, more fulfilling life for himself. One day, his friend informed him of the endless opportunities to earn money by working in restaurants and other fancy places in Kampala, Uganda. Eager to enjoy this amazing promising future, Barnabas and his friend decided to travel by bus to Kampala in December 2020. Since they didn't have money for transport, they hid under the chairs of the bus for the 8-10 hour journey where no one noticed them. They only got out when everyone was getting out. Unfortunately, the two boys separated because of the high congestion of people in the city.

Walking in the streets, sad and alone, Barnabas wondered what he would do to survive. He met other street children who encouraged him to collect bottles for sale and beg for money from people while on the streets. They also advised him to fetch water for restaurants in town to earn a meal and that is

exactly what he did, earning an average of 0.25 to 0.38 Euros. The street life was tougher than he had anticipated. He would get beaten up by the older boys who were asking for money he had collected during the day which attributed to his lower abdominal and scrotal pain. He could not get any treatment for that. He faced a very tough, unbearable life for more than three months. “Life is hard on the streets, it is extremely cold at night and getting what to eat is very difficult. I was sad most of the time,” he explained.

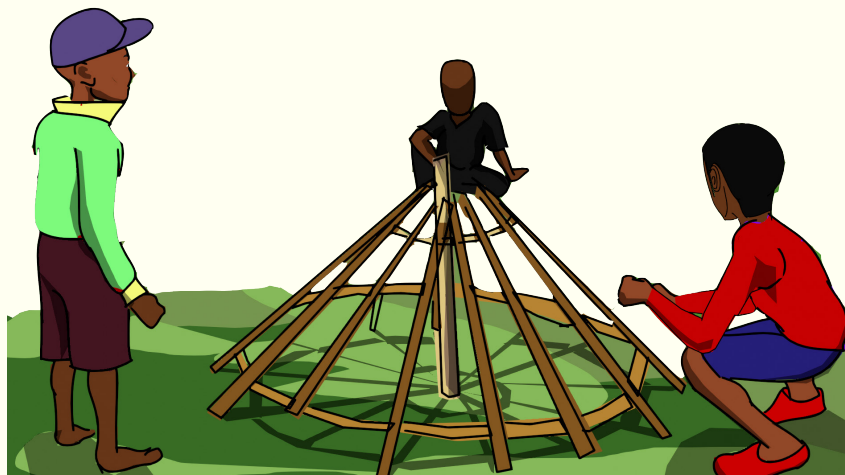
Rescued

In June 2021, Barnabas was rescued together with 161 other street boys through a mass rescue outreach conducted by our partner *Dwelling Places* and other organisations. He was admitted to a primary school and later transferred to a campsite where he received shelter, a comfortable bed, food, holistic health care, psychosocial support, and life skills training.

Barnabas was then taken to a Rehabilitation Home in Buloba after the Covid-19 lockdown where he received shelter, nutrition, catch-up education, health services, and psychosocial support. He successfully underwent surgery to remove fluid that had accumulated in his scrotum which helped reduce swelling and is now pain-free. He became more playful and wears a smile most of the time, which was rare at the point of rescue.

Content and Happy

Speaking about how his life changed, he stated, “On the street, I used to not sleep well, but at *Dwelling Places* I sleep well. I looked for money while on the street and ate but here I take tea during tea breaks and eat food without paying. I was not going to school while on the street but I’m studying while here.” “When I finish school and become a doctor, I want to treat all the people who have no money for treatment and my mother too,” Barnabas added. He is now reintegrated with his foster parents with regular follow-ups done by the project team to ensure he is safe, healthy and happy.



3 Empowered and Unstoppable

Fancy was born and raised in a polygamous family. In 2019, a time when Fancy was to begin her university education, her biological father disowned her and neglected his responsibility as a provider. His argument was that university education was too expensive to waste on a girl. His negligence forced Fancy's mother to take up the duties and provide for the family with her daily income of approximately 7.93 Euros, which she earned from selling peanuts in Kampala, Uganda. As time went by, the situation became overwhelming for her mother and they had no choice but to move to their maternal home in Kampala. As her mother continued to worry about the pressing need of her daughter's school fees, Fancy received good news that she had qualified for a scholarship from *Girl Up Initiative Uganda* —which supports academically excellent disadvantaged girls actively engaging in institutional programmes.

A space deprived of female voices

Ever since her father abandoned her, Fancy felt unworthy. She questioned her potential as a young ambitious woman. She wanted to give her mother hope and assure her that their future was bright, which is why she withheld her feelings. Fancy's community had no space to accommodate female voices. As she grew up, she had a relentless urge to disrupt the limiting social norms and stereotypes that denied girls and young women a chance to speak up and take part: but she was unable to figure out how to address these issues. "I was simply aware that women can also lead but not aware of why, when, or what happens when women are fully involved in leadership and decision-making processes. My attitude towards women's involvement was still stereotypical," she said.

Establishing the She Laws Community

While pursuing her law degree in a Moslem founded university, Fancy couldn't help but notice the stereotypes around female students, especially those that studied law. Her desire to change the false narratives grew stronger until, towards the end of July 2021, when she formed the, '*She Laws Community*' movement — a mentorship association of female students of law in Uganda that aims at enabling female students of law manoeuvre law school. Its purpose is to create a stronger sisterhood in law school in Uganda. Some of the thematic areas that the movement seeks to address include; building one-self, understanding and changing the negative stereotypes and beliefs around being a female lawyer, legal practice, lawyers in



entrepreneurship and the art of reclaiming spaces as young female lawyers in societies. Step by step, Fancy is creating opportunities for women. Currently, the movement has attracted female law students from eight universities, encouraging and supporting each other.



Becoming a She Leads Advocate

As a *She Leads* advocate, Fancy has been exposed to various platforms as a representative of girls and young women (GYW). She was selected to give a keynote address during the grand launch of the *She Leads* Programme on behalf of other girls and young women. She boldly took up the challenge and delivered well. Additionally, she was one of the panellists, representing *She Leads*, at a high-end political forum on SDGs organised by *Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)*. She also shared her thoughts and expectations of the *She Leads* Programme on UBC television. In a national youth dialogue, Fancy represented GYW at a panel discussion organised by *National Youth Council* in partnership with *Plan International*. Her latest remarkable participation, where she had voices of GYW amplified, was during the *African Union's* summit that was organised by *GIMAC* in Ethiopia.

Receiving Support and Mentorship

Fancy has experienced tremendous growth since she was identified by *She Leads*. She is still a beneficiary of the project and is currently receiving support and mentorship. She is taking the lead in monitoring and supervising the two safe spaces in Kawempe and Ntinda. In her daily routine, Fancy strikes a balance between home care, advocacy work and running her movement. Her Fridays are exclusively dedicated to safe spaces and her human rights training. Her progress is commendable. She has made a laudable leap forward — from being a young girl who allowed the stereotypes ascribed to her, to unapologetically taking up leadership roles and disrupting false ascription of women. “I envision a world where every girl and young woman can receive equal and quality education. A world where we can openly call out negative social norms that limit our meaningful participation in the processes of decision making at whichever level,” she said in a voice of hope and determination.



4 A Serene Dwelling Place for Benjamin

Benjamin was taken to live with his grandmother when he was just three months old, after his parents separated. After a while, he went to live with his mother who was married to another man in the slums of Kibuli, Uganda. Due to the mistreatment he experienced, he ran to the streets and it was tough for him. Luckily, he was identified by *Dwelling Places*, rescued, supported and resettled with his family.

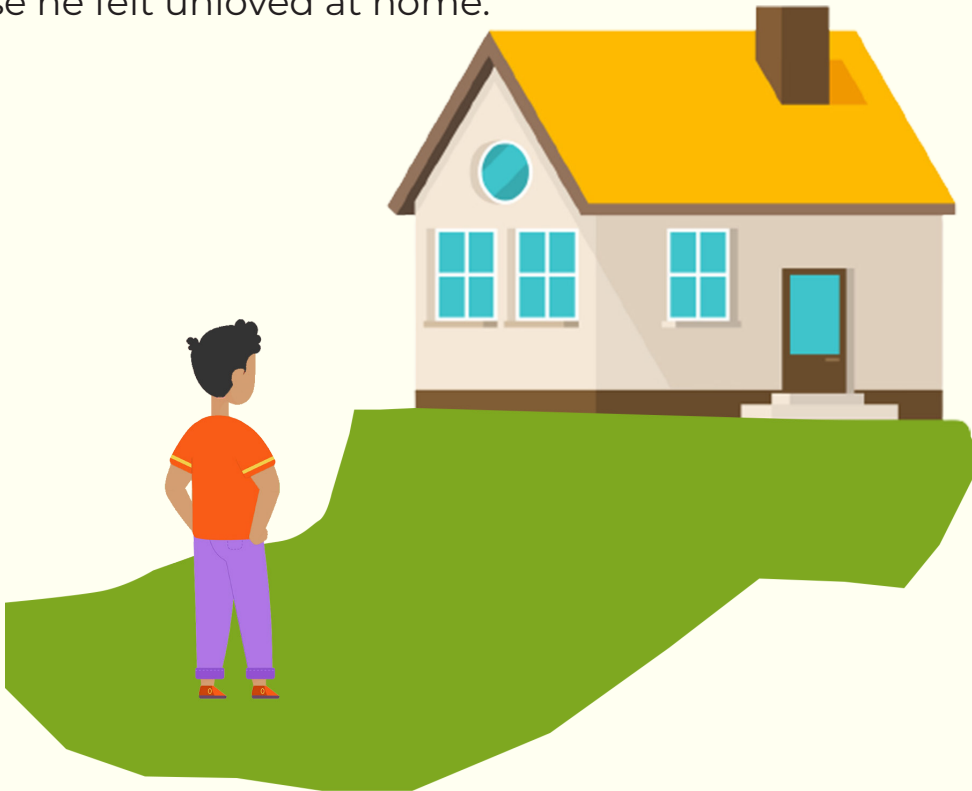


Parents' Separation

Benjamin was left under the care of his maternal grandmother when he was three months old. After his parents had separated, his mother moved to Kalanga, Uganda in search of greener pastures. While staying with his grandmother, he started stealing from her. "I would always regret stealing from my grandmother because every time I would steal, I would go back to the streets and when the money is done I would get stranded and would wish I had not stolen," Benjamin recounted. After staying with his grandmother for a while, his mother returned and lived with them. This marked the beginning of trouble for Benjamin. His mother would beat him mercilessly and not even his grandmother's intervention would restrain her. When it was too much to bear, Benjamin decided it was time to leave home.

His Return

They say east or west home is best. After a while Benjamin returned home since life on the streets was tougher than he thought. He found a few things had changed while he was away. His mother had remarried and stayed at a slum in Kibuli with her new husband. The twelve-year-old boy joined the family and soon learnt the atrocities of his new environment —the slum. Here, young people indulged in drugs and the crime rate was high. It didn't take long before Benjamin succumbed to the influence. He would spend time both at home and on the streets. At home, the situation worsened day by day. His mother, a drug addict, would punish Benjamin and his sister so badly that one day she broke her daughter's arm. This forced him to run to the streets because he felt unloved at home.



Life in the Slum

Benjamin joined the street family in hopes of experiencing change — a different life from the ill treatment he was subjected to at home. Little by little, Benjamin began applying the ideas he had learnt from his peers. He started stealing from his family and every time he would commit this crime, he would escape to the streets to hide. He once stole his uncle's phone and disappeared. When he showed up at home again, his mother thoroughly beat him and he left for the streets again. This time round, he ran away for good. Unfortunately, his survival there grew harder and harder. He sold scrap metal and would make approximately 0.25 Euros to 0.50 Euros. It was a difficult activity to engage in since there was always too much to do with little results. Being a child, it was even worse and he was exploited in the process.

Identified, Rescued and Supported

Benjamin was identified during a joint outreach conducted by *Dwelling Places* and he was rescued from the streets in June 2021. After two weeks of quarantine at a school, Benjamin and other children were taken to Wakiso District for rehabilitation for two months. *Dwelling Places* continued the rehabilitation in August 2021. During this process, he was offered guidance and counselling, catch-up education, health care, life skills lessons, nutrition support and other basic services, including clothes, shoes, bag among others.

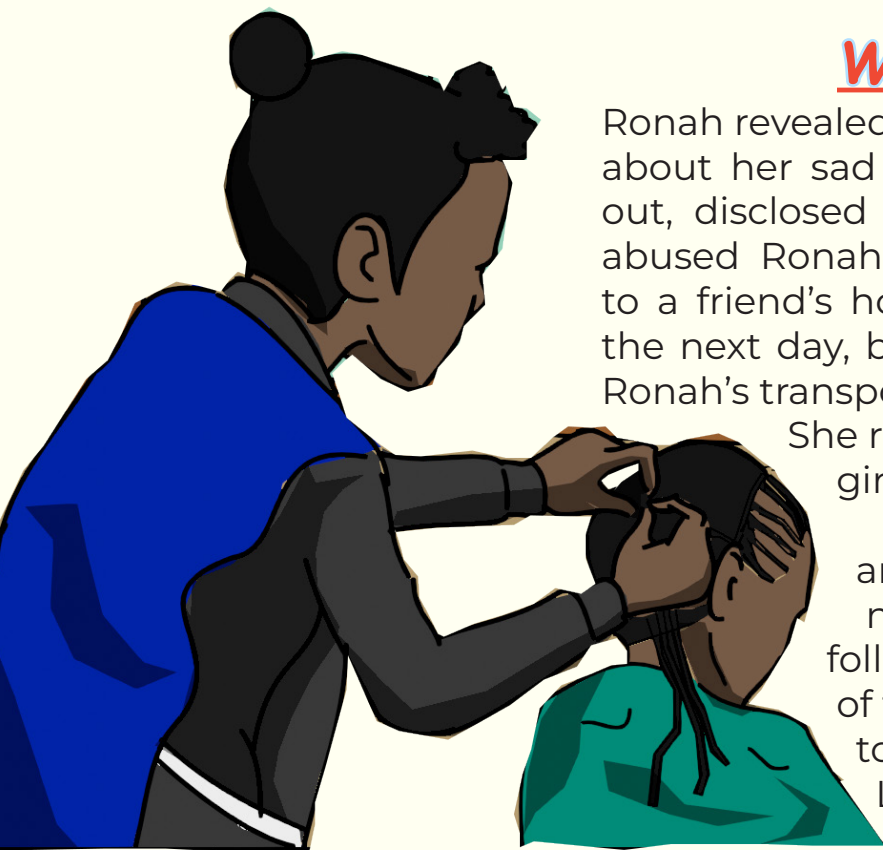
Resettled at home

Through psychosocial support, Benjamin was able to forgive his mother, shared information about his family and sought to be reconciled. The family was traced and he got reconciled with his mother and he was resettled with her. However, when a social worker followed him up after three weeks of placement, he seemed unhappy and withdrawn. His mother recommended that it would be best if he stays with his grandparents. He was resettled with his grandparents, who lived with his only sister, in Kitenga. They were extremely happy to see him again. When asked about how he feels at the moment, he happily said, "I feel good because my grandparents now know that I have changed." *Dwelling Places* has also supported him to go back to school, and enrolled him in primary four. When he grows up, Benjamin would like to be a scout and save lives.



5 “Now I can start a salon and raise money for my child”

Ronah, 18, lost her parents when she was just two years old, prompting her to be in the care of her grandmother. At a tender age, Ronah was responsible for paying her own school fees. She got the money from doing menial jobs such as making bricks, digging in people’s gardens and even fetching water for the constructors. Unfortunately, when she was just 15, Ronah was sent away from school due to fee arrears, which led to her subsequent dropout.



Walking Home

Ronah revealed to her grandmother on the phone about her sad experiences. Her employer found out, disclosed it to her husband who physically abused Ronah. That night, she escaped and went to a friend’s home. She called her grandmother the next day, but she had no money to cater for Ronah’s transport. She then opted to walk home.

She rested at a trading centre and a girl going home from school alerted her that the area was not safe and welcomed her to spend the night at her mother’s home. The following day, Betty, the mother of the girl, who welcomed Ronah to their home, went to the Local Council Chairperson 1 (LC1) to report the case. Ronah’s grandmother was still admitted in the hospital,

so Ronah stayed at Betty’s for 10 months, where she occasionally learnt to sell boiled cassava. From the profit she had made from selling cassava and the little money her grandmother sent her, she was able to travel back home. Two months later, she was referred to work in Entebbe for a lady.

Exploited Sexually

Ronah took care of her poultry-rearing business as well as supplying polythene bags, mostly to male customers. Soon, the men began making sexual advances towards her. After some time, the employer put Ronah in a taxi to travel home alone. On her way, the taxi driver asked Ronah for her phone contact, which she shared. After communicating for a while, the two started staying together. The man sexually exploited Ronah and promised to marry her. A month later she discovered that she was pregnant and the man disappeared.

Lending Hand

“I felt like killing myself when I got pregnant because when I tried to reach out to the taxi driver who impregnated me, he did not receive my calls. I tried tracing him in the taxi park but I didn’t find him there,” Ronah recounted. A health worker based where Ronah went for an antenatal clinic identified and referred her to our partner *UYDEL*. At the centre, she learnt hairdressing and she was offered guidance and counselling. The child protection committee members also started tracing the man who sexually exploited her.

Hopeful

From her hairdressing skills, she is able to get income. “I hope to start working in a salon where I can save money and start up my small business so that I can raise money to take care of my child,” she said.



6 Napeyok's Safe Repatriation

Napeyok, 16, lived in Napak district in Uganda. Her mother is the family's main breadwinner, who earns a living through buying and selling charcoal packed in small colourless polythene bags. Due to financial constraints, Napeyok only managed to study up to primary six. She then dropped out when she was 15 years old and made a decision to go to Nairobi, Kenya.

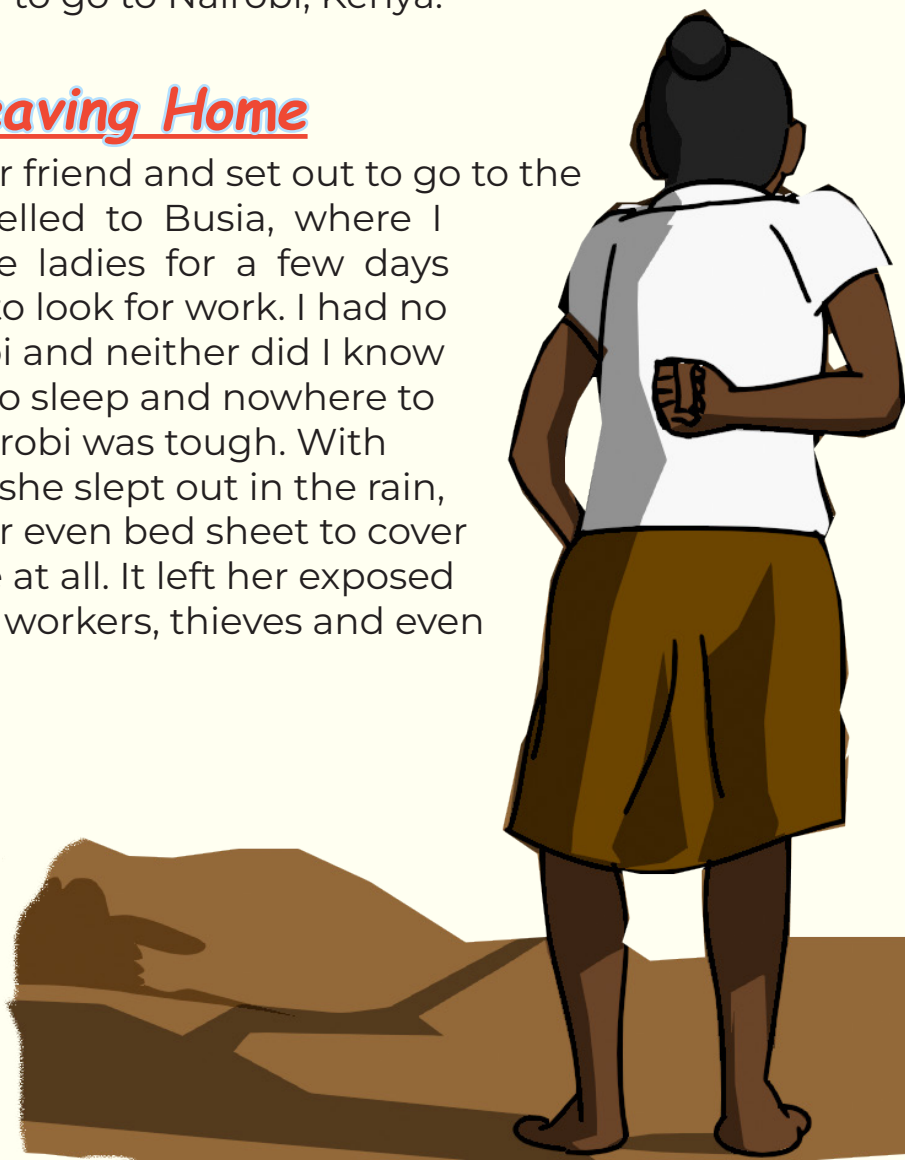
Leaving Home

She borrowed money from her friend and set out to go to the city. "I got the money and travelled to Busia, where I was accommodated by some ladies for a few days before proceeding to Nairobi to look for work. I had no prior knowledge about Nairobi and neither did I know anyone there. I had nowhere to sleep and nowhere to start from." Her first day in Nairobi was tough. With nowhere to seek refuge from, she slept out in the rain, with no sweater, coat, jacket or even bed sheet to cover herself. The place was not safe at all. It left her exposed to all kinds of people from sex workers, thieves and even rapists.

Tough Life

Napeyok later got a job as a domestic worker. She didn't have prior experience with this kind of work, hence it was very difficult for her to perform the tasks. Her work included mopping the

entire house, washing utensils, scrubbing the walls of the house, washing clothes, cooking, buying groceries from the market, preparing children and taking them to school and back. Her employer shouted at her and sometimes threatened to beat her up. Owing to the brutality she experienced, Napeyok ran away and got another job, still as a domestic worker. "My new employer even turned out to be worse. She exploited me so much and could not even allow me to rest or even sleep at night. I would sleep at 2:00 am and had to be up by 4:00 am to start working again," Napeyok narrated about her new experience. She had no choice but to go back to living on the streets.



Safe Repatriation

Fortunately, Napeyok was one of the over 90 Karamojong girls who were identified by *Counter Human Trafficking Trust East Africa (CHTEA)* in Kenya. *CHTEA* contacted *Dwelling Places (TdH NL partner)* for support. *TdH NL* in partnership with *Dwelling Places* and other organisations ensured that Napeyok - and 31 other girls were finally brought home and successfully reintegrated in August 2021.

Back Home


Before their reintegration, the girls were taken to a rehabilitation centre where they were taught life-changing skills like business skills and how to conduct themselves upon reintegration. Napeyok is back home and waiting to be enrolled in a skills training course. "I am very happy to be with my parents and siblings, even if there are a lot of hardships in my family like poverty, hunger, etc. I know that these are for all families, and I wouldn't allow it to make me lose focus of my dream of studying and becoming a nurse," Napeyok expressed her hopes for the future.



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