



# Homeless

**Submission to the call for input released by the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery focused on homeless as a cause and consequence of contemporary form of slavery.**

**Workshop Season 2 True Talk, Mist, 2023**

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### Homeless as a cause and consequence of contemporary form of slavery

On February 3<sup>rd</sup> we received a request from the International Secretariat of the GAATW to contribute to a collective submission to the call for input released by the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery focused on homeless as a cause and consequence of contemporary form of slavery.

#### 1. A group of Mist members gathered to debate on the questions addressed by the GAATW-IS:

*- Has homelessness come up as an issue for the people you work with? Are there many homeless people among them? If yes, is it some or many, nationals or migrants, women or men? Are they subjected to exploitation and if yes, in what sectors? Are some of them homeless as a result of trafficking?*

*- What are the drivers of homelessness for the people you work with?*

*- Are there government programs for homeless people in your country? Are these accessible for the people you work with? Do you help them access such programs?*

*- Do you want to make any recommendations to reduce the risks of exploitation for homeless people?*

#### 2. Homelessness is a critical issue for our members:

Our organization works only with victims of trafficking, mostly sexual exploitation. Most of the people we meet find themselves homeless at various stages of their journey: most of them are migrants and exploited in prostitution and debt bondage; we mainly receive women.

Foreigners are often hosted by their traffickers when they arrive in France. However, during this time, they must pay them the rent and the food even if they are often crammed together with lack of freedom or comfort. After a while it is common that they must find their own accommodation and being in an irregular situation and forced prostitution, they then integrate informal shared accommodations (without legal lease) which are rudimentary and very precarious. They are at the mercy of the landlords, both in terms of the amounts to be paid and the conditions of occupation of the premises. They are regularly kicked out of the house from one day to the next.

Access to emergency accommodation in France via the phone platform (115) is saturated in most departments, and when people are taken in charge it is often for a single night with no guarantee of continuation (even women with kids or families that are left outside or hosted for 1 or few nights from a hostel to another).

The difficulty of accessing accommodation when leaving prostitution/traffickers is increased. Those who have access to shelters for asylum seekers are few and far between and the conditions of reception are often very difficult (rooms with 4 or 6 people / violence in the accommodation /

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<sup>1</sup> En cas d'utilisation de données contenues dans ce texte, merci d'indiquer la référence suivante : "Association Mist (Mission d'Intervention et de Sensibilisation contre la Traite), *Travail Préparatoire de la saison 2 des podcasts True Talk*, submission to the call for input released by the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery focused on homeless as a cause and consequence of contemporary form of slavery. Mars 2023, 6 p.

impossibility of settling down and sleeping / increased stress / development of anxiety and psychological disorders...).

One of the obstacles to access housing for these women who are asylum seekers is also that in France asylum seekers have a permit which does not allow them to work, it keeps them in vulnerable and precarious situation. Moreover, many women are moving from one country to another in Europe (freely or not) and they are under the Dublin Protocol which does not allow them to access to asylum seekers' shelters.

Many Nigerian women for instance are moving from Italy to France to search for help but and they apply for asylum protection but cannot be sheltered because of Dublin Protocol despite the potential THB victim identification by NGOs so many are forced to go back to street prostitution to survive which expose them to traffickers' recruitment or different forms of violence. Last year, one of our Nigerian members under this Dublin Protocol situation was attacked in the street and almost died because she was slaughtered.

The emergency accommodation system ruled by the phone platform of 115 is not in capacity to give accommodation to all the people who call them; it is extremely difficult to have a place to stay through this hotline. The issue has increased since the Ukraine war because part of the accommodation system is now dedicated to the Ukraine refugees.

Many of the Nigerian victims of trafficking are not well and are still very weak years after getting out of trafficking: homelessness can lead to an increase of their psychological troubles. In 2022, we assisted two women who had psychiatric issues due to their homelessness with their children. One was admitted to the psychiatric hospital two times and lost temporary the custody of her daughter because no one could take care of her. The child is still with the children welfare services.

Concerning the French victims: most of them ran away from their family home because they endured violence, so they end up in dangerous situation where they are recruited by traffickers who pretend to help them. When they are minors, their parents sign their statement in the police station against their traffickers and it might create a gap between them because of stigma so many of them want to run away from their home because of shame.

3. Because homelessness is a critical issue, we have decided to give more time and attention to this debate. We will conduct more than one meeting on this topic and we will produce at least one episode of the podcast True talk about it on our Youtube channel. To answer to the IS-GAATW and Special Rapporteur's request, we share today our first meeting's debate:

- Hello guys, we are here again in Paris and this episode of our broadcast with the Mist Association is about challenges that people face while searching for social housing in France in general.
- Hi everyone, my name is Hope, this topic is really very interesting because a lot of us pass through these difficulties, and we really must share it to make others understand the difficulties we have in France to get social, social apartment or social housing.
- Good afternoon, everybody, my name is Olivia, I want to talk house for Paris, house is very difficult for us that go to road work, that go to prostitution because it is very difficult,

sometimes we don't even have money to pay for house rent, sometimes clients and all those bad boys in the street they beat us, it is very difficult. Me, now I am decided to stop the road work and be looking for house for about two months now, there is no house for me, I don't, can't talk about this.

- Hello, my name is Alexia, I am going to talk about the the difficulties I experienced while looking for social housing right. It is very difficult to find social housing, it is like impossible in France, I remember one time in my life when I was looking for housing and I had to call 115 a lot of times, like every morning I wake up, every morning at 5 o'clock in the morning just to call 115, and most times they don't even respond and most times the lines are very busy and after calling they give me a place for just one night and after one night is done and they don't ask me to come back, and most times I had to sleep with friends, like having a place with someone at his or her house and sometimes you stay one night and the friend tell you don't come back to my house because my house is too small for me, not to talk of to accommodate somebody else. And then I looked for a place for a long time, I got a, finally got a place and later the landlady pushed me out one morning I came back from my work, where I was working and I found my things outside because the landlady said she doesn't want me in the house, just imagine! If the government has made available social housing, like a good social housing for people that does or doesn't have papers to have accommodation, even if it is not free accommodation, it wouldn't have been the same like, it wouldn't have been the same, could have, there would have been a lot for us that are immigrants that came to another country to live, it wouldn't have been like the same. I know some other people that are in the same situation that find it difficult even till today having house, a place to stay and some of them live with friends, some of them call social, 115 every day and some of them are being registered to have SIAO or other housing that can't or never can be possible and they have been waiting for years, months because nothing can be done and nothing is supposed like, it is almost impossible, to find housing in Paris, in France in general.
- So what we are, why we want to do this podcast, why me and my friends we want to do this podcast is to help the government understand our situation, our place in France, to help us to make housing available for us of course so that we will have a place to stay and to, because if you have a place to stay you will be able to think well and think of how to advance in life far, to move forward in life. But when there is no place, it is almost impossible to do something.
- Sometimes there are some difficulties that we face, that the government must elaborate on this, why I am saying this is because many people who is out of prostitution, they need a place to stay, you understand, to gain their self-confidence.
- Why don't the government create like an accommodation for all these people who were once in the street doing prostitution, why don't they get a, like, at least a place for them to stay to gain their self-confidence and be free like they are being recognized as victims and at least to gain their self-interest, to you understand, I don't know, to boost their immunity like have that strength to at least say I am out of this, I am out of prostitution, have their self-confidence, at least have a place to stay that maybe the government hears them, he hears their voice and values their interest, you understand. I don't know, that is my point of view.

- Like my friend just said, most girls really want to stop working in the street, they really want to stop but then again, when going to the street or when doing internet sex work, the only way they find money to feed, accommodation and other things is when they work in the street. How can you ask somebody or advice somebody to stop the working in the street or having life, source of livelihood when you don't have a place for the person to stay? Like most times the associations or other associations that wants to help, they have other, they have the things, like they have the means to help, they really want to like invest in the girls life but it is not easy, it is not possible when you tell someone okay I will help you to do this, I will help you to do that, then when the person decide definitely to stop working in the street there is no accommodation and we are soliciting the government, to help us, to help the girls that are really ready to do all these things, to give us accommodations, to give us place to stay, to be more independent with our self.
  
- And also to just do something for our case because we can't stop, we can't say ok we want to go out from road work if there is no place to stay, if there is no place to stay because the money we are making, most times even using the money to rent an apartment can even be difficult, you don't even see apartment anywhere to rent and sometimes people take your money and don't even give you house. Like those fraud people they put it online that they have apartment to stay, then when you pay them they don't give you house, then we ask for social housing, it is not available from any association and then we want to stop but there is no means to stop, if you look at it well there is no means to stop, because after stopping what else happens? You can't even sleep at night because there is no place to stay. So, I pray, I hope and I beg the government to listen to us and find a possible solution to our cry and this message to also pass to other girls that really wants to stop prostitution, like want to do good for themselves, to be courageous, to fight for what they want and decide to really like do good and change their situation
  
- I want to talk about myself. As for me as my friend said, as for me I have stopped working since December, since December I don't go to work, to get money to feed is my problem, to even get a house to stay in is my problem. I don't even have a house to stay in now because I keep calling 115 for the past 1 month now, one month, at first, they did not answer me, but the one time they answered me I was given a place to stay for only one day and asked me to leave. Since then, I have been staying with my friends, from one friend to another and from house to house, and that one is not good for me. Most girls pass through this stress because they don't get access to this government house. Please we really need help, we Nigerians, I know that it is difficult for us because of road work, many people want to stop because of this they don't, they don't even have money to, if they want to stop now, they don't have money to pay for rent house, they don't have money to pay for food, to take care of their self. We really need help please.
  
- As we were saying, we are talking about single girls, what about mothers with three, four kids who have to go outside every night to sleep under the bridge with their kids, it is really pathetic. The French government have to do something, even at least those mother, even if they don't have document, you understand me, at least those children they go to school, they have a life you understand, they cannot sleep under the bridge or sleep in a hotel for three nights and the next morning they have to go out and I don't understand really, it is really crazy. The French government I don't know the way they do their things but at least they need to get accommodation for all these mothers, single ladies, men, even boys,

underage boys I see a lot of them also in the street. So, it is pathetic that the French government they have nothing to do with these people. They really have to do something for these people, for we in general you understand so that at least we will have a place to, they will have a place to stay, mental health is really an issue, if you don't sleep you can go crazy, you will have health issues, psychological issues, the children also they cannot concentrate in school because why, they have difficulties when they see their parents or their mom crying every day, looking for where to stay, where to put them, the children are not stable in school, it disturb their mental health also. So, the French government have to do something, it is really very pathetic what I see in France.

- Just imagine a woman, woman who has children, two or three or who is a single mother, and she has to go to the street to work because she needs to pay house rent for her child, just to put shelter, put roof on the children's head. It is not possible, it is not, it is something that is unheard of not because she wants to be a prostitute after, maybe she has been a prostitute one time in her life but after having children, but before having children she decided to stop, then she had to go back because of having difficulties to access, to gain access into the social housing, like it is unheard of, it is not normal because there is no houses, there is nothing, nothing is being done on this situation, on this issue.
- Most women after having children they left prostitution for a long time, then they must go back again because they need to feed, they need to put food on their children's table, they need to pay for house rent, they need to, and they leave their children at, with friends or maybe neighbors and they go to work. And sometimes bad things can happen, and police will come and take the children, and after they don't know the real cause of this issue, why the woman left in the first place. It is not her fault that she had to find for her family, and most of them are single mothers too, they don't even have husbands. So the government should please help, think of what can happen, like what can happen in the future to these women, like what can happen to the future of these children too?