

SEEKING SANCTUARY IN ISTANBUL

PROJECT REPORT

2022

HUMAN TRAFFICKING
PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS

STOP THE TRAFFIK.
PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BE BOUGHT & SOLD.



Traffik Analysis Hub

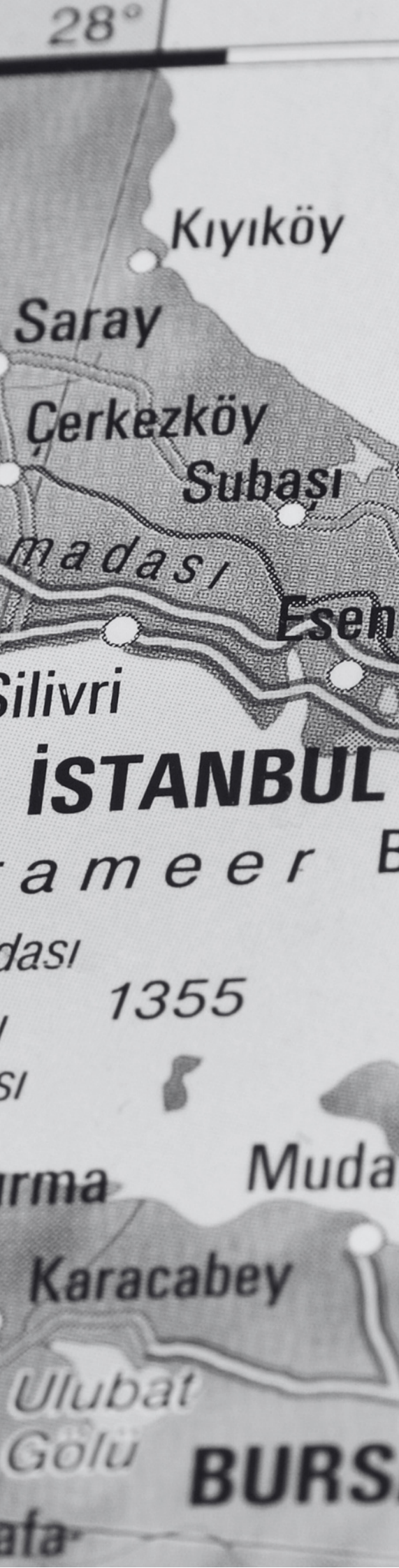


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AMAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Utilising the power of people and technology, **STOP THE TRAFFIK Group*** is working to prevent human trafficking globally through our innovative intelligence-led approach. By shining a light on this hidden crime, and by building resilience in communities and businesses, we can change the low-risk high-reward environment of which traffickers take advantage.

Between October 2022 and January 2023, STOP THE TRAFFIK Group delivered two Human Trafficking Prevention Campaigns as part of its Aman Safety project and in partnership with ASAM. These campaigns aimed to prevent human trafficking and exploitation among vulnerable refugee and migrant communities in Türkiye. This report outlines the project's objectives, methodologies, and outcomes as well as provides recommendations for future work.

The geo-targeted campaigns targeted at-risk communities through social media platforms. Specific areas in Istanbul, such as Bağcılar, Esenyurt, Fatih, and Beyoğlu, were identified based on research and intelligence gathering. Additionally, the campaigns, consisting of a video and a landing page, were tailored to various languages, including Arabic, Farsi, French, Pashto, and English, to reach individuals from different countries.

Through survivor stories and information-sharing, the campaigns successfully achieved their objectives, including increasing perception of risk, providing knowledge about trafficking and exploitation, and promoting the adoption preventative behaviour. The use of empowering and informative language in campaign materials helped build trust and encouraged individuals to seek support from local partner organizations.

RESULTS SUMMARY

SOME ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS PROJECT INCLUDE:

400,360

migrants and asylum seekers seeking sanctuary in Istanbul **were reached**

40,167

viewers clicked through to our landing pages to learn more

106

at-risk individuals reached out to STTG for support and were signposted to safety

17

case referrals were made by STTG for individuals to receive on the ground support

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW

About STOP THE TRAFFIK Group

STOP THE TRAFFIK Group (STTG) is a pioneering organisation in the prevention of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT). STTG works to unite people around the world by inspiring, informing, equipping and mobilising communities to know what human trafficking is, how to identify it and how to respond if they see it.

THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING BUSINESS RELIES ON THE:

Ability of traffickers to
RECRUIT
at-risk communities

DEMAND
for the exploitation
of persons targeted
for human
trafficking

MOVEMENT
of the proceeds
of crime through
legitimate
financial systems

STTG's strategy tackles the issue systemically by disrupting each of the above three factors upon which the human trafficking business is founded. Through this unique approach, we are changing the high profit, low-risk environment of trafficking and squeezing the criminal business to zero profit.

Our Aman Safety Programme

Aman Safety is a 5-year project which has been running since 2020. It is funded by Comic Relief through its "Across Borders: Routes to Safety for Refugees" programme. Through this project, we seek to raise awareness and prevent the trafficking of displaced communities as they seek sanctuary in Greece and Türkiye. We provide vital safety information to people on the move in their language and connect them with support organisations on the ground.

The project seeks to help people who have fled from countries including Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon.

You can find out more about our previous campaign work [here](#).



The Problem



Refugees and asylum seekers become forcibly displaced from their countries because of situations of **war, poverty, natural disasters and persecution**. Millions of refugees from Syria and other Middle Eastern and African countries travel to Türkiye and Greece in search of safety. **Common refugee routes have been identified as hotspots for trafficking and exploitation.**

People on the move often **lack labour rights, access to healthcare, safe migration and asylum routes, support from governments and organisations, and accurate information in their own language**. These factors increase their vulnerability to being targeted for exploitation and human trafficking.



Human trafficking relies upon the recruitment of at-risk communities through tactics including **grooming, deceit and false promises**. Traffickers aim to profit on their displacement by often posing as friends, romantic partners or someone offering help. **Recruitment can take place in person and through online platforms.**

Economic insecurity, as well as the **social and political marginalisation** of refugees, can exacerbate the risks of experiencing gender-based violence, engaging in survival sex, accepting offers to sell an organ, and working under unsafe conditions. Therefore, **people on the move often experience different types of exploitation including sexual exploitation, organ trafficking, labour exploitation, forced criminality and forced marriage.**



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Our Model of Prevention

At STTG, we use **social media** to **geo-target at-risk communities** who may be difficult to reach through traditional methods.

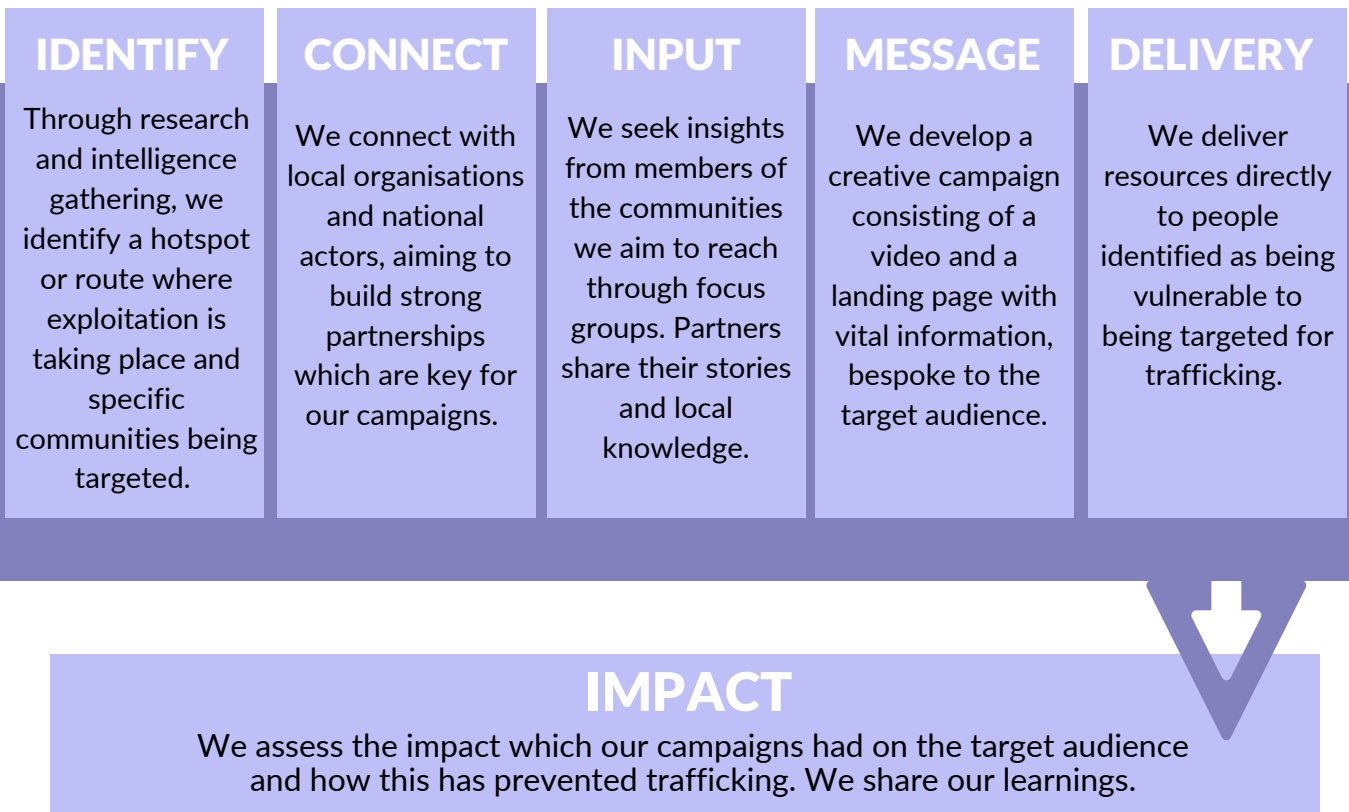
The aim is to target specific groups who have been identified as being at risk of being targeted for human trafficking **in their own language**.

Our campaigns raise awareness and share vital information on:

- **The risks of being recruited into exploitation**
- **How to spot the signs of trafficking**
- **How to report it**
- **Where to access support**

Our Methodology

Our prevention campaigns have a robust methodology which put survivor stories at the heart of our work. The following phases enable our campaign work:



Main Campaign Objectives

1

Increased perception of risk by equipping people with information to understand the prevalence of trafficking and the risks to individuals and the wider community.

3

Gained knowledge by providing information about specific signs of trafficking people may encounter and ways they can respond.

2

Signposted to safety by connecting at-risk individuals with support organisations on the ground.

4

Adopted preventative behaviour by inspiring people to take proactive steps to protect themselves and others from potential trafficking situations.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our geo-targeted prevention campaigns targeting at-risk communities and reaching millions of people each year with safety information are possible thanks to our collaboration with local partners.

Partners play a key role in shaping the content of our campaigns through their knowledge and survivor testimonies and by joining us in creating survivor-led responses.

Collaboration with local organisations enables us to safeguard individuals and prevent them from being recruited by traffickers. Local organisations provide education, job opportunities, healthcare, housing, legal advice, and community support to at-risk people.

While we do not provide direct support to individuals who contact us through our campaigns, our goal is to refer them to our local NGO partners and monitor the process while support and protection are provided.

PART 2: CONTEXT

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN TÜRKIYE

Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit. Men, women and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this global crime. Traffickers often use violence or false promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims.

Türkiye has one of the highest rates of human trafficking and modern slavery. It is estimated to have the 5th highest trafficking rate worldwide, the highest in Europe and Central Asia ([Walk Free, ANF News, 2023](#)).

THE 2023 GLOBAL SLAVERY INDEX (GSI) ESTIMATES THAT AS OF 2021, THERE WERE 1.3 MILLION INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN MODERN SLAVERY IN TÜRKIYE - ROUGHLY 15.6 PEOPLE FOR EVERY THOUSAND PEOPLE.

Official trafficking statistics from the [Turkish Provincial Directorate of Migration Management PDMM](#) indicate that 345 human trafficking victims were identified in 2022 by the Turkish authorities, although the actual number of victims is likely to be far higher.

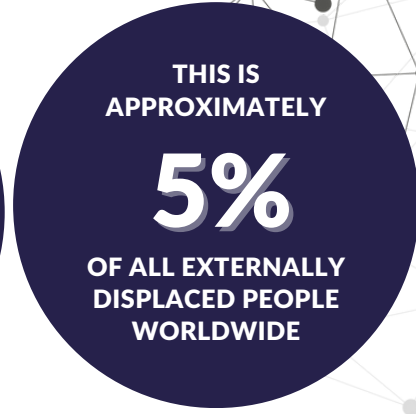
According to the Trafficking in Persons 2022 report, most trafficking victims in Türkiye are Syrians followed by Uzbeks and Afghans ([US State Department](#)). Türkiye's large refugee population is vulnerable to being targeted for human trafficking and exploitation, particularly Syrian refugees. Türkiye has over 3.6 million Syrian refugees, 64% of whom are at or below the poverty line ([Brookings Institute](#)). Poverty and lack of access to work permits are key risk factors for human trafficking and exploitation.

MIGRATION & ASYLUM IN TÜRKIYE

Due to its geographical location, Türkiye attracts hundreds of thousands of migrants from neighbouring and African countries, and further afield. Most refugees and asylum seekers in Türkiye are Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan and Iranian. Some migrants settle in Türkiye, while others attempt to enter Europe via the Eastern Mediterranean Route and only stay in Türkiye in transit until they manage to cross to Greece, Bulgaria or Cyprus.

In the last decade, there has been an influx of refugees and migrants seeking safety and opportunities in Türkiye. The country has been hosting the world's largest refugee population for the eighth consecutive year.

**ACCORDING TO
UNHCR DATA (2022),**



Türkiye is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol but maintains a geographical limitation to the Convention. Based on this limitation, migrants in Türkiye are only recognised as refugees if they are fleeing a European country. Instead, Türkiye offers temporary protection status to Syrians and international protection status to other non-European nationalities.

According to Turkish legislation, Syrians with temporary protection status are entitled to a range of rights and services, including “access to health, education, social assistance, psychological support, and access to the labour market” (UNHCR, 2023). Meanwhile, other nationalities who have the international protection status have the right to reside legally in Türkiye, be safe from deportation, and benefit from rights including education and for a limited duration, healthcare.

PART 3: CAMPAIGNS

CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND

In November 2022, the Aman Safety project launched 2 geo-targeted social media campaigns in Istanbul which ran simultaneously.

The 'Project Yardim' campaign focused on the prevention of organ trafficking and the 'Staying Safe in Istanbul' campaign aimed to prevent sexual exploitation. Both campaigns delivered safety information and connected at-risk individuals with legitimate support on the ground.





SEXUAL EXPLOITATION FOCUS

Consultations with our partner organisation, as well as intelligence-gathering and reports reflected the importance of raising awareness around issues of sexual exploitation and sex trafficking among refugee communities.

WHAT IS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Sexual exploitation is when **someone is deceived, coerced, or forced to take part in sexual activities.**

This might be:

-  with nothing in return
-  in exchange for necessities (such as food, shelter, rent, protection, work)
-  to pay back a debt incurred through debt bondage
-  in exchange for travel or transportation

It can also occur through **forced marriage**, in which one or both people do not freely consent to the marriage. Forced marriages are different to arranged marriages. In arranged marriages, both people agree to the marriage. In forced marriages, one or both people do not have a choice.

Anyone can be a victim of sexual exploitation.

Sexual exploitation can happen in many places including: in someone's home, in the workplace, in hotels, brothels, massage parlours and bars, or online, for example through live streaming.

ORGAN TRAFFICKING FOCUS

Survey results and interactions with refugees and asylum seekers from our previous campaign in Greece in 2020 also showed a need for spreading lifesaving information about the dangers of organ trafficking in Istanbul.

WHAT IS ORGAN TRAFFICKING?

Organ trafficking (also known as Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal) involves removing a part of the body, commonly a kidney, to sell for profit through means of deception or coercion.

Organ traffickers sometimes forcibly remove organs **without consent or through coercing their victims with false promises of payment.** Even if the individual receives a payment initially, there are reports of them being targeted for robbery soon after, often from the same criminal network that facilitated the procedure.

ORGANS CAN BE TAKEN IN SEVERAL WAYS:

TRADE

A victim formally or informally agrees to sell an organ, but is then cheated because they are not paid for the organ, paid less than the promised price, or robbed whilst recovering from the procedure.

AILMENTS

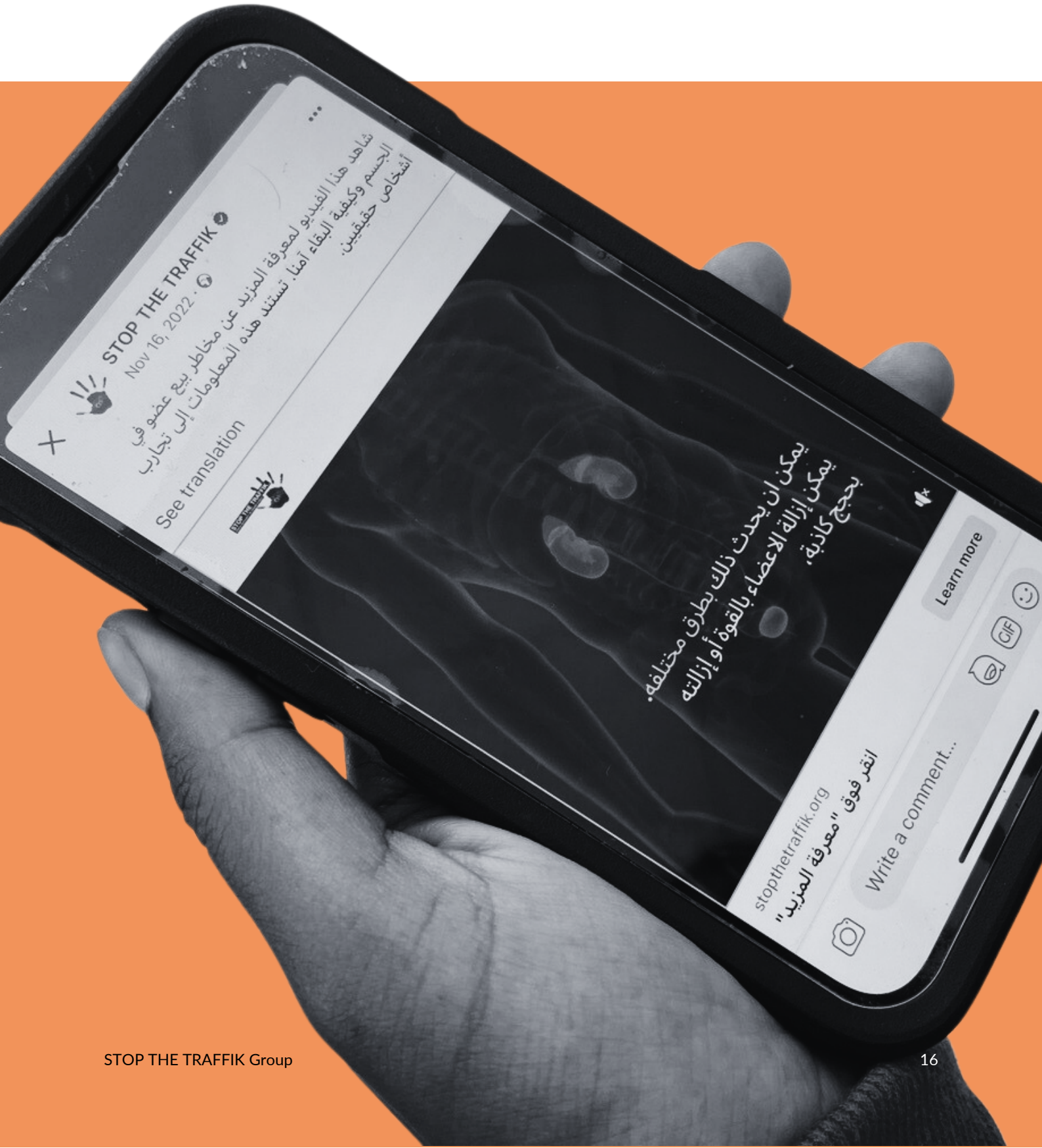
A vulnerable person is treated for an ailment, which may or may not exist, and the organs are removed without the victim's knowledge.

EXTORTION

A victim may be kidnapped, and their organs removed without consent.

The campaign social media posts appear as adverts on the social media timelines of the target audience.

The **'Learn More'** button directs the viewer to a landing page with further information.



TARGETING METHODOLOGY

The data and intelligence-led nature of our prevention campaigns allows us to determine our targeting methodology. Based on the above-mentioned information, our geo-targeted social media advert campaigns can target specific demographics. Our main aim was to reach refugees, migrants and asylum seekers who are at risk of being targeted for sexual exploitation or organ trafficking.

TARGET AREAS

Through our research and intelligence gathering, we were able to plot areas in the country that have large refugee communities and where there have been indications of suspicious organ trafficking activity or where communities appeared to be particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. This was followed by discussions and consultations with partner organisations, researchers in the field, and global law enforcement agencies to confirm the accuracy of our research.

By deciding to target specific areas in Istanbul, we ensured that the safety information being delivered through our campaigns would be useful and relevant to the audience.

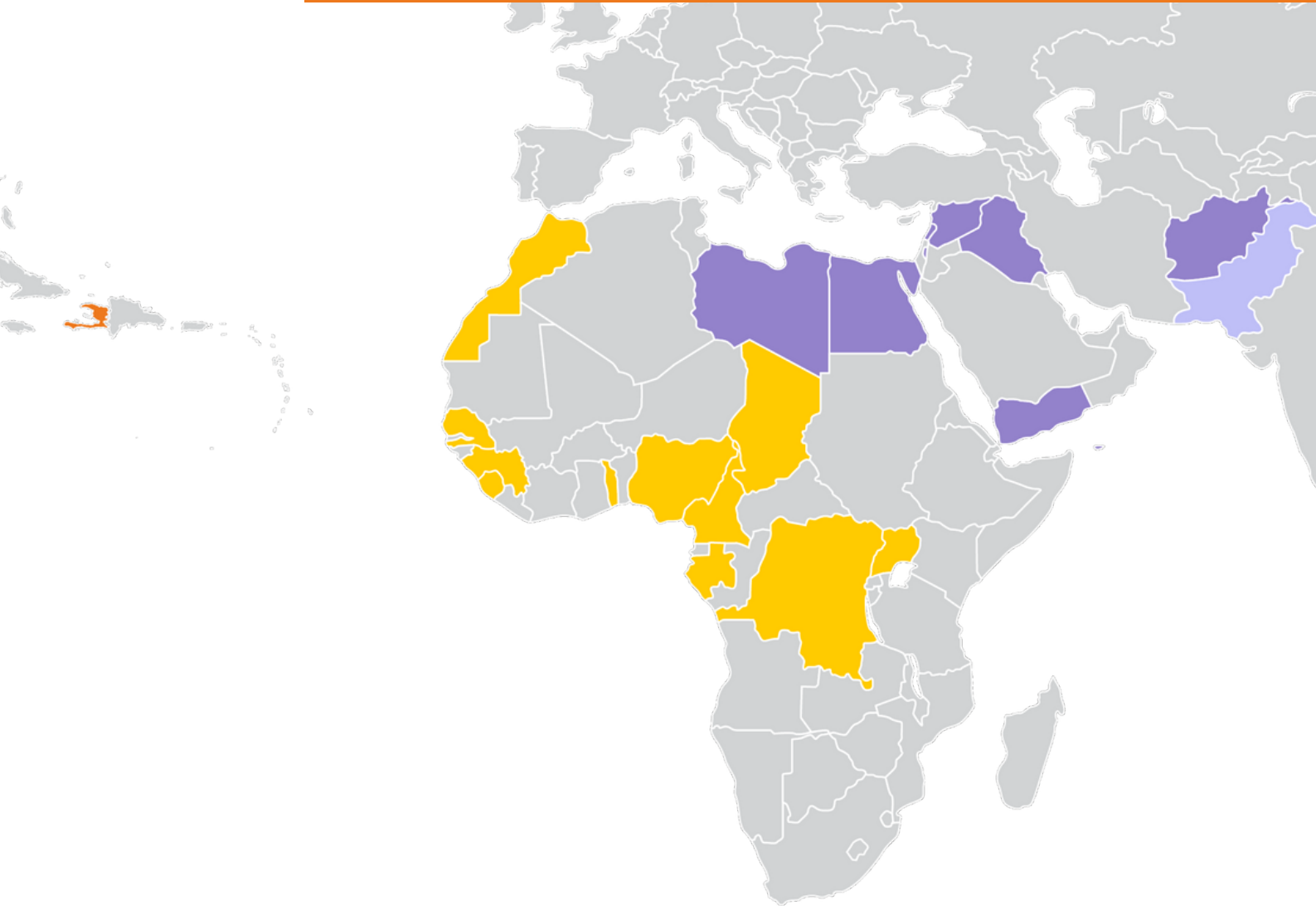
We therefore targeted the Istanbul areas of Bağcılar and Esenyurt for the organ trafficking campaign, and Fatih and Beyoglu for the sexual exploitation campaign.

TARGET LANGUAGES

We also conducted research to determine which languages should be targeted. We closely examined cases of organ trafficking in Türkiye to identify patterns in specific refugee and migrant communities. Our findings showed that some at-risk communities include people from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, and Egypt. **For this reason, our organ trafficking social media campaign explicitly targeted users in Arabic, Farsi, French and Pashto.**

For the sexual exploitation campaign, we found that refugee communities from countries including Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Somalia were particularly vulnerable to being targeted for sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. **Consequently, our sexual exploitation social media campaign targeted social media users on Facebook and Instagram in Arabic, Farsi, French and English.**

By targeting social media users in Arabic, Farsi, French, Pashto, and English, we were able to reach individuals from at least **22 different countries** who were based in Istanbul.



NORTH AMERICA

Haiti

AFRICA

Morocco, Congo, Cameroon, Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Togo, Gabon, Uganda, Chad, Nigeria

MIDDLE EAST

Egypt, Libya, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon

SOUTH ASIA

Pakistan

TARGET AGE GROUPS

Finally, we had to determine which age groups to target. For the organ trafficking campaign, we researched which age groups are at a high risk of being targeted for organ trafficking. **Our intelligence showed that refugees between the ages of 18 and 35 are at the highest risk of receiving deceptive offers to sell an organ because their organs are more likely to be fully developed and healthy, and because they have a larger presence on social media platforms – where offers of organ trafficking are often advertised. The same population is also vulnerable to sexual exploitation.**

OUR CAMPAIGNS IN TÜRKIYE THEREFORE EACH TARGETED WOMEN AND MEN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 35 IN TWO DIFFERENT AREAS OF ISTANBUL AND IN FOUR DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

CREATING BESPOKE CAMPAIGN VIDEOS

In order to achieve our campaign objectives of increasing awareness of the prevalence of the risk communities face to trafficking, and to equip the audience with knowledge about trafficking, the formulation of campaign materials focused on attracting the attention of social media users and establishing trust. Social media users are flooded with content across multiple platforms.

Our aim was to deliver information in a relatable, realistic and approachable manner, while avoiding any fear-mongering imagery or language.

These qualities are an essential part of the videos at the forefront of the campaign. The campaign videos include general information, safety tips, and a call for action asking the viewer to click on the 'Learn More' button which leads to a landing page with more information.

The length of the video is one minute—just enough to capture the viewer's attention and emphasize that the information is useful to carry with them.

The language and visuals used in the video are carefully chosen to equip the viewer with the knowledge to make an informed decision.

For example, the organ trafficking prevention campaign video does not tell the person not to sell an organ, as STTG campaigns do not instruct people about the decisions they make in their lives, but equip them with knowledge so they can make an informed decision.

Moreover, statements that aim to empower the individual to seek help are used. This is coupled with statements which highlight the presence and importance of trusted organisations: “There are organisations that can help you without judgement and that can provide care.”

THE MESSAGE ENABLES VIEWERS TO ASSESS RISKS AND DECIDE FOR THEMSELVES:

“ **IF YOU ARE THINKING OF SELLING YOUR ORGANS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DANGERS.** ”

THE VIDEO ADOPTS AN EMPOWERING AND REASSURING MESSAGE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PREVENTION CAMPAIGN VIDEO INCLUDES STATEMENTS SUCH AS:






“ **YOU MAY FEEL ASHAMED BUT BE REASSURED THIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT. THIS CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE.** ”

Cultural considerations also lie at the core of the creative process. Upon assessing cultural perceptions of issues such as sexual exploitation or abuse, decisions were made regarding the type of language used in the videos. Words such as ‘rape’ or ‘sexual abuse’ were avoided to avoid potential feelings of shame. Discussions with members of the community and NGO social workers brought to our attention how shame around the topic of sexual exploitation can prevent people from reporting and lead to prolonged suffering. By reassuring people to come forward, and challenging the stigma, not only can individuals be signposted to safety and receive the appropriate aftercare, but it can ultimately expose the trafficking networks facilitating abuse for profit.

CREATING THE LANDING PAGES

While the videos are at the forefront of campaigns, the landing page or website is where the person can find important information about how to stay safe and where to find support. **It includes helpful sections such as common questions and answers that are often at the core of misinformation and misconceptions.** This information was derived from extensive research on the topics of organ trafficking and sexual exploitation, as well as discussions with experts in the areas. More importantly, the information included is adjusted and edited based on responses collected from pre-campaign surveys where people can express their needs and thoughts. Overall, the language used on the website is empowering, clearly avoiding victim-blaming or judgement.

Importantly, the landing pages include case studies that are based on real life experiences. By including such stories, we aim to:

-  Allow viewers to relate to the content and bring them closer to the information by re-humanising the topic
-  Show viewers that such issues can happen to anyone, including any age or gender or nationality
-  Steer away from purely medical explanations of organ trafficking
-  Create a resource with a 'peer to peer' tone, as the audience are listening to testimonies of others
-  Prove that help is available and that they are not alone in their experiences

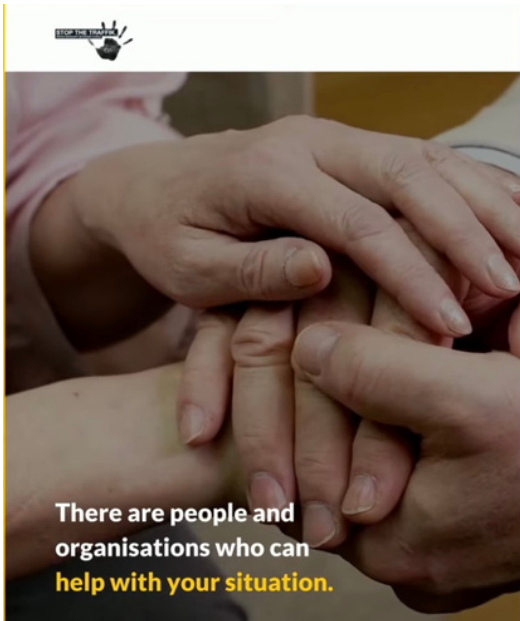
The goal is to provide people with information to make an informed decision and avoid negative coping mechanisms, such as resorting to selling an organ or engaging in survival sex which may appear as solutions to their issues. Highlighting the risks are not enough to prevent someone from falling into exploitation. An important section of the landing page includes the details of support organisations in their area, where they can receive support for other 'enabling factors' that increase the risk they face to exploitation. Contact details, website, addresses, operating hours, and description of the services offered are featured on the page.

The landing page also offers information about where to report exploitation or human trafficking in their own language (including Arabic, French, Farsi, and English). This is achieved through the STOP APP which enables anyone who has experienced, seen or heard about human trafficking or exploitation to securely and anonymously report it. The STOP APP collects individuals' stories of global human trafficking to disrupt and prevent this crime.

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

ORGAN TRAFFIKING CAMPAIGN

VIDEO



LANDING PAGE

Introduction

This page includes stories and advice based on real life accounts of people who have experienced sexual exploitation.

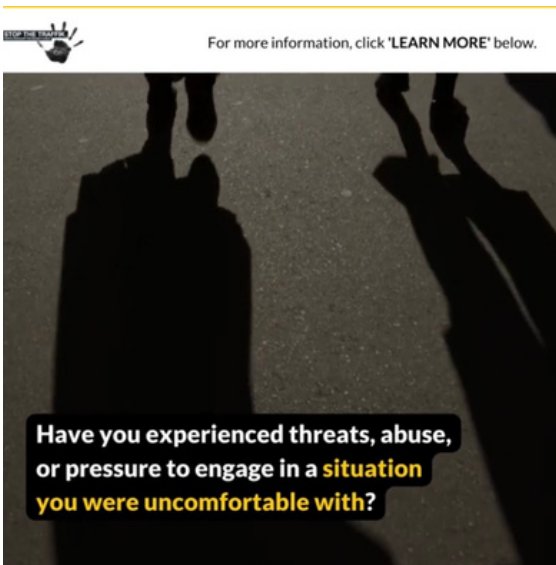
Are you experiencing any of the following?

- Is someone pressuring you into providing sexual services?
- Is someone making you feel frightened of the consequences if you refuse?
- Are you experiencing physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse?
- Is someone controlling your movements or sleeping arrangements?
- Is someone in possession of your identity documents?
- Is someone threatening you, your family or your loved ones?
- Is someone restricting your contact with friends and family?
- Are you being forced to provide sexual services because someone says you owe them money?

These are some of the signs of sexual exploitation. **Not all of these have to be present for it to be exploitation, one of these alone could still mean you are being exploited.**

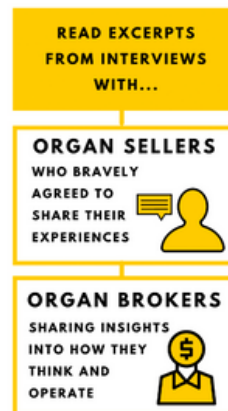
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION CAMPAIGN

VIDEO



LANDING PAGE

This page provides information about the realities of selling an organ for money.



By knowing what others have experienced and how brokers work, you can understand the risks and be equipped with knowledge so you can make an informed choice about your future.

SIGNPOSTING PARTNERS

**WE NEVER DO WORK TO A COMMUNITY,
BUT WITH A COMMUNITY.**

A key part to prevention work is a holistic approach that facilitates people to access support for vulnerabilities they may have. These campaigns were developed and run in partnership with **ASAM (Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization)**, as one of the leading organisations in Türkiye.

ASAM is an independent, impartial and non-profit non-governmental organization operating actively in the field of migration, has been conducting activities since 1995 in more than 30 provinces to assist asylum seekers and refugees in accessing rights and services and to support their psychosocial wellbeing and social cohesion.



ASAM'S VISION IS TO CREATE A PLACE WHERE ALL ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS CAN ENJOY THEIR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND SERVICES AND LIVE IN A HARMONY WITH THE HOST COMMUNITY.

The project was run by ASAM Dolapdere Office, Beyoğlu, and by ASAM Al Farah Center, Fatih with supervision from Ankara HQ Protection Unit.

The ASAM team was consulted and provided advice in formulating the campaign message. **Information and contact details of ASAM were then shared in our campaign material and at-risk individuals were signposted to the organisation.**

PART 4: OUTCOMES

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?

The project had 6 objectives regarding the prevention of the trafficking and exploitation of refugees and migrants:



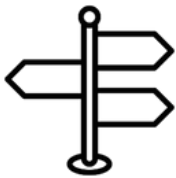
INCREASED PERCEPTION OF THE RISK OF MSHT



GAINED KNOWLEDGE OF MSHT



ADOPTIVE PREVENTATIVE BEHAVIOUR



SIGNPOSTED TO SAFETY



PROVIDED SUPPORT



ESTABLISHED SAFE REPORTING MECHANISMS

BASED ON DATA ANALYSED FROM SURVEYS, SOCIAL MEDIA, FEEDBACK AND MESSAGES FROM THE TARGET AUDIENCE, WE CONCLUDED THAT THE PROJECT SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES.

INCREASED PERCEPTION OF RISK

The campaigns aimed to increase the target audience's perception of risk. The campaign material (videos, landing pages, surveys) included information that raised awareness of the risks that refugees and migrants may face concerning organ trafficking and sexual exploitation. **An increased perception of risk enables communities to take preventative action, which is key for protecting them from human trafficking.**

HOW THE CAMPAIGNS ACHIEVED THIS OBJECTIVE:

After viewing the campaign:

- 8% of the survey respondents said **“I realised I was at risk of becoming a victim of organ trafficking”**
- 20% of the survey respondents **found the campaign helped them understand the risks of selling an organ.**

A significant number of those reached by our organ trafficking prevention campaign, Project Yardim, contacted us through comments or messages to express their desperation. Many were thinking about accepting offers to sell their organs to improve their financial situation. Our team responded to these messages and explained the risks of selling organs and how to spot the signs of exploitation.

Here's an example of a message received by an Arabic speaker after viewing the campaign:

I have been living in Türkiye for two and a half years. I separated from my family in search of work and a better place. I was exposed to fraud, and I lost all my money. I hoped to find someone to help me, but I did not find anyone. I need money to get out of here and I thought about selling one of my organs to get out from here to any place that brings me closer to my family. They now live in extreme poverty.

After carefully explaining to him the dangers of organ trafficking and offering to provide the contact details of a support organisation, he replied with the following:

Thank you very much for your interest and reading my story and I hope you provide me with full information about this organization.

GAINED KNOWLEDGE

The campaigns aimed at increasing the knowledge of the target audience around the issues of organ trafficking and sexual exploitation, through explaining the recruitment and control methods as well as providing information about the perpetrators.

Gained knowledge creates resilient communities that are equipped with knowing their rights, understanding the signs of exploitation and being informed on how to access support.

HOW THE CAMPAIGNS ACHIEVED THIS OBJECTIVE:

Our campaigns reached more than 400,000 individuals with 10.1% of them choosing to click “Learn More” to access our landing pages with detailed information. Through our surveys, we shared information with respondents in an interactive way. More than 5,000 people navigated through the information shared in our surveys. The survey respondents gained knowledge on the issues of organ trafficking and sexual exploitation by answering true or false questions.

60% agreed that no one has the right to force someone to provide sexual services, even if money is owed	61% agreed that selling an organ can have serious short-term and long-term health implications
52% agreed that sexual exploitation can happen to people of any gender, age, or nationality	48% agreed that organ traffickers sometimes deceive you to sell your organ with false promises of a large payment
51% agreed that sexual exploitation can happen online	45% agreed that organ traffickers sometimes forcibly remove organs without consent

“Thank you for this survey, which provides information in a simple and useful way.”

Comment received on our survey by an Arabic speaker

“Great! Thank you so much for providing us with useful information.”

Comment received on our advert by a Farsi speaker

ADOPTED PREVENTATIVE BEHAVIOUR

The campaigns aimed to inspire people to adopt preventative behaviours that will make it harder for traffickers to recruit them into exploitation. Preventative behaviours are actions people can take to stay safe from trafficking and exploitative offers, including:

- Contacting trusted support organisations when they need help
- Saving emergency numbers on their phone
- Keeping their ID and travel documents safe and never giving them away
- Not accepting offers of help or shelter without knowing more details
- Sharing the workplace address with someone they trust if they are offered a job
- Not trusting people who prevent them from contacting friends and family

HOW THE CAMPAIGNS ACHIEVED THIS OBJECTIVE:

- 83% of survey respondents said they will adopt at least one preventative behaviour after reading information in the survey
- 72% of survey respondents reported taking actions to reduce the risk of organ trafficking after viewing the campaign materials, including declining offers to sell their organ
- 196 people reached out to us directly after viewing the campaign material asking for information about how to access support, reflecting a change in perceptions of trust towards support organisations. Approximately 300 people clicked the contact information of our partner organisation ASAM on our landing pages

The individuals who took the steps to reach out to STTG and ASAM are taking active action to protect themselves and others from being at risk of exploitation, by trusting that legitimate support is available.

“I will seek help from a trusted organisation”

Response to our post-campaign survey on organ trafficking

“I will not accept a physical or verbal offer of assistance or shelter until I have been given all the pertinent information”

Comment received on our survey on sexual exploitation from a Farsi speaker

SIGNPOSTED TO SAFETY

The campaigns sought to signpost at-risk individuals to safety through connecting them with support organisations on the ground. The option of being **signposted to safety and understanding how to access legitimate support is a vital part of prevention.**

HOW THE CAMPAIGNS ACHIEVED THIS OBJECTIVE:

The process of signposting to support entails directing a person in need of help to organisations in their area that speak their language. The Aman Safety team has created a strong network of support organisations across different locations in Türkiye. We work closely with a wide range of organisations including medical and legal associations. Such collaborations are essential for the success of our campaign objectives.

“I was contacted by ASAM, and they took all the details from me and told me that they would help me legally. I thank you for your effort and follow-up on my behalf.”

Message received from an Arabic speaker

This quote was said by one of the 106 people who were directly signposted to safety by STOP THE TRAFFIK through the campaign. **100% of the people who contacted the team asking for support were sent the details of a support organisation on the ground.**

“I beg you to give me information about organizations that can help me get a lawyer and a process of my asylum case so that I can get proof, work here and solve my financial problems, and please provide me with information about the organisation that is working.”

Message received from a Farsi speaker

People are signposted to safety either directly through our landing pages or after they directly reach out to us. The landing pages include the details of organisations, such as contact details, type of services offered, languages available, and operating hours.

The information, which is presented in the person’s language, allows for them to make an informed decision regarding which organisation would be the most suitable to meet their needs.

PROVIDED SUPPORT

While some people were sent contact details of support organisations and advised to reach out to them themselves, others required closer safeguarding intervention. Upon receiving a message or comment, the team undertakes a vulnerability assessment to evaluate the needs of the person.

The cases that were identified as needing urgent support were directly referred to our partner organisations. Upon receiving consent to share their details with a support organisation, a case document is created with relevant information. Providing support such as legal aid, financial support and shelter, can be instrumental in protecting communities from exploitation.

HOW THE CAMPAIGNS ACHIEVED THIS OBJECTIVE:

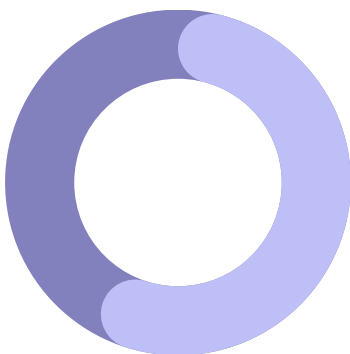
Referrals were made to 6 trusted organisations based on the needs of the person.

These organisations included: ASAM, Greek Council for Refugees, Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, and IOM Türkiye.

17 CASES

REFERRED TO THE ABOVE ORGANISATIONS

41%



59%



The support provided included:

Legal Counselling

Social Counselling

Health Counselling

Financial Assistance

Provision of Hygiene Kits

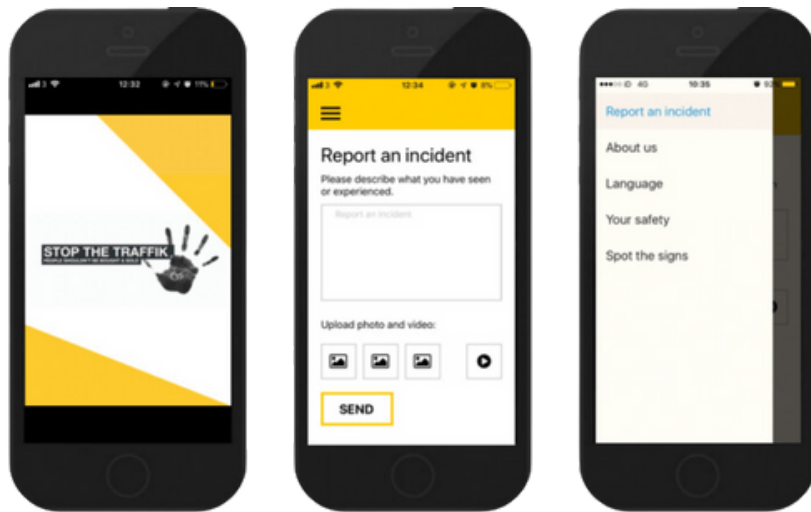
ESTABLISHED SAFE REPORTING MECHANISMS

Safe reporting mechanisms allow people to anonymously report suspected or experienced exploitation and trafficking.

Through our campaign, we received messages from people wishing to report problems or to tell us their stories of exploitation, such as:

- Exploitation and mistreatment in the workplace
- Blackmail through fake social media profiles
- Death threats
- Debt bondage

These messages highlighted how people often did not know where they could safely report exploitation or did not trust organisations or authorities to support them if they filed a report. This is why it is so important that there are safe anonymous reporting mechanisms available to people at risk of being targeted for trafficking.



Our landing pages included information about the **STOP APP**, a mobile phone application created by STOP THE TRAFFIK through which people can make anonymous reports of exploitation or trafficking. Reports are then investigated by the intelligence team at STOP THE TRAFFIK who determine the relevant follow-up actions.

71

people in Türkiye downloaded the STOP APP during our campaign

This means that these people can safely report trafficking incidents and spread the word about the app with their friends and family.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

KEY INTELLIGENCE FINDINGS

We gathered intelligence about the trafficking risks and situation of refugees and migrants in Türkiye throughout the different campaign phases, from research to evaluation. These findings can help STTG gain a richer picture of trafficking and inform and shape future prevention programmes.

Together with STTG's intelligence team, we published our research and campaign intelligence findings in a series of Key Judgements which present **actionable high-level insights to key stakeholders such as partner organisations and financial institutions.**

The combination of information from sources offers an analysis sufficient to guide activity or inspire action, either by us or an appropriate party to reduce vulnerability or deliver safeguarding opportunities. The Key Judgements produced by STT can be found [here](#).

ORGAN TRAFFICKING

- Organ traffickers target undocumented migrants and refugees, especially young Arabic-speaking men.
- According to our surveys, 1 in 7 Arabic-speaking refugees in Istanbul have received or seen online or in-person offers to sell an organ.
- Organ traffickers commonly recruit victims via social media platforms including Telegram, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, imo and WhatsApp.
- Organ traffickers attract victims through:
 - the false promise of large sums of money
 - the provision of (forged) ID documentation
 - the suggestion that they will be saving someone's life
- Organ trafficking is most often connected to kidney transplants, but there is evidence that eye parts, liver parts, and testicles are also being bought.
- Organ traffickers use faked kinship documentation such as marriage certificates to bypass hospital ethics boards.
- Organ trafficking networks often include former/current medical staff, a person who forges kinship documents, a translator, and a person at the hospital who mixes forged documents among the rest.

TOP FINDINGS:

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

- Syrian refugees are at risk of sexual exploitation, especially in regions near the Syrian border where people are in financially desperate situations.
- Women and children are exploited in exchange for necessities such as rent or food. Some are sold into forced marriage by their families.
- There are organised sex trafficking networks operating between Sub-Saharan African countries and Türkiye.
 - Victims are often recruited in their home countries through online or in person false job offers, such as cleaning and English-teaching jobs.
 - They then arrive in Türkiye by plane on tourist visas and are picked up at the airport by traffickers. Traffickers confiscate their passports, and the victims are told they must engage in sex work.
 - Sometimes they are trafficked on to Greece where they are further exploited.

TOP FINDINGS:

LABOUR EXPLOITATION, DEBT BONDAGE & FORCED CRIMINALITY

- According to our surveys, approximately **45% of refugee men in Istanbul have experienced labour exploitation and have worked for little to no pay.**
- Approximately 25% of refugees surveyed were seeking to travel onwards to Europe, via Greece. The need to raise money to pay smugglers makes them more vulnerable to exploitation. If they cannot pay:
 - Traffickers offer debt bonds, i.e., smuggling in exchange for work in the country of destination.
 - Smugglers offer free transportation if they agree to help with logistics, such as navigating the boat to Greece. This is a form of forced criminality and if they are caught by the authorities, they are arrested and prosecuted for smuggling upon arrival.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

ENABLING FACTORS

Through our campaign work, many people contact us who are experiencing other difficulties and are not necessary in a situation of trafficking. These other difficulties are often enabling factors that make people more vulnerable to being targeted for exploitation or human trafficking. We aim to prevent exploitation before it happens and ensure people experiencing these factors are signposted to legitimate support, and decline potentially exploitative offers to solve current difficulties.

During these campaigns, we acquired significant information regarding the most prevalent enabling factors experienced by displaced populations in Istanbul. In the following analysis, we present our key findings which increase our understanding of how forced displacement increases the risk of human trafficking.

By understanding the most prevalent challenges the communities face, we can share such findings with partner organisations and make recommendations to diminish trafficking risks.

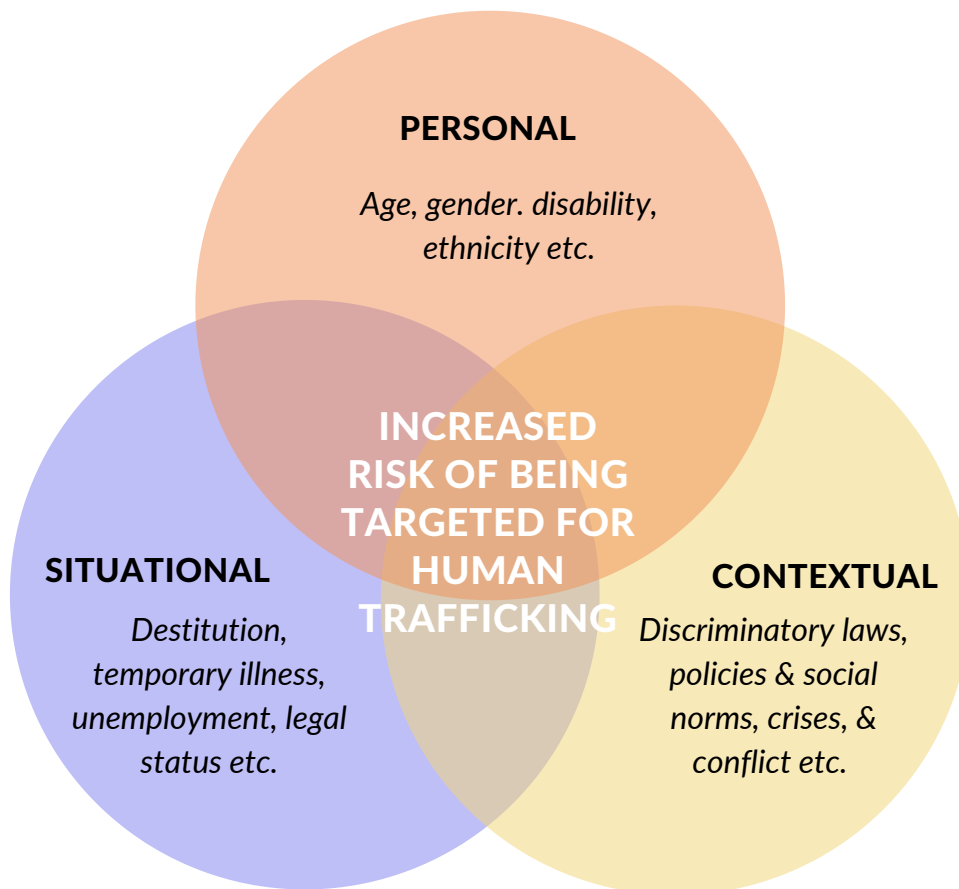


Fig. Factors that put people at a higher risk of being targeted for human trafficking and exploitation.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

ENABLING FACTORS

→ PERSONAL FACTORS

All individuals are rights holders, and the extent to which an individual's rights are respected will affect how individual factors impact vulnerability or resilience. Some examples of personal factors are age, sex, racial and/or ethnic identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, personal history, mental and emotional health, and access to resources such as money, services, goods or support.

→ PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Refugees with protected characteristics such as persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI+ community, and pregnant women were found to be more vulnerable than other groups. Intersectional identities, such as disability and refugeehood, put many at a higher risk of ill-treatment, abuse, and violence in detention facilities and police custody. Refugees who fled their home countries due to fear of persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender expression continue to be discriminated against in Türkiye. Through our campaigns, we have seen some organisations struggling to secure protection for trans migrant women who are at a high risk of being trafficked or exploited.

→ ETHNICITY

Racism and discrimination against refugees and migrants are widespread in Türkiye. The anti-refugee rhetoric in the media and politics has resulted in attacks, violence, and tensions targeted at refugee communities. A large proportion of people who saw our campaign talked about racism and how it affects their lives in comments on Facebook, responses to the surveys, and in direct messages. They expressed fear and made it clear that racism affects their livelihoods and their physical and mental health to a great extent.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS

➔ LEGAL STATUS

One of the most serious enabling factors that make refugees vulnerable to trafficking is lack of legal status. Through these campaigns, we observed that unregistered migrants face multiple barriers to accessing fundamental rights and support in Türkiye. At least 44% of the people who reached out to us asking for support were unregistered. The majority of these were from Afghanistan and African countries. Unregistered migrants do not have access to education, health services, or legal employment.

Thus, they are excluded from society. This means they are at an increased risk of police violence and deportation at any point. Fear of deportation was one of the most frequently expressed issues by the people who messaged us through the campaigns and responded to our surveys. To avoid this risk, unregistered migrants told us that they often avoid leaving their accommodation and feel like prisoners inside their own homes. In fact, lack of legal status does not only exist as an enabling factor contributing to vulnerability but has also been identified as the dominating control method used by traffickers (threats of deportation) to keep survivors trapped.

Since unregistered migrants cannot work legally in the country, they resort to informal jobs which often result in labour exploitation. In the case of workplace accidents, unregistered migrants are not entitled to legal protections. For example, we received a message from a refugee who worked informally as a carpenter and sustained a work injury due to the poor working conditions. The accident resulted in the amputation of two fingers, leaving him unable to work, and unaware of how to access legal support.

➔ FALSE JOB ADS & ONLINE EXPLOITATION

Recruitment and exploitation often take place online.

A number of people reported seeing online advertisements from organ traffickers searching for potential sellers. False or deceptive online job advertisements that promise employment in fields such as education and sports are also common and often result in victims being recruited for sex trafficking. The lack of knowledge around online safety and personal information sharing puts people at a higher risk of responding to deceptive advertisements and offers.

Exploitation can also take place online, through commercial websites and social media platforms. For example, a woman reached out to us reporting a social media page that was impersonating her underage daughter. The page claimed that the girl was a sex worker.

“We sweat day and night to make our living in a legal way, yet they won't let us do that. We live in constant fear of being deported.”

Comment received by Farsi speaker

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

.....➔ LACK OF DURABLE SOLUTIONS

UNHCR (2022) has identified three possible durable solutions:

- repatriation (when safe to do so) to countries of origin,
- integration in host countries,
- and resettlement to third countries.

In the absence of a large-scale resettlement programme from Türkiye, and with little prospect of safe return for refugees, the question of the long-term status and attendant rights of persons in need of international protection becomes particularly important.

Türkiye's ability to provide durable solutions to refugees is severely compromised by the denial of full refugee status to non-Europeans. Punitive immigration policies and lack of access to safe migration options further exacerbate risks of trafficking. Many trafficking victims refrain from seeking government and law enforcement assistance, fearing not only arrest due to their irregular migration status, but also violence from their exploiters.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the intersection of the above factors further exacerbates the vulnerability of displaced communities in Türkiye. Refugees often expressed feelings of desperation and increase in willingness to accept disingenuous offers of help that may be exploitative. Traffickers take advantage of such situations, knowing the vulnerable situations they face, by presenting false promises which often lead to exploitation.

Understanding these factors and addressing them will strengthen community resilience to trafficking and ultimately reduce the trafficker's opportunity to recruit and profiteer from displaced communities.

CAMPAIGN CASE STUDIES

A STORY OF ORGAN & SEX TRAFFICKING PREVENTION

**WE WERE CONTACTED BY
AMINA*, A 21-YEAR-OLD
FROM MOROCCO WHO WAS
HOMELESS AND WAS
SLEEPING IN A PARK.**

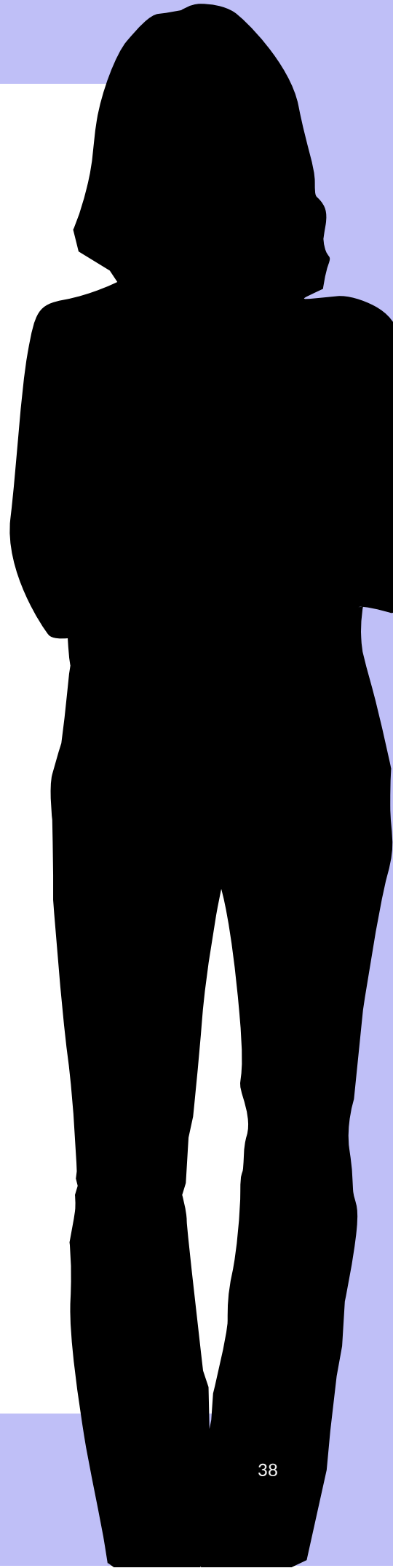
She was considering selling an organ to solve her financial problems. She mentioned the option of getting involved in sex and escort work but was hesitant to do so.

We had multiple calls with Amina to understand her situation, offer her a listening ear, and reassure her that support is available.

We connected her to organisations that were able to offer emergency cash assistance to pay rent, psychological support, food cards, and legal support to register in the country.

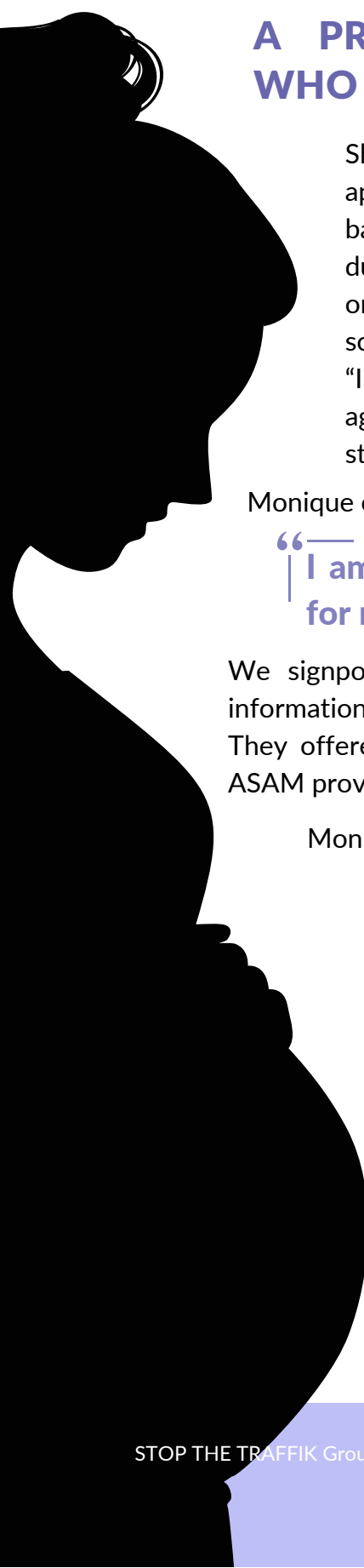
Amina, who was once at a high risk of being targeted for sex and organ trafficking, is now in a better situation. She has safe accommodation and is on the path to legal employment.

****Names changed to protect identity***



DEALING WITH SCAMS AND RISKS OF HOMELESSNESS DURING PREGNANCY

WE WERE CONTACTED BY MONIQUE*, A PREGNANT WOMAN FROM CAMEROON WHO WAS ALONE AND SCARED IN ISTANBUL.



She was in the last stages of her pregnancy and her due date was quickly approaching. The soon-to-be mother was worried about her and her baby's health and safety. Monique had not received any medical support due to the lack of legal status in the country. She did not have any family or community around to support her. Not knowing her rights, she was scammed by an agency which claimed to help with legal documents. "I spend all the money that I had for my residence for nothing...(…) an agency took my money... I am now illegal without residence. Not enough stuff for my baby and money for hospital's fee."

Monique expressed suffering from physical pain, as well as psychological stress:

“—
| I am almost at end. I am so stressed. That's not good
for me and the baby (...) I cry every day. I feel alone. —”

We signposted her to ASAM who invited her to their offices and gathered information about her situation. Monique said that that they were very kind to her. They offered legal support to start the process of getting registered in Türkiye. ASAM provided Monique with supermarket cards and sanitary kits.

Monique sent us a message after her appointment with the organisation:

“—
| I am crying of joy.
Thank you so much for being there for me. |
—”

Monique was also signposted to a health and human rights organisation.

She gave birth to a healthy baby in a safe hospital. We continued to check up on Monique to make sure that her and her baby were comfortable and safe.

“—
| Since I am chatting with you. I am less stressed.
Thank you so much for everything. —”

**Names changed to protect identity*

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION: FROM TÜRKIYE TO GREECE

Nabil's* friend told him about an advert that he had seen on his Facebook page from an organisation with safety information for refugees. The advert was part of our Arabic campaign in Istanbul. 28-year-old Nabil searched for STOP THE TRAFFIK's account and sent us a message asking for help. The third-year university student fled his home country, Yemen, because of the war and arrived in Türkiye. His main goal was to continue his university education. After multiple failed attempts of registering in Türkiye and enrolling in an educational institution, Nabil decided to take the dangerous route to Greece.

Out of despair, he made an agreement with someone online. This person told him that he would take him to Greece where he would arrange a job for him to work and pay back the money owed for the trip. Nabil knew that this could result in a situation of debt bondage and labour exploitation – but he thought that this was his only option.

“I knew the risks that could happen later, but I had no choice.”

In the attempt to cross the border, they were caught by the Greek authorities and pushed back to Türkiye.

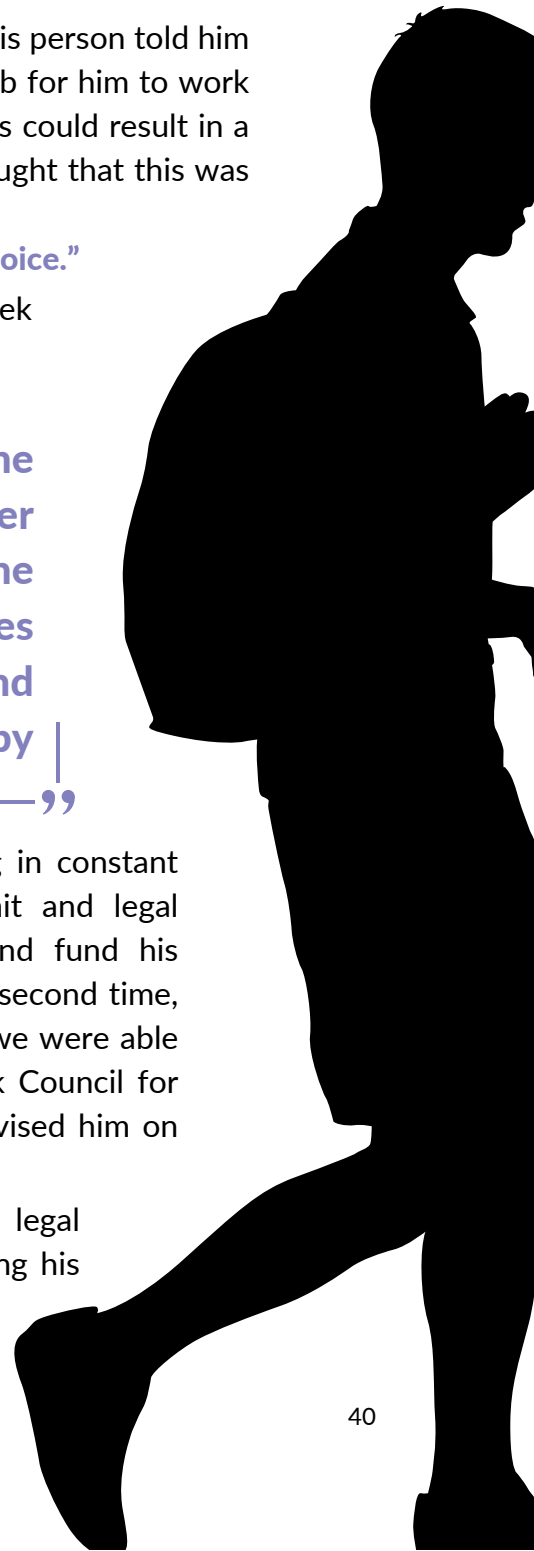
“—

We spent a whole day in the river in the extreme cold and the rain, we were cut up by the river with a light rubber boat that was caught by the Greek police. They took all our supplies, phones and food. They took our clothes and shoes and returned us barefoot to the Turkish side by throwing us in the middle of the river. —”

He was experiencing severe financial distress and was living in constant fear of deportation in Türkiye. Without a residency permit and legal documents, he was unable to work to support himself and fund his education. He lost hope and attempted to travel to Greece a second time, this time successfully. A few days after his arrival to Greece, we were able to connect him with organisations on the ground. The Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) provided Nabil with legal counselling and advised him on the legal procedures.

Nabil is now awaiting his appointment to receive legal documentation in the country. He is on the path to continuing his education.

****Names changed to protect identity***



Message from Nabil to STOP THE TRAFFIK*

WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT STOP THE TRAFFIK IS THAT YOU WERE VERY COOPERATIVE WITH ME, AND YOU SUPPORTED ME PSYCHOLOGICALLY TO A GREAT EXTENT, AND YOU ALWAYS FOLLOWED ME AND ASKED ABOUT ME.

ALSO, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR SOME THINGS, INCLUDING THE WAY YOU COMMUNICATE WITH US IS VERY SMOOTH AND COMFORTING, SO THAT THE PERSON FEELS THAT THE WORLD IS STILL FINE AND THAT HOPE IS STILL THERE.

ALSO, YOUR DILIGENCE IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE REST OF THE ORGANIZATIONS AND TRYING TO COORDINATE BETWEEN US AND THEM TO GET THE MAXIMUM BENEFIT. REALLY, THERE ARE NO WORDS TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO YOU.

I HOPE THAT YOU WILL ALWAYS CONTINUE BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY WHO NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

PART 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

In no particular order:

01

Increase focus on the prevention of human trafficking by tackling enabling factors that put communities at risk of being targeted:

- Creating safe spaces and shelters which accommodate for women and LGBTQIA+ migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees who continue to face discrimination and are at a high risk of being targeted for sexual exploitation.
- Provide accessible mental health support, particularly around suicide prevention resources (such as helplines) in different languages in Türkiye.
- Address barriers to legally reporting labour exploitation, bad working conditions and work accidents for unregistered refugees working in the informal job market.
- Address barriers to registering and acquiring legal status for irregular migrants and unregistered refugees.

02

Capacity-building and training of first responders in the identification of human trafficking:

- Medical staff (including doctors and nurses) to be trained to identify potential victims of organ trafficking and other forms of exploitation (for example, sexual or labour exploitation).
- Social workers to be trained on how to recognize the signs of exploitation or trafficking and knowing how to respond.

03

Future areas of research and focus

- Further research on the intersection between online platforms and exploitation with a focus on online recruitment methods, which can guide further work on increasing online safety by collaborating with stakeholders (META/TikTok) and social media users (people at risk of being exploited online).

04

Explore options for more cross-collaboration between NGOs, local grassroots organisations, shelters, and associations to bridge gaps in service allocation.

- Create intelligence and data-sharing opportunities between stakeholders across different sectors (including financial institutions, medical tourism businesses, NGOs) around the topic of human trafficking, specifically focusing on money flows and trafficking routes
- By NGOs and other organisations sharing and analysing anonymous data and intelligence we can see where and how trafficking is happening, so we can predict and prevent it. This project recommends that NGOs safely share anonymous data to aid rescue and prevention work

PART 6: CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

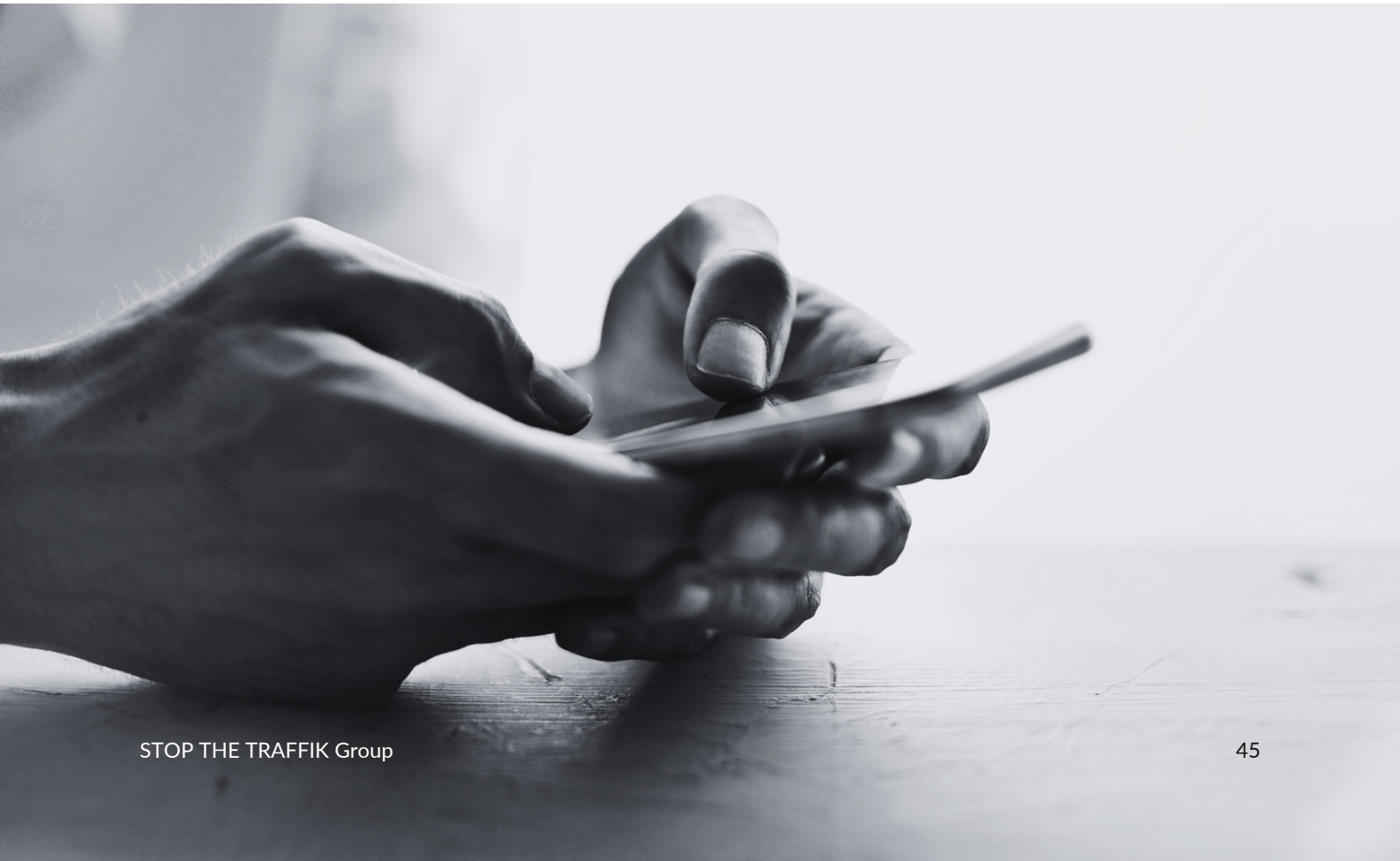
FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

In conclusion, the Istanbul campaigns conducted by STOP THE TRAFFIK Group have demonstrated their efficacy in combating human trafficking and exploitation among at-risk refugee and migrant communities in Türkiye.

By harnessing the power of targeted social media campaigns, the initiatives successfully raised awareness, provided crucial knowledge, and promoted preventative behaviour.

This project also proved the importance of collaboration between different actors, especially local organisations, to successfully achieve the prevention of modern slavery and human trafficking.

Despite the project's successes, a lot remain to be done in this area. The Aman Safety project will continue to work aiming to reduce the recruitment of at-risk communities into exploitation with similar initiatives across the Mediterranean route.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These campaigns would have been impossible without organisations working on the ground, to whom we were able to signpost individuals for further support.

Thank you to the all the amazing volunteers who contributed to this project.

Thank you to the Meta Team and the Merkle Data Analytics Team for their support of the project.

Finally, we would like to say thank you to Comic Relief and the Across Borders Programme for their support to prevent human trafficking.

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