

# Stories Unspoken<sup>2</sup>

of 13 migrant women



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This book is part of the LEA project, funded by the European Union and the Austrian Development Cooperation, and implemented by Caritas Austria, Caritas Lebanon, Kafa, and Amel.

The LEA project aims to reduce forced labor and exploitation in Lebanon by improving protection and access to justice for migrant workers. It targets state authorities, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and civil society organizations to strengthen their ability to identify victims of abuse and enhance access to justice and protection mechanisms.

The LEA project provides a range of services to help migrant domestic workers access basic rights, including safe shelters; 150 through Caritas Lebanon (CL) and 120 through Kafa, along with psycho-social and legal assistance. It also addresses the needs of children of migrant workers, who are often undocumented, which increases vulnerability for both mother and child.



The project directly improves the situation of vulnerable migrant workers and their children through basic assistance, capacity-building activities such as language support, social and health services, shelter access for severely vulnerable or abused cases, rights awareness sessions, and legal counseling.

Caritas Lebanon and Amel specifically target migrants in detention, providing legal, psycho-social, medical, and in-kind assistance to 700 female and male migrants.

Under Outcome 2 “Enhanced access of migrant workers in Lebanon to justice and rights protection mechanisms in line with international standards” the women at the CL shelter participated in two Non-Focused Psychosocial Support initiatives: Art Therapy and Storytelling. These activities allowed them to express themselves through writing and painting.

As a result, the publication “*Stories Unspoken Second Edition*” brought together their drawings and stories, amplifying migrants’ voices and serving as a powerful advocacy tool against human trafficking.

The journey that began with the stories of eleven resilient migrant women in the first edition, supported by another EU project, continues in this second volume, where new voices and fresh experiences enrich a tapestry of courage, hope, and healing.

## Anna's Story

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*I had so many dreams before coming to Lebanon. I imagined giving my children a better future, sending them to good schools, and maybe even building a home for my parents. I wanted to change our lives.*

*But when I arrived here, everything shattered. Life turned out to be much harder than I ever imagined. I have no job. I don't even know if my children have enough to eat or warm clothes to wear. My heart is torn every day, and now... I leave everything in God's hands—whether it's good or bad, I believe He has a plan.*

*My mother is sick now... and I know deep down that it's because of the worry I've caused her. She believed I would come here and help her. That's what I thought too. But instead, I feel helpless, broken. I keep praying—just asking God to open a door, a way to let me travel back, even if I have nothing, just so I can see her and make sure my kids are okay.*

*Every day I wonder: how can I help them while I'm stuck here like this? All I want is to go back home, to be close to my children, to breathe again... to lay this burden down and try to start over.*

*The longer I stay here, the heavier the stress gets. I can barely sleep. I just keep praying that the authorities will look into my case soon—so I can finally go home.*

*And my agent... he's the reason I'm here. I never wanted to come to Lebanon. I begged him, but he insisted. Maybe if I had gone somewhere else, my story would've been different. Maybe I wouldn't be living this nightmare.*

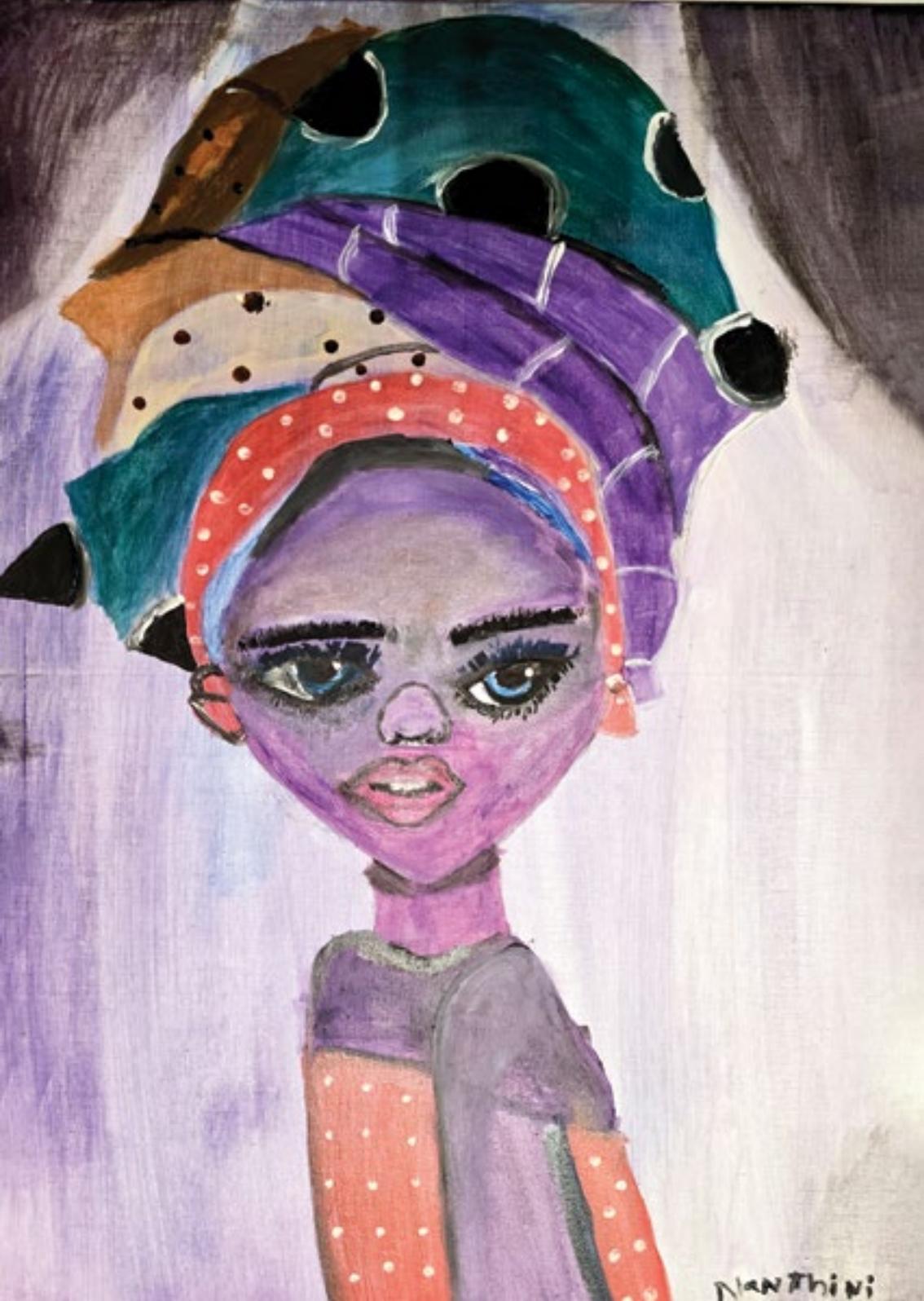
*But I thank God I found Caritas. If not for them, I don't know where I would've gone... where I would've slept... who would've helped me. Caritas gave me hope when everything else was falling apart.*

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Anna's story is not just her own—it's the voice of thousands of migrant women who leave home with dreams of a better life, only to find hardship and heartbreak. It's a reminder that behind every domestic worker is a mother, a daughter, a human being with dreams and responsibilities.

We must listen. We must act. Governments, agencies, and communities must work together to protect migrant workers from exploitation and abuse. They deserve rights, dignity, and a safe path home. No one should suffer in silence, far from home, simply for trying to build a better future.





## Florence's Story

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*I'm sitting alone in a quiet room, staring at the stars through the window, asking God why my life took such a painful turn. I once had dreams—big, bright dreams for myself and for my two beloved children. But now, it feels like those dreams have been shattered beyond repair.*

*For two years, I worked in Syria. Life there was stable, even hopeful. My employer treated me with kindness and respect. I felt safe. I worked with pride and purpose, believing that I was building a better future for my family. But then, everything changed in a moment.*

*When the war in Syria began, chaos and violence erupted around us. Bombs fell without warning. Fear filled every street. We had no choice but to flee. My employer and I left Syria and began a long, terrifying journey toward the Lebanese border. It took us two days—two long days of fear, silence, and uncertainty. All I could think about was: Where will I go now? Will I ever feel safe again?*

*By the time we reached Lebanon, I had already lost so much. My phone was taken away. My passport—confiscated nearly two years earlier by my agent—was left behind in Syria. My agent had been arrested, and like many other young women from Kenya and other countries, my documents were still in his possession. Even my two suitcases were left behind. I had nothing.*

*Once in Lebanon, everything moved quickly and without explanation. My employer made phone calls in a language I couldn't understand. All I heard was "yalla, yalla." We stopped briefly at a hotel, had lunch, and rested. Then, without warning, my employer handed me over to a taxi driver. I was told he would help me buy a phone and SIM card, and that we would return shortly. But we never did.*

*Instead, I found myself alone outside the Kenyan embassy. The taxi driver dropped me off and drove away. I was confused, terrified, and deeply betrayed. Oh my God, what's happening to me? Why would they abandon me like this? I stood at the embassy gate, paralyzed, tears welling in my eyes.*

*Three Kenyan women approached me, greeting me warmly in Swahili. I hesitated. "My sisters," I said, "I'm from Ghana." Slowly, I began to share my story. They listened in shock, disbelief written on their faces. One of them even let out a short, pained laugh—sometimes heartbreak makes you laugh before you cry. They gently told me the truth: I had been abandoned. My employer had left me behind.*

*Inside the Kenyan embassy, a compassionate consultant welcomed me and offered reassurance. "You're safe now. Don't worry," she said. Her kindness brought a small sense of relief to my shattered spirit.*

*From there, I was brought to the Caritas shelter. And this is where I remain—heartbroken, uncertain, and waiting. I don't know when—or if—I'll return to Ghana. I don't know what the future holds. All I know is that everything I had worked for, all the plans I had made, have crumbled. I feel lost. But life goes on.*

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Florence's story is not just her own—it echoes the pain and abandonment experienced by thousands of migrant domestic workers around the world. In pursuit of hope, she faced betrayal, displacement, and fear.

Her journey reminds us of the urgent need for stronger protections, humane migration systems, and accountability. No woman should ever be left behind, misled, or stripped of her dignity.

Behind every migrant worker is a story, a family, and a dream. And every one of them deserves to be heard—and protected.

## Messay's Story

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*My name is Messay. I'm Ethiopian, and I came to Lebanon ten years ago in search of a better life. For four years, I worked as a domestic worker under the Kafala system before gaining the strength and independence to begin freelancing.*

*In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, I found hope and joy—I got married to the love of my life. My husband and I spent four beautiful years together, dreaming of a future built on love, family, and possibility.*

*But in 2024, that future was torn apart.*

*While seven months pregnant with our first child, our home was destroyed. We were forced to flee to Beirut to seek safety. I was taken in by Caritas Lebanon, who welcomed me with compassion and care. Unfortunately, the shelter could not host men, so my husband found refuge with a friend in South Lebanon—an area deeply affected by the escalating conflict.*

*Then came the unimaginable.*

*I received the devastating news that my husband had been killed in the war—a victim of Israeli airstrikes. Just like that, the person I loved most was gone. Our dreams, our plans, and the joy we had imagined holding in our arms as parents—shattered in a single moment.*

*In the midst of grief and displacement, I gave birth with the support of Caritas. My heart was heavy. Throughout my pregnancy, I had spoken to my baby every day, telling him how much his father and I loved him and how excited we were to meet him. When my husband died, I kept speaking—this time through tears. I whispered apologies, afraid my sorrow might weigh too heavily on the tiny life growing inside me. But I also whispered promises: that he would be loved, that I would stay strong, that his father's spirit would live on through him.*

*Raising a child alone in a country that is not my own, while mourning the man I love, is the hardest thing I've ever faced. But I carry on—for my son. He is my reason to wake up, my light through the darkness, my reminder that love does not die when someone is gone. It lives on in memory, in action, in the life of a child who was born into heartbreak, but will grow in love.”*

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Messay's story is a powerful testament to the resilience of migrant women who face unimaginable loss, yet continue to rise for the sake of their children and their futures. Her experience underscores the need for compassion, protection, and support for women affected by displacement, conflict, and the injustices of migration systems.

Behind every migrant woman is a story of strength. Let us listen. Let us care. Let us act.



## Sharon's Story

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*My time in Lebanon has been a period of immense hardship, yet my resolve remains unbroken. Despite the profound challenges, I refuse to surrender.*

*My initial employment proved to be a crushing experience. From the moment I entered that home, the treatment I endured stripped away my desire to work. Though I longed to succeed, the mistress of the house made it impossible. She demanded I rise at 6 AM, a directive I dutifully followed. However, after only a few days, I was overcome with fever and chest pain. Her response was swift and devoid of empathy: she contacted my agency, declaring me too "weak" to continue. I was promptly dismissed from her home and sent back to the agency.*

*After a brief stay at the agency, a new placement was secured. This second employer, a kind woman, offered a glimmer of hope, though her children presented a constant, chaotic challenge. Yet, I focused solely on my duties and the financial stability I desperately needed, choosing to overlook the children's disruptive behavior. Tragically, this fragile sense of security was shattered when my madam's husband began to sexually abuse me. The violation was unbearable, and my only thought was to flee, to return to my homeland. When my madam questioned my sudden desire to leave, expressing her confusion given her kindness, I could only offer a vague explanation: "Madam, you are very nice, but I must go back. I don't want to work anymore."*

*The truth, that her husband was the perpetrator, was a dangerous secret; I feared for my life if I revealed it. She took me to the agency, and that very day, I was placed in yet another household, starting a new contract.*

*My third employer was also kind. With only a 16-year-old son, the workload was manageable, and I was determined to see my contract through. Despite occasional difficulties with food, I persevered, grateful for the lighter duties. However, after six or seven months, the escalating bombings near the house became unbearable. The relentless threat of war compelled me to make another agonizing decision: to return home. I explained the dire situation to my employer, who, understanding the gravity of the circumstances, released me.*

*She brought me to the agency, but they resisted my departure, urging me to reconsider. I firmly refused. My madam left me at the agency, where I remained for a week, trapped by the ongoing conflict. Days later, a taxi arrived to collect me. I left the agency with a surge of hope, believing I was finally on my way to meet my agent, who would arrange my papers for repatriation. Instead, I found myself at Caritas.*

*My arrival at Caritas plunged me into a profound depression. It felt like a place where one could easily lose themselves. Yet, in time, my despair gave way to immense gratitude. Caritas provided everything I needed: food, clothing, and shelter. Now, I await the completion of my documents, my only desire to return to my country. My heartfelt thanks go to Caritas. May God bless their compassionate hearts.*

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Sharon's story is a harrowing testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable adversity. It powerfully illustrates the vulnerabilities faced by migrant domestic workers, particularly in conflict zones, and sheds light on the grave issues of exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking.

Despite enduring severe illness, sexual assault, and the constant threat of war, Sharon's determination to survive and return home never wavered. Her narrative also highlights the crucial role of organizations like Caritas in providing essential humanitarian aid and a lifeline to those in desperate circumstances, offering not just material support but also a sense of hope and a path towards recovery and repatriation.

## Jennifer 's Story

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*Right now, all I have is a heart heavy with regrets, a soul pierced by heartbreaks, and a mind swirling with question marks. The moment I asked my agent to find me a job, that was the day I stepped into the frying pan.*

*Back then, life was good. I was earning more money than I do here, and I had my freedom. Every day, I could finish my work and go back to my own house. Every weekend, I could visit my family and we'd have a wonderful time! If wishes were horses...!*

*Sometimes, people are so ungrateful. Even after working tirelessly for my employer, making sure her house was spotless, and respecting her even when she was shouting, limiting my food, insulting me... Sometimes she would say that Black people have low senses, that I should go back to school, things like that. Dooh! My God, she was so intimidating! Just because I'm Black doesn't mean I'm not good. My only reason for coming to Lebanon was to find greener pastures, to learn about a different culture, and to live with different people. I just love to explore.*

*So, after all the bad treatment and endless stress, I asked my employer to take me back to Kenya. Hehe! All hell broke loose. She became wild. I couldn't wait for the worst to happen; only her answers kept running through my head.*

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Jennifer's story is a heartbreaking reminder of the courage it takes to seek a better life, and the devastating impact of prejudice and exploitation faced by those who are most vulnerable. Her experience underscores the urgent need for dignity, respect, and protection for all.



## Joyce's Story

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*"Never, ever give up, no matter what. You must work relentlessly to achieve your goals, for there is always light, always, at the end of the darkest tunnel." This is the truth I carry in my heart, a truth forged in fire.*

*What is life, truly? For me, it began with a profound confusion, growing up calling my grandparents 'Mom' and 'Dad.' My school days were a relentless battle. I would arrive drunk, the alcohol a desperate substitute for food, a grim necessity since childhood. By Class Three, the gnawing hunger and lack of clothes became unbearable. I made a desperate choice, believing life might be better on the streets. I ran.*

*But even in that desolate place, a miracle unfolded. A kind stranger, who turned out to be my grandmother's sister - a family I never knew I had - found me. She pulled me from the brink, taking me back to school, back to a chance at a future.*

*Life wasn't easy, but it wasn't as hard as before. Then came the Class Eight exams, and with them, another wall: no money for high school. My aunt, a beacon of hope, stepped in. She promised to pay my fees, to care for me as her own granddaughter. A new chapter seemed to open.*

*But fate, it seems, had other plans. She left me, abandoned in her house with her children and husband. By Form Two, the man I was supposed to call 'uncle' began to treat me as he pleased, demanding whatever he desired. My only shield, my only focus, was to study, to cling to that dream. I endured,*

*I tried to make it easy, but the weight was crushing.*

*The burden became too heavy. I ran again, back to my grandparents' house. Every day, I walked the long, arduous distance from their home to school, my feet aching, my spirit weary. My grandmother, bless her heart, knew nothing of a young girl's needs. When I needed pads, or school supplies, she simply couldn't afford them. It was this desperate need for money that, tragically, led me to men.*

*In a moment of profound bad luck, I found myself pregnant in Form Three. My grandparents, unable to accept it, turned me away. Marriage seemed the only solution, a desperate leap into the unknown at just 15 years old.*

*Being called 'someone's wife' at such a tender age was a heavy, bewildering burden. I tried to make it work for seven agonizing months. Then, the pain began - searing stomach pains. My husband took me to the hospital, and then, he simply left me there.*

*I lay in that hospital bed for a week, the pain a constant companion. They sent me away, without a pregnancy card, without answers. When I returned home, the man who was my husband didn't want me. Broken, lost, and still in agony, I dragged myself back to my aunt's house.*

*She took me to another hospital, where I stayed for two more weeks. The doctors made a decision: an operation. And then, a miracle. My baby was alive! They took her to the*

*nursery, and my heart swelled with an overwhelming joy. It was a girl.*

*I stayed, healing, waiting for my precious daughter to reach nine months. After three long months, we finally went back to my aunt's. Six months later, with her help, I returned to school, clutching onto the hope of a future.*

*Once school was done, my focus shifted entirely to my daughter. She suffered from so many illnesses, and it tore me apart to see her suffer. In Kenya, the salary is small, but the responsibilities are immense. A friend, working abroad, encouraged me. "Go," she said, "earn enough to care for your baby." The decision was made.*

*I began the arduous process to seek those "green pastures" abroad. My first employers were truly good, a rare blessing. They did nothing wrong. But then, my employer fell ill and had to travel to the UK. They asked me to stay with their grandmother for three months. I refused, a gut feeling telling me they might not return. I chose to go back to the agency office.*

*One month I stayed at that office, then I was placed with a second employer. Oh, how can I even begin to explain what I endured in that house? A shower, once a week. A phone call, ten minutes, not every day, not even every week. It was a cage. I tried, I truly tried, to make it easy, but it was impossible. I decided to go back to the office.*

*But the office told me I couldn't go back to Kenya. My contract was finished, they said, and my documents were still with the first employer. I was trapped. For three months, I stayed at that office, unknowingly hidden. When I finally realized their deception, I ran. I ran to the embassy for help. They sent me to Caritas, document-less, vulnerable.*

*"Welcome to Caritas," I heard, "where you have to follow rules and be strong like a woman." Entering Caritas, I was filled with despair, unsure of where I was going. But then, a new miracle. I met my Kenyan friends. I thought I was the only one with such a painful story, but as I listened to their experiences, I was shocked. Domestic workers, so many of us, are going through unimaginable hardships.*

*Now, I am filled with hope. I yearn to go back to Kenya, to start a new life with my beautiful daughter. With God's power, I know all shall be fine. I am hoping for the best, for a future where my strength, forged in adversity, can finally shine."*

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Joyce's story is a powerful testament to the unbreakable spirit of a woman who faced unimaginable hardship, yet never stopped fighting for a better life and a hopeful future for her daughter. It's a raw reminder of resilience, dignity, and the hidden struggles many endure.





## Jane's Story

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*The day I left my home country for the first time to come to Lebanon, I was filled with joy and excitement. I had never traveled abroad before, and stepping into Beirut's airport felt like stepping into a dream. My employer was waiting for me, and I truly believed my life was about to change for the better.*

*At first, everything seemed fine. But over time, things began to change. The work became difficult, and I no longer felt safe or respected. Hoping for a fresh start, I asked the agency to transfer me to a different household. They agreed and took me to a new employer, promising that everything would be better.*

*The next morning, my new madam explained how I should do my job—but very quickly, it became clear that life in that house would be just as painful. I was humiliated constantly and lived without peace. For an entire year, I endured emotional suffering, feeling trapped and hopeless. There were moments I thought I would lose all strength—but God gave me the courage to hold on.*

*Then, war broke out.*

*My employer returned me to the agency and informed me that the office would arrange my ticket home. I was overjoyed—finally, I thought, I would be reunited with my family. But the next morning, the office told me I couldn't leave because*

*I didn't have my documents. My hopes crumbled. They told me I had to wait until my papers were ready.*

*I spent three long months at the agency, working without pay, with no freedom and no clear end in sight. The emotional burden became unbearable. I felt completely alone, and in my darkest moment, I thought of ending my life—believing maybe then, someone would finally send me home.*

*Then came a flicker of hope.*

*I heard that the President of Kenya had announced his intention to help Kenyan girls stranded in Lebanon return home. My heart filled with joy. But I didn't know how he would ever hear about me. Still, I knew I had to try. I made the decision to escape from the office, even though I had no idea where to go.*

*By God's grace, I found a kind taxi driver who took me to Caritas. At the shelter, I was met with compassion and care. They listened to my story and promised to help me return to my country. For the first time in a long while, I felt safe. I felt seen.*

*Now, I wait for the day I can embrace my family again—with a heart forever changed, but not broken. I carry my scars, but also a renewed faith in humanity, and in the kindness of strangers who chose to help me when I had nothing left.”*

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Jane's story is one of silent suffering, but also one of incredible strength. Her journey reveals the urgent need to reform migration systems that leave women vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Her voice represents countless others. Let's listen. Let's act. Let's never let these stories go unheard.



## Cynthia's Story

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*In a village called Ocean, girls were known for their beauty—smooth skin, long hair, and perfect figures. But one girl, Cynthia, looked different. She didn't like how she looked and wished she resembled the other girls.*

*Though her mother always reminded her to appreciate her unique beauty and not to give in to pressure, Cynthia couldn't help feeling insecure. She eventually heard about a doctor in the city who performed beauty surgeries and gave injections to enhance appearance.*

*Determined to change, Cynthia left her village and went to the city. The doctor gave her injections and instructions to follow. But after a month, her hair was damaged, her body became sick, and the implants didn't work. Her mother took her to the hospital, where they discovered she had been using harmful chemicals.*

*The doctor at the hospital warned her about the dangers of such chemicals—they could destroy her health or even kill her. Cynthia finally understood that true beauty lies in self-acceptance.*

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Girls should appreciate their natural beauty. Comparing ourselves to others and using harmful substances can cost us our health—and even our lives.



## Margie's Story

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*In 2022, I made the difficult decision to leave my home country, Uganda. My dream had always been to start my own business and become self-employed in Uganda, but I lacked the capital to make it happen. With hope in my heart and determination to build a better future, I accepted a two-year contract to work in Lebanon as a domestic worker. My plan was simple: save money, return home, and invest in my future.*

*At first, I felt blessed. I was placed with a family of four—madam, mister, and their two young children. My main responsibility was to care for the children during the week, and I did light cleaning on weekends when the parents were home. The work was manageable, and the family seemed kind. I thought I had been lucky.*

*But everything changed when Mister began to sexually harass me.*

*He would follow me into the kitchen, into my bedroom—anywhere he could corner me. He waited for Madam to leave the house, then touched me inappropriately. At first, I was confused and afraid. Then he started leaving gifts in my closet, secretly messaging me to say they were from him. I contacted the recruitment office immediately, and they advised me to monitor the situation.*

*The harassment escalated. One day, on the balcony, he tried to touch me again—but this time, I screamed, and he let go. I knew I needed undeniable proof, so I hid my phone in*

*the kitchen and secretly recorded him. When he came in and assaulted me again, I allowed it for a few moments just to capture the evidence. Then I pushed him away and ran, shouting for help.*

*I sent the video to the agency. They finally took me out of that house.*

*The office asked if I wanted to stay in Lebanon and promised a new placement with a safer family. I agreed, hoping to complete my contract in peace. Thankfully, the new household was kind, and I was able to finish my contract.*

*But when I returned to the office after completing my term, I only wanted one thing: to go home.*

*Instead, the agency saw an opportunity to exploit me further. They refused to let me leave and forced me into another contract. I had not yet transferred the money I earned in the last three months, and when I asked for it, an agent pulled a gun on me. He took my savings, my phone, and sent me to a new employer—without any means of contact, and under the shadow of threats and abuse.*

*I arrived at the new house broken, bruised, and sick. I begged the new madam to send me back to the office. My face was still swollen from the violence I had endured, but instead of helping me, she tricked me—pretending she would get ready to take me, then forcing me out and locking the door behind me.*

*Alone and afraid, I wandered the streets until a kind stranger saw me crying. I shared my story, and he paid for a taxi to take me to the Nigerian Embassy. There, four men listened to me, assessed my condition, and referred me to Caritas for shelter and support.*

*At Caritas, I found peace for the first time in a long while.*

*I was welcomed with warmth and dignity. They provided me with food, shelter, and safety. I was told I could stay while they worked on my travel documents. It has now been five months. I have not had to work. I have simply been given the space to rest, recover, and begin to hope again.*

*I am forever grateful to Caritas for the care and compassion they showed me during the most painful chapter of my life.*

*My message to others: always keep trying—because choosing to try is better than surrendering to despair.”*

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Margie’s story is a harrowing testament to the abuse many migrant women endure in silence. But it is also a story of courage, resilience, and survival. Let her voice—and the voices of so many like hers—remind us of the urgent need for justice, protection, and human dignity.



## Rama's Story

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*For many of us who grow up in humble families, getting a job abroad feels like a golden opportunity—perhaps the only chance to change the course of our lives. It seems like the answer to our prayers, a way to support our loved ones, build a future, and break the cycle of poverty. And so, we take the leap, signing contracts, leaving our homes, and placing our hopes in a distant, unknown land.*

*But what we often don't realize is that in chasing this dream, we are also taking an enormous risk—not just with our careers, but with our health, our dignity, and our peace of mind.*

*When I arrived abroad, full of hope and determination, I believed the two-year contract I signed would bring stability and progress. I believed that the sacrifice of leaving my family behind would be worth it. But as the days passed, reality began to sink in. The hardships, the loneliness, the mistreatment—it became clear that not all opportunities are what they seem on paper.*

*In this foreign place, I came to understand one of life's deepest truths: nothing is more valuable than your health, your family, and your inner peace. No amount of money can replace those things once they are lost.*

*I do not say this to discourage anyone from seeking work abroad. For many, it is a necessary path. But I urge every person to weigh the decision carefully. Understand both the*

*potential benefits and the risks. Don't let desperation make you gamble your entire life on a promise that may never come true.*

*Yes, a two-year contract might look like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—but what if those two years break your spirit and leave scars that last far longer?*

*To anyone considering this path: be informed, be prepared, and most importantly, never forget your worth.*

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Rita's story echoes the quiet struggle and strength of countless migrant workers. Her voice calls us to pause, to consider, and to protect what truly matters. Let her story be a reminder that behind every opportunity lies a choice—and that our wellbeing must never be the price we pay for survival.





## Damaris' Story

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*My name is Damaris, a 32-year-old woman from Kenya. Like many others, I left my home in search of a better future—not just for myself, but for my children. In April 2024, I traveled to Lebanon through an agency, full of hope and determined to build a life through honest work.*

*When I arrived in Lebanon, my employer picked me up from the airport. The following day, my madam explained my responsibilities—cleaning and managing the household. I worked hard, trusting that the sacrifice I made by leaving my family would be rewarded fairly.*

*But at the end of the first month, I was devastated. The salary I received was far less than what had been promised. I felt betrayed. When I asked to return home, my madam told me I could only leave if I paid her \$2,000—a sum I didn't have. When I turned to the agent for help, he simply said I had to complete my contract.*

*Soon, the working conditions worsened. My workload increased, my salary was delayed, and I was no longer treated with even the most basic dignity. I decided to leave and returned to the office, only to face even greater humiliation. I was passed from one house to another, working without pay. I narrowly escaped a sexual assault attempt. My children were suffering back home without me, and I felt helpless.*

*One day, the agent locked me in the office—without food, without light. That was my breaking point.*

*In desperation, I reached out to a friend who guided me to Caritas. There, I found the support, kindness, and protection I had been denied for so long. They gave me hope again.*

*I want to speak up—for myself, and for all the women who are still suffering in silence. Employers must stop treating domestic workers like property. We are human beings, not animals, not items to be bought and sold. Our documents should never be taken from us. We deserve rest, fair pay, and the freedom to leave when we can no longer endure abuse.*

*Agents should stop exchanging us like clothes and follow the contracts they ask us to sign. The rules exist to protect us—yet too often, they are ignored. If someone wants to return home, they should be allowed to. A contract should not become a prison.*

*To Caritas: thank you for your compassion, your care, and your unity. Because of you, I found strength in my darkest moment. May you continue your work and be blessed for all you do.*

*As I move forward, I carry one truth in my heart: “Say the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

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Damaris' story is a testimony to the courage of countless migrant women. Her voice demands dignity, justice, and change.



## Sylvia's Story

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*Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a devastating reality across many African societies. Despite strides in modernization and education, harmful traditions and patriarchal norms continue to expose women and girls to abuse, neglect, and injustice.*

*Sylvia's story is one among countless others—a heartbreaking reminder of the price women pay when their voices are silenced, and their rights ignored.*

*At just fifteen, Sylvia was a bright and hopeful girl, full of dreams. Her ambition was to become a nurse, to care for others and uplift her community. But her life took a tragic turn when her father arranged for her to marry Mr. Tumbo, a much older, wealthy neighbor. Known for his alcoholism and violent behavior, Mr. Tumbo was not a husband by choice, but by coercion.*

*Sylvia resisted. She begged. She cried. But her protests were silenced by force. Five men dragged her to her new “home,” and what awaited her there was not a life, but a sentence. Mr. Tumbo—whose first wife had died under mysterious circumstances—subjected Sylvia to repeated physical and sexual abuse. Her body bore the marks of countless beatings; her spirit, the weight of isolation and fear.*

*Bound by a culture that often normalizes domestic violence and discourages women from seeking help, Sylvia had nowhere to turn. Returning to her family was not an option—she*



*knew she would be blamed and sent back, if not punished herself. So she stayed, enduring the cruelty in silence.*

*The final blow came just days after she gave birth. Still recovering from the difficult delivery and suffering from severe bleeding, Sylvia was unable to prepare a meal on time. For this, her husband beat her mercilessly. Her cries echoed through the village, but no one came. Fear and indifference kept the neighbors behind closed doors. That night, Sylvia died from her injuries. She left behind young children, now motherless and vulnerable.*

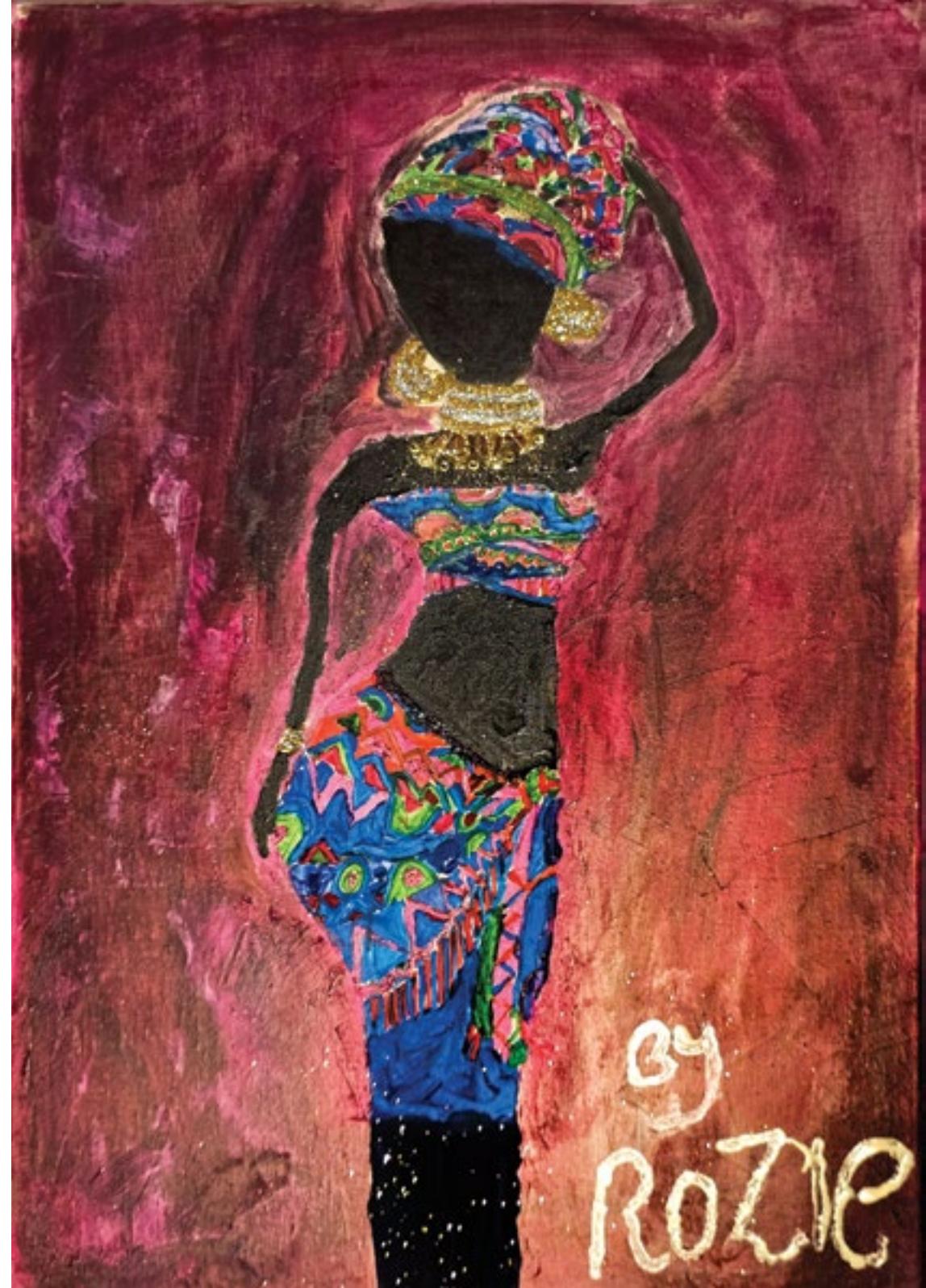
*Tragically, even before her grave settled, Mr. Tumbo was reportedly seeking a new wife.*

*Sylvia's story is not fiction. It is a reflection of the deep-rooted gender inequalities that still persist. It is a call to action—for governments to enforce laws that protect women, for communities to break the silence and speak out against violence, and for families to reject harmful traditions that sacrifice their daughters' lives and dreams.*

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Sylvia's story is a tragic call to action, demanding that we condemn all forms of violence against women, dismantle harmful traditions, and actively work to create a society where women are safe, respected, and free.

Gender-based violence must end. Child marriage, abuse, and the silencing of women are serious crimes. We must raise our voices and educate societies. Girls like Sylvia deserve a future, not a life of fear.



## LEA-Eradicating All Forms of Abuse and Forced Labour in Lebanon

A brief of the Key Activities under this project include:

### 1. INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING & COORDINATION

- Training law enforcement (GS, ISF) on safe migration, human trafficking, migrants' rights
- Capacity building for ISF hotline operators & investigators
- Logistical/technical support for ISF & MoL hotlines and complaint handling
- Interlinking focal point (GS, ISF, MoL, General Prosecution) for joint referrals & follow-up
- Policy roundtables with MoL & MoET (medical insurance for MDWs)
- Policy meetings with GS, MoL, ISF, MoJ (legal residency status & legal aid)
- Case conferences with MoPH & PHCCs (access to health services)

### 2. POLICY ENGAGEMENT & CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT

- Training MPs & political parties on migrant rights & labor law inclusion
- Capacity building for CSOs (human rights, GBV, referrals, rural outreach)

- Joint coordination meetings of CSOs
- National workshops with FENASOL & SORAL on fair recruitment & labor rights

### 3. ADVOCACY & AWARENESS:

- National media campaign (targeting public, employers, policymakers)
- Production of advocacy media (social media, videos)
- Awareness-raising campaigns (with CSOs, students, youth)
- Workshops for media & journalists
- Research & data analysis on migrant workers' issues (dissemination to stakeholders)

### 4. DIRECT SUPPORT SERVICES

- Case management, counseling, medical, mental health, legal & PSS in safe shelters
- Legal aid for vulnerable migrants in detention centers
- Community-based case management & PSS in centers
- Weekly empowerment & PSS sessions in AMEL centers
- Protection awareness sessions (legal rights, labor rights, PSEA, SH access)
- Promoting migrant worker community rights
- Multilingual guides on migrant & employer rights (with GS)

# *Stories Unspoken<sup>2</sup>*

of 13 migrant women

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*This second edition continues to share the powerful stories of 13 migrant workers, now enriched by new voices and fresh experiences. Through storytelling and art, these women find strength, healing, and a renewed sense of hope.*

*Alongside their moving narratives, the book features artworks created during therapeutic sessions, offering a vivid glimpse into their inner worlds.*

*By giving them space to express both their struggles and triumphs, this volume deepens understanding and empathy for their journeys. Writing and creativity remain vital tools, helping these women reclaim their voices, reflect on their resilience, and inspire change.*

*This collection stands as a testament to courage and the transformative power of sharing one's story.*



**Caritas**  
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