

ANNUAL REPORT FOR BRIGHTER HORIZONS PROJECT, DK

FROM THE PERIOD 1/7-2020 UNTIL 15/8-2021

The annual report is written in connection to our Annual General Meeting on the 19/8-2021. In the following report, I will give an update on the activities of our organization Brighter Horizons DK as well as our partner organizations', Pink Power and Brighter Horizons Sierra Leone, during the period.

THE EX-PROSTITUTION PROJECT

Throughout the past year we have met some challenges in our ex-prostitution project, which made us change the agenda and the form of the program. Marie Shyllon, who was the leader of the program, and who became the first CEO of Pink Power as well, has been fired. For several years she was a good and trustworthy employee, who was doing a great job with all the young ex-sex workers, that she took care of in the project. However, we realized that she had great problems in the leadership role in Pink Power. The employees and the volunteers actually feared her – a fact that we did not know anything about until this year. The past year has shown that Marie is a believer in "black magic", which is a common believe in Sierra Leone, especially amongst the less educated people. During the past year, we, BH.DK, got several complains about Marie from our partners in Sierra Leone. They all mentioned that she was casting "black magic spells" on the people in our partner organizations, if they had a different opinion than her. We did not get any complaints from the young girls and women that she was working with in the house, but a lot of the key members of both Pink Power and Brighter Horizons.SL were telling the same stories. We felt that we had to take action and, in cooperation with the board of our partner organizations, we had to let her go. To be honest, the people in both of our partner organizations feared her, because of her threats of "black magic". With all this, Pink Power chose Lovetta Kamara (Lady Love) for their new leader. Lady Love has been working as a key member of Pink Power from the beginning, and she is a very strong and

outspoken female leader with a big heart for the young and vulnerable girls and women that Pink Power is works with. Therefore, we really understood and approved the decision.



NEW INITIATIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THIS PERIOD

Many things were achieved in our work with our partners in Sierra Leone between 2020-2021.

During the Covid-19 lockdown in Sierra Leone, we received a substantial amount of money from DERF, an emergency relief fund run by CISU. The amount of funds made it possible for us to make an extra effort for the sex workers that we are working with in the country in particular. While we were still running our awareness campaigns about STI's, AIDS, FGM and female rights, we were at the same time capable of starting up a safehouse for raped and abused girls, and hand out food supplies on a daily basis for these girls and women for a three months period. These new interventions meant a lot for the recognition and appreciation of our partner organizations, especially Pink Power, which was the most profiled organization during these campaigns.

Another thing we have to mention as an achievement in the past year is the skill training of young and vulnerable women that our partner organizations started in their Pink Power and Brighter Horizons office. Every day from Monday to Friday, our partners have been training twelve young women in two different skills: tailoring and hairdressing. The girls and women get free education for one year at the time, and the educational programs give a great chance to young and vulnerable girls, who would not be able to get an education otherwise. After this one year they will be able to make an income for themselves, so they do not have to walk the streets, often selling their bodies.

THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF THE YEAR

In May 2021, Pink Power and Brighter Horizons were contacted by a big US based NGO, ICAP. They had been trying to test sex workers for HIV for the past six months, but they did not believe that the girls they tested were in fact sex workers. Only 2,3% of the assumed sex workers they tested were HIV positive (17 out of 720). Because of their disbelief in the numbers, they wanted to cooperate with our partner organizations and do 500 more tests together with them. Brighter Horizons participated in the testing's as well, since both Mathias Rasmussen and I were in Sierra Leone at that time, and were able to participate in the testing's and assist our partners in the structure and planning of the intervention.

Together with ICAP we tested 444 sex workers in the period from the 17/5-16/6, 2021, and the results were shocking. In average, more than 30% of the sex workers tested were HIV positive. When we tested on location at nighttime, which we assume is the most credible way of testing, the number of HIV positive sex workers was 40%. Compared to the reports from UNAIDS, the numbers were extreme. UNAIDS has, during the past 15 years, been telling that the positive percentage amongst sex working in Sierra Leone is 6,7%.

Our findings have harmed our relations to both UNAIDS and to the Ministry Of Health in Sierra Leone. When they heard about our findings, they were furious and blamed us for creating a lot of damage to their work, as they have claimed different positive percentages. Of course it is not nice for them to face the numbers that our testing's with ICAP have been showing. The numbers are very different from their findings. However, it means that we, BH.DK, BH.SL, and Pink Power are very

aware of trying to create a good relationship with the above mentioned organizations again, because it is important to have more partners in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

It is important to mention that all the girls that we tested were offered free medication. The HIV positive girls were offered medication for HIV, and the HIV negative girls were offered PrEp, which is a medication that protects them from getting HIV, even if they have sex with their customers without the use of a condom. Unfortunately, when we offered the sex workers free medication, less than 40% of the girls that had been tested showed up the next day at the meeting point, from where our Pink Power kekeke's would take them for the free treatment. This was a fact even though we made a great effort to tell them that they would eventually die if they did not start treatment, and even though we told them how important it was for them to get on PrEp if they were negative, since 40% of the other sex workers were positive, which again means that a great number of male costumers must be infected.



THE DISABLE PROGRAM

The disable house is still running well. Brighter Horizons.SL is running the disable house with great success. There is a lot of harmony in the house, and the boys are having a good time together, where they feel connected to each other and appreciate the chance they have been given. They are doing skill work in the house, playing a lot of football, and are having skill training as well. To be honest, however, we have not been as focused on the disable house as we should have been. We have been prioritizing the buildup of Pink Power instead, but we sincerely hope that we can put more effort in the disable house in the future period, because the boys really deserve it. Vidal Koroma is still the leader of the house and is still doing a great job.

CONCLUSION

We are very proud of the work we and our partners have been doing in Sierra Leone for the past year. Especially the new cooperation with the big and recognized organization ICAP is promising for the future. One thing we are very aware of though, is to strengthen our partners in Sierra Leone in their structure and capacity. They need to be able to monitor their finances better and be more aware of what it takes to be independent from us, BH.DK, as their sole financial source. They received some funds from UNAIDS and UN Women in the past year, but not nearly enough to achieve the aims and targets. In the next year we will have a lot of focus on building them up. When it gets easier to travel, we will send our two board members Christian Hedegaard and Christian Gregart down to Sierra Leone to facilitate workshops and seminars to empower them. They both have the capacity to empower them in fundraising, financial control, and structure.

Let me finish this report with a big thanks to CISU for their important financial support and to Doctor Henrik Rasmussen and his wife Britta Rasmussen for their generous support as well.

Best from

Erik Rasmussen, Chairman of the Board

Zora Saskova, Board member

Christian Hedegaard, Board member

Jesper Bloksgaard, Board member

Christian Gregart, Board member

Diana Rune, Board member

Henrik Hansen, Board member

Sille Rasmussen, Board member
