Stop the Traffik Kenya’s Statement on COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted several counties in Kenya leading to restrictive measures by the Kenyan Government in order to prevent wider spread of the virus and mitigate further risks to the population.

The current situation affects the entire population; however, marginalized and vulnerable communities are particularly affected. Migrants in Kenya may lack access to life saving information due to language barriers and victims of trafficking may not be identified as victims that need protection. Due to job loss and movement restrictions, many workers, especially low earning jobs and those whose jobs require a lot of physical human interaction, have lost their jobs, further increasing their risk to exploitation.

Access to shelters and additional support structures is also limited, with few shelters remaining operational and with donors currently re-directing funding towards the public health and emergency food security sectors globally, this will have a significant impact on the shelters that are currently operational.

During this period, traffickers will likely prey on vulnerable communities and it is crucial that the government works with civil society and grassroots organizations to ensure these communities have access to food, clean water and health care services.

To this effect, STT-Kenya is calling on the government to protect the rights of trafficked persons in Kenya by;

1. Enhancing cooperation between anti human trafficking civil society organizations and the government in ensuring a victim-based approach is adhered to when dealing with trafficked persons and persons from marginalized and vulnerable communities in the country
2. Ensuring access to equal health care services for everyone, including refugees, illegal migrants, stateless persons, Internally Displaced People and other vulnerable communities
3. Ensuring appropriate measures are taken to address poor conditions in detention facilities where victims of trafficking are potentially being held, and ensuring social distancing and hygiene guidelines are followed
4. Releasing a statement through the CTIP Secretariat on the measures in place to assist victims of trafficking stuck in other countries
5. Allowing NGOs that provide direct services to victims of trafficking to provide emergency services to victims of trafficking during rescue operations, provision of in person trauma therapy during exceptional cases and other necessary assistance as the need arises
6. Advocating for all employers in the affected counties to ensure they treat workers humanely

STT- Kenya is working with the anti-trafficking community at large to identify potential risks and mitigation measures during this crisis, and we solidify our commitment to collaborating with the government, our partners and the donor community to ensuring we work collectively towards assisting victims of trafficking in Kenya and supporting vulnerable communities in reducing their risks to exploitation.