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**Call for Submissions - Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants on Gender-Responsive migration laws, policies and practices**

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"submission to GA report"

## **INTRODUCING MAISHA e.V. Germany**

### **GERMANY – A RESPONSE FROM MAISHA e.V- African Women in Germany**

Maisha e.V. –Maisha African Women Organisation in Germany was founded 1996 by African Women living in Germany (Maisha is a Kiswahili word meaning “Life” )

We have many years of experiences in the following fields:

- Empowerment and human rights of migrant women across Germany
- Promoting equal treatment and equal rights
- Ensuring attention to the specific needs of migrant women
- Working on enhancing the integration of migrant women
- Health for undocumented migrant women
- Helping in shaping social policies and designing action programmes addressing migrant women, both at national and EU level



## **Maisha e.V. Support group of African women in Germany**

We run a counselling center that supports African women in questions of integration, asylum, health, education and family problems, and questions of return. In addition, the association organizes seminars, workshops and conferences on a National level on integration and gender issues that affect the psychosocial and health sectors, such as female genital cutting. In addition, the association lobbies for the interests of African women in Germany and in their home countries. Maisha e.V.-African Women in Germany has already held numerous successful international conferences and projects for women and girls in the field of migration, integration and health issues. A current concern is the topic of migration as well as women and girls trafficking.

The main focus of Maisha's work is migration, integration, health and return preparation and support for migrant and refugee women. The association responsible as a clearing office of Frankfurt city health department for undocumented women. We offer equal access to medical care and therapeutic facilities, as these women need medical and psychosocial care due to traumatic experiences

### **THE SPECIFIC INITIATIVE**

#### **AKWAABA WOMEN RETURNEE PROJECT IN GHANA**

Our concerns over the problem of migration began in 1998 in Spain where an African Diasporan group met with young people who were in a centre in Spain who had been travelling from various parts of Sub-Saharan Africa for years to get to Europe. At the time some of their countries were not even affected by SAP. We saw them as our children and this deeply pained us. Over the years we have dared to appeal & lobby to both the EU and the AU to do something about this problem affecting the future of Africa. We decided to do something by ourselves



as we do believe that those Africans in the Diaspora could act. Some of our frustrations and concerns were clearly visible after our Director went to Ghana as a special guest of the current German President and we saw very little done for women returnees, whom we were told that their numbers are extremely small in Libya, which contradicted some of the television coverage.

In 2018 we began a project supported by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany which gave us the opportunity to work with women returnees. We went to Ghana where one year previously we had opened and registered a local sister NGO and with the support of local chiefs, the Deputy Defence Minister, the local MP for Kasoa, a Government minister we launched the project. Two months later after some preparation back in Germany we returned where we had trained over 54 women returnees .

***SPECIFICS OF OUR APPLICATION, FOR OUR PROJECT WHICH WAS TO BE FINISHED IN 4 MONTHS.***

**Please briefly describe the starting situation in the project area**

The number of returnees is a not to be an underestimated proportion. They have fled their home countries for similar reasons as men (poverty, wars, political persecution, torture, environmental degradation, etc.), but women's and girls' experiences of violence are still specific to women. Returnees have been experiencing women's specific experiences of violence on the escape route as well as in Europe, such as rape, forced marriage, and forced prostitution, sexual exploitation, domestic violence. Those who have experienced bad habits often cannot talk about it. This is one of the reasons fleeing women often do not share their experiences. Also, the fear of being implausible and being excluded in their communities plays a very important role. especially in case of attacks, the project should make it easier for women to exchange and open up to each other. It gives women courage and hope to talk about their own experiences and to be multipliers for others, when the interviewees have experienced similar migration experiences, are



committed to women and open up new perspectives in the home countries through dedication and with their expert knowledge as "bridge builders" for the returnees.

Many of these women and girls have left their familiar surroundings, have been through long periods of hardship and are returning to their country of origin, Ghana, with much suffering, despair, intimidation, trauma and shame. Fear was the constant companion of women on the migration path. Many women were afraid of procrastination and sexual assault.

Maisha e.V.- African Women in Germany many years of work and experience with returnees indicate that the returnees are willing and are strong as woman to get their life under control again and to integrate into their own community. Reintegration needs sensitization and empowerment.

### **3. Project planning Project**

1. **objective:** Describe the specific goal to be achieved with the project: What changes should be achieved against the background of the current situation?

Maisha organizations in Germany & Ghana, who are campaigns for women and girls, reports that especially women and girls have a large information gap about migration to Europe, trafficking in women, prostitution and violence.

These multipliers will in turn work with returnees and women and girls who want to migrate to Europe and pass on the knowledge they have acquired. As "makers of bridge builders" they inform, accompany and advise in Accra / Ghana. The focus is on human rights education and empowerment of women and girls. In addition to multiplier training courses at national level in Accra / Ghana, educational offers, workshops, lectures, podium discussions, readings, media production and demonstrations on specific migration topics are offered.

The project is not only intended to convey migration information and campaign, but also to establish a network for returnees from Germany / Europe , Explain the exchange about their own migration experience and in the community and pass on their acquired knowledge in their own communities.

**Measures and activities measures:** What specific project should be carried out to reach the goal (including schedule)?



b.) Multiplier training to support and strengthen returnees  
 Maisha eV wants to sensitize returnees as ambassadors, movers and bridge builders in Accra / Ghana, to train and mobilize them in migration topics.

**PROJECT AKWAABA –CHANGE AGENTS ON MIGRATION**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>PERIOD</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>PLACE OF IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>MULTIPLIER TRAINING</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> .-28 <sup>th</sup> . OCT. 2018	Maisha Germany	Accra
<b>1.Exchanges on personal migration stories</b>	22-10-2018		
<b>2.The reality of living with Illegal Status</b>	23-10-2018 MORNING	Maisha, Germany	Accra
<b>3.Mediation of Information on Legal Migration</b>	23-10-2018 AFTERNOON	Maisha, Germany	Accra
<b>4.The empty Promises and methods used by traffickers of women and girls</b>	24-10-2018 MORNING	Maisha, Germany	Accra
<b>5.Illegal Migration Routes and Risks to Europe</b>	24-10-2018 AFTERNOON	Maisha, Germany	Accra
<b>6.The difficulties of the Sahara</b>	25-10-2018 MORNING	Maisha, Germany	Accra
<b>7.Empowerment and</b>	25-10-2018 AFTERNOON	Maisha, Germany	Accra



<b>Opportunities in Ghana for Women and Girls</b>  <b>8.Summary of Training, Feedback, reflection</b>	N  AFTERNOON	Change Agents	Accra
<b>9.PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES</b>	26-10-2018	Maisha, Germany	Accra
<b>10.Fieldwork and Campaigning</b>	27-10-2018	Change Agents	Accra
<b>11.Fieldwork and Campaigning</b>  <b>Campaigning</b>	28-10-2018	Change Agents	Accra
<b>PROJECT</b> 12.Project	Documentati on 15-12-2018 - 31-12-2018	Maisha, Germany	Frankfurt

Conceptually, there were two key issues driving our project. Firstly, women can assist other women in getting correct information out to each other about illegally travelling to Europe, and secondly, women can become stakeholders in their own community and find every good reason to remain in their countries of origin.. The women were helped to see themselves differently and over the week's training these women



were transformed as they supported each other as among them there was a high degree of illiteracy and innumeracy.

Those with particular skills started supporting each other and passing on knowledge and giving each other opportunities for working together when those with catering or beautician skills got big jobs. As a result of their commitment the 50 returnees we trained have recruited over 400 other women to be part of their training. They have mapped out ways to reach new returnees and are very much involved in encouraging and lifting each other up. They are very encouraging as a group to work with as they are determined to succeed alongside each other.

We have a report completed which we will send as an attachment, but this project has its web-site, the women started a blog in the very first few days. They are saving money, planting Moringa, those who were from forest community backgrounds have run a course on soap-making, we are encouraging them to make things professionally so that we can get an European market. All this is done with very little financial backing as the programme was not about business although we firmly believed that there could be opportunities for women in their environment.

As the project shows, we are not policymakers, but we do believe that governments must also concentrate on women who have reading and writing difficulties as they could be able not only to help themselves but contribute to Ghana plc. There is too much talk about high school and university graduates and too little concerns over those who are young but poorly educated. In our experience women leave education for reasons that are far from predictable- the death of the main provider, marrying to pay off debts or simply having to become a provider at an early age.





Programmes also have to become flexible, so we do not adhere to the Western model of one individual, one business plan! What happens when women as a group wish to work together and because of literacy and numeracy challenges, all that they wish cannot be reduced to a well written business-plan? How can this be funded? How can we make them successful as a cooperative perhaps? Focusing on IT and digital issues for future training means that many are left behind and not too many poor women and girls are able to join what is seen as an elite group of people. In a country like Ghana too many young women have very good social skills but cannot read and write but they are managing to cope. Imagine what they could achieve with some resources itemised for women and girls with those challenges!

Too many policies and organisations seem to believe that the issue is to get people back home but everything will then be covered with magic-dust. Sorry, but that has not worked and will not work. Why are people not reintegrated in former communities? There are issues of debt obtained for travelling and they cannot be reconciled as families until they are paid? How do people explain the new son or daughter to their husband who has not seen them for years or a brother or sister to their children? Who is willing to talk about being raped? Re-integration can take a long time and policies are mainly short-term, numbers driven, so the reasons for a lack of reintegration are never really examined thoroughly. (Our work has involved Kenya and Sierra Leone as well in the past.)

Women have a different story when seeking re-integration, they have to overcome taboos, fear and shame which may all be bundled together, these women should have a Returnees house to put themselves together as they may be unravelling as individuals.



Finally, agencies should promote opportunities for women to talk and families need to realise that a daughter who is alive should be welcomed back, rather than be seen as a disappointment for not having made it. Families should also be invited to learn about travelling illegally, and perhaps they may stop sending their children to their deaths.

**This particular exposition has dealt with Ghana and its national level.**