



## **Candle of Hope Foundation**

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(April/ May2020)

Gender equality and Justice  
Campaign against human trafficking

## April Awareness

### Awareness on human traffickers' exploitation during the COVID-19 pandemic

When disasters strike, economies of many countries always take a big hit and many institutions are forced to cut their expenditure in order to stay afloat, as a result, most of their employees are forced to take pay cuts while others completely lose their sources of livelihoods. It is during these desperate times when scammers take advantage of the situation to exploit unsuspecting citizens.

During the ongoing corona virus pandemic, we have always received warnings through the media about scams connected to the coronavirus or about people trying to profit from the pandemic. Scammers have devised new ways of taking advantage of desperate individuals who have been affected to prey on their trust and entice them with the promise of great deals.

We are worried that if we don't take action amid the highly contagious virus, many will be coerced into sexual exploitation or other services for money, and therefore putting their health at risk. It is due to these, we decided to raise awareness targeting the exposed communities in Burao and Berbera in Somaliland on the following:

- Avoid making deals with strangers
- Staying at their homes unless it's very necessary
- Be socially responsible by keeping social distance and wearing a face mask
- Washing their hands thoroughly with soap and maintain high standards of hygiene

*Participants practically keeping the 1 meter distance during one of our awareness campaign sessions in Berbera*



COHF staff (standing) illustrating ways to maintain proper hygiene to the participants



During an interactive practical session on how to properly wash hands



One of our trainers taking through the youth on various forms of human trafficking and how to avoid striking deals with strangers

## May Awareness

### Awareness campaigns on FGM as grounds for human trafficking

Due to governments' directives that require citizens to stay at home to help contain the spread of COVID 19, many institutions such as worship centres, schools, hotels etc. have been shut. In Somalia, reports indicated that since schools were closed, there has been a huge upsurge in female genital mutilation (FGM), which is one of the most extreme violence against girls and women. The rising cases have further been attributed by the restrictions on movement which has made it harder to raise awareness of the dangers of FGM.

Over the years, research has linked FGM in Somalia to child marriage, forced sexual debut among other sexual slavery. As a result, many of these girls are often trying to find ways of escaping these torturous ordeals, making them easy targets of human trafficking.

Unfortunately, data regarding trafficking in Somalia remains very difficult to obtain or verify since trafficking routes (source, transit and destination) are particularly undefined; although it is understood that most of the victims' destination are Kenya Europe, Gulf States, Canada and the USA. Most victims are recruited by women (who mostly are known to them) for the purpose of domestic servitude or sex trafficking.

For that reason, Candle of Hope Foundation through our **Hope for the Horn Initiative**, have intensified our awareness campaigns by distributing information materials in Berbera. These materials are meant to help promote empowerment among women and cautioning the communities on the dangers of FGM, its underlying risks as well as the role the practice plays in the increasing cases of human trafficking.



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