



Trafficked fishing boys drawing nets under the supervision of a “slave master” in Tonka, a small fishing community on the shores of Lake Volta.
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IOM and Migrant Assistance

GAF: IOM’s Global Assistance Fund

GAF: IOM’S GLOBAL ASSISTANCE FUND

Protection and Reintegration of Trafficked Persons

IOM’s Global Assistance Fund (GAF) provides assistance in countries of destination, transit and origin which can include **safe accommodation, medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, assistance with retrieving lost or stolen travel documents** and **career counselling**.

GAF also offers the option of assisted voluntary return in cases in which the beneficiary expresses a wish to return to his or her home country as well as reintegration assistance, which may consist of post-arrival reception assistance, educational support either for the beneficiary or for his or her children, skills training and small business grants to support income-generating activities.

Geographical Coverage

GAF is available to stranded trafficked persons worldwide, excluding Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States of America.

How to Access the Global Assistance Fund

Trafficked persons in need of protection can apply directly to IOM’s Migrant Assistance Division in Geneva, Switzerland, at iomglobalassistance@iom.int, the nearest IOM country office, or by way of referral from an IOM partner, including identified intergovernmental agencies, government ministries and embassies, and non-governmental and civil society organizations.

For more information, please contact us:

International Organization for Migration
Migrant Assistance Division
IOMGlobalAssistance@iom.int

IOM’s Global Assistance Fund (GAF) is an **emergency support mechanism** that provides case-specific assistance to men, women, and children who have been trafficked across international borders, and who are not eligible for assistance through comparable regional or national-level projects.

Funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), and the Nippon Foundation, GAF has provided direct assistance to more than 1,499 victims of trafficking since its inception in 2000 and serves an increasingly diverse range of beneficiaries every year.

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Meet Aliou: Returning home after years in servitude

| Child Trafficking

Tricked into believing he would be a Talibé – a Qur’anic school student – and learn about city life, Aliou - no more than six years old - was forced to beg in the streets of Dakar after his family accepted an offer from an old friend.

Until recently, Aliou’s future seemed bleak: after being rushed out of bed at five – with just enough time to copy the Qur’an for an hour - Aliou was forced to roam the bustling streets of Senegal’s capital worrying whether he would make enough money to satisfy his master. This was his daily routine for eight years.



Photo: Ho Visto Nina Volare

“I thought I would learn, play and be taken good care of,” Aliou says. But he was wrong: after a long and arduous journey from Guinea-Bissau with five other boys, he was given an empty can of tomato sauce and sent off to beg under the threat of physical harm.

Disguised as a Marabout – a wandering Qur’anic teacher, an old friend of the family lured them into believing that Aliou would be taking a step to securing his future via this traditional rite of passage. “It should take two years to learn the Qur’an from top to bottom,” Aliou says, “But I’ve been a talibé in Dakar four times as long, and I haven’t had time to finish reading it once.”

Like most of the children in his situation, Aliou desperately wanted to flee. He explains that breaking the links to this life was difficult, “but sometimes you’ve simply had enough”. The night Aliou escaped, a neighbour saw him alone in the street and took him to a government-run shelter for children. This event was to become a turning point in his life.

“...the traditional practice of Marabout has in some instances resulted in child exploitation, as is the case for many children sent to what parents think are Qur’anic schools but where they are in fact forced to beg, often far from their community of origin”

What is next for Aliou? Home, he says. He wants to return to Guinea-Bissau and finish studying the Qur’an at the local Qur’anic school, or daara, and learn Creole. Adeline, the social worker responsible for him at the Dakar shelter, has been teaching him to read and write. She says that “most of the children coming to the centre are very quick and bright. They jump at any opportunity to learn something, and we should encourage them to continue with their education once they return home.”

IOM’s Global Assistance Fund supports the local NGO that located Aliou’s family and is drawing up a reintegration programme in preparation for his return. The plan is to enroll him in primary school so he can continue his education while in the evenings Aliou would like to attend a daara close to his village with his family.

Meet Akra: Building a life after years of captivity at sea

| Labour Exploitation

Akra had hopes for a better life when he, at 19, accepted an offer from a trusted friend. He was promised a well-paid job in a garment factory in Thailand but was faced with captivity in the far reaches of the South China Sea.

The garment factory did not exist. Instead, after crossing the border from Cambodia, Akra was forced into a van that took him to the coast of Thailand. Here, he was immediately led onto a fishing trawler under the watchful eyes of men armed with guns. For two years, Akra never left the boat working inhumane hours in dangerous conditions, sleeping on a crowded deck with 40 other men.

“We were threatened to be thrown overboard if we did not comply with our masters”, Akra explains. With horrifying stories of assaults to the workers going around, Akra was getting increasingly anxious that he might never see his family again - or indeed leave the boat. Filled with fear and under cover of the night, Akra managed to one night sneak onto a little service boat that had docked to their vessel. And from there, he escaped to the mainland.

A local IOM office took Akra in and answered his plead. With the help of **IOM’s Global Assistance Fund** to that office, Akra was able to receive the essential support needed to return home safely.

What is next for Akra? Since returning home to his family, he was able to start a weaver’s apprenticeship in his home town and is hoping to one day take over the shop. He vowed to never seek employment overseas again.



© IOM (Photo: Thierry Falise)

Meet Selenge: Regaining strength after being held in shackles in a circus

| Child Labour

Upon moving to Russia to work as an aerial acrobatic, Selenge was denied her full salary, severely beaten and threatened into silence.

To support her family, rather than attend school, 13-year-old Selenge agreed to move to Russia to work as an aerial acrobatic in a circus. Shortly after her arrival, Selenge was denied the full salary promised in her contract, severely beaten by her circus trainer Enkh-Amgalan and ordered to work overtime. Sometimes, during rehearsal, Enkh-Amgalan would slam Selenge’s head against the wall. The circus trainer would often threaten Selenge, so much so that she feared for her life. Furthermore, she said that if Selenge told her mother, she would put the family into un-repayable debt.

Acting on suspicions, her mother finally went to Russia, and discovered Selenge’s situation. Her physical health was in a critical condition, and she had suffered serious psychological abuse. Upon Selenge’s return to Mongolia and hospitalisation in Ulan Bator, the Mongolian police suggested that her mother contact the Mongolian Gender Equality Centre.

The Centre staff, with the support of the **IOM Global Assistance Fund**, provided financial assistance for Selenge’s urgent specialist medical and psychosocial treatment. Prior to speaking with the Centre, Selenge and her mother had no idea how to start a criminal case against Enkh-Amgalan. However, the Centre was able to provide free legal advice to help Selenge and her mother eventually convict Enkh-Amgalan under the Mongolian Criminal Code. Enkh-Amgalan was delivered a five-year prison sentence, and ordered to pay Selenge and her family a small compensation.

What is next for Selenge? She is now on the road to recovery, but her health remains poor. The Centre has recently filed a claim at the civil court for her former trainer to provide compensation for her ongoing health expenses, and waiting for their decision.

Donate now
to help those victims of trafficking who otherwise have no chance of being assisted by international mechanisms - like Aliou, Akra, and Selenge, at www.IOM.int.