

# Enabling Wellbeing of Vulnerable Women



# ANNUAL 2018 REPORT

DAR HOSEA

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Association Friends of Thouret

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## Members of the Board for Dar Hosea

|                     |   |              |
|---------------------|---|--------------|
| Sr. Natalie Abela   | - | Chairperson  |
| Mr Frank Mifsud     | - | Secretary    |
| Ms Rita Bonello     | - | Head of Home |
| Dr Marco Farrugia   | - | Member       |
| Dr Anna Maria Vella | - | Member       |

# Executive Summary

## Annual Report

Dar Hosea is an NGO working under the auspices of the Sisters of Charity (Friends of Thouret). The *aim* is to provide a safe shelter and professional support to vulnerable women in prostitution who experience distressing and difficult situations, including physical and psychological abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health issues, drug addiction, impoverishment, and other forms of hardship. *Our mission* is to provide a sense of belonging, security, and dignity to vulnerable women. Dar Hosea supports prostituted women by offering them a safe environment where they may benefit from a sense of worth, dignity, and fulfilment, which is acquired through respect, love, and acceptance.

Dar Hosea is run by both paid and voluntary professionals and carers, who constantly practice respect and a non-judgemental approach. The women who seek the services of Dar Hosea are respected and loved unconditionally, irrespective of age, nationality, socioeconomic status, or religion. The staff at Dar Hosea provide a sense of bonding and connection which is constantly encouraged within the home, to provide a sense of belonging, which would have been absent in the lives of these women.

## Services Offered at the Residence

The residence offers a safe homely environment, where breakfast and lunch are served daily. The food, freshly prepared by the volunteers, represents the goodness, love, and nourishment normally found in a loving family ambiance. Other services which are offered at the residence are the shower and laundry facilities, a small library, a resting area, art and crafts, reading, reflective sessions, gardening, cooking, inspirational movies, drawing sessions and a hairdressing service.

Due to the traumas experienced by the women in prostitution, emotional support and counselling are provided by the professionals at Dar Hosea. Moreover, staff at Dar Hosea also assist the service users in seeking employment, including the preparation of a C.V. and document writing. Sexual education and STI screening are provided by a doctor who is part of the management team of Dar Hosea.

Furthermore, other services offered outside the residence include: accompanying clients to hospital visits, dentist check-ups, court hearings, meetings with probation officers, parent's day meetings, employment interviews and facilitating meetings and re-contact of clients with family members.

Dar Hosea also extends its services to the Detox Centre and Corradino Correctional Facilities (CCF). This is done in order to reach out to other women who would have entered prostitution in order to maintain addiction, or who would have initiated addiction as a means of coping with other negative impacts which hinder wellbeing, due to the psychological distress experienced in prostitution.

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## The Dar Hosea Team

Currently, the staff team includes a manager (who is also a social worker by profession), a medical expert on addiction and sexual health who runs the STI clinic on a pro-bono basis, a social worker (also a psychology graduate-full time), a social support worker (also a psychology graduate - part-time), an assistant administrator (volunteer), and 17 staff support (volunteers).

## Promoting Awareness

In order to raise awareness regarding the hidden realities of the harms of prostitution, Dar Hosea provides regular presentations, including educational talks, to other organisations and groups. As part of its advocacy campaign, last September Dar Hosea organised a conference with both local and international professionals and speakers.

## Future Plans

Amongst other things Dar Hosea plans to provide additional services in the near future, such as promoting legislation that safeguards women in prostitution and raising further awareness by organising educational talks at schools and various parishes on abuse, in order to remove any stigma and prejudice related to prostituted women. Dar Hosea also plans to reach out to the women's children who mostly lack educational help and effective parenting which, consequently, prevents them from developing their motor and literacy skills.

## Conclusion

Through sustained support and on-going dialogue about their dangerous and harsh exploitative reality and its consequences, a number of women have successfully moved away from prostitution and are striving hard to rebuild their insecure lives. Relapse is forever looming but, with the help provided by Dar Hosea, such instances are decreasing immensely. Despite any challenges faced, the Dar Hosea team want to ensure that all goals and targets are met as much as possible.

## Introduction to Dar Hosea

Dar Hosea is an NGO working under the auspices of Sisters of Charity (Association Friends of Thouret). The aim is to provide a safe shelter and professional support to vulnerable women in prostitution who experience distressing and difficult situations. These include physical and psychological abuse, sexual exploitation, mental health issues, drug addiction, impoverishment, and other forms of hardship. Dar Hosea not only provides a safe space and support to the women who are currently experiencing such anguish, but it also offers its support to women who in the past have experienced similar distresses and are struggling in finding their way back in society. Additionally, Dar Hosea assists and supports vulnerable young women who are at high risk of being exploited into prostitution. Our mission is to provide a sense of belonging, security, and dignity to vulnerable women.



### The Meaning Behind the Name

The name 'Dar Hosea' is derived from the Book of Hosea, a chapter in the old testament which speaks of the prophet Hosea, whose name means 'salvation'. God had asked Hosea to marry an adulterous woman, to love and respect her, despite her unfaithfulness. In the story, God tells Hosea: 'Go and marry a harlot. Love her and give her back her lost dignity' (chapter 2). This story was the foundation behind the name 'Dar Hosea', as well as its inspiration and philosophy.



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## The Aims, Ethos, and Objectives of Dar Hosea

Dar Hosea supports prostituted women by offering them a safe environment where they may benefit from a sense of worth, dignity, and fulfilment, which is acquired through respect, love, and acceptance. Such concepts are based on the humanistic psychological approach of unconditional positive regard, which refers to accepting and respecting every individual as they are, without any judgement or evaluation.



The objectives at Dar Hosea are to reach out to vulnerable prostituted women who lead chaotic lifestyles, create supportive relationships with them, whilst encourage them to maintain beneficial healthy communicative channels through which they could ease their way back into society. Childhood sexual exploitation, physical abuse and emotional neglect, are distinctive underlying factors for trajectories into prostitution. Early adolescence is the most frequently reported age of entry into any type of prostitution. Due to such exploitative experiences, it is common for these women to engage in abusive and manipulative relationships with partners and pimps who further exploit and coerce them into prostitution.

Dar Hosea offers a vast variety of support services to meet the women`s basic needs, and any other unmet needs. Dar Hosea is run by both paid and voluntary professionals and carers, who constantly practice respect and a non-judgemental approach. The women who seek the services of Dar Hosea are respected and loved unconditionally, irrespective of age, nationality, gender, socioeconomic status, or religion. The staff at Dar Hosea provide a sense of bonding and connection which is constantly encouraged within the home, to provide a sense of belonging, which would have been absent in the lives of these women. Dar Hosea offers the women a welcoming and safe space where they are able to freely express their narratives without risking any judgement, whilst embrace their true potential as women, and explore alternatives in life.

The ethos of the residence is to restore a sense of humanity to the women attending Dar Hosea, as well as to provide empowerment and resilience through unconditional positive regard, support, and a sense of family love. This is done through a sense of a safe homely environment, where breakfast and lunch are served daily. The food, freshly prepared by the volunteers, represents the goodness, love, and nourishment which is usually provided in a loving family ambiance. Unfortunately, this would have been frequently lacked in the lives of the women who end up in prostitution. Through the provision of freshly cooked lunch, a sense of bonding is enhanced over conversations at table, which is fruitful and beneficial for these women. Through such interactions, the symbol of a family environment is acquired and experienced by the women attending the home, which in turn provides them with a sense of acceptance and love.

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## Services Offered at the Residence

Other services which are offered at the residence are the shower and laundry facilities, a small library, and a resting area. Activities which are also performed on a regular basis include art and crafts, reading, reflective sessions, gardening, cooking, inspirational movies, and drawing sessions. A hairdressing service is also provided when required. Due to the traumas experienced by the women in prostitution, emotional support and counselling are provided by the professionals at Dar Hosea. Moreover, the staff at Dar Hosea also assist the service users in seeking employment, including the preparation of C.V. document writing. Sexual education, and STI screening are provided by a doctor who is part of the management team of Dar Hosea. Apart from the facilities offered, service-users are provided with bus fares, access to non-formal education, mobile phone top-up cards, toiletries, contraceptives, good quality clothing, and second-hand crockery and furniture.

Furthermore, other services offered outside the residence include: accompanying clients to hospital visits, dentist check-ups, court hearings, meetings with probation officers, parent`s day meetings, employment interviews, and facilitating meetings and re-contact of clients with family members. Support to the families of the women attending the residence is also provided if requested. As part of the daily living skills programme, the women attending the residence are also assisted when carrying out personal shopping - such as clothing and/or groceries, and they are also accompanied to bank appointments. Transport service is offered to women who are unable to access public transport to attend the residence. Dar Hosea staff also go to home visits, accompany clients to lawyers, and visit clients residing at Mount Carmel Hospital (MCH). In order to provide a holistic support network for the service users, meetings with other professionals and representatives of other services involved in the clients` situations, are frequently carried out. Home visits are a means of maintaining a healthy relationship and an open communication channel with the service users who would have discovered an alternative employment and adjusted to a conventional lifestyle.



## Other Extended Services

Dar Hosea also extends its services to the Detox Centre and Corradino Correctional Facilities (CCF). This is done in order to reach out to other women who would have entered prostitution in order to maintain addiction, or who would have initiated addiction as a means of coping with other negative impacts which hinder wellbeing, due to the psychological distress experienced

in prostitution. At the Detox Centre, these women can be easily reached and offered to attend Dar Hosea, as many women may not be aware of the services provided. Dar Hosea staff also assist prostituted pregnant women with problem drug use, who are often further stigmatised and marginalised by society due to being pregnant, in addition to their addiction and prostitution. Dar Hosea staff ensure that the women attend the Detox Centre for their daily medication, assist the women for any maternity medical check-ups at Mater Dei Hospital (MDH), whilst assists them with any other social issues. One to one sessions and group sessions are also provided at Dar Hosea.

Dar Hosea also extends its services to the women in prostitution at CCF. This is carried out through weekly crafts sessions which are prepared by the volunteers of Dar Hosea. Such sessions not only serve as a means of therapy for the women at CCF, but they also facilitate and enhance better communication opportunities between the staff at Dar Hosea and the women at CCF, so as to provide additional continuous support once their prison sentence is ended. Due to the obstacles which are experienced upon exiting prison, Dar Hosea is also currently working on an exit programme in order to be able to assist and help the women in prostitution reintegrate back into society. Dar Hosea



maintains regular professional liaison with other specialised entities such as CCF and MCH in order to ensure a progressive approach for all the service users attending Dar Hosea.

In addition to the services offered to the women attending the residence, Dar Hosea also offers its services to the children of these women who, many times, also attend the home with their mothers. The staff at Dar Hosea help and assist the children according to their specific needs, whether it is in supporting them with homework, or other basic learning skills which are acquired through play, such as drawing, colouring or doing puzzles. The staff also assist the mothers by basic child rearing education skills which are carried out through a friendly communicative approach.

## Other Services



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## The Residence & The Team of Dar Hosea

At ground floor level, the house consists of a kitchen, dining/living area, a yard, a bathroom, store room, and social worker's office / counsellor's room. Upstairs, one can find the manager's office, a staff bathroom, the doctor's clinic, a bedroom, and space utilised for crafts.

Currently, the staff team includes a manager (who is also a social worker by profession), a medical expert on addiction and sexual health who runs the STI clinic on a pro-bono basis, a social worker (also a psychology graduate - full time), a social support worker (also a psychology graduate - part-time), an assistant administrator (volunteer), and 17 staff support (volunteers).

Monthly meetings are held between management and the support volunteers on the last Thursday of every month in order to: discuss and assess progress, brainstorm ideas, overall sharing of information, discuss clients and the difficulties they face, improve service provision, resolve any administrative or service provision issues, and discuss the way forward. Staff on-going training is also held during these monthly meetings. A clinical meeting is also held weekly between management and staff in order to assess occurrences and maintain a close approach of current situations, whilst provide immediate assistance when required. Regular supervision is maintained by the manager at Dar Hosea and the staff. A management board meeting is also held on a monthly basis.



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## Statistical Information & Interventions

In 2018, there were 07 re-opened cases, as well as 12 new clients (2 of which had a young child), who were welcomed at Dar Hosea. In total there were 811 women and 164 children drop-ins at the residence, these drop-ins included 28 attendees (women) and 9 children.

Both the professional staff and volunteers accompanied the women to court, lawyers, MCH, MDH, probation officers, and dental appointments. In addition to the drop-in centre, six volunteers from Dar Hosea run weekly women's outreach sessions at CCF. The social worker attends weekly sessions at the Detox centre.

The following table includes interventions which were carried out by the manager and social worker at Dar Hosea during 2018:

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| One-to-one sessions   | 152 |
| Group sessions  | 200 |
| Accompanying service users to medical visits, court sessions, employment services, and other outings  | 58  |
| Home visits   | 19  |
| Phone calls to service users  | 600 |
| Ward visits   | 10  |
| Transport Services  | 321 |
| Interventions with other professionals: medical doctors, other social workers, head of homes, lawyers, government officials (such as housing departments, etc) and other entities | 612 |
| Outreach at Detox Centre  | 12  |
| Outreach at CCF   | 45  |

# STATISTICS



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The following table includes the total amount of hourly duties, as carried out during the year by the team of Dar Hosea.

| The Team                   | Hours |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Manager                    | 2080  |
| Medical Expert (voluntary) | 520   |
| Social Worker              | 1736  |
| Social Support Worker      | 1040  |
| Staff Support (volunteers) | 1691  |

General medical examinations and tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were carried out regularly when clients asked for them (approximately 3 per month). Women who were given this service were then provided with follow-up sessions to discuss the results and any further required treatment.

Throughout the year, there were on average 4 drop-ins daily. Breakfast, lunch, tea and coffee were provided to all. At times, packed lunches were also handed out. The busiest months were January, February, March, and April. Here, approximately 6 service users were making use of the drop-in centre daily. The staff accompanied the women and children on regular outings. These included visits to Marsascalca Bay, Pama Village, Kitchen Garden, and San Anton Gardens.

## Promoting Awareness

In order to raise awareness regarding the hidden realities of the harms of prostitution, Dar Hosea provides regular presentations, including educational talks, to other organisations and groups. Strong professional networking is also created and maintained with various other organisations in order to provide the best possible support. As part of its advocacy campaign, last September Dar Hosea organised a conference with both local and international professionals and speakers. The title of the conference was: ***Combating Human Trafficking Today – Taking Stock of Evidence-based Research.***



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## Educational Support

Additionally, Dar Hosea assists university students when conducting research in the field of prostitution. Due to the sensitivity of the research, whilst in order to also protect the identities of the women attending the drop-in centre, the research questions which would have been prepared by the students are occasionally carried out by the professionals of the residence. The professionals at Dar Hosea are expertly trained how to conduct such research questions, whilst also maintain strict confidence for both the participants and the researcher.



As part of their development programme, and in order to maintain competence in the field, the professionals at Dar Hosea carry out frequent academic research on current prostitution and sex trafficking issues.

## Other Activities and Events

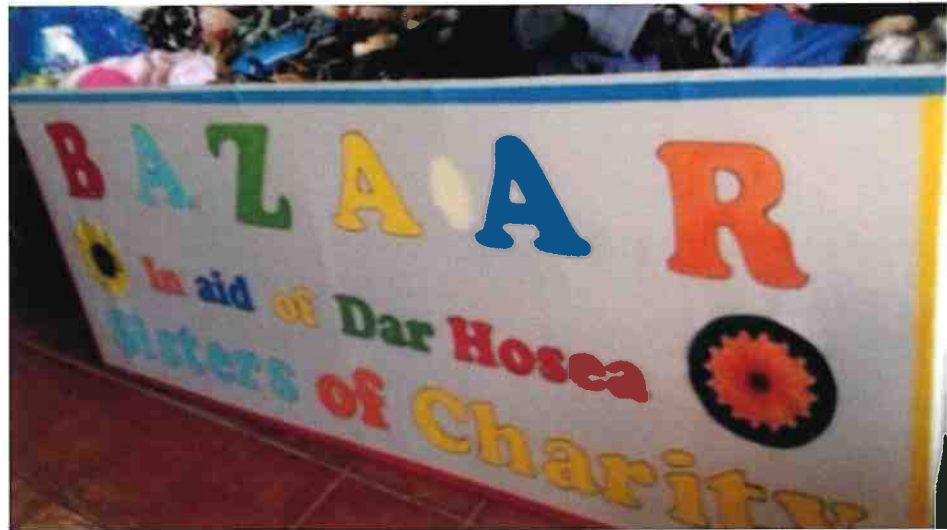
Other activities included the preparation of Christmas crafts and Christmas foods during the Christmas season. Preparation of cupcakes and the preparation of figolli and kwaresimal during the Easter season also took place. A special meal was prepared for Christmas, including the distribution of gifts, where 27 persons attended. An Easter Lunch and a prayer meeting was organised during the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

In order to possibly render Dar Hosea self-sustainable, other activities included the organising of various fund-raising activities, such as the distributing of leaflets, selling items at a Ta`Qali market stall, and selling crafts made by the women attending Dar Hosea at St Joan Antide school were carried out.



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During the summer months Dar Hosea also had the opportunity to organise a bazaar in Mosta for the duration of a month. The aim of this bazaar was not only to help Dar Hosea with funds, but the volunteers at the bazaar also helped customers in need attending the bazaar by donating items from the bazaar. This experience despite being a rather challenging one, was fruitful and wonderful, since all the team at Dar Hosea collaborated and contributed all their efforts and energies in this project, further enhancing the dynamics of the team. During the bazaar, family members and friends of the team of Dar Hosea also helped out by volunteering at the bazaar. This sense of commitment was very encouraging and beneficial for the successful outcome of the bazaar and the sense of community within the Dar Hosea team.

All the staff at Dar Hosea go out of their way and truly aim to give a sense of family environment to the service users. Another special event experienced this year was the graduation from a rehabilitation programme of one of the women attending the residence. Since she had no family to attend her graduation, all the team of Dar Hosea attended this event in order to show their support and encouragement to the woman who successfully and determinedly battled and overcame her addiction.

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## The Narratives

### Christine

When she was still very young, Christine's father abandoned her family. Christine was often sexually abused by her older brother and would then run away from home. Because she was so young, her mother would report her disappearance to the police, and she was always found after about 3 days. This became a pattern. While away, she often spent time in pubs and soon started sleeping with men to finance her alcohol abuse.



Sometime later Christine married a non-Maltese national and had children. However, like her own father, her husband too abandoned the family. Due to her severe drinking, Social Services took her children under their care. Following this, she lost all contact with her family members.

Two years ago, Christine was referred to Dar Hosea and started spending her days there. Here, she underwent therapy. One fine day Christine had complained of feeling unwell and didn't show up the following day. Because she always attended Dar Hosea on a daily basis, the manager went to her house to see how she was and found her severely unwell. Christine died in hospital soon after. A funeral service was organised by Dar Hosea. Sadly, despite her death, she was dismissed by her family members and they refused to attend her funeral.



### Stella

Stella worked as a prostitute for many years. She would pay 30 euros per day for a rented room and men visited her there. During this period, she fell pregnant. Upon birth, the baby was taken into care by Stella's mother. Stella then lost touch with her mother and daughter as the former severed all ties. Eighteen months ago, Stella started therapy through Dar Hosea.

Social work intervention enabled her to re-establish her relationship with her family and eventually she went to live with her mother and daughter.

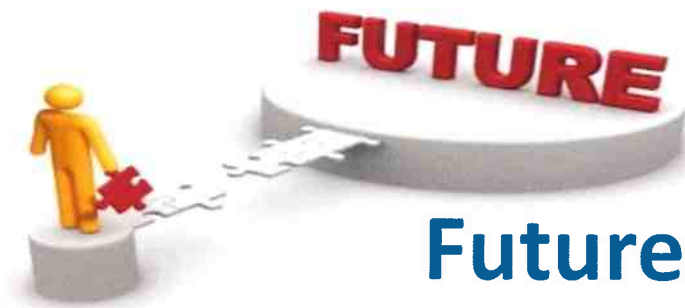
Today, Stella is no longer working in prostitution or abusing of drugs and has a full-time job. Her next step is to find a home where she can live with her daughter.

## Anita

Anita has been suffering from an extremely young age. When growing up, she was mistreated by her own mother. She was also abused by her mother's partner. Soon after first meeting her alcoholic father, she was raped by him. She suffered severe mental health issues. Like her mother, she too started working as a prostitute and then fell into heavy substance abuse. When her birth father died due to alcoholism, Anita financed the funeral service through prostitution. Approximately 9 months ago, Anita was referred to Dar Hosea by a doctor. Some time later she was admitted to Mount Carmel. Though she has been discharged, the Dar Hosea management regularly visits her at home and are constantly encouraging her to start going to Dar Hosea again.



Dar Hosea makes it a point to follow all clients even after they would have left, especially after Dar Hosea would have found them a job. There are also cases where clients, would not be able to come to Dar Hosea as they would have male children of a certain age (usually teenagers). In that case Dar Hosea conducts home visits to monitor and help the families as much as possible.



## Future Plans

Some of the desired outcomes of the service Dar Hosea offers in the near future include the following:

1. An advocate for legislation that:
  - (a) Targets those who pay women for sex as well as pimps.
  - (b) Introduces new measures such as funding NGOs which provide support to those who are coerced into prostitution.
2. Setting up a social enterprise which will effectively provide flexible work opportunities for Dar Hosea service users. Such an initiative will solve the difficulties faced by Dar Hosea service users who struggle to find employment because of:
  - (a) Pending court cases as they will have to stop working once the Court sentences them to time in prison.
  - (b) A lack of employment due to their criminal record.
  - (c) Their severe mental illness precludes them from maintaining a steady career.
3. Forming a fund-raising group which will be co-ordinated by the manager.
4. Organising educational talks at schools and various parishes on abuse, and in order to remove any stigma and prejudice related to prostituted women. Through such talks at schools:
  - (a) Students may be encouraged to pursue their studies in related issues.
  - (b) University students may be provided by placements at the residence.
5. Outreach to the women's children who mostly lack educational help and effective parenting which, consequently, prevents them from developing their motor and literacy skills. One of the objectives includes helping the children with their school and homework on Saturdays.
6. Increase outings and other outdoor activities.
7. To increase the service user base to eighteen in order to reach out and help other prostituted women.
8. To arrange a meeting with the police department, request a specific contact number where one could immediately contact if any safety/security issues occur. This is in order to maintain the safety and security of the residence, which are compromised due to occasional threats by individuals stalking the women.
9. To invite motivational female guests to share their personal stories of success through hardship and distressing experiences, as a means of inspiring and empowering the women.

## Conclusion

In order to maintain a sense of safety, whilst remove any stigma which might arise by society, and protect the identities of the women, including their children's, as well as maintain the safety of the employees and volunteers at the residence, it is of utmost importance that a low profile of the residence is maintained. As such, the address of the residence is only provided to professionals, whilst publicity of Dar Hosea as a means of raising awareness of its services, is maintained to a minimum in social media. Due to the sensitive nature of Dar Hosea, including the services provided, every effort is constantly made to ensure a holistic safety approach of the residence and the staff.

Through sustained support and on-going dialogue about their dangerous and harsh exploitative reality and its consequences, women who make use of the services provided by Dar Hosea thrive emotionally and psychologically and slowly wean off substance abuse and daily kerb crawling. Links with their relatives and children are gradually mediated and re-established. Access to non-formal education is explored. To date, a number of women have successfully moved away from prostitution and are striving hard to rebuild their shaky lives. Relapse is forever looming, but with the help provided by Dar Hosea, such instances are decreasing immensely. Despite any challenges faced, the Dar Hosea team want to ensure that all goals and targets are met, or if not, reached as far as possible.

The overall objective of Dar Hosea is to give security and love to vulnerable women who have suffered much abuse and lacked possibilities and opportunities such as education, and a sense of belonging. Since they have been trapped and coerced into a world of prostitution, they are then exposed to harsh dangers such as violence, exploitation, addiction, mental health issues, and STIs. The ultimate intention of Dar Hosea is to encourage the women to gain self-confidence, self-love, self-respect, self-worth, and to never give up on finding love and happiness. No doubt, we strongly believe that Dar Hosea will provide them with a place they can see as a home where they are loved and cared for.

