

Azadi Kenya August 2022 Newsletter



We are excited to share with you this quarter's newsletter. It is our one year anniversary and we would like to share the milestones achieved this year since we started the bold idea to come together as a community. We are also going to keep you updated on the ongoing activities and projects. Finally, read some reflections on community building from our founder as we mark this important milestone! We officially launched Azadi on 30th of July, so its officially one year since we started this journey. As a community, this milestone marks as a time for reflection on what the year has brought so far. Our growth has been significant both in numbers and in the work and impact that we had envisioned.

Some of the key milestones for the year include:

1. Growth in our numbers - what started as a collective of 14 people has now grown to a collective of more than 70 members. We have managed to develop a process for membership and are currently working on a participatory data management tool to look at the impact of our work.
2. Our vision as a collective has always been about creating safe spaces for survivors and the opening of our physical space was a dream come true. We now have a physical space that is now exclusive for survivors to come meet, learn and connect within the community and specifically for long term support. A special shout out to The Freedom Fund who supported us financially in setting up the space.

1. We have also grown in our implementation of projects that align with our programs and vision. This year, we have seen 16 survivors employed as consultants in our projects with an average of four members hired per project, most of them receiving between 500 and 1000 USD for each project. An average of 39 % of the project budget this year has gone directly to survivors. We have worked with partners like Valkyrie Gives, Maisha and Okoa Sasa on a project that will see more than 130 survivors receive trauma-informed and survivor-centred care. We are excited to document the lessons learned from this project incorporating the reflections of survivors leaders in our community.

1. Finally, our highly anticipated ethical storytelling exhibition was officially launched on 30th July. It featured art from two survivor leaders and three fellows from Rice University who were trained by two amazing artists: Aisha Haji and Rehema Baya in photography and writing respectively. This exhibition featured photographs, photo stories, stories, and zines. It was exhibited at Kobo Trust in Nairobi and was open to the public. It was amazing seeing so many people come and support the artists and Azadi. The exhibition also launched virtually, which you can see using the link below:

Virtual Exhibition

We asked the participants to share their opinions and these were some of the takeaways:

"One thing I realized is how photography draws out the beauty and humanity of each subject. Rather than seeing a subject as a victim of a terrible crime, I saw them as a strong human who had built themselves up to possess their own form of strength"

"My whole understanding of human trafficking has change immensely because I now understand that anybody can become a victim of human trafficking"

"Art is a powerful tool to create awareness on human trafficking"

As we have now reached the pivotal age of 1 as an organisation, we start to ponder on what's next to come. We can't predict the future but, friends, we have got some great things cooking and we have no doubt that Azadi will continue to grow, evolve, and develop as time goes on.

News

& Upcoming projects

We did a research project with the University of Liverpool that wrapped up a few months ago and as part of the research we conducted and the subsequent report, we have been asked to write a blog post for Open Democracy. This will be among the blog posts written by the other consultants for the initial project, all of which is meant to provide an accessible, straightforward guide to the findings of all of our research, which centres around meaningful survivor engagement in human trafficking-related policies and programmes. We'll be sure to share the blog with you when it's published.

We are also expanding our wellbeing activities. We recently started doing yoga which is a great way to promote wellness and wellbeing. All members and staff were invited to join in on the fun together. Soon, we will also start doing art therapy, which is meant to support our members' healing and wellbeing through the use of art. We're excited about these new opportunities in our wellbeing activities that we're starting.

Those are all the updates on things to come for now, friends, but please read on to hear about Sophie's reflection on the communities we've built at Azadi over the past year.



Reflections on a year of community building

Azadi was started as a result of a need that emerged during the pandemic amongst a group of survivor leaders and allies. The goal initially was to create a safe space during the pandemic where survivor leaders could connect away from the chaos that was going on presently in our world. We knew that we could not fix the pandemic. We knew that for many of us, the pandemic represented another reminder of how vulnerable we were and also a reminder of how little help we had. The weekly meetings online to connect and learn together were a reminder that we had some form of control and that we were not helpless.

When I think of this journey, I recognise how the admission of helplessness is important in developing a community yet many of us live in a world that rarely celebrates the admission of helplessness.

The idea of coming together and weaving together our strengths and weaknesses to build a community remains pertinent to us. Our commitment remains to look at different ways that we can work together to grow together. It is a recognition that our power grows when we share it and we are doing solidarity work.

As we mark Azadi's first year, it is this vision of what it truly means to be in a community that motivates me as an individual. I aspire to imagine better communities, to continue in the creation of community and above all to be accepted as part of one. It has been challenging to imagine and create this for survivors and by survivors but we are here one year later and we are stronger! Cheers to the years to come!

That's all the updates we have for now but dear friends, you will hear from us very soon again. If you want to follow our updates as they come, please follow us on our social media platforms on @Azadi Kenya. And you can contact us by sending us an email on info@azadikenya.org

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