

GWI Calls for the Recognition and Protection of Trafficked Women and Girls

Geneva, Switzerland, July 30, 2017 – Graduate Women International (GWI) urges that all people but particularly international, national, state, religious, law enforcement and criminal justice and community leaders to recognize that human trafficking has grown exponentially since the 1990s and we call on them to not stand idly by while this atrocity continues to grow. Human trafficking is the world’s fastest growing crime earning, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), produces profits of \$150 million a year of which commercial sexual exploitation of women, girls, boys and young men earns \$99 billion.

The ILO estimates that there are well over 21 million trafficking victims who are trapped in modern day slavery. Groups considered most vulnerable to human trafficking include women, children, indigenous persons, persons with mental and physical disabilities and migrants. Fifty-five percent of all trafficking victims around the world are women and girls.

The [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC) defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion...for the purpose of exploitation” and is considered a grave violation of human rights punishable by international law.”

Anyone could fall victim to human trafficking, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status, and location with certain individuals being more vulnerable to trafficking than others. Some of those factors include individuals that have experienced any form of abuse, individuals suffering from instability (economic, social, personal), or individuals that are fleeing some form of conflict ([Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children](#), A/71/303, 2016).

“GWI posits that many of the current policies and programs of globalization have contributed to the acceleration of human trafficking. Globalization has been responsible for unprecedented poverty in many countries and this has facilitated the goals and processes of human trafficking as criminals have lured hapless victims away from their families and communities with the promise of employment. GWI calls on all country governments to ensure the safety of their citizens by providing social safety nets, healthcare, food security and education so that they are not victimized twice – first by country policies and second, by predatory criminals,” says GWI President Geeta Desai.

Communities and leaders must acknowledge that when women and girls are enslaved by human traffickers they are raped, beaten, threatened and forced into labour and the sex trade. These victims are denied all human rights, are treated as commodities and cast aside when they have outgrown their use to their captors. Even once rescued from traffickers, victims are often traumatized from the experience and unable to adjust to a normal life and assimilate back into their families and communities. [Traffickers go unpunished, with only a few out of the millions in the world being prosecuted.](#)

“If we are to create a society that is free of violence towards the poor and the disenfranchised, we must first recognize the magnitude of this crime and enforce the law,” adds Desai. GWI underscores that all governments must prioritize the eradication of the corrupt and criminal activities that aid and abet human trafficking even as they prioritize the rescue and rehabilitation of their victims. GWI strongly urges all global citizens to act now by raising awareness, advocating for changes in national socio-economic policies, as well as international economic and trade policies, for the rescue and restitution of victims and for the prosecution of traffickers and the large criminal empires that employ them, to the full extent of the law.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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