

Prostitution of Women and Girls

The Issue

The purchase of sexual services is a violation of the dignity of the prostituted person, where girls and women are particularly at risk. This is because the prostitution of women and girls frequently occurs under coercion and is often exacerbated by the inability of these women and girls to escape their situation by not having access to socio-economic opportunity. Prostitution is degrading treatment of the prostituted person and in many instances a modern form of slavery.

Causes of Prostitution:

- Poverty: women and girls are forced to provide for their families;
- Drug addiction;
- Mental health issues: exploitation of at-risk women and girls;
- Trafficking and kidnapping, *de facto* forms of slavery.

GWI's position

The purchase of sexual services should be prohibited. Criminal sanctions should be imposed on the purchasers and not on the prostituted persons. Prostituted persons should be provided with essential support services, training and funding to enable them to earn a living free from prostitution.

In order to address the main causes and deter purchasers of sexual services, GWI urges states to:

1. Recognise prostitution as a fundamental violation of human rights

GWI recommendation:

- Recognise prostitution as a form of violence against women and girls;
- Educate the public at large about the incidents of violence, degrading treatment, trafficking, kidnapping and slavery involved in the lives of prostituted persons.

2. Prohibit the purchase of sexual services and impose criminal sanctions on purchasers

GWI recommendation:

- Make prostitution illegal and prohibit the purchase of sexual services;
- Include adequate criminal penalties and sentences in legislation that both punish perpetrators accordingly and act as a deterrent;
- Enforce adequate criminal sanctions on both the persons exploiting marginalised women, whether it is as traffickers or pimps, and the purchasers of sexual services;
- Publicise sentences of offenders and impose harsher sentences on repeat offenders.

3. Help protect prostituted persons from exploitation and impose no criminal sanctions on them

GWI recommendation:

- Impose no criminal sanctions on prostituted persons;
- Provide support services, training and funding to enable prostituted persons to earn a living free from prostitution.
- Adequately finance and train first responders including law enforcement, health care professionals and social workers to help prostituted persons to seek medical services, find safe shelter and access training and education programmes.