

WHERE WE STAND

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Where Things Stand...

[The Convention to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery](#) was signed in 1926, yet human trafficking as a crime is relatively new. In Palermo, Italy, 2000, the UN officially recognised that comprehensive international approach to trafficking in persons was necessary, issuing the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime](#) (the Palermo Protocol herein), entering into force 29 September 2003.

The Palermo Protocol defined trafficking in persons as: "...the recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person by such means as threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception for the purposes of exploitation". Its goals are:

- (a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons, paying special attention to women and children
- (b) To protect and assist the victims of such trafficking, with full respect for their human rights; and
- (c) To promote cooperation among State Parties in order to meet those objectives

There are an [estimated 40.3 million](#) people trapped in slavery today. This is what is happening:

- Women are recruited to travel for decent work, then find themselves in **forced prostitution** far from home
- Daughters are **sold into child marriage** by their own parents due to extreme poverty
- During conflicts, young people are forced to become **child soldiers**
- Men seeking jobs, are conscripted onto fishing boats, and kept for years under **brutal slavery-like conditions**
- Women are sent to do domestic work, employers keep their identification papers and they become **domestic worker slaves**
- **Children** are trafficked for **begging**
- Fraudulent recruitment practices lead to **exploitation** at the place of employment, including **wage theft** or **debt bondage**
- Those living in poverty are **trafficked for organ removal**, and often suffer poor health outcomes
- **Terrorist groups** kidnap girls and women, **making them "wives"** and **sell them as slaves**
- In [2017 the European Union](#) recorded the largest increase of slavery of any world region because the influx of refugees and migrants has strained protection measures, creating loopholes easily exploited by criminal networks

And Where Things Need to Go...

Fundamental Action

As per [SDG, Target 8.7](#), States must take immediate and effective measures to end human trafficking, and modern slavery, eradicate forced labour and secure the prohibition and elimination of child labour in all its forms, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, by 2025.

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In General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council, United Nations (ECOSOC); Operational Relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); Special List of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Official Relations with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO); Consultative Status with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO); Consultative Status with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

States that have not done so, must take immediate action to [sign and ratify the Palermo Protocol](#) and develop plans for the swift implementation of its provisions.

States must use all appropriate measures to assure that trafficking victims and victims of modern day slavery shall be treated as victims of crime and not as criminals, and humanitarian and compassionate factors are considered when dealing with victims of human trafficking.

States must make substantial efforts to attack the root causes of poverty for women and girls, by implementing [SDG 5 and its targets](#), to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Further Action

States must make special efforts to identify human trafficking and exploitation, recognising the heightened vulnerability of women and girl migrants moving from countries of origin, transit and destination. Border guards, police and other authorities at borders should be trained appropriately. NGOs should be permitted to assist and provide services to such victims.

States should assist trafficking victims in having their views presented at the appropriate stages of criminal proceedings and take actions to protect victims and survivors of trafficking from being re-victimised.

Where Soroptimist International Stands...

These are the principles that Soroptimist International strongly supports and will advocate for on behalf of victims and survivors of human trafficking:

SI recognises that trafficking in persons is a heinous violation of fundamental human rights and must be strongly combatted. The consequences of human trafficking have a spill-over effect that touches every element of a society.

SI will work to educate and empower women and girls to overcome the conditions of poverty -- which put them at risk of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

SI will work with all relevant actors, including UN bodies and agencies, UN Member States, NGOs, civil society and the private sector, to make States more accountable for identifying human trafficking, protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators.

SI will work with other NGOs and civil society to advocate for protection of victims, helping them become survivors by providing needed services, such as health, education, psychological, economic and social assistance.

SI will work to educate the public to understand that human trafficking exists everywhere and to recognise its signs. SI will inform the public on supply chains in the global economy and on how to determine if the products they use or the clothes they wear have been produced in any part by forced labour or child labour, and to advocate against such practices by the private sector.

SI will seek to assure that States listen to the voices of victims and survivors of human trafficking, in all matters related to their lives after the trauma of trafficking, including repatriation.

Soroptimist International supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through its Federations, Unions, Regions, Clubs, by working on the ground with partner organisations and UN agencies to Educate, Empower and Enable women and girls everywhere.