

**UN WOMEN CONSULTATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND SEX WORK,  
THE SEX TRADE AND PROSTITUTION: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE**

(Sent to [consultation@unwomen.org](mailto:consultation@unwomen.org))

Submitted September 26, 2016 by

**Jeanne Sarson, MEd, BScN, RN and Linda MacDonald, MEd, BN, RN**

**A FORMAL CONSULTATION PERIOD WITH A FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING THREE  
QUESTIONS**

Question 1) The 2030 Agenda commits to universality, human rights and leaving nobody behind. How do you interpret these principles in relation to sex work/trade or prostitution?

Question 2) The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls.

The SDGs also include several targets pertinent to women's empowerment, such as:

- a) reproductive rights
- b) women's ownership of land and assets
- c) building peaceful and inclusive societies
- d) ending the trafficking of women
- e) eliminating violence against women.

How do you suggest that policies on sex work/trade/prostitution can promote such targets and objectives?

Question 3) The sex trade is gendered. How best can we protect women in the trade from harm, violence, stigma and discrimination?

**Contact information:**

Persons Against Non-State Torture (NST) | Web: [www.nonstatetorture.org](http://www.nonstatetorture.org)

General email contact: [contact@nonstatetorture.org](mailto:contact@nonstatetorture.org)

Phone | Fax: 1-902-895-6659

Mail: 361 Prince Street, Truro, NS, Canada, B2N 1E4

## RESPONDING TO QUESTION 1

Utilizing the principles of “universality, human rights and leaving no one behind” in relation to “sex work/trade or prostitution” must not begin with women, or young women over 18 years of age; it must begin with the girl infant. “Sex work/trade or prostitution” is generally spoken of from an adult-based perspective ignoring that in a patriarchal dominated social world sexism and misogyny are fundamental foundations to the global inequality of women, as are misopedia and *childism* fundamental to the inequality of the girl child. Misopedia and childism are discriminatory biases clearly evident in UN Women question number 2. It declares that the “SDGs set out to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls” then immediately eliminates and invisibilizes the girl child from question 2, (a) to (e) statements. In particular, these two statements must read d) ending the trafficking of women *and girls* and e) eliminating violence against women *and girls*, if UN Women is serious about “leaving nobody behind” and upholding the universal human right principle of equality for girls. The exclusion of the chronic sexualized victimization inflicted against the girl child trafficked, conditioned, prostituted, or born into “sex work/trade or prostitution” will reinforce a destructive discriminatory perspective that will shape their future of inequality, objectification, and dehumanization, shaping a ‘no way out’ of “sex work/trade or prostitution”; this becomes a gendered place in society for adult women, the majority having endured chronic sexualized victimizations as girls.

## RESPONDING TO QUESTION 2, particularly to items d-e

As previously stated in question 1, the following two points (d) “ending the trafficking of women” and (e) “eliminating violence against women” must be discussed from the non-discriminatory human rights SDGs perspective that is inclusive of the girl child, otherwise, we would be willfully responding dishonestly when addressing UN Women’s questions on “sex work/trade or prostitution”. We are into our 24<sup>th</sup> year of focused professional work identifying that non-State torture is suffered by exploited girls of all ages prior to ‘becoming’ the legal age of 18 and presumed capable of making an informed choice when “sex work/trade or prostitution” victimization is all they know.

Following are six questions with ‘simple’ answers we have professional insights on, in that human trafficking for sexualized exploitation or ‘prostitution’ can and does involve the risk of suffering torture by non-State actors—by parents and their friends, by pimps and johns—sellers and buyers of human beings, predominately girl children and women. The six questions and answers are:

- **Does legalizing “sex work/trade or prostitution” of women protect the young from the pimps/traffickers and johns?** *No, it does not.*
- **How young is young in the supply and demand chain for the “prostitution” of children?** *It starts with demands for infants.*
- **Who are the suppliers that meet the demand for the exploited “prostituted” young?** *They can be parent(s), other relatives, boyfriends, pimps, pornographers, human traffickers, drug dealers, gangs or rings, and people in authority or trusted for example.*

- **Is there a “prostitution” demand for young girls who have been conditioned by their parent(s) or others to withstand sexualized torture?** *Yes, there is.*
- **How many sexualized torture ordeals might a child/woman suffer?** *We estimate for a woman who was born to non-State torture, human trafficking exploiting family-based operators and unable to escape until age 20, has endured at least over 24,000 “prostitution” torture rapes, not counting sadomasochism involving electric shocking, objects, weapons, bestiality, and torture ‘pornographic’ ordeals.*
- **What social and legal attitudes can develop to normalize exploitive sexualized torture?** *According to a response received from Stats Canada when asked how they tracked sexualized torture perpetrated by private individuals they explained that; “It is just **regular torture** [emphasis added] between two individuals and called non-state actor torture . . . all kinds of implications and exceptions for S&M (re: consent to torture); (email communication, July 27, 2009). They did not address the torture and bondage of exploited child.*

### The Canadian Reality is:

- Canadian opinion is that 78 percent of girls under aged 16 are not in “prostitution” by choice; that 67 percent are exploited against their will, and 70 percent of those brought into Canada are illegally exploited;<sup>1</sup>
- A Canadian federal police force report suggests that sexualized exploitation is often linked to organized crime and internet recruitment of underage girls;<sup>2</sup> and that non-State torture is inflicted by exploiters;<sup>3</sup>
- Between September 2002, and March 2009, Cybertip.ca examined child sexualized exploitative websites, of 4,110 images 82.1% were of children under 12 years old, extreme sexualized violence was inflicted against children under eight years old, 83% of the images were of the girl child, and images included infants and toddlers.<sup>4</sup>
- Northern Canadian aboriginal women and children, who identified surviving sexualized exploitation, report the exploiters were family members, boyfriends, and friends.<sup>5</sup>
- In the Canadian province of Manitoba, the average age when adults were first “prostituted” was aged 13 to 14 years but children as young as nine years suffered being prostituted.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Women’s Foundation. (n.d.) *End human trafficking*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadianwomen.org/trafficking>

<sup>2</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2010). *Human trafficking in Canada: A threat assessment. (Summary)*. Retrieved from <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/ht-tp/hta-tpem-eng.htm>

<sup>3</sup> The Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre. (2013, October). *Domestic human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Canada*, p. 22. Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

<sup>4</sup> Bunzeluk, K. (2009, November). *Child Sexual Abuse Images: Summary Report. An Analysis of Websites by cybertip!ca*. Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

<sup>5</sup> Redfern, M. (2014). *Inuit victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking in Nunavut: Executive summary*. Ajungi Arctic Consulting.

<sup>6</sup> Manitoba Family Services and Housing. (2008). *Front Line Voices: Manitobans working together to end child sexual exploitation*. Retrieved from [http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childfam/pubs/tracias\\_trust\\_en.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childfam/pubs/tracias_trust_en.pdf)

### RESPONDING TO QUESTION 3

UN Women's acknowledgement that the "sex trade" is gendered demands that they include the girl child as we have explained in our two previous responses. Further insight in reference to the terminology of "sex work/trade or prostitution" UN Women is using, includes:

- As soon as UN Women says "the sex trade is gendered" this admits to the inequality and to the selling and renting or buying of women and girls in society;
- The term "sex trade" dismisses that it is a human being that is being traded, disguising an industry of 'human trading';
- The term "sex work" dismisses it is a human being that is being sold, rented, or bought, commonly of women and girls in positions of vulnerability;
- The term "prostitution" of women is defined in article 6 of [CEDAW](#) in a manner that "requires States parties to take appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress . . . the exploitation of prostitution in women" and to suppress the human trafficking in women. Child "prostitution" is defined and addressed internationally as "the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration" and also acknowledges that a child can be sold and bought by "any person or group of persons" across this globe as outlined in articles of the [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#). There can be no denial that children are sold and bought in "sex work/trade/prostitution" thus all discussion formulated under the UN Women's terminology of "sex work/trade/prostitution" must include the girl child of all ages and not only women.

**In closure**, "sex work/trade/prostitution" is a gendered form of violence of women and girls globally. If a very small percentage of women promote themselves as willfully engaged in "sex work/trade/prostitution" their position must not override the human rights of the majority who are chronically victimized and enslaved in a gendered oppressive reality. Risking and/or withstanding non-State torture is not work; we disagree with the terms "sex work" or "sex trade".