

## Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd Position on the Prostitution of Women and Girls



1. The prostitution of women and girls is an ancient form of gender violence that is structurally embedded in societies. Socio/cultural perceptions and attitudes about relationships between men and women reinforce the system's strength. Prostitution is rooted in economic systems, structured within a globalized economy that has seen rapid growth of women in extreme poverty. Political structures and systems that devalue and exclude women and do not evaluate gender outcomes of social policy give prostitution acceptance. The root causes of prostitution are tied to poverty, patriarchy, male privilege, extreme wealth, racist attitudes, militarization, ecological degradation, inadequate family support, and the demand by men for women to be available for sexual purchase. The rapid global expansion of human trafficking as a criminal industry has increased the demand for girls and women to be objects of prostitution. Likewise, lack of people-centered and rights-based migration policies increase the incidence of human trafficking and prostitution.

2. We recognize that the multiple harms of prostitution make it an egregious form of discrimination. Our position on prostitution is rooted in the dignity of the human person. It echoes the UN 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others that says, "prostitution is incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and endangers the welfare of the individual, the family and the community..." Prostitution by its nature is exploitative and is never part of a decent work agenda. The idea that women are commodities available to be consumed and exploited has no place in a society striving for gender equality.

3. OLCGS rejects any notion of "child prostitution." Sexual exchange between an adult and child (through age 18) is a form of criminal abuse, affirmed by article 34 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Early marriage of a minor is also an abuse. Likewise, we reject the notion that a person in prostitution is a "sex worker"; prostitution is not a profession nor is it in harmony with a view that work is a sacred contribution to human development and the social fabric.

4. Our first response is to express solidarity with those who are vulnerable to being the objects of prostitution. We seek to listen to the experiences of these persons, accompany them in their personal journeys and develop, with them, holistic programs to meet their needs. We support women and girls in healing, self-sufficiency through employable skills, economic and personal growth opportunities, and reconciliation with often-estranged families.

5. We seek to be active in processes of social change. We engage in the international debate on the nature of prostitution; we seek changes in outdated national laws and policies; we support the changes in national laws that have been happening since 1999 when Sweden adopted a policy of zero tolerance for buyers of sex.

### **6. In responding to Prostitution, it is critical to:**

- a. Identify the prostitution of women and girls as a form of gender violence; unmask the lie that it is a profession or can be dignified as an acceptable form of work.
- b. Develop programs, with the participation of those who have been prostituted, that provide holistic social support and empowerment, skills training, and education about human rights.

Trauma awareness practices should be incorporated in programs and working for economic empowerment as a foundational approach.

- c. Condemn state sponsorship of prostitution; reject the legalization of prostitution. Call for laws that do not criminalize a prostituted person but prosecutes those who sponsor commercialized sex and those who purchase sexual acts from other persons (Such laws are referred to as the Nordic model and/or the abolitionist position.)
- d. Be active educators within communities about the dignity of girls and women and promote analysis of attitudes and traditional practices, including the issues of male sexual initiation in one's society. Critique practices such as early marriage and honor marriage; critique sexualized images in advertising.
- e. Ensure good practices for prevention of sexual and gender exploitation. This requires up to date awareness of information technology, on-line practices of ensnarement, acceptance of pornography, and popular proliferation of attitudes that demean women.
- f. Use the SDGs, particularly 5 & 8.3 in program planning and implementation. Promote policies that support results-based gender inclusion, economic opportunities, job creation, entrepreneurship, creative and innovative income generating projects, including women's access to financial services and land ownership.
- g. Contribute to policy formation through participation and leadership in campaigns, and conferences, articulating and clarifying that prostitution is a form of gender violence.
- h. Be conversant with initiatives of UN Women, the UN Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2017); support national laws that favor abolition policies. Know recent trends and research on the topic.
- i. Include awareness in educational programs of the cross-sectional issues that influence prostitution: migration realities, gender discrimination, unrestrained consumerism, militarism, economic and patriarchal systems, and feminization of poverty.
- j. Expand capacity for service and advocacy through use of effective networks and initiatives, in cooperation with the NGO work of the GSIJPO.
- k. Support international Human Rights tools, including the UN 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and the (Palermo) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
  - l. Use the OLCGS NGO office in Geneva for human rights reporting for the UN CEDAW and the CRC with its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children.  
Do the same on national level.



## Glossary of acronyms used in OLCGS Position Papers

*Alphabetically listed*

CEDAW	Conventions on the Eliminating of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GSIF	Good Shepherd International Foundation
GSIJPO	Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GCM	Global Compact on Migration
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
IDP(s)	Internally displaced person(s)
ILO	International Labor Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OLCGS	Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
PP(s)	Position Paper(s)
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
US	United States
UNFAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

## Mission Development Process –

*a diagram for Implementation of OLCGS Position Papers*

The implementation of the OLCGS Positions in Mission and Ministry requires effective program development. The diagram below, based on the work of the GSIF and adapted by the GSIJPO, provides interrelated elements necessary for an integrated process of mission development. It can be adapted and enhanced for all levels of programs, communities, and formation. Groups can analyze their own strengths and needs by consideration of the total framework. Development can take any starting point along the schema and will necessarily move to interact with and include all elements, resulting in a dynamic process of ongoing learning, change, and development. Some elements will require technical help and professional training; many will challenge a sense of security or routine. All are critical to meet the mission demands of today.

