GROOMING, LURING & HUMAN TRAFFICKING: POLICY DEVELOPMENT WITH CEGEP STUDENTS

GENDER-BASED CYBERVIOLENCE STRATEGY DESCRIPTION

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PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document describes one of the strategies used by the Atwater Library and Computer Centre's project, *Preventing and Eliminating Cyberviolence Against Young Women and Girls,* funded by Status of Women Canada (April 2014-April 2017). In making this strategy document publicly available, we hope to offer other organisations and communities a tool that can be adapted and used in order to develop definitions of and policies around gender-based cyberviolence. In establishing clear definitions and policies, we believe that organisations and communities will be better equipped to understand, prevent, respond to and eliminate gendered cyberviolence in their respective settings.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Atwater Library and Computer Centre's *Preventing and Eliminating Cyberviolence Against Young Women and Girls* project was a 3-year project funded by Status of Women Canada. The project sought to develop strategies, in collaboration with stakeholders, that would mobilize participants to work towards the goal of preventing cyberviolence directed at girls, women, LGBTQQI2S[1], and gender non-conforming people. The strategy to develop definitions, policy solutions and responses to prevent and eliminate gender-based cyberviolence emerged directly from the needs assessment we conducted during the first year of the project. Stakeholders overwhelming articulated that there was a need to 'name cyberviolence' through defining cyberviolence. Without clear definitions, there was no way for people who were experiencing cyberviolence to point to a definition and seek help.

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[1] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, and Two-Spirit

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IMPETUS FOR THE ACTIVITY

On November 21, 22, 23 and 24, 2016, CEGEP students participated in several 3-hour knowledge mobilization workshops to collaborate on developing strategies to address the issue of potential grooming, luring and trafficking occurring at high schools and colleges in their communities. The activities were designed to bring young people (ages 17-19) together to learn about and discuss issues relating to online violence. Discussions centered primarily on the use of social media in grooming, luring and trafficking of youth. At the end of the activities, the young people were invited to develop policy-based responses and strategies to address this phenomenon.

Following the in-class collective activities, students were invited to work alone or in groups of two to create a pamphlet designed as a knowledge mobilization tool aimed at youth ages 15-25. The pamphlets were edited and compiled into a booklet by the *Atwater Library and Computer Centre's Helping Communities Respond: Preventing and Eliminating Cyberviolence directed at Girls and Young Women* project and shared widely.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITIES

1. To foster a space for CEGEP students to reflect on the phenomenon of the intersection of technology and human trafficking experienced by youth in today's society.

2. To consider the role of various stakeholders (including students, teachers, and school administrators) as agents of change in preventing and eliminating grooming, luring, and trafficking.

3. To identify and collectively develop specific policy guidelines to address grooming, luring, and trafficking at the individual, collective, and systemic levels.

4. Describe how the information gathered will be used to create online and offline resources to support youth, teachers, and administrators to identify and address grooming, luring, and trafficking.

5. Focus on strategies for getting resources to youth who are in their later years of high school, in CEGEP, and in University.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION:
EXAMINING INTERSECTIONS OF TECHNOLOGY & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

We began the activity with a PowerPoint designed to provide a framework of basic knowledge related to the use of social media in grooming, luring, and trafficking young people, and for students to begin a conversation with a shared and equal understanding of a wide variety of issues to be discussed in later activities. Specifically, we provided an overview of definitions, discussed risk factors, and provided examples of these behaviours and statistics of their occurrences. We ended the PowerPoint by exploring the intersections between technology and grooming, luring and trafficking. At the ending of the 20-minute presentation, the students had an opportunity to ask questions and comment as a group to what they had learned.

We described the goals of the workshop and how the information gathered would be used to create online and offline resources to support youth, teachers, and administrators to identify and address grooming, luring, and trafficking. Preliminary observations showed that students were already knowledgeable about the issue. Specifically, they viewed the issues as important, timely, and were personally invested in developing an even great knowledge base on the topic.

KEY DISCUSSIONS WITH STUDENTS

We raised the question as to whether the normalization and pervasiveness of gender-based cyberviolence online contributes to the normalization of gender-based violence offline. In our previous work, we talked to over a thousand people about how cyber-violence affects girls and young women, finding that the overwhelming response from previous discussions showed that sexual violence directed at girls and women online does indeed normalize violence experienced to the offline world. We also found that:

- ♦ Normalization and glamorization of sex work in the media and in online venues often misrepresents the reality, and so, young girls are often drawn into such fields without fully understanding the realities of what such a life entails.
- ♦ The 'objectification', 'hyper-sexualization', and 'commodification' of girls, along with 'representations of sexual violence as entertainment' in media and popular culture contributes such a landscape, which then even further normalizes online grooming and luring practices.
- ♦ The use of Back pages, which commodifies the buying and selling of underage girls for sex and potentially 'normalizes' this.

We provided some basic information and definitions from the Canadian RCMP's online resources about grooming, luring, and trafficking. Additional information that was used in the PowerPoint is referenced at the end of this document.

Some of the other questions and ensuing discussions during the workshops included:

WHAT IS SEX TRAFFICKING?

- ♦ The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.
- ♦ An individual is considered a victim of trafficking if they are coerced, forced, or deceived into engaging in a commercial sex act, such as prostitution, or maintained in prostitution through one of these means after initially consenting.
- ♦ Sex trafficking also may occur within debt bondage, as individuals are forced to continue in prostitution through the use of unlawful "debt" purportedly incurred through their transportation, recruitment, or even their "sale" – which exploiters insist they must pay off before they can be free.
- ♦ It is extremely important to emphasize to young people that if they choose to voluntarily engage in, or are coerced into, a commercial sex act, this does not imply to ongoing consent. Individuals always have the right to withdraw their consent at any time.
- ♦ A person's initial consent to participate in prostitution is not legally determinative: if one is thereafter held in service through psychological manipulation or physical force, he or she is a trafficking victim.

FACTS ABOUT TRAFFICKING

- ♦ The crime of tracking in persons affects virtually every country in every region of the world.
- ♦ Anyone can be trafficked, regardless of citizenship, class, education, gender, or age, when coerced, threatened or enticed by false promises.
- ♦ Youth who are runaways are at substantially greater risk for becoming victim of human trafficking.
- ♦ Trafficking is happening in Canada. Currently, the most common manifestation is human trafficking for sexual exploitation, with the vast majority of victims are Canadian women and children.

WHAT ARE SOME RISK FACTORS FOR BEING LURED OR GROOMED INTO SEX TRAFFICKING?

- ♦ Traffickers often target children and youth who have a predisposed history of sexual abuse, dating violence, low self-esteem, and minimal social support at home and in their community; this includes, but is not limited to:
  - Youth who are having conflicts with parents and family.
  - Youth who are and whose parents are economically disadvantaged.
  - People who are newly immigrated.
  - All things being equal, Indigenous youth are more at risk than non-Indigenous youth.
  - Youth who are in protective services.
  - Runaway and homeless youth are at an especially high risk for becoming victims, though some trafficked youth do continue living at home and attend school.

- LGBTQ + youth are more likely than heterosexual and cisgender youth to be victims of trafficking.

WHY DON'T VICTIMS COME FORWARD?

There are a variety of reasons; some of these include:

♦ Fear for their safety.
♦ They may have a distrust of authority figures, including police and other law enforcement.
♦ They don't consider themselves victims of trafficking – sometimes they blame themselves.
♦ Shame, embarrassment, or online destruction of reputation is difficult to come back from.
♦ Fear for how their families or loved ones may react.

TECHNOLOGY CAN ALSO BE USED TO FACILITATE TRAFFICKING

Examples include:

♦ Young people live much of their lives online in public spaces (personal web pages, social networking, online communities, multi-player gaming spaces, etc.), and therefore, the reality is that they are much more visible and accessible to traffickers.
♦ Young people often share personal information on social media, which can be used by traffickers to identify vulnerable youth before luring them into the sex trade profession.
♦ Traffickers build relationships with young people through social media and text messaging, effectively luring and grooming them through mobile phone communication.
♦ Images or video can be used to blackmail or coerce young people – threats of posting pictures or video online often leave young people with few choices but to concede with perpetrators.
♦ Technology moves trafficking from physical spaces, such as street corners, to online spaces, like websites (e.g. Backpage, etc.) and cell phones, which makes such transactions less visible to parents or school teachers/administrators, thereby reducing the risk of public exposure for perpetrators.
♦ Traffickers and purchasers communicate with one another through online forums, using encoded messages to rate the services they receive from victims, and help each other further engage in these illegal activities. They can repurpose technology, for example, by using gaming technologies to communicate with youth "in game", or by leveraging Skype and other video services to make brief video connections to coordinate online spaces that are more difficult for police to trace than it is to track youth's mobile phone use.
♦ Video services can also be used to broadcast illicit acts, which viewers pay to watch. Single accounts can be used by multiple people, which makes identification more difficult.

TECHNOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS TO FACILITATE TRAFFICKING PREVENTION

♦ Technology can be used to spread awareness to potential victims of trafficking. We can leverage and build awareness through technology that young people already use in their daily lives.

- If traffickers can use social media to identify potentially vulnerable youth, so too can front line workers and law enforcement identify at-risk youth to reach out to them.
- Young people are on the front lines of this issue and are well positioned to see the first indicators that a peer is being groomed, lured, and trafficked. Young people could be educated to recognize signs of luring and grooming in their online communities and be trained in safe and appropriate (peer to peer) bystander interventions.
- Taking advantage of digital traces that traffickers leave through these interactions can be used to track traffickers themselves; i.e., parents using GPS to track down their daughters through mobile phone applications.
- Using technology leaves digital traces that may potentially make it easier for law enforcement officials to gather important evidence for eventual prosecution of perpetrators.
- Law enforcement can leverage technology to infiltrate online spaces where trafficking often occurs, and to potentially identify and stop traffickers.
- Technology could be used by anti-trafficking organizations to share information with one another, and to allow survivors to connect with each other.
- Information shared between anti-trafficking stakeholders could also lead to better resources where information can be shared quickly and disseminated online to facilitate a larger group of protection facilitators.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

EXAMINING INTERSECTIONS OF
TECHNOLOGY & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Participants were divided into 3 groups of 12-13 students. Each group was assigned to one of three brainstorming stations, each addressing a unique level of intervention:

1. **Individual:** Address how to support individuals, specifically youth, who are experiencing grooming and/or luring.
2. **Collective**: Explore how to address the practice of when it has become an integrated part of a specific space (i.e., occurring in and around neighbourhoods or community centres) or among and identified group of people.
3. **Systemic:** Develop systemic steps and strategies for addressing grooming, luring, and trafficking.

METHODOLOGY

Each participant group worked with a flip chart and a series of questions designed to help the participants engage in brainstorming strategies to address the issue. One member from each group was elected to record key points on the flip chart, while another group member led a 30-minute brainstorm session with the other group members. Once the 30 minutes were up, the groups rotated to begin a new brainstorm at a different station. Groups had the option of having a different person facilitate the subsequent brainstorms. The round-robin process was repeated until all the groups had a chance to brainstorm strategies relevant to each of the three levels of intervention.

Following the brainstorming activity, everyone came back together to discuss the ideas generated through the process. Each group posted their flip chart responses on the wall and then presented select findings to the rest of the class for discussion. This process also provided an opportunity for participants to share their own stories related to grooming, luring, and trafficking.

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

Below is an expanded view of the 3 levels of intervention that the participants brainstormed on, including a list of questions participants considered for each level.

➔ **Individual level:** This level of intervention involved providing direct, active, individual support to students experiencing or witnessing grooming, luring, and trafficking. The following questions related specifically to this level of intervention:

◆ What factors do you think might cause a student to be at risk for grooming, luring, and trafficking?
◆ What kind of individual supports from peers do you think might be helpful for someone who is at risk?
◆ What might someone who thinks a friend or peer is at risk do to help? (bystander)
◆ What could some of the potential consequences of these strategies be, first, for the students who are at risk, and second, for bystanders who intervene?

♦ Which resource personnel could you receive help from and what services might they ideally provide?

♦ How could you use your personal skills and resources to address this issue?

➔ **Collective level:** This level of intervention involves providing direct, active support to teachers and students, and aims to support them in addressing the issue experienced on the ground and in their daily lives. Such questions include:

♦ Do you think that teachers, educators, and school counselors have a role or responsibility to address grooming, luring, and trafficking in the lives of their students?

♦ What are some ways to address the risk of grooming, luring, and trafficking at school? What activities and/or discussions can a teacher introduce to help students understand and navigate these issues?

♦ Who can a teacher seek support from or collaborate with in implementing these measures?

♦ In which ways do you foresee these efforts to be met with resistance? What would a teacher need to do to overcome this resistance?

♦ Can you think of any initiatives that might be effective?

➔ **Systemic level:** This level of intervention involves developing specific strategies that would contribute to nurturing an alternative online culture that is free of violence. This level of intervention aims to support administrators and other people in positions of power, in enacting far-reaching and transformative policies, programs, and changes to institutional structures and cultures. Questioned posed included:

♦ What current educational structures and cultures need to be changed in order to foster an alternative online culture?

♦ What policies and programs can be developed and implemented systemically to achieve this change?

♦ With whom can administrators collaborate, and how?

♦ What can be addressed at the systemic level in regards to media and technology? (i.e. Rape culture online; grooming and luring on social media; use of websites such as backpages for trafficking?)

♦ What factors in your (or peers') environment or circumstances could be addressed to reduce the risk of grooming, luring, and trafficking?

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

This section provides a synthesis of the main points that emerged on the flip charts from the brainstorming activities and the discussions that followed. A list of the most common responses from participants are included as an appendix at the end of this document.

Students were overwhelmingly aware of the existence of grooming, luring, and trafficking in their communities: In every class, they almost unanimously responded that they were aware of the issue from experiences and observations in their own communities. Conversely, we had expected that the students' awareness or understanding would have primarily come from media sources, such as movies or televisions shows. Unfortunately, participants also reported that they had yet to receive

any formal information or training about these issues before these workshops; no formal education or school curricula touched on any of these issues whatsoever.

Language is important: An important finding was that students did not necessarily relate to our definitions and descriptions of what we called "grooming, luring, and trafficking" with what they had experienced in their own communities. They related to us their knowledge of grooming, luring, and trafficking with people from other countries being brought into Canada illegally to work against their will. The definitions and examples we presented of young Canadian girls, for example, being groomed and lured for sex work over social media, was considered "Something that just happens in some neighbourhoods." If you are poor, attractive, have trouble at home, it's seen as a way out of a difficult situation. As one young person explained, "when you come from my neighbourhood and you're a pretty girl, you often think that's the only thing you have to sell; your youth and your body are your only way to get out." Participants continued to explain that "getting paid for sex at parties often leads to other things like drugs and then you are trapped in an even worse situation. It might seem like you have found something better at first but it always ends up going really bad."

Targets of luring are often unaware: Students suggested that luring and grooming is often such a slow subtle process, and since it occurs simultaneously on and offline, it is difficult for targets to identify and stop as it is occurring. They described cases of young women they knew making friends online, or falling in with the wrong crowd in their neighborhood, and then being brought to 'parties' and asked to do 'favors' for cash or being coerced or threatened. They described the slow escalation of these situations, the intertwining of personal friendships and relationships, and vulnerability of targets, suggesting that it becomes very difficult to disentangle oneself from this situation, and it often escalates to a situation where there seems to be no way out. One young person described a case of two of his friends gone missing; he suspected trafficking as the reason, but their parents had neither any knowledge of the perpetrators or any resources for how to intervene.

Parents weren't the only ones lacking information on the topic. For example, one of the most interesting conversations we had was when a group of female students asked, "How do I know that it's wrong and that I'm being coerced and that it's not something that I want to participate in. How do I differentiate trafficking or exploitation, from being pressured to do a favor for my boyfriend at a party?" Girls reported that they often engaged in sexual activities that didn't feel 'right' or 'comfortable', but that was just a 'normal' aspect of adolescence. They wanted a clear definition or a clearly defined line.
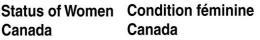
Knowledge mobilization needs to begin early: Students expressed that while participating in this activity and discussion was interesting and useful in regards to providing them with skills and information to help younger people, they would have found the workshop more useful if they had participated much earlier in their early adolescence, such as before they had to navigate their teen years. They were very adamant that this information should be provided in middle school, before they entered adolescence, such as at 13 or 14 years of age, when or even before they had first begun to encounter these issues.

Protecting vulnerable youth: When discussing obstacles that teachers might face when addressing issues of grooming, luring, and trafficking, students raised the desire (on the part of adults) to

protect young people from 'scary' information. Parents often don't want to discuss these issues with their children, because they want to protect them from unpleasantness. However, participants noted a desire to have these issues brought to the forefront, so as to prepare them when inevitably these issues are brought up among them and their peers.

In a similar vein, participants also raised the idea that educators often want to present technology as a positive tool and don't want to be perceived as spreading 'moral panics' around 'stranger-danger'. Students suggested that these well-intentioned objectives often leave the most vulnerable (young) people without the necessary information, knowledge, or resources to safely navigate adolescence. A strategy that workshop participants suggested to overcome this obstacle was to engage parents and teachers in awareness-building and knowledge mobilization, so that they too understand the necessity of sharing knowledge and resources with their children.

Policy and responses: Education institutions should implement clearly articulated, accessible, and widely circulated policies to prevent grooming, luring, and trafficking. They should also have a response plan in place, so that teachers, counselors, and administrators have clear guidelines regarding how to respond to signs that grooming might be occurring.

Bystander interventions: Students were eager to participate in initiatives to address this issue. They expressed that peers had a significant role to play as they were on the front lines and were often the first resource a student, who was in trouble, would turn to. Beyond awareness building initiatives, they discussed the importance of creating a sense of community for young people, and suggested that having strong offline communities and networks helped vulnerable youth be resilient, and ultimately, reduced risk. They suggested providing lots of opportunities to join activities in school and in community centres as particularly important, and they also raised bringing religious organizations into the conversation.

Create safer spaces both on and offline: Students suggested that a potential strategy for creating safe spaces for young people to interact and socialize in online venues (i.e., spaces with guidelines around netiquette, a code of conduct, and moderators to go to for help, etc.,) would both keep young people safe, as well as provide opportunities for young people to acquire skills to help them successfully navigate the larger world wide web. Additionally, providing safe spaces to socialize and interact in the offline world that is violence free, drug free, and gang free, was also important for reducing risk of human trafficking. Reducing overall violence and poverty in young people's everyday lives was also raised as a significant factor in reducing vulnerability to grooming.

DISCUSSION & LIMITATIONS

Participants in the workshops engaged in thought-provoking discussions and generated a wide range of potential strategies. While many of the ideas proposed by the participants are not necessarily new (e.g. directing victims to resources, educating teachers and parents, enacting stronger laws and policies, etc.), the process of generating the strategies provided a valuable opportunity for the students to think through the issues and develop responses autonomously; they were able to take ownership of the issue and expressed feeling empowered, particularly as they assumed the role of

educating the workshop facilitators, their professors, and in creating resources useful for other students.

STUDENTS CREATE RESOURCES: AWARENESS PAMPHLET

At the end of the sessions, students were given an assignment to create a resource, in the form of an awareness pamphlet, to be useful to other students. This assignment comprised the Creative Project for their course. The assignment reads as follows:

ASSIGNMENT
Drawing on the PowerPoint presentation, focus groups, flip chart brain-storming sessions, class discussions, and any additional research you conduct on your own, create a pamphlet targeted at youth, created by youth, as an information dissemination exercise about grooming, luring, and trafficking. The pamphlet you create as a group should be directed at late high school (Secondary 4 or 5) to CEGEP-level students. You may decide what the objective/purpose of your pamphlet will be, and you can choose what specific information you believe is most important for young people to have as a resource.

SOME SUGGESTIONS
Your pamphlet could provide definitions and explanations about what grooming, luring, and trafficking is, how it occurs, who is at risk, etc. Your information pamphlet might provide suggestions for strategies at the individual, collective, and systemic levels; it may outline strategies for prevention, strategies to support youth at risk, and/or survivors of trafficking. You may provide additional resources and references, and include any other information that you think would be important for young people to know.

WHAT YOUR PAMPHLET SHOULD LOOK LIKE
Your pamphlet should be double-sided. You can fold it like a traditional pamphlet if you want. You can create the pamphlet by hand or using a computer. Include any text, images, quotes, content, etc., that you think might reach your target audience. Your pamphlet can be as creative as you want. You can use color and images.

OPTIONAL
If you have more to say, you can include a reflection post on the issue (approximately 250 words). The refection post can discuss what you learned from the activity, additional aspects you would have wanted to cover, and any observations or insights you might have had about the issue of grooming, luring, and trafficking, or about the class activity in general.

*Keep in mind that content from your work may be included in a final pamphlet, which will be designed by educators and graphic artists from the Atwater Library's Preventing Cyberviolence Project. This pamphlet may be also distributed to stakeholders.

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APPENDIX A: STUDENT RESPONSES FROM FLIP CHARTS

(in no particular order)

It's crucial to educate and inform students about the dangers and effects of trafficking with activities and interventions like we are doing in this class right now.

Education should begin in middle school; optimally, at age 11-12 years old.

Parents should be informed so that they can be aware of the issue, know signs that their child is being lured, and knowledgeable about where to get help.

School administrators need to be more aware of the issues and become involved.

Schools should have policies in place to inform and respond to online issues, such as harassment, revenge porn, slut shaming, and grooming.

Get more religious communities involved.

Create support groups at school for people who are survivors.

Involve peers/students in creating resources and support so that there is greater awareness, and so that they know how to respond when they see someone at risk.

Awareness building on campus through posters, symposiums, lectures, awareness days, etc.

Educate and inform - pamphlets and information for student, teachers, counselors, and administration.

Educate police better, and make police more accessible for students when they reach out for help.

Eliminate shame and judgement for survivors.

It would be good to have survivors speak to students so that they could understand how it happens.

It would be good to have students create a play showing how grooming, luring, and trafficking happens in everyday life, and then have them perform it for other students in schools.

Addressing the sexualisation of girls and women online and in our media. Addressing rape culture online and on campus.

Teaching netiquette at younger ages and building awareness with school seminars.

Create an environment where students can go to teachers and counselors and share what is actually happening.

Sensor more websites.

Economic instability of young people makes them more vulnerable to online grooming. We need to address the economic and environmental factors that contribute.

Problems at home and low self-esteem make people vulnerable; we need to provide more resources to address those factors.

Creating community and a sense of belonging helps young people be resistant to grooming online.

When you see a friend or peer start to isolate themselves from friends and surroundings, we need to intervene and reach out to find out what is happening.

Create safe spaces and cultivate an environment at school where young people feel comfortable to reach out and talk to peers, teachers, and counselors.

Make discussions and awareness building around grooming, luring, and trafficking a mandatory part of the curriculum, concurrently included within sexual health education.

Teach young people from an early age that 'knowing of someone' is very different from actually knowing them. You need to build an awareness of online safety.

Create safe spaces online for young people to create safe friendships and relationships so that they aren't being friended by people with ulterior motives.

Create more offline community through activities at school, so that young people can make friends (In Real Life) within the boundaries of already-established safe environments.

School administrators should collaborate with knowledgeable community organizations and resources so that they can educate themselves to help students stay safe. For example, if a student registers but doesn't attend classes, it's a warning sign.

Teach teachers to identify signs of potential cyberviolence, grooming, and luring of their students.

(Implement or amend) stricter laws against online grooming.

Reach out to a peer if you think that they are at risk of grooming; listen to them without judgement and be supportive, and don't let them isolate themselves.

Often people who are at risk are in denial, and they are unaware of the signs or don't want to believe that their online friends are dangerous.

PRESENTATION FOR PACT

We were invited to speak on December 2nd at PACT (Persons Against the Crime of Trafficking in Humans), for their annual End Slavery Day event at Knox Presbyterian Church, 120 Lisgar Street in Ottawa. PACT-Ottawa is registered as a non-profit corporation in the Province of Ontario, Canada.

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, December 2nd, marks the date of the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (resolution 317(IV) of 2 December 1949). The focus of this day is on eradicating contemporary forms of slavery, such as trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, the worst forms of child labour, forced marriage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

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