**Draft General Recommendation on TWGCGM”**

**Submitted by: Soroptimist International**

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**We recommend the the following be inserted in the document I would insert between paragraphs 40 and 41 on page 13**

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the world under enormous strain and unleashed a recession unseen since the Great Depression.[[1]](#footnote-1) It has affected the lives of everyone, but especially women and girls by exacerbating and bringing to the forefront the systemic and deeply entrenched economic and societal inequalities that are among the root causes of human trafficking.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Among the groups most vulnerable to trafficking as a result of this pandemic are refugees, migrants and internally displaced women and girls. For example :“Worldwide more than 70 million people, including more than 41 million internally displaced people (IDP) and 26 million refugees, are facing the COVID-19 pandemic living already on the margins of society and under threat for their lives, survival and livelihoods. Some [60% of those displaced by conflict or crisis](https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/press-releases/statement-from-womens-refugee-commission-covid-19-pandemic/) are women and girls.[[3]](#footnote-3) Moreover, if conditions in camps for refugees and IDPs are generally bad and unsafe, [they are even worse for most women and girls](https://msmagazine.com/2020/04/15/we-cannot-abandon-migrant-and-refugee-women-during-the-covid-19-crisis/) especially in light of the COVID 19 epidemic.” [[4]](#footnote-4) For example, In Haiti, camps of internally displaced people have become a challenging setting for countering human trafficking and sexual exploitation.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Of the world’s 13 million child refugees, those who reside in camps or crowded settlements face similar challenges. They, along with a million child asylum-seekers and 17 million internally displaced children worldwide, are among those most likely to be excluded from social protection, and to be negatively affected by movement restrictions that may keep them obtaining a more secure status. Children living in institutions and detention – including child migrants – face a different kind of vulnerability.Their continued care is easily put in jeopardy during the COVID 19 crisis.[[6]](#footnote-6)

In an environment where priorities and actions are geared towards limiting the spread of the virus, it is easier for traffickers to hide their operations, making these victims increasingly invisible as well as making it more difficult for then to seek protection, services, assistance and support, due to rules on confinement and related closure of NGOs and government offices. With the reduction of government services and changes in the way they are administered or identified, victims who were already being supported by government services or community groups may also face challenges. [[7]](#footnote-7) Lack of housing, healthcare, legal and other services will also increase vulnerabilities both to re-trafficking and to COVID-19 infection. [[8]](#footnote-8)

In addition, victims who have been provided with temporary immigration documents or time-limited services linked to their status as victims of trafficking might not be able to renew them easily. The situation can worsen if borders are closed and planned repatriations cannot take place, while residence permits and related access to healthcare and social benefits have already expired. [[9]](#footnote-9)

While Governments are diverting resources to address the pandemic and the police have new tasks for the enforcement of lockdowns and social distancing, there is a danger that investigating trafficking in persons will become a lower priority and that proactive inspections of suspect sites and cases will be reduced. This may in turn have an impact on arrests, investigations, prosecutions and convictions, leading to a climate of practical impunity where traffickers can operate with even lower risk of detection and conviction. [[10]](#footnote-10)

1. World Economic Situation and Prospects 2020 (United Nations publication) May 2020 page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Trafficking of Persons UNODC COVID 19 response 2020 page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. COVID-19 uniquely affects women. Here are many of the ways it does.30 April 2020 by  [Liane Schalatek](https://us.boell.org/en/person/liane-schalatek) Section C accessed online 5-1-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. COVID-19 uniquely affects women. Here are many of the ways it does.30 April 2020 by  [Liane Schalatek](https://us.boell.org/en/person/liane-schalatek) Section C accessed online 5-1-20 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Policy Brief Crime and Contagion ; the impact of an pandemic on organized crime Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime March 2020 page 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Policy Brief: The impact of COVID 19 on children 4-15-20 page 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Trafficking of Persons UNODC COVID 19 response 2020 page 2 see also Policy Brief Crime and Contagion ; the impact of an pandemic on organized crime Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime March 2020 page 11 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Trafficking of Persons UNODC COVID 19 response 2020 page 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Trafficking of Persons UNODC COVID 19 response 2020 page 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Trafficking of Persons UNODC COVID 19 response 2020 page 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)