

Combating Human Trafficking and Protecting the Rights of Women and Girls

Joint Stakeholder Summary Report



Submitted for the 36th Session of the
Universal Periodic Review



UN Universal Periodic Review: Third Cycle

Summary of Joint Stakeholder Report: United States of America

Combatting Human Trafficking and Protecting the Rights of Women and Girls

Towards the goal of contributing primary-source input for the Universal Period Review of the United States in May 2020, UNA-Greater Detroit, UNA-Southern California, UNA-Kentucky, UNA-Chicago, UNA-Whittier, and UNA-USA submit this summary joint stakeholder report with a focus on combatting human trafficking and protecting the rights of women and girls within the United States. To compile this report, UNA Chapters relied on grassroots consultation sessions with local advocates and organizations. Specifically, this report addresses four issues:

- Combatting Human Trafficking;
- Ending Sexual Violence against Women and Girls;
- Ensuring Access to Women's Health Services and Protecting the Rights of Women; and
- Protecting the Rights of Women Migrants and Asylum-Seekers

The joint stakeholder report was compiled through a national consultation process that took place among four organizations within the nationwide chapter advocate network of UNA-USA from April through August 2019. These consultative events featured over sixty local grassroots organizations.

A. Combatting Human Trafficking

Reported cases of human trafficking in the United States have increased dramatically; it is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world and has grown 842% in the United States since 2007. Furthermore, efforts must be enhanced targeting labor trafficking and educating employers and consumers about fair trade practices. Employers in particular must be held responsible for labor trafficking.

The U.S. supported a number of recommendations regarding human trafficking during the 2015 UPR process, particularly implementing a strategic action plan on human trafficking and strengthening services for trafficking victims, increasing resources for nationwide anti-trafficking awareness programs, and others.

B. Ending Sexual Violence against Women and Girls

Today, one out of every six American women has been the victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. Despite these staggering figures, only 19% of sexual violence victims receive victim services which could include information, emotional support, help finding resources, and other assistance.

Women in the U.S. continue to face sexual violence in the workplace, at home, and from unknown assailants. Many also continue to be impeded by the statute of limitations on sexual as-

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sault and rape cases despite the fact that many women are only able to come forward decades after their assault. Due to new abortion policies introduced by the Trump administration, many rape victims are also unable to receive abortions for the pregnancies that are a result of their assaults.

C. Ensuring Access to Women’s Health Services and Protecting the Rights of Women

Women in the U.S. today have the highest rate of maternal mortality compared to ten other high-income countries, and this rate has been steadily rising over the past decades. More than one third of women in the U.S. have reported skipping needed medical care because of costs.

Despite the fact that it has been over half a century since the U.S. passed the Equal Pay Act, American women still face a significant gender wage gap. Today, on average, a woman working full time earns 80.7 cents for every dollar a man working full time earns. Additionally, women’s median annual earnings are \$9,909 less than men’s.

The U.S. also agreed to a number of recommendations from the 2015 UPR process including ensuring equal access to maternal health, combatting discriminatory practices against women in the labor market, ensuring women receive equal pay for equal work, and others.

D. Protecting the Rights of Women Migrants and Asylum-Seekers

There is critical concern regarding the situation on the southern border and the Trump administration’s immigration policy of long-term detention for migrants and asylum-seekers along with family separations. These policies have a particularly adverse effect on women migrants and asylum-seekers who not only face a lack of health services in detention centers, but also experience higher rates of sexual assault.

The U.S. has also agreed to a number of recommendations from the 2015 UPR process including addressing the disproportionate impact on immigrant women and ensuring detention centers for migrants and the treatment they receive meet basic conditions and universal human rights law.

“Human trafficking violates the most fundamental of rights we all hold dear: the right to life, to equality, dignity, and security; the right to health; the right to freedom of movement, freedom from violence and abuse, the right to be recognized as a person before the law.”

- Kyung-Wha Kang, Former Deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Recommendations for the United States:

- Increase prosecution of human trafficking cases by increasing federal penalties.
- Increase awareness regarding labor trafficking laws within immigrant communities and local law enforcement.
- Increase funding and resources for organizations who provide services for sexual assault victims, particularly smaller, community-based organizations.
- Reform legislation regarding long-term prison sentences of abuse victims.
- Adopt mandated paid maternity leave and universal childcare.
- End abortion bans and making access to abortions legal, safe and affordable.
- Pass the proposed Paycheck Fairness Act, a salary history ban, and support partial wage reimbursement through the FAMILY Act in order to close the gender pay gap.
- Ensure health care for immigrants placed in detention centers with a particular focus on women’s health.
- Ensure protections for those seeking their legal right to asylum, particularly for women and vulnerable populations.