

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**Leading Expert in Human Trafficking Speaking in British Columbia and Ontario**

BRAMPTON, ON. – March 31, 2016 – Sonagachi in Kolkata, India is Asia’s largest red-light district. With an estimated 20,000 sex workers, an environment has been created that allows the trafficking of under-age girls. Robbed of their future, these girls are forced to work in brothels where hope seems distant. They are modern-day slaves, taken from their families and communities to be abused. Even those who are rescued and returned to society may go back to the brothels, as they feel they have no other place to go. This has become known as re-trafficking and the odds of a girl escaping are remote if her rescue is not accompanied by long-term care.

It is this gap in the system that Smita Singh, a clinical psychologist, recognized and moved to fill. With a vision of true rehabilitation, Singh established Mahima Care Homes – a ministry partner of Partners International Canada – which focuses on ensuring that victims of the sex trade in India are reintegrated into society with their self-worth restored. As the director of Mahima Care Homes, Singh works with young women and girls to provide counselling, vocational training and education for those who have been rescued from brothels in Sonagachi.

“Mahima is so much more than just a rehabilitation program” says PI Canada President, Kevin McKay. “It’s focused on successfully and safely reintegrating these beautiful girls back into society so that they can make a contribution and live a full life. That is a powerful statement about Mahima’s holistic and comprehensive care given the brutal places these young girls have to return from psychologically. It also speaks of the unconditional love they receive through Mahima’s caregivers led by Smita.”

From March 30 until April 8, 2016, Singh will be in British Columbia as part of Partners International’s Hope in Action tour and is available to speak on her work and the importance of long-term care in restoring victims of human trafficking. Singh will then speak in Ontario from April 9 until 18.

The larger goal of these programs is to provide a sense of self-worth for those who have been abused. “Providing them with unconditional love makes a huge difference because they have been told they are not worth anything and are not precious in any way” says Singh. “We want to let them know that they have worth, it is built into everything that we do.”

Partners International Canada and Mahima Care Homes:

Since opening its doors in 2010, Mahima Care Homes has successfully helped 154 young women and girls while becoming the model for government run aftercare homes in India. 26 girls who have participated in the program have testified in human trafficking-related court cases resulting in convictions. They have continued to expand, now running two care homes for minor

girls as well as a transition home for girls over the age of 18. Mahima is currently expanding to include an awareness and education program to help prevent human trafficking before it ever happens. Partners International works in the least reached, least resourced areas of the world with locally-led Christian ministries like Mahima Care Homes who specialize in holistic development. Their leaders have the advantage of grassroots knowledge that enables them to overcome the cultural barriers often difficult to conquer by outsiders.

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