Statement by End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) on Reports of Harvey Weinstein’s Sexual Abuse

“Start by Believing” Campaign Reduces Fear and Stigma of Sexual Assault Disclosures

Over the past week, reports of Harvey Weinstein’s repeated and prolonged sexual victimization of women have dominated the news and social media. Unfortunately, this situation is not unusual. Women and men are sexually abused in this country with alarming frequency, and most do not report the crime or seek help from professionals. In fact, victims who do find the courage to come forward are often not believed, or they are blamed for “bringing it on themselves.” Research documents that these negative responses have a devastating impact on survivors, over and above the sexual assault.

End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) is dedicated to changing this. Our Start by Believing campaign is designed to reduce the fear and stigma associated with sexual assault disclosures, and improve responses of professionals and the public. Because a friend or family member is typically the first person a victim confides in, each person’s reaction is the first step in a long path toward justice and healing. Moreover, because perpetrators often re-offend, one failed response can equal additional victims. Start by Believing is leading the way toward stopping this cycle, by creating a positive community response, informing the public, uniting allies and supporters, and improving our personal reactions.

But what happens next? After we Start by Believing, how do we help victims of sexual assault?

Seek Then Speak provides victims and their support people with the tools they need to gather information, explore options, and link with community resources. Victims can even begin the process of reporting directly to law enforcement and requesting supportive services. In other words, Seek Then Speak helps to close gaps in service delivery and promote justice and healing.

#MeToo

For further information, contact EVAWI Executive Director Kristina Rose at Kristina@evawintl.org, 703-860-9353.