



## **Linda Smith**

*President and Founder*

*Shared Hope International*

Linda's political career began in 1983 as a Washington State Legislator. She won a write-in campaign for Congress in 1994. Critical to Linda's success is her ability to galvanize the grassroots community to action. Her compassionate and uncompromising belief that every individual has dignity has carried her from advocating for permanent safe homes for children as the State Senate chair of the Committee on Children and Family Services, to the halls of Congress, and ultimately to searching out victims in the red light districts around the world. Linda and her husband, Vern, reside in Vancouver, Washington and are the proud parents of two and grandparents of six.

In the fall of 1998, while still a member of the U.S. Congress, Linda Smith traveled to Falkland Road in Bombay, India- one of the worst brothel districts in the world. The hopeless faces of desperate women and children forced into prostitution compelled Linda to found Shared Hope International (SHI).

Linda's model for restoration has been revolutionary. SHI builds partnerships with local groups to provide homes and shelters where women and children can live with no time limit. These Villages of Hope have a holistic approach to recovery, including educational and job skill training.

To build momentum in the international movement of anti-trafficking, Linda founded the War Against Trafficking Alliance (WATA) in January of 2001. WATA coordinates both regional and international efforts necessary to combat sex trafficking. In February 2003, WATA co-sponsored a World Summit with the U.S. Department of State which brought together non-government and government leaders from 114 nations, all demonstrating a sustained commitment to prosecuting trafficking, providing assistance to victims and building regional strategies to protect the vulnerable from the sex trade.

In 2006 SHI spearheaded the U.S. Mid-Term Review on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) bringing together leaders from across the USA to assess progress made combating the sexual slavery of children in America . The CSEC conference resulted in a broader approach to combating trafficking that looked at the victimizer in addition to the victim. This concentration on a "buyer" became the focus of the *DEMAND* report and documentary in 2007. In the creation of *DEMAND*. Linda was in the field conducting research in Jamaica, the Netherlands, Japan, and the United States to reveal the sophisticated business model behind sex trafficking, exposing the buyers who increase demand and the traffickers who supply the victims.

The *DEMAND* findings revealed that startling numbers of American children are being sex trafficked within U.S. borders. In response, from 2006-2008 Mrs. Smith and Shared Hope International (SHI) have been working in partnership with Anti-Trafficking Task Forces throughout the U.S. with the goal to identify and provide services to the victims of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST).

To schedule an interview with Congresswoman Smith please contact Katie Pitchlynn at 360.693.8100 or [katie@sharedhope.org](mailto:katie@sharedhope.org)