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First Ever Global Campaign to Decriminalise Suicide Worldwide

*Working across 52 countries, **LifeLine International** is calling for legislative change and greater availability of crisis support services.*

London, October 23, 2023 – Today, LifeLine International launched Decriminalise Suicide Worldwide, a new campaign advocating for legal changes in countries where suicide is either a crime or the law is unclear.

Former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard joined Lifeline International to give a keynote speech calling for communities around the world to unite against outdated and punitive laws exacerbating the isolation and stigma associated with suicide.

According to new analysis from [LifeLine International](#), suicide and attempted suicide is a crime in 25 countries, while the legality of both is unclear in a further 27 countries. Laws criminalising suicide are generally associated with higher suicide rates because they are ineffective deterrents and inhibit people in suicidal distress from seeking help.

The analysis, completed with input from the International Bar Association, is the latest comprehensive audit of laws criminalising suicide undertaken. A population of 1.2 billion people live in the 52 countries where suicide is either a crime or laws are uncertain.

The campaign advocates for legislative changes that will also help achieve the [UN's Sustainable Development](#) goal to decrease global suicide rates by 30% by 2030. Where we seek to change laws, LifeLine International will also work to either establish or enhance crisis line services.

Decriminalisation has gathered positive momentum in the last five years, with legal reform completed in Ghana, Malaysia, Pakistan, India and Singapore. LifeLine International has identified Malawi and Nigeria as initial focus countries for decriminalisation campaign support.

In the 27 countries with unclear legal frameworks, LifeLine International will engage with governments and civil society organisations to seek clarity and request the removal of barriers preventing people from seeking help. The ambiguity comes from a lack of consistency in the respective legal systems.



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The official campaign launch at Australia House in London was attended by diplomats, representatives of major mental health organisations, service providers, charities, supporters and the media.

Former Australian Prime Minister, the Honourable Julia Gillard AC, who gave the keynote speech at the event said:

"The power of coalition and influence has the potential to drive significant change in addressing suicide as a global public health crisis. Coming together to support decriminalising suicide holds the promise of saving hundreds of thousands of lives."

LifeLine International President, Justin Chase, said:

"Every day, more than 1,900 people lose their lives to suicide, and approximately 77% of these tragic events occur in low- and middle-income countries. Suicide is a global public health challenge, but LifeLine International's new campaign is committed to creating a world where individuals facing suicidal thoughts can seek help without fear of legal repercussions. Decriminalisation addresses a significant barrier to deploying crisis support services and tackling the social stigmas that discourage help-seeking."

As part of the campaign, two digital platforms were launched today:

- www.25crimes.org – A social change campaign platform serving as the public face of the campaign; and,
- www.suicide-decrim.network – A bespoke knowledge platform for experts, NGOs, civil society, and crisis support services to facilitate the formation of national decriminalisation.

LifeLine CEO Thilini Perera said:

"Through our knowledge platform, we are bridging the gap between countries, to advocate for change. LifeLine International's commitment to using innovative technology and galvanising support will accelerate decriminalisation campaigns, allowing people living in countries where suicide remains a crime receive the help they deserve. We are proud to open source our knowledge to support network participants. Our platform will enable us to track progress and move closer to a world



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where suicide is decriminalised, stigma is reduced, and help-seeking is both accessible and encouraged."

About LifeLine International:

LifeLine International is an Australian-registered international civil society organisation representing 27 Members, in 23 separate countries. Our Members collectively operate more than 200 suicide prevention and crisis support services across the world. Our shared mission is to create a world where quality suicide prevention support is available, accepted and encouraged.

Our goal is to ensure that the life-saving work of our Members is fully recognised, valued and supported. We focus on supporting the expansion of community-based crisis support services, wholly operated by our Members and beyond. We believe that crisis support services must be accessible and widely promoted in all communities, regardless of location, cultural practice or legal frameworks. We fundamentally believe that crisis helplines play a critical role in the overall continuum of care for suicide prevention.

Our ultimate beneficiaries are help seekers: individuals in distress, despair and at risk of suicide.

Notes to Editors:

- Click here for the [Campaign Brief](#)
- Click here for the [Decriminalise Suicide Worldwide Factsheet](#)
- For further information or interview requests, please contact LifeLine.International@highgate.ltd