PREVENTING MODERN SLAVERY

Recommendations to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
Most of the world’s poorest people live in countries with struggling justice systems and weak law enforcement, where criminals abuse the most vulnerable with impunity. Those living in poverty have no one to turn to who will stop the pervasive crimes of child abuse, domestic violence, land theft, police abuse of power, modern slavery, and trafficking for forced labour or sexual exploitation.

Traditional development efforts to build education, economic and health care services have not stemmed the tide of violence. This violence hurts individuals, communities, nations, economies, other development efforts, and our future.

Since the publication of its Modern Slavery Strategy in 2014, the UK Government has pioneered efforts to eradicate the worst human rights abuses of our time, domestically and around the world. The UK is rightly considered a leader on the global stage, and the government is to be commended for its success in increasing international awareness and focus on the need to prevent exploitation.

Those who exploit and abuse others in conditions of modern slavery must be held to account. Justice should be served for the sake of those who have suffered abuse, and because doing so acts as a deterrent to would-be offenders, thereby strengthening protection for other at-risk communities.

Supporting local justice systems to proactively and effectively prevent modern slavery can help further many other UK Government foreign policy objectives: improving international safety and security, enabling British businesses to thrive around the world, and achieving crucial SDGs such as ensuring girls have access to education.

The risk of modern slavery has, of course, been heightened by the COVID-19 crisis, which has made many communities more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. It is, therefore, essential to ensure that justice systems around the world are equipped to restrain traffickers and those who might seek to take advantage of this increased vulnerability.

The UK Government is to be commended for the many initiatives which it has pioneered to tackle modern slavery, particularly to raise awareness and increase understanding of modern slavery. As this work moves into a new phase, IJM recommends that greater emphasis is placed on strengthening the rule of law to maximise the effectiveness of those other initiatives.

By tackling the impunity which enables modern slavery to thrive around the world and affecting sustainable change, the newly established Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office can guarantee its position as the leading actor in the anti-slavery movement.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. **BUILD BACK BETTER FROM COVID-19: INVESTING IN JUSTICE SYSTEMS THAT PROTECT PEOPLE FROM SLAVERY AND VIOLENCE**

   The FCDO must confront the global challenge of rebuilding communities and economies in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, and the increased risk of modern slavery which the crisis has created. It is essential to increase the capacity and resources available to public justice systems to ensure those who would perpetrate exploitation, abuse and violence are held to account, and to protect the well-being of at-risk communities.

   The UK has an opportunity in 2021 through its presidency of the G7 to be a leading, unifying voice on the global stage. IJM hopes that the UK government will seize this opportunity to call for a collaborative and urgent response to modern slavery and ensure that no-one is left behind in the global recovery.

2. **INTERNATIONAL MODERN SLAVERY PREVENTION STRATEGY**

   The FCDO must be bold in setting its objective to eradicate modern slavery. Defining a new international modern slavery prevention strategy, setting out a roadmap for how this will be achieved, can provide the impetus for the next phase of the global anti-slavery movement.

   IJM recommends that this strategy should prioritise: tackling impunity; listening to the experience of survivors; ensuring survivors receive trauma-informed support; and strengthening international collaboration.

   IJM also recommends the FCDO lead in establishing a dedicated cross-government modern slavery prevention fund. This ground-breaking move would demonstrate the UK’s commitment to tackling slavery, ensure consistency of approach across government, and lead the world in pioneering a holistic approach to the SDGs.

3. **WORKING WITH BUSINESS TO TACKLE SLAVERY AT SOURCE**

   British businesses regularly source and manufacture goods from countries and regions with a high prevalence of forced labour. IJM recommends British Embassies and High Commissions work with British businesses to advocate for and support an improved response from local governments to modern slavery. The UK’s presence in-country can prove pivotal, capitalising on their understanding of the local context and their capacity to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas.

   IJM also recommends that the FCDO work collaboratively with the Department for International Trade to maximise the opportunity presented by the negotiation of new trade agreements to encourage greater action by governments to strengthen the rule of law and protect workers from exploitation.
An essential role for the FCDO

The newly established FCDO is the department best placed to lead the UK’s global strategy on modern day slavery in all its forms. This unique position will mean that it can build on the priority issues established under DFID, including tackling violence against women and children and leaving no one behind, and bring a wider number of stakeholders to bear on ensuring the delivery of the SDGs and eradicating modern slavery.1

The UK has established itself as the global leader on modern slavery, however it is estimated that over 40 million people around the world remain in slavery.

Ensuring the UK retains a strong voice on the international stage in tackling modern slavery, not only strengthens protection for people around the world, it will further other government objectives:

IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Not all forms of modern slavery are committed by sophisticated criminal groups, however the systematic failings and culture of impunity which allow modern slavery and other forms of violence to take place, also enable other organised crime and corruption to take hold. The UNODC has found that organised crime hampers the rule of law by creating a climate of diminished public trust and distorting policymaking through corruption.2

Along with negatively impacting the livelihoods and quality of life of ordinary citizens, this can also undermine democracy and legitimate economies, creating instability and hindering development.

Modern slavery thrives where exploitation and violence go unchallenged and traffickers can act with impunity. By addressing these root causes of modern slavery, the UK can play a significant role in enhancing safety and security internationally. Strengthening the rule of law and enhancing the expertise and capacity of the local justice system to proactively address slavery, goes hand-in-hand with tackling other related criminal activity which can create domestic and international insecurity.

ENABLING BRITISH BUSINESS TO SOURCE AND MANUFACTURE GOODS FROM AROUND THE WORLD WITH GREATER CONFIDENCE

Thanks to the Modern Slavery Act, many businesses are proactively identifying areas of high risk within their supply chains and taking steps to introduce safeguards. However, it remains impossible for them to offer any guarantees that exploitation is not taking place, particularly in regions where workers’ rights are not adequately protected.

British businesses regularly source and manufacture goods from countries and regions with a high prevalence of forced labour. In many low-middle income countries, dangerous or demeaning work is often carried out by those living at or below the poverty line. Too often weak public justice systems enable a culture of impunity to exist around forced labour and modern slavery, especially where there is an economic interest in keeping multi-national corporations in-country.

However, if businesses are prompted to work with source-country governments to strengthen the enforcement of protective laws, with the help and support of the UK government and the non-profit community, source locations can become safe, low-risk zones for supply chains. British businesses will be able to source and manufacture with greater confidence that they are not perpetuating exploitation or exposing their own reputation to risk.

ADVANCING GIRLS’ EDUCATION

Without the rule of law, the effectiveness of aid money and projects to enhance development or tackle modern slavery risk being diminished. Girls’ educational initiatives or attempts to raise awareness of modern slavery will be undermined if the justice system cannot protect them from abuse or exploitation, and communities may be destabilised. To achieve the SDGs by 2030 globally and in the UK, there needs to be an end to impunity so that both perpetrators and victims have confidence that there will be consequences for crime and violence.

Strengthening public justice systems to protect vulnerable communities from modern slavery therefore provides other vital international development programmes with the necessary platform to succeed.

REDUCING HARM IN THE UK AND AROUND THE WORLD

Those who seek to exploit vulnerable people are not constrained by international borders. This can be seen within the UK: the number of potential victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism continues to rise year on year. In 2019, 10,627 potential victims of modern slavery from approximately 150 countries were referred to the NRM, a quarter of whom (2,762) claimed to have been exploited overseas. It is estimated that there are 100,000 victims in the UK.3 Addressing exploitation at home, requires a response abroad and on the international stage.

The UK is pioneering a collaborative response to the online sexual exploitation of children through the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC). According to the NCA, the UK is the third largest consumer of livestreamed abuse so urgent action is required to tackle the demand within the UK. Not only are British nationals posing a threat to children around the world, but there is a known connection between online abuse and contact abuse, therefore these predators likely pose a risk to British children too.

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1 Global Slavery Index 2018 wwwglobalslaveryindexorg2018findingsglobal-findings/


3 Centre for Social Justice wwwcentretorsocialjusticeorguklibraryit-still-happens-here-fighting-uk-slavery-in-the-2020s
International Justice Mission (IJM), is the largest global anti-slavery organisation. Our global team of lawyers, social workers and investigators work in partnership with local police, prosecutors and authorities to bring about justice system transformation, so that the law works to protect those who are vulnerable to modern slavery and other forms of violence.

IJM partners with law enforcement agencies as a case progresses from initial investigation to arrest, charge and prosecution. We then work with our partners in the justice system to develop high-impact interventions that address the most critical issues, enabling them to proactively address the problem and achieve sustainable change.

Our team has spent more than 20 years on the front lines fighting some of the worst forms of violence and exploitation across South and Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. We have seen over 50,000 people free from oppression and violence, seen over 1,800 perpetrators held accountable for their actions in local courts, and trained over 216,000 people. Many of these successes have happened through partnerships with local governments.

IJM’s work has shown that it is not only possible but eminently practicable to improve a justice system’s effectiveness against a violent crime in a variety of contexts, with profound impact. We have seen that when perpetrators of slavery and violence are held accountable for their crimes, there is a dramatic decrease in the prevalence of exploitation, ultimately leading to safer communities and lower vulnerability to future exploitation.

THE PHILIPPINES:
In the Philippines, we worked with local police, prosecutors, courts, and aftercare providers to develop a specialist response to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. After 4 years IJM found that the availability of children for commercial sexual exploitation had fallen in the three cities in which IJM worked by 79% (Cebu), 75% (Manila) and 86% (Pampanga). Not only that, but the Philippine Government created specific Anti-Human Trafficking Law Enforcement Units throughout the country.

CAMBODIA:
In Cambodia, from 2012 and 2015, IJM again saw the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children decline by 73% in IJM’s three project areas.

UGANDA:
From 2012-2017 we partnered with local authorities in Uganda to build the capacity of the justice system to effectively combat land theft. Previously more than a third of widows reported experiencing attempts to take their land and one in five reported a murder attempt on their life, but at the conclusion of our project there was nearly a 50% reduction in the prevalence of land theft. Not only that, but the same study also found there was increased knowledge amongst widows about their inheritance rights.

www.ijm.org/documents/studies/philippines-csec-program-evaluation.pdf


6 IJM Factsheet: Uganda
www.ijm.org/documents/2019_IJM_FactSheets_Africa_KampalaUganda-UPDATED.pdf
Recommendations:

IJM has gained tremendous expertise in tackling the worst forms of modern slavery and violence in some of the most challenging contexts around the world. Our hope is to share some of the lessons we have learned with the FCDO and to work closely with the new department to develop and implement an effective and sustainable response to modern slavery.

1. BUILD BACK BETTER FROM COVID-19: INVESTING IN JUSTICE SYSTEMS THAT PROTECT PEOPLE FROM SLAVERY AND VIOLENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts every facet of society. One area of greatest impact is safety.

Economies crashing, migrant workers left stranded, and women and children in lockdown behind closed doors with their abusers, means that millions of vulnerable people are now at increased risk of violence and exploitation. The World Bank estimates that 49 million more people will be forced into extreme poverty this year. Individuals in precarious situations due to economic, health or social exclusion will be made more vulnerable in this period of financial hardship and prolonged isolation.

This lack of security is aggravated in countries which struggle to enforce laws and protect citizens, even more so when the local public justice system is forced to operate at reduced capacity due to the pandemic.

Responding to the crisis means not only providing immediate relief to meet health, economic, and other welfare needs of vulnerable communities. It requires providing protection from violence, and building sustainable, long-term capacity in local law enforcement and support services to stop abusers and restore survivors.

Whilst the current crisis poses many challenges in responding to violent abuse, it also represents an opportunity for change. This is a time to examine the effectiveness of the protection afforded to the most vulnerable in society.

The Government’s commitment to the COVID-19 recovery comes in the context of needing to manage the economic impact of the pandemic. Identifying the underlying issues which create vulnerability and susceptibility to exploitation will ensure more effective targeting of the ODA budget and more efficient use of taxpayer money.

The FCDO together with British Embassies and High Commissions can play a crucial role in not only rebuilding communities and economies in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis but also confronting the increased risk of modern slavery and exploitation which the crisis has created. The FCDO can help build the capacity and expertise of public justice systems, drawing from the local expertise of Embassies and NGO partners, to ensure those who would perpetrate exploitation, abuse and violence are held to account, and to protect the well-being of at-risk communities.

The UK has an opportunity in 2021 through its presidency of the G7 to be a leading and unifying voice on the global stage. IJM recommends that the UK government seize this opportunity to mobilise a collaborative and urgent response to modern slavery which prioritises the rule of law and ensures that no-one is left behind in the global recovery.

2. AN INTERNATIONAL MODERN SLAVERY PREVENTION STRATEGY

The FCDO must be bold in setting its objective to eradicate modern slavery. Defining a new international modern slavery prevention strategy, setting out a roadmap for how this will be achieved, can provide the impetus for the next phase of the global anti-slavery movement.

As the new department develops its international anti-slavery strategy, IJM has identified foundational principles upon which that strategy ought to be built.

a. Tackle Impunity

The World Justice Project estimates that 5 billion people live in a ‘justice gap’, meaning they are unable to obtain justice for everyday problems, excluded from the opportunity the law provides, or living in extreme conditions of injustice.9

IJM has consistently seen that when local law enforcement agencies around the world are trained and equipped to proactively hold traffickers to account and protect survivors the prevalence of exploitation falls dramatically.

Without the rule of law, the effectiveness of other anti-slavery efforts risks being diminished. Whilst education and awareness-raising are important, increased understanding of one’s individual rights or of the signs of slavery will not alone prevent exploitation if the system is not equipped to actively protect those rights and if traffickers can act with impunity. The public justice system must be able to fairly and visibly enforce just laws, shifting the balance of power away from traffickers, to those who are vulnerable.

The FCDO’s strategy to prevent modern slavery, must therefore rectify the gaps in resources, capacity, training, and expertise of local justice systems which hinder their response. IJM’s experience has proven that empowering local law enforcement to address modern slavery themselves will reduce their reliance on financial assistance and expertise from the UK in the longer term.

b. Involve survivors in developing anti-slavery projects and policies

Survivors are uniquely placed to understand the circumstances and systemic failings which led to their abuse. They must have the opportunity to not simply recount their exploitation, but to inform anti-slavery interventions, and programmes of support for survivors.

The Global Survivor Network (GSN) is a pioneering survivor-led network elevating the voices of those who have endured slavery, violence, and severe human rights abuses. The GSN will mobilise thousands of survivors and survivor groups to ensure that their voices are heard in local and global development policy, programming, and decision-making.9

The FCDO’s international anti-slavery strategy must be shaped by those who have the lived experience of exploitation, engaging with groups such as the GSN. British Embassies and High Commissions would also benefit from engaging with local survivor led groups to help inform their in-country response.

c. Ensuring access to trauma-informed support

Providing specialist support is essential to not only enable a survivor’s full recovery and mitigate the risk of them suffering further harm or re-trafficking, but many survivors also require considerable support so they feel confident and safe to engage with the investigation and prosecution of their traffickers and prevent harm to others.

Every individual’s experience of modern slavery and trauma is distinct. Therefore, systems of support must meet all survivor’s fundamental rights, and have the flexibility to adapt to meet their individual needs.

IJM’s Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO) tool enables support providers to assess an individual’s progress across 6 key aspects of their recovery: safety, legal protection, mental wellbeing, economic empowerment and education, social support, and physical wellbeing.10

The ASO tool may prove valuable to the FCDO in ensuring that programmes of support meet survivors’ needs and are effective in restoring their independence, dignity, and safety.

d. Strengthening International Collaboration

Intelligence and information sharing, and collaboration between international law enforcement agencies is required to effectively dismantle the criminal networks which seek to exploit people across borders.

IJM has seen first-hand the benefits of the UK’s international collaboration through the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Centre (PICACC). Through this collaboration between Philippine and Australian law enforcement, the UK’s NCA and IJM, since February 2018 the PICACC has had 67 operations, which led to the rescue of 218 victims and children-at-risk of online sexual exploitation. It has seen the arrest of 60 suspects, 4 of whom have been convicted.

IJM commends the FCO for funding the NCA’s contribution to this collaboration and recommend that the FCDO continue this support.

IJM recommends that the new department work closely with British Embassies and High Commissions to explore opportunities for further collaboration, including intelligence sharing, exchange of good practice and material assistance, in countries and regions of particular strategic importance to the UK, such as Central and Eastern Europe.

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e. Cross-government funding for international anti-slavery projects

The UK Government must be applauded for the resources which it has so far allocated, in excess of £200 million, to tackling modern slavery around the world. This substantial commitment has helped to advance the global anti-slavery movement.

As we enter a period of economic hardship following the COVID-19 crisis, it is essential that the FCDO maintains this commitment to funding international slavery prevention initiatives. Modern slavery has rightly been identified as the great human rights issue of our time, which inflicts physical and psychological violence on an estimated 40 million victims, in the UK and abroad. The response to this crime requires a level of investment which is commensurate with the scale of the problem, the seriousness of the criminal offences, and its impact upon survivors.

The response to modern slavery requires the expertise of various government departments, most notably the FCDO and the Home Office. To ensure consistency and coherence in the Government’s response, IJM recommends establishing a dedicated cross-government modern slavery prevention fund. This would be a ground-breaking move which, in addition to ensuring consistency of approach, would also demonstrate to the world the UK’s unshaken commitment to the cause of ending modern slavery. It would also represent a holistic response to SDG 8.7, which few Governments can demonstrate.

3. BUSINESSES TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY AT SOURCE

Supply chain statements produced by businesses under the Modern Slavery Act have revealed the close links between exploitation occurring around the world, and British high streets and consumers.

Those businesses have a responsibility to take all necessary steps to minimise the risk of perpetuating slavery or exploitation of any kind in its supply chains. They can also work with the local host governments to bolster the protections in place for vulnerable workers.

There is an opportunity for British Embassies and High Commissions to work alongside British businesses to be a force for good in the countries and communities from which they source.

IJM recommends the FCDO convene British businesses to consider what collective action and advocacy might be possible in areas of common interest, building safeguards to protect local workers, and engaging local government authorities to ensure workers’ rights and welfare are upheld.

Leaving the EU necessitates that the UK build new relationships and trade agreements with other countries. IJM therefore recommends that the FCDO work collaboratively with the Department for International Trade to maximise the opportunity presented by the negotiation of new trade agreements to encourage greater action by governments to promote fairness and human dignity, protecting workers from modern slavery.
Ghana

TACKLING CHILD TRAFFICKING IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Operating in Ghana since 2014, IJM has established a successful model to combat child forced labour in the fishing industry on Volta Lake, one of the largest manmade lakes in the world.

IJM’s engagement in Ghana over the past six years has enabled us to develop deep relationships with stakeholders across the justice sector and civil society, including at the highest levels of the Ghana police service, the prosecution service, the judiciary, and national and local government. IJM has also developed collaborative relationships with international and local NGOs in Ghana and are a founding and Executive Committee member of Ghana’s Coalition of NGOs Against Child Trafficking (CNACT).

IJM together with our partners have helped hundreds of children out of slavery in the fishing industry on Lake Volta.

EXPANDING PROTECTION: COCOA

Ghana is the second largest cocoa producing country in the world, falling only behind neighbouring Côte d’Ivoire in annual production. Stakeholders across the spectrum – government, industry, civil society, and consumers – realise that child labour, including the worst forms of child labour (WFCL)11 is pervasive within the cocoa supply chain in West Africa. This reality poses substantial legal and reputational risks to companies that source cocoa from the region.

Since 2001, the industry has invested large sums to eliminate WFCL in the production of cocoa. However, The Cocoa Barometer (2018) stated: “Not a single company or government is anywhere near reaching their commitments of a 70% reduction of child labour by 2020.” In fact, a 2020 National Opinion Research Centre study concluded that child labour in the sector has instead increased by seven percent over the last ten years.

Interventions in the cocoa industry have included education/sensitisation, direct support to high-risk families, building schools, and paying a premium for cocoa certified as free of child labour, but none have included a substantial law enforcement component.

In order to effect meaningful change in the cocoa industry, protecting children from trafficking being exposed to violence and dangerous work, the local public justice system must be supported to respond. This will require resources and specialist training.

IJM would welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can work with the FCDO and British business to achieve this more impactful response.

11 as defined under International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention Number 182 (C182).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

COBALT

With demand for cobalt expected to increase significantly in years to come, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)’s Copperbelt is set to continue producing at least 70% of global cobalt supplies through Large-Scale Mining (LSM) and Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM). 255,000 creuseurs (“diggers” and other ASM workers) produce 25% of cobalt output from the region, among whom are an estimated 35,000 children.12

Child labour issues have been exposed for several years, with a focus on the very serious issue of poverty (and with it a lack of access to education) as a driver for children engaging in artisanal mining with their parents.

However, forced labour concerns among ASM communities have not been emphasised or adequately explored. In 2019, the OECD found a heightened risk of forced labour, which aligns with IJM’s 2018 assessment findings. Harvard Professor Siddharth Kara has witnessed “measurable human torment [...] a thousand cries of misery and injustice [and] vicious and unjust treatment” in his research of labour conditions in the Copperbelt.

The risk of forced child labour, as well as forced labour of parents and other adults, corresponds with a lack of regulation of the ASM sector and a lack of rule of law. Rectifying existing gaps in the public justice system and strengthening the enforcement of labour and criminal laws will be vital to achieving protection for those children and adults suffering forced labour.

IJM would again welcome the opportunity to discuss how our expertise can help support the FCDO in addressing this form of modern slavery which impacts so many company supply chains.13

13 Save the Children evidence https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/8587/pdf/
Conclusion

The FCDO must pick up the baton of leading the global movement to end modern slavery and will do so in challenging circumstances. The COVID-19 crisis not only exacerbates the problem, it creates new operational challenges for those with responsibility to apprehend offenders and protect survivors.

However, the new department is well-positioned to build upon the Government’s good work in recent years, and to drive an urgent response which reflects the seriousness of this crime. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the UK also has an opportunity through its presidency of the G7 in 2021 to accelerate a coordinated global movement to strengthen justice systems and protect the most vulnerable in society.

IJM has considerable expertise of working closely with Governments and law enforcement agencies around the world, providing specialist training and guidance. By implementing our collaborative model, we have seen dramatic reductions in the prevalence of modern slavery. We have achieved sustainable change in varied and challenging contexts, which offers hope that modern slavery can end.

We would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the FCDO to develop and implement a strategy to effectively and sustainably eradicate modern slavery.
INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION is a global organisation that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 21 programme offices in 13 countries to combat slavery, violence against women and children, and other forms of abuse against people in poverty. IJM works to rescue and restore victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and help strengthen public justice systems. Learn more at IJMUK.org.

*To protect IJM survivors, we have included photos that do not depict actual victims where appropriate. Consent gathered for all images.