

Modern slavery

Slavery didn't end with abolition in the 19th century. It still exists today in every country in the world. There are estimated nearly 21 million people in slavery across the world.

Modern slavery is the severe exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. Victims are deceived or coerced into a situation which they cannot leave.

Slavery is closer than you think. It happens all over the world, including the UK and the rest of Europe. In the UK alone there is an estimated 13,000 victims of modern slavery.



Story of Fasika, from Ethiopia

When I was sixteen I decided to go to Lebanon to work as a domestic worker. Soon I realised it wasn't the good life I hoped for.

I had to clean, cook and look after two grandchildren of my employer. I worked eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, without any rest.

I worked like a slave and was treated like one. They beat me regularly. I wasn't allowed to call my mother, she thought I was dead.

They always kept me locked inside the flat on the 13th floor. I couldn't go out for three years!

Finally, after becoming so tired I couldn't work anymore, Madame allowed me to go home.



Photo: Every year over 1 million people are forced to pick cotton by the government of Uzbekistan

Someone is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work - through mental or physical threat;
- owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse;
- dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property';
- physically constrained or has restrictions placed on his/her freedom of movement.

Forms of modern slavery

- **Forced labour** - any work or services which people are forced to do against their will under the threat of some form punishment.
- **Debt bondage** - the world's most widespread form of slavery, when people borrow some money and are required to work to pay off the debt, then losing control over the conditions of both their employment and the debt.

- **Human trafficking** - involves people being transported into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion. Purpose of exploitation can range from forced prostitution and forced labour to forced marriage and forced organ removal.

- **Descent-based slavery** – where people are born into slavery due to belonging to a 'slave class', caste or a group. A child of a mother in slavery is automatically enslaved too.

- **Child slavery** – defined as the delivery of a child by its parents or a guardian to someone else for the purpose of exploitation. Child slavery can include child trafficking, child soldiers, child marriage and child domestic slavery.

- **Forced marriage** – when someone is married against their will and cannot leave the marriage. Most child marriages can be considered slavery.

- **The exploitation of migrant workers** in conditions amounting to slavery

Many forms of slavery involve more than one element listed above.

Facts about slavery

20.9 million people are in modern slavery across the world

5.5 million children are in slavery across the world

11.7 million people are in slavery in the Asia-Pacific region, mostly in bonded labour

3.7 million people are in slavery in Africa

1.6 million people are in slavery in Latin America

1.5 million people are in slavery in developed economies

14.2 million slavery victims are exploited in economic activities

4.5 million people are in forced into sexual exploitation

98% of people trafficked for sexual exploitation are women and girls

2.2 million people in slavery are exploited by governments

US\$ 150 billion - illegal profits forced labour in the private economy generates per year

**All estimates by ILO*

‘When I started having children they separated them from me. They started working as soon as they could walk. Life was all about work’.

Choueida mint Mbowrick, born into slavery in Mauritania.



Photo: Child bonded labourer in India's stone quarry
Credit: Bharat Patel

How to end slavery?

Slavery is a complex problem that requires complex solutions, addressing all its root causes.

Poverty and the lack of access to sustainable livelihood opportunities must be addressed to minimise the vulnerability of people to slavery.

Discrimination and social exclusion are also big factors contributing to making people more vulnerable to slavery, so anti-discrimination policies must be at the heart of anti-slavery work.

“You work like a slave from morning till night, not enough food, [we] sleep and wake up hungry again.”

A student from Uzbekistan, forced to pick cotton by its own government.

We must consider the wider picture of the political economy and other power structures. We need to change the way we conduct business, as well as trade, aid, development, migration and other policies.

New social norms repudiating slavery must be adopted, so exploiting people is no longer acceptable. Only then can strong laws and policies be implemented effectively to protect people from slavery.

What we do to end slavery

In partnership with local organisations we tackle the root causes of slavery to achieve sustainable change to build a world free from slavery.

Together, we:

- **investigate** and **expose** current cases of slavery
- **identify** the best ways to stop these abuses and **influence** policymakers to take action
- **press** for effective implementation of laws against slavery
- **support** victims of slavery in their struggle for freedom
- **empower** individuals and communities vulnerable to slavery to **demand** respect for their human rights and obtain protection
- **work** with the private sector to identify and address slavery in global supply chains.

Our impact

- 2016: We achieved the first ever conviction by the Special Courts for slavery in Mauritania.
- 2015-16: We reached out to over 50,000 brick kiln workers in India and assisted 1,484 workers to be released from bondage
- 2015: We helped obtain the inclusion of slavery eradication as a target in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals
- 2015: We lobbied the parliamentarians to significantly improve the UK Modern Slavery Act
- 2014: We obtained a commitment from the government of Senegal to end forced child begging in the country's "daara" schools