

CONSTRUCTING THE GLOBAL SLAVERY INDEX

What is modern slavery?

In 2013, modern slavery takes many forms, and is known by many names. Whether it is called human trafficking, forced labour, slavery or slavery-like practices (a category that includes debt bondage, forced or servile marriage, sale or exploitation of children including in armed conflict) victims of modern slavery have their freedom denied, and are used and controlled and exploited by another person for profit, sex, or the thrill of domination.

Today some people are still being born into hereditary slavery, a staggering but harsh reality, particularly in parts of West Africa and South Asia.⁸ Other victims are captured or kidnapped before being sold or kept for exploitation, whether through 'marriage', unpaid labour on fishing boats, or as domestic workers.⁹ Others are tricked and lured into situations they cannot escape, with false promises of a good job or an education. Modern slavery can involve using children in the military, whether as combatants, porters, cooks or for other jobs.¹⁰ The chains of modern slavery are not always physical – sometimes escalating debts, intimidation, deception, isolation, fear or even a 'marriage' that is forced on a young woman or girl without her consent can be used to hold a person against their will without the need for locks or chains.

Modern slavery is poorly understood, so it remains hidden within houses, communities and worksites. Criminals are creative and will use any available means to conceal, rationalise, and justify slavery – be it race, ethnicity, religion, gender, caste, 'custom' or any other excuse or vulnerability they can exploit. Modern slavery is not always as self-evident as some other crimes, such as homicide or even theft. Modern slavery involves an extreme abuse of power, which is not always immediately apparent but requires understanding the people and the relationships involved.

While most forms of modern slavery are illegal all over the world, existing information suggests these laws are rarely used and enforced. The 2013 US Trafficking in Persons Report notes that while 46,570 victims of human trafficking were officially identified in 2012, there were only 7,705 prosecutions, and 4,750 convictions recorded globally.¹¹

The reality of modern slavery is millions of people who cannot walk away, who are trapped and denied freedom and lives of dignity, and bound only to serve and profit the criminals that control them.

Why a Global Slavery Index?

Modern slavery is a global issue. Some countries have a bigger problem than others but the crime affects all of us. Human trafficking reaches across borders, and the products of modern slavery flow into global supply chains, into local shops, and ultimately into our homes. Many of the problems that help modern slavery to flourish are also global: corruption, conflict, poverty, discrimination and the impact of poor or declining economic conditions and adverse environmental change.

Nearly every country in the world has committed to prevent and eradicate modern forms of slavery – whether through their national policies and laws, or their agreement to international conventions.¹² While individuals, civil society organisations, trade unions and businesses all have a role to play, the role of governments in addressing this human rights violation is paramount. Only governments can enact and enforce criminal and other relevant laws. Only governments can ensure that victims are treated as such and not as criminals. Only governments can allocate national budgets to fund law enforcement and other responses.

Efforts are being made to understand the size of modern slavery globally,¹³ and a handful of countries have undertaken national or representative surveys to more accurately estimate the size of the problem in their

⁸ See for example, "Slavery in Mauritania", *Anti-Slavery International*; http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/descent_based_slavery/slavery_in_mauritania.aspx

⁹ See for example, "Sold to the Sea: Human Trafficking in Thailand's Fishing Industry", *Environmental Justice Foundation*; <http://ejfoundation.org/soldtothesea/film>.

¹⁰ See for example, "Lord's Resistance Army and the Central African Region", (15 May 2013) *Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*; <http://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/countries/lords-resistance-army-and-the-central-african-region/>

¹¹ "US Trafficking in Persons Report 2013", *US Department of State*; p46: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210737.pdf>

¹² 97 countries, or 49.7% of members of the United Nations, are party to the 1926 Slavery Convention; 23 countries, or 63.7% of members of the United Nations, are party to the 1957 Supplementary Slavery Convention; 176 countries, or 91.1% of members of the United Nations, are party to the Forced Labour Convention.; 154 countries, or 79.7% of members of the United Nations, are party to the UN Trafficking Protocol.

¹³ See for example, "ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour: Results and Methodology", (2012), *International Labour Organisation*, and, Kevin Bales, "The Social Psychology of Modern Slavery" (2004), *Scientific American Journal*; <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=the-social-psychology-of>

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