

The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme

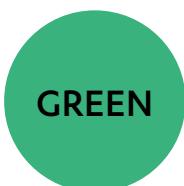
A review

October 2020

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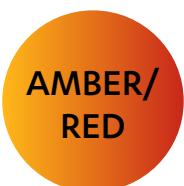
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Overall review scores and what they mean



GREEN

Strong achievement across the board. Stands out as an area of good practice where UK aid is making a significant positive contribution.



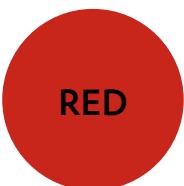
**AMBER/
RED**

Unsatisfactory achievement in most areas, with some positive elements. An area where improvements are required for UK aid to make a positive contribution.



**GREEN/
AMBER**

Satisfactory achievement in most areas, but partial achievement in others. An area where UK aid is making a positive contribution, but could do more.



RED

Poor achievement across most areas, with urgent remedial action required in some. An area where UK aid is failing to make a positive contribution.

OGL

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AMBER/ RED

The UK government has successfully raised awareness of modern slavery globally, but has not built sufficiently on the experience of others and lacks a systematic approach to analysing the problem and building evidence on 'what works' to develop an effective set of programmes in the future.

“ I wish I could have known how bad it was going to be. I was in prison. I did not know how bad the suffering would be. **”**

Survivor of trafficking, Nigeria

Modern slavery is a global problem that causes untold suffering. From bonded labourers in brick kilns in South Asia to the trafficking of West African women into Europe for sexual exploitation, many millions of people around the world are forced to work in conditions of coercion, exploitation and violence.

The UK government has prioritised tackling modern slavery both domestically and internationally since the 2015 Modern Slavery Act, and has met its commitment to spending £200 million in UK aid on promoting global action. Coordination among government departments has been strong. The government has conducted a sustained international campaign to raise awareness, successfully lobbying for a reference to 'modern slavery' in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals and persuading many governments to sign an international Call to Action. We find, however, that the campaign did not build sufficiently on the experience of others and has had limited follow-up at country level. The use of the umbrella term 'modern slavery' lacks precision, has negative historical undertones and risks stigmatising survivors as 'slaves'. The government is working with UK companies to address modern slavery within their international supply chains, but opportunities for deeper partnerships with the private sector have been missed.

This is a new and complex challenge for UK aid, where the evidence on 'what works' remains limited. The UK has undertaken some substantial research at programme level, but does not have an overall research strategy or systematic approach to filling evidence gaps. The sensitivities of countries affected have made the government reluctant to share information externally, and the government has not published a clear statement of its overall international objectives and approach. The portfolio is not based on a detailed assessment of the challenge, either globally or in particular countries, to identify priorities and entry points, and some aspects of modern slavery (such as domestic servitude in Africa) have been largely neglected. Survivors of modern slavery are involved in programme implementation, but have not been consulted adequately by the government to inform its overall approach or programme selection and design. Analysis of gender and other cross-cutting issues remains relatively weak, and there have been only limited attempts to mainstream modern slavery interventions across the wider aid programme.

The modern slavery aid portfolio contains worthwhile pilots, with useful outputs, and we heard positive feedback from the survivors and target communities we consulted. Most programmes, however, have not yet demonstrated impact or value for money and are not well set up to generate robust data on 'what works', due to short project cycles, a lack of strong programme logic and underinvestment in monitoring and evaluation. We therefore conclude that the current portfolio is not well positioned to achieve impact or to expand knowledge on 'what works' in tackling modern slavery.

Individual question scores

Question 1

Learning: How well has the UK government built and applied the evidence base in support of its modern slavery work?



Question 2

Relevance: How well has the UK government gone about building a relevant, strategic, coordinated and credible portfolio of modern slavery programmes and influencing activities?



Question 3

Effectiveness: How well is the modern slavery portfolio delivering results and value for money?



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Executive summary

Modern slavery is a global problem that leads to appalling human rights violations and suffering. The term lacks precise definition, but encompasses a range of related but distinct problems, including bonded and forced labour, human trafficking (including for sexual exploitation) and some of the worst forms of child labour. Modern slavery is a vast and global problem, whose hidden nature makes it very difficult to measure. One estimate by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Walk Free Foundation was that 40 million people were victims of modern slavery on any given day in 2016,¹ but the full extent remains uncertain.

Ending modern slavery, both at home and internationally, has become a significant priority for the UK. This review assesses how well the UK government has done in learning 'what works' and developing a credible portfolio of programmes to tackle this complex global challenge. It covers the period since November 2014, when the UK's modern slavery strategy was adopted, and includes in-depth consideration of a sample of programmes, the UK's work in two countries (Bangladesh and Nigeria) and the UK's influencing efforts with international partners and with the private sector.

Combating modern slavery internationally has been a cross-government effort. The Department for International Development (DFID), the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) have all been involved in delivering international programmes (as our review is of programming undertaken before the DFID-FCO merger, we continue to refer to the former departments in our findings). UK aid programmes have attempted to combat modern slavery through a range of interventions, including programme-level research, piloting innovative approaches, awareness raising for those at risk of falling into modern slavery, strengthening law enforcement responses and helping survivors to reintegrate in their communities.

In 2018 the government undertook to spend £200 million in aid to support international cooperation and action in developing countries over a number of years.² The portfolio at the time of the review had a combined budget of around £240 million, of which £200 million has been managed by DFID. Most of the programmes are in Asia and Africa, together with a number working at the global level, including supporting the UK's efforts to promote international cooperation.

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to give rise to new modern slavery challenges. Sharp rises in unemployment in developing countries may leave individuals at greater risk of exploitation. There are also major concerns about migrant workers who have been left stranded after their jobs have disappeared. The UK government is adapting its programming in light of the pandemic, but these efforts are not covered by this review.

Learning: How well has the UK government built and applied the evidence base in support of its modern slavery work?

Tackling modern slavery is a new and complex challenge for the UK aid programme, where the evidence on 'what works' remains limited. The responsible departments have recognised the data and evidence gaps, both globally and in particular country contexts, and have undertaken substantial pieces of research and analysis at programme level. However, there is no research strategy, nor a systematic approach to filling evidence gaps to guide the choice of interventions. Nor is there an adequate central repository of research and lessons learned, either in the UK or globally. As a result, the responsible departments lack a clear basis for deciding which aspects of modern slavery to prioritise and which interventions to undertake.

Mechanisms for collecting, synthesising and sharing the research, learning and innovation generated within individual programmes are still at an early stage of development. The sensitive nature of modern slavery work has meant that the Home Office and the FCO have been reluctant to share information with external partners or the public. DFID has been more open and has had a number of external research partnerships. The merger of DFID and the FCO provides an opportunity to widen good practice in this area.

The UK has been a strong proponent of global cooperation on modern slavery, not least because the

¹ Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage, ILO and Walk Free Foundation, Geneva, 2017, p. 5, [link](#).
² UK leads the charge in eradicating scourge of modern slavery, UK Government, 2018, [link](#).

trafficking of people into the UK for commercial or sexual exploitation cannot be prevented without tackling its international dimension. The UK successfully lobbied for inclusion of the term ‘modern slavery’ in the Sustainable Development Goals and has raised the issue in numerous international forums. However, we found that the UK encouraged other international actors to adopt the UK approach, rather than drawing on the experience of those who had been active on modern slavery issues for much longer. While the stakeholders we interviewed credited the UK with helping to raise the profile of modern slavery, some saw its approach as divisive and duplicative of existing efforts.

In particular, the use of the umbrella term ‘modern slavery’ by the UK government has proved unhelpful. While it adds rhetorical force to the agenda, harking back to the international campaign to abolish the slave trade, the term is unacceptable to many countries and individuals. It does not have a clear legal definition internationally and, in failing to distinguish between different forms and degrees of exploitation, can be seen as stigmatising all survivors as ‘slaves’.

Overall, in view of the lack of a strategic approach to building research and evidence on modern slavery and the failure of the government to build on past experience in its international influencing work, we award an **amber-red** score for learning.

Relevance: How well has the UK government gone about building a relevant, strategic, coordinated and credible portfolio of modern slavery programmes and influencing activities?

The UK has yet to publish a clear statement of its overall objectives and approach to using aid to tackle modern slavery. The government produced a modern slavery strategy in 2014, covering both domestic and international work, but this was focused mainly on law enforcement challenges. The international elements of the government’s work have expanded significantly over the past six years, but no new statement has been published. Civil society representatives argued that the lack of a public strategy has constrained both accountability and learning. We saw no evidence of survivor engagement in the development of the overall approach.

The portfolio is not based on a systematic assessment of the global modern slavery challenge, to identify priorities and possible interventions. Modern slavery is often treated in UK documents as a single phenomenon, even though its component elements are diverse in terms of affected groups, geography and potential solutions. Some dimensions of modern slavery have received little attention. We found, for example, that the approach in Nigeria focuses primarily on international trafficking, rather than addressing major problems of domestic servitude, internal trafficking and child labour. By contrast, the Bangladesh portfolio targets two challenges, promoting safe and legal migration and tackling child labour, that are well suited to the country context.

The UK government’s programmes have taken a multi-level approach, and include supporting survivors, working with grassroots organisations in at-risk communities, engaging the private sector and supporting governments with policy and legislative reform. UK programmes work with a wide range of partners, although some agencies that we interviewed expressed the concern that the UK treats them as implementers rather than strategic partners.

The literature on modern slavery suggests that effective interventions must be firmly grounded in the needs and experiences of survivors. However, across the programmes we reviewed, there was limited consultation with survivors in setting priorities and designing interventions, although survivors were more involved in programme implementation. This is important because understanding the needs and experiences of survivors is essential for designing strategies and effective programmes. Most of the programmes were weak on gender analysis and other cross-cutting issues. Modern slavery work is not being mainstreamed across programmes funded by UK aid or linked with broader sectoral programmes, in areas such as governance, education and livelihoods, in countries with high incidence of modern slavery, despite opportunities to do so.

Theresa May strongly promoted addressing modern slavery as a policy priority for the UK, first as home secretary and then as prime minister. In 2017, the UK launched an international Call to Action at the UN General Assembly, inviting countries to declare what actions they would take to eradicate modern slavery. This initiative was supported through a sustained campaign across multiple international events and processes and over 90 countries have signed up. However, the Call to Action did not incorporate any reporting or monitoring mechanism, and we saw little evidence of its impact at country level.

There is a useful focus by the government on encouraging UK companies to publicise their efforts to eliminate modern slavery from their international supply chains, requiring larger companies, by law, to publish annual statements on the steps they are taking. We also found good examples of collaboration with the private sector in developing countries in some of the programmes that we reviewed. However, the private sector representatives that we consulted stated that opportunities for deeper partnerships between government and the private sector had been missed.

The government has made an important contribution in raising the international profile of the modern slavery challenge. It has not, however, based its programming on a thorough analysis of the components of modern slavery or been adequately guided by survivor voices, gender and other cross-cutting analysis. Opportunities for mainstreaming are being missed and follow-up to the Call to Action has been limited. We therefore award an **amber-red** score for relevance.

Effectiveness: How well is the modern slavery portfolio delivering results and value for money?

This is a young portfolio in which the majority of programmes are at an early stage of implementation. There is very little information on results or value for money yet available. Our assessment of effectiveness therefore also looked at whether programmes were delivering as planned and whether they were configured in such a way as to generate evidence on 'what works', to inform future programming and to demonstrate impact in the future.

The government has met its financial pledge by committing more than £200 million for modern slavery programmes. The programmes we reviewed were producing a range of potentially useful outputs, such as capacity building of national partners, business opportunities for young people living in at-risk communities and technical inputs to support the reform of laws and policies. During our country visits, we spoke to a range of survivors and members of target communities on their experiences with UK aid programmes. In Bangladesh, we interviewed women from poor communities who had received training and awareness raising input on safe labour migration options, and found that some had gone on to share their knowledge with others in their communities. In Nigeria, DFID and Home Office programmes have supported 2,000 highly vulnerable individuals who have returned after traumatic experiences of trafficking, helping them to reintegrate in their communities and avoid being re-trafficked, although at a high cost per person that raises questions as to sustainability. Those we spoke to reported that UK support had helped them establish ongoing small businesses, with modest earnings.

The programmes have yet to demonstrate impact on reducing modern slavery. There have been few external evaluations of Home Office and FCO programmes, in part because of the young age of the portfolio. DFID also underinvested in evaluation, with the exception of its flagship programmes, given the weakness of the evidence base. Methods for ensuring value for money are still under development. Those evaluations that have been undertaken have found disappointing results. One programme promoting alternative livelihoods in the Niger Delta was found to be too short in duration to generate any information on its impact on modern slavery. One of the longest-running DFID programmes, Work in Freedom, has sought to empower 100,000 women in India, Bangladesh and Nepal to choose safe migration options through training and awareness raising and, more recently, to support them in their destination countries. The evaluation of its first phase, however, found that while the women had appreciated the training, this alone was unlikely to have protected them from exploitation, as their vulnerability was largely a result of the conditions facing migrant workers that placed them in positions of powerlessness, rather than a lack of knowledge and confidence. Awareness raising for migrant workers remains a common intervention across the portfolio, but further exploration is needed as to how this can be combined with other interventions to protect them from exploitation.

The portfolio includes a good range of innovative pilots. However, we found that most programmes were not designed or configured to generate data on outcomes or to provide evidence to support future scale-up of programmes. The Home Office and FCO programmes tended to be too small in scale and short in duration to produce measurable results. Some of the programming shows evidence of having been designed and delivered in haste, to meet the government's spending commitment, causing design and consultation processes to be truncated. Programmes generally lacked robust theories of change, baseline data and measurable outcome indicators. There is limited value in small-scale pilots unless they are set up to support learning, with real-time monitoring and evaluation to test whether the interventions show promising results.

Coordination between departments on modern slavery has generally been strong. The UK has good relationships with other governments and multilateral organisations. Some of its projects have supported the UK's international influencing goals, such as funding for the secretariat of the UN's Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons. The UK's involvement, together with Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US, in an initiative to eliminate modern slavery from public procurement supply chains was very positive. However, the UK has not been a prominent supporter of the ILO's Decent Work initiative on labour rights,³ nor has it challenged the multilateral development banks to engage more on modern slavery issues.

Overall, while there is some innovative programming under way, there has been no demonstration of impact or value for money to date and we are concerned that the portfolio as currently configured is not well set up to deliver robust evidence on 'what works' or future impact. We therefore award an **amber-red** score for effectiveness.

Recommendations

Ending modern slavery remains a stated priority of the UK government. To achieve this, it will need to strengthen its evidence base for interventions, draw from the experience of survivors, strategically mainstream its approach across a broader range of programmes and work more closely with a wide range of stakeholders including private sector companies and partner governments. We offer the following five recommendations to help achieve this:

Recommendation 1

Responsible departments should develop a more systematic approach to filling knowledge and evidence gaps, including sex-disaggregated and sector-specific data, gender analysis and more comprehensive evaluations, to guide the choice of interventions.

Recommendation 2

Responsible departments should do more to draw on survivor voices, in ethical ways, with a particular focus on inputs to policy and programme design, and to deepening understanding of lifetime experiences and gender dimensions of modern slavery.

Recommendation 3

The UK government should publish a clear statement of its overall objectives and approach to using UK aid to tackle modern slavery internationally.

Recommendation 4

Responsible departments should increase the future impact of programming by examining the scope for more interventions in neglected areas of modern slavery, and mainstreaming modern slavery into other development programmes, including in the COVID-19 response.

Recommendation 5

Responsible departments should strengthen partnerships on modern slavery, including deepening engagement with the private sector and working with partner governments to develop locally owned action plans covering origin, transit and destination countries.

³ The ILO's Decent Work initiative was launched in 1999 based on the 1998 "Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work", which provides a framework for the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour and the effective abolition of child labour, identified in *Decent Work, Report of the Director-General at International Labour Conference, 87th Session, 1999*, [link](#).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Modern slavery is a global problem that leads to appalling human rights violations and suffering. It includes bonded labourers working in brick kilns in South Asia, women trafficked from West Africa into Europe for sexual exploitation and millions of people around the world forced to work without freedom or adequate wages through violence and intimidation. In this report, we use 'modern slavery' as an umbrella term, encompassing bonded labour, forced labour, human trafficking and some of the worst forms of child labour, in accordance with UK government practice.

“ They treat you like an animal. They beat us so hard. They locked me outside. I was screaming, crying and they locked the gate and made me sleep on the floor. ”

“ My sister, have you ever seen the sea? Waves bigger than you can ever imagine. It is terrifying. ”

Survivors of trafficking, Nigeria

- 1.2 Tackling modern slavery is an important new commitment for the UK aid programme, particularly since the adoption of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act. In 2018 the government committed to spend £200 million of UK aid funds over a number of years to address it. As this is a new and complex area, our review focused in particular on how well the responsible departments had done in assembling an evidence base and developing a credible portfolio of programming.
- 1.3 Our focus was on the UK government's efforts to tackle modern slavery internationally using official development assistance (ODA), rather than UK domestic policies or programmes. We covered the period since November 2014, when the UK first adopted a modern slavery strategy.⁴ The review, which took place before the creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), covered the activities of three ODA-spending government departments – the Home Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID).
- 1.4 We began with an assessment of how well the responsible departments had invested in, and made use of, data and evidence on 'what works' in tackling modern slavery, as this is foundational to developing an effective response. We assessed their progress in designing a relevant portfolio of activities that reflected the needs and experiences of survivors, and the level of coherence and coordination across the responsible departments. We explored whether the programmes were achieving their intended results, and the effectiveness of the UK's partnerships and influencing work with civil society, the private sector, developing countries and other international agencies in promoting effective international cooperation. Our review questions are set out in full in **Table 1**.
- 1.5 Throughout the review, we sought to be informed by the testimonies of those who have experienced modern slavery and to obtain feedback from those intended to benefit from UK programmes.

⁴ Modern slavery strategy, Home Office, November 2014, [link](#).

Box 1: Survivors' experiences of modern slavery

Those who have experienced modern slavery have a unique perspective of its reality and brutality. Throughout the review, we attempted to hear and amplify the voices of survivors. Some of the stories that we heard in our visits to Bangladesh and Nigeria are retold in this report and include the following two personal testimonies:

“ After my father died, I moved to Benin for greener pastures to try and get more money. It was in Benin that I was told to try and get to Libya and from there to Europe. To get to Europe, I had to pay 700,000 naira [approximately £1,650]. I sold my father’s property, but I still only had 500,000 naira [approximately £1,200]. They said I would make it up by working two weeks in Libya. I left for Libya from Kano. I spent nine days in the desert. Many people died. It was very hard; we say God saved us. In Libya we went from one punishment to another. The Nigerian contact I had was no longer reachable as soon as I got to Libya. We were taken from place to place. There were further charges, I couldn’t pay. I started car washing and my wages were taken to pay the fee. I was doing this for around six or seven months. Even after I paid the man, he would not let me go... ”

Survivor of trafficking, man, Nigeria

“ I migrated to Dubai and worked there for six years, I was paid 20,000 taka [around £200] per month and they treated me very well. I returned to Bangladesh three years ago. My husband had a stroke and passed away. After his death my daughter and I had no means of living so I migrated again and this time I went to work in Jordan. The family I worked for was not very wealthy. Within six months, my new employer exploited me in many ways. On one occasion, the mother got angry and threw tea at me, burning my thighs and making me bleed. When I first started my new job, I was given a mobile phone and a month’s salary, but then my employer stopped paying me. I was told I would receive my salary after a year. In the fifth month, I was so frustrated that I took a taxi and went to the police. The police took me to the Bangladesh High Commission. They opened a case and called my employer. The employer gave false information, claiming that I was not doing my work properly. The Bangladesh High Commission housed me in some rooms and then brought me back to Bangladesh after three days. ”

Migrant returnee, woman, Bangladesh

- 1.6 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be achieved without eradicating modern slavery, which affects some of the most vulnerable people in the world. The commitment to 'leave no one behind' focuses attention on hidden and marginalised people, including those who are subject to modern slavery. The SDGs include a commitment, promoted by the UK, to ending modern slavery, alongside eradicating forced labour and ending human trafficking and child labour, under Target 8.7. The principal ways in which modern slavery relates to the SDGs are illustrated in **Box 2**.

Box 2: How this report relates to the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Most important for the UK's goal of ending modern slavery are the following SDGs:



Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere – Those in modern slavery are among the most vulnerable to extreme poverty and the focus of the SDGs on 'leaving no one behind' requires action to eradicate modern slavery.



Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls – Men, women, boys and girls experience modern slavery differently. Women and girls face greater challenges of sexual exploitation and trafficking for domestic servitude.



Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all – Decent work is at the core of addressing modern slavery, which requires an understanding of the functioning of labour markets and interventions to disrupt the profitability of business models that depend on modern slavery. Target 8.7 specifically refers to ending modern slavery.



Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries – Those subject to modern slavery are among the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. Target 10.7 relates specifically to facilitating orderly, safe and responsible migration.



Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts – There are strong links between modern slavery and climate change. Climate change pushes individuals and communities into poverty and makes them vulnerable to modern slavery. The migration of people induced by climate change increases the risk of trafficking and exploitation.



Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies – Addressing modern slavery requires strong justice systems and a commitment from governments to establishing laws to end modern slavery and enforcing them.

- 1.7 On 2 September 2020, DFID and the FCO were merged to create the new FCDO. As this is a review of past programming, we continue to refer to the former departments in our findings. We assume that future responsibility for modern slavery programming will continue to be shared between the Home Office and this new department.

Table 1: Our review questions

Review criteria and question	Sub-questions
Learning: How well has the UK government built and applied the evidence base in support of its modern slavery work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well have the responsible departments identified data and evidence gaps, and established suitable research, data collection, pilot programmes and evaluation approaches to address them? • How well are knowledge and lessons learned being captured and disseminated to inform the UK and global response to modern slavery? • How well does the approach and programming reflect the available evidence on 'what works'? • How well has the UK government drawn on international experience and approaches to addressing modern slavery in designing its influencing work?
Relevance: How well has the UK government gone about building a relevant, strategic, coordinated and credible portfolio of modern slavery programmes and influencing activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well has the UK government defined the modern slavery problem and how well do its priorities within its modern slavery work reflect the nature and scale of the elements of the modern slavery challenge? • How well does the UK government draw on the voices of those expected to benefit, including victims and survivors of modern slavery, in designing and delivering its response and in assessing the effectiveness of its interventions? • How well does the UK government set its priorities within this portfolio to determine which channels it works through, including the private sector, and which partner countries it works with? • How coherent is the portfolio and approach with other areas of UK aid?
Effectiveness: How well is the modern slavery portfolio delivering results and value for money?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well is the portfolio managed and executed? • How well is the portfolio delivering its intended results and seeking to maximise value for money? • How effectively is the UK government's work on international modern slavery coordinated across government departments and with other donors and multilateral organisations?

The impact of COVID-19 on modern slavery

- 1.8 This report was written as the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold. The UK government expects the pandemic to have a significant impact on modern slavery. The vulnerability of poor communities to exploitation is increasing as employment falls and poverty rises. Workers are losing their jobs as orders dry up, for example in garment factories across Asia. Concern is growing that the pandemic will exacerbate modern slavery, by heightening the vulnerability of those who are already exploited, increasing the pool of individuals at risk of exploitation and disrupting efforts to support survivors.⁵
- 1.9 We saw evidence that the UK government is seeking to incorporate modern slavery into its global aid response to COVID-19. The government commissioned research into the impact of COVID-19 on

⁵ *The impact of COVID-19 on modern slavery*, James Cockayne and Angharad Smith, United Nations University, April 2020, [link](#).

modern slavery in India and Bangladesh.⁶ This concluded that COVID-19 has deepened and exposed vulnerabilities, with intensifying negative impacts, particularly through the return of migrants. Women are suffering the worst effects. The UK government highlighted the need for additional action to address negative coping strategies adopted by families in the face of the pandemic. Guidance was provided by DFID to its country offices on how to incorporate a modern slavery perspective into their response to COVID-19. DFID offices in both our case study countries of Bangladesh and Nigeria received the central guidance and were actively managing their modern slavery work in response to COVID-19. Given the timing of this review, it has not been possible for us to assess the extent to which programming has responded to this new challenge.

⁶ *The impact of COVID-19 on modern slavery in Bangladesh and India*, IMC, July 2020, (unpublished).

2. Methodology

2.1 The review methodology included the following elements:

- **Literature review:** We prepared a review of the literature on modern slavery, covering definitional challenges, statistical issues, causal issues, evidence on 'what works' and survivor experiences.⁷ Our literature review informed our findings and is published as a separate report.⁷
- **Survivor voice:** During country visits to Bangladesh and Nigeria, we undertook community consultations with survivors of modern slavery and the target communities for UK aid programmes, and we held a consultation with organisations supporting survivors of modern slavery in the UK (see **Box 3**).
- **Strategy review:** We reviewed the UK government's strategy and approach to addressing modern slavery. This included assessment of strategy papers, policy commitments, guidance, theories of change and stakeholder interviews.
- **Influencing review:** We assessed the effectiveness of the UK government's attempts to encourage international cooperation on modern slavery. We looked in particular at the 2017 Call to Action, the UK's advocacy for inclusion of modern slavery in the Sustainable Development Goals and its efforts to raise the profile of the issue in international forums.
- **Private sector review:** We assessed the effectiveness of the UK government's work with the private sector to tackle modern slavery in global supply chains, including a consultation with private sector representatives in the UK, focusing on firms with an interest in tackling the issue within their international supply chains.
- **Desk reviews:** We conducted desk reviews of a sample of UK modern slavery programmes and funds. Our sample covered all three departments (the Home Office, the FCO and DFID) and was chosen to represent the breadth of the portfolio and the issues raised by our review questions. It covered just under half of the portfolio by value. The desk reviews were based on programme documentation including business cases, annual reports and evaluations, together with telephone interviews. They are listed in **Annex 2**.
- **Country case studies:** We carried out case studies of the UK's modern slavery approach in two countries, Bangladesh and Nigeria. We conducted one-week visits to each country to view programme sites and to undertake interviews and focus groups, including with target communities. We explored how the responsible departments identify entry points for programming, how they interact with national stakeholders and how they engage people expected to benefit in the design, delivery and monitoring of programmes.

⁷ The literature review is available on the ICAI website.

Box 3: Survivor voice methodology

During our visits to Bangladesh and Nigeria, we consulted with a range of modern slavery survivors, at-risk groups and members of the community, including social workers and employers at garment factories, about their experiences of interacting with UK modern slavery programmes. These visits took place in early March 2020, before COVID-19 social distancing measures. Implementing partners for UK government programmes in our sample were asked to select participants for focus groups and individual interviews, so as to be representative of different social characteristics, including gender, age, ethnicity and religion as appropriate. Staff from implementing organisations accompanied the visits to make introductions, but in most cases were not present during the interviews. We supplemented our survivor interviews and community meetings with interviews with frontline organisations working with victims and survivors, which enabled a broader understanding of the experiences and views of wider groups of survivors. The consultations were designed to triangulate other data sources, rather than to generate primary evidence of impact.

Detailed ethical protocols were developed for our consultations, which followed the ‘do no harm’ principle. Focus groups and interviews were held in safe locations, and conducted by individuals experienced in research with vulnerable individuals, through an interpreter. Focus groups were segregated by gender, and no minors participated. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The interviews and focus group discussions focused on participants’ current needs and priorities and their experiences of UK aid programmes. They did not probe personal experiences of modern slavery, but some participants chose to share their experiences with the research team. Excerpts of some of these experiences can be found in the report and a larger number can be found in **Annex 1**. These stories have not been verified.

2.2 Full details of our methodology and the sampling approach for the review are given in our approach paper.⁸ The review included the following elements:

- over 230 key stakeholder interviews, including 80 UK civil servants, 36 UK civil society representatives, 20 staff in other national governments and international agencies and over 80 stakeholders in Bangladesh and Nigeria, including government representatives
- 84 people involved in community consultations in Bangladesh and 54 in Nigeria
- over 1,300 documents collected
- detailed document reviews of two funds, two country programmes and 27 projects (see **Annex 2** for more details).

Box 4: Limitations to the methodology

- There is no globally agreed definition of modern slavery.
- The modern slavery portfolio is diverse, making it difficult to generalise findings to the portfolio as a whole.
- Most of the portfolio is relatively recent and many individual programmes are yet to generate outcome-level results.
- There are methodological challenges associated with attributing results to the UK’s influencing work on modern slavery, given the involvement of many other actors.
- Many developing countries are reluctant to acknowledge the existence of modern slavery. The UK government consequently keeps some of its work confidential, which means that not all the evidence we collected could be included in the final report.
- Our participants for community consultations during country visits were selected by implementing agencies and cannot therefore be regarded as a representative sample.

⁸ *The UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme*, approach paper, ICAI, February 2020, p. 5-9, [link](#).

Figure 1: Modern slavery context in our case study countries: Nigeria and Bangladesh

NIGERIA DEPARTURE COUNTRY

Nigeria has a population of 196 million.⁹ It is estimated as many as 1.4 million people are living in slavery in Nigeria in sectors including: agriculture, domestic work, manufacturing and construction industries.¹⁰

⁹ World Bank data population total - Nigeria, World Bank, [link](#).

¹⁰ Global slavery index 2018, Walk Free Foundation, p. 69, [link](#).

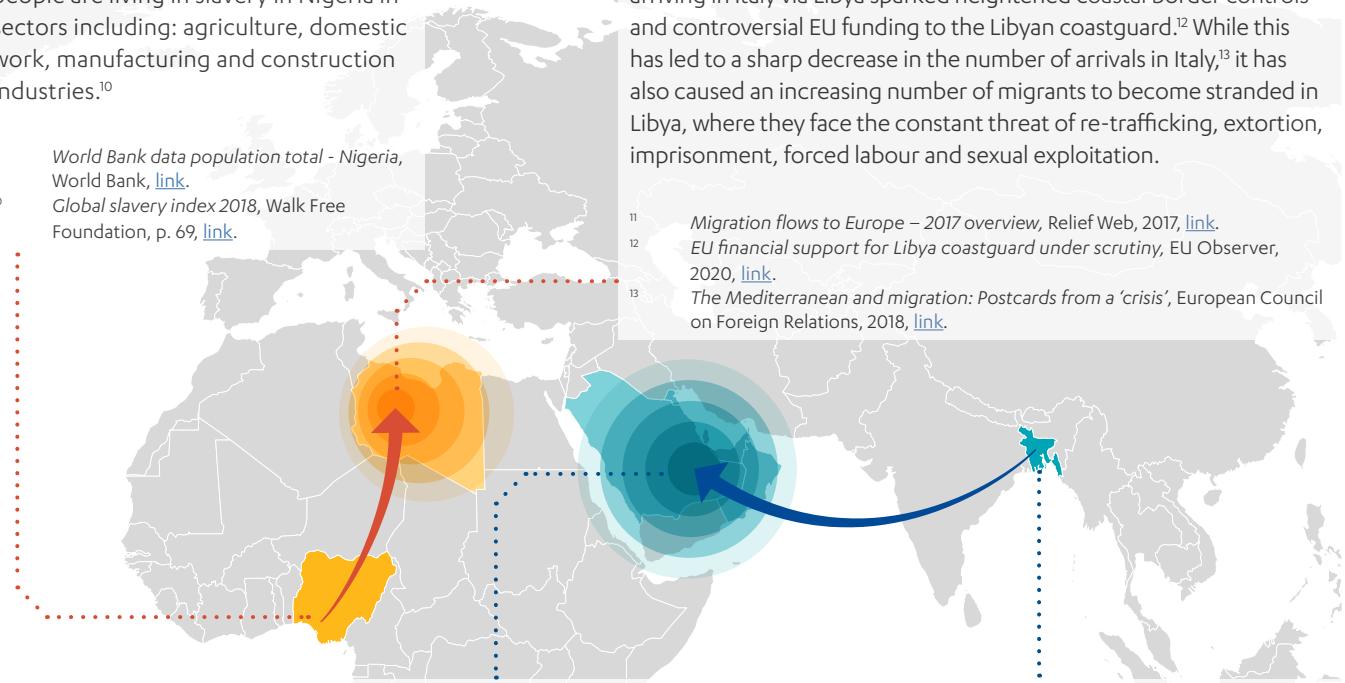
LIBYA – TRANSIT COUNTRY

In 2017, Nigeria was the largest single country of origin of migrant arrivals to Italy via Libya.¹¹ Over the last decade, a spike in migrants arriving in Italy via Libya sparked heightened coastal border controls and controversial EU funding to the Libyan coastguard.¹² While this has led to a sharp decrease in the number of arrivals in Italy,¹³ it has also caused an increasing number of migrants to become stranded in Libya, where they face the constant threat of re-trafficking, extortion, imprisonment, forced labour and sexual exploitation.

¹¹ Migration flows to Europe – 2017 overview, Relief Web, 2017, [link](#).

¹² EU financial support for Libya coastguard under scrutiny, EU Observer, 2020, [link](#).

¹³ The Mediterranean and migration: Postcards from a ‘crisis’, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2018, [link](#).



MIDDLE EAST DESTINATION COUNTRIES

In 2017, over a million Bangladeshi workers migrated through official channels.¹⁴ Five of the top ten destination countries for Bangladeshi overseas workers are in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar).¹⁵ For many, their experience of employment overseas is positive. However, for some, this migration is subject to abusive practices. These abuses can include unpaid wages, confiscation of documents, excessively long working hours without rest days, restrictions on freedom of movement, deception and intimidation.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bangladesh annual migration report 2017, International Organisation of Migration, 2019, p. 14, [link](#).

¹⁵ International labour migration statistics in South Asia: Establishing a sub-regional database and improving data collection for evidence-based policy-making, International Labour Organisation, 2018, p. 23, [link](#).

¹⁶ Study of modern slavery in Bangladesh, DAI, August 2019, p. 3, [link](#).

BANGLADESH DEPARTURE COUNTRY

Bangladesh has a population of 161 million.¹⁷ It is estimated as many as 600,000 people could be living in modern slavery in Bangladesh. Sectors include: garment factories, shipbreaking, domestic work, shrimp, rice and tea farming.¹⁸ Bangladesh is characterised by high levels of regular migration of both women and men to work in other countries.

¹⁷ World Bank data population total - Bangladesh, World Bank, [link](#).

¹⁸ Study of modern slavery in Bangladesh, DAI, August 2019, p. 5-8, [link](#).

3. Background

What is modern slavery?

- 3.1 Modern slavery includes forced labour, bonded labour, human trafficking and some of the worst forms of child labour (see **Box 5** for more details). Experts and practitioners have diverse views as to whether it is useful to group these disparate phenomena, each with different perpetrators, vulnerable groups and modes of operation, into a single modern slavery category.

Box 5: What is modern slavery?

The term ‘modern slavery’ has no precise, internationally accepted definition. It is commonly used for a range of related, but distinct, issues covered by international conventions (see **Box 6**). These include:

- **Forced labour:**¹⁹ where people are compelled to work through violence, intimidation or coercion, often for no or inadequate payment.
- **Bonded labour:** where people are forced to work to repay a debt.
- **Human trafficking:**²⁰ which involves the recruitment, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people, often involving them being transported, either within a country or between countries, for exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion to work against their will, or for sexual abuse. People can be trafficked for many different forms of exploitation, such as forced labour, forced prostitution, forced begging, forced criminality, domestic servitude and forced organ removal.
- **Descent-based slavery:** where people are born into a class or caste of slaves.
- **Early and forced marriage:** where children, usually girls, are married without their consent.

These issues can overlap, with individuals being subject to more than one form of modern slavery.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that one in four modern slaves are children,²¹ and the UK has included interventions on child labour in its portfolio to tackle modern slavery.

Early and forced marriage has only recently been included as a sub-category of modern slavery by the ILO.²² This is addressed by the UK government as an element of its work to end violence against women and girls. It is generally not included in its portfolio to tackle modern slavery and thus not covered in this review.

- 3.2 Modern slavery is usually hidden and while the scale of the problem is very large, it is difficult to quantify. The 2017 Global Estimate of Modern Slavery produced by the ILO and the Walk Free Foundation, in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration, estimated that 40 million people were victims of modern slavery at any one time in 2016.²³ This included 25 million adults and children in forced labour (using a broad definition that encompassed bonded labour and human trafficking) and 15 million adults and children in forced marriages. In 2014, the Home Office estimated that there were up to 13,000 victims of modern slavery living in the UK,²⁴ and a recent estimate, extrapolated from police data in the West Midlands, suggested a figure of 100,000 in the country as a whole.²⁵ In numerical terms, trafficking is a small sub-component of modern slavery. The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, established in November 2017, collects case data on victims of trafficking. Using data from 2006 to 2016, the database

¹⁹ The legal definition of forced labour is: “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”. Source: *Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), Article 2*, [link](#).

²⁰ The legal definition of trafficking in persons is: “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” Source: *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, 2003, Article 3*, [link](#).

²¹ *Forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking*, ILO, [link](#).

²² Official: *forced marriage is slavery*. Anti-Slavery International, September 2017, [link](#).

²³ *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage*, ILO and Walk Free Foundation, Geneva, 2017, p. 49, [link](#).

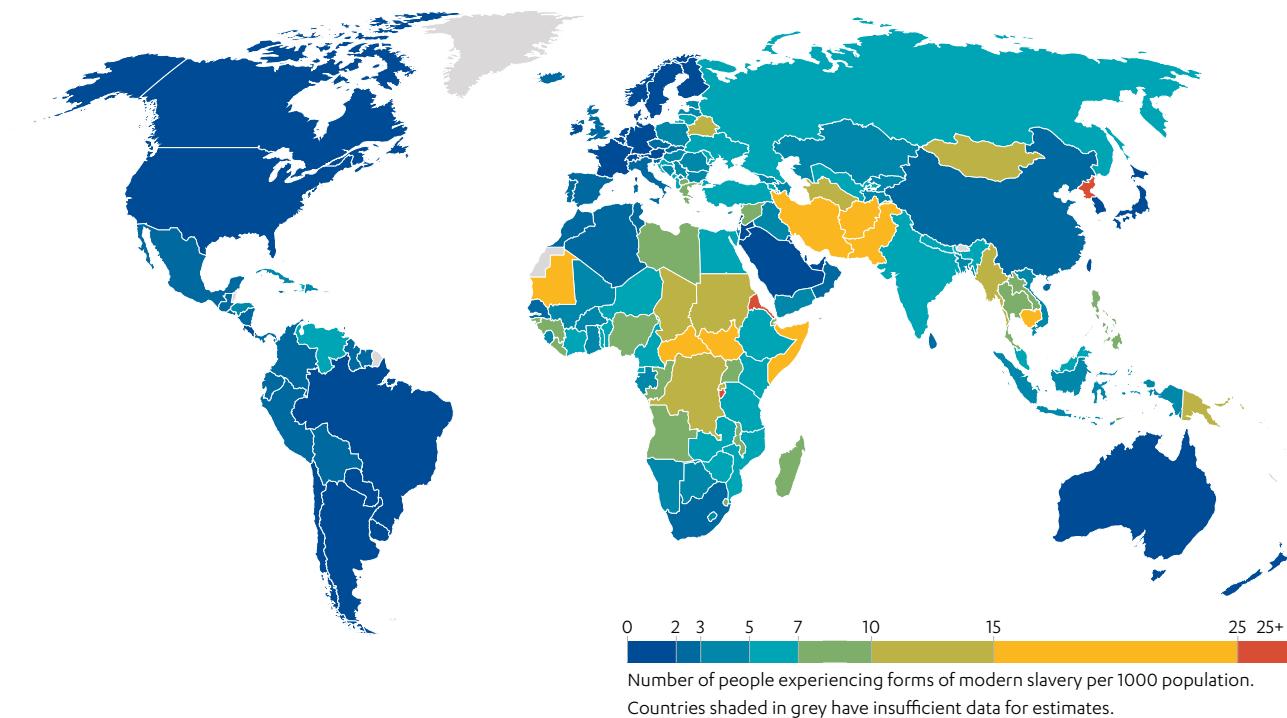
²⁴ *Modern Slavery: an application of multiple systems estimation*, Bernard Silverman, November 2014, p. 5, [link](#).

²⁵ *It still happens here: Fighting UK slavery in the 2020s*, Centre for Social Justice and Justice & Care, July 2020, p. 20, [link](#).

has identified over 108,000 individual human trafficking cases representing 175 nationalities exploited in 164 countries, illustrating the global nature of the phenomenon.²⁶ However, these estimates all use different and often contested methodologies, do not have consistent data over time and cannot be compared with each other. There is therefore no reliable way of identifying whether or not modern slavery is increasing at the global level.

- 3.3 Modern slavery is a global problem with incidence estimated to vary between countries and regions, as illustrated in **Figure 2**. Modern slavery is a highly gendered experience involving complex power dynamics. It occurs in a wide range of industries in the private sector, as well as through state-imposed forced labour. It takes place both within countries and through trafficking across international borders. In Nigeria, community members highlighted to us that the phenomenon of trafficking within the country is common and victims tend to be children living in rural areas.

Figure 2: Map of prevalence



Source: Data adapted from 2018 Global Slavery Index, Walk Free Foundation, 2018, [link](#).

What works in addressing modern slavery?

- 3.4 Our literature review²⁷ revealed that the data on modern slavery and evidence on 'what works' in tackling it remain very limited. Most interventions are focused on helping individuals to avoid modern slavery, or on supporting survivors. There is much less focus on addressing the structural forces that drive exploitation, for example through strengthening workers' rights. Common interventions include:
- interventions to reduce people's vulnerability to exploitation, such as awareness raising, supporting alternative livelihoods and education on safe migration practices
 - interventions to support survivors, including medical and psychosocial support, access to justice and support for reintegration
 - criminal justice and other regulatory measures, including changing laws to criminalise exploitation and building the capacity of law enforcement bodies.

We have seen examples of all of these within the UK government's aid portfolio.

²⁶ Global Data Hub on Human Trafficking, Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, 2020, [link](#).
²⁷ Literature review available on the ICAI website.

- 3.5 During the past 100 years, the League of Nations and the UN have sought to define, regulate and eliminate slavery and modern slavery as outlined in **Box 6**.

Box 6: Conventions defining and addressing slavery and elements of modern slavery

The following conventions have helped to define terms and shape international law for addressing these issues:

- **The Slavery Convention (1926)** defined slavery as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”.
- **The ILO Forced Labour Convention (1930)** aimed to suppress the use of forced labour in all its forms and provided a legal definition of forced labour.
- **The Slavery Convention (1953)** allowed the UN to regulate on these issues and to foster international cooperation to address underlying economic and social factors.
- **The Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery (1956)** added debt bondage, serfdom, servile marriages and the enslavement of children to the 1926 definition of slavery.
- **ILO conventions on Child Labour include Convention 138 (1973)** on the minimum age for young people to be working and Convention 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour.
- **The Palermo Protocol (2003)** – “The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children” under the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime included a definition of trafficking in persons.
- **The ILO Forced Labour Protocol (2014)** provided non-binding practical guidance in the areas of prevention, protection of victims and ensuring their access to justice and remedies, enforcement and international cooperation.

In 1974 the UN established the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. This was replaced in 2007 by the post of Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

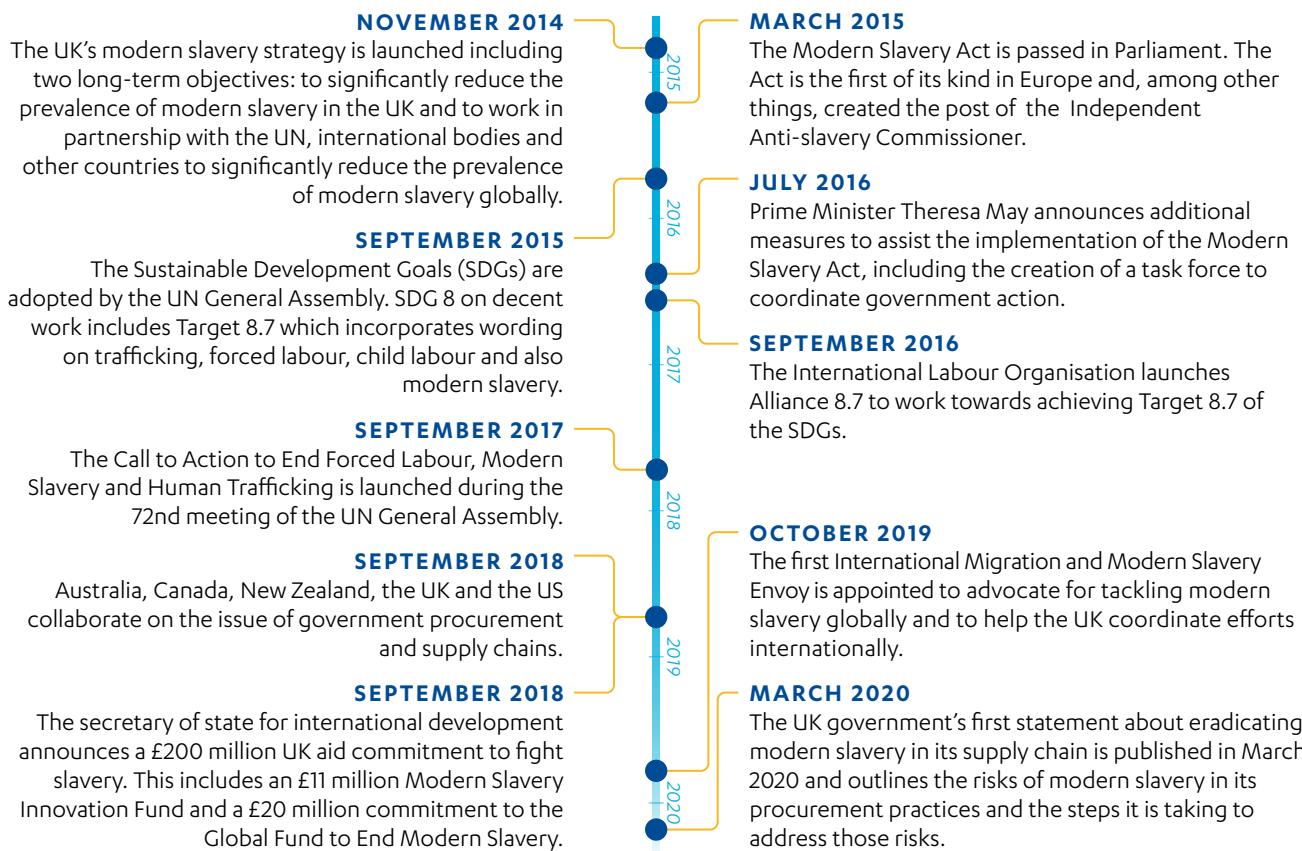
The UK's efforts to tackle modern slavery

- 3.6 The UK's international work on modern slavery followed the Modern Slavery Act of 2015, which established the UK's intention to be a leading country in addressing modern slavery issues.²⁸ Theresa May introduced the Act and played a prominent role in highlighting modern slavery, as home secretary up to 2016 and then as prime minister from 2016 to 2019. Over this period, tackling modern slavery internationally became a priority for UK aid. The UK successfully lobbied in 2015 for the inclusion of modern slavery within Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. It has raised the issue consistently in international forums and high-level declarations. At the 2017 UN General Assembly, Theresa May launched the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking by 2030, which has received over 90 endorsements by other governments.²⁹ In 2018 the UK, alongside Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US, launched an initiative entitled Principles to Combat Human Trafficking in Global Supply Chains. **Figure 3** provides a timeline of some of the key events.

²⁸ Modern slavery: how the UK is leading the fight, Home Office, July 2014, [link](#).

²⁹ How the Government is tackling modern slavery, Home Office in the Media blog, May 2019, [link](#).

Figure 3: Key milestones shaping the UK's modern slavery work



- 3.7 Combating modern slavery at the international level is a cross-government effort. The Home Office, DFID and the FCO have all been involved in delivering international programmes. These have been supplemented by the work of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, established under the 2015 Act, and the International Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy appointed by the FCO in 2019. Regular coordination meetings have been held between the departments. There are clear links between domestic and international modern slavery issues. The 2015 Modern Slavery Act³⁰ requires certain larger UK businesses to publish annual statements on what steps, if any, they are taking to tackle modern slavery risks in their supply chains, and high-profile tragedies, such as the death of 39 Vietnamese people in a lorry in Essex in October 2019,³¹ have illustrated how the movement of people across borders, as well as the production of goods, is open to abuse.
- 3.8 Between 2003 and 2012, before the period of our review, it was estimated that donor countries provided, on average, \$124 million annually to address modern slavery, of which the UK contributed \$5 million.³² There is no more recent comprehensive data on global spending on modern slavery, but the UK has significantly scaled up its international aid for tackling modern slavery over the past five years.
- 3.9 UK-funded projects are focused on “reducing vulnerability to exploitation, addressing the permissive environments that enable the criminality of modern slavery to thrive, and supporting businesses to employ innovative approaches to eradicate exploitation in their supply chains”³³ There is a strong focus on anti-trafficking measures, alongside research and programmes on livelihoods, addressing child labour and supporting returnees. Most programmes are specific to modern slavery, but DFID’s portfolio also included some pre-existing programmes that were retrospectively identified as being relevant to modern slavery or where a modern slavery component has been added. Over 90% of UK government

³⁰ Modern Slavery Act 2015, UK Government Legislation, 2015, [link](#).

³¹ See the latest updates on the investigation by Essex Police, [link](#).

³² OECD and modern slavery: How much aid money is spent to tackle the issue?, Anti-Trafficking Review, 2014, p. 4, [link](#).

³³ 2018 UK annual report on modern slavery, UK Government, October 2018, p. 45, [link](#).

programmes are in Asia and Africa. There are also a number of global programmes, including in support of the UK's global influencing objectives.

- 3.10 The Home Office has so far contributed £23.9 million to modern slavery programming, out of a stated commitment of £33.5 million, through the Modern Slavery Fund. This includes £11 million for a Modern Slavery Innovation Fund that invested in innovative projects designed to increase the evidence base on how to tackle modern slavery internationally. The Home Office has focused its support on developing countries with the highest flow of migrants to the UK who are subject to modern slavery. DFID identified £199.5 million of its aid funds being deployed to tackle modern slavery and the FCO has funded £2.9 million of projects through its International Programme budget.
- 3.11 Government departments reported that there were 86 projects in their modern slavery portfolio, with budgets totalling £238.3 million as illustrated in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: Modern slavery spending commitments across government departments

Department	Fund	No of projects/programmes	Budget
Home Office	Modern Slavery Fund (MSF)	16	£33.5m
Home Office	Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF)	18	
Home Office	Commonwealth Security Programme	2	£2.4m
FCO	International Programme	18	£2.9m
DFID	UK Aid Direct Fund	5	£4m
DFID	Country, regional and global programmes	27	£195.5m
	Total	86	£238.3m

4. Findings

- 4.1 This section presents the findings of our review, covering the learning, relevance and effectiveness of the UK government's response to modern slavery. Under learning, we explore how the UK has undertaken research to address gaps in evidence on modern slavery and how it has drawn on evidence for its own programming. In the relevance section, we assess how well the UK government has built a portfolio of programmes and influencing activities to address modern slavery. Finally, under effectiveness, we look at how well the portfolio was achieving results and maximising value for money.

Learning: How well has the UK government built and applied the evidence base in support of its modern slavery work?

The responsible departments have recognised significant data and evidence gaps, but do not have a modern slavery research strategy

- 4.2 Our literature review identified a lack of basic research to guide the design of modern slavery programmes, and noted that "there is extremely limited evidence on effective interventions."³⁴ The departments acknowledged that there is a weak evidence base to decide which aspects of modern slavery to prioritise and which interventions to undertake. Research is needed to identify causal factors and vulnerabilities that could be targeted by interventions. Nonetheless, the UK government has not developed a comprehensive approach to filling this gap. Several interviewees contrasted this with the What Works programme on violence against women and girls, a high-profile £25 million research and innovation programme launched in 2014 to guide UK programming.³⁵

“ What we don't have across government is a coherent research and evidence strategy. ”

UK civil servant

- 4.3 There is no adequate central repository of research and lessons learned. Under the Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF) (Home Office; £11 million; 2017-21), the Home Office has funded a new knowledge platform, called Delta 8.7, launched by the United Nations University in September 2018,³⁶ and linked to Alliance 8.7.³⁷ Delta 8.7 gathers global research to inform policy and practice on modern slavery. The UK has invested £1.3 million in this project and, while this is a promising initiative, it is currently too small in scale to drive global research or dissemination. The Home Office has also facilitated the creation of a UK-based community of practice, has funded UK universities to undertake research and is establishing a new Policy and Research Centre to generate research and data on modern slavery, with knowledge generation largely related to modern slavery in the UK.
- 4.4 There are substantial research gaps to be addressed. The literature review³⁸ and our expert interviewees recognised the need for longitudinal research, tracking people's experience of modern slavery over their lifetimes and along particular migration journeys or job-seeking paths, to help identify factors that give rise to vulnerability to, or safety from, exploitation, and the experiences of survivors with recovery and reintegration. Other research gaps were highlighted on freedom of movement, bonded labour, trafficking and forced labour. Insufficient attention has been given to learning lessons from interventions in similar areas, including regulating labour markets, addressing survivor needs and ending violence against women and girls. Much of trafficking is about labour exploitation, and there is a need

³⁴ Literature review available on the ICAI website; see also *Combatting human trafficking since Palermo: What do we know about what works?*, Katharine Bryant and Todd Landman, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 6, 2020, pp. 119-140, [link](#).

³⁵ *About What Works, What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls*, [link](#).

³⁶ Delta 8.7 – The Alliance 8.7 Knowledge Platform, [link](#).

³⁷ Alliance 8.7 is a global partnership seeking to achieve Target 8.7 of the SDGs, [link](#).

³⁸ Literature review available on the ICAI website.

to undertake additional reviews and evaluations of interventions by a range of international donors and agencies on recruitment fees, labour rights, freedom of association, migration and the role of the private sector in bringing about change in complex supply chains. There is also a need to understand better the experiences of particular groups of survivors, such as refugees and street children in low-income settings. Efforts to change behaviour through awareness raising would benefit from research on other complex behaviour change interventions, for example around female genital cutting, early marriage and violence against women and girls.

“ [Information] campaigns would not work in Nigeria. Before I left, I heard a microphone warn of the risks, but I didn’t pay attention, I never thought it would happen to me. ”

“ People think it will not happen to them – people think they have a 50/50 chance of getting to Europe. It’s not 50/50, it’s 90/10 [against]. ”

Survivors of trafficking, Nigeria

Box 7: 'Not for Sale' campaign in Nigeria

We saw an example in Nigeria of an initiative that had failed to draw on international research on trafficking awareness programmes. 'Not for Sale' (Home Office and DFID; £500,000; 2018-20) was a high-profile campaign that sought to raise awareness of local employment and training opportunities, and to change attitudes on irregular migration to Europe. The campaign targeted girls aged between 16 and 25 and their families with messages about the dangers of irregular migration and has also demonstrated innovation through its focus on the benefits for girls of working or starting their own businesses in Nigeria. The campaign targeted the southern states of Edo and Delta, as they have the highest rates of trafficking of women to Europe for sexual exploitation. Although Edo is a significant source of trafficking to the UK, the large majority of migrants from Edo are trafficked to other destinations, with Italy being top of the list.

'Not for Sale' appears to have been highly successful as an advertising campaign, in terms of brand recognition and recall of key messages, and was praised by Nigerian government officials as being better than previous campaigns. It demonstrated learning by expanding its messages in a second phase from young girls to their whole families, as the drivers for irregular migration were better understood. It has also provided links to training programmes that have helped some young people develop their own businesses. The review team's consultations with a sample of community members confirmed that awareness had been raised and key messages understood, leading to a reduction in intentions to travel abroad. The underlying premise of the campaign, however, is that awareness raising can reduce irregular migration and trafficking. Communities in Edo State place a high cultural value on personal advancement through migration and receive misleading stories of successful migration through social media, personal networks and from local agents.³⁹ In this context, increased knowledge about the risks of irregular migration or the economic opportunities available in Nigeria may not drive decision making.

Such awareness campaigns are a common modern slavery intervention around the world, but they are not supported by research.⁴⁰ Studies suggest that, even if such campaigns increase knowledge, they do not reduce trafficking because abuses are often beyond the control of any individual's own decision making. Examples include the social and economic pressures that people face within their own families and communities and the violence and coercion practised by traffickers at various stages during the migration journey. Some UK civil servants shared this view:

“ What I have noticed is a lot of donors...tend to spend a lot on awareness campaigns. They look nice, but by their own admission, [there is] very little evidence of their impacts. **”**

The campaign has also faced criticism for focusing exclusively on the drivers for international trafficking, despite evidence that trafficking within the country is an even greater problem in Nigeria. The campaign targeted the southern states of Edo and Delta, where international trafficking is highly prevalent, but neglects other parts of the country. As one survivor of human trafficking noted:

“ Now the focus is only Edo – I think they could expand to the east, the north and the west where they don't even have a number to call. **”**

³⁹ *Combatting irregular migration through rural awareness campaigns: the case of Edo State, Nigeria*, United Nations University Policy Brief Number 9, 2019, p. 3, [link](#).

⁴⁰ See, for example, *Human trafficking in South Asia: Assessing the effectiveness of interventions, rapid evidence assessment*, Department for International Development, London and HEART, March 2020, p. 32, [link](#).

The UK has promoted research and learning within individual programmes.

- 4.5 We found a more active approach to research and learning at the programme level. The programmes we reviewed were mostly selected without a strong base of research or evidence to guide the initial choice of interventions. Nonetheless, most showed an awareness of evidence gaps and incorporated research, contextual analysis and experimentation into the design of the programme. This seemed to work best when the government tapped into the expertise and networks of implementing partners, such as academic and multilateral organisations for the DFID Asia Regional Child Labour Programme (DFID; £26 million; 2018-23), or local civil society, as in the case of the DFID UK Aid Direct fund projects in Nepal (DFID; four projects totalling £3.3 million; 2018-21).
- 4.6 The establishment of the MSIF demonstrated the Home Office's commitment to research at project level, including a study on vulnerability to trafficking in major source countries for trafficking to the UK. The Modern Slavery Fund (MSF) programme in Nigeria (Home Office; £5 million; 2018-21), however, had no additional research component, even though its documentation identifies key data gaps. The FCO has undertaken small pieces of localised research, for instance on trafficking in South Africa and Latin America, but these efforts have been fragmentary. DFID programmes have generally done well in identifying evidence gaps and commissioning research and pilot initiatives to address them. Examples include:
- the Asia Regional Child Labour Programme, which identified a weak evidence base on the effectiveness of interventions on child labour and launched a large-scale pilot of innovative interventions for social protection
 - the Stamping Out Trafficking in Nigeria programme (DFID; £10 million; 2019-21), which commissioned research during its inception phase including on the political economy of Nigeria and on the drivers and enablers of unsafe migration
 - the AAWAZ II: Inclusion, Accountability, and Reducing Modern Slavery programme (DFID; £39.5 million; 2017-24), which commissioned research on the forms and patterns of modern slavery in Pakistan.

In most cases, with the exception of the main MSF programmes, research was commissioned as a programme activity, rather than to inform the selection and design of new interventions, and there has been inadequate evaluation work undertaken so far to generate outcome data and demonstrate the effectiveness of these pilots.

- 4.7 In terms of dissemination of learning, only a third of the programmes we reviewed have captured lessons learned and communicated them beyond programme level, but in some instances, fully fledged uptake and engagement strategies are in place. A further half of the programmes have developed learning products, but their dissemination is on an ad hoc basis rather than guided by a dissemination strategy. One sixth of the programmes (primarily FCO-led) demonstrated little to no evidence of lesson learning or dissemination, whether at programme level or beyond.

Box 8: Research and learning in the Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF)

The Modern Slavery Innovation Fund's first tranche of £6 million was opened to external bidders in 2017 to test innovative projects intended to reduce the prevalence of modern slavery. The MSIF seeks to contribute to the body of evidence on 'what works' and help identify which interventions might be increased in scale. It awarded funding to ten bidders in its first phase and eight in its second phase, with four partners from Phase 1 also receiving grants in Phase 2.

One example of research under the MSIF was the University of Bedfordshire, which was successful in gaining a grant during the first phase to research why human trafficking occurs and how the government can better support those who have been trafficked into the UK. The research was conducted in Albania, Nigeria and Vietnam, which at the time were the countries of origin of the highest number of referrals of people in the UK system. The project was carried out over two years, in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration. It provided a deepened understanding of the process and drivers of trafficking and practical recommendations as to how trafficking can be addressed.⁴¹

A series of learnings and recommendations emerged in the first phase of the MSIF that were used to inform the second phase of the fund. An evaluation was undertaken and findings shared with grant recipients, but the findings have not yet been published. The MSIF call for proposals for tranche two projects stated that they should constitute new innovations in order to fund as many new approaches as possible. However, in response to a question as to whether bidders could include a longitudinal study five years after conclusion of an MSIF project, the Home Office stated it would not fund any activity beyond the original 27-month period.

The government has shared learning internally, but its systems are at an early stage and external dissemination has been hampered by confidentiality requirements

- 4.8 There has been good cross-departmental dialogue and collaboration on modern slavery, and DFID has shared expertise with the Home Office on how to capture learning. Reviews of programmes and regular updates have been shared between departments, but systems for learning within government are still at an early stage and were acknowledged as "nascent" by Home Office officials. We did not see extensive evidence of learning being analysed and lessons being collated or made accessible for use at a later date.
- 4.9 There was evidence of real-time learning being generated from the MSIF programmes as highlighted in the previous ICAI review of *How UK aid learns*, which also concluded that the Home Office was at an early stage in developing a learning architecture for its aid work.⁴² In other areas, given the sensitive nature of some of its modern slavery work, the Home Office has found it easier to share lessons within the department, or with colleagues in other government departments, than with external partners or the public. For the MSF, lessons have been regularly drawn from operations in countries where programmes are being implemented through a six-monthly review process led from London and involving all departments represented in country. Making such information public, however, has been seen as carrying high risks, particularly in countries that object to the use of the term 'modern slavery'. The Home Office has increasingly drawn on expertise from the Stabilisation Unit and the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund to facilitate internal learning processes.
- 4.10 The FCO has had a similarly limited commitment to sharing learning outside of government. It has collected progress reports from modern slavery projects around the world, but systems for aggregating lessons learned, sharing them between projects and making them more widely available have been underdeveloped. There was evidence of the FCO drawing periodic lessons from modern slavery projects supported by the International Programme,⁴³ but these lessons have not been aggregated. The FCO

⁴¹ 'Between two fires': Understanding vulnerabilities and support needs of people from Albania, Viet Nam and Nigeria who have experienced human trafficking into the UK, University of Bedfordshire, September 2017, [link](#).

⁴² *How UK aid learns*, ICAI, September 2019, [link](#).

⁴³ Previously known as 'strategic and bilateral programmes' and 'FCO departmental programmes', the FCO International Programme finances projects which promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries. *Official Development Assistance (ODA): FCO International Programme*, UK Government, last updated March 2020, [link](#).

has also regularly reviewed progress, providing six-monthly updates to ministers on behalf of the three departments, feeding into wider work and ensuring head of mission-level engagement where appropriate.

- 4.11 DFID has been the most open of the departments on external learning, in terms of both sharing its own learning and drawing on the learning of others. It has commissioned various reviews of the evidence for 'what works' for addressing modern slavery, particularly in South Asia.⁴⁴ It has worked closely with researchers at the Freedom Fund, Nottingham Rights Lab, the United Nations University and the Minderoo Foundation on a regular basis. It has also encouraged partners to invest in learning to inform future programming.

The UK has not drawn adequately on international experience and established approaches in its modern slavery work

- 4.12 In 2017, the UK took up the issue of modern slavery on the global stage. The government recognised that the issue could not be successfully tackled in the UK without addressing the international dimension, and the then prime minister, Theresa May, who had started working on modern slavery as home secretary, made it a cross-government priority. The UK sought to promote international agreements and cooperation and to invest more in programming. The UK's international engagement was strongly influenced by its domestic experience, and the requirements of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act. Stakeholders agreed that the Act helped raise the profile of the issue internationally, with the private sector and with the general public.
- 4.13 The UK was not a first mover in the area. There have been international agreements and conventions in place on slavery and forced labour since 1926 and 1930 respectively, the challenge is integral to the mandates of a number of UN agencies, notably the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and bilateral donors, such as the US, have been working on human trafficking issues for many years. However, the UK has tended to ask others to adopt its own approach, rather than building on existing experience. Some stakeholders saw its efforts as duplicative or detracting from existing work, rather than enhancing cooperation.
- 4.14 The UK put considerable effort into launching an international campaign around the issue. The term 'modern slavery' was seen as adding rhetorical force. It lent visibility and moral urgency to an issue that is often hidden in less transparent parts of the labour market. Use of the language of slavery also harked back to the international campaign to abolish the slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries, suggesting that a similar campaigning ethic would be required.
- 4.15 We discussed the UK's adoption of the term 'modern slavery' with a wide range of stakeholders. A minority of them, mainly from civil society, supported its use, for its ability to add moral weight to their own advocacy efforts. However, most stakeholders saw it as unhelpful because it was not anchored in established international agreements on forced labour, child labour and trafficking in persons. It was also criticised for heightening political sensitivities, and for being too broad, vague and lacking in legal definition.
- 4.16 For some countries, 'modern slavery' terminology is unacceptable, particularly for those that have a history of enslavement. It is widely seen as justifying a criminal justice approach, rather than focusing on the need to promote human rights and reform labour markets.⁴⁵ The term does not distinguish between different forms and degrees of exploitation, and risks stigmatising survivors as 'slaves'.
- 4.17 Underlining the problematic nature of the term 'modern slavery', we found that, in practice, UK government staff around the world have adapted their language in response to local sensitivities and understanding. In many countries, the UK government itself does not use 'modern slavery' terminology due to its contested nature. We support this approach.

⁴⁴ See, for example, *Interventions to combat modern slavery*, Iffat Idris, University of Birmingham, December 2017, [link](#); and *Modern slavery prevention and responses in South Asia: An evidence map*, Pauline Oosterhoff et al., DFID, December 2018, [link](#).

⁴⁵ See, for example, *Beyond trafficking and slavery: Eight reasons why we shouldn't use the term 'modern slavery'*, Mike Dottridge, Open Democracy, October 2017, [link](#).

“ You can talk about specific issues such as safe migration, trafficking, poor working conditions. Modern slavery is perceived as a made-up Western agenda. ”

“ People don’t like the term; it is embedded in the historical, colonial and military rule context, so it’s very difficult to come here as Westerners and bring up terms like modern slavery. ”

British government officials working in aid-recipient countries

- 4.18 The term ‘modern slavery’ was included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) following a strong lobbying effort by the UK in 2015. The UK government and the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner were influential in its insertion as an additional element of SDG 8.7 in the closing stages of the negotiations.⁴⁶ This was alongside the existing terms ‘forced labour’, ‘human trafficking’ and ‘child labour’. While this demonstrated the UK’s diplomatic influence, not all stakeholders believed that it was a helpful intervention. Some saw it as an unsatisfactory last-minute process, which lacked sufficient consensus from other governments. The resulting language is repetitive and confusing, in that it refers to both modern slavery and some of its constituent elements, as well as importing controversial terminology.
- 4.19 Alliance 8.7 was set up by the international community to take forward the implementation of SDG 8.7 and the UK has supported these efforts. Alliance 8.7 is a global strategic partnership, led by the ILO, where partners come together to support governments in achieving Target 8.7.⁴⁷ The forum promotes research, collaboration among partners and exchange of ideas to promote understanding of the problem and accelerate action to address it (see **Box 9**).

Box 9: Target 8.7 and Alliance 8.7

Target 8.7 of the SDGs states: “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”⁴⁸

Alliance 8.7 has four ‘action groups’ covering the rule of law and governance, conflict and humanitarian settings, supply chains and migration. The UK has funded the migration action group, which is focusing on trafficking and irregular migration. All three government departments, plus the Department for Work and Pensions, have had independent representation in this action group.

The Alliance has recognised 21 ‘pathfinder’ countries, including Nigeria, which have made commitments to accelerate action to end modern slavery and have been supported in delivering their action plans. These action plans have measurable targets and are subject to annual review. Alliance 8.7’s sister project, the Delta 8.7 knowledge platform (Home Office; £1.3 million; 2017-19) is run by the United Nations University and is funded exclusively by the UK through the MSIF.

Conclusion on learning

- 4.20 The responsible UK departments have identified evidence gaps on modern slavery, but have not commissioned comprehensive or long-term research to guide programming. We did not identify a UK or global centre for modern slavery research capable of marshalling the evidence effectively. There has been some good contextual research within individual projects, but it is not strongly linked to programming choices. External sharing of learning is constrained by concerns with confidentiality.

⁴⁶ Ending my tenure as Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, May 2018, [link](#).

⁴⁷ Alliance 8.7, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, [link](#).

⁴⁸ Sustainable Development Goal 8 Targets and Indicators, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, [link](#).

- 4.21 The UK approached its international advocacy as though modern slavery were a new topic for international cooperation, without building adequately on existing international cooperation on trafficking, child labour and forced labour, which are terms with wider international acceptability and a stronger legal base. We treat this as a failure of learning because the UK did not adequately inform itself about, or build on, what had gone before. The term 'modern slavery' has helped to raise awareness, but has also risked alienating some potential partners. Its inclusion in the SDGs was duplicative and confusing. We therefore award an **amber-red** score for learning.

Relevance: How well has the UK government gone about building a relevant, strategic, coordinated and credible portfolio of modern slavery programmes and influencing activities?

The UK has yet to publish a statement on its objectives and approach for using aid to tackle modern slavery

- 4.22 The UK government published a modern slavery strategy in 2014,⁴⁹ which was primarily focused on modern slavery within the UK and the associated law enforcement challenge. The strategy was based on 'four Ps' – Pursue, Protect, Prevent and Prepare – the same strategic framework that the Home Office had used to inform its response to terrorism and serious organised crime. Internationally, the strategy focused on law enforcement cooperation and intelligence sharing. It also highlighted the need to protect vulnerable people, both those at risk of trafficking to the UK and those in countries with high domestic incidence of modern slavery. Its limited references to international action, however, were as an additional means of dealing with the problem in the UK. The international section of the strategic approach was only two paragraphs, emphasising partnerships and the role of the FCO.
- 4.23 The government's approach to addressing modern slavery internationally has developed considerably over the past six years. The government recognises the need to reduce modern slavery in countries with high incidence, whether or not they have links to the UK, and for multilateral engagement and international coordination to drive action to eradicate modern slavery globally. However, the government has not undertaken an analysis of the multifaceted nature of modern slavery or identified clear policy options. Departments have clear responsibilities, but lack a shared framework for engagement or intended results. There has been no analysis of what sustainable freedom from modern slavery looks like for survivors and how it can be measured.
- 4.24 We found no evidence of survivor engagement in developing the government's approach. This is important because testimony on the needs and experiences of survivors is necessary both to understand the nature of the problem and to plan and design effective programmes in response. The government is reluctant to publish a statement because it is diplomatically sensitive to identify countries with a high incidence of modern slavery. Civil society argued that this lack of transparency has constrained both external oversight and shared learning. The lack of any public statement of the government's international modern slavery objectives and approach is surprising, especially since most elements of the programming can be found within documents in the public domain.

Programmes have generally not been selected on the basis of a systematic review of modern slavery in a given country or the priorities of partner governments

- 4.25 One of the weaknesses of the UK modern slavery approach is that it has treated modern slavery as a single phenomenon, when its elements are extremely diverse. The UK's modern slavery work has not been based on a systematic global analysis of these elements, their relative priority and policy options for responding to them. Each department has a different focus to its work. The Home Office has prioritised countries based on data from the UK's National Referral Mechanism and other third-party sources which give information about countries where the problem is greatest. The FCO's work was driven by a human rights approach, linked to the Call to Action, and has been focused on high-incidence countries. DFID programming has been more decentralised to its country offices and regional teams

⁴⁹ Modern slavery strategy, Home Office, November 2014, [link](#).

and does not appear to have been driven by a global approach. In Asia, DFID saw the availability of new resources to address modern slavery after 2015 as a way to expand existing work on trafficking and child labour, and has taken a strongly regional approach. In Africa, its work has consisted mainly of country-level programmes: a few country offices, such as Nigeria, have placed a high priority on the issue, while others have not been engaged at all. The priorities for UK programming have mainly been set by the UK government itself. We saw little evidence of joint strategies with governments in partner countries.

- 4.26 In Nigeria, the UK's choice of programming has focused primarily on international trafficking and has not responded in the same way to the challenges of modern slavery within the country. There are few opportunities for safe migration from Nigeria and the Home Office programmes have supported law enforcement focused on police, border forces, the national anti-trafficking agency (NAPTIP) and anti-trafficking activities. The UK has also provided support through the IOM to 350 returnees from Libya with high levels of need. The DFID programmes focused on the prevention of trafficking, with a strong emphasis on alternative livelihoods. DFID also supported 1,700 returnees through the IOM, in cooperation with the Home Office. The UK portfolio does not have a strong focus on trafficking within Nigeria, even though the British High Commission in Abuja told us that there were over a million people in domestic servitude in slavery conditions, and major problems with child labour.

Box 10: Nigeria trafficking survivor story

“ I used to own shops where I sold goods. After my husband died when I was 22, I needed more income. I was told that if I had foreign goods, I could sell more and then I would earn more. A woman, new to the area, began targeting me. She asked people in our area about me, she had found out that my husband had just died. She recruited me. I was told we were going to Egypt to buy goods and that we would be back in two weeks. She collected money for a passport and a ticket from me. I ended up giving her 228,000 naira [about £500]. I later found out the passport was fake. I left Nigeria having sold everything, leaving my two-month-old baby with my mother for what I thought would only be for two weeks. I expected to arrive in Egypt, but I ended up in Libya where I was beaten, stripped naked and threatened that my nude photographs would be sold. My parents are religious, my father is Muslim. I did not want to disappoint him. I was sold like a piece of gold in Libya, an Arab family purchased me, and they beat me and constantly nagged me. Without help from agency X,⁵⁰ I would have gone crazy – any noise triggers fears. **”**

Returnee from Libya, woman, small business owner, Nigeria

- 4.27 The priorities for UK programming in Bangladesh have been promoting safe, legal migration and tackling child labour, which are appropriate to the context. Our visit focused particularly on the two main DFID regional programmes – the Work in Freedom programme (DFID; Phase 1: £10 million; 2013-18, Phase 2: £13 million; 2018-23) on migration, implemented through the ILO, and the Asia Regional Child Labour Programme, implemented through the ILO, UNICEF and the Institute for Development Studies. There are estimated to be 1.33 million children⁵¹ in the worst forms of hazardous labour in Bangladesh. The Asia Regional Child Labour Programme has chosen not to specify targets for the reduction of child labour in Bangladesh at this stage, since its initial focus has been on generating evidence and learning on 'what works'. The DFID Excluded People's Rights programme (DFID; £48 million; 2017-23), has had a target of 44,000 children removed from the most hazardous forms of child labour, although this is often to less hazardous forms of child labour. The government of Bangladesh launched a three-year programme in 2018 to reduce numbers by 100,000 children.⁵² These targets are positive, but remain well short of the level of effort that would be required to meet SDG Target 8.7 of eliminating child labour by 2025.

⁵⁰

Agencies have been anonymised to protect the identity of individuals.

⁵¹

2018 findings on the worst forms of child labour: Bangladesh, US Department of Labor, 2018, p. 1, [link](#).

⁵²

2018 findings on the worst forms of child labour: Bangladesh, US Department of Labor, 2018, p. 1, [link](#).

The programme has neglected some dimensions of modern slavery, as well as transit and destination countries

- 4.28 Different approaches and different evidence bases are needed to address the different elements of modern slavery, including capturing the varied gendered experiences. Interventions that might be effective for forced labour in construction are not likely to be appropriate for domestic workers, forced street begging, or other sectors such as mining, agriculture or fishing. The UK portfolio has tended to focus on international trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation and child labour. Issues of domestic servitude and trafficking within countries have featured in only a small number of UK programmes, despite their global importance.⁵³
- 4.29 It makes little sense to address international trafficking and forced migration in source countries without also taking necessary action in destination countries and along migration pathways. In Bangladesh, many of the problems associated with migration are linked to abuses in destination countries, where workers lack legal rights and the opportunities for organisation or legal representation. The Work in Freedom programme is one of the few examples in which programmes have been extended to destination countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon. Through MSIF Phase 2, the Home Office has also piloted interventions in transit and destination countries. The FCO has engaged in advocacy in Gulf countries (a key global destination for migrant labour) to address abuses in labour markets, but much more could have been done in major destination countries, in partnership with national authorities, to promote the rights of migrant workers and to enhance the support available to those who suffer exploitation.

The UK has worked with a wide range of implementing partners as channels for delivery on a project basis, but not as strategic partners

- 4.30 The government, and in particular DFID, has tackled modern slavery through interventions at different levels from grassroots development, empowering civil society and engaging the private sector, to national policy and legal reform. The work has involved a wide range of implementing partners, selected for their capacity and networks. We found good examples of programmes working together with international organisations, international and local civil society, faith-based organisations, national and local governments, and universities. The project Transforming India's Capacity and Response to Bonded and Forced Labour (Home Office; £115,000; 2018-21), for example, has undertaken multiple, complementary initiatives to develop government and civil society capacity and commitment to addressing bonded labour, including strengthening the criminal justice system, victim empowerment and business engagement.
- 4.31 We heard feedback from a range of agencies, however, that the UK government has tended to treat them as contractors implementing its programming objectives, rather than as strategic partners. We found that it has not worked at a strategic level with other organisations to draw on their particular mandates and capabilities – such as the standard-setting role of UN organisations, the capacity and legitimacy of national governments and the diverse skills and expertise of civil society organisations and private sector companies. Alliance 8.7 is a positive partnership, but there was little evidence of wider UK cooperation with other donors on a collaborative basis for programme delivery. One multilateral official expressed concern that their organisation was not being recognised as a strategic partner, but merely as a delivery mechanism for UK programmes.

Modern slavery initiatives have not been scaled up or mainstreamed across UK aid or linked with broader sectoral programmes

- 4.32 Addressing modern slavery more comprehensively requires a scaling up of existing activities and particularly the inclusion of modern slavery elements in a much broader range of development programmes. There are opportunities to address aspects of modern slavery across a range of development and humanitarian programmes, including on education, health, governance, private sector development and the protection of refugees. However, there has been no plan for scaling up and no systematic approach to mainstreaming modern slavery issues across the UK aid portfolio.

⁵³ Our analysis of government programmes suggests for example that the number of programmes addressing domestic servitude is less than a third of those addressing trafficking.

- 4.33 We did not see evidence of training for departmental staff on modern slavery outside the context of specific programmes, or the production of guidance notes for staff to help raise awareness or integrate modern slavery into sectoral programming. There are very few modern slavery specialists employed by the UK government. A dedicated in-country programme manager in Nigeria has greatly assisted programme delivery and coordination and such posts are in place for all major MSF programmes. All three UK government departments are represented in Bangladesh and noted the difference that a dedicated modern slavery adviser had made when employed in Dhaka, but this post has been discontinued. The government's portfolio of dedicated modern slavery programmes is inevitably small in scale in relation to the problem being addressed. If modern slavery is to be ended, effective interventions will need to be mainstreamed by domestic governments, donors and aid agencies. Training is also likely to be needed for implementing partners, so that they can apply a modern slavery lens to their work.
- 4.34 We identified some specific opportunities for mainstreaming during the course of the review, as outlined in **Box 11**. There are also opportunities to address modern slavery through trade agreements and related initiatives. There are notable gaps in research and knowledge on the links between modern slavery and other development challenges, particularly economic transition, migration, natural resource exploitation and serious organised crime. Recently, DFID began to explore the impact of climate change on modern slavery, where it is feared that the increase in poverty and forced migration prompted by climate change will lead to greater vulnerability to exploitation.

Box 11: Opportunities for focused mainstreaming

During our consultations, we identified a number of areas of UK aid where modern slavery elements could usefully be incorporated, as a way of scaling up the impact of the UK's work. These included:

- education projects⁵⁴ to ensure that those in bonded labour have access to schools and that school curricula cover modern slavery issues
- humanitarian programmes, given that refugees and displaced people are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of exploitation
- governance programmes to promote effective regulation and enforcement of legislation
- livelihoods and economic development projects, including supply chain analysis
- COVID-19 responses to identify groups with heightened vulnerability to modern slavery.

We found one positive mainstreaming initiative in Pakistan. Following research funded by the South Asia Research Fund,⁵⁵ a presentation was held for the DFID Pakistan country team. Opportunities for mainstreaming were reviewed in a range of sectors and DFID Pakistan has sought to mainstream modern slavery approaches into governance and education programmes, including exploring the links between child labour and education provision.

Survivor voices have been largely absent at policy level, but there has been some involvement of survivors in programme implementation

- 4.35 Experts agree that meaningful survivor engagement is necessary at all stages of interventions to address modern slavery, from policy through implementation to evaluation. Our literature review⁵⁶ noted the need to focus on the experiences of individuals affected. We found no evidence of survivor inputs into the UK government's policy development.

⁵⁴ Research on the links between education and child labour is being undertaken by the UNICEF Office of Research under the Asia Regional Child Labour Programme.

⁵⁵ *Modern slavery in Pakistan: final report*, DAI, August 2019, [link](#).

⁵⁶ Literature review available on the ICAI website.

“ Whilst there is increasing recognition in the UK that policy and programme development should be more survivor-informed, and emerging examples of good practice globally, the UK is yet to develop an embedded approach to survivor involvement, in which survivors play a central and consistent role in policy making. Developing this will take time and will be a learning process. ”

Nothing about us, without us. Survivor involvement in anti-slavery policy making: Guidance for policy makers, University of Nottingham, 2020⁵⁷

- 4.36 Within the government’s influencing activities, there have been efforts to bring the voice of survivors to the table. This included enabling space for a women’s forum and survivor stories at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in April 2018,⁵⁸ and inviting a prominent survivor to speak at a UN General Assembly high-level event: Stepping up Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in September 2018.⁵⁹
- 4.37 From our reviews of programme documentation, the level of engagement with those intended to benefit has been mixed, with more involvement in implementation than design. One third of programmes had no inclusion of those intended to benefit, one third made some level of commitment and one third of programmes made a strong commitment to drawing on the voices of those intended to benefit throughout the project cycle. We found that FCO-funded projects were less likely to consult with those intended to benefit than Home Office or DFID-funded programmes. There is no evidence that grantees under the FCO International Programme, such as the programme for mapping modern slavery in Latin America (FCO; £216,000; 2018-20), were required to consult survivors. This was in part related to the small size of the programmes.
- 4.38 We reviewed three projects within DFID’s UK Aid Direct scheme, which has provided funding for civil society programmes. These projects provide a very positive model of involving people intended to benefit at all stages of project delivery, from design to implementation. Across the three grants that we reviewed in Nepal, communities had been consulted at the design stage and consultation mechanisms were in place and being reported on. We also saw evidence of consultation with survivors and those intended to benefit in our country visits, including the IOM rehabilitation projects in Nigeria and the Work in Freedom and Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (DFID; £22 million; 2018-22) programmes in Bangladesh. Despite these good examples, however, our overall finding is that survivor engagement across the portfolio has been inadequate.

“ There is a lack of survivor voice in terms of research and in terms of informing programme design. ”

Civil society representative

⁵⁷ *Nothing about us, without us. Survivor involvement in anti-slavery policy making: Guidance for policy makers, University of Nottingham, March 2020, p. 3, [link](#).*
⁵⁸ *The Forums, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, London, April 2018, [link](#).*
⁵⁹ *Introduced by Penny Mordaunt in a speech on modern slavery at UNGA 2018, UK Government, September 2018, [link](#).*

Box 12: Lessons from survivor testimony in Bangladesh and Nigeria

Survivor testimonies that we heard reinforced the following policy lessons:

Bangladesh

- It is the lack of livelihood opportunities that causes women to migrate.
- Women often have to take out loans to migrate and fall into a cycle of debt.
- Action is needed against corrupt agents and intermediaries involved in recruitment.
- Not all migration experiences are bad.
- Women are unlikely to talk about sexual exploitation or abuse they may have experienced abroad due to stigma.
- Women suggest that there should be local physical offices they can visit to access information and services for migration in both departure and destination countries.

Nigeria

- More could be done by government to address the causes of modern slavery, including improving livelihood opportunities, cracking down on trafficking networks and strengthening border controls on known trafficking routes.
- Experiences of severe violence and detention in Libya highlight the importance of mainstreaming efforts to tackle modern slavery into humanitarian programmes.
- There has been a significant lag for survivors between returning to Nigeria and receiving reintegration support.
- More can be done to raise awareness through digital media, especially for young people.
- There is a need to focus on domestic as well as international trafficking.

Government programmes have been weak on gender and other cross-cutting analysis

4.39 Characteristics such as gender, age, caste and other demographic factors impact significantly on the experience of victims of modern slavery. Female and male survivors differ according to how and at what age they are recruited, and for what sector and purpose. Effective interventions need to take these variable factors into account. We saw limited evidence of this. Home Office documentation was initially weak on gender. MSF and MSIF programme documents now go into more detail on gender, but do not adequately address disability, ethnicity, religion or age. Our gender analysis concluded that the UK government has missed the opportunity to take gender into consideration in a meaningful way.

“ For women there is a lack of employment opportunities. They have low salaries. Women want to go abroad to earn money. ”

Volunteer, Bangladesh

“ When these girls are married off early, there is a chance that their husbands might leave or the couple might separate. These women are then forced to migrate due to their circumstance. ”

Manager, partner organisation, Bangladesh

“ Lots of women have gone abroad to work. They were misinformed, they were told they will do domestic work but this isn't true. Because women have spent so much money they adjust. Women face sexual exploitation. Men can work with ten other men, but women cannot. **”**

Woman community member, Bangladesh

Box 13: Gender analysis within the modern slavery portfolio

The Gender Equality (International Development) Act 2014 requires the government to consider the possibility of addressing gender inequality in all aid programmes. The modern slavery portfolio largely falls short in its obligation to consider the different experiences of women and men. Although there have been attempts to collect disaggregated data and to run some gender-focused programmes, gender is not addressed systematically. The UK government has missed various opportunities to take gender into consideration:

- Understanding gender as a factor in identifying victims, survivors and perpetrators.
- Assessing how stigma is experienced differently across genders and age groups.
- Recognising that sexual exploitation is predominately experienced by women and girls, whereas men and boys are more at risk of labour exploitation.
- Having gendered perspectives on employment, care, abuse and sexual exploitation.
- Utilising a gender-transformative approach which challenges the power dynamics and structures that reinforce gendered inequalities.
- Undertaking bottom-up approaches to gender analysis by listening to survivor voices, especially when designing programmes.
- Approaching gender as non-binary and engaging with transgender communities.

4.40 From our reviews of programme documentation, DFID has done more than the other departments to incorporate gender analysis. The Work in Freedom programme in Asia and the LIFT programme in Myanmar (see **Box 14**) were strong examples. The FCO had some good examples of community-based methodologies that have a focus on women, including the Talitha Kum training on human trafficking in Africa (FCO; £40,599; 2018-20), and its Supporting Victims of Trafficking projects have displayed gender-sensitive approaches. However, many of the Home Office and FCO programmes have not collected gender-disaggregated data, thus preventing meaningful gender analysis. The UK government has not shared lessons about gender issues across the portfolio. Key stakeholders from civil society and the private sector were in agreement that more could have been done on gender.

Box 14: Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) in Myanmar

A good example of mainstreaming modern slavery issues in larger programmes was the DFID-supported LIFT Fund in Myanmar. LIFT is a £480 million programme to improve the livelihoods and prospects of the most vulnerable people in Myanmar. The UK government is the largest of nine current donors to LIFT. Over 14 million people have benefited from the programme over the past ten years. Since 2015, and at the UK's instigation, LIFT has included a focus on reducing exploitation of migrant workers and other dimensions of modern slavery, including human trafficking and debt bondage. It brought in expert advice, commissioned foundational research and worked with a wide range of key partners, including the ILO and IOM, to develop programmes. Interventions have applied gender-specific approaches to programming and have been informed by the voices of migrants and trafficking survivors. The programme has included:

- strengthening legislation and policies on labour and social protection, migration governance and anti-trafficking to better protect vulnerable groups, including migrant domestic workers
- increasing access to justice for labour abuses through free legal aid and improving the remedies offered by the government's grievance mechanisms
- engaging civil society and trade unions to deliver safe migration information and services to protect the rights of vulnerable migrants, particularly for ethnic minorities
- providing access to affordable finance to help families keep girls in school
- improving working conditions for migrant women in the garment sector through skills development, peer support and protection from violence and harassment
- working with BBC Media Action to increase awareness of safe migration, expand public dialogue on decent work and improve the media discourse on migration
- supporting rescue and rehabilitation of women trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced marriage, including trauma counselling and training for alternative livelihoods.

The COVID-19 response of this programme, in the first three months of the crisis, reached a total of one million people, including preventative information, personal protective equipment, food assistance, shelter, transportation, legal assistance and psychosocial support for vulnerable migrants.

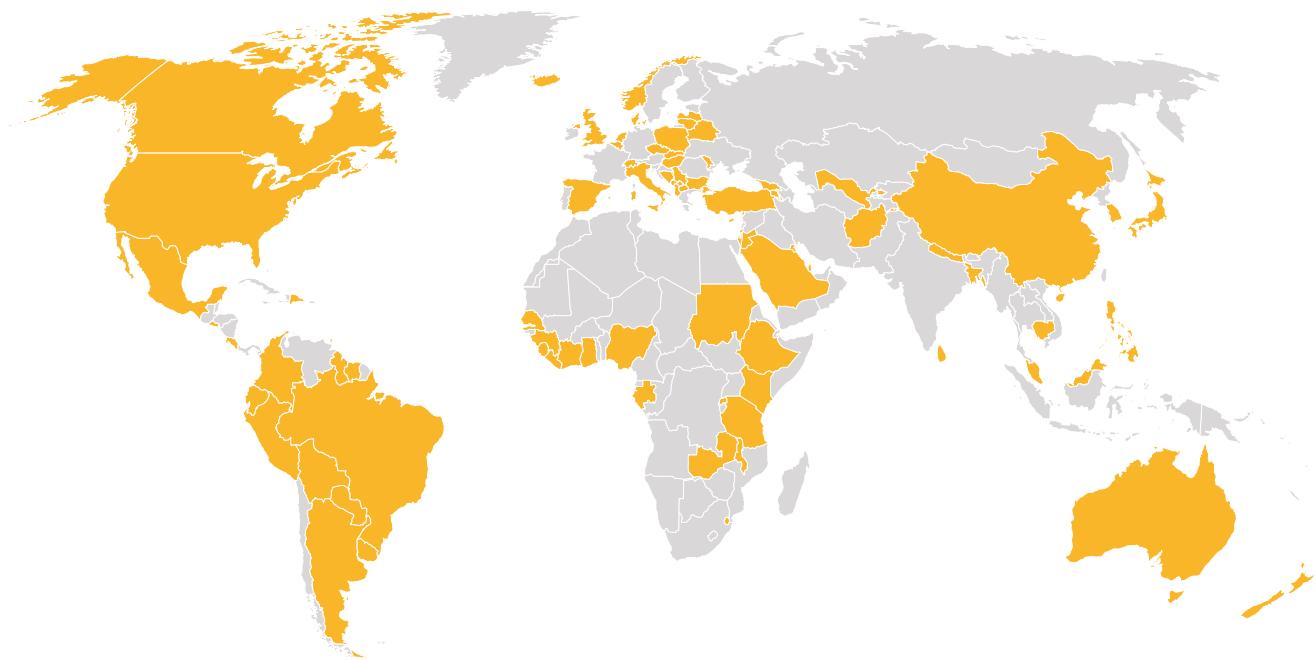
The UK's sustained international campaign on modern slavery has helped to raise the profile of the issue

- 4.41 Modern slavery is an area where the government has demonstrated a joined-up approach between its aid programmes and its diplomacy. The launch of the Call to Action by the then prime minister, Theresa May, at the UN General Assembly in September 2017 was a central plank of the UK government's influencing strategy. The Call to Action⁶⁰ is a non-binding declaration signed by national governments to express their commitment to eradicating modern slavery. The government has sustained its influencing effort on the Call to Action over three years and has been successful in persuading almost half of the member states of the UN to sign up (92 out of 193 as of March 2020). There are significant absences in the signatories, including India, Pakistan, South Africa, Indonesia, half of the EU countries (including France and Germany), some Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean, and Russia, which for a variety of reasons disagree with the UK's approach, definitions or terminology. The Call to Action has also divided opinion among experts, with some valuing the heightened attention it has brought to the issue and others seeing it as divisive.
- 4.42 The UK government has also integrated modern slavery into other high-level international commitments and declarations and sustained this over time. It has raised the issue in some 27 international events and declarations since 2017, including with Commonwealth heads of government in April 2018, the Fourth Global Conference on Child Labour in November 2017, G20 labour and employment ministers in July 2017 and G7 foreign and security ministers in June 2018. It has secured new commitments on modern slavery through UN processes, for example contributing to the Global Compact on Migration negotiations

⁶⁰ This call to action was launched on 19 September 2017 during the 72nd Meeting of the UN General Assembly. A *call to action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking*, Delta 8.7, November 2018, [link](#).

in 2018. The UK government has made representations to the UN Security Council and established trafficking in conflict and humanitarian situations as an international peace and security issue in March 2017. There has also been policy-level advocacy with other governments, for example through regular recommendations under the Universal Periodic Review process, which examines the human rights records of all 193 UN member states and takes place under the UN Human Rights Council.⁶¹

Figure 5: Countries that have signed the Call to Action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking



Source: Data obtained from the FCO as part of our request for information in March 2020

We have seen little evidence of impact on the ground from the Call to Action

- 4.43 Under the Call to Action, signatory countries are invited to nominate the actions they will take to address modern slavery. These voluntary commitments are not backed up by any monitoring and reporting mechanisms or any commitment to making financial allocations. We did not see evidence that the Call to Action has made substantial practical impact, and there was a lack of awareness among key players at national and international level of its existence.
- 4.44 Particularly concerning is the fact that countries touted as regional champions, such as Bangladesh or Nigeria, have taken very few steps towards implementation. During our country visits, the partner government representatives we spoke to were either unaware of the Call to Action or told us that it had not led to any specific action. The federal government of Nigeria signed up to the Call to Action and offered to be a regional leader within West Africa. Some state governments in Nigeria have taken action under the Call to Action, but there has been little follow-up or reporting at the federal level. This was well summed up by a senior politician in Nigeria, who recognised that the Call to Action was an important political moment, but queried its practical significance. Bangladesh also signed up and made a series of commitments. There was, however, at the time of our visit, no clear institutional lead within the government of Bangladesh for taking these actions and the senior officials we met with were not aware of the Call to Action.

⁶¹ Universal periodic review, United Nations Human Rights Council, [link](#).

The government's emphasis on tackling modern slavery in global supply chains is important, but its approach to working with the private sector has been limited

- 4.45 The literature confirms that modern slavery is often hidden within complex international supply chains and subcontracting arrangements. The Modern Slavery Act requires larger UK companies to publish statements setting out what steps they have taken, if any, to ensure that modern slavery is not taking place in their business or global supply chains.⁶² The hope is that greater transparency will create incentives for UK companies to work with their suppliers to address the problem. However, we received consistent feedback from private sector representatives that the UK's engagement with the private sector was narrowly focused on transparency at the expense of other collaborative action to address modern slavery. Many of our interviewees believed that the private sector could contribute a deeper understanding of business models, labour practices and supply chains, and could do more to mobilise their networks and points of leverage, if the UK government played a complementary role, for example by convening joint sectoral working groups.
- 4.46 Businesses also stressed the importance of establishing a level playing field in which unethical competitors do not undercut companies that are trying to do the right thing. There was an appetite from private companies that have taken a lead on eliminating modern slavery from their supply chains to work with the government to drive greater compliance by other companies in specific economic sectors such as construction.

“ Businesses want a level playing field more than they want a reduction in red tape. We need government to support the companies that want to do decent work and not get undercut by 'Johnny no ethics'. ”

Private sector stakeholder

- 4.47 The Home Office has worked much more closely with private companies than DFID or the FCO, especially through the Business Against Slavery Forum,⁶³ although the focus has been on domestic engagement and has lacked the international support that many businesses need. The Home Office and the FCO have both had teams that combine a modern slavery and business remit, giving them more insight into the role that the private sector can play in addressing modern slavery. DFID's approach at its headquarters was much weaker, and our interviewees argued that DFID displayed a mistrust of the private sector and a limited willingness to engage directly with private companies. For all government departments, most efforts have been addressed towards large private sector enterprises, but a substantial proportion of extreme exploitation occurs in local small enterprises and in the informal sector, where evidence is difficult to collect and interventions are challenging to design and implement.
- 4.48 Across our sample, involvement with the private sector varied widely. About one fifth of the programmes we reviewed showed deep engagement with the private sector. This included providing training or safe labour options to survivors to facilitate reintegration efforts, raising awareness of employers about socially responsible business practices, equipping businesses with improved understanding of responsible sourcing and involving businesses and industries in policy reform efforts. One strong example was DFID's Business for Shared Prosperity programme (BSP) in Myanmar (DFID; £74.4 million; 2015-22). This directly engaged and worked with the private sector. It has provided grants and technical assistance to Myanmar-based businesses and has conducted awareness-raising activities for the private sector and various types of capacity-building activities. The linkage BSP has made with access to finance and the need to tackle the risks of debt bondage has reflected the nature and scale of the modern slavery challenge in Myanmar.

⁶² Modern Slavery Act 2015, UK Government, [link](#).

⁶³ Leading businesses united to tackle slavery, Home Office, October 2017, [link](#).

Box 15: What are some of the ways in which the private sector could make a difference?

In recent years, large companies have become much more active on the issue of modern slavery in global supply chains. While transparency initiatives are an important aspect, there have also been initiatives on:

- responsible recruitment, including developing new policies, systems and data gathering
- understanding the demand for cheap goods and services and associated purchasing practices, including how downward pressure on prices, requirements to meet tight deadlines and last-minute changes to orders can put pressure on suppliers, leading them to cut corners on working conditions
- sectoral initiatives to identify key issues in specific industries
- engaging with workforces, including worker voice programmes
- identifying new business models, including the risks and financial costs of modern slavery in order to build the business case for alternative approaches.

Each of these areas requires complementary action from government and private firms and a shared approach would enable each stakeholder to play to its strengths. The Responsible, Accountable and Transparent Enterprise programme (DFID; £30.3 million; 2014-20) provides good examples of positive collaborative action in many of these areas and has generated lessons which can be built on in future initiatives. There is also an opportunity for the government to work with the private sector to support survivors of modern slavery and to ensure that survivors remain sustainably free from modern slavery.

The UK government remains committed to ending modern slavery but needs to communicate this more clearly

- 4.49 The government stressed to us its continuing determination to end modern slavery. We saw recent evidence of commitment to tackling modern slavery in government procurement and supply chains, including in partnership with other governments and businesses. This was demonstrated in the government's Modern Slavery Statement, issued in March 2020,⁶⁴ for which the prime minister, Boris Johnson, signed the foreword. Government departments all argued to us that the priority of modern slavery is being maintained.
- 4.50 Awareness of this commitment, however, seems to have declined, which suggests that the government needs to communicate its commitment more clearly. The majority of interviewees outside government who commented on this issue suggested that the UK government's commitment to ending modern slavery had reduced over the past few years. During our country visits, UK government staff indicated that they were receiving fewer messages from headquarters on modern slavery issues than in the past. Other development partners also reported a dropping off in the UK government's engagement.

 The UK government has a standard approach of pushing for pledges and commitments and holding summits, but follow-up is an issue. 

Partner government

Conclusion on relevance

- 4.51 There has been no systematic attempt by the UK government to analyse the complex nature of modern slavery, set priorities and develop a credible global approach. The government has built a portfolio of programmes with a major focus on trafficking, but some areas of modern slavery, including domestic servitude in Africa and issues arising in transit and destination countries, have been largely neglected. Modern slavery initiatives have not been extensively mainstreamed across UK aid. Within each region or

⁶⁴ UK Government modern slavery statement, UK Government, March 2020, [link](#).

country, the selection of interventions has not been based on a systematic assessment of need or the priorities of partner governments. There has been some engagement with survivors during programme implementation, but more could have been done to integrate the lifetime experiences of survivors into policy development and programme design. Gender analysis has generally been weak. The Call to Action raised the international profile of modern slavery, but follow-up has been limited and there was little evidence of consequential action in our case study countries. Engagement with the private sector has been focused on promoting transparency, but at the expense of wider collaboration. There was evidence as to the ongoing level of commitment by the government to ending modern slavery, but some conflicting perceptions from other stakeholders. We therefore award an **amber-red** score for relevance.

Effectiveness: How well is the modern slavery portfolio delivering results and value for money?

- 4.52 The government's overall modern slavery portfolio, as identified by the responsible departments, exceeds £200 million and therefore meets the 2018 spending commitment.⁶⁵ However, this is a young portfolio, in which the majority of programmes are still at an early stage of implementation. Most are engaged in research or piloting new interventions, rather than delivering interventions at scale. Across the portfolio, we found that very little outcome-level data has been generated at this stage. Our assessment of effectiveness therefore also focuses on whether programmes are delivering as planned, and whether they are being managed in such a way that they are likely to deliver robust evidence on 'what works', to support the continuing development of the portfolio.

Most programmes have delivered their activities as planned and have produced a range of potentially useful outputs

- 4.53 We assessed our sample of programmes against good practice in programme cycle management and achievement against expected results. Among the programmes we reviewed, we found that three quarters were well managed, or reasonably well managed, in terms of the quality of planning, documentation and delivery. A quarter of programmes demonstrated weaknesses, or fell below good practice standards, with specific weaknesses at programme level including delays in implementation and poor management of risk. As a consequence, projects have generally scored well in annual reviews, which assess progress against planned activities and outputs. Across 24 programmes in our sample, three were performing strongly, achieving or exceeding all their delivery targets, 15 were on track to meet the majority of their targets, and six were performing poorly or demonstrated significant management weaknesses.
- 4.54 We found a range of potentially positive outputs from the programmes. For example, the Home Office's Transforming India's Capacity and Response to Bonded and Forced Labour project (Home Office; £115,000; 2018-21) had trained over 570 stakeholders, held consultations with a range of businesses and business associations, formed ten survivors' groups and trained 26 survivors to champion the needs of their communities. Similarly, the GoodWeave Sourcing Freedom project (Home Office; £532,058; 2017-19), which seeks to eliminate child labour from carpet manufacturing in India, identified 4,135 at-risk children in its target communities, enrolled them in school and monitored their continuing attendance. GoodWeave offers a certification process, supported by regular, unannounced inspections of production facilities, with a consumer label that certifies carpets as free from modern slavery. Through the Home Office grant, it signed up an additional four companies and expanded its inspections to cover an additional 9,000 workers.

⁶⁵ UK leads the charge in eradicating scourge of modern slavery, UK Government, September 2018, [link](#).

Feedback on UK-funded programmes

“ I want to stay here, I have support from IOM, and other organisations. I am happy I came back. I like Nigeria. ”

“ I learned how to manage my business and how to advertise it. When I came back, I opened my shop and started doing my business differently. I learned a lot, I really enjoyed it. I learned how to take care of my customers, it helped me a lot. ”

Survivors of trafficking, Nigeria

“ Those that were lied to and came back also found jobs through the organisation. This organisation has given them a network but they are also getting skills which is leading them to work. ”

Woman who attended migrant training, Bangladesh

Box 16: Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligibility

We assessed whether Home Office programmes on modern slavery were checked to ensure that their expenditure was ODA-eligible (this being the first full ICAI review of Home Office programming). We found that the Home Office had made a clear statement on ODA eligibility requirements, and had recently put in place systems for ensuring compliance with this. The Home Office has a small ODA unit, set up in 2019, which manages ODA monitoring and reporting, including financial expenditure oversight. The priorities for the Home Office regarding aid management have been transparency and spending their allocation on time. The Home Office noted that most of its interventions can be categorised as ‘capacity building’, which is a well-established category of ODA spending. We found no evidence of programmes being misreported as ODA.

- 4.55 UK government programmes in Nigeria have provided valuable support to returnees. Both DFID and Home Office programmes have provided a range of support through the IOM to over 2,000 highly vulnerable individuals who have returned after traumatic experiences of trafficking, although at a relatively high cost that raises questions about the sustainability of the approach.
- 4.56 In both Bangladesh and Nigeria, we heard positive feedback from those intended to benefit from UK government projects. While our consultations were limited in scope and not necessarily representative, they demonstrated the potential for positive impact on people’s lives. In Bangladesh, we heard that training and awareness-raising programmes, including Work in Freedom, had made individuals better placed to make informed choices about whether or not to migrate and, if they chose to proceed, equipped them to make safer choices. In Nigeria, we met with a number of survivors who had been supported to establish businesses to generate alternative livelihoods and to help them reintegrate and reduce their vulnerability to being trafficked again. Most of those we met stated that their businesses were functional, but they were not yet generating enough income to support themselves.

Box 17: Feedback on UK government programmes from those intended to benefit

Work in Freedom programme in Bangladesh

We interviewed a number of women who had participated in training sessions. We found that they were able to talk with confidence about risks associated with labour migration and how to reduce them. They were informed about some of the formal requirements for regular migration, such as health checks, visas and age restrictions for accompanying children. They described being taught how to deal with cultural and language barriers, what the types of exploitation are and how to respond to them. They had been taught measures such as memorising important telephone numbers, registering with the Bangladesh embassy and keeping copies of their passports in safe places. We heard accounts that women had shared this knowledge with members of their communities who were considering migration. A number of participants had gone on to work as project staff or volunteers, using their lived experiences to help communicate with other women in their communities.

IOM protection and reintegration projects in Nigeria

In Nigeria, we spoke with returnees from exploitation in Libya who were being provided with psychosocial support tailored to their specific needs and vulnerabilities, designed to help them cope with severe trauma and social stigma, as well as physical injuries. They also received training in business to offer them an alternative means of improving their socioeconomic status, supplemented by financial support for their personal needs and business start-up costs. Some of those that we spoke to stated that they had successfully established ongoing business ventures. While the income was not enough to sustain them, they were hopeful that it would do so in the future. Some of the survivors had joined WhatsApp groups, where co-learning and peer support continued.

The portfolio has often been innovative but has generated little usable outcome data

- 4.57 While we found a range of positive activities and outputs across the portfolio, the programmes have so far generated very little data on modern slavery outcomes. While we would not expect programming at this limited scale to reduce the prevalence of modern slavery in particular countries or industries, we would expect to have seen programmes generating early data on whether or not pilot interventions were reducing the vulnerability of target groups. There has been a good range of innovation across the portfolio and some interesting examples are listed in **Box 18**. However, we found that most of these programmes had generated very little usable data in terms of demonstrating outcomes or providing evidence for scaling up future interventions to achieve long-term impact.

Box 18: Examples of innovation and piloting

We have seen many examples of interesting approaches to innovation and piloting, including the following:

- The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Project (Home Office/Conflict, Stability and Security Fund; £536,787; 2018-19) has undertaken interesting small-scale innovation on legal development, parliamentary drafting and civil society mobilisation to combat modern slavery in Commonwealth countries.
- The British Academy Tackling Slavery, Human Trafficking and Child Labour in Modern Business programme (DFID; £2 million; 2017-19) included good examples of research and innovation at project level.
- The MSIF Trafficking Advice Centre project (Home Office; £499,956; 2017-19), run by the NPSCC, has piloted awareness raising through theatrical performance with women vulnerable to trafficking in Ghana.
- The MSIF Salvation Army Community Awareness and Recovery project (Home Office; £582,271; 2017-19) has piloted a foster care model for victims in the Philippines.
- The Humanity United grant within the Responsible, Accountable and Transparent Enterprise programme (DFID; £30.3 million; 2014-20) has supported a range of pilots, including Maya Apa – an app connecting Bangladeshis to expert advice on issues such as employment rights. This initiative subsequently secured funding commitments to enable it to scale up.

- 4.58 We were concerned about the lack of robust theories of change for modern slavery programmes managed by the Home Office and the FCO. FCO projects tended to be small in scale and short in duration, with relatively light design and reporting requirements and rather basic, activity-based results frameworks. There were no explicit theories of change in any of the FCO projects that we reviewed. Within the Home Office, modern slavery programmes have been overseen by a unit that addresses serious and organised crime. This unit has been committed to improving its monitoring and evaluation and has slowly been getting better at developing theories of change and results frameworks. However, it acknowledged that it is still at an early stage of the journey and that it often lacked clear theories of change or outcome-level indicators for its plethora of small projects.
- 4.59 The failure to articulate clear causal pathways and identify measurable outcome indicators has meant that the capacity of these programmes to generate useful results data has been weak. In the context of a new and complex area of engagement, pilots are only useful if they provide a robust platform for learning.
- 4.60 DFID also appears to have underinvested in evaluation across its portfolio, except in its flagship programmes, given the weakness of the evidence. The few evaluations that have been undertaken so far have produced disappointing results. For example, the Market Development in the Niger Delta (MADE) programme (DFID; £22.1 million; 2014-20) in Nigeria was extended into a second phase to target modern slavery, but the additional two years were still insufficient for it to generate any data on modern slavery outcomes, rather than just on immediate livelihoods. The independent review of the programme concluded with regard to the modern slavery component: “Although most outreach targets have been achieved, the implementation period was too short, and interventions are barely ending the pilot phase. A solid exit strategy is therefore required to try to consolidate these interventions, as otherwise many are likely to fail.”⁶⁶
- 4.61 The DFID Work in Freedom programme, launched in 2013, was the forerunner of much of the current portfolio. It has sought to address migration and trafficking issues in India, Bangladesh and Nepal by helping 100,000 women to choose safe migration options and empowering them to exercise their rights.⁶⁷ Between April 2017 and March 2018, Work in Freedom reached 35,000 women with training and support services.⁶⁸ However, a DFID-commissioned evaluation of the first phase of the programme

⁶⁶ *Independent review of DFID Nigeria’s Market Development in the Niger Delta project (MADE), Phase 1 and 2 with reference to other M4P projects in Nigeria*, Nathan Associates, February 2020, [link](#).

⁶⁷ *Work in Freedom: Preventing trafficking of women and girls in South Asia and the Middle East*, ILO, 2013, [link](#).

⁶⁸ Annual review, Work in Freedom, DFID, 2018, [link](#).

found that, while women valued the training they had received, it was unlikely to protect them from trafficking or exploitation, as their vulnerability came not from a lack of self-worth and confidence, but from structural conditions in the migrant worker experience that placed them in a position of powerlessness.⁶⁹ The evaluation noted that the training might even be misleading and harmful in suggesting to women that knowledge of the risks of deception and abuse might help to protect them, or that there would be assistance available to them in the destination country if they were exploited. It recommended that those designing anti-trafficking interventions should shift their focus away from one-off, pre-migration interventions to raise awareness and towards programming that addresses power dynamics between migrants, recruiters and employers right through the migration trajectory, to strengthen the rights of women migrants to exit from abusive situations.⁷⁰ While this has been an increasing focus in the second phase of Work in Freedom as part of its ‘whole trafficking chain’ approach, with more support for migrant workers and national authorities in destination countries, we find that pre-departure awareness raising is still a common intervention across the government’s portfolio.

Much of the programming has been short-term and often rushed

- 4.62 The literature and many of the experts we consulted stressed the need for a long-term approach to addressing modern slavery. Helping survivors to exit modern slavery sustainably and successfully reintegrate into the community requires a mixture of support, including psychosocial, education and livelihoods support, over a lengthy period. DFID has had some examples of large-scale programmes sustained over many years, which represent a substantial proportion of overall spend. Most of the UK government’s projects, however, do not run for long enough to have realistic prospects of impact. FCO programmes, in particular, have been small and generally have lasted for two years or less. These were unlikely to generate measurable impact on modern slavery, although they may have helped to encourage policy and legislative reform.

Survivors in Nigeria highlighted the need for long-term change, because they did not want their children to face the same challenges they faced, and the need to address a lack of prospects, particularly for the younger generation:

“ We want generational change. ”

“ There is no job opportunity in Nigeria, the people who I was travelling with [to Libya], were all graduates, but because they had nothing to do in Nigeria, they left. ”

“ Government should empower young people, they should concentrate on the youths and get them not to go, not just wait until they have gone. ”

Nigerian women, survivors of trafficking

⁶⁹ South Asia Work in Freedom three-country evaluation: A theory-based intervention evaluation to promote safer migration of women and girls in Nepal, India and Bangladesh, Ligia Kiss, Joelle Mak, Bandita Sijapati et al., SWiFT Evaluation, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, February 2019, p. 5, [link](#).

⁷⁰ South Asia Work in Freedom three-country evaluation: A theory-based intervention evaluation to promote safer migration of women and girls in Nepal, India and Bangladesh, Ligia Kiss, Joelle Mak, Bandita Sijapati et al., SWiFT Evaluation, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, February 2019, p. 6, [link](#).

- 4.63 In the early stages of expanding the modern slavery portfolio, there was strong pressure to meet the spending commitments made by the government in 2017 and 2018.⁷¹ The Home Office received ODA for the MSF before it had a clear strategy for spending it. It necessarily took some time to develop its approaches and programming, and was then required to disburse the funds quickly.⁷² Pressure to spend may have inhibited survivor consultation, gender analysis and acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the problem through engagement with other actors, including implementing organisations, advocacy groups and independent experts. It has also undermined effectiveness by hindering investment in foundational work such as analysis of local modern slavery trends, development of theories of change and identification of feasible interventions. In particular, it has made it very difficult to establish robust results measurement processes. We saw this in the case of the MSF Nigeria programme, which did not collect adequate baseline data, in large part due to pressures to begin its activities quickly.⁷³ There were also concerns about the £20 million grant to GFEMS in 2017 (see **Box 19**).

Box 19: Supporting the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS)

The Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) was founded in 2014 and is financed primarily by the governments of the UK, the USA and Norway and by private philanthropy. It takes an integrated and comprehensive approach, spanning the public and private sectors and civil society. It aims to end modern slavery by making it unprofitable through changes to economic systems. It provides grants to a range of organisations under the three themes of rule of law, business engagement and sustained freedom.

The UK government agreed in 2017 to invest £20 million in GFEMS, alongside the US government. GFEMS was a new organisation with no track record of implementing modern slavery programming or commissioning research. The decision appears to have been taken at a political level, without adequate appraisal and due diligence processes. The government has since had to devote considerable effort towards helping GFEMS put in place its core systems, including for monitoring and evaluation. Questions have also been raised over the value for money of this investment, which has high overheads and limited outputs to date.

Now that it is up and running, GFEMS has performed well in consulting survivors and developing interventions that address commercial sexual exploitation and exploitation in the garment sector.

The approach to ensuring value for money is still nascent

- 4.64 Developing value for money (VFM) approaches for modern slavery programmes is challenging. We have seen evidence of VFM analysis across a range of (mainly DFID) programmes and some more detailed approaches, including good examples of competitive procurement, effective cost management and rigorous analysis of costs and benefits. We saw limited use of VFM frameworks outside DFID, and few examples of VFM indicators used in annual reports. VFM analysis across the portfolio tends to focus on efficiency criteria rather than looking at effectiveness or equity. DFID has been in the process of developing more comprehensive VFM guidance. It has reviewed the approach taken in major projects to date, concluding that more emphasis should be given to equity issues. The new guidance will include principles and detailed guidance for designing and implementing VFM analysis of modern slavery work.

⁷¹ The then prime minister made a commitment of £150 million in September 2017 and this was extended to £200 million by the then secretary of state for international development. *UK leads the charge in eradicating modern slavery*, UK Government, October 2018, [link](#).

⁷² Taken from key informant interviews, December 2019 to April 2020.

⁷³ Taken from key informant interviews and independent programme reviews, December 2019 to April 2020.

4.65 Returnee programmes provide an obvious potential for VFM analysis. The programmes funded in Nigeria for supporting returnee survivors of trafficking from Libya through the IOM had costs of £1,000 per person for DFID and up to £4,000 per person for the Home Office, where much more complex needs were being addressed. Both programmes involved support for new livelihoods, but the Home Office programmes also included medical and psychosocial support. This shows the risks of using crude comparisons, yet raises questions about the high costs in the context of low per capita incomes. We were also concerned that the lack of long-term support for returnees who established businesses might undermine the prospects for a sustainable exit for them from exploitation.

Regular coordination across departments in London was highly rated by government staff

4.66 UK government departments reported good coordination across government. Political leadership and adapting the machinery of government were important to achieving coordination in the early stages, including clear directives from the prime minister, initial coordination by the Cabinet Office and an inter-departmental ministerial group.⁷⁴ The focus then moved on to working-level collaboration, with DFID, Home Office and FCO staff sitting together on steering committees for each department's programming, joint awaydays, monthly meetings, lesson learning events and meetings for inputting into each other's policy positions and programming documents. For some civil servants that we interviewed, cross-government collaboration has never been better.⁷⁵

The UK government has had good relationships with other donors and multilaterals, but could have promoted deeper collaboration

4.67 The UK's international engagement on modern slavery has focused on promoting its inclusion in international declarations and delivering programmes through specialist UN agencies. It has not challenged the multilateral development banks to engage more actively on modern slavery issues, or worked with major UN initiatives such as the ILO's Decent Work initiative,⁷⁶ which seeks to promote the rights of workers. UN agencies have important norm-setting, convening, coordinating, data collection and fundraising roles, in addition to project delivery. Some small UK projects, however, have supported the international system, such as FCO initiatives to strengthen the secretariat of the UN's Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons in Vienna (FCO; £140,000; 2018-19) and various small projects sponsored by the UK Mission in Geneva, including support to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery (FCO; £112,000; 2018-19).

4.68 The government has planned its own international activities building on the Call to Action, but has not developed joint approaches with other signatory governments on concrete steps for joint action to reduce modern slavery in their countries. The small number of donors who contributed to our review reported a good relationship with the UK government and would welcome closer collaboration. A positive example that was cited was a multi-country initiative on public procurement (see **Box 20** below).

⁷⁴ Taken from key informant interviews, December 2019 to April 2020.

⁷⁵ Taken from key informant interviews, December 2019 to April 2020.

⁷⁶ Decent work and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, ILO, [link](#).

Box 20: Multi-country initiative on public procurement

The need to eliminate modern slavery from supply chains applies as much to the public sector as to the private sector. The development of principles for tackling modern slavery in global supply chains was an idea that emanated from workshops of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.⁷⁷ It was then picked up by the governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US, which produced a joint declaration at the UN General Assembly in September 2018.⁷⁸

The four principles developed by these governments cover eliminating human trafficking from public and private supply chains, promoting responsible recruitment and enhancing harmonisation between governments. They help to expand the focus on transparency beyond the private sector. This was not specifically a UK initiative, but an international collaboration. It is being implemented in several countries and is also being considered by multilaterals for their procurement systems.

It is now being applied to the UK government's own procurement through a March 2020 statement⁷⁹ that assessed modern slavery risks across the UK's £50 billion of annual government spending. Individual UK ministerial government departments will be required to make their own modern slavery statements from 2021 onwards.

Conclusion on effectiveness

- 4.69 The UK's modern slavery programmes have delivered a range of potentially useful activities and outputs, and we received generally positive feedback from our consultations with survivors and communities in Bangladesh and Nigeria. However, they have so far generated little evidence of impact, and many of the programmes are unlikely to do so given weaknesses in results frameworks and theories of change, missing baselines and their often short-term nature. There has been underinvestment in evaluation, which undermines the value of piloting innovations, and there is limited evidence that the portfolio has responded to the findings of the few evaluations that have been undertaken. This also means that there is inadequate evidence to inform the continuing development of the portfolio in order to achieve and demonstrate future impact. There has been good coordination across government in London and the UK has good relationships with other donors, although there is scope for deeper collaboration. Overall, we award an **amber-red** score for effectiveness.

⁷⁷ *Model guidelines on government measures to prevent trafficking for labour exploitation in supply chains*, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, February 2018, [link](#).

⁷⁸ *UK agrees principles for tackling modern slavery in supply chains*, UK Government, September 2018, [link](#).
⁷⁹ *UK Government Modern Slavery Statement*, March 2020, [link](#).

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

- 5.1 Modern slavery is a serious global problem that causes untold suffering. Addressing modern slavery is part of the ‘Leave no one behind’ commitment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The UK is a relative newcomer to the global modern slavery agenda and has started tackling the problem with considerable energy. It has successfully raised the profile of the issue in international forums and secured commitments from other governments.
- 5.2 However, we share the concerns of many stakeholders that the UK has not taken the time to understand the state of the field and what others were doing. The adoption of the term ‘modern slavery’ lent urgency to the problem, but not clarity, and has proved a barrier to analysis, data collection and dialogue with some partner countries. Commitments to action were obtained without a follow-through mechanism at country level. The government’s engagement with UK firms has encouraged them to tackle exploitation within their global supply chains, but opportunities for deeper partnerships with the private sector have been missed. There is also scope for more strategic partnerships with other governments and international organisations.
- 5.3 While acknowledging the weak data and evidence base, the UK government has not developed a systematic approach to research and data collection to guide strategy and programming. While it is legitimate to include a focus on trafficking to the UK, the lack of a clear strategy for prioritising interventions has led to some other elements of modern slavery being neglected. Survivor voice is central to understanding and addressing modern slavery, but there is little evidence of survivor engagement in the design of the UK policy or programmes. The government has not published a clear statement of its overall objectives and approach, which inhibits public debate and scrutiny.
- 5.4 The UK’s modern slavery aid portfolio remains in its infancy and has so far generated limited data on results. Programmes have generally been well managed and have delivered a range of useful activities and outputs, including practical support on safe migration, reducing child labour and support for returnees to reintegrate into their communities. We received generally positive feedback in Nigeria and Bangladesh from those who have benefited directly.
- 5.5 However, we find that the portfolio is not well configured to generate evidence on impact, due to weaknesses in programme design and underinvestment in evaluation – particularly for the smaller-scale programming. When tackling a complex and novel challenge, it is important to pilot new interventions and test ‘what works’, so as to inform future interventions on a larger scale. While there is some innovative programming under way, pilot programmes are only useful if they are designed with a view to generating solid evidence. We are concerned that the portfolio as presently configured is not likely to generate a good return on investment in the form of expanded knowledge on ‘what works.’
- 5.6 Overall, we judge that the UK has done well in raising global awareness of the modern slavery challenge, but should be working more collaboratively with other actors. It needs a more systematic approach to building research and evidence to guide the choice of interventions, and to capturing the results of its pilot initiatives to achieve future impact. We therefore award an overall **amber-red** score, indicating the modern slavery portfolio has some way to go before it is well positioned to tackle this critical but extremely complex international challenge.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Responsible departments should develop a more systematic approach to filling knowledge and evidence gaps, including sex-disaggregated and sector-specific data, gender analysis and more comprehensive evaluations, to guide the choice of interventions.

Problem statements:

- There are substantial gaps in evidence on the incidence of modern slavery.
- There is inadequate research to guide the choice of modern slavery interventions.
- Government programmes are not being chosen on the basis of what will be the most effective in ending modern slavery.
- Existing initiatives, including Delta 8.7, are insufficient to fill knowledge gaps and guide the choice of interventions.
- There is a lack of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis is weak throughout the government's modern slavery work, especially for the Home Office and the FCO.
- Current programme investments often lack well-supported evaluation components to help determine 'what works' and what is worth scaling up.
- Analysis of the role of modern slavery in various sectors, such as education and health, is weak.

Recommendation 2: Responsible departments should do more to draw on survivor voices, in ethical ways, with a particular focus on inputs to policy and programme design, and to deepening understanding of lifetime experiences and gender dimensions of modern slavery.

Problem statements:

- The voices of survivors are not being adequately heard throughout the project cycle.
- Survivor voice is particularly weak in policy development and programme design.
- There is inadequate understanding of the lifetime experiences of survivors.
- FCO programmes have had very limited survivor engagement.

Recommendation 3: The UK government should publish a clear statement of its overall objectives and approach to using UK aid to tackle modern slavery internationally.

Problem statements:

- The government's approach has developed considerably since it published its modern slavery strategy in 2014, which was largely UK-focused.
- The government has not published a clear statement of its overall objectives and approach to addressing modern slavery through the aid programme.
- Diplomatic sensitivities constrain the sharing of policy and other documents.
- Current government objectives are not clearly communicated, making it difficult to hold the government to account.

Recommendation 4: Responsible departments should increase the future impact of programming by examining the scope for more interventions in neglected areas of modern slavery, and mainstreaming modern slavery into other development programmes, including in the COVID-19 response.

Problem statements:

- The modern slavery portfolio is ad hoc and not systematically planned.
- There is limited evidence of impact on reducing modern slavery in the current portfolio.
- The modern slavery portfolio neglects vital dimensions of modern slavery, especially domestic servitude in Africa and internal trafficking.
- Modern slavery is frequently treated as a homogenous phenomenon and UK approaches often neglect the sector- and context-specific nature of the different causes and forms of exploitation.
- Modern slavery has not been adequately taken into account in other DFID sectoral programmes such as education, livelihoods, humanitarian work and governance.
- FCO programmes have been too small and too short-term to have an impact.

Recommendation 5: Responsible departments should strengthen partnerships on modern slavery, including deepening engagement with the private sector and working with partner governments to develop locally owned action plans covering origin, transit and destination countries.

Problem statements:

- The UK has launched its own international initiatives to end modern slavery, rather than working with others and with pre-existing approaches.
- The government is missing opportunities to work more strategically with the private sector.
- Most of the worst forms of exploitation are occurring in the informal sector, which is not being adequately addressed.
- FCO influencing has been focused at the global level and there has been very little work on joint country-level strategies with partner governments.
- There is inadequate action on transit and destination countries for trafficking.

Annex 1: Voices from Bangladesh and Nigeria

ICAI believes that communities affected by UK aid should have a voice in its reviews. During visits to Bangladesh and Nigeria, we spoke to 138 people from target communities of the programmes we were reviewing. This included survivors of modern slavery, community members and grassroots workers. Our interviews focused on their current needs and their experience of interacting with UK aid programmes. However, many individuals also freely shared testimony on their experiences of modern slavery on the basis of informed consent. The stories in this annex illustrate just a few of the diverse experiences of people in these two countries affected by modern slavery, and should not be seen as representative. Names have been changed, and organisations and programmes described as "X" or "Y", to protect the privacy of individuals.

For more information on our research protocols and safeguarding considerations, see **Box 3** in the main report. The interviews enabled us to test the relevance of UK aid programmes to their target communities, to contextualise our analysis and to triangulate other data that we collected.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, labour migration is an important livelihood strategy for thousands of people seeking to escape poverty. Women and girls from rural communities, who have few other livelihood opportunities, may choose to take jobs in textile factories in larger towns and cities. Others travel to the Middle East, where many work as domestic workers in private households. Many have positive experiences of labour migration, enabling them to send remittances home to their families. However, others face deception by labour recruiters (dalaals or local agents), including excessive recruitment fees leading to increased indebtedness, or exploitation at the hands of employers.

One of the programmes we reviewed (referred to as Programme A) provides training to women in rural communities, through their partners (referred to as Organisation X), to help them make informed decisions about whether or not to migrate and how to reduce the risks of exploitation. The training sessions also seek to empower women and to change gender norms and attitudes. Here are some accounts from women who received the training, many of whom had previous experience of labour migration.

Rohana's story. Rohana is 27 years old and had previously migrated for work. On her return to Bangladesh, she received training from Organisation X, and has now joined as a social worker.

"I went to Jordan for a month, I wasn't feeling well and I returned to Bangladesh. I then received a five-day training session from Organisation X. During the training Organisation X asked me to work as a social worker. After I joined, I faced retaliation from my community. People said bad things about me like: "She is a woman. Why is she going to Dhaka by herself? She shouldn't be doing this." I have proven myself and now my community asks me for advice. The community brings women who face these types of problems [migration, exploitation-related issues and problems with local agents] to me for advice. In my community most of the women are overseas. The few that are in my community, if they want advice, do not go to the chairman, but come to me instead. I am very proud of what I do, I am so popular in my neighbourhood and community that even in the government offices when I need paperwork, they just sign the documents and nobody asks me for anything. I faced retaliation for a year. People said that women who step out of the house are bad women. Because of the training Organisation X has provided, people in the community are more aware."

Kamini's story. Kamini's husband was the sole breadwinner in their family of six. She migrated to Oman for domestic work to provide for her children and mother-in-law. She used a local agent who duped and misinformed her about her work.

"I migrated to Oman and I stayed there for two years and seven months. I was cheated and misinformed. I was told that I would work in one home, but once I arrived, I was told that I would also have to work at another house. There were lots of kids to look after and I did not receive good food. While I was working in Oman, my eldest daughter wanted me to return home. But I owed the local agent a lot of money. I made the decision to earn enough money to pay the agent back and then return home to my family. I came back to Bangladesh almost four years ago. Since then I have taken part in the training session. I was thinking about going abroad again but I was told in the training that, with a small child, you should not go abroad. If I went abroad then my children's education would be interrupted. I am also aware that women working abroad may get tortured and abused, so I decided not to migrate and to stay here instead. Now I sell local chaat [street food] on the streets to earn money to support my family."

Fargana's story. Fargana worked at a garment factory in Bangladesh, but discovered she had hepatitis B. She wanted to migrate for work and took the training course provided by Organisation X. She then decided not to migrate or to work at the factory where she risked getting hepatitis B again. The social worker suggested that she could earn a living working from home by selling clothes. Through her experiences she was able to advise her cousin.

"I migrated to Jordan in 2014 and worked as a domestic worker for two years. My employer sent me back to Bangladesh because I was overweight and could not do all the different types of work. My cousin just finished Grade 10. She already agreed with a local agent to help her go abroad to learn how to be a masseur. [After my training] I spoke to her about the realities of going abroad and the difficulties involved. My cousin then made the informed decision not to go. When my cousin informed the local agent that she wouldn't go, the local agent went off with her passport and money. My cousin now does various jobs, like cleaning at weddings. She is happy and satisfied that she didn't go. She thinks that had she gone abroad then she would have been sold. The local agents sometimes tell women that they will be taken on a dancer's or a masseur's visa. We know now that this is a bad visa. We heard stories that these women are raped and sexually exploited and sold on."

Salma's story. Salma is a social worker for Programme A where she runs pre-departure training sessions for women who are considering travelling abroad for work. Participants are identified by social workers during door-to-door visits and invited to attend the training. Women receive information about how to make an informed decision about migration and training on empowerment.

"The basic problem that I have found is that these women don't realise they are victims. They accept quite easily that their husbands can beat them. One of our trainees said: 'My husband works long days and he is busy and he provides for us so he can torture me and he can do anything to me.' She thinks of herself as her husband's property. We try to make these women aware of the concept of gender issues, gender discrimination, empowerment and safe migration-related issues. We have seen changes after the training, but they are not huge or revolutionary. Their mindset is set so it changes slowly. And a two-day empowerment session is not going to do that."

Nigeria

Many Nigerians seek work opportunities in Europe or the Middle East, but there are very few opportunities for regular migration. Many therefore attempt irregular migration, becoming highly vulnerable to human traffickers. In the communities we visited, human trafficking survivors had taken long overland journeys through Niger to Libya, and in some cases had attempted to cross the Mediterranean. Many had faced deeply traumatic experiences, including brutal treatment by traffickers and bandits, the hazards of crossing the desert, slavery and extortion in Libya and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean.

Programme X supports survivors who have returned to Nigeria to reintegrate into their communities or new ones by providing temporary shelter, medical care, psychosocial support, accommodation assistance, legal support, family tracing, finance for business start-up costs and business skills training. Non-governmental organisation (NGO) Y aims to both support survivors of trafficking and prevent vulnerable groups from becoming trafficked by promoting skills training and entrepreneurship. NGO Y also undertakes awareness-raising communication activities to warn of the dangers of irregular migration and promote available livelihood opportunities. Around 70% of the returnees we spoke with were female. Below are a number of accounts from individuals who had returned from Libya at least 12 months before, together with one testimony from a victim of trafficking within Nigeria and one testimony from a teacher.

Amenze's story. Amenze is a survivor of trafficking to Libya. She received support from Programme X including a flight to voluntarily return to Nigeria, counselling, financial assistance and business skills training. With the support of NGO Y, Amenze learned how to be a seamstress, and is currently working as a fashion designer.

"I did not have an easy upbringing. Many people travel because they see neighbours travel. A man took me to a shrine and told me to swear an oath [not to run away] and told me if I told anyone I would be cursed. When we got to Agadez, there was no food or water, many had died. The journey was very rough. People from Niger also travelled, and from Senegal and Burkina Faso, but lots of them died in the desert. We continued the journey till we got to Libya. When the person took my money, he told me I would be selling clothes to white people in a boutique. The guy that transported us did not pay our money for the sea crossing, so I was forced to do prostitution. I was told if I didn't do the prostitution, I would be killed. I was bought for 2,000 dinars [around £1,100], which I was supposed to repay. After I had paid double that, I was sold again. I was helpless and had to do what they said. They don't use protection, no condoms. Since I came back from Libya, I was struggling a lot. I then got involved with [NGO Y]. They asked what was I interested in and I said fashion. They put me into a fashion course. I started in May and graduated in December. By the grace of God, I am now a fashion designer."

Esosa's story. Esosa experienced trafficking and domestic servitude within Nigeria. She was then able to return to school and went on to study theatre arts at university. She is now a professional dancer and performer. Esosa supports anti-trafficking efforts in her community, including through NGO Y, by choreographing performances to raise awareness of the dangers of irregular migration.

"When my mum complained that things were hard, a friend suggested that she send a child to go and work for someone she knew. My mother's friend said that I was old enough, I was 12 at the time and the eldest. I was sent to an aunt in a village in the east. I thought she was my aunt, but it turns out she wasn't. This 'aunt' was supposed to send me to school, but instead I was made to work. I only had the clothes I arrived in to last me the whole six months I was there. Sometimes when I was on her good side, I would eat once or twice a day. If I was on her bad side then I would starve for two days. Even though I was eating very little, I was overworked. I was made to work more than anyone doing manual labour on her farm. I had to sleep on concrete. She wanted to pimp me out, but because I refused, she would beat me and stab me. I decided to run away. Every day, the aunt would wake me up at 3.30am, so I had to start running by 3.00am. I started running. I got to a church and a Catholic priest let me in. I was allowed to call my mother; I memorised her number before I left. Two days later, my mum arrived to collect me. I was away from home for six months. Because afterwards I needed medical treatment, I lost a year out of school."

Chidi's story. Chidi is a survivor of trafficking to Libya. Chidi received support from Programme X including counselling, financial assistance and business skills training. He went on to set up a retail unit selling women's accessories.

"I took out a loan to start another business but it turned out to be a con. The loan had high interest rates and I lost the investment. After the loan, there was no way I would be able to survive. So I called my friend in France. He said he would help me with a French passport, but at a high cost. I sold my cars, I sold everything, but he was deceiving me. I was sent to Abuja to meet this agent. I called my friend, he said I had to go through Libya to get to France. I was not like the others who had come prepared for the trip. I didn't have any food. I spent six days in the desert. The agent said he had not been sent any money from my friend in France. They said that they would kill me unless I paid 1.5 million naira [£3,000] more. I could not get the money so I was locked up for four months. They tortured me, they burned me on my arms and back, my body is damaged. Eventually I was able to raise 700,000 [naira]. My family had to take out loans to put it together and send it across. Then I was released. I came across one Edo guy, and with his support I became a tiler, I was coping. But then the Asma boys⁸⁰ kidnapped me. They took me to an underground prison, and they asked me to pay 1.2 million naira. In that prison either you pay or you die. I was locked up for about four months. We were fed only once a day – just a little bit of bread. Eventually they let me go because they thought I was going to die from an injury. They dumped me on the side of the road. A Nigerian took me to the UN camp where they treated my injury and gave me money and food. I decided to try and go to Europe. I got on a boat with around 150 passengers. We got three hours away from Libya, there was a storm and the engine died. We spent 13 hours in the sea. We were collected by the Libyan police. Luckily they came with UN staff. When I came back [to Nigeria], no one would believe [Programme X] would give me free support and I was discouraged by people to start. I am glad I did it. With the training I was able to understand how to run a business. I am self-employed and now I have freedom."

⁸⁰ 'Asma boys' is a term that many sub-Saharan migrants use to describe those in the business of holding migrants for ransom. It is reported that Asma boys can belong to criminal gangs, militias or the Libyan police. 'They use black men as slaves': Migrants tell of brutality in Libya, CNN, March 2018, [link](#).

Amaka's story. Amaka is a teacher from a school where UK aid has funded NGO Y to undertake anti-trafficking awareness-raising activities for school children. This included peer learning on the issue of trafficking, a short play that warns children of the dangers of irregular migration and speeches from survivors on their experiences of trafficking.

"A couple of years back, before this training, we had about three to four students, they were around 15 to 18 years old. They went missing and we later found out they were trafficked. We found out it was one student that led the others after her older brother told her to gather some girls willing to travel. They promised the girls good work abroad. They left Edo state for Lagos. In Lagos they met a man who was going to transport them and one of them started to cry and decided to come back. They all came back with her. When they came back, we questioned them. The student that led them told them they were going to make a lot of money if they travel and they would get better education. Some victims are put under a 'juju' curse to not say anything. We asked: Did they make you take an oath? Did they have sex with you? They said no. We counselled them and spoke to their parents.

[Following the awareness-raising activities in her school] Apart from continuing to talk to our students, I began to learn about the issue myself. It made me think we had a lot of work to do. We think they should be speaking to the parents as well and telling them the children that God has given to us are not for sale. No amount of money is worth our children being sold. Their parents do not understand what happens – they should hear and see this drama; I think it would go far. They shouldn't just target the cities; they should also go to the villages. There is a child from a rural area who was brought here to work as a servant. We don't just have international trafficking, we also have it locally. Some traffickers go to villages. They target mainly girls and they bring them to Edo state. They force some of them into prostitution, some they give them out as house servants. The families don't bring them up like their own, they use them. They do not let them go to school. Some employers are good, some train them, but others are very bad. When they are done with them, they sell them to another family."

Annex 2: The sample of funds and programmes assessed for this review

Programme/Fund/Project	Department	Commitment	Time scale
Modern Slavery Fund (MSF)	Home Office	£33.5 million	2016-21
Description: The Modern Slavery Fund is the Home Office's official development assistance fund to support the UK's goal of reducing the prevalence of modern slavery in countries from which the UK sees a high number of victims. Its desired outcomes include: improved global coordination and disruption of trafficking routes, more responsible business practices and slavery-free supply chains, reduced vulnerability to exploitation and improved victim support and recovery.			
MSF: Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF) (Phase 1, 2017-19; Phase 2, 2019-21)	Home Office	£11 million	2017-21
Description: The Modern Slavery Innovation Fund is funded by the MSF and aims to build the evidence base by supporting projects taking innovative approaches to tackling modern slavery.			
MSF: Nigeria Country Programme	Home Office	£5 million	2018-21
Description: This programme is funded by the MSF and seeks to reduce the flow of people being trafficked from Nigeria. The programme consists of five components: a victim support package, capacity-building for NAPTIP (Nigeria's anti-human trafficking agency) in investigations and prosecutions, capacity-building for NAPTIP in strategic communications, judicial capacity building and independently conducted monitoring and evaluation.			
MSF: Vietnam Country Programme	Home Office	£2.5 million	2018-21
Description: This programme is funded by the MSF and seeks to tackle modern slavery upstream in Vietnam by: preventing vulnerable populations from becoming victims, strengthening the judicial response to human trafficking and supporting rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking.			
MSF: Transforming India's Capacity and Response to Bonded and Forced Labour	Home Office	£115,000	2018-21
Description: This project is funded by the MSF and seeks to build Indian institutions' understanding, capacity and commitment to addressing bonded and forced labour by: improving state administration, improving survivor advocacy and improving business understanding of bonded labour.			
MSF: Toward a Data-Driven Movement to Combat Modern Slavery in Indonesia and Beyond	Home Office	£196,000	2018-20
Description: This project was funded by the MSF and aimed to support a data-driven anti-trafficking movement equipped with both more and better data, to help practitioners understand the issue more comprehensively, including root causes and where to direct limited resources to have the most impact.			
MSIF: Innovation of the GoodWeave Sourcing Freedom project	Home Office	£550,000	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the MSIF and sought to expand the GoodWeave supply chain assurance model from the South Asian rug sector to other high-risk industries in India, including apparel, fashion jewellery and home textiles. GoodWeave seeks to reach hidden levels of supply chains, including exporters, subcontractors and home workers, and then improve conditions through inspections.			
MSIF: NSPCC expansion of their Child Trafficking Advice Centre	Home Office	£500,000	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the MSIF and sought to involve children and young people in anti-trafficking work to influence and raise awareness of child modern slavery in Ghana and Vietnam.			
MSIF: Research by the Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery (St Mary's University)	Home Office	£113,000	2017-18

Programme/Fund/Project	Department	Commitment	Time scale
Description: This project was funded by the MSIF and researched key trafficking routes into the UK from Nigeria, Vietnam and Albania and the involvement of organised crime, aiming to identify key entry points to aid law enforcement.			
MSIF: 'Vulnerability' to Human Trafficking: A Study of Vietnam, Albania, Nigeria and the UK (University of Bedfordshire)	Home Office	£500,000	2017-19
Description: This project was funded by the MSIF and researched both 'vulnerability' to human trafficking from Albania, Vietnam and Nigeria and subsequent support needs of people from these countries in the UK. The study aimed to contribute towards building an evidence base across the four countries through primary research and country-specific written outputs.			
MSIF: United Nations University Knowledge Platform	Home Office	£1.3 million	2017-19
Description: The project was funded by the MSIF and aimed to create an online knowledge platform to act as a repository of evidence-based insights into modern slavery issues. The project is linked to the Alliance 8.7 movement of organisations seeking to implement Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals.			
Tackling Modern Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean in line with the UK approach: implementation of IOM recommendations	FCO	£150,000	2019-20
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and seeks to implement the recommendations identified in the study 'Understanding the regional dynamics of modern slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean in line with the UK approach', which was conducted by the International Organisation for Migration in 2018, with the support of FCO embassies in Venezuela and Colombia.			
Identify Regional Dynamics of Modern Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean	FCO	£214,000	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the Magna Carta Fund and consisted of a mixed method comparative study on the dynamics of modern slavery related to human trafficking in sexual exploitation and forced labour. It was focused on identifying regional dynamics to enable recommendations on how to strengthen modern slavery policies, based on the comparative analysis of prevention, investigation and prosecution, assistance and protection to victims, and institutional coordination.			
Improving regional understanding of the dynamics and risks of modern slavery through a strategic communications campaign in Latin America	FCO	£60,000	2019-20
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and seeks to improve the regional understanding of the dynamics and risks of modern slavery through the delivery and dissemination of a strategic communications campaign in Latin America.			
Harnessing Women's Capacities in Sex Trafficking Prevention and Response in Communities where Massive Human Rights Violations Occurred	FCO	£840,000	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and sought to provide psychosocial support for local women and help to prevent sex trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence. It included paralegal work and women's rights education in communities affected by killings related to the war on drugs in the Philippines.			
Break the Silence Campaign	FCO	£1.7 million	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and sought to prevent child sexual abuse and exploitation with a special focus on online abuse cases, in partnership with the local governments of Caloocan, Malabon and Navotas in the Philippines.			
Talitha Kum Training against Human Trafficking in Africa	FCO	£40,000	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and sought to help end the exploitation of trafficked women and children in Africa through training programmes, capacity building and research carried out by Talitha Kum – a religious anti-trafficking network.			
The Development Case for Fighting Modern Slavery	FCO	£90,000	2019-20
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and seeks to establish and promote a clear case for the global development community to prioritise anti-slavery and anti-trafficking in development programming and policies.			

Programme/Fund/Project	Department	Commitment	Time scale
A One-UN response to Trafficking in Persons and Modern Slavery – Continued Support for ICAT's Efforts to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons	FCO	£180,000	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and sought to further enable a One-UN response to trafficking and modern slavery by continuing funding to the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT). ICAT serves as a central coordinating mechanism to help member states better fulfil their anti-trafficking obligations and commitments through effective multilateralism and partnership and is solely funded by the UK.			
Enhancing the Capacity of Labour Inspectors Regarding Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Investigations in Bangladesh	FCO	£28,000	2018-19
Description: This project was funded by the FCO International Programme and sought to build stronger and more accountable public institutions responsible for conducting labour inspections relating to modern slavery and addressing human trafficking allegations.			
Community-Led Action against Modern Slavery and Poverty	DFID	£750,000	2018-21
Description: The project in Nepal is funded by the UK Aid Direct fund and seeks to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking and support those who have been victims by: working to ensure children stay in school, supporting young people and families to work their way out of poverty, providing survivors with support to reintegrate, and working with government and civil society to help develop policies that protect vulnerable children and women.			
Assist Haliya Community rehabilitation (HC) to Achieve Full Rehabilitation from Slavery and Labour Exploitation	DFID	£776,000	2018-21
Description: The project is funded by the UK Aid Direct fund and aims to reduce the vulnerability to slavery and labour exploitation of 6,000 Haliya Households (36,000 men, women and children) in Nepal through increased social, political and economic empowerment and participation in the effective implementation of the government's rehabilitation process.			
Breaking the Bonds: Freedom through Education and Economic Empowerment for Musahar Girls in Nepal	DFID	£2.5 million	2018-21
Description: The project is funded by the UK Aid Direct fund and aims to support 3,000 Musahar girls in remote areas of Nepal to access education and employment to end the cycle of debt bondage.			
Supporting the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS)	DFID	£22 million	2018-22
Description: GFEMS aims to develop new and innovative approaches to tackling slavery in targeted populations. The programme focus includes increasing the global evidence and resource base and working with new partners in the private sector to improve effective practice. The initial strategy focuses on: rule of law, supporting victims and business engagement in India and Bangladesh.			
Work in Freedom Phase 1 - Asia Regional Human Trafficking Programme	DFID	£10 million	2013-18
Description: This programme sought to prevent women and girls from India, Nepal and Bangladesh from being trafficked within South Asia and to the Middle East for garment and domestic work. Within five years, the programme sought to reach 100,000 women and girls to help them protect themselves from being trafficked and contribute to an overall reduction in the incidence of trafficking in South Asia.			
Asia Regional Child Labour Programme	DFID	£26 million	2018-23
Description: The programme supports initiatives in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan to invest in research on child labour, to tackle its causes and to build the evidence base on the effectiveness of different types of interventions to combat child labour.			
Business for Shared Prosperity (BSP)	DFID	£55 million (*)	2015-22
Description: This programme focuses on improving the management and governance of the private sector in Myanmar to spur inclusive growth, create jobs, increase incomes and consequently reduce poverty. In the first component of BSP, efforts were made to mainstream a modern slavery approach by supporting job opportunities that are capable of reducing vulnerability and developing a responsible business environment that operates in line with internationally accepted human rights principles.			

Programme/Fund/Project	Department	Commitment	Time scale
Safety, Support and Solutions Programme for Refugees and Migrants; Phase 2 (modern slavery component)	DFID	£78 million (*) (£3 million modern slavery component)	2017-20
Description: This programme provides humanitarian aid including food, medical care and protection services to vulnerable migrants along key migration routes towards Europe. As a part of this programme, a £3 million allocation was made to the International Organisation for Migration in Nigeria to provide reintegration assistance to victims of trafficking being returned from Libya. This project also seeks to improve the capacity of state and non-state partners to provide returnees with specialised mental health and psychosocial support.			
Stamping Out Trafficking in Nigeria	DFID	£10 million	2019-23
Description: This programme seeks to prevent trafficking in persons and slavery in Nigeria through innovative programme approaches that challenge social norms accepting irregular migration and drive positive behavioural changes by delivering effective communications and behavioural change programmes through government and civil society in Nigeria.			
Responsible, Accountable and Transparent Enterprise	DFID	£30 million (*)	2014-20
Description: This programme seeks to ensure that businesses are diligent in managing the social and environmental implications of their actions and are accountable for the consequences for poor workers and communities who may be affected by them. This programme engages with partners across a range of responsible business approaches, such as voluntary standards, company reporting, and human rights and gender impact assessments, in order to improve enterprises' social and environmental risk management, and their accountability, transparency and openness to participation.			
South Asia Research Fund	DFID	£5 million (*)	2015-20
Description: The programme seeks to generate robust and context-specific research in South Asia (specifically Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan) to inform the design and implementation of DFID policy and programming, leading to improved development outcomes.			

(*) These programmes have modern slavery components, but are not exclusively devoted to modern slavery.



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