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Rahima Khartoum holds a photograph of her son, 14 year old trafficking victim Din Mohammad, July, 2015 in Shamlapur, Bangladesh. Three months earlier, Mohammad left his Rohingya settlement in Bangladesh with a man who told him he could take him to a good job in Malaysia for free. He left without telling his parents. Two months ago his parents got a call from one of their son's friends saying that they were in a camp in Thailand and the traffickers had sold them, but they had been rescued. They haven't heard from anyone since that phone call.

Photo credit: Shazia Rahman/Getty Images







TWO STEPS FORWARD, YES. BUT IT'S A CHANGE IN MINDSET THAT IS NEEDED.

Fiona David | Executive Director of Global Research, Walk Free Foundation



In November 2017, a slave auction was broadcast around the world.

CNN journalists travelled to a town not far from Tripoli, Libya and captured shocking video footage of the sale of 12 Nigerian men.

This was not an isolated occurrence.

Many African people seeking to migrate via Libya to Europe through irregular channels – either to improve their economic prospects or to seek asylum – are falling victim to unthinkable extremes of abuse, including modern slavery.

Increasingly restrictive approaches, applied by the European Union in an effort to curb the flow of migrants from Libya by returning migrants back to detention centres in that country, have exacerbated the issue.

Far from being a source of order or security, these detention centres have proved to be little more than staging pens for human merchandise subjected to rape, overcrowding, organised extortion, and sale into slavery.

While the EU agreed to fund an emergency program of voluntary repatriations from Libya's detention centres in November 2017,¹ by February 2018 there were still at least 700,000 migrants in Libya, some 4,400 of whom were in immigration detention.²

Furthermore, while the European action has provided a much-needed emergency response, this has not addressed the underlying cause of the crisis – failing policies on migration and refugees.

Since we published the last Global Slavery Index in 2016, there have been many successes in terms of increased efforts to address modern slavery.

The 2018 Global Slavery Index confirms that governments are taking more of the steps we ask of them to respond to modern slavery – strengthening laws, training police, providing services and shelters to victims, and engaging with business on supply chain transparency.

Businesses and governments are increasingly accepting the reality that when modern slavery occurs in one country, the direct results will be felt throughout international supply chains.

We are seeing a stronger focus on collaboration and measurement as key foundations of truly coordinated, informed, and impactful responses to modern slavery. The UN Security Council has made two resolutions on human trafficking, one in 2018 imposing sanctions for individuals involved in the Libyan slave-trade.

While this is all progress, the haunting CNN footage of a slave-auction conducted in 2017 must act as a sharp reminder that these successes take place against a backdrop of increasingly extreme and blatant patterns of modern slavery.

Our small steps forward must also be measured against the reality that we remain, as an international community, unable to respond quickly and effectively to prevent the atrocities that we know will create a breeding ground for further abuses, including slavery.

For example, in 2015, the world was horrified when mass graves of tortured and murdered Rohingya migrants were discovered in “death camps” along the Thai–Malaysian border, to which they had been smuggled.³

These camps were used as staging pens for Rohingya migrants desperate to leave Myanmar, only to find themselves subject to extortion, torture, and human trafficking by the criminals who had been paid to “help”.

Yet since conclusive evidence began to emerge in August 2017 of fresh campaigns of ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya, the international community has done little to act. As nearly 700,000 people escaped burned villages and fled to the shelter of temporary camps in Bangladesh, UN agencies warned of the risk of modern slavery in this chaotic and high-risk environment.⁴ Disagreement in the UN Security Council Permanent Membership meant that a binding resolution was scaled back to a Presidential Statement in December 2017.⁵ In the absence of any coordinated international response, some 800,000 people remain living in camps and shelters built on the mud of Cox Bazar, Bangladesh.

Important questions in our pursuit to end modern slavery remain. How is it that with all we have in place to respond to modern slavery in 2018, human beings are still being sold in Libya as “big strong boys for farm work?” Why is modern slavery still so pervasive around the world? Why and how is it tolerated in the globalising economy? What are we missing?

The answers are found partly in the ever-present challenges and failures of implementation.

Laws on paper are worthless without implementation and enforcement. Police training means little if witnesses can be intimidated and judges can be bought. Or shelters operating like prisons continue to leave victims of modern slavery with few, if any, alternatives.

This underscores the enormous value of transparency and reporting – a commendable feature seen in the publication of recent audits of police responses in the UK.⁶ If all governments were genuinely open to transparently examining the effectiveness of their efforts, we would not have tens of millions of people in modern slavery.

The answers also lie in deeper examination of drivers of vulnerability to this crime, not only in matters related to poverty, access and governance found in low-income countries, but also in the gaping holes in protection that developed countries create when they enact sweeping immigration, crime control, or social welfare policies that undermine their other efforts to stop modern slavery.

We have to shift from individual to collective approaches to solving what are truly global problems.

It is unthinkable that in 2018, world leaders have managed to make global, legally binding agreements on everything from outer space to carriage of goods by sea, but they have yet to agree on a framework that would enable the safe movement of people globally. The withdrawal of the United States from international discussions about the UN Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration is a massive failure of leadership.

Finding solutions to modern slavery must also be integrally connected to efforts to prevent and end protracted conflict situations.

It is not enough to simply blame conflict on those who hold the weapons. We must also apply responsibility to those who have the power to influence situations but choose not to act. As the outgoing UN High Commissioner for Human

Rights said, “while conflict is perpetrated by criminals...the responsibility for the continuation of so much pain lies with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. So long as the veto is used by them to block any unity of action, when it is needed the most, when it could reduce the extreme suffering of innocent people, then it is they – the permanent members – who must answer before the victims.”⁷

In this regard, France and the UK are to be commended for their leadership proposing the five permanent members of the UN Security Council voluntarily suspend the use of their veto rights in situations involving mass atrocities.

Millions of victims of conflict, and with them millions of victims of modern slavery, are depending on the remaining permanent members of the Security Council, United States, China, and Russia to agree to this life saving approach.

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A picture taken on June, 2017 shows irregular migrants being transported to a detention centre in the Libyan coastal town of Zawiyah, 45 kilometres west of the capital Tripoli, after their rescue while attempting to reach Europe. Media and UN reports have confirmed that large numbers of migrants in Libya are being traded and sold with detention centres being used as staging posts.

Photo credit: Taha Jawashi/AFP/Getty Images



MODERN SLAVERY: A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Kevin Hyland | Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner UK

Modern slavery can be found in every corner of our globalised world. In 2017, the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery estimated that 40.3 million individuals were living in modern slavery; with individuals being exploited for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, domestic servitude, and forced criminality.

Advances in data collection have allowed us to better understand the prevalence and drivers of modern slavery, region by region and country by country. Higher rates of modern slavery have typically been associated with countries with lower economic wealth, weak rule of law, and those affected by conflict. Whilst this remains the case, this year's Global Slavery Index highlights the significant role that more economically-developed countries have in perpetuating modern slavery. Despite their relative wealth, modern slavery crimes are taking place at an alarming rate in these countries and within their global supply chains.

Progressive action has been taken by developed nations to combat modern slavery, such as the introduction of modern slavery legislation, and this is to be welcomed. However, it is clear that critical gaps remain in the provision of protection for the vulnerable and in the apprehension of perpetrators.

Whilst new laws to tackle modern slavery are to be welcomed, countries also have a responsibility to

look at existing legislation and assess whether they are inadvertently generating the conditions in which exploitation can flourish. Particular cohorts of the population, such as those working in the "gig economy" or seasonal migrant workers, may be particularly vulnerable to abuse due to weak labour laws and restrictive immigration policies. Any legislation, policy, and practice that exacerbate abuse must be repealed.

In my role as the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, I have seen just how much can be achieved when there is political will to tackle modern slavery, and a readiness of government, business, and civil society to work in partnership. However, it is also clear that merely having modern slavery legislation,

without the commitment or resourcing to ensure its effective implementation and enforcement, is not enough.

In 2015, the Modern Slavery Act was brought into force in the UK which, with the support of business, included a "Transparency in supply chains" provision. This provision

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requires businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more that provide goods and services in the UK to produce an annual statement explaining what they are doing to tackle modern slavery within their supply chains. The inclusion of this provision was an important step; however, two years on, corporate response to this requirement remains patchy at best. In 2017, 43 of the FTSE 100 failed to comply with the basic requirements of this legislation. Even with the legislation, the UK has a long way to go to in ensuring that UK businesses are slavery-free.

The introduction of the Modern Slavery Act has undoubtedly served to raise awareness of modern slavery, resulting in year-on-year increases in the number of victims of modern slavery being identified. There is greater understanding of the various forms of modern slavery and the prevalence of British nationals falling victim to this crime. However, greater awareness is just a starting point; we must ensure that where cases are identified they are met with a robust, professional response.

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All countries are affected by modern slavery and therefore all have a responsibility to bring an end to this scourge. Collaborative action at the local, national, and international level is required to address the conditions which make individuals vulnerable to abuse.

The UK's current system of support – the National Referral Mechanism – does not meet the needs of all victims and is currently being reformed. I welcome this. This is a crime that can destroy lives and we have a responsibility to protect and support victims to recover from their experiences and rebuild their lives – regardless of age, gender, or nationality.

It is unacceptable that modern slavery continues to exist in a climate of low risk criminality and high profit reward, making it the crime of choice for criminals, who for too long have operated with impunity across the UK and beyond.

All countries are affected by modern slavery and therefore all have a responsibility to bring an end to this scourge. Collaborative action at the local, national, and international

level is required to address the conditions which make individuals vulnerable to abuse.

Through research such as this Global Slavery Index, we have a greater understanding of modern slavery across the globe. We know what the problem is, let's now act.

Elvira, 50, trafficked from the Philippines into domestic slavery in the UK

“When my husband got sick, I went to work in Qatar so I could send money for medicine back home. But the family were cheating me out of my salary. They said I could go home if I went to work for one of the sisters in London. She lived near Harrods. She'd shout at me, calling me stupid, and made me sleep on the floor by her bed. She fed me a single piece of bread and cup of tea for the whole day. I felt like I was in prison.”

Photo credit: Hazel Thompson for The Guardian



SURVIVORS ARE SPEAKING. ARE WE LISTENING?

Minh Dang | Survivor Alliance, Executive Director & PhD Student, University of Nottingham



Survivors of slavery and human trafficking regularly receive invitations to share their experience, whether by the media, at congressional hearings or at conferences. When the organisers are asked to expand on the nature of their requests, the typical response is: “We would love to hear your personal story, how you overcame it, and we want our audience to leave inspired.” The clear assumption in these requests is that survivors will speak about their traumatic experiences of slavery.

The problem

The presumptive role in these requests is for survivors to provide a face to the issue and to make it real for the audience. As some of the best interpreters of modern slavery in the broadest sense, survivors’ insights are wasted when they are restricted to telling personal stories. Survivors become tokenized when there is only one survivor invited to participate in an event and asked to “speak for all” survivors. Treated as an afterthought, most anti-slavery efforts assume that there are no survivors in the room, or the voices and agendas of survivors are not critical to the agenda of an event, publication, or exhibit.

Survivors are also undervalued through a widespread assumption that they will volunteer their time and expertise. They are regularly unpaid for their contributions or even required to pay out of pocket for travel expenses. Their work products are not treated with the same considerations normally given to intellectual property, such as acquiring consent for publication or reuse.

Deepening our understanding

Survivors are placed in an exasperating predicament: to be heard in limited ways, with little to no compensation, or to be excluded from important conversations that affect their lives. Similar to the weariness that people of colour experience when asked to educate white people about racism, survivors of slavery are weary of being asked to share traumatic stories. What is implied is that their “personal story” is purely a story of horror and atrocity, and other important aspects of their identities are negated.

Many survivors understand the benefit of sharing some aspects of our story to raise awareness; however, our experience in slavery is not the only, *nor the primary*, topic that we want to discuss. We want to talk about policy change. We want to design social service programs and lead our own organisations and programs. We want to build grassroots solutions and to sustain ourselves. Like all humans, we want self-determination and autonomy, coupled with interdependence and community support.

Our personal experiences include our identities as parents, scholars, business and NGO leaders, activists, artists, lawyers, and so much more. Our experiences in slavery inform our anti-slavery efforts, but we are people, just like you. We are people who seek access to a healthy, safe, and secure life for ourselves and our communities.

As such, many survivors engaged in anti-slavery efforts have full-time jobs to make ends meet, support families, and pay off debt. Many of us desire to be actively engaged in the anti-slavery movement but we do not have the capacity to volunteer our time. Thus, our request for compensation and reimbursement of expenses is the same as any other professional.

While at times there are occasional legal or logistical difficulties to compensating survivors, these challenges are not insurmountable. To lay it out plainly, here are some reasons why survivors need and should be compensated:

- › A request to speak, present, or give feedback on documents is a request for expert input or consultation. It is common to pay consulting fees to any subject matter expert.
- › A request to appear in a venue that is away from the survivor's home or workplace involves an additional travel expense that the survivor likely cannot incur.
- › To tend to health and self-care needs, pre-, post-, and during involvement in anti-slavery efforts, additional costs are incurred.
- › Survivors must often use vacation or unpaid time to participate in projects and may need to make alternative child care arrangements.

The solution

Going forward, to be more inclusive and to ensure that survivors can contribute in meaningful ways, it is time for the anti-slavery movement to focus on developing and deepening opportunities for survivors that are not centred around sharing their trauma narrative, and to provide compensation for their time, travel, and expertise. I recommend the following actions:

- › Add a line item to your budget for survivor participation and develop a fundraising plan to support it.
- › If you feel unsure about how to incorporate survivors, hire a veteran survivor leader to conduct an assessment and make recommendations.
- › If there are no existing survivor groups in your area, work with allied organisations to recruit people who exited slavery long before it became the social issue of the moment.
- › Request anonymous survivor input through surveys of program participants. Offer gift cards in exchange for participation.

- › Invite a survivor to join your Board of Directors or an Advisory Board.
- › Invite survivors to review and provide input on program plans, training curricula, and media campaigns.
- › Involve survivors in creating research questions and measurement variables.
- › Develop employment opportunities for survivors within your organisation and provide support for their success. These include discussing confidentiality, making workplace and cultural norms explicit, and if necessary, training other staff members on how to engage.
- › Invest in survivor leadership programs such as the National Survivor Network⁸ in the United States, Utthan⁹ in India, and a new international organisation that I am launching, the Survivor Alliance.¹⁰

The Survivor Alliance unites and empowers survivors of slavery around the world. Incubated in the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab,¹¹ it focuses on developing a global network of trained survivor leaders. In addition to

empowering survivor voices in the anti-slavery movement, the Survivor Alliance shifts the focus from the moment of emancipation and the immediate aftermath, to the long journey of (re)building a life in freedom.

Until we actively support the development of survivor leaders, there will be a dearth of such leaders to call on to support anti-slavery efforts. We believe the wider movement has a moral obligation to help make this happen.

The more successful our anti-slavery efforts become, the more survivors will live among us. Survivors will demand a prosperous life and the ability to sustain our freedom.

Freedom is more than the absence of slavery.

It is imperative that our movement integrate survivors as equal members of our community. We are here to build with you. When we knock on your door, please invite us in. We do not want our words to continue to fall on deaf ears, but rest assured, we will not be silent.

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Minh Dang discusses potential survivor-informed research projects with Valentine Nkoyo, Director of Mojatu Foundation and Survivor Alliance Membership Coordinator, and Julie McGarry, University of Nottingham Associate Professor of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Photo credit: University of Nottingham



PUBLIC PROCUREMENT: THE TRILLION-DOLLAR MISSING LINK

*Andrew Forrest AO | Chairman, Fortescue Metals Group
& Chevaan Daniel | Group Director, The Capital Maharaja Organisation Limited*

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No one speaks in favour of modern slavery, and slavery has no real friends. At best, it can be said that slavery has temporary acquaintances, people who rely on slavery for short term profit.

No country or business can build its future on slavery. Indeed, slavery thwarts economic empowerment and puts a ceiling on growth.

All sides of politics are unified behind this point, a rarity in today's fractured policy landscape. Likewise, business has led its own reform and has shown its willingness to work with government in joint endeavours. The leaders of all faiths have come together and shared their common abhorrence of slavery in their teachings.

Still, despite this leadership many continue to benefit from this often invisible crime, or resign themselves to accepting modern slavery as an inevitability.

Modern slavery is a human condition of our own making which can be ended by concerted action. It is a multi-billion dollar transnational criminal business which, on any one given day in 2016, ensnared 40.3 million people.

The scale of this truly global and abhorrent practice is staggering and will not be rectified until there is significant cooperation between business and government. One of the first areas to address is rooting out slavery where it exists in supply chains, be they of major businesses or governments.

Many governments are the biggest buyers of goods and services in their countries. Public procurement represents, on average, around 12 percent of a country's GDP and it is estimated to be in the order of the GDP which equals to US\$1.6 trillion worldwide.

While some governments are setting reporting requirements for corporations, there are a paucity of measures directed at minimising the risks of modern slavery in public procurement in these policy responses. Governments need to get their houses in order.

This is a failure of leadership and an insult to business, which is tasked with meeting high expectations by policy makers who fail to measure themselves to the same standards. Continued inaction by governments exposes them to enormous reputational risk and economic consequences.

Thankfully, there are green shoots of progress. This year's Global Slavery Index finds 36 countries are taking steps to investigate forced labour in business or public supply chains, up from just four countries in 2016. Of the 36 countries, 25 are taking steps on government procurement. And there is no reason why the figure can't be higher.

The countries which collaborate beyond their own borders to adopt regional approaches to stamp out slavery will be rewarded with stronger societies, robust trade, and sustainable growth. Those that take steps to clean up labour issues at home will send the best possible signals to the investment world.

For investment destinations that are both accountable and attractive, there is almost no shortage of capital available. As more is learned about slavery, and how to measure it, investors will increasingly steer clear of opportunities that

come with exposure to slavery risk. Business leaders are acutely aware of the attractiveness of certain investment destinations and often labour issues and other social problems are serious deterrents to new ventures.

In the short-term, slavery may fill criminals' pockets with illegal profits, but in the long-term, the national profits of a country that allows slavery to thrive will be dragged down. Economic empowerment is the key to long-term growth and so it is no surprise that slavery, more than many other factors, hinders sustainable development.

As scrutiny increases down the long tail of multi-national companies' supply chains, countries that continue to allow modern slavery within their borders are at ever increasing risk of tarnishing their reputation and losing out on trade.

But slavery is not just a problem for developing countries seeking investment.

The great challenge with modern slavery is that not only is it hidden within the depths of criminal networks that are trafficking people for exploitation, but modern slavery also occurs where mainstream industries meet informal economies.

Slavery exists in all corners of the planet and touches us all through trade and consumer choices.

The Walk Free Foundation has engaged with the G20 process to ensure that the countries responsible for 80 percent of the world's economic activity take responsibility. The decision of the G20 in Germany in 2017 to prioritise the issue of modern slavery and develop policy responses was a huge step forward. It is now time for each of those countries to act.

We are encouraged by developments in G20 countries including Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States on public procurement. But, as the 2018 Global Slavery Index finds, there is still a long way to go.

Businesses and governments in G20 countries are importing masses of products that come with significant risks of being produced using modern slavery.

Our analysis found G20 countries are collectively importing at least US\$354 billion worth of at-risk products annually – for example seafood from Thailand, electronics from Malaysia, or coal from North Korea.

Business too has a critical role to play here. The old paradigm of name and shame has not delivered comprehensive reform, rather it has often discouraged businesses from looking too closely in case they discover abuses.

We need a paradigm shift to encourage businesses to seek out abuses in their supply chains, and reward leaders who take on the responsibility and challenge of addressing modern slavery. We need to celebrate the discovery of slavery as the first step to remedy the problem and empower those afflicted. This will drive businesses to ensure they are not enabling this crime.

Investors are more alert to this issue than ever before and are increasingly demanding businesses act with impact. Some of the largest institutional investors in the world are telling major corporations to improve

their social footprint or face losing out on billions of dollars of investment.

True business leaders know that creating sustainable supply chains can contribute positively towards growth, improve competition, provide job opportunities, and bring families out of poverty. This is a sustainable business model.

By providing decent work or demanding their suppliers and contractors do, companies are investing in the futures of communities. Profits and purpose are not mutually exclusive. In the long term, everyone loses out from slavery.

We have a tremendous opportunity to capitalise on the progress made and the commitment of so many to end the misery of 40.3 million of our fellow human beings.

It is an opportunity we must not let slip.

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Yum, 29, sold from Cambodia on to a Thai fishing boat

"One of my friends said he and a few others were leaving to find work. The next day we got a taxi and headed for Thailand. A man offered us £150 to work on a construction site, but drove us to a busy sea port instead. We sailed for days before they told us we'd been sold to the Thais to work as fishermen. After nine months at sea, I knew I had to escape. Now I have a newborn baby, a wife and no prospects of work. Maybe I will try to find work again in Thailand"

Photograph credit: George Nickels for The Guardian



UNFINISHED BUSINESS: ADDRESSING THE VICTIMISATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Jacqueline Joudo Larsen | Senior Research Manager, Walk Free Foundation



Although modern slavery occurs in every corner of the globe and affects many regardless of race, gender, religion, and socio-economic status, females are disproportionately affected. Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of modern slavery's victims are women and girls.¹² This varies depending on the form of slavery but, notably, there are more female than male victims across all forms of modern slavery, except for state-imposed forced labour. The 2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery revealed that women and girls account for 99 percent of victims of forced labour in the commercial sex industry, 58 percent in other sectors (for example, domestic work), 40 percent of victims of forced labour imposed by state authorities, and 84 percent of victims of forced marriage.

There are many examples of women in forced labour around the globe. Women are trafficked from Nigeria to southern and western Europe, or from Malaysia to Australia, for commercial sexual exploitation.¹³ Large numbers of women travel from Southeast Asia to the Middle East for domestic work only to face extreme exploitation on arrival. Many more victims are exploited closer to home. For example, Ugandan women and girls are trafficked to South Africa and the Middle East where they often end up exploited in domestic work or the sex industry.¹⁴ Within the Caribbean region, women are trafficked from Guyana and Jamaica to neighbouring nations such as Antigua and Barbuda.¹⁵

Some forms of modern slavery, such as forced marriage, can be difficult to parse out from cultural practice. Forced marriages occur in both developing and developed

nations, with women and girls being forced to marry for many reasons, some of which are closely linked to longstanding cultural practices and understandings of gender roles, while others reflect far more pragmatic economic reasons relating to income generation and alleviating poverty. In some parts of the world, young girls and women are forced to marry in exchange for payment to their families, the cancellation of debt, to settle family disputes, or to secure another person's entry into the country. In some societies, a woman can still be inherited by the brother of her deceased husband and forced marriages may occur when a rapist is permitted to escape criminal sanctions by marrying the victim, usually with the consent of her family. In countries with significant levels of conflict, women are abducted by armed groups and forced to marry fighters.

Of course, slavery does not spare men and boys. Men are more likely than women to be exploited by the state and in many industries, such as agriculture, mining, and construction. While a focus on female victims should not come at the expense of male victims, who must also be supported and empowered, an understanding of the gender differences in victimisation can shed light on where prevention and victim identification efforts should start. Findings from the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery reflect highly gendered patterns of employment and migration that see more women than men employed in informal and unregulated sectors – areas of work where heightened vulnerability to abuse and exploitation has been well-documented.

The disparity begs the question: what makes women and girls more vulnerable to modern slavery? Our research points to the relevance of broader patterns of human rights abuses that disproportionately affect women and girls, including domestic and sexual violence and discriminatory beliefs and practices around access to property, education, and even citizenship. Globally, women are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty and to report food insecurity. In turn, this impacts access to education with data revealing those living in poor households have higher rates of illiteracy, and of those, women in poor households are the most disadvantaged of all.¹⁶ Lack of education restricts employment opportunities for women and globally, women's labour force participation is 31 percentage points below that of men.¹⁷ In light of this, it comes as no surprise that women have access to fewer economic resources than men, for example, they make up just 13 percent of agricultural landowners across the globe.¹⁸ Without access to education, better employment opportunities, and economic resources, women are at greater risk of modern slavery.

Cultural practices and values, family structures, lack of autonomy, few employment opportunities, and access to education all play a part in creating risks that impact women and girls more than they do men and boys. When a decision is made to send a son to school and a daughter into the fields or to marry, their life outcomes diverge substantially. Although in many instances forced or child marriages are believed to be the best way to secure a daughter's future, there are significant health consequences. Girls who are married young are at higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, obstetric fistulas, and death during childbirth. Such marriages place women and girls at greater risk of being subjected to other forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and other forms of forced labour. For girls who are married young, education moves even further out of reach.

Unequal risk for men and women is not only the result of cultural practices and economic decision-making. Discriminatory legislative practices also exacerbate the disadvantaged position of women and girls; these include unequal inheritance rights, husbands having the legal

right to prevent wives from working, no legal protection from domestic violence, exemption from prosecution for rapists if they are married to, or marry, their victim.¹⁹ The numerous gaps in legal protection for women and girls must be addressed to help break the cycle of inequality.

Fundamentally, modern slavery cannot be addressed in isolation. It is both a symptom and a cause, and in tackling other fundamental rights issues through the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG's) – eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (SDG 5.2), eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (SDG 5.3), ending abuse, exploitation, and trafficking of children (SDG 16.2), and facilitating orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (SDG 10.7) – we will reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to modern slavery. Small steps in the right direction are being taken in some regions. In the forced marriage space, raising community awareness on the dangers of forced marriage, human rights, and the importance of education for girls in bridging the inequality gap have shown some progress in combating modern slavery.²⁰ Front-line organisations such as the Freedom Fund and their local partners have made significant inroads into addressing the slavery of women and girls by adopting a wraparound approach that tackles the root causes.²¹

At the heart of these issues lie traditions and systems that perpetuate and propagate the discrimination and exploitation of women. In his 2018 International Women's Day address, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that the push for gender equality is "...the unfinished business of our time."²² In the wave of activism that has propelled the #MeToo and #TimesUp campaigns across the globe, there is no better time to tackle the root causes of vulnerability among women and girls.

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Anita, 15, forced into child marriage in Kenya.

"I was out grazing the cows when my father said it was time to get married. I was woken up early and circumcised. The elders said the man was to be my only husband. He was 55. I was very confused. I was only 10. Nine months later, because I had not given him a baby, he began tasking me with the difficult jobs. I decided I had to escape – he beat me so hard my leg wouldn't stop bleeding. I was taken in by the Catholic Sisters and started school in 2013. I hope to be a doctor."

Photo credit: Kate Holt for The Guardian

Endnotes

- 1 For more information, please see: National Survivor Network. Available from: <http://nationalsurvivornetwork.org/> [22 February 2018].
- 2 For more information, please see: Utthan. Available from: <http://www.sanjogindia.org/programmes/utthan/> [22 February 2018].
- 3 For more information, please see: Survivor Alliance. Available from: www.survivoralliance.org [22 February 2018].
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