

Press release: Commonwealth countries unite to stamp out human trafficking and child exploitation

A new UK aid package of support will help eradicate human trafficking and child exploitation in the Commonwealth, as more countries commit to take action to help victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

A new UK aid package of support will help eradicate human trafficking and child exploitation in the Commonwealth, as more countries commit to take action to help victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

This support, from the Department for International Development and the Home Office, will identify vulnerable people most at risk of child labour and strengthen law enforcement responses in a number of Commonwealth countries to crack down on this horrific crime.

UN experts will determine where child labour is taking place, in what form, and map out where the greatest number of victims are. This work will show where we can help the most children and develop targeted plans to prevent and stop child labour, including in businesses and supply chains. They will also focus on communities affected by conflict where there could be a higher risk of exploitation, such as Rohingya families in Bangladesh who have already fled brutal violence and persecution.

The UK will also work in Commonwealth countries such as Sri Lanka and Malawi to build the capacity of police forces and prosecutors to root out human trafficking and rapidly increase the number of convictions to punish the perpetrators. We will boost regional cooperation, train prosecutors, strengthen the protection of victims to encourage them to speak out and help to develop national policing strategies to break the business model of the traffickers.

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, said:

The UK and the Commonwealth are stepping up to fight one of the greatest injustices of our time – the trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable people by predators.

UK aid is helping to stamp out these evil practices, by smashing the traffickers' exploitative business model, helping to punish the perpetrators and supporting vulnerable people and victims – who are all too often women and children – to rebuild their lives so they do not fall back into a cycle of abuse.

The Commonwealth is uniting to take on this challenge and our renewed commitment to end exploitation of anyone, anywhere, is vital in a world where over 40 million people are still being

forced to live in these barbaric conditions.

Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, said:

Human trafficking, forced labour and child exploitation are cruel and horrendous crimes that no one should suffer.

The UK is leading the world in tackling this form of abuse through the ground-breaking Modern Slavery Act 2015, which ensures victims are identified and supported and provides law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to bring perpetrators to justice.

But this is a global problem which requires a global response, which is why all countries must unite to end this to make these brutal crimes a thing of the past. The UK continues to work with our Commonwealth neighbours to strengthen their response to human trafficking and child exploitation. The funding announced today will play a vital role in helping these countries identify and support the most vulnerable people in their communities, while supporting law enforcement to bring offenders to justice.

The Commonwealth has committed to taking a leading role in the international fight against human trafficking and the UK's support will have a life-changing impact. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings being held in London, a further eight countries have already joined the global Call to Action to end Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, launched by the Prime Minister at the United Nations last year. Over 50 countries around the world have now endorsed the call to action, including more than a third of the Commonwealth, and more are expected to join during the Summit.

The UK is already working closely with Commonwealth countries to end the exploitation of men, women and children. For example in South Asia we are preventing trafficking and forced labour among women migrant workers; in Nigeria we are supporting victims and raising public awareness of the risks of trafficking, whilst improving law enforcement and justice systems to crack down on this crime and root out the perpetrators.

Forced labour and trafficking affects an estimated 40 million people and thrives on desperation, discrimination and inequality in every country of the globe. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable and constitute 71% of all victims – such as in forced labour in the garment sector, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude. The UK's work is enabling girls and women to make informed choices about their lives, including through access to skills and education.

Today's package of support totals £5.5 million, delivered by the Home Office and DFID, which includes:

- £3 million to support Commonwealth governments to better identify, analyse and subsequently act upon instances of child labour through

gathering information and building capacity to end the practice in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. Our support will focus on areas affected by conflict where there could be a higher risk of modern slavery in global supply chains and communities like the Rohingya population in Bangladesh. Child labour is prevalent in areas like agriculture, the garment sector, fisheries and construction – raising the risk of products of child labour reaching the UK market.

- £2 million to strengthen law enforcement and justice systems in fighting human trafficking in India, Sri Lanka, Malawi and Zambia. This will develop and implement national policing strategies; raise criminal justice standards on trafficking, and boost the protection of victims.
- £500,000 to support tough new legislation to prevent and tackle human trafficking and forced labour in nine Commonwealth countries including Ghana, Nigeria, Pakistan, Uganda, Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, and Sri Lanka – and supporting the scrutiny and oversight of the response to human trafficking.

Notes to Editors:

At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2017, the Prime Minister announced that the UK will double its development spending on modern slavery to £150million, enabling more work in collaboration with source and transit countries. The Prime Minister also made a global Call to Action to end Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

The £5.5 million of support announced today is from the Conflict, Security and Stabilisation Fund (CSSF), with DFID and Home Office Official Development Assistance. The CSSF is a Cross Government fund through which the UK and our international partners are more secure from threats such as terrorism, corruption and illegal migration or trafficking.

The UK's ongoing work in South Asia includes the Work in Freedom programme to help women at risk of trafficking and forced labour.

The £10.5 million first phase of the programme helped 380,000 women at risk, and an independent evaluation found the project was innovative, highly relevant and delivering results.

A £13 million investment in the second phase of the programme was announced in December 2017, and will help over 350,000 women, including victims of forced domestic work and garment manufacturing and supporting women at their destination to access help if they are exploited.

In Nigeria, both DFID and the Home Office are working to improve the support offered to victims of trafficking, promote alternative, aspirational livelihoods to potential victims of trafficking, and building the capacity of law enforcement to crack down on the crime.

£7 million of DFID support in Nigeria was announced in December 2017 to create job opportunities in sectors including hospitality and technology which could help up to 30,000 women at risk of modern slavery; and strengthen systems that support victims of trafficking, including through improving safe

house support and training for counsellors in at least six safe houses.

The Home Office has provided £5 million of support – announced in September 2016 – which will build the capacity of Nigerian law enforcement to crack down on the crime, help investigate prolific traffickers, and provide protection and rehabilitation for victims.