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Welcome to the first edition of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network newsletter! Here, you will find news about the 8.7 Network, the impact of our work across all regions, useful resources and tools, as well as our latest updates and activities. #Commonwealth87net



About the Commonwealth 8.7 Network



The Commonwealth 8.7 Network is an international member-driven network of over 60 national and local civil society organisations, who share a common vision to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking.

Our members work on diverse issues that include anti-trafficking initiatives, survivor advocacy, first assistance, provision of vocational training and other support to survivors, the protection of children, women's rights, migrant workers' rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, and supply chain impact assessment.

The 8.7 Network was founded by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and is named after the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7 which encourages states to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery. The 8.7 Network serves as a knowledge-sharing platform that works collaboratively to raise awareness, build capacity, and advocate for changes to laws and policies.

In 2019, the 8.7 Network received the Commonwealth Secretary-General's Innovation for Sustainable Development Award.

Join us today and let's work together to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking! https://www.commonwealth-87.org/become-a-member



Message from our Chair



Dear 8.7 Network Members and Friends,

In these challenging times the need for community has never been greater.

By sharing information, data, ideas and best practices, we can support each other, whilst building a true Commonwealth picture of the reality of these crimes against humanity. Locally, regionally, nationally, internationally, this picture will empower our work to challenge and change policies, hold governments and businesses accountable, and give victims the ability to rebuild broken lives.

As the world faces the realities of a pandemic, heightened conflict, forced migration and global warming, human exploitation continues at an expanding pace. The business of buying and selling humans remains a growth industry.

In this, the first Commonwealth 8.7 Network newsletter, we would like to celebrate and highlight the strength and diversity of our members. However, we would also like to share how far we still must go to achieve the mission of eradicating modern slavery and human trafficking.

Collectively we have a greater voice. Collectively we can hold leaders accountable. Collectively we can force change.

Thank you for supporting the 8.7 Network, Thank you for giving voice to those declared their say.



Meet the Management Committee members!



Afasi Komla Director Engage Now Africa, Ghana



Francisca Awah Mbuli Founding Director Survivors' Network, Cameroon



Anne Pakoa Founder and CEO Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition, Vanuatu



Menal Sachdev Founder and Director Shiva Foundation, UK



Red Godfrey-Sagoo CEO The Sophie Hayes Foundation, UK Chair of the 8.7 Network Management Committee



Sally Irwin Founder Freedom Hub, Australia



Sneh Aurora Director CHRI London, UK Secretariat to the 8.7 Network



Syed Saiful Haque Founder WARBE Foundation, Bangladesh



Vera Belazelkoska Director of Programmes Ulula, Canada Vice-Chair of the 8.7 Network Management Committee



Syed Ayaz Hussain Chief Executive Officer Bonded Labour Liberation Front, Pakistan



Spotlight on the Regions



Contemporary Forms of Slavery Affecting Women and Girls in Africa

In recognition of International Women's Day and Commonwealth Day on 8 March 2021, this quarter's Spotlight on the Regions explores the contemporary forms of slavery to which women and girls in Africa are most vulnerable. The Spotlight focuses on two members of our Commonwealth 8.7 Network and their efforts to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery among women and girls in Cameroon and Ghana.

Poverty, inequality, conflict and climate change are the main drivers of contemporary forms of slavery in Africa. As a result, girls, women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Prevalent forms of contemporary slavery in the region include forced labour, domestic servitude, ritual servitude, head portage, debt bondage, child and forced marriage, and sexual exploitation.

Find out how Survivors' Network Cameroon and Engage Now in Ghana are contributing to the fight against contemporary forms of slavery and how they strive to identify, assist and support victims and survivors in Africa and beyond.

Survivors' Network Cameroon

Francisca Awah Mbuli

Survivors' Network Cameroon is a female and survivor-led NGO that builds a network of survivors of contemporary forms of slavery across Cameroon and Africa. The network supports and empowers women and children who are vulnerable or who are victims and survivors of contemporary forms of slavery and gender-based violence.



Francisca Awah Mbuli, the founding director of Survivors' Network, is herself a survivor of contemporary forms of slavery. She explains how Survivors' Network fills important gaps in the area of victim assistance through rescue, reintegration and first assistance. She also tells us that the network provides temporary and transitional homes, as well as case management and counseling services, to rescued victims and survivors.

Survivors' Network has so far aided the escape of more than 2000 women trapped in exploitative situations in the Middle East, and has facilitated the repatriation of 63 of these women by assuming the costs of their travel. Francisca also tells us that the network has rescued more than 500 child and female victims of trafficking, provided temporary shelter to 25 survivors, as well as offered guidance counseling to more than 1000 survivors within Cameroon.

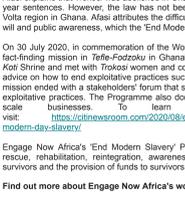
Francisca stresses the importance of economic independence and awareness of potential risks in preventing re-exploitation. To achieve this, Survivors' Network organises educational and vocational capacity-building training sessions that aim to empower women to explore business opportunities and provide in-depth information on migration, foreign employment and the indicators of potential trafficking situations. Survivors' Network has to date delivered entrepreneurship skills workshops to more than 900 women, and has engaged more than 600 women in income generating activities.

In 2020, Survivors' Network channelled part of its efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through the production and distribution of masks and food packages. This year, Survivors' Network has procured a multipurpose vocational training centre and a victim shelter. We are excited to see what the future holds for Francisca and Survivors' Network!

To learn more about Survivors' Network Cameroon: https://www.survivorsnetwork.co/

Engage Now Africa- Ghana

Afasi Komla



Engage Now Africa is a community-based NGO that runs the End Modern Slavery Programme, which seeks to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery in West Africa. Afasi Komla, the director of this programme, emphasises the need to eradicate ritual servitude in Ghana, Togo and Benin.

Afasi tells us that ritual servitude is most visible among the Ewe Tribe who reside in parts of Ghana, Togo and Benin. In Ghana, one form of ritual servitude is known as Trokosi, which involves the offering of a young virgin girl to the Fetish Gods to atone for crimes that were committed by their relatives. These girls are forced to live in the shrine and serve the Gods for the rest of their lives. If these girls/women escape or die, they will be replaced with other virgin girls from the same families, and when they die, their bodies must be returned to the Gods.

Afasi explains that Trokosi was abolished in Ghana in 1998 with a law that punishes perpetrators with three year sentences. However, the law has not been enforced and Trokosi continues to be practiced in the Volta region in Ghana. Afasi attributes the difficulty in eradicating this practice to a general lack of political will and public awareness, which the 'End Modern Slavery' Programme is working to address.

On 30 July 2020, in commemoration of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, Afasi led a Trokosi fact-finding mission in Tefee-Fodzoku in Ghana's Volta region. During this mission, the Team visited the Kofi Shrine and met with Trokosi women and community elders, who provided information on Trokosi and advice on how to end exploitative practices such as ritual servitude, child labour and child trafficking. The mission ended with a stakeholders' forum that sought to educate the community on the need to stop such exploitative practices. The Programme also donated money to six Trokosi women to support their small scale businesses. To learn more about this mission, please visit: https://online.wsroom.com/2020/08/engage-nw-africa-dialogue-with-stakeholders-in-teepee-modern-day-slavery/

Engage Now Africa's 'End Modern Slavery' Programme implements a range of activities that include rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration, awareness-raising, law enforcement training, career training for survivors and the provision of funds to survivors to enable their economic independence.

Find out more about Engage Now Africa's work: https://engagenowafrica.org/

8.7 Members News



The Beacon of the Freed (Canada) has released a report on human trafficking in one of Quebec's rural areas: the Laurentides region. Full report can be found here.

Congratulations to Ulula (Canada) and Partners who were awarded the Thomson Reuters 2021 Stop Slavery Collaboration Award, for its innovative Kutalia mobile-based impact monitoring project in the DRC's mining sector! Click here to learn more.

Congratulations also to Sanjog India, who have been awarded the Thomson Reuters 2021 Stop Slavery Impact Award, for their work on the frontlines in the fight against modern slavery! Watch their acceptance speech here.

Network Action



High Level Dialogue: Delivering a Common Future to Eradicate Modern Slavery

31 March 2021: The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) UK held a virtual High Level Dialogue, entitled Delivering a Common Future to Eradicate Modern Slavery. The dialogue was organised in collaboration with Walk Free and featured a powerful interview with the Commonwealth 8.7 Network's very own Francisca Awah Mbuli, Management Committee Member and Founding Director of Survivors' Network Cameroon.

The Dialogue included other high level speakers, including H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan, President of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, former Prime Minister of the UK and Member of Parliament for Maidenhead, as well as other diplomats and government officials from Australia, The Bahamas, Fiji and the UK.

The Dialogue explored the role of the Commonwealth in eradicating modern slavery by building on previous commitments and taking concrete action, and is a key event in the lead up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that is expected to take place in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2021. Watch the webinar recording.

Submission to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery

15 March 2021: Members of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network collaborated with CHRI in the submission of a joint response to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery's Call for Inputs on the Nexus between Forced Displacement and Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

Our response will go on to inform the Special Rapporteur's thematic report to be presented to the 48th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council in September 2021. The full response can be found here.

The following members offered valuable contributions, ensuring that national level realities are reflected in the development of international policies and frameworks:

- Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) - Australia
Centre for Youths Integrated Development - Nigeria
PACT-Ottawa (Persons Against the Crime of Trafficking in Humans) - Canada
The Freedom Hub - Australia
Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition - Vanuatu



International Women's Day

8 March 2021: In recognition of International Women's Day and Commonwealth Day, both falling on 8 March, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and the Commonwealth 8.7 Network prepared a joint statement urging Commonwealth governments to fulfill their commitments to eradicate modern slavery by 2030. Read the full statement.

Side Event to the UN Human Rights Council's 45th Regular Session

24 September 2020 - The Commonwealth 8.7 Network, the Office of the Special Rapporteur for contemporary forms of slavery, and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative co-organised a virtual side-event parallel to the United Nations Human Rights Council's 45th Regular Session, entitled: Contemporary Forms of Slavery and COVID-19: Mitigating risks, addressing challenges, and identifying good practices.

This event explored how COVID-19 has impacted and is likely to continue to impact, both contemporary forms of slavery practices and the abilities of states and CSOs to combat them while mitigating the effects of the pandemic.

Our panelists included the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery Tomoya Obokata, UK International Ambassador for Human Rights Rita French, and CSO representatives from the Commonwealth 8.7 Network, including Smriti Sengupta from Destry Reflections (India) and Vera Belazelkoska, Ulula (Canada). Watch the webinar recording.

8.7 Webinar Series

11 September 2020: Our 8.7 Webinar Series kicked off - a planned series of capacity-building webinars for our 8.7 Network members. So far, we have hosted four sessions on the following topics:

- Advocacy Part I: Demystifying the Human Rights Council
Fundraising Part I: Building fundraising proposals and identifying funding sources
Fundraising Part II: Financial sustainability: Successfully securing funds and maintaining relationships with funders
Advocacy II: The Importance of Networks and Survivor Participation

All of the webinar recordings are available on our members' YouTube channel. Join us to take part! And if you have any ideas for topics or guest speakers, please email us.

Upcoming Events



21 - 25 June 2021

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kigali, Rwanda. Under the theme, "Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming" Commonwealth leaders will come together to discuss delivery of commitments made at CHOGM 2018.

21 June - 9 July 2021

47th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. During this session, Ms. Siobhan Mullaly, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, will present her report on the implementation of the principle of non-punishment in the context of trafficking in persons.

Resources and Tools



Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and Walk Free

The CHRI and Walk Free Report, Eradicating Modern Slavery provides an assessment of Commonwealth governments' progress on achieving SDG Target 8.7. The report highlights the existing gaps in government responses to modern slavery and provides recommendations for action to end it. Read full report.



UNODC Global Report

UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2020. Read full report.



U.S. Department of State

20th Anniversary U.S. Department of State 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report. Read full report.



World Vision

A World Vision report warns Canadians could be contributing to child labour with every grocery trip. Read full report.



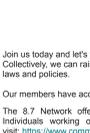
Irish Legal

Northern Ireland launches consultations on modern slavery transparency in supply chains, which will run until May 2021. Read full report.



Ontario Newswroom

On National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, the Ontario government in Canada introduced New Anti-Human Trafficking Legislation: "Proposed Changes will Better Protect Victims, Support Survivors and Increase Tools to Crack Down on Offenders." Read full report.



UNODC Press Release

'Share of Children Among Trafficking Victims Increases, Boys Five Times: COVID-19 Seen Worsening Overall Trend in Human Trafficking', says UNODC Report. Read full report.

Join our Network!



Join us today and let's work together to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking! Collectively, we can raise awareness, strengthen skills, share good practice, and advocate for change to laws and policies.

Our members have access to an exclusive Slack channel where we share ideas, resources and tools!

The 8.7 Network offers four membership categories based on the mandate of your organisation. Individuals working on these issues can also apply. To learn more about how you can join, visit: https://www.commonwealth-87.org/become-a-member/



Send us your Stories!



If you're a member of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network and would like to be featured in an upcoming issue of our newsletter, we invite you to get in touch and share your stories and photos!



Thank you!



We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this first 8.7 Quarterly Newsletter and invite you to share it with your networks.

