

**Submission to the 2024 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)
on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking**

Endorsed by Global, Regional and National Civil Society Organisations

July 2024

**Human Dignity, Not Exploitation: A Civil Society Statement on Eradicating Modern Slavery and
Human Trafficking**

Despite Commonwealth commitments to promote and protect human rights, equality and justice, millions remain entrapped in modern slavery including human trafficking - gross violations of human rights that demand immediate action. The Commonwealth, with its rich tapestry of cultures and shared values, has a unique opportunity to lead the fight against these heinous crimes.

It is estimated that 50 million people worldwide are living in modern slavery on any given day, either forced to work against their will or subject to forced marriage.¹ This equates to one in every 150 people living in the Commonwealth. According to the 2021 Global Slavery Index² (GSI), 27.7 million people are trapped in forced labour and 22 million in forced or servile marriage.³ An estimated one in four victims of modern slavery are children - 12 million globally. Of these, 3.3 million children are in forced labour and 8.9 million children in forced marriages.⁴ According to the UNHCR as of May 2024 there are 120 million people across the world who have been forcibly displaced leaving them vulnerable to predatory exploiters⁵.

The persistence of modern slavery is deeply rooted in a complex interplay of systemic issues that create and exacerbate vulnerabilities among affected populations. Socio-economic inequality is a primary driver, as individuals in impoverished communities often lack access to education, employment, and social protections, making them susceptible to exploitation. Gender inequality and discrimination further compound these vulnerabilities, with women and girls disproportionately targeted due to their marginalised status in many societies. Harmful social and cultural norms, such as those that condone child labour or forced marriages, perpetuate environments where modern slavery can thrive.

This situation is further exacerbated by climate change and conflict which create conditions that foster exploitation and human trafficking. Climate change disrupts agricultural productivity, triggers extreme weather events, fosters climate-driven migration and conflict, and compromises health and essential infrastructure. This has a disastrous impact on livelihoods, forcing families and individuals to make perilous decisions which increase their vulnerability to modern slavery, human trafficking, forced marriage, and forced labour. Climate-induced modern slavery particularly affects the Commonwealth - 25 out of 56 Commonwealth states are small island developing states (SIDs) (constituting 66% of all SIDs globally) and are particularly vulnerable to the devastating effects of climate change⁶. The World Bank predicts that by 2050, 216 million people will be forced to migrate within their own countries solely because of climate change. This forced migration will make them more vulnerable to the risk of human trafficking and modern slavery.⁷

Addressing modern slavery and human trafficking requires an integrated approach that considers the complex interplay between root vulnerabilities and drivers, climate change, migration, loss of livelihood, leading to increased instances of modern slavery, including human trafficking, forced labour, child, early, and forced marriage. It requires investing in climate resilience, promoting sustainable development, and strengthening conflict prevention and resolution efforts. Such an approach must place greater emphasis on rights-based, survivor-centred, participatory, and gender and age-responsive interventions that address the drivers of modern slavery.

¹ International Labour Organization, Walk Free and International Organisation for Migration (2022) -

[Report: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage \(ilo.org\)](#)

² [Global Slavery Index | Walk Free](#)

³ International Labour Organization, Walk Free and IOM (2022) - [Report: Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage \(ilo.org\)](#)

⁴ <https://www.antislavery.org/what-we-do/ending-child-slavery/>

⁵ [Worldwide levels of forced displacement hit new high: UNHCR | UN News](#)

⁶ [Climate Risk Country Profile, Samoa; Samoa Observer](#)

⁷ [The Connection Between Climate Change and Modern Slavery](#)

Commonwealth Commitments

At the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), States emphasised the need for effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, by 2025. Commonwealth Heads also endorsed the Kigali Declaration on Child Care and Protection Reform and encouraged member States to ratify and implement relevant international human rights agreements and International Labour Organisation conventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS: One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Commonwealth

In line with the aims of CHOGM 2024 and building on existing commitments, we call upon Commonwealth governments to:

Strengthen democratic institutions, uphold human rights, and enforce the rule of law. These are the cornerstones of resilient societies capable of effectively addressing modern slavery. Robust democracies ensure transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and citizen participation, in addition to fostering international cooperation and coordination, which are crucial for identifying and dismantling exploitation networks. Upholding human rights protects vulnerable populations from abuse, while a firm rule of law ensures good governance practices where perpetrators of modern slavery are prosecuted. By committing to and implementing these principles, Commonwealth nations can make significant strides towards eradicating modern slavery and securing a just and equitable future for all.

Create a resilient environment to combat climate change, thereby addressing modern slavery and human trafficking. Climate-induced displacement and economic instability increase vulnerability to exploitation. By financing and investing in climate resilience, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable development, and disaster preparedness, vulnerable communities can be protected from falling prey to traffickers. Robust environmental policies will not only mitigate climate impacts but also reduce the socio-economic factors that drive modern slavery. Additionally, any responses to climate change must consider issues related to loss of livelihood, migration, and increased vulnerability to modern slavery, human trafficking, and exploitation. Member states must commit to building a future where both our planet and our people are safeguarded against exploitation and harm.

Build resilient economies that support recovery and prosperity by prioritising sustainable economic growth, quality education, decent work and job creation, and social safety nets which can protect individuals from, and prevent exploitation. Resilient economies empower communities, reduce poverty, and enhance education and opportunities, making them less susceptible to traffickers. Promoting equitable access to economic opportunities, especially for marginalised groups, lifts vulnerable populations out of poverty, the very breeding ground for modern slavery and human trafficking. Additionally, prioritise enacting legislation and standards that require businesses to audit and report on labour practices within their supply chains, including penalties for non-compliance. Continuously monitor human and labour rights risks and impacts and dedicate appropriate resources to remediation. Incentivise ethical business practices through tax benefits and public recognition for companies that excel in eradicating exploitative labour.

Promote resilient societies to empower individuals for a peaceful and productive life, including fostering inclusive communities, enhancing social protection, and ensuring equal opportunities for all, which can help to reduce systematic inequalities, discrimination, and other vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. Empowered individuals can resist exploitation, support their families, and contribute to societal well-being.

More specifically, we call on all Commonwealth governments to:

Support Survivors:

1. Increase identification of, and improve support for, modern slavery victims and survivors by providing regular, systematic training for all frontline service providers.
2. Enable victims and survivors' self-empowerment by ensuring they have information on services, access to their rights and effective remedies, including independent advocacy, legal representation, and compensation.

3. Implement targeted measures to deliver sustainable, long-term programmes to address the stigma associated with trafficking and sexual exploitation and support the successful reintegration of survivors of trafficking.
4. Expand and adequately resource integrated, adolescent and child-friendly services that are responsive to the needs of survivors. Such programmes should be victim-centred and gender-responsive and offer community integration or reintegration support services to support the immediate and long-term recovery, reintegration, and rehabilitation of survivors. This could include reintegration back into the education system, the provision of skill building, access to shelters and community-based care, housing and job market support, legal, medical, mental health and psychosocial assistance, and sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services that promote recovery and reintegration.
5. Engage survivors in policy and programme development and implementation. Ensure that the processes for creating policies and programmes aimed at eradicating modern slavery are informed by survivors, and that implementation includes their active participation and engagement.

Protect Children:

The 2025 target for eradicating child labour is rooted in the global commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 which calls for “immediate and effective measures to end child labour in all its forms by 2025”. This target was established in 2015 as part of the [United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

We therefore urge Commonwealth member states to:

6. Ratify relevant international conventions and ensure that national laws align with international standards, such as ILO Conventions No. 138 on Minimum Age and No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and that these laws are effectively implemented and enforced.
7. Promote and enable all children to receive quality education - especially girls and those from marginal and vulnerable groups - including taking measures aimed at transitioning child labourers to students, such as financial support for families, the actualisation of free primary education and regulation of high fees charged by private educational institutions. In addition, socio-economic and wider strengthening of families, strengthening of child protection systems and increased awareness and understanding of child trafficking within communities can increase resilience of children and their families falling prey to predatory traffickers.
8. Provide rehabilitation and support services for children who have been involved in child labour to help them reintegrate into society and access education and other opportunities. Additionally ensure proper targeting of social intervention programmes to provide coverage for child victims and survivors of modern slavery. Rehabilitation and support services need to be holistic, culturally competent, trauma and survivor informed, and rights based to address the individual needs of children and to promote healing and recovery, reintegration in society and reduce risks of re-trafficking.
9. Cooperate and take action to end child sexual exploitation and abuse, both online and off-line, and combating transnational child trafficking, by joining relevant international bodies and initiatives. This includes ratifying the Hague Convention 1996, which covers civil measures of protection concerning children, including establishing co-operation between states; the Lanzarote Convention for Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CSEA) which requires criminalisation of all kinds of sexual offences against children; ILO Convention 138 as they have Convention 182; ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Workers, and by strengthening legal and protective systems to support child survivors, prosecute perpetrators and prevent CSEA offences.
10. In order to effectively tackle forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour under the SDG 8.7 framework, We recommend that Commonwealth members consider joining [Alliance 8.7](#) to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG Target 8.7. This strategic alliance will enable access to resources, knowledge sharing, and strengthen capacity for international cooperation.

Eradicate Exploitation from Economies, including Supply Chains:

11. Ratify and domesticate relevant international instruments, including ILO Conventions No. 29 and No. 105 on Forced Labour, and ILO Protocol No. 29 on Forced Labour.
12. Identify sectors at high risk of exploitation, and work with businesses in those sectors and with trade unions and civil society to develop initiatives to mitigate risks of forced labour and other forms of exploitation. Additionally, work with those with lived experiences (workers) as they are the best people to inform of initiatives to mitigate risks, and ensure access to remedies.
13. Strengthen laws and policies applicable to public procurement and corporate supply chains, by implementing mandatory transparency requirements and mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence. Additionally, strengthen laws and policies that facilitate safe and legal routes of migration including ensuring visa processes are well considered, protect the workers, and do not increase vulnerability.
14. Strengthen labour laws, establish, and resource independent labour inspectorates. Robust legislation that clearly defines and prohibits forced labour and human trafficking, coupled with well-funded and well-trained labour inspectors, would enable them to conduct proactive inspections, identify exploitative practices, and hold perpetrators accountable.
15. Develop mechanisms to periodically review actions taken by businesses to address modern slavery and to ensure that their operations are in consonance with international standards, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the ILO General Principles for Fair Recruitment. Businesses should be required to demonstrate how effective their actions to address modern slavery are through an impact measurement framework that includes clear goals, objectives, indicators, inputs, and outputs that show qualitative and quantitative changes.

THIS STATEMENT IS ENDORSED BY:

1. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
2. Commonwealth 8.7 Network
3. Commonwealth Trade Union Group (CTUG)
4. Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
5. Tanzania Anti-Human Trafficking and Legal Initiatives (TATLI)
6. SERAC-Bangladesh
7. Tanzania Relief Initiatives (TRI)
8. Tanzania Network against Human trafficking (TANAHUT)
9. Ulula
10. The Awakening (Pakistan)
11. One Billion Literates Foundation
12. Awareness Against Human Trafficking (HAART)
13. Child and Youth Protection Foundation
14. Aparajeyo-Bangladesh
15. My Choices Foundation

16. It's a Penalty
17. Challenging Heights (Ghana)
18. Economic Empowerment and Human Rights Sierra Leone (EEHR-SL)
19. Survivors' Network (SN), Cameroon/Africa
20. Stolen Dreams
21. Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON)
22. Free The Slaves
23. Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD)
24. Hope for Justice
25. Hiwot Ethiopia
26. Ella's
27. Centre for Communities Education and Youth Development
28. WARBE Development Foundation
29. Agar Ethiopia Charitable Society - Bahir Dar Branch
30. Engage Now Africa
31. Roots Link Africa
32. Media Coalition and Awareness to Halt Human Trafficking (MeCAHT)
33. Rwenzori Center for Research and Advocacy
34. Save Visions Africa
35. Solidarity of Refugee Women for the Social Welfare (SOFERES)
36. Global Welfare Association (GLOWA)
37. Bella Foundation for Child and Maternal Care
38. Unchained Solutions Pty Ltd
39. Shakhi Friends Of Women
40. Sukaar Welfare Organization
41. Sahil
42. Snehalaya
43. Professional Alliance for Development (PADet)
44. AbibiNsroma Foundation
45. Youth Rise International
46. Kiota Women Health and Development (KIWOHEDE)
47. Candle of Hope Foundation
48. Organisation for Prevention Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Children (OPRIFS)
49. Muwanga Development Association
50. Rupantar Bangladesh
51. Christ Soldiers Foundation NGO

52. Oasis India
53. Sport-Aid Development Trust
54. ISIZIBA Community Based Organizations of South Africa
55. Changing Lives Initiative Zambia
56. Civil Society SDGs Campaign Zambia
57. Disability Peoples Forum Uganda
58. Consolation East Africa
59. AFVMC Assistance to Families and Migrants
60. Centre For Community Initiatives Against Human Trafficking (CIAHT)
61. Grassroot Development Support and Rural Enlightenment Initiative
62. SAHRINGON Tanzania Chapter
63. Action for Change
64. Focus on Tanzania Organisation
65. CSYM - Mbuenet Mtandao Coalitions TZ
66. CSYM Huduma Christian Spiritual Youth Ministry Ylo Tanzania
67. Women Against AIDs And Poverty
68. COEL Commy Organization for Education for Women Leaders
69. Defence for Children International, Sierra Leone
70. Amaclare Connect & Development Initiative
71. Defence for Children International, Ghana
72. The Needy Today
73. The Freedom Hub
74. Patriotic Citizen Initiatives, Nigeria/Africa
75. Community Youth Development foundation
76. Casa Menina Mulher
77. Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE)
78. Powering Young Initiatives
79. Grassroots Advocacy Centre for Economic Development (GRACED)
80. Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition
81. ACRATH, Australia
82. Caribbean Coalition Against Trafficking In Persons
83. Destiny Reflection
84. Sonke Gender Justice
85. Street Children Empowerment Foundation
86. HURDS Foundation
87. Integrated Youth Empowerment Center (IYEC)

88. Women in Alternative Action Cameroon
89. CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago
90. Women Empowerment Association for Development in Africa
91. Bridgers Association
92. CIRCLE International
93. Udhhar Multipurpose Society
94. Youth Child Support Initiative (YCSI)
95. Centre for Social Concern and Development
96. Mbulu Education Network
97. Centre for Domestic Training and Development (CDTD)
98. Make a Child Smile
99. Streetwise Transformers
100. Youth Empowerment and Activism
101. Creatives Against Drugs And Crime
102. Jafari Jata Solution
103. Domestic Workers Returnees of Kenya
104. The Salvation Army Uganda
105. Global Justice Kenya
106. CULP - Centre for Unfolding Learning Potentials
107. The Eagle Eye Behavioural Reorientation Initiative - TEEBRI
108. One More Day For Children Foundation
109. Sophie Hayes Foundation
110. Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour (NACTAL) Nigeria
111. Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education
112. Empower People
113. Renel Ghana Foundation
114. People Serving Girls At Risk
115. Wisdom Ways Academy
116. Youth Aid Initiative Ghana
117. Women's Integrated Development Organisation
118. Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD)
119. Association pour la promotion de la lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes et la participation au développement de la Femme africaine (LUCOVIFA)
120. FIDA Cameroon
121. Devatop Centre for Africa Development
122. AFCOD-UGANDA

123. Hossanah Help Foundation
124. Caritas Bakhita House
125. Misthy Cee Development Center
126. Migrant Help
127. Anti-Slavery Australia
128. La Casita Hispanic Cultural Centre
129. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
130. Sink Drug Abuse Network
131. Jiko La Uhuru
132. Vanuatu Mama Recruit
133. Anne's Christian Community Health School and Nursing Services
134. Nakor Alam Youth Association
135. Vatu Mauri Consortium
136. Vanuatu Young Women For Change
137. MindSpark Community
138. International Justice Mission UK
139. AFRUCA Safeguarding Children
140. UK BME Anti Slavery Network
141. Footprint to Freedom
142. National Freedom Network South Africa
143. Teouma Masoemarama Women's Association
144. Crenshaw Limited
145. Development of Rural Education Agriculture and Medical Society
146. Bakhita Centre
147. Navachar Sansthan
148. Human Rights and Development Services
149. Street Girls Aid (S.Aid)
150. Rajsamand Jan Vikas Sansthan
151. Sung Foundation
152. Southwark Against Modern Slavery
153. Stop The Traffik Kent
154. Restore Hope South West
155. ShieldThem Support Organisation
156. Women's Centre for Community Transformation
157. Welfare of Children and Youth Association
158. Peace Advancement Action Against Violence And Rape Foundation

159. Children's Fate
160. Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF)
161. All for Integral Development
162. Sinatsisa Lubombo Women and Girls Empowerment Organisation
163. Good shepherd women empowerment
164. African Refugees Rights Organisations Project ARRO)
165. Africa Child Foundation Mission of Tanzania
166. Dr Uzo Adirieje Foundation
167. Afrihealth Optonet Association (AHOA)
168. Society for Conservation and Sustainability of Energy and Environment in Nigeria
169. Initiative for Peace and Development
170. Political Animals Mentorship Network
171. Sustainable Action for Community Development
172. Adolescent Health and Information Project
173. A Common Future
174. Association Human Rights, Democracy and Development
175. CWN
176. Local Initiative for Sustainable Development (LISUDEV)
177. Youth Initiative Foundation
178. Young Leaders Organisation
179. Youth Association for Development (YAD)
180. Bonded Labour Liberation Front Pakistan
181. Life Bloom Services International
182. Interactive Digital
183. Good Samaritan Association
184. Counter Human Trafficking Trust-East Africa (CHTEA)
185. Set Free to Thrive
186. Migrant Defenders Organisation
187. ONG Bender Djedid
188. Root of Generations
189. Community Empowerment for Progress Organisation (CEPO)
190. South Sudanese Network for Democracy and Elections
191. A21 Australia
192. The CRADLE - The Children Foundation
193. Terre des Hommes Netherlands
194. Divine Era Development and Social Rights Initiative (DEDASRI)

195. Mi Nina NGO
196. New Generation for Christ
197. Word of Life International Inc
198. Kenya National Outreach, Counseling & Training (K-NOTE) Program
199. Society to Help Entire Lower & Rural People - HELP
200. Impulse NGO Network
201. Sewing Hope Kenya
202. Stop The Traffik Ghana
203. Shalom Women's Development Network
204. Jabala Action Research Organisation
205. KARIBS Foundation
206. Ubani Trust
207. Centre for Assistance to Victims of Violence and Trafficking (CAVT Bamenda)
208. Save the Future of Children Initiative (SAFIN)
209. Girl Child Freedom at the Grassroot (GCFG)
210. West Africa Youth Network for Peace Education and Economic Development
211. Child Protection Network Nigeria
212. Youth For Change Initiative
213. Reclaim Your Right Initiative
214. Davina care foundation
215. Girls United For Human Rights
216. Somali Humanitarian Organisation (SHO)
217. Bauchi Community Oriented Development Initiative (BCODI)
218. UCTH Calabar
219. Partners In Community Development Programme (PACODEP)
220. Divine Benevolent Care Organisation
221. Association of Orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria Cross River State Chapter
222. Gender and Sustainable Development Forum
223. Sherrynorth Real Life Foundation
224. Dorcas 'Ebinumo' Foundation
225. FiftyEight
226. African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect
227. Freedom Mission International
228. The Salvation Army
229. Azat Foundation
230. Impact on Reproductive Health Initiative

231. Christian Youth Association of Malawi
232. Girls Voices Initiative
233. African Association for Prevention of Elder and Child Abuse
234. Women & Community Livelihood Foundation
235. Pearls Hub Initiative (PHI)
236. Accelerating Social Impact Initiative
237. Edem Children Foundation (ECF)
238. Action for Change Development Initiative