

International Development Strategy: Call for Evidence Modern Slavery PEC Submission

1. How might progress on international development to 2030 be impacted by the trends identified in the Integrated Review? How should the UK respond?

This response will focus on the issue of modern slavery, which has been identified as a priority for the UK government in the context of international development. It will draw on available research and assessment of evidence carried out by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (hereafter: the Modern Slavery PEC).

The Modern Slavery PEC funds and supports a wide range of research on modern slavery including projects that are directly relevant to international development. It regularly publishes policy briefs that provide reviews of evidence in this area. Recent examples include:

- Policy Brief on Modern Slavery and International Development (April 2021)
- Policy Brief on the Effectiveness of Forced Labour Import Bans (July 2021)

1.1. What might be the impact of trends identified in the Integrated Review on work to address modern slavery?

- The four main trends identified by the Integrated Review are likely to have differential impacts on progress in addressing modern slavery in international development to 2030. The strength of evidence in this area is mixed and there is a need for further research, but modern slavery is linked to negative outcomes for many other key areas of international development. [An assessment of the evidence undertaken by the Modern Slavery PEC](#) concluded that modern slavery results from multiple, overlapping drivers and vulnerabilities which are often also the same root causes of other international development issues. Modern slavery impedes both human rights and economic development.
- Activity to address modern slavery is therefore important for achieving sustainable development and there is compelling evidence of links between modern slavery and the UK Government's seven priority international development issues
- There is evidence of the potential for significant risks to progress in relation to geopolitical/economic shifts and systemic competition. For example, allegations regarding state-based forced labour in Xinjiang, China, underline the risk that authoritarian regimes will not comply with international norms regarding labour standards and human rights agreements. There is currently significant pressure for the global community to respond and the UK is well-placed, via its presidency of the G7, to lead in this area.
- The trends of rapid technological change and transnational challenges provide a mixture of opportunity and threat. For example, [research carried out during the global Covid-19 pandemic](#) has generated new evidence that underlines the problem of forced labour in supply chains, and the challenges for governments such as the UK in mitigating these risks. Rapid increase in demand for certain products, for example PPE (personal protective equipment) has led to worrying changes in indicators for forced labour in the production process. [Research funded by the Modern Slavery PEC](#) found worsening conditions for workers in factories in Malaysia where medical gloves are produced.

1.2. How should the UK respond?

- **Invest in, and make use of, research and evidence on the most effective approaches, incorporating the voices of those affected to improve planning and programming.** A report by ICAI (2020) highlighted that the UK's approach to tackling modern slavery via the aid programme was hampered by the lack of a sufficiently evidence-informed and strategic approach. There was also a concern about the incorporation of the perspectives and voices of those that were affected and experienced modern slavery.
- **Co-ordinate work on modern slavery across government, and with other governments, to maximise opportunities, working together in collaboration and partnership.** The UK has asserted its ambitions to lead in the area of modern slavery, as evidenced by the passing of the Modern Slavery Act (2015) and the international Call to Action (2017). There are opportunities for the UK to work with partners and for FCDO to co-ordinate with other government departments to incorporate measures or targets on modern slavery where appropriate in negotiations on international trade agreements, work with partners and the business community. A number of opportunities, some relating to the UK's leadership of international fora are outlined in the [Modern Slavery PEC policy briefing on international development](#). One example for potential collaboration is around the inclusion of labour standards in international trade agreements, and exploration of the value of targeted measures to prevent or reduce forced labour, as outlined in the [Modern Slavery PEC policy briefing on the effectiveness of forced labour import bans](#). The Government should use the revised strategy on modern slavery, announced in the [New Plan for Immigration](#), to ensure coherence on its domestic and international ambitions in relation to modern slavery.
- **Enable greater sharing of evidence and best practice:** The UK can play an important role in facilitating international sharing and co-ordination of research and evidence about international development work on modern slavery. There has already been investment by the UK in international initiatives in this area such as Delta 8.7 and the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery. This could be further developed by, for example, inviting independent evaluations of previous programmes and current international policies and strategies, developing new ways to share findings, and working with partners on new research that addresses common challenges, e.g. research on the risks of modern slavery in [the key source countries for trafficking](#), or in sectors such as those producing [personal protective equipment \(PPE\) where there are known forced labour issues](#).
- **Develop a more comprehensive, systematic approach that links issues and takes account of unintended consequences of different priorities.** The Modern Slavery PEC policy briefing on International Development highlighted the evidence that demonstrates interlinkages between key priorities for the UK government such as girls' education and prevention of modern slavery, also the growing evidence base on the linkages between efforts to address climate change and impacts on local communities, including modern slavery risks. The evidence base on modern slavery and international development is still not strong, but there are compelling arguments for a more system-wide and systematic approach to modern slavery. The 'Developing Freedom' report by the United Nations University (Cockayne 2021) highlighted the interlinkages between modern slavery and the Sustainable Development Goals, pointing to the value of a systems approach. The revised HMG strategy on modern slavery should set out how the UK will address modern slavery internationally.

2. What could success in 2030 look like in terms of meeting the needs of the poorest and most marginalised and increasing opportunities for countries to become self-sustaining?

- The Modern Slavery PEC is driven by a vision where success would be a world where everyone is protected from exploitation by effective laws and policies, informed by evidence. There are a number of specific targets relating to modern slavery in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- An international development strategy that prioritises prevention of modern slavery and protection for those that experience it, while mainstreaming modern slavery issues across other international development challenges, would respond to the three main aims of the SDGs: to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- As outlined in the Modern Slavery PEC's [assessment of evidence](#) modern slavery results from multiple, overlapping drivers and vulnerabilities which are often also the same root causes of other international development issues. Modern slavery impedes both human rights and economic development, limiting societal resilience to future crises.
- A future where the effective prevention and reduction of modern slavery is prioritised is one where international development can be more equitable and where there is an enhanced chance of supporting the poorest and most marginalised, and for supporting those communities to be more resilient and self-sustaining.

3. How and where can wider UK government international policy and activity best support long term international development outcomes?

The issue of modern slavery highlights the way that wider policies and activities on international development are linked and efforts to address one issue can have unintended consequences for other areas. Given the interconnectedness of these issues, policies formulated to respond to development issues may therefore have implications for modern slavery. The inclusion of modern slavery as an overarching issue that is mainstreamed across the government's international development priorities therefore presents an opportunity to improve the effectiveness of programming and reduce or prevent modern slavery.

- In the areas of climate change and Covid-19, conflict and humanitarian crisis there is evidence of interconnectedness between the impacts of these issues and people's vulnerability to modern slavery. There are therefore strong arguments to mainstream modern slavery considerations into existing UK government-funded development programmes in these areas.
- In other areas such as international trade policy, a strategic approach could leverage the UK's position, building upon the 2017 Call to Action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, launched by the UK's Government at the UN General Assembly. Evidence of forced labour involving the Uyghur population in Xinjiang has brought an [international focus on modern slavery and the regulation of global supply chains](#), with the Foreign Secretary calling for 'co-ordination with our like-minded partners around the world'. Diplomatic efforts on trade and climate change may be an opportunity to influence partner governments, and UK businesses in-country, e.g. via the UK's presidency of COP26 and the G7.
- Overall, the importance of cyclical and systemic challenges means that the impacts of poor access to education, Covid-19, health inequalities and conflict and humanitarian crises may all indirectly increase vulnerability to modern slavery. Experiencing modern slavery is also linked to poor health and lower educational outcomes. Therefore, it is essential for modern slavery to be integrated into policy and activity addressing wider international challenges.

4. How and where can Government work on development best support the UK's wider strategic objectives set out in the Integrated Review?

The UK has the potential to make an enormous contribution to international development, and there are a number of opportunities in the area of modern slavery that link to the strategic objectives from the Integrated Review. Modern slavery disproportionately affects the poorest and most marginalised communities.

Actions to address modern slavery speak directly to the objectives of 'strengthening security and defence at home and overseas' and 'building resilience at home and overseas'. In addition to this, there are important ways in which global leadership on modern slavery can contribute to a successful strategy on international development:

Re: science and technology

- The UK is already at the forefront of research into modern slavery and international efforts to address it. It is important that this research includes a range of disciplines that draw on the strength of the UK in the areas of science and technology.
- However, the recent reduction of the UK's overall aid budget risks the potential for leadership in this area particularly around the role for UK-funded research. Meeting the UK's strategic objectives for 2030 will be dependent upon the ability for the research community to generate high quality evidence and support for ambitious international partnership working. In the context of reduced funding for research, there should be a focus on international collaboration and joint working with researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders including involvement of survivors in all aspects of research.
- Success in this context requires a greater focus on impact evaluation within programme design, to generate better evidence on 'what works' in addressing modern slavery. Impact evaluation should draw on best practice for safeguarding in international development research to ensure that impact evaluation focuses on principles of equity and survivor involvement.

Re: shaping the open international order

- There are opportunities to leverage the UK's global role on modern slavery to influence at the international level for greater emphasis on modern slavery considerations in wider development and trade activities. This could be through a future for international trade not based on the exploitation of workers.
- The Government should consider how to ensure free trade agreements include a strong focus on fair treatment of workers to reduce risks of modern slavery. Through the single UK strategies for each country, there are opportunities for the UK Government to continue and strengthen existing diplomatic efforts to influence partner governments, UK businesses in-country and suppliers to Government to take action to address modern slavery including in their supply chains.

5. In what area of international development does the UK have comparative advantage, particular interests, or is best placed to deliver?

- The UK has made a commitment to £200million aid spending on modern slavery and is well-placed to develop work in this area.
- Previous investments have initiated programmes to address the root causes of modern slavery within a range of countries overseas.
- Programmatic interventions include provision of survivor support and reintegration services, capacity-building for law enforcement agencies and creating jobs and livelihoods.
- Alongside these programmes, the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund has focused on working in source countries from where a high number of people are trafficked to the UK.
- The UK has comparative advantage on the issue of addressing modern slavery in supply chains. Through the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the UK was the first country to introduce legal requirements for certain businesses to publish annual modern slavery statements. In

addition, the UK was the first country to publish a Government modern slavery statement, setting out how the UK is using public procurement levers to reduce modern slavery risks in supply chains. The UK is well-placed to share lessons and encourage greater international collaboration to address forced labour in supply chains, including through the G7 presidency.

6. How should the UK's approach evolve to build partnerships with new actors and strengthen existing ones?

- The Modern Slavery PEC recently completed a programme of research on Covid-19 and modern slavery. This experience has further emphasised how essential equitable partnerships are for work on international development, and how the persistence of deep, structural inequalities have grave consequences for outcomes. Without partners in the countries in which we are working there would be no possibility to carry out research and continue to address common challenges.
- Equitable partnerships should be collaborative and address local needs. They are crucial because community leadership is a vital component, as are the voices of those with lived experience of modern slavery, if we are to effectively research and identify new pathways to challenge exploitation and support sustainable change (Balch and Mhishi 2021)
- There is evidence from recent work in Africa funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) that a more community-centred approach utilising creative methods and devolved funding can provide ways to build more equitable partnerships and enhance outcomes in the area of modern slavery (Balch and Mhishi 2021).

Bibliography

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