Subscribe **Past Issues** View this email in your browser The 8.7 Quarterly Commonwealth 8.7 Network Spring 2025 Welcome to the seventeenth 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. @CMW87network www.commonwealth-87.org Commonwealth 8.7 Network LinkedIn Commonwealth 8.7 Network Facebook #Commonwealth87net About the Commonwealth 8.7 Network The Commonwealth 8.7 Network is an international, member-driven network of over 100 national and local civil society organisations and individuals united by a common vision to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking. Our members work on diverse issues including survivor advocacy, direct assistance and vocational training for survivors, child protection, women's rights, migrants' rights, indigenous peoples' rights, and human rights due diligence for businesses. Founded by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, the Commonwealth 8.7 Network is named after the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7. The Network serves as a knowledge-sharing platform working collaboratively to raise awareness, build capacity, and advocate for legal and policy change. In 2019, the Commonwealth 8.7 Network received the Commonwealth Secretary-General's Award for Innovation for Sustainable Development. 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 the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Secretariat to the Commonwealth 8.7 Network Dear 8.7 Network Members and Friends, We are pleased to share the Spring edition of The 8.7 Quarterly Newsletter, which highlights a persistent yet often hidden form of modern slavery:domestic servitude—forced labour in private homes. Domestic workers, especially migrant women and girls, often work behind closed doors with little to no protection. Many endure long hours, withheld wages, restricted movement, and abuse. Legal and immigration frameworks in many countries continue to exclude domestic workers from labour protections, leaving them especially vulnerable to exploitation. With the global demand for live-in domestic labour rising—driven by demographic shifts, inequality, and displacement—the risks of exploitation are increasing. Urgent action must strengthen legal safeguards, ensure access to justice, and reform tied visa regimes. Survivor experiences and grassroots efforts should guide our collective response. In 2021, CHRI published a report on domestic work in the Commonwealth which sheds light on the blurred lines between decent work and conditions that amount to servitude. The findings remain relevant in understanding how legal gaps and lack of oversight continue to enable hidden exploitation. We must continue to amplify hidden voices, push for stronger protections, and collaborate across borders to ensure no one is left behind—especially those whose work remains unseen. Sincerely, Sneh Aurora Director, CHRI UK **Spotlight** On Behind Closed Doors: Forced Labour in Private Homes Forced labour in private homes—commonly known as domestic servitude—remains one of the most hidden and persistent forms of modern slavery worldwide. Victims, often women and girls from impoverished or marginalised communities, are trafficked or coerced into situations where they work long hours for little or no pay, under threat, manipulation, or deception. Deprived of freedom, contact with the outside world, and often access to basic rights, they are trapped in exploitative working and living conditions behind closed doors. According to the International Labour Organisation, there is an estimated <u>75.6 million people</u> in the domestic work sector as of 2021-over 76% of whom are women. Many endure multiple and intersecting forms of abuse: physical violence, sexual exploitation, withheld wages, restricted movement, and threats of deportation, especially when their immigration status is tied to their employer. The hidden nature of domestic settings makes this form of exploitation particularly difficult to detect and address. Migrant domestic workers—especially those on tied visa schemes—face even greater risks. In many countries, legal frameworks exclude domestic workers from labour protections, further reinforcing their vulnerability. Without regular labour inspections, grievance mechanisms, or social protection, those trapped in domestic servitude find few avenues for escape or justice. The 2021 CHRI report on Domestic Work in the Commonwealth outlines how the lack of portability of visas, absence of employment contracts, and barriers to accessing justice mechanisms all contribute to conditions of servitude. The situation is particularly stark in regions where demand for low-paid, live-in domestic workers is rising, fuelled by demographic shifts, urbanisation, and increasing income inequalities. Meanwhile, crises such as armed conflict, climate change, and displacement continue to push vulnerable populations into informal and unregulated domestic work across borders. To combat domestic servitude, coordinated and rights-based interventions are needed: • Enact and Enforce Inclusive Legislation: Ensure domestic workers are fully protected under national labour laws, regardless of immigration status. Ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 189, which guarantees decent work for domestic workers. • Ensure Access to Justice and Redress: Establish accessible and worker-centred grievance mechanisms that are safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate, with translation services, legal aid, and witness protection where necessary. • Strengthen Oversight and Monitoring: Regulate recruitment agencies, mandate written contracts, and develop monitoring mechanisms that can balance privacy rights with the need to prevent abuse in private households. • Empower and Organise Workers: Recognise the right of domestic workers to organise and join trade unions. Invest in civil society and community-based efforts that provide legal support, shelter, and rehabilitation. • Reform Immigration Regimes: Remove or reform employer-tied visa regimes that restrict domestic workers' mobility and access to alternative employment. Ending domestic servitude requires breaking the silence surrounding exploitation in private homes. Robust protections, global cooperation, and survivor-centred interventions are vital to ending this hidden form of modern slavery. By the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Secretariat to the Commonwealth 8.7 Network. Hidden In Plain Sight: Legal Responses To Domestic Servitude In European **Commonwealth States** By Victoria Brea, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, UK Modern-day slavery remains a global crisis, affecting an estimated 1 in every 150 people across Commonwealth countries. One of the most pervasive yet hidden forms is domestic servitude, where individuals, often driven by poverty are coerced into working in private homes under abusive conditions. These environments often conceal human rights violations, leaving victims to suffer in silence. Read the full 8.7 blog here As we spotlight domestic servitude in this edition, we revisit a past blog that explores related issues around domestic work and vulnerability—threads that weave into the broader conversation on hidden forms of modern slavery. How Hotels Can Be Part Of The Solution Of Ending Domestic Servitude By Meenal Sachdev, Shiva Foundation, UK (Initially published 19 January 2022) Domestic servitude is one type of modern slavery recognised in the UK. It usually involves migrant domestic workers working in private households who are abused and exploited. Because the exploitation happens in private households, it is one of the most underreported types of modern slavery in the UK making up 8% of all reports to the National Referral Mechanism (the system under which suspected victims are recorded and supported in the UK). Read the full 8.7 blog here 8.7 Members' News A selection of achievements and new projects by our members ENGAGE NOW AFRICA Engage Now Africa, in collaboration with Ensign Global University, organised a seminar on human trafficking to raise awareness and promote strategies for prevention and eradication. The event aimed to equip participants with the skills to identify warning signs of trafficking and exploitation. The TANAHUT Network recently held a press conference to highlight urgent and disturbing cases of human trafficking, including child sexual exploitation, forced criminality, organ trafficking, and domestic servitude. The Network, founded by Tanzania Relief Initiative, called for collective action and stressed the need for coordinated efforts to dismantle LANZANIA SELIEL trafficking networks and protect vulnerable individuals, especially children and young people. The Sierra Leone Humanitarian Service Awards 2025 recognised The Needy Today for its impactful work in food security, climate justice, education, women's empowerment, and protection from gender-based violence. Street Children Empowerment Foundation (SCEF) marked its 15th anniversary with a national stakeholder symposium in Accra, calling for expedited implementation of Ghana's five-year strategic plan for street-connected children and young persons. Held under the theme "Accelerating the Implementation of Ghana's 5-Year Strategic Plan for Street-Connected Children: From Policy to Action," the event urged coordinated, rights-based interventions to restore dignity and opportunity. <u>Challenging Heights celebrated the graduation of 37 women</u> from its 100-week direct cash transfer programme, a major step in advancing women's economic empowerment in atrisk communities. The initiative, which provided sustained financial support over nearly two years, aims to reduce the vulnerability of women and their families to exploitation and modern slavery. International International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) published an analysis of child labour legislation in Sierra Leone, offering key insights into the country's legal framework and its alignment with international standards. The report assesses national laws, identifies protection gaps, and recommends measures to strengthen enforcement. This resource supports ongoing efforts to eliminate child labour in cocoa-growing regions by guiding policymakers and stakeholders towards more robust child protection systems. HAART Kenya received the Silver Award in the Human Rights & Equitable Livelihoods category at the inaugural Warriors for Good Awards. The recognition celebrates its tireless efforts to combat human trafficking and promote equitable livelihoods across the country. KIWOHEDE, Tanzania, through its Youth Ready Project, held KIWOHEDE graduation ceremonies for young people who completed <u>vocational training in various fields.</u> The initiative equips youth with skills and knowledge for employment and independent living, marking a significant step toward economic empowerment. Empower People hosted a State Executive Meeting of the Survivors Collective in Panipat, India, under its Activating Survivor's Advocacy Program (ASAP). The event brought together survivors, community leaders, and advocates to strengthen grassroots efforts against bride trafficking, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence. The session www.empowerpeople.in featured powerful testimonies, strategic discussions, and the drafting of a survivor-led Demand Charter outlining priorities for reform, support, and justice. Snehalaya proudly announced that Rui Chhattishi village has become the first child marriage-free village in Ahilyanagar district. Snehalaya's dedicated team achieved this milestone by working closely with the local community. Their aim is working toward ending child marriage district-wide by 2027. Snehalaya Hope for Justice shared the story of a trafficking survivor in HOPE FOR JUSTICE Ethiopia who, thanks to sustained support, has avoided re-<u>exploitation</u>. After returning from domestic servitude in Saudi Arabia, she faced severe emotional and physical trauma. The Hope for Justice team and their local partners provided counselling, medical care, and reintegration support. This case underscores the importance of survivor-centred, longterm assistance in breaking the cycle of exploitation and enabling lasting recovery. Justice and Care, in partnership with the City of London **JUSTICE** Sheriff, recently hosted a high-level event to strengthen CARE efforts to combat modern slavery and human trafficking. The gathering brought together law enforcement officials, policymakers, and civil society actors to explore collaborative approaches to victim support and justice delivery. The organisation showcased its pioneering work in supporting survivors, disrupting trafficking networks, and advocating for systemic reforms that centre victims in anti-trafficking responses. Events for your calendars **ATLEU Training Programme 2025** May-October 2025 Aimed at legal and support professionals working with trafficking and slavery survivors, the sessions will cover legal evidence, National Referral Mechanism reconsideration ANTI TRAFFICKING AND LABOUR EXPLOITATION UNIT requests, appeals, judicial reviews, legal representation, and accommodation. Find more information here. Slavery Past, Present & Future: Conference hosted by 26 - 28 June 2025 Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam This interdisciplinary conference aims to explore the multifaceted nature of slavery and enslavement across history and in contemporary contexts. Participants will engage in discussions on topics such as the Transatlantic Slave Trade, modern forms of exploitation, and the legacies of slavery. The conference seeks to foster cross-disciplinary dialogue and insights into the persistence of various forms of exploitation. Find more information <u>here</u> **Resources and Tools Domestic Work is Work** Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative This report underscores the vulnerability of domestic workers to contemporary forms of slavery, including human trafficking, forced labour, and debt bondage. It advocates for the ratification and implementation of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), highlighting case studies from countries like India, Uganda, South Africa, and Jamaica. The report emphasises the need for legal recognition, social protections, and the empowerment of domestic workers through unionisation and policy reforms. Read the report here. **Achilles UK Ethical Business Report 2025** Achilles UK This report reveals frontline insights into modern slavery risks across construction sites, and offers practical guidance to help the industry strengthen ethical labour practices. Based on data collected through Achilles' Ethical Business Programme, the report draws from on-theground interviews with 9,834 workers representing 102 nationalities, across hundreds of sites in the UK and Ireland. These frontline insights provide a detailed view into the conditions facing those most at risk of exploitation. Read the report <u>here</u>. Global Commission on Modern Slavery No Country is Immune: Together to end modern slavery & Human Trafficking and human trafficking Global Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking We live in a world grappling with unprecedented challenges climate change, mass migration, and conflict – all contributing to a surge in modern slavery and human trafficking. This report reveals the stark reality of this hidden crime, affecting millions worldwide. It's a call for urgent, collaborative action, offering concrete recommendations to governments, businesses, and civil society to eradicate this pervasive violation of human rights. Read the report here. **Effectiveness of Forced Labour Import Bans** Modern Slavery PEC MODERN This policy briefing examines the growing use of forced labour import **SLAVERY** bans and their potential to address labour exploitation in global supply chains. It discusses how such bans can drive corporate accountability while highlighting implementation challenges and the risk of unintended consequences for workers. Read the briefing <u>here</u>. Slavery and Human Trafficking in Supply Chains: Guidance for businesses **UK Government** This guide offers practical advice for businesses on how to meet the transparency requirements under the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015. It outlines steps to identify and address risks of modern slavery in supply chains, covering areas such as risk assessment, due diligence, and reporting. The guide aims to support ethical business practices and improve corporate accountability. Find the guide <u>here</u>. **Criminalisation of Modern Slavery Survivors Briefing** After Exploitation and Hibiscus Initiatives EXPLOITATION This briefing outlines how survivors of modern slavery continue to be wrongly criminalised in the UK. It highlights the ongoing challenges faced by survivors within the criminal justice system, including issues of wrongful arrest and prosecution despite clear indicators of Hibiscus exploitation. The publication calls for systemic change to ensure protection and justice for all survivors. Read the report <u>here</u>. Safeguarding Sponsored Workers: A UK workplace justice visa and other proposals from a six-country comparison Adis Sehic and Dr Dora-Olivia Vicol This report explores the risks of exploitation faced by sponsored workers in the UK and outlines proposals to improve their protections. Drawing on comparative research across six countries, it recommends introducing a UK Workplace Justice Visa, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, and increasing access to justice for migrant workers. Read the report <u>here</u>. **Modern Slavery Reconsiderations Fact Sheet** After Exploitation and Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group **EXPLOITATION** Recent changes to UK law have tightened decision-making in The **Anti Trafficking Monitoring** Group modern slavery cases, reducing survivors' access to support. A key concern is the new 30-day deadline to request reconsideration after a negative decision—leaving little time to gather evidence or legal support. Many survivors may miss this opportunity due to delays in receiving decisions or lack of specialist support. This fact sheet outlines the updated NRM process, the reconsideration procedure, its human impact, and necessary reforms. Find the factsheet <u>here</u>. Improving Return and Reintegration for Survivors of Modern **UN MIGRATION** International Organisation for Migration These set of guidelines support the safe return and sustainable reintegration of survivors of modern slavery. The resource outlines trauma-informed, survivor-centred approaches, emphasising the need for individualised support and cross-sector collaboration to ensure long-term recovery and stability. Read more here. Persisting Servitude and Gradual Shifts Towards Recognition and Dignity of Labour: A study of employers of domestic workers in Delhi and Mumbai International Labour Organisation Domestic work has emerged as the fastest growing sector of women's employment in urban India. It enables first entry to paid work, especially for women from low-income households. As such it has become a characteristic feature of women in India's labour market. While many studies have been conducted on working and living conditions, limited evidence is available on the demand side of domestic work, and in particular about employers' attitudes on domestic workers. This study explains how domestic workers are hired, how wages are negotiated and how employers perceive workers. Read the report <u>here</u>. Prohibition of Slavery, Servitude, Forced Labour and Trafficking INTERNATIONAL in Human Beings **HUMAN** Ludovic Hennebel and Hélène Tigroudja Chapter 29 examines the international legal framework prohibiting slavery, servitude, forced labour, and trafficking. It traces the evolution of these norms through treaties and case law, analyses state obligations, and explores contemporary forms of exploitation. A TREATISE The text emphasises the role of international human rights law in preventing abuse and ensuring accountability. Read the chapter <u>here</u>. Join our Network! Join us today and let's work to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery and human trafficking! Together, we can raise awareness, strengthen skills, share good practices and advocate for changes to laws and policies. The Commonwealth 8.7 Network offers three membership categories for organisations and individuals who share our vision. To learn more about how you can join, visit: https://www.commonwealth-87.org/become-a-member Join the 8.7 Network Send us your Stories! If you are a member of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network and would like to be featured in the next issue of our newsletter, we invite you to get in touch and share your stories and photos! **Email the Secretariat** Thank you! **Donate** Keep up to date with us via email and our social media platforms. Email YouTube Twitter LinkedIn Facebook We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this edition of The 8.7 Quarterly newsletter and invite you to share it with your networks. Subscribe

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