



# International Development Sub-Committee on the Work of the Independent Commission for Aid Impact

Oral evidence: ICAI's review of the UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme , HC 1337

Wednesday 14 April 2021

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Members present: Theo Clarke (Chair); Sarah Champion; Chris Law; Kate Osamor; Mr Virendra Sharma.

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## Witnesses

[I](#): Sir Hugh Bayley, Commissioner, Independent Commission for Aid Impact; Peter Grant, Team Leader, ICAI Modern Slavery Review, Independent Commission for Aid Impact.

[II](#): Yuki Lo, Head of Research and Evaluation, Freedom Fund; Sophie Otiende; Board Member, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery.

[III](#): Professor Alex Balch, Research Director, Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre; Professor James Cockayne, Professor of Global Politics and Anti-Slavery, University of Nottingham.



## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Sir Hugh Bayley and Peter Grant.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to our first panel of witnesses for this Sub-Committee evidence session on the ICAI review of the UK's approach to tackling modern slavery through the aid programme. For our first panel, could I turn to Hugh Bayley to lead with this question? Are you satisfied with the Government's response to the modern slavery review?

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** In truth, it is a mixed response. There are bits that we welcome and bits that we hope you will follow up with the Government when they produce witnesses to discuss the matter with you. They agreed with three of our recommendations and, in particular, gave commitments to publish a statement this year on their objectives for the use of ODA in the fight against modern slavery. They agreed to set out proposals for a more systematic research agenda, which we believe will be published as part of that statement, and to improve the integration of survivor voices, including making a proposal, which we had not specifically asked for but very much welcome, to explore the appointment of modern slavery survivors to advise Ministers.

With two of the recommendations, it was, frankly, a weak response. We asked the Government to place a greater emphasis on neglected areas of modern slavery. When we were doing fieldwork in Nigeria, we saw that domestic servitude and internal trafficking were bigger problems than cross-border trafficking, but they were not addressed by UK programming. We made a strong case for mainstreaming modern slavery into other sectoral programmes, which did not really have a strong response, and strengthening partnerships with the private sector, which you may want to discuss in more detail.

In particular, the Government have put a great deal of worthwhile effort into persuading other countries—now more than 90—to sign up to Theresa May's call to action, but there was little follow through with those countries that had signed up. We advocated that they should develop shared action plans with other countries, so really all those 90 countries. They responded in respect of a small group of donor countries, with which they have been engaged in follow-up action. They should be doing it with Nigeria, Bangladesh and all those countries they have persuaded to sign up.

Finally, in relation to the last two recommendations, which they only partially accepted, they made the point that further programming will depend on the spending review. The spending review has now occurred and that might be a follow-up question that your Committee might wish to put to Ministers. They might be able to add a bit more flesh to the bones.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you; that is very helpful. You mentioned a couple of very specific steps that the Government are taking. Do you feel that the



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Government's statements have been backed up by enough detail of practical action to make a step forward on this agenda?

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** Not yet, but then it would be early days if there had been a step change already. Clearly, these are matters you will pursue with the Government Ministers when they appear before you. We, as ICAI, as you know, do a follow-up review after a major review like this. We will be starting that in about a year's time, in January of next year. In relation to all the proposals we made that were accepted or partially accepted by the Government, we will be checking on progress and reporting back to your Committee on it

**Peter Grant:** We feel the key step will be the Government publishing their statement of objectives, which they said they will do sometime this year. Within that, they said they would also include something about their research strategy. That will be the key point to make that assessment.

Q3 **Chair:** That is very helpful. Finally from me, are there any concrete steps that you would like to see the Government taking in order to improve their work on modern slavery?

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** Peter has just mentioned one, which is probably the most pressing. Also, in their response the Government said they would establish a periodic cross-Government review. We would like to know when the first review will be published and how frequently they intend to do that. They also said, as I mentioned, that they were looking at the feasibility of appointing survivors of modern slavery to advise Ministers. It would be good to have a progress report from the Government about how that idea is developing.

Q4 **Chair:** Peter, would you like to add anything else?

**Peter Grant:** I do not think so. The other things are more about the substance of the programmes themselves, which I think we are coming on to. Hugh has highlighted very much these issues of mainstreaming, of a comprehensive research strategy and so on. Those are the key points coming out of the report.

Q5 **Chris Law:** Sir Hugh, you were very critical of the Government's approach to gender issues in modern slavery. What are your main concerns?

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** We think the Government could do more to help people, victims, escape entrapment and to help people in enslavement to escape, if they looked more closely at the gendered nature of slavery. The risks are not the same for all people. Women and girls, for example, are at greater risk of sexual exploitation. Men and boys are at greater risk of labour exploitation. The stigma of being captured and used as a slave affects women and girls in a different way from men and boys. Indeed, there are other demographic indicators that affect vulnerability



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and the nature of slavery: age, caste, disability, religion and transgender status as well.

If the Government were collecting data and fine-tuning programmes to address the particular vulnerabilities that different people face, we think the programme would have greater impact. Put simply, not all kinds of modern slavery are the same. One needs to be very clear who are the victims who are at greatest risk and to address your interventions to reduce the risk and harm.

**Peter Grant:** We feel that the Government response on this was very weak and they could be doing a lot more. We would love to see sex-disaggregated data collected across all the programmes. The Government should be looking at the lifetime experiences of men and women in modern slavery, which are very different. They ought to be much more active in addressing the fundamental power inequalities that are driving so much of modern slavery, such as power inequalities between the genders.

Q6 **Chris Law:** Sir Hugh, the Government's statement was, "We will continue to ensure gender outcomes are embedded into our modern slavery policy and programming". Has that given you peace of mind? If not, Peter has made a few suggestions that the Government need to do to be on the right track on gender. Is there anything additional you would like to add?

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** The statement did not leave me feeling it was a strong enough response. They need to do more than they are doing presently. Peter has outlined some of the specific steps that the Government could commit to and that would make a difference to their programming if they did commit. We hope to hear more from them when we do our follow-up review, that they are going to put a better focus on the gendered nature of slavery.

Q7 **Mr Sharma:** The Government claim that modern slavery is integrated and mainstreamed into large numbers of major aid programmes. Do you agree with that statement?

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** There are some examples of good practice. I might say briefly, although it was not part of our review, you and I will recall, as members of the IDC, visiting a school for brick kiln workers funded by UK ODA in Pakistan. That is a very good example of the education programme in Pakistan mainstreaming modern slavery.

Another good example would be the LIFT programme in Myanmar, which is a large, long-term £480 million livelihoods programme. The UK is the largest donor but is one of nine donors to their scheme. They have provided assistance to 14 million people over a 10-year period. Although the focus is on livelihoods, there have been elements of the programme that have been to press for stronger legislation on labour and social protection, to press for improving access to justice through free legal



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advice to people suffering from bonded labour and other conditions of slavery, and through working and engaging civil society and trade unions to deliver safe migration information, with a particular focus on migrant women in the garment industry.

Those are two good examples, but I think you and other members of your Committee will know, from your visits to other countries, that slavery appears as an element very infrequently in education, humanitarian and governance programmes. It would be interesting to look particularly at whether the ODA-funded Covid response has identified groups with heightened vulnerability to slavery. Good examples are there that a Government could follow and roll out more widely. That would be our view.

**Peter Grant:** There is so much more that could be done in the context of leaving no one behind. Slave communities are among the most vulnerable, marginalised and invisible groups. Therefore, any programme that is trying to achieve the sustainable development goals ought to have some element of a focus on modern slavery, at least to screen within it. That could be across a whole range of sectors that Hugh has already mentioned. It also requires an internal effort in Government to train staff more to be looking out for these kinds of things, to have better guidance and that comprehensive approach to integrating modern slavery into a whole lot more of their programming.

Q8 **Mr Sharma:** Is there any one example or suggestion you can make where modern slavery can be better integrated? You mentioned quite a few areas. If you are given the opportunity, what would be your focus on one point to integrate?

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** I would change the question slightly and say, in relation to each UK ODA-funded programme, they should look and find a modern slavery focus. Within education programming, it might be to look at how education is provided to child labourers. Can a deal be struck, assisted with ODA, to ensure that child labourers get four hours off in the morning or evening to go to school, with special school sessions arranged at times when they can attend.

Within humanitarian programmes, there should be recognition that, when women and children flee from their homes, often with nothing other than the clothes they stand up in, they are extremely vulnerable to sexual predators and trafficking. Instead of finding one particular theme, I would say each programme should find one particular theme where they think they would make a significant difference to relieving the risk for people.

**Peter Grant:** I would very much agree with Hugh. It is having this modern slavery lens that we look at any programming through and seeing what the implications are.

Q9 **Kate Osamor:** My question is to Hugh and Peter. How do you feel the FCDO can better gather evidence and research on modern slavery?



**Sir Hugh Bayley:** We saw some good monitoring and evaluation of some of the programmes, but the problem with that is that they were looking at how effective and what impacts or outputs a particular programme had had. Little of this research was structured in a way that would allow the Government to learn whether that particular intervention was a best use of resources to combat modern slavery. In other words, there was a lack of a strategic approach and a lack of a focus overall on what kind of interventions work best. The consequence of that is that some ODA is spent on programmes that may not be effective in helping people to avoid entrapment.

To give you one example, we saw a campaign in Nigeria called Not for Sale, which was a £500,000 advertising campaign warning the public of the risks of being trafficked across the Sahara to Europe, and the dangers of entrapment or death on the way. It had good recognition. The research said that lots of people had heard the adverts and taken them in, but there was no evidence that it was stopping people taking the risk, because they were so desperate for a better livelihood. We had one survivor saying to us, "I knew the risks, but I personally would step over the dead bodies in order to get there." She did not get there and she, fortunately, got back to Nigeria.

Simply achieving what you intend to achieve with a programme does not necessarily reduce the global burden of modern slavery. It is that strategic response that is missing. You said you wanted Peter to comment and he can perhaps comment on the fact that the Government have made some investments in global research centres. We felt that was not at a scale that will provide an answer to the problem.

**Peter Grant:** The need here is for a global repository of research that can guide interventions. A lot of people contrasted to us the approach of the Government on violence against women and girls, where £25 million was invested in a What Works research programme hosted in South Africa. They felt that that was lacking in this case. The Government have put £1.3 million into Delta 8.7, the United Nations University platform for gathering research, but we felt that was not at a scale to be able to perform this function.

The other interesting initiative of course is the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre. You will be speaking to Professor Alex Balch later, who can speak more about that. That is not funded by official development assistance and did not fall within our remit. It is only just beginning, but it will be interesting to see what ambition it has, particularly in the international sphere, to try to fill some of those gaps. The real need is for that solid research base to say, "Where is the money best spent in achieving impact to reduce modern slavery?"

Q10 **Sarah Champion:** Sir Hugh, since your review we have obviously heard that the ODA budget is going to be significantly reduced. Thinking about what you were saying to Virendra Sharma about how modern slavery



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should be integrated into every project, I wonder if you have any thoughts about the Government and how they should prioritise money for modern slavery going forwards.

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** A lot of our proposals are not going to cost a great deal of money. It would be possible to focus research funding on the strategic questions better than is currently being done without significantly increasing expenditure. It is vitally important to listen to survivors. We saw some good evidence of that within the management of programmes and indeed in relation to evaluation of individual programmes, but not in conceptualising and designing programmes, which we think is a big mistake.

For instance, a survivor in Nigeria put to me the proposal that survivors could be employed alongside border officials on the northern border, to tell people that they are putting their lives at risk and are unlikely to get through. They have tried it and are thankful to be back home. I believe that the insights of survivors could significantly strengthen programmes, and it does not cost a great deal to consult people. I am very pleased to see the Government saying that they are looking at whether they can put together a number of survivors to advise Ministers.

You have mentioned mainstreaming, and that is extremely important. We felt there was a lot more the Government could do with the private sector. Private companies know a great deal more than diplomats abroad on labour conditions in those countries and the dangers within supply chains. The leading companies that are doing most to combat modern slavery, not just going through the motions of producing an annual report, as required by the Act, but actually driving the agenda forward, said to us that they found it difficult to contact diplomats in the field to work with them on issues like changing the law in those countries or pressing the Government for stronger enforcement. One of the points they make is that they are doing everything they can. Some companies have a really strong record, but they want a level playing field. They want their competitors to be required to do the same.

In the Netherlands, for instance, the Dutch Government have set up sectoral advisory panels of business people. People in business who are working, purchasing clothing from the garment sector, have a garment industry advisory panel with the Government. The construction industry has an advisory panel. That is a model the Government might want to follow up.

We found generally that the Home Office was better at consulting the private sector than the former DFID. There is quite good co-ordination between the Government Departments in this particular area. That is an area the new FCDO could do some learning from across Government.

Perhaps most importantly, the Government have invested a lot of effort and a huge amount of money in getting other countries to sign up to Theresa May's call to action on modern slavery. Half the countries in the



world—over 90—have done so. There is little evidence yet that those who have signed up are actually doing things to change the risks of enslavement in their countries. I believe the Government diplomats in each country that has signed up to the call to action should be working with the Governments of those countries to agree a joint programme, probably part-funded by ODA, where the UK and that Government would select priorities.

This comes back to the point that there was a focus on international migration in the UK funding programmes to inhibit and reduce the risks of international migration in Nigeria, but more people were at risk of slavery through internal migration or domestic servitude. If the UK Government were putting together a programme of action with the Nigerian Government, they might alight on different priorities. They would get a more fulsome, willing, dedicated and committed response from Nigerian state authorities if they were engaged in setting the priorities jointly.

We think that stronger partnerships should be built with other Governments. As I mentioned earlier, the response says that they are doing so with the United States, and there is a trade deal with Canada. That is really important and something we warmly endorse.

**Q11 Sarah Champion:** I have two more specifics. Since the inception of the Act, there has been criticism that not enough has been done to support children. I wondered if you had any thoughts about that from your research.

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** Our comments about the gendered nature of slavery apply just as strongly to age-related impacts. There is another thing I would say, in relation to the impact on children. Following the passing of the Act in 2015, the Government launched quite a significant, £200 million ODA-funded programme. It appeared to start as if they were the first in the world to think of combating modern slavery. The ILO passed the anti-slavery convention in 1926. There are international conventions against the worst forms of child labour. One could strengthen the UK programming by building links with others, learning from others and passing information on to others. Some of the UK confidentiality and secrecy requirements prevent our officials from talking about their learning from projects. That needs to be passed on to others and we need to learn from others.

**Peter Grant:** One of the big programmes we looked at was the Asia Regional Child Labour Programme. We went to Bangladesh and I visited the tanneries area of Dhaka and saw appalling examples of particularly young boys working in dangerous environments, with chemicals and so on. We certainly welcome the Government's focus on child labour, particularly in the Asia context, but we feel so much more could be done. There are estimated to be over 1.3 million children in Bangladesh alone engaged in hazardous forms of child labour. The targets, both of this Government and of the Bangladesh Government, to reduce and eliminate that are really inadequate. That is particularly in the context of the



commitment in the sustainable development goals to see an end to child labour by 2025. There is just nothing anywhere near approaching an ambition to achieve that.

**Q12 Chair:** Hugh, perhaps you could start. You mentioned a couple of times examples of programmes in Africa. Of course, we have now had the integrated review of the UK's foreign policy. It very much has a shift towards the Indo-Pacific region. I was wondering how important you think it is that modern-day slavery issues in Africa and south Asia are not being lost by the new geographic tilt of the Government.

**Sir Hugh Bayley:** If the Government wish to continue programming to combat modern slavery, and they have made clear that they do, they need to focus their efforts on the areas where there is a prevalence of modern slavery. That is not to say that there are not issues of modern slavery in all parts of the world, including of course the UK—there are. If the commitment is going to be maintained, it will have to be maintained in Africa and South Asia, as well as elsewhere

**Peter Grant:** The only thing I would add is that you have to look at modern slavery in a global context. Particularly on the trafficking side, we saw the nature of routes and the need to engage in origin, transit and destination countries. Interestingly, in Bangladesh as well, hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi women have been going overseas to work, many of them in the Middle East and Gulf states. One of the issues there was what their rights were when they reached there and what the Government were doing to engage with those destination countries to try to improve the situation. In a sense, whatever the geographical focus, it is going to be really important to say where the incidence of modern slavery is, what the patterns across the world are and where we need to engage with those to make a real difference.

**Q13 Mr Sharma:** This is not a huge question but just a suggestion. Peter, when you are talking about Bangladesh, you are forgetting Sri Lanka, India and Nepal. These are the three other countries in South Asia where the women trafficking and child labour is quite high. We have witnessed that while visiting many times in the past. Do you think that those countries should be highlighted whenever any discussion is taking place?

**Peter Grant:** Absolutely, yes. I focused on Bangladesh because that was where we went on our visit and saw things at first hand. Yes, what is needed, and what I am hoping for very much in this Government statement of objectives this year, is a much more systematic analysis of the incidence of modern slavery across the world in different countries, to have a much more systematic response.

**Chair:** Thank you very much to our first panel of witnesses. That is all the questions from my colleagues.



## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Yuki Lo and Sophie Otiende.

Q14 **Chair:** Could we turn now to the second panel, to Ms Lo and Ms Otiende? My first question for you both is about what your view is on ICAI's review and the Government's response.

**Yuki Lo:** Thank you for the opportunity to be here. Let me jump straight to the question, in the interests of time. On the face of it and on first read, the red/amber rating seems harsh, but, on reflection, also honest. It is perhaps an assessment and a reflection of the state of the modern slavery movement, which is in a nascent state. We should remember that we have not had the decades of programmatic and policy experience, as compared with the health, education and climate sectors. We also have far less resource. In terms of ODA, the modern slavery sector receives about one 20th of the funding that goes into, for example, education and nutrition interventions.

There is definitely room to grow, learn and build on what works. It is very important to see that the UK Government continue to play a visible role and can bring forward Whitehall leadership to tackle an issue that is really at the heart of the SDGs and expressly, as others have mentioned, the commitment to leave no one behind.

I will also focus on two of the ICAI recommendations. Others have already mentioned this. It is great to see that the Government are committed to making a statement to clarify their plans. It was also somewhat disappointing that, in the integrated review that was published last month, there was no explicit strategy for modern slavery. There were only two mentions of it in the very long review and only in the context of organised crime and state-sponsored forced labour. We would welcome the upcoming statement of objectives. We hope that there will be a more deliberate approach to modern slavery being mentioned, as called for in the ICAI report.

On the second point, as head of research and evaluation, I have to comment on the recommendation to develop a more systematic approach. Tying into what others have already said, there is certainly an opportunity to be more integrated and make stronger linkages with other sectors. This also applies in terms of data, evidence and research. There is a lot that can be learned, for example about the impact of cash transfer programmes on child labour and thinking about how a social norm campaign can or does not work to transform discrimination against certain marginalised groups. We are perhaps not yet fully drawing on the lessons that have been learned by other sectors. I hope that, as the UK aid is thinking about commissioning research, we also draw in expertise and synthesise evidence from these other sectors.

My last point is that, in terms of how we conduct research, the UK aid could also be more deliberate about engaging the voices of not only



survivors but also the communities most affected. I do not mean that in terms of including them as research participants. It is about making sure that they are actually part of the design process and part of the institutions that are authoring these reports. It is not just them being there to collect data and organise translation for meetings. They are there after the research is published. They are there and can present and defend the research to local decision-makers. UK aid can deliberately build these into funding calls, to make sure that there is an encouragement of collaborating with local researchers and activists and that research is not only used for funders to inform their decision but actually leads to empowerment and action in these communities that are affected by modern slavery.

Q15 **Chair:** Ms Otiende, would you like to also comment on ICAI's review and the Government's response?

**Sophie Otiende:** I would say the same thing that Yuki mentioned. The assessment looks harsh, but when I looked at the recommendations and the assessment I see it as a reflection of the sector as a whole and not necessarily unique to the UK. As someone who is a survivor practitioner and is working in this sector, one of the things I wanted to comment on was the whole idea around survivor inclusion and how it has generally been discussed. Again, this is not a UK-specific issue. That is one of the areas where, in terms of leadership, the UK could take the lead and be able to include survivors and ensure a meaningful inclusion of survivors.

The modern slavery and human trafficking sector is one of the unique sectors, according to *[Inaudible]* social objectives, that is actually led by professionals. Whether you are talking about NGOs, research or any single aspect of this work, survivors are not leading and survivors, when included, are included as beneficiaries. It is a gap for the sector, not necessarily a gap that is specific to the UK.

I have been working in this sector as a practitioner for the past seven years. Some of the things that have been mentioned, even in this report, take a long time for organisations to find out. Survivor leaders and survivor activists have been constantly shouting about the conversation on migration, on the fact that just awareness is not going to be a good tool to deal with a huge gap. That is a conversation that survivors started having more than 10 years back. We have evidence of this. The problem is that the approach in this sector has generally been that survivors do not lead conversations and are consulted simply to receive services. For me, that has been a huge gap.

I like the fact that one of the things that this addresses is also the whole issue of mainstreaming. I wanted to point out the fact, which I know James at some point is probably going to touch on, that this trafficking and modern slavery touches on so many sectors. The approach was just intersectional, even in terms of the return on investment, which is the conversation that we are talking about. All the root causes of trafficking are in other issues, so most of the issues that you see in modern slavery



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and trafficking are symptoms of wider societal issues that are already being addressed in other sectors.

It seems that, with most of the work that is being done within this sector, it is as if everyone is doing new work. As a survivor, that is very frustrating. It is very frustrating. When you think about something like child trafficking, the child protection and child rights movements have been doing this work for years. There are so many lessons that could be drawn from that. What I see in the movement is this consistent saying that, “We need to get more information.” It is important that we actually get more information, but it is work that has already been covered by so many sectors.

When we talk about trauma, for example, and healing, these are things that have been explored in gender-based violence work in women’s rights movements. We do not need to explore new work. When we think of the conversation on the routes of trafficking and what is happening, there is a lot of work that shows the connections between [*Inaudible*] trafficking and the routes that people are willing to take. I feel that there is a lot of work that needs to be done, especially as far as co-ordination is concerned and getting to the root aspect of these issues and then, as we are saying, mainstreaming. If people actually listened to survivors, most of these things could have been avoided.

Q16 **Chair:** Ms Otiende, you mentioned that you were a survivor. Only if you feel comfortable, but would you be happy to briefly share with us your story? I am particularly interested to know if there is anything that you think could have prevented or helped with your experience that Governments could do?

**Sophie Otiende:** I am a survivor of domestic servitude, so we go back to that whole conversation of what the main issue is. When you look at an issue like domestic servitude—it was covered in the report—for example, in a country like Kenya, that is one of the main forms of trafficking that we see. For my case, for my story, the main issue was the fact that my parents could not pay school fees and then a family member then ended up abusing me.

When you look at my story, right now Kenya has free education. If free education had been available in my country, I would not have been trafficked. If the proper social protection systems were available in my country, I would not have been trafficked. When you think about the approach that the sector currently takes, to hold accountability in families is extremely difficult and the criminal justice framework does not work, essentially, when you are dealing with trafficking that happens in the context of families. You are not going to arrest all the poor family members who are sending their children to other family members who are abusing them. It just does not work. For me, that would be my reflection.

Q17 **Chair:** Ms Lo, what do you think are the three most effective actions that



could be taken by international donors to help end trafficking?

**Yuki Lo:** That is an ambitious question, so let me try to answer it through different approaches and angles. First, so far, and even looking at the SDG 8.7, it has been a fairly top-down effort. A lot of work is focusing much more on ratification of policies, providing training to law enforcement and so forth. We know that there is often a disconnect between laws and policies that exist on paper and the lived experiences of the most vulnerable individuals. More effort needs to go into understanding what happens on the ground versus what is on paper, but also, secondly, building up the capacity of these local community survivor networks and activists to continue to monitor and hold leaders to account when promises do not end up being delivered.

There have been a lot of direct interventions that focus on service delivery, shelters, reintegration, which is all really important, but we need to look beyond that to think about how we build up the capacity and the influence of these groups. First, there needs to be a move away from simply thinking about policies into the community experience. Secondly, if there is a pivot into the Indo-Pacific region, a lot of the slavery there is related to supply chain. At the moment, I would say that a lot of businesses and industries are getting away with it quite easily. Aside from hosting dialogues, there needs to be more effort into actually monitoring and holding them to account for promises they have made.

For example, when we are talking about the seafood sector, there is a report that just came out last month that showed that 21 global tuna brands all had human rights due diligence processes, but actually only one of those 21 brands found and reported cases of abuse in its supply chain. We know that there needs to be much more effort on not just giving them credit for the policies that are in place but actually looking at whether those policies are effective.

Finally, besides working with communities and businesses, the UK's unique role as a financial centre should also be leveraged. The UK aid could be thinking much more about engaging with the investment community on modern slavery. There are initiatives, such as the CCLA Find It, Fix It, Prevent It programme, which is basically a coalition of UK-based investors that are engaging companies who receive capital from these investors on actually having effective human rights due diligence processes. These are three angles that UK aid could consider when trying to tackle this very multifaceted issue of modern slavery.

**Q18 Kate Osamor:** Welcome to our witnesses. Thank you for what you have been telling us today. Thank you, Sophie, for being very open about your experience. We really appreciate that. My question is to both of you. In your experience, is UK support for projects to combat modern slavery more or less effective on the ground than the support provided by other donors? Sophie is laughing.



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**Sophie Otiende:** Yes. My experience has been that it depends on where that funding has been given. It generally depends. As someone who has implemented projects on the ground, one of the issues with Government funding, or funding that comes from Government, is the whole bureaucracy that it actually takes to manage the Government funding. That means that most of Government funding is not able to go to grassroots organisations or is not able to go to small organisations that are doing the work.

This is not in any way to say that accountability is not important. Accountability is extremely important, but, when a small grassroots organisation spends 70% of its time managing a grant from the Government, it means that we are taking away time from doing the work that they are able to do to push the agenda forward.

That goes back to the whole set-up of donor funding and how it works. Putting funding in place with bigger donors that are able to manage grassroots organisations, ensure accountability and ensure that money gets to the right people is way more effective than expecting that smaller grassroots organisation apply directly for this kind of funding.

In terms of my experience, in my country, one thing that I saw in Kenya was that the UK spent a lot of money on building the capacity of the police. They built the capacity of the police, which was great. The police specialised units that were trained by NCA were able to identify victims, but what happened is that that funding did not cover the whole loop. The police were able to identify victims so were able to go and do this, and then all of a sudden there was no money for where survivors could actually be placed, because no investment was put into protection services. What ended up happening in the past few years was that this specialised unit would do this and then, essentially, would have no place to put the survivors. The survivors would have to be placed in cells or in jail, because they need a place to put them.

It is about looking at the issue, which is multifaceted, from beginning to end. We know that one action affects another one and another one. It is just training the police or the prosecutors and not thinking about the work that is actually being done in that area that actually helps. Relatively, my experience has been better, despite the gaps I have seen. The UK programme in Kenya organising training of police is the only one that I have seen that was actually successful, where I can say that the police got proper training. It is mixed feedback, but it is also the way the sector is set up.

**Yuki Lo:** For full disclosure, the Freedom Fund has received funding from DFID in the past and is currently receiving funding from the UK Home Office. Different funders come with different characteristics, so let me focus on one positive and one negative aspect of the UK aid versus other funders. It has actually been great to see the focus of UK aid and its willingness to fund some of the unglamorous or less glamorous side of



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modern slavery. By that, I mean the hard work of giving profile and voices to marginalised groups and building their capacity, all those sorts of mechanisms that I have talked about before to improve accountability.

It has been great to see the willingness to fund that network-building and the capacity of local activists. That differs from other Government funders around the world. There has traditionally been much more of a focus on law enforcement, as Sophie has just mentioned, as well as reintegration of survivors, but less about challenging the power imbalances that cause slavery. That is the positive aspect of UK aid.

Also, to highlight and echo what Sophie has said, one of the big challenges has been the short-term nature of the funding. Sophie already talked about how that impacts programming. Also, let me talk about how that impacts measurement and research. One of the criticisms of the ICAI report is that we are only measuring outputs, interim achievements. That is no coincidence. It is because the terms of funding are so short that we do not have time to wait for outcomes to occur. Multi-year funding is really important. It is about being able to wait to not only see what happens with the participants of certain programmes but to also wait a couple of months, maybe one or two years, to see if you have changed the environment that they find themselves in. That is really important, in terms of trying to address some of these ICAI recommendations.

**Q19 Kate Osamor:** Can I ask you to give some examples, if you are able to do so, of those less glamorous pieces of work, where marginalised voices, people who would not normally be around “the big table”, are able to get their voice heard? More importantly, they need to be able to help people not get caught up in the trap of modern slavery.

**Yuki Lo:** My work focuses on research, so let me draw on an example from that. Part of a project that we have been doing in India is to work with a lot of communities affected by debt bondage and forced labour. Part of the research process was to bring on board local NGOs, get them to help us define what we are trying to measure: what are the indicators of bonded labour? We worked with them to collect the data.

There are pros and cons of this approach. We are not necessarily using the same international definitions that the ILO might have wanted. The advantage of this is that we ended up with a measurement that is relevant to the local community and local policymakers. Also, by using these groups to collect, analyse and present the findings, it was basically the local policymakers’ own constituency who were saying this. Therefore, it was a lot more effective in driving ownership and change within the local government. Part of that process was to also bring on board the community to look at the data and the analysis, and to then come up with recommendations, so that it really reflects their reality.

It was also to make sure that they were the ones who were presenting it to MPs. That was really important, because a lot of the times with aid-funded projects you have a lot of foreign academics that come in. It is



having local voices to say, “This is not just a western notion of exploitation. We see it in our community. We are going to be around for years and years, until you help us fix this problem”.

**Q20 Sarah Champion:** Ms Lo, you have researched modern slavery in a number of countries in Asia and Africa. I wonder if you could give us some examples on the different forms that it takes, the different impacts that it has in-country and the different approaches that ought to be used to tackle it.

**Yuki Lo:** Drawing on what the authors of the ICAI report have said, there are many different forms of slavery within the same country. All of those have different root causes. Drawing on some themes that I think are going to be more and more important, given climate change, especially in the aftermath of Covid, we certainly should be paying more attention to internal migration. The mechanisms that are available in different countries vary. For example, in some of the countries we work in—for example, Ethiopia—there is a lot of internal migration and children, especially girls, who end up as domestic workers.

In that instance, it really is about activating social protection programmes. We know there is supposed to be free schooling and basic healthcare. We also know that often a lot of households do not have a practical way of accessing it. They do not have identification documents. They do not even know where to get a form to fill in, let alone actually filling in a form and sending it off. There is a lot of work that could be done to connect vulnerable populations to existing mechanisms. That is, again, part of the unglamorous, form-filling work, but that actually makes a really big, sustainable difference by connecting.

**Q21 Sarah Champion:** On that particular point, whose responsibility should that be? Should that be Government? Should that be the humanitarian sector? Should it be an international court? Who takes control of that?

**Yuki Lo:** Ultimately, it is the Government’s responsibility to make sure that there are practical mechanisms. Civil society can play a role, by demonstrating building a process that works. In another example from India, we know that health issues and crises are the number one driver of debt bondage. There is now supposed to be a sort of universal healthcare model. At the same time, there are very few mechanisms to actually access it. NGOs have set up camps in marginalised communities and migrant settlements to make sure they sit there and help communities fill out a form. They bring Government officials along, so they can see how this works.

What has happened since is that there was one kind of camp that was running for about a month and a half and ended up enrolling about 400,000 people on to the healthcare system. From that point onwards, we were able to show that this is not an expensive intervention and Government really should take it up. There is a role for aid funding and



for civil society to demonstrate these processes, so that the Government can then take it up and scale it forward.

**Q22 Sarah Champion:** Ms Otiende, how often are survivors listened to when it comes to developing programmes to prevent modern slavery?

**Sophie Otiende:** Rarely. In the seven years I have worked, most of the time, in most programmes, survivors will be recipients. The time that they will actually be consulted again is probably when monitoring and evaluation is being done, so essentially to ask, "Has this programme done well and how has it done well?" Most of the organisations that actually sit down with survivors and conceptualise programmes are survivor-led organisations. When you find a survivor-led organisation, they are very conscious about that. They will sit down and, before a proposal is written, they will ask, "What are some of the areas that actually would work? What are some of the interventions that you think make sense?" In most cases, survivors rarely are incorporated.

As I said, this is a sector problem, in the sense that, when this sector was developed, survivors were put on the sidelines as victims requiring to be rescued and not necessarily as people who could actually give feedback. Also, there is this whole narrative that survivors come in one form or present in a certain way. Survivors are professionals. I know survivors who are researchers, who are therapists, who are social workers, who are managing programmes, like me, and who are doing research. How the sector was set up and how the narrative of who a survivor is within this sector was set up from the beginning is fundamentally the problem, because a criminal justice framework requires that you have a victim and a perpetrator, and people who are supporting this victim.

If we then move to a more human rights approach, where we are looking at this as an issue that touches on all these different issues, we start having conversations about resilience, the social protection system and the agency of survivors. Again, survivors of trafficking do not get to self-identify because most of the support offered to survivors is tied to either Governments or organisations identifying them.

There is a whole sector that talks about freedom, yet survivors never get to self-identity. There are survivors who do not want to be called survivors of trafficking, who want to identify as migrant workers, who want to identify as different things, but you know very well that if you pick up that identity you will not be able to get to that point. The framework, as it is, was built fundamentally for survivors not to participate or to participate in a very specific way.

**Q23 Sarah Champion:** If we gave you the millions of pounds that the UK Government spend to try to prevent modern slavery and support survivors, how would you spend it?

**Sophie Otiende:** One of the areas for me would definitely be looking at how this issue relates to the different social protection issues, because



the whole issue of root causes is such an important issue, because modern slavery is a symptom of all these other issues that are happening. We need to look at learning, and also this understanding that research and knowledge exists, but we need to think about how knowledge is consumed and who we are targeting with this knowledge, which I sometimes feel is something the sector does not think about. If it is knowledge that we want survivors of trafficking or vulnerable people in communities to know, there is a way that it needs to be taught. If it is knowledge that goes to social workers who basically do not have time to read, we really need to think about their knowledge contacts and fundamentally look at evidence.

The second thing, still on that evidence, would be this whole conversation of monitoring and evaluation versus record keeping—they are not the same thing. The main reason why this sector is where it is is because our collection of data is really bad. For the data collected by grassroots organisations and most of the people who are implementing projects, the goal is not to learn; the goal is not to look for evidence. The goal is to actually collect data so that we can show donors that the project works. We have ended up not looking at basic record keeping. If we are talking about protection, grassroots organisations are the ones collecting most of the information. How are they collecting this information? Are they collecting it ethically? How are we using that information to actually educate our approach and how are we planning to do it?

The other thing would just be looking at how we can shift this whole conversation and start incorporating more survivors in leadership positions. It is not because there are few of us with capacity; it is that there are few of us in this position because room has not been created. That would also be another area, as would the investment on companies and looking at how we can tap into working with the private sector.

As Yuki has said, in terms of most of the work and most of the people that are helping, it is not even about millions of dollars and everything; it is just about looking at the resources we currently have and actually using them effectively and making sure that they are targeted.

Q24 **Sarah Champion:** You make very powerful points; thank you. Ms Lo, I wonder if you could comment on examples of where you see it has actually worked on the ground and made a difference?

**Yuki Lo:** I will give two examples, one that is more programmatic and one that is about what Sophie has just described, the use and ownership of data. Looking back at some of our work with migrant workers, both internal migrants in the textile sector in India but also in Thailand, we know that building worker networks and making sure that there are internal complaint mechanisms in a lot of these factories is a vital and very sustainable way of making sure that workers are able to defend themselves and to negotiate with employers.



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We have seen these models work. In India, before the Covid crisis, there were a lot of incidents of late payments of wages, workers being forced to work double shifts, et cetera, and we know that by having these mechanisms in place workers were able to negotiate with their employers to make sure that these incidents do not happen; otherwise, collective action would be taken. Similarly, in the seafood sector, in Thai processing factories, we know that recruitment fees have been a huge issue and a source of debt bondage. Workers have been able to come together to show that, even though on paper we are not supposed to be paying recruitment fees, a lot of us have actually paid recruitment fees and were able to get large global brands to actually repay them for the fees that they have incurred illegally. These are some examples of how mobilising workers and investing in things like accountability mechanisms is really effective and sustainable.

On the example of the data, I did not know Sophie was going to go there as part of her strategy for spending these millions of dollars, but it is really heartening to hear, because we also find that, when we actually help local actors look at what data they need, gather it, and use it, it is actually so much more impactful. One example is we have been working with a network of NGOs in Thailand, and part of their role is to help file complaints on behalf of workers, because, as I said, these migrant workers do not necessarily speak Thai or are not comfortable filling out forms. Through that we have been able to lodge thousands of complaints on behalf of workers. These NGOs have also been able to show that four out of these five complaints get lost in the Government system and do not show up in official statistics. That is an example of the power of helping civil society gather and use that data to hold people to account

**Q25 Chris Law:** Ms Lo, you mentioned earlier about the supply chain coming from South Asia. Given the integrated review of the UK's foreign policy having a shift towards the Indo-Pacific region, can you tell us a little bit about modern slavery issues in that region? One of the things I found shocking on the Global Slavery Index is that our non-domestic fish are eight to eight and a half times more likely to come from ships with bonded labour or slavery into Europe and the UK. I wonder if you could talk wider about the modern slavery issues in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Yuki Lo:** Building on my earlier comment, a lot of the supply chain efforts have focused on dialogue and top-down efforts to establish policies, but we also know that for a lot of these workers—for example, in the fishing industry, in garment and in a lot of the agricultural sector, like meat production—it is informal. These workers are either working on small-scale farms or small-scale factories, which are second, third or fourth tier on from the main buyers.

One of the issues really needs to be getting businesses to actually extend their auditing and transparency beyond the first tier. It is very easy to show that there is nothing happening in the factory, where you know where the factory is, but often many of these global brands do not even



know, beyond their tier 2, where the source materials are coming from, in terms of tracing all the way back to cotton, where we are finding a lot of problems with forced labour in some of the Indo-Pacific region. The UK, as an importer of a lot of these products, but also through its involvement in the financing of these companies and producers, can play a key role in pushing forward the transparency, beyond T2 and onwards, of the supply chain.

**Q26 Chris Law:** I have a final question to both of you. How important is it that the UK does not lose sight of Africa and South Asia in its modern slavery work?

**Sophie Otiende:** It is one of the things where, again, if we go back to looking at data and what the information tells us in terms of how trafficking is globally connected, focusing on one region and leaving another region is not going to help; it is just going to highlight stuff. This is a global problem, and the idea that focusing on one place is going to make things better does not make sense, especially considering the fact that, when we talk about some of the raw materials and why the Indo-Pacific area is the place where the companies are, Africa is where most of the raw materials come from. The raw materials are coming from this direction and then they are sent to Asia. There is that connection.

Again, if we were essentially looking at root issues, we would not focus on one place. We would essentially ask what some of the ways are that the UK could actually leverage. If it wants to focus on this one region, what are some of the ways it could leverage the rest of the donor community and the rest of the Governments so that no part of the world is left unattended, considering that it is a global problem. That would be my feedback as far as that is concerned.

**Yuki Lo:** Building on what Sophie has said, it is not mutually exclusive to work on different regions. As recommended by the ICAI review, there could be smarter ways about how we tap into the resources of educational health and social protection programmes. A lot of those programmes are focused on the Africa and South Asia regions. There certainly could be more linkages and harnessing those programmes to also address issues of forced labour, child labour and forced marriage.

**Chair:** Thank you very much to our second panel of witnesses.

## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Alex Balch and Professor James Cockayne.

**Q27 Chair:** We are now going to turn to our third and final panel. Professor Balch and Professor Cockayne, you have just heard from a number of witnesses this morning. What lessons do you draw from what you have heard about the situation with modern slavery across the world?



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**Professor Balch:** I have been listening very carefully. There has been a lot of wisdom around some of the problems that we have now learned about what does not work. We are now a bit clearer about what does not work. The ICAI report was very clear in emphasising that previous interventions may have been a bit too top-down and had not been community-engaged enough. We have heard some strong arguments around the benefits of being more community-engaged. The emphasis on migration and international movement of people has been a bit counterproductive if those are not the actual needs of those societies where the programmes are happening.

I really welcome the ICAI report. It has really been a brilliant way of shining a light on some of these issues, particularly around the lack of a decent evidence base and the lack of a strategic approach. One thing that has not come up, which might be worth reflecting on, is the difficulty with the term "modern slavery". It can be difficult to have a truly global conversation when that is not always understood or received in the same way in different parts of the world. Alongside a global strategy, we do need a global conversation. We need to find shared values, shared meanings and shared understandings of what the problem is itself. As the ICAI report very clearly pointed out, it is a multifaceted, complex, difficult set of problems, not a single problem.

There is a tension between that desire for a global strategy, for UK aid to have a global role, and then that critique, that we need to be more bottom-up, community-engaged, community-driven and survivor-driven. There is a tension there, but I welcome ICAI's findings. The underinvestment in monitoring and evaluation is a really good point.

On the short-termism, again, I can give examples of projects that had 12 or 14 months to complete, and others that have five or 10 years. Clearly, it needs to be something that has a strong political commitment that goes beyond a 12-month cycle.

Finally, the response of the Government has been mixed, as I think the authors of the ICAI report said, but we are in a moment of flux with the whole development strategy of the UK. The cut in ODA funding is particularly worrying, and that limits our possibilities to be more strategic and to make that commitment. It is not yet clear whether the opportunity is lost to change course and to do something more systematic and strategic in this area. The door is open for that to happen, but there are some concerns around the cuts to funding and the lack of mentions of modern slavery in some of these recent publications, such as the integrated review and the new priorities.

Through my work with the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre, we have tried to put together a set of findings about what evidence shows and which priorities can include, integrate and mainstream modern slavery in much the way that the ICAI report recommends. I am very happy to talk about that in more detail.



**Professor Cockayne:** It is a pleasure to be with you. Thank you for the opportunity to appear as a witness, and thank you to all the earlier witnesses, who I have learned a great deal from, both this morning and in their earlier work. Before I place my sense of the ICAI review in the global context, as you have suggested, it might be useful for me to explain why I might be someone pertinent to offer a view on that, and in so doing quickly disclose a few governmental ties, including to HMG. I am a professor of global politics and anti-slavery at the University of Nottingham, but in a previous role I led Delta 8.7, which was mentioned by Peter Grant and discussed in the ICAI review. It was a recipient of significant ODA funding from HMG.

I am also an Australian citizen and member of the advisory group to the Australian Government on their international strategy on modern slavery, and founded Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking, which works with the Governments of Australia, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands and Norway, and investors and banks with over £10 trillion assets under management. I recently chaired the US Council on Foreign Relations study group on trafficking in person. I come at this issue really thinking about what we see in development practice and thinking globally.

I am going to draw on another HMG-funded report just released, *Developing Freedom*, which was published after the ICAI review, in January 2021. I will briefly highlight four or five things from that. First, we see that global development theory in practice has a big modern slavery blind spot. It is not peculiar to any particular country. Most of our thinking and aid assumes that individuals have economic agency. We assume that they actually can have labour mobility and that they control the revenues generated by their labour. That is simply not the case for modern slavery. The first big finding is that there is this blind spot.

Secondly, when you track the results of that restriction of economic agency up to the macro level, you find that there are 10 distinct drags placed on sustainable development by modern slavery. I will not go through them all now; I would be happy to answer questions. The third key point is that those drags are actually measurable and significant. We know that by failing to tackle modern slavery, whether through development levers or other levers, such as trade, finance or labour market regulation, we are missing out on around a couple of GDP percentage points per country. It depends on the individual country's circumstances, but it is around a couple of GDP percentage points of growth. In the current economic climate, that is very significant.

Fourthly, we know that contemporary development aid generally does not factor that into its lending and its programming. One reason is that ODA spending, as several of our witnesses have already mentioned, is really not strategically well organised. It is very fragmented and it is frankly low. Even before recent cuts we found that just \$12, or a little less than £9, was spent in aggregate per victim worldwide in ODA each year



between 2000 and 2017. £9 per victim, for all donors put together, is really a very low number when one thinks about it.

The good news out of this report is that we are beginning to understand what works to reduce modern slavery at scale. When I say at scale, I am talking about examples like Uzbekistan, where we have seen a reduction in the hundreds of thousands in recent years, or Qatar or Brazil. The Brazilian Government has rescued over 50,000 people from slavery-like conditions in recent years.

I would just highlight three particular points. First, we know that modern slavery risk reduction needs to be made a strategic objective. What I mean by that is not just that you go after it—not just as a safeguarding risk—but actually as a strategic objective of your programming. You have to treat that in a truly strategic way. There has to be not only finance; there has to be know-how and political will. Secondly, you have to do that in a coalition. You cannot do it as an individual country. You have to work with other partners, including business, as other witnesses have been stressing.

Thirdly, you need to do that along global value chains. Here, I see a particular opportunity for global Britain to frame its development work as an opportunity to work with recipient Governments and partners to upgrade their supply chains, not only for growth but for sustainability. In a climate where finance is increasingly turning to sustainability, that is a huge opportunity. Yuki rightly stressed the City as an asset. There are a number of other assets but perhaps we can come to those later.

**Q28 Chair:** Just to follow up on your points, Professor Balch, do you think that the UK has the right measures in place to tackle the most pressing issues?

**Professor Balch:** No. There needs to be a refresh of the strategy. That is something the Government have promised this year, so I am really looking forward to how they put that strategy together. Again, referring back to the ICAI report, that strategy needs to be evidenced-informed. There has been a rush to get some of the money out the door in some cases; in other cases there has not been sufficient long-term commitment. Those things can be addressed in this new strategy.

We must remember that the ICAI report found good outcomes in many of the projects. We are not saying that nothing works, but just that it is one thing to run a programme and for it to meet its objectives; as some of the other witnesses have referred to, those objectives may not have been strategic enough, and also there has not been a commitment to return and maintain that in a sustainable way. For example, if you are talking about a programme that is trying to improve educational engagement and it includes cash transfers, you might see a good short-term impact, where there might be really quite positive outcomes, but then what in five years' time? We need to be a lot more long-term in our thinking, but we need to learn from what has not worked in the past, going back to



that focus on law enforcement, prosecutions and criminality, and moving more towards community-engaged, community-driven and survivor-led work.

That sometimes means stepping back. As a funder the UK Government could do more in terms of devolving some of the funding decisions and devolving some of the way that projects have worked. That is where, again, there is a bit of a tension with this desire for a global strategy, theories of change and rigorous evaluation templates and techniques, which are valuable, but at the same time those processes and demands can sometimes exclude certain civil society actors from leading and being involved in some of these projects. I have seen that first-hand.

**Professor Cockayne:** I would agree with much of what Professor Balch has said. Building on earlier witnesses, one of the things that really requires grappling with, which we have not seen happening in any development agencies, whether in the UK or in other global leaders, such as USAID, which have devoted significant time and attention to these issues, is deep thinking about what it means to promote growth in a country without placing people at greater vulnerability of modern slavery. We have a global value chain-led model that is promoted through our global development system, through the IFIs, for example, that we know in some cases actually keeps people vulnerable or enlarges the vulnerable population in terms of modern slavery.

We need to think deeply about what growth pathways look like that get the growth benefits of, for example, export-led, low-wage, low-skill manufacturing but reduce risk. That comes back to all the things that Sophie Otiende was talking about, so supplementing the flexibility of labour markets with strong social protection mechanisms, with a strong focus on gender protection. For example, in Bangladesh, which was referred to by an earlier witness, we know that the efforts to address vulnerability as a result of Rana Plaza led to a reduction of wage income, specifically for women. The cost that firms undertook to remediate occupational health and safety shortfalls as a result of donor interventions were taken out of the pay of women specifically, because of the power imbalances.

We need interventions. We need development pathway design that is realistic about these gender power imbalances, the informal work that Ms Lo was pointing to before and the opportunity that donors, including the UK, have to bring their know-how for how to upgrade these supply chains in a way that actually produces equitable outcomes for all.

Q29 **Kate Osamor:** I would like to welcome the professors. Can you give the Committee your thoughts on ICAI's review and the Government's response?

**Professor Balch:** I have already cited the review many times. I was really impressed with the work it did. It was quite thorough, and it is great to have an independent scrutiny body that can do that work. It is



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so helpful in terms of shedding light on some of the more intractable issues around development, and in particular the difficulties but the desirability of including survivors beyond the tokenistic inclusion of survivors, and all the difficulties around strategy. I absolutely welcome the ICAI report.

The Government accepted the first three recommendations and were then partial on the last two. There is obviously a balancing act there, and we do need to wait and see, because with all of those we are waiting for some of those promises to come to fruition, particularly around the new strategy, but also around the thing that I am particularly interested in, which is research. As a director of research at the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre, we are particularly concerned about improving that translation of evidence into action and policy.

We understand the difficulties there, because there are politics involved here and this is not about accumulating more data and then passing that data on to politicians who then make the right decisions. I am sure the Committee is well aware that there is a little more nuance to it than that. The PEC has been set up, and it has been a strategic investment by the Government, through the strategic priorities fund, recognising that there is this problem of transmission of evidence into policy. Although the PEC is set up as a conduit for the research community to speak to policy makers, that recommendation about improving the evidence base is the one that I would like to focus on, because there needs to be an improvement on both sides. The research community is guilty of possibly not being as coherent as we could be about the power of the evidence that we are creating and speaking in a common voice and using common standards of evidence and common measures to enable researchers to combine their results so that we do not just have small studies proving the same thing.

I think the other witnesses have already mentioned that there are other examples from other similar areas where we can really learn. The ones that sprung to my mind when Professor Cockayne was just talking about the international development space are the ones on child labour in the late 1990s, where we saw great efforts to reduce child labour, and significant investment, but some unintended consequences, because in some parts of the economies in West Africa—for example, in cocoa production—prohibiting child labour might actually be counterproductive in certain examples where the children of families are part of the development of that family business. Excluding them from the workforce might not actually have been the best response to the problem of child labour. We have decades and decades of international development efforts here.

Improving the evidence base is not just about the modern slavery evidence. It is about using the learnings we have across the international development space and applying those in a better way and explaining that better to the decision makers and policy makers, so that the



Government can live up to their commitments in this area. Again, the commitments are quite strong, in the 2017 call to action and in the £200 million committed. There is a strong commitment, and we need to hold the Government to that commitment

**Professor Cockayne:** I would summarise my view on this question by saying that there is a moment for urgency and ambition in the Government's response going forward, for a couple of reasons. First of all, things have actually changed significantly since the ICAI review was presented. We have an Administration in the US that could not be placing respect for labour standards at a higher level in their foreign policy. It is crystal clear, and I would be happy to say more about that.

Secondly, we have the integrated review, which offers a framework for thinking about competitive advantage here in the way Britain brings its know-how on these issues to bear both diplomatically and commercially. Thirdly, we have Xinjiang, which really places a very different focus on these issues and is going to be completely change the political nature of this discussion in all places, even if China is not formally part of that discussion. That creates a sense of urgency.

On the flipside, we see from the ICAI review that global Britain has massive competitive advantages on this issue, if it understands them as such and comes up with the strategic framework for harnessing them. It has this investment, which Professor Balch has referred to, in know-how. This is not just social sciences research and fundamental research. It is about colleagues at the University of Nottingham developing applications of British aerospace technology, for example. It is about the Alan Turing Institute's work on AI and how it can be applied in different spaces here. There are actual areas of commercial advantage that the UK can bring to its trade relationships, and bring, frankly, to its development relationships as an offer to partners, alongside accountability for holding them to international standards. Alongside a stick, there can be a carrot for helping them to upgrade their supply chains, to be able to continue to play in global financial markets that are increasingly insisting on respect for international labour standards as part of the ESG regime.

There is a reframing needed here to understand that development is part of an integrated strategy, using diplomatic, commercial, development and political levers to help bring everybody up to a level playing field all around the world, so that we do not see British workers being undercut by illegal subsidies of illegal labour practices elsewhere in the world.

Q30 **Chris Law:** What both of you have been saying today has been really insightful and helpful. Professor Balch, I wanted to ask you to tell us a little bit about your research and work with the Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre. How does the centre intend to use Government funding to help close evidence gaps?

**Professor Balch:** Thank you for the opportunity to talk about the PEC, the policy and evidence centre. We were created with the understanding



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that there were gaps. One of the things we need to avoid is producing another report saying there are gaps, because it is now clear, and I have read many reports complaining about the quality of evidence and the quality of data. We know those problems, and it is now about working to improve those. We have a research community in the UK and across the world that is actually quite well integrated. There is quite good collaboration between researchers. It could be better, but we have a great base. We have an excellent set of researchers and research projects. The policy and evidence centre is made up of six partners. It includes the Rights Lab, where James is based, the Alan Turing Institute, Liverpool, where I am based, and three others—Bingham, Bonavero and Hull.

We have already some centres of expertise, and we are setting them the task of developing a set of evidence reviews across those six institutions, to build that foundation. That is really going to be the bedrock. The majority of the funding will actually be on open calls—open and competitive calls—but based on the findings from that foundation of evidence reviews across our partnership. Those open calls will be based on priorities that we have actually already developed through a consultation. We felt that we needed to consult the entire community—researchers, policy makers, practitioners and activists—to really understand what the priorities are, because an evidence gap is not necessarily something that has to be filled. That is something that any good PhD supervisor would tell their student: just because there is a gap in knowledge, it does not mean you have to fill it. We need to work out where the most important priorities are.

We have a really substantial bit of funding. We have £10 million over five years. This is a big area. It is difficult, and actually that will go quite easily across. If you think about the five different areas we have identified, there are several priorities in each area. We have already heard about how multi-faceted modern slavery is. According to different typologies, there are 17 different types of modern slavery to consider. We have to be selective and judicious about how we invest that money, but it will be done through open and competitive calls. It will be as transparent as possible. I would recommend anyone interested in this topic to seek to collaborate with others and submit an application.

Beyond that, we actually are opening up a portal for ideas, for any stakeholder to propose research so that we can really have the best possible selection of ideas that we invest our money in. We obviously go back to that consultation, what the priorities are and where we should prioritise, but within those priorities we are still very interested to hear what the best research ideas are and, as many others have been saying, how we can move to the next phase of work in this area. We could say that we have had 15 or 20 years of research since the turn of the century on trafficking and modern slavery, and it is now time to move on to a new phase of research and action on this. The PEC is well positioned to be that platform.



Q31 **Chris Law:** You both have been carrying out extensive research into modern slavery for some time. Is it too early to indicate the main or key issues that you would like to see looked at and identified?

**Professor Cockayne:** I should self-disclose that I have a particular bent towards applied and particularly policy-oriented research. Through my work with the finance sector over the last few years, one area in which I have begun to believe that there is the potential for significant, rapid gains for everybody is in thinking about the unit of analysis of risk. The financial sector's job in the global economy is to intermediate and manage risk, identify and manage that risk. Most of us, as social science researchers, tend to think either at the structural level or at the individual victim level, but firms are interested in an intermediate level. The financial sector is interested in worksite-level risk or firm-level risk, and a lot of the questions we have been asking in the academy do not provide those answers. They are adjacent to what we have been doing.

I see particular gains for us to think about how we can take the research base we have already built and move it in a direction that gives it financial application. Frankly, that is also a benefit because the financial sector has an R&D budget that in some contexts dwarfs public sector R&D budgets, and it is interested in developing commercially applicable solutions. That is only going to be relevant for certain parts of the puzzle. We are not necessarily going to find a fast route through that pathway to thinking about best practice in survivor rehabilitation, national referral mechanism management, or other questions like that. But it is one way to create a flywheel that will accelerate progress in other areas in fairly short order.

I go back to something that Ms Lo said. The UK has a natural advantage here, with the City and with other transmission mechanisms. The call to action is an underutilised resource. The Commonwealth is a massively underutilised resource, particularly when it comes to Africa and certain South Asian parts of Asia-Pacific.

I will also mention climate, which has not come up a lot. It is clearly the number one priority for this Government, as made clear in the integrated review. There is huge potential crossover here between modern slavery work and climate. One example is solar panels. Depending on which types of materials you are talking about, up to 80% of polysilicon is thought to come from China and may be tainted by forced labour, in various contexts there. If you want a just transition to renewable energy, you need to find a way to ensure that you are not just decarbonising but you are actually reducing modern slavery. At the moment that looks like a bad trade-off for the financial sector. We need research into specific problems like that to address these issues at scale. Sorry I went a little long; I get passionate about these issues.

Q32 **Chris Law:** I am going to tease that a little bit further out. You mentioned earlier about the Xinjiang province, where there are about a million Uyghurs in concentration camps—let us call them what they are—



and being used for forced labour. How effectively is the UK Government's approach, for example, to modern slavery addressing that issue and issues like that?

**Professor Cockayne:** I am not sure how many issues there are that are issues like that, because the particular nature of alleged CCP support, from a policy and subsidy perspective, for the infrastructure that underlies the allegations of mass forced labour in the Xinjiang province, and in other provinces, relying on displaced Uyghurs, Kazaks and other ethnic groups, is very unique. We have other instances of Government support for mass forced labour, such as in North Korea, Eritrea and, to some extent, the Tatmadaw in Myanmar, but there are a particular set of problems here, not least given the limited leverage that Governments have because of their trading relationships with China.

What this boils down to is, if we want a rules-based order at the international level, then we must insist not only on respect for international labour standards but also offer the support that Governments need to bring their economies up to the standards that we are seeking to enforce. Sticks are very important: calling out shortcomings when it comes to those labour standards, wherever they are found, including in our own countries. I applaud the UK Government for their willingness to acknowledge the challenges they face domestically, including in the garment supply chain, for example. We must also be developing the knowledge base to offer support to countries, and here I would say, yes, also to China, to allow them to upgrade their supply chains to meet the standards we are insistent upon. If we want to compete and collaborate, here is a perfect opportunity to do just that.

Q33 **Chris Law:** Thank you. Professor Balch, what you would you most like to see to improve the UK Government's approach?

**Professor Balch:** Following on from James's point about Xinjiang, the research question there is about whether import bans work. Another one is about how you incorporate a modern slavery question into international trade agreements. The Government should be thinking about both questions very carefully right now.

Going back to your question about prioritisation and the guiding principles of where the UK should go, the PEC has identified three. The first is effectiveness and a clear demand for more of an understanding about effectiveness of programmes and policy. The second one is about a more equitable approach. That speaks to this idea of structural inequalities, which has come up time and time again in this discussion. The emphasis on the international movement of people and the risks they are in is one thing, but the other thing is the structural inequalities within countries and between countries, which create these incentives for exploitation.



Finally, it is about survivor inclusion. How can we go beyond a more tokenistic involvement of survivors and actually step back and really allow for survivor-led and community-driven work that is devolved from possibly the control of the funder, with a greater willingness to step back and be told things you might find difficult to hear about your own policies and practices? The UK needs to be magnanimous and humble about the fact that not only is the history of slavery one that the UK was very much involved and implicated in, but there are continuing forms of inequalities in the global capitalist system. The way the world works at the moment is not necessarily very fair for some parts of the world. That comes across very loud and clear when you leave the UK. That might require some soul searching in terms of how we conduct ourselves as a country and how the Government conduct themselves in international fora.

There are some great opportunities coming up for the Government, not least on climate change and in the G7. The potential for the UK to show leadership here is not just about a financial commitment. I am a bit concerned about the cuts, as I am sure everyone is, to ODA funding, but there are other ways in which that commitment can be demonstrated by thinking a little bit more carefully about our own influence and our own sustaining of the international system, and therefore ways that we could make a difference.

Q34 **Kate Osamor:** You have kind of already answered my question, Professor Balch, but maybe you have a few more suggestions. What does the UK have to learn from the approaches of other countries to tackling modern slavery?

**Professor Balch:** That is something I have been thinking about a lot, because, as James has disclosed, for full disclosure I am a recipient of funding from more than one country. We could spend a lot of time discussing the complexities there, because each country has a different definition of what human trafficking and modern slavery is. You have these very difficult situations where you are trying to translate one set of priorities from one funder and their particular political context, and then transpose that to an entirely different third country that has its own needs and problems. It is about alignment.

My experience with the US Department of State is that it is more willing to spend longer-term. The programme I am on there is between five and seven years long. It involves significant funding and is working in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Senegal. There has been a commitment to a baseline, mid-term and end-line research. The balance between research and programming is quite healthy. The US was criticised for exactly the same things in this area, for not being strategic enough and not being evidence-informed enough, but it is slightly ahead in terms of responding to that and making that investment. There is a new evidence centre that has been set up through the US Department of State funding.

It is a complicated answer because, as soon as you start thinking about other funders' priorities, it gets tricky, but there has to be more



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collaboration between researchers and funders. That is where the UK could play a really important role, because, as James mentioned, there is the Commonwealth connection, but the presence at these global networks and forums could allow for a much greater collaboration between different funders. It is not going to be easy because of those different definitions that I mentioned. Things like forced marriage and trafficking for sexual exploitation bring up all sorts of quite difficult issues depending on which country you are working for, with and in, but there are common issues. It brings me back the fact that I think we need a global conversation, not necessarily a single global strategy, which might be beyond us. We need a global conversation that can bring these shared meanings and understandings of what we need to do.

I would just like to mention safeguarding, which has not come up particularly strongly here. Reflecting on the recent news around DRC, Oxfam and what happened in 2018, safeguarding and international development should always be close to the front of our minds, because we are talking about the reputation of the UK, the entire sector and its ability to work. If we cannot guarantee safety and prevention of harm, we are going to be limited from the very beginning about what partnerships and collaborations we can achieve. Again, that is about collaboration and learning from the approaches of other countries. Again, the UK needs to be humble and admit that there have been mistakes and that we can do better. Talking about safety and prevention of harm is actually one example of the sort of shared language that does cross divides and is a good way to start the conversation.

**Professor Cockayne:** On safeguarding, we have had a lot of violent agreement on these panels so far, so I am going to take a slightly different position from Alex. It is crucial to remember that the “do no harm” principle is often framed as “first do no harm”. In an era of cuts and limited bandwidth, if you take “do no harm” and safeguarding seriously, as we must—I agree with Alex on that—you may not end up with much bandwidth left to go on from the first “do no harm” to the second. We have to try to find a way to recognise that, while we are safeguarding, the way we win big gains—this is a key thing to learn from countries such as Uzbekistan, Brazil and, to some extent, Thailand—is by not just treating this as an issue of safeguarding in our programming. We go after modern slavery reductions at scale. We set ambitious targets and we think about what that looks like.

In terms of what it looks like, the big lesson is you do this by addressing economic agency, as Sophie Otiende was making clear. You get at that by understanding that the bright line between domestic policy and foreign and development policy is not so bright, as the Americans like to say now. It is about the way we approach economic agency, which is not just labour; crucially, in certain areas, it also has to do with access to capital, access to land, support for entrepreneurialism, lifelong learning and human capital development. All of those areas of domestic policy position your country for engagement with global markets. If you get your foreign



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policy, trade policy and investment policy wrong, you bring vulnerability into your own jurisdiction.

A third learning, again going back to Sophie, is that if you want to address agency, the best way to do so is to give people agency, so to bring them into the heart of the development design, the execution and the M&E aspect. It is very heartening to see the Government signal that they want to bring survivors closer to the heart of execution.

The final point is something that was also mentioned by both Sophie and Yuki Lo. We have to be honest about the fact that addressing slavery is a deeply political intervention. Slavery is a rent-taking institution. People are going to lose out in the short term. Our research in developing freedom says that in the long run we are all better off, but in the short run the profit-takers, the rent-takers, will be worse off. They are often very powerful and they use their rents, through corruption, to buy political protection. They are going to resist, and that is going to be very dangerous for frontline human rights defenders.

Going forward, I would like to see all development actors being more honest about the dangers that frontline workers face, and, going back to Alex's point—maybe I have ended up agreeing with him—ensuring that safeguarding is really central to thinking about how we dismantle these extractive institutions at scale.

**Q35** **Kate Osamor:** Can you give the Committee examples of both good and inadequate practice in tackling modern slavery? Could you explain why they worked or did not work?

**Professor Balch:** That is a good one. I will start with the good examples. I have mentioned that one of the projects I have been running has been giving funding to local civil society groups across Africa; that is the Antislavery Knowledge Network. That was funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund, which has now been effectively cancelled, or at least almost entirely, with damaging effect. With the GCRF money, we were able to do some of the things we have just been hearing about, which is to take a step back and allow people who would not necessarily define themselves as researchers to be involved in research. I am endlessly curious about the way we define ourselves as researchers, activists or civil society. With that funding, we were able to blur those lines in a very productive way.

The example I would bring up would be Yolred, which is a survivor-led organisation in northern Uganda that helps ex-child combatants reintegrate into society. We were able to work with them to develop arts-based methods to improve outcomes in terms of integration of ex-child combatants. It is run, designed and implemented by them, with demonstrable positive impacts on the communities that they serve. That is a great example of where research was included and enabled an already successful intervention to scale up to do more of what it was already doing well. That is a really nice example of scale-up.



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In terms of less successful interventions, the obvious ones that most people would point to would be the ones that focus very much on preventing risky migration, where you have this very difficult balance between trying to persuade people not to take risky migration routes and getting involved in awareness-raising campaigns that have a short-term dissemination impact, where you can point to the number of people who have witnessed the advertising campaign or who have read the posters. There is a short-term effect with that, but then, in the medium and longer term, there is no demonstrable impact on the propensity to take those risky routes. Again, other so-called anti-trafficking efforts that are actually about stopping migration have unexpected and sometimes really terrible consequences for communities that are now going to take greater risks and are going to put themselves in greater danger.

In terms of the ones that are focused on the needs of the funder country, which is really about the interests of that country to reduce migration, rather than directly speaking to the needs of the community where the work is happening, you can immediately see the positives and negatives, depending on which route is taken. That is my experience of the good and the bad in the field of anti-slavery.

**Professor Cockayne:** I will take two examples, because they are very similar and have very different results. Uzbekistan had a 75% reduction in five years; Thailand had a 10% reduction. Both were delivered through ILO programming and had very different results. Why? With Uzbekistan, there was a big consumer and buyer boycott of cotton. The only way to get capital financing for industrial development was through the World Bank, and then the World Bank said, "We are going to work with the ILO and require upgrading of your cotton industry to meet labour standards". There was a very successful result.

In Thailand, there is a much more fragmented approach from industry on Thai fishing. You do not have that same limitation of access to markets or the same restrictions on access to capital. You do not have a development actor like an international financial institution coming in. You do not have the same political concert from the other bilateral development donors. As a result, there is a limited period of effort, but not really the same result. That points to the need for a concerted, strategic, co-ordinated approach to addressing this as a transformation exercise in the structures and the political economy that are giving rise to the modern slavery in the first place.

**Chair:** Thank you very much to all of our witnesses.