



14/09/2018

Professor Philip Alston

UN Special Rapporteur On Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

VISIT TO THE UK: POVERTY AND SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING – SUBMISSION BY AFRUCA

AFRUCA – Africans Unite Against Child Abuse is a UK charity working with victims and survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery from Africa into the UK. We provide one to one practical and therapeutic support for young people, so we are very conversant with many of the difficulties victims of slavery experience on escape from their predicament.

Based on our work as described above, AFRUCA would like to present a written submission to inform your visit to the UK in November 2018. We are happy for our submission to be made publicly available.

While poverty and the effects on victims of human trafficking is not one of the issues directly identified in your call for submission, nevertheless, we would like to bring to your attention some of the extreme difficulties faced by victims and survivors of trafficking and modern slavery, based on our direct work with this cohort of young people.

This year, the government has made some changes to how survivors of trafficking who are looked after as part of the National Referral Mechanism (government support programme for victims) are financially supported. From 1st March 2018, asylum-seeking survivors of modern slavery who are usually entitled to housing, counselling and a stipend, have seen this standard subsistence allowance granted to them reduced from £65 a week to £37.75. This is the financial resource young people (majority of whom are female) are expected to spend on food, female hygiene products, medication as well as transportation.

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Africans Unite Against Child Abuse

Promoting the rights and welfare of African children

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Further information about this development is available in the media here: <https://news.trust.org/item/20180207130111-1yz6b>

These unexpected changes have brought substantial hardship and inconvenience to the lives of hundreds of survivors, many of whom are still dealing with the terrible impact of long term slavery and exploitation. This means that many of our young people, already struggling to survive are effectively being made to live in abject poverty, while experiencing serious mental health issues as a consequence of their slavery experiences. This situation is compounded by the complex immigration system young people have to navigate in trying to sort out their status in the UK.

CASE STUDY

We have decided to use an anonymised case study to demonstrate the impact of this government decision on victims. This is with the permission of the young person.

AFRUCA is supporting a young woman who had no prior knowledge or information about changes to her monthly financial support. During her routine appointment, she was informed of these new changes and given the reduced amount of £37.75 from her usual stipend of £65. This caused the young woman substantial distress and anxiety as she also just discovered she was a couple of weeks pregnant.

Cuts to the subsistence alignment also brought abrupt changes to her carefully thought out and calculated routine. For this young woman, she regularly attended church sessions up to 5 times a week and maintained weekly social contact with very good friends to enhance her recovery from her traumatic past as well as from depression. To enable these meetings, she regularly purchased a weekly bus pass costing £21.20. However, with the changes to her subsistence allowance, she was no longer able to maintain this routine.

Additionally, she reported to us that she was struggling to make the money last her throughout the week, sometimes running out of food and thus having to borrow money from friends. She was anxious about being unprepared for the arrival of the new born as she couldn't afford to purchase items with her new weekly income of £37.75 a week. She felt that the cuts to the subsistence allowance funds were not well thought out, there was no consideration of individual needs and she felt that the government had put her in a new position of extreme vulnerability and poverty.

Months on, this young woman is now a new mother and even though she now receives child care support from children social services, her own needs will continually be unmet and she will struggle to make ends meet. Without financial relief, she may continue to borrow money from friends which means that she is trapped in an endless cycle of finding money to pay the private loans and meet her physiological needs.

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We feel that this decision requires lengthy reconsideration especially in relation to the impact on victims and survivors of slavery in the UK. We believe that if asylum-seeking victims of modern slavery are left in a position where their needs are unmet, not only would they be more vulnerable, but this would open them to re-trafficking and targeting by other criminal gangs.

We thank you for your time in considering the points raised and hope that you will be able to consider this issue as part of your visit to the UK.

Yours sincerely,



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