

Contemporary Slavery and Racial Discrimination:
Civil Society Support to Survivors during the Global Pandemic
Webinar on the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
2 December 2020, 12:00 – 13:30

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Board of Trustees, UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

OPENING and CLOSING REMARKS

OPENING REMARKS

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, I wish to welcome you to our **5th annual panel discussion** (and first to take place remotely) to mark the **International Day for the Abolition of Slavery**.

About the Funds

- The UN General Assembly created our Fund **nearly three decades ago** in recognition of the needs of slavery survivors. Today – although legal, policy and institutional framework for States to guarantee victim’s right to rehabilitation and redress have advanced – slavery **continues to persist** and the needs remain acute. The **COVID-19** pandemic has caused a further deterioration to the precarious situation of slavery survivors and exacerbated the risks of falling into slavery-like conditions.
- The Fund brings the **needs of survivors** of slavery to the forefront of national and international efforts to meet this goal, by funding civil society organizations. The projects ensure that thousands of slavery survivors across the world receive **medical, psychological, social, legal, vocational and humanitarian** services, otherwise unavailable.
- Since its establishment, the Fund has awarded more than \$8 million USD via more than 730 grants in 104 countries. **In 2020 alone**, the UN Slavery Fund **supported approximately 15,000 survivors of contemporary slavery through 37 projects in 33 countries across the world**.
- In addition to the Funds unique victim-centred approach, the UN Slavery Fund has another distinctive quality: its universality. The Fund currently supports organizations based in countries where UN funding is at times the only channel of support. The Fund may form partnerships with both grass-roots initiatives, well established civil society organizations and rehabilitation centres. **Among these 37 current grantees, 12 operate shelter homes and 2 are survivor-led organizations**.

About the webinar

- On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to highlight the importance of today’s event and its focus on **racial discrimination**. As will be illustrated, the link between the two phenomena is crucial in prevention and elimination of contemporary slavery.

- Representatives of the organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon and Brazil and an activist and survivor from Ethiopia will share with you today stories about grave violations and struggles, but also stories of empowerment and hope. I also welcome Ms. Vibha Kamble of OHCHR, who will share her personal journey from grassroots organizing to the UN Slavery Fund's Secretariat. I am honoured and humbled to share the panel with them.
- We are grateful to the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for sponsoring and Ambassador Rita French for co-moderating this event, as well as to the Geneva Human Rights Platform, represented by Mr. Felix Kirchmeier for co-hosting. We also warmly welcome the presence of the Special Rapporteur on Slavery, Mr. Tomoya Obokata and a Member of Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Ms Tina Stavrinaki; together we constitute part of the anti-slavery and anti-racial discrimination architecture of the UN Human Rights Office.

CLOSING REMARKS

Summarizing the webinar

- Over the years, the Fund has also become a **knowledge-sharing platform** for its grantees. Issues raised by the civil societies representatives and experts reflect that much is needed to support survivors of contemporary forms of slavery, including specific groups that are subjected to racial discrimination
- Next year the Fund will be celebrating its **30th Anniversary** and will tell the story of the Fund through the **voices of survivors** and civil society organizations from around the world during the past three decades. We hope that many of you will be able to join some of these events.

Funding appeal

- I wish to thank **Australia, Germany, India, Holy See, Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, Saudi Arabia, Spain and the United Kingdom, who have made pledges and contributions this year, for your continued support to the Fund.**
- I call on States and other international partners to bolster support to combatting the practice of slavery during at this time of dire needs resulting from the social and economic impact of the pandemic, and to make contributions to the Fund to ensure that the thousands of slavery survivors we assist are not left behind.
- Thank you.