

Inputs from the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (UNVFCFS) for the Special Rapporteur Thematic Report on Domestic Servitude of Migrant Women and Girls

The [United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery \(UNVFCFS – UN Slavery Fund\)](#) provides support each year to victims of contemporary forms of slavery through partner organisations providing medical, psychological, legal, and social assistance to victims in all regions of the world. Since its establishment, the Fund has created a unique platform bringing an impact at the grass-root level and connecting civil society actors in the fight against modern forms of slavery. At its 22nd session, the Board of Trustees approved financial support to **29 projects to be implemented in 27 countries in the course of the year 2018**, for a total amount of **US\$ 503,500**. These projects run by specialized civil society organizations, provide direct assistance to nearly **10,000 victims** of contemporary forms of slavery, in particular to women and children. The beneficiaries include victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced and bonded labour, worst forms of child labour, sexual slavery, and domestic servitude.

The Board of Trustees of the UN Slavery Fund through the work of its partner civil society organisations throughout the world has observed an increasing incidence of domestic servitude as one of the predominant forms of contemporary slavery and hidden form of trafficking in human beings. Domestic servitude has devastating short-term and long-term consequences for its victims, especially those who are simultaneously subject to multiple forms of abuses such as physical and sexual abuse including rape, confinement and inhuman and degrading treatment. Predominantly affecting women and children, this form of contemporary slavery is, like in the past, based upon a relationship of domination and subservience, power and dependency. Domestic servitude remains widespread, which suggests that still more needs to be done by states collectively and individually to implement international standards prohibiting domestic servitude and other forms of contemporary slavery. The implementation of the obligation by states to investigate instances of domestic servitude is also critical to prosecute perpetrators, provide remedies to victims and protect victims from re-subjugation or re-victimization.

Domestic servitude has been one of the priority focus area of the Fund. In past years, a number of organisations have received financial support for projects providing direct assistance to victims of forced labour and migrant domestic workers, especially women and girls. In the last two years, the Fund has provided financial support to **9 organisations in 8 countries** providing direct assistance to victims of domestic servitude. The Fund's grantee organisations have shared concerns over a significant increase in the number of victims of domestic servitude, particularly women and girl migrant domestic workers within private households including diplomatic households. The violations include long work hours, no regulated salary, confiscation of wages and travel documents, confinement, physical and verbal abuse, and women and girls, in particular, are subject to sexual abuse including rapes. The factors that make victims of domestic servitude vulnerable are the existence of sponsorship laws in some countries that grant the employer of a foreign domestic worker the power to decide when the worker can leave the workplace and the country, the lack of legal framework/regulations, monitoring mechanisms and the recognition of domestic work as a

type of work. As a result, the victims are unable to seek redress for their rights and the exploiters often go unpunished. To overcome these barriers, it is essential to encourage and highlight good practices and methods adopted by civil society organisations in providing redress and rebuilding the lives of survivors. Below are some recommendations of successful interventions based on the experiences shared by the Slavery Fund grantees.

1. Restavek Freedom Foundation (RFF), Haiti

Project title: Strengthening Child Advocacy with Specialised Programming

Type of assistance: The organisation provides victims of child domestic slavery – ‘Restavek’ - the opportunity to attend school by paying for their tuition fees, books and uniforms and reunite them with their biological families. The organisation runs Child Advocacy Program, Family Life Education program, and uses awareness-raising platforms such as radio shows to create awareness, especially in poor rural areas. It also uses Haiti’s first database registering *restavek* cases, used by the government and NGOs. A new initiative was launched under the Family Life Education Program to provide sex education to 150 girls. The Child Advocates conduct an assessment at the time of the child’s enrolment into the program and accordingly provide medical and psychological assistance.

2. Comité Contre L’Esclavage Moderne (CCEM), France

Project title: Addressing the primary needs of victims of human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation through work

Type of assistance: CCEM, is a well-established organisation in France, with extensive experience in providing assistance to victims of contemporary forms of slavery, particularly victims of domestic servitude. The organisation uses strategic litigation and legal representation to assist victims of forced labour and domestic servitude. The social worker participates in the identification of victims, receives them in the NGO’s premises for a first exchange and interview, and constitutes a tailor-made plan of action seeking to offer all appropriate means to the victim in order to regain confidence and personal autonomy. This assistance includes practical information and guidance regarding access to services and language classes, as well as referrals to specialized associations. It also involves basic psychosocial support as well as financial support for medical and enhanced psychological assistance (including transportation to and from such support).

Furthermore, for legal assistance the organisation has elaborated a four stages process: (a) informing the victims about their rights, (b) analyzing the context and the evidence, (c) launching legal proceedings against the exploiter, (d) legal following-up cases and providing continuous legal representation to the victims. The NGO is also undertaking the process of delivering or renewing residence permits for the victims.

3. Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC), Lebanon

Project title: Protection and Assistance for Victims of Trafficking in Lebanon

Type of assistance: The organisation runs safe houses for migrant workers, especially women and girls who have suffered abuse by their employers. The victims are identified through the help of local social workers or referral cases. The project provides shelter, integrated social assistance such as medical care and trauma counselling, and options of long term solutions for victims, in cooperation with Lebanese authorities. The safe houses provide a supportive environment while the legal cases are handled by the organisation.

4. Anti-Slavery International, Tanzania

Project Title: Protection, rehabilitation and empowerment of Tanzanian child domestic workers (CDWs) affected by worst forms of child labour.

Type of assistance: The project provides psychological, social and legal assistance to CDWs, especially girls in two districts of the Mwanza region. The project builds on a number of home-visits conducted by the staff members, over a period of 3-4 years, to identify children working and living in their employer's homes who are at risk of abuse. The project is supporting 150 CDWs and is providing social assistance including shelter homes, family reunification, vocational skills and alternative work opportunities, access to education, conducting awareness programs and intense advocacy with the employers with respect to the rights of CDWs. Psychological support is provided according to the nature of the abuse experience, particularly in cases of sexual abuse of girls where specific support is provided to overcome trauma and stigma attached to the abuses. Furthermore, relevant legal assistance is provided to CDWs seeking redress for the worst forms of child labour, including securing withheld wages and receiving compensation. The organisation has also been instrumental in advocating for local domestic workers' by-laws in Mwanza. The impact of by-laws has led to an increase of work contracts and regular payment of the workers.

5. Kav LaOved Workers' Hotline, Israel

Project Title: Protecting Live-in Domestic Workers in Conditions of Contemporary Slavery

Type of assistance: The project provides legal assistance to victims of domestic workers by filing legal action on behalf of migrant domestic workers against employers who have violated their labour and human rights in relation to contemporary slavery. The organisation has adopted a strong rapport with the migrant domestic workers through its regular twice-weekly reception days and telephone hotline services. The practices adopted by organisations in social assistance include training of staff or volunteers and conducting workshops for Israeli police to

identify victims, awareness programmes for victims of the available resources and shelters, accompanying victims to their workplace to collect wages and belongings and other social services as per the individual cases.

KLO has shown its expertise in this field through affecting government laws and policies regarding migrant caregivers and successful court cases on behalf of migrant caregivers (e.g. successful appeals to the Supreme Court regarding bilateral agreements between Israel/source countries and fair and equal medical treatment for veteran caregivers, as well as nearly \$5,000,000 in compensation recovered for caregivers in 2015).

To conclude, although the Fund has with the financial support of its partner member states, funded a growing number of organizations that provide direct assistance to victims of domestic servitude it recognises that much more efforts would be needed on the part of member states, individually and collectively, civil society and international organisations to address the growing problem of domestic servitude in a more coherent and co-ordinated manner, as well as to reach out and assist victims.
