

Arise Foundation submission to the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences

About

Arise is an anti-slavery and anti-human trafficking organisation working across the world to protect communities from exploitation, with a focus on long-term prevention work in source communities. We believe that local groups and their networks are a hugely powerful, but an often marginalised and underdeveloped, resource in the fight against slavery. As a result, we work with frontline organisations and their networks, through strategic grant giving, direct partnership, training and capacity building, amplifying their voices within the human rights and policy communities.

It is due to our belief in a person-centred and locally-led response, that our submission is built upon the experiences of our frontline network. We hope that by magnifying the insight of those fighting slavery on the ground, our contribution will shine a light on the strength and potential of better supported prevention in source communities.

Please note that in this submission Arise is using 'employer' to mean anyone that is in a position of power over someone else working within the agricultural field, and might not, therefore, be the person who holds the contract but might be a direct manager. Arise is using 'labourer' to mean someone who is working within the agricultural sector as a day, or temporary, worker and is at risk of trafficking and exploitation.

Introduction: contemporary slavery and minority communities

From indigenous communities in South America to the Yazidis, we have seen an increase in the number of faith-based communities who are both vulnerable and subject to contemporary slavery, with a now widening concern surrounding two minority groups: the Hazaras and the Uyghurs.

Hazaras, a Shia minority, suffered grave persecution under the Taliban's previous rule. As a consequence of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, millions of Hazaras are vulnerable to faith-based trafficking. Meanwhile Uyghur Muslims from the Uyghur region in China are subject to forced labour on a mass scale, just one facet of their ongoing persecution which the independent [Uyghur Tribunal](#) found to be genocide at the hands of the People's Republic of China. Over 17 global industries are implicated in Uyghur forced labour, and evidence has emerged about the depth in which this occurs in the cotton and solar industries. The Uyghur region, of which 84% of China's cotton production comes from, is tainted by forced labour. With a fifth of the world's cotton coming from the Uyghur region, it is estimated that one in five cotton garments in the global apparel market have been made by Uyghur forced labour. In the solar industry, a report found that 45% of the world's solar-grade polysilicon supply, a material used in 95% of the world's solar panels, comes from the Uyghur region.

Elsewhere in the world, cases of trafficking of individuals from low caste communities and migrant workers highlight the widespread proliferation of modern slavery. Only last year, a [lawsuit](#) was filed in the United States against a Hindu temple who had held workers against their will to work 13-hour shifts, paid just over \$1 an hour. The employer

used the caste position of the workers to keep them constrained and isolated. Such examples prove that the differences that define a community as a 'minority' in any given region underpin the factors of vulnerability that leave such minority communities susceptible to trafficking.

Current responses to slavery

Forming an adequate response to minority-based modern slavery requires those working to provide a solution, from the state level to civil society, to develop a thorough knowledge of the minority groups themselves - their daily life, their strengths, their struggles. A coherent understanding of these elements will serve as a solid foundation to identify the minority groups' vulnerabilities, prior to developing a means to reduce their susceptibility to trafficking.

Current government responses show that state mitigation simply does not go far enough. Whilst policy makers may have facts and figures at their disposal, it is difficult for them to deepen their knowledge of what is occurring on the ground without further insight. In the same respect, whilst there exists a wide range of non-governmental entities who work in the field of anti-slavery, there are very few whose focus lies in the prevention of modern slavery amplifying the work of existing local networks, as opposed to dealing with its consequences.

There is a need to reach marginalised communities, which can only be done sufficiently through the mobilisation of local civil society groups. In addition to policy changes, tools such as foreign aid can provide power to these localised groups. It is through improved foreign aid policy, in combination with empowered civil society groups who invest time, money and energy into prevention work, that the occurrence of minority-targeted modern slavery can be reduced, and eventually ended.

A frontline focus on contemporary slavery

Over the past few years, reports revealed that Pakistani Christians were being deliberately targeted and groomed into bride trafficking. In 2018, it was estimated that at least 100 girls have been sold into marriage by their families. It emerged that predators were waiting outside churches in Pakistan attempting to manipulate poor families into selling their girls. The complexities of combating such occurrences of trafficking are far and wide, and include the difficulty of building capacity on the ground in good time to help prevent further instances of such trafficking from repeating. In response to this, Arise board members Lord Alton of Liverpool and Lord Hogan-Howe of Sheffield, put forward questions in the UK Parliament to ascertain what international assistance may be able to be offered. Through this action the UK Government response disclosed that no foreign aid is targeted at groups who are at-risk because of their faith. This scenario highlights the inadequacy and inconsistency of international development thinking. In a House of Lords debate about faith-targeted human trafficking in 2019, it was emphasised that for as long as UK aid is distributed according to "need and need alone", vulnerable people of ethnic or religious background will remain sidelined in the growing area of minority-based contemporary slavery. UK and international foreign aid policy risks leaving behind some of the most persecuted because of the fact that they are from a faith-based background.

Arise's model of supporting the frontline has proven the invaluable benefit of empowering those on the ground in the fight against modern slavery. Localised NGOs and faith-based

organisations have a unique insight into their communities. This includes having an understanding of what makes such communities vulnerable to modern slavery. Arise's work in India focuses greatly on supporting those from low caste groups and those who are migrant workers. Circumstances that have been observed to exasperate the susceptibility to modern slavery of those from low caste communities are strongly derived from political factors, as well as social exclusion. In both categories, people from low caste communities remain isolated, unable to seek out opportunities to learn about their rights and entitlements, which in themselves may be socially limited due to their caste group, but also leaves individuals unable to seek help once they become victims of modern slavery and trafficking. In the case of migrant workers, seasonal and temporary work leaves individuals unable to stay in a location long enough to understand their rights and the local laws. Other characteristics of seasonal work, including carrying out work in rural and sparsely populated areas, leaves migrant workers with little access beyond their immediate area, and increases their dependency, and therefore the risk of coercion, on their employers.

Recommendations

1. Improved state foreign aid policy

Foreign aid policy will remain inadequate for as long as it distributes aid according to need only. Arise's model highlights the necessity to focus on prevention work, which itself is most effective when it addresses why people are at-risk. In order to prevent minority communities, who often find themselves most at-risk of modern slavery, from being sidelined in the international development-based response, governments must close this loophole.

In the words of Arise at the time of the House of Lords debate: *"As the suffering of the Yazidis under Daesh and the atrocities inflicted upon the Rohingya showed very clearly, religious belief can be the key indicator of vulnerability. In both these cases, as with the Christian girls in Pakistan, it was their creed which defined the need. If our aid programmes remain blind to the fact that the faith of these girls is putting them at risk, how can they possibly be effective?"*

2. Improved cooperation between states and localised civil society groups

Faith-communities and localised networks are powerful, yet often under sourced actors in the fight against modern slavery. These communities have a unique insight into their local communities, with the ability to better identify those at-risk as well as support those who are found to be victims of modern slavery. The use of local networks would also strengthen the foreign aid response, by ensuring the effective distribution of funding and resources locally by groups who are embedded in those communities.