

**UNITED NATIONS  
VOLUNTARY TRUST FUND ON  
CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY**



# **THE HUMAN FACES OF MODERN SLAVERY**



UNITED NATIONS



UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

*Bonded labourers burning hard wood to produce charcoal in Latin America.*



# THE FUND AND THE PLIGHT OF VICTIMS OF MODERN SLAVERY

## NAVI PILLAY / UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

For many, slavery is synonymous with the past, transatlantic slave trade. But sadly, slavery still exists in various forms. Today more than 27 million men, women and children still live in enslavement, or in slave-like conditions. They are trapped in forced labour and debt bondage, in domestic servitude and forced marriages, or exploited by human traffickers.

The first challenge in combating slavery must be recognition: we must acknowledge the bitter truth that slavery may have been weakened, but it continues to exist. The majority of those who suffer are poor and socially excluded groups, often living in the margins of our society.

States have the responsibility to prevent, prohibit and punish all acts of slavery. They must reinforce access to justice and provide adequate protection mechanisms for the victims.

The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery was established in 1991 by the United Nations General Assembly to alert the world to the plight of these victims and give them direct assistance. It is an effective and concrete

mechanism, managed by my Office, which awards grants to civil society entities that provide assistance to victims of modern slavery. With the support of the Fund, victims can obtain redress, regain their freedom and rebuild lives of dignity.

Since its creation, the Fund has provided support to tens of thousands of victims through more than 500 projects. They include victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, children who have been exploited in mines and plantations and young girls who are victims of forced marriage.

The Fund has supported the creation of emergency shelters, the delivery of humanitarian support and vocational training, as well as the provision of legal, medical and psychological aid to individuals whose human rights have been violated.

I urge Government, private and public entities to contribute to the Fund and its specialized and life-saving assistance to the victims of modern slavery.

Thank you for your support.



## THE UN VOLUNTARY TRUST FUND ON CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY

Since its establishment in 1991, the UN Voluntary Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, managed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has awarded several million US dollars in project grants to more than 500 organizations worldwide. These organisations extend humanitarian, legal, psychological and social assistance to individuals who have been subjected to modern slavery. In addition to traditional slavery, modern forms of slavery include serfdom, forced labour, debt bondage, the worst forms of child labour, the sale of children, forced and early marriage, the sale of wives and inherited widows, trafficking in persons for exploitation and sexual slavery.

The Fund supports projects aimed at:

- > **REDRESS AND REHABILITATION** for victims of modern slavery through the provision of psychological, medical, legal and social assistance.
- > **EMPOWERING** victims through capacity building activities and vocational training so that they may re-gain self-sufficiency and their livelihoods.
- > **INTEGRATING** victims back into society by restoring their dignity and independence, working in partnership with their communities and families.

On the following pages, individuals who have escaped modern slavery and have rebuilt their lives with the assistance of the Fund, tell the stories of what they have endured.

## MODERN SLAVERY

Today numerous contemporary manifestations of slavery affect millions of people across the world. The UN Slavery Fund works to assist the victims of these atrocious practices, which include among others:

- > **TRADITIONAL SLAVERY** - individuals are born into slavery and are ascribed a slave status which lasts for life. They are, in effect, the property of the families who control them.
- > **DEBT BONDAGE** - a person is held as collateral against a loan. The work of the bonded labourer is the means of repaying the loan. Since such labourers receive little or no pay, loan repayment is difficult, and his or her debt may even be inherited by the next generation.
- > **SERFDOM** - a form of servile labour that binds a person by law, custom or agreement to work on land that belongs to someone else. The labourer's inability to change status makes this a form of slavery.
- > **FORCED LABOUR** - work that is exacted under coercion, force, penalty, threats, intimidation and the denial of freedom.
- > **SALE OF CHILDREN AND WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR** - include situations of child labour which are characterised by slavery, sexual exploitation,

illicit activities and hazardous work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morale of children. Examples include forced begging, domestic servitude, work in quarries, brick kilns and dangerous work in the fishing industry for long hours and no pay.

- **COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN** – such as child prostitution, child sex tourism and child pornography.
- **TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND FORCED LABOUR** – human beings are recruited, using threats, deception or coercion, for the purposes of economic or sexual exploitation. Traffickers confiscate victims' passports, withhold wages, and force victims to work against their will. In other cases individuals are trafficked and exploited for the purpose of removing their organs.

- **SEXUAL SLAVERY** – the sexual exploitation of individuals through the use or threat of force, often occurring in times of armed conflict or belligerent occupation. There may be no financial gain in sexual slavery, unlike in the case of exploitation of prostitution (another contemporary form of slavery).
- **FORCED OR EARLY MARRIAGE, THE SALE OF WIVES AND WIDOW INHERITANCE** – slavery-like practices which exist within the context of marriage. Forced marriage takes place without the free or valid consent of either or both parties and on payment of money or in kind to third parties. In widow inheritance, a widow is automatically re-married to her husband's brother or another member of the family, following the death of her husband.
- **OTHER FORMS OF SLAVERY** – these are brought to light constantly. Sadly, modern slavery is a global and dynamic phenomenon. The forcible recruitment of child soldiers, forced labour in export processing zones (sweatshops) and fisheries, domestic servitude, sex tourism and illegal activities within certain religions and cults are among the practices that resemble slavery.

*Bonded labourers burning hard wood to produce charcoal in Latin America.*



Credit: Cecilia Felneri, ADPARE

Maria in an educational movie about human trafficking

## TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### MARIA'S STORY

Maria was just 16 when she moved in with her boyfriend, in the town where she grew up in Romania, and had a baby. He turned violent; four years later, although she was pregnant with her second child, she moved out. After a few failed attempts to reconcile, Maria's ex-boyfriend came to visit her at her mother's house. He took her to a field where two cars were waiting. The men in the cars handed Maria's boyfriend 1,500 euros, then grabbed Maria. They took her to a house where she was kept prisoner for several months. She was repeatedly raped and beaten.

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*“The people who bought me sold me again for 1,000 euros and a car.”*

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Maria was later re-sold for 1,000 euros plus a car to a group of men who intended to exploit her in Italy. On the way to Italy with her new buyers, Romanian traffic police stopped the car; Maria managed to alert them. She was referred

to ADPARE, an NGO that assists predominantly Romanian victims of human trafficking, both inside Romania and beyond its borders. Maria and her children were provided with **psychological counselling, legal assistance, humanitarian support and social assistance.**

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*“Although my 5-month pregnancy showed, the buyer's brother had sex with me and they beat me up.”*

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Today, Maria has re-built her life. She lives with her two children at her parents' house, working as a cleaner, and occasionally as a beautician. She also works with ADPARE to educate other women about human trafficking.

*ADPARE has received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2011. The Romanian NGO assists victims of internal and external trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour.*

## WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR EBO'S STORY

*“My Friend Malik (also a trafficked child) died from drowning when he was made to dive to untangle nets. I was afraid and begged to be sent back home because I might also die.”*

When Ebo was 8 years old, his mother uprooted him from his home town in Ghana and handed control of the boy to his elder sister and her husband. They promptly put him to work in highly dangerous conditions on Lake Volta. For long hours every day, he had to paddle their canoe, cast nets and perform the dangerous task of diving deep to untangle nets. When he was not working on the lake, he had to scale, smoke and package the fish for sale at the market. He was beaten and insulted whenever he made a mistake.

For 8 years Ebo worked as a slave for his sister and her husband. He did all kinds of dangerous work. He made friends with another boy who had been trafficked and forced to work on Lake Volta; where they fished all day in their canoe, in extreme heat

From the age of 8, Ebo was forced to risk his life as a fisher on Lake Volta

and cold or in storms that sometimes capsized their boat. They were given little to eat. Sometimes they watched as the dead bodies of children and adults floated past their canoe in the hazardous waters.

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*“We work three times daily. We start work at 4 a.m., work till noon, and then come back home and go on the lake again at 2 p.m. until 6 p.m.; then we go to cast the last net at night.”*

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When Ebo was 16, he was rescued by Challenging Heights – an NGO working to free children from slavery. He was taken to a centre some 10 hours away from the lake, not far from his home town. Here he spent 5 months undergoing an intensive

rehabilitation program designed to take into account the physical, psychological, behavioural and educational needs of former child slaves. Ebo then returned to his home town, to live with his aunt – who supports him, with the help of Challenging Heights, so that he can attend school.

**Today Ebo is happy to be back at school and savours his new freedom. He plays football and dreams of one day becoming a bank manager.**

*Challenging Heights, received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2013. The Ghanaian NGO seeks to combat child trafficking and the worst forms of child labour. It supports rescue, rehabilitation and family reintegration programs for victims of these modern forms of slavery.*



*Trafficked children work as fisherman on Lake Volta in extremely hazardous conditions.*



*Rekha Bai cleans out her neighbours' dry latrines; she will then carry out the waste in a bowl on her head, and dump it outside the village.*

## CASTE-BASED SLAVERY

### REKHA'S STORY

Rekha Bai is a 32-year-old woman from Rajasthan, India. When she was a child she was married off to a man whose mother, because of her caste, was engaged in “manual scavenging.”

Traditionally, women of the Dalit caste are obligated to empty the dry latrines of people from higher castes – with their bare hands. They must then carry the waste on their heads, in wicker baskets, to a dumpsite outside the village. Following tradition, Rekha inherited this responsibility when her mother-in-law became too old.

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*“As payment for my labour I got just one chapatti from each household.”*

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Rekha was engaged in manual scavenging for 18 years. As compensation for her work, she would only receive one dry *chapatti* from each household. Her health suffered as a result of carrying waste on her head; fecal matter is a major vector for infectious disease. She also faced violence and discrimination because of her caste status. Rekha was deeply ashamed of her degrading occupation.

With the encouragement of Jan Sahas and another local NGO that seeks to eradicate the practice of manual scavenging, Rekha gathered the courage needed to walk away from this modern form of slavery. In 2013 she joined a 10,000 kilometre march, or “Yatra”, organised by these groups, alongside some 5000 other victims from 18 different Indian states. Rekha was also provided with **legal and social assistance** by Jan Sahas.

**Today, Rekha is a daily wage labourer, and receives the minimum wage. She is free. Rekha is now viewed as a role model for others who are still engaged in the manual scavenging practice.**

*Jan Sahas, which has received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2012, is an NGO working in several states in India to end slavery and violence against Dalit women and men. It helps Dalit communities to abandon slave-like practices, find alternate livelihoods and re-build their lives in dignity.*

*Diane, pictured here at CCEM's premises, has begun to rebuild her life with the help of the UN Slavery Fund following two years of domestic servitude in Paris.*

## TRAFFICKING FOR FORCED LABOUR

### DIANE'S STORY

Diane is a 30-year-old woman from Burkina Faso who was kept for two years as a domestic slave in the Paris apartment of an affluent family from West Africa, after having been trafficked from her home country to France.

She was not free to go out of the flat, except to take the family's children to school, and was only given leftovers to eat. She was insulted and threatened on a regular basis.

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*"I worked 19 hours, every day of the week, for a monthly salary of 45 euros."*

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After two years of this treatment Diane eventually drew up the courage to escape from the house while running an errand for her employers. A few days later she came into contact with CCEM, an NGO in Paris providing **legal, social and financial assistance** to victims of contemporary forms of slavery. Diane was integrated into a social assistance programme to help her overcome her trauma. The social

worker assigned to her case observed at the time that **"her undocumented status and the suffering she endured during servitude have left her psychologically very fragile."**

**Today Diane has re-built her life in France and is the mother of two children. She has gained her independence and maintains contact with CCEM, which continues to support her legal case against her employers.**

CCEM (Comité Contre L'Esclavage Moderne), has received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2013. The French NGO was established in 1994 in order to assist victims of trafficking for the purposes of domestic servitude and other modern forms of slavery, such as people trapped in forced labour situations in the agricultural and construction sectors, or through marriage. Victims are provided with legal, social and financial assistance. CCEM has also brought successful cases against perpetrators to the European Court of Human Rights.



## FORCED AND EARLY MARRIAGE MAYSOUN'S STORY

Maysoun was forced into marriage when she was just 15 years old. As soon as she was under her new husband's roof, he made her quit school.

For two years Maysoun suffered his abuse and those of his extended family. She had to wake up at dawn and spent her days standing in the kitchen washing, cleaning, and cooking. The duties of a wife according to traditions overwhelmed the young girl and put her under tremendous psychological pressure. She started hallucinating and talking to herself.

Then, when she was just 17, her husband divorced her, leaving her isolated in the community and filled with shame.

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*“Every day I wished I had never been born, for no one deserves such crushing pain and suffering.”*

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Two years later, Maysoun came into contact with Trust of Programs for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education, which placed her in a community-based program aimed at empowering victims of early marriage and educating the community on the ills of child marriage. Maysoun was able to meet with other victims of forced and early marriage, speak freely about her experiences and gain the confidence she needed to re-build her life. She also attended courses on sewing, housekeeping and computers.

< Maysoun and other victims of forced and early marriage meet to discuss their experiences and participate in training and educational activities.

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*“After I was divorced, I felt that everybody was giving me dirty looks and wondering about the reasons for my divorce. I would walk down the street with my eyes fixed on the ground, trying to avoid eye contact.”*

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Today, Maysoun has overcome her feelings of isolation and defeat. She is an active member in her community and her work with Trust of Programs makes her an inspiration for other young women trapped in child marriages.

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*“I was transformed. I felt I was a real human being, able to voice my opinion within my family. Now they consult with me and listen to my advice.”*

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Trust of Programs for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education has received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2012. It engages with Palestinian communities to eliminate the practice of early and forced marriage and provides social assistance to victims of this contemporary form of slavery.



© Trust of Programs

Schoolgirls participating in art activities aimed at raising awareness on early and forced marriage.

## CHILD DOMESTIC SERVITUDE JOHANNE'S STORY

Johanne, a 15-year-old Haitian girl, became a victim of human trafficking and a child domestic slave – a 'Restavek' – at the age of nine. When she was just 11 years old, Johanne lost her left hand in the 2010 earthquake that ravaged Port-au-Prince.

Francoise, a child advocate from the organisation Restavek Freedom Foundation (RFF), first met Johanne in 2011. She was living in Port-au-Prince with a woman whom she called "Aunty." Forced to perform numerous household chores, including carrying water in 20 litre buckets up and down the hillside every day, she was also subjected to abuse and prohibited from attending school.

Francoise negotiated with Johanne's "Aunt" to allow Johanne to go to school. Still, Johanne was often late for class because she had to complete her chores before leaving the house.

Eventually Johanne was chased out of her "Aunt's" home. With the assistance of RFF, Johanne was placed in the care of her father and was able to return to school full-time. A grant from the UN Slavery Fund covers her tuition fees and ensures that RFF maintains a trusting relationship with Johanne – and a dialogue with her family – so that she can rebuild her life.

*Child slaves in Haiti work many hours performing domestic chores for no pay.*

**Today, Johanne is thriving and performs exceptionally well in school. Her school principal has even suggested that Johanne skip a grade.**

*Restavek Freedom Foundation has received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2012. It is an NGO based in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which aims to assist child domestic slaves, providing them with the opportunity to attend school by paying for their tuition, books and uniforms.*

© Hugues Siegenthaler

*A dream for the children in domesticity:  
to go to school.*



## BONDED LABOUR

# AASHA'S STORY

Aasha is an energetic young girl from the Tharu community in Nepal – an indigenous community which has a tradition of sending girl children to work as “Kamalaris,” or bonded labourers, in the houses of local landlords.

At the age of 10, Aasha was sent by her own family to become a “Kamalari” in a local landlord’s house. She was forced to serve the 15 family members from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day. Her chores included washing up, cooking, taking care of the children, cleaning the house and collecting cow dung.

Aasha was only allowed to eat leftovers, after the entire family had finished lunch and dinner. She was also physically and mentally ill-treated repeatedly by her master. Once, her leg was fractured. Permanently disabled by this injury, she was sent home.

Aasha joined the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), an organisation assisting indigenous women who have suffered bonded labour. She was provided with a **scholarship and counselling services** through a local facilitator. Initially Aasha was



*Aasha began working as a bonded labourer at the age of 10.*

pessimistic and felt hopeless. But after starting school, she regained confidence and began to rebuild her life.

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*“My mission is to seek justice for Kamalaris. They have the right to get compensation and go to school.”*

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Today Aasha is studying for a Bachelor's degree and is a Kamalari rights activist. In June 2013 she demonstrated against the government for the right of Kamalaris to go to school and to receive justice.

*Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities* which has received grants from the Fund since 2012, is an organisation in Nepal which started off developing awareness-raising campaigns on indigenous rights issues. Today, it supports victims of slavery-like practices in Nepal, raising the issue of their rights at the policy level. Since 2004, NEFIN has provided scholarships and counselling support to almost 2,000 victims.



*Former Kamalaris are provided with social assistance thanks to funds from the UN Slavery Fund.*



*Jonalyn and other migrant workers who were abused by their employers participate in an orientation seminar at a safe house run by Caritas*

## DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

# JONALYN'S STORY

Jonalyn left her home in the Philippines and traveled to the Middle East to work as a domestic worker for a family in Lebanon.

For nearly a year, Jonalyn suffered severe psychological and physical torture at the hands of her employers. She was imprisoned in solitary confinement for 10 days and was threatened constantly with death. She endured both physical and sexual abuse. Her employer poured chlorine-based detergent over Jonalyn's body and open wounds, and subjected her to electric shocks using a stun-gun.

Jonalyn eventually came into contact with the Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC), an

organisation that runs a safe house for migrant workers who have suffered abuse by their employers. Initially Jonalyn was so traumatised and afraid of reprisals from her employers that she was unable to trust staff at CLMC. It took a long time for Jonalyn to feel comfortable discussing her abuse with a CLMC social worker.

Jonalyn was placed in CLMC's safe house where she received medical care, basic needs assistance, trauma counseling and legal aid. She was also counselled on the possibility of returning to the Philippines or seeking a safer job in Lebanon, and she began a lawsuit against her employers.

Slowly Jonalyn recovered physically and emotionally, and prepared herself to make an independent choice. She decided to accept her employers' plea bargain of USD\$20,000 and an airline ticket home, and was counseled by CLMC staff on medical follow-up and retrieval of payment once she arrived home.

**Today, Jonalyn is living a quiet life in the Philippines, far from the horrors she endured.**

*Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (CLMC), has been received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2013. It seeks to protect and assist victims of domestic servitude and trafficking in Lebanon. It provides shelter, integrated social assistance and options for durable solutions to victims, in cooperation with the Lebanese authorities.*



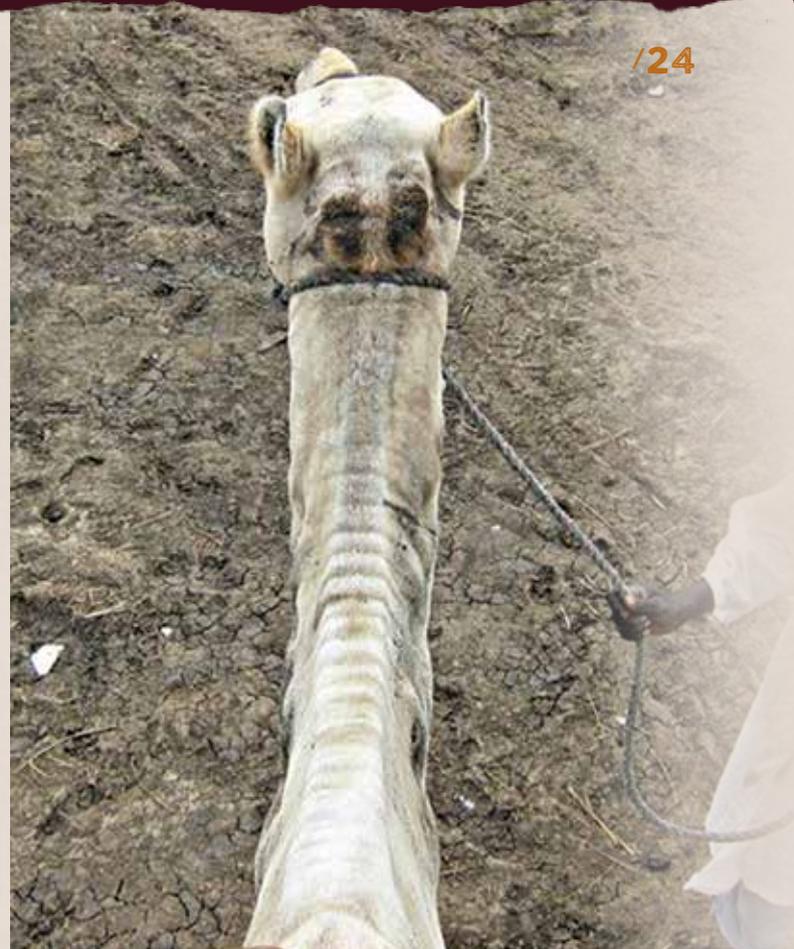
## REMNANTS OF TRADITIONAL SLAVERY

### SAID AND YARG'S STORY

Said and Yarg, two brothers from Mauritania respectively 15 and 13 years old, were owned by a master since their birth.

As his property, the boys had no choice but to do as they were told. They were forced to spend hours in the sun herding camels and were not allowed to go to school. They were also frequently subjected to beatings.

In 2011, Said managed to escape. With the assistance of his aunt and two local anti-slavery organisations, he pressed charges against his master, resulting in the rescue of his younger brother.



That same year, Minority Rights Group, together with the local anti-slavery organisation SOS Esclaves, hired a lawyer – using a grant from the UN Slavery Fund – to represent Said and Yarg, in order to ensure that the criminal case against their former master was properly prosecuted.

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*“When referring to me, everyone would say ‘Said, the slave of this family.’ This hurt me. I questioned why I wasn’t allowed to play football like the other children.”*

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In November 2011, Said and Yarg's master was found guilty under Mauritania's 2007 anti-slavery law, which makes the practice of slavery a criminal offense. It was the first successful prosecution under this law.

**Today, Said and Yarg are free to go to school and make friends. They have a childhood. Said comments: "It's as if I was born again." Yarg's ambition is to be a lawyer so that one day he can defend other victims of slavery.**

*Minority Rights Group International (MRG) has received grants from the UN Slavery Fund since 2014. It works to support minorities and indigenous communities across the world. It has teamed up with a leading Mauritanian anti-slavery organisation, SOS-Esclaves, to provide legal support to victims of traditional slavery in Mauritania.*





Child domestic workers enjoy a performance at a holiday camp organized by the Foyer Maurice Sixto, an organization that supports Restaveks.

## SUPPORT THE UN SLAVERY FUND

### WHY SUPPORT THE FUND?

The UN Slavery Fund is a unique, victim-oriented and cost-effective mechanism that provides assistance to victims of contemporary forms of slavery and their family members. In 2014, approximately 9,000 victims benefit from the Fund's support in all regions of the world.

*“The help from the UN Slavery Fund enabled me to restart my life. I completed my education and started afresh. A little bit of support at a very crucial time can open the doors to this big world for victims like me.” Aasha*

### HOW MUCH DOES THE FUND NEED?

Every year, the UN Slavery Fund receives hundreds of applications from NGOs requesting grants to provide assistance to thousands of victims of modern slavery across the globe. In order to meet these demands meaningfully and effectively, the UN Slavery Fund require at least US\$2 million every year in voluntary contributions.

### HOW MUCH ACTUALLY GOES TO VICTIMS?

After administration costs are met, 80 cents of every dollar received by the Fund goes to victims.

### HOW ARE PROJECTS EVALUATED?

An initial assessment of project proposals, and review of reports on the use of previous grants, is made by the Secretariat of the Humanitarian Funds at OHCHR. Subsequently, the UN Slavery Fund's Board of Trustees, which meets once every year, uses its collective expertise to formulate recommendations for project funding. In doing so, the Board considers a variety of factors, including merit, needs, geographic location, target group, the priorities of OHCHR and the impact and sustainability of the project.

### HOW DOES THE FUND MONITOR PROJECTS AND ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY?

The OHCHR Secretariat and field presences, as well as the Fund's Board conduct pre-screening and monitoring visits to applicants and grantees. Grantees are also required to provide annual narrative and financial reports as well as *ad hoc* audit reports.

### HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUND?

OHCHR receives pledges on behalf of the Fund. Contributions should be earmarked for the UN Slavery Fund.

© Pete Pattison



Bonded labourer, Shyari, 60, wraps her hands in cloth to protect her hands from the bricks she has to shift for 12 hours a day.

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*“Modern slavery is a crime. People who perpetrate, condone or facilitate it must be brought to justice. Victims and survivors have a right to remedies and reparations. For more than 20 years, the Fund has helped restore human rights and dignity to tens of thousands of children, women and men. I urge continued support for this vital initiative.”*

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**BAN KI-MOON**  
**UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL**

**ACT NOW! DONATE!**

**Visit us at: [www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund](http://www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund)**

**Email us on: [slaveryfund@ohchr.org](mailto:slaveryfund@ohchr.org)**

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Child labourers picking coffee  
in an estate coffee plantation.