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Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution [46/122](#), provides an overview of the work in relation to the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery, in particular the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-third session, held in Geneva from 26 to 30 November 2018. It also provides information on other recommendations adopted by the Board and on activities in relation to the fund.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [46/122](#), by which it established the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery. It provides the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-third session, held in Geneva from 26 to 30 November 2018. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved the recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General on 9 January 2019.

B. Mandate of the fund

2. In line with resolution [46/122](#), the fund was established with the purpose of extending humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. The fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations, private or public entities and individuals.

C. Administration of the fund and Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with the advice of a board of trustees and in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

4. The Board of Trustees is composed of five members with relevant experience in the field of human rights and, in particular, issues of contemporary forms of slavery. They serve in their personal capacity and are appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution. The Board is currently composed of Danwood Mzikenge Chirwa (Malawi), Renu Rajbhandari (Nepal), Nevena Vučković Šahović (Serbia), Leonardo Sakamoto (Brazil) and Georgina Vaz Cabral (France), who was appointed Chair of the Board at its twenty-third session. Ms. Rajbhandari was unable to attend the session.

II. Management of grants

A. Admissibility criteria

5. In accordance with the mandate of the fund as set out in resolution [46/122](#), the beneficiaries of assistance from the fund are individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the fund's guidelines. Project proposals should be aimed at the delivery of assistance services to beneficiaries who are victims of contemporary forms of slavery and, when applicable, members of their families. As indicated in the fund's guidelines, contemporary forms of slavery that qualify for project grants include traditional slavery, serfdom, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, the worst forms of child labour, forced and early marriage, the sale of wives and inherited widows, trafficking in persons and of human organs, sexual slavery, sale of children, commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in armed conflict.

6. Priority in allocating grants is accorded to projects implemented by civil society organizations that aim at providing rehabilitation, reparation, empowerment and integration services for victims of contemporary forms of slavery through the provision of direct assistance. This may include medical, psychological, social, legal, humanitarian and educational assistance, vocational or skills training or other assistance in support of an independent livelihood. Detailed information on the types of assistance provided to victims through the projects financed by the fund, as well as on their impact on the lives of the beneficiaries, is available from the OHCHR website.¹

7. By 1 March 2018, the deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2019, the fund had received 46 applications. After the applications were pre-screened by the secretariat of the fund, 37, amounting to \$846,000 in requests for direct assistance to victims, were declared admissible and were examined by the Board at its twenty-third session. Priority was given to project applications providing assistance to victims of slave labour and slavery-like practices, including forced and early marriage; projects assisting women and children; and projects operating in conflict and humanitarian crisis scenarios.

8. The deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2020 was 1 March 2019. By the close of the call, the fund had received 93 applications, more than twice the number of the previous year. After the applications were pre-screened by the secretariat of the fund, 70, amounting to \$2.13 million in requests for assistance to victims, were declared admissible and will be examined by the Board at its twenty-fourth session, to be held in Geneva from 25 to 29 November 2019. In 2020, priority will continue to be given to project applications providing specialized assistance to women and children and projects operating in conflict and humanitarian crisis scenarios. In addition, priority will be given to project proposals intended to assist victims of contemporary forms of slavery in the context of supply and value chains.

B. Monitoring and evaluation by the secretariat of the fund

9. At its twenty-third session, the Board was presented with 37 admissible applications for project grants that would be awarded for activities to be implemented in 2019. Of the applications, 35 had been evaluated through on-site visits by staff of the secretariat of the fund, OHCHR field presences, human rights components of peacekeeping missions and members of the Board of Trustees in previous years, including 17 visits in 2018. On-site technical evaluation visits to applicant organizations are a crucial aspect of the fund. The visits provide a first-hand opportunity to verify new applicants, monitor activities supported by the fund over a number of years and provide feedback to grantees.

III. Financial situation of the fund

10. Notwithstanding the fundraising and outreach efforts of the Board and the secretariat of the fund, underfunding remains an issue. Since 2002, the fund has received \$9.2 million in contributions from Member States, which represents an average yearly income of \$545,000. A peak was observed in 2009, with income amounting to \$886,000. However, to meaningfully fulfil its mandate and adequately respond to the needs of victims, the fund would require at least \$2 million in contributions each year. The contributions received in 2018 for 2019 covered only 30 per cent of that target. For 2020, the fund aims to reach the symbolic target of

¹ See www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund.

\$1 million, encouraged by the positive feedback received on its operations by an increasing number of State representatives.

11. The table shows the contributions and pledges received in 2018.

Contributions and pledges received in 2018

(United States dollars)

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
Australia	149 013	7 June 2018 and 9 February 2019 ^a
Germany	238 662	24 September, 22 November and 14 December 2018
India	25 000	12 March 2018
Luxembourg	17 045	2 October 2018
Republic of Korea	40 000	19 December 2018
Saudi Arabia	70 000	27 April 2018
Spain	39 772	11 December 2018
Turkey	10 000	17 December 2018
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	130 331	16 November 2018 and 29 March 2019 ^a
Holy See	2 500	2 February 2018
Total	722 325	

^a Amount pledged for 2018 and paid in two instalments, in 2018 and 2019.

IV. Twenty-third session of the Board of Trustees

12. The twenty-third session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 26 to 30 November 2018. Building on the recent thematic report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, on the impact of slavery and servitude on marginalized migrant women workers (A/HRC/39/52), the fund convened an expert panel on domestic servitude (see paras. 20–22) on 30 November. That was also the occasion to commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. In addition, the Board held a working session with representatives of four of the fund's grantees to discuss challenges and share best practices and lessons learned on a victim-centred approach to rehabilitation of domestic workers in servitude, taking into account perspectives from different regions. Furthermore, the Board met a representative of the Guatemalan National Council of Displaced Persons, one of the fund's grantees, to discuss lessons learned and challenges faced by the organization.

13. In addition, in line with the mission statement adopted on 26 November 2015 (A/71/272, para. 27), the Board continued to pursue closer coordination with other actors in the field of contemporary forms of slavery. Against the backdrop of the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Board held fruitful exchanges with OHCHR staff supporting special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, and on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Board also held a teleconference with the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

14. A Board member, Leonardo Sakamoto, delivered remarks at the opening plenary session of the seventh Forum on Business and Human Rights, which was held in Geneva from 26 to 28 November 2018 and brought together more than 2,000 participants from Governments, businesses and civil society. Board members also convened a working meeting with members of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. They met bilaterally selected representatives of companies attending the Forum, which may pave the way for future collaboration. Members of the Board are of the view that only close cooperation among relevant mandate holders and mechanisms will ensure a more effective response to victims of contemporary forms of slavery.

A. Grant-making recommendations

15. Following a thorough intersessional evaluation of admissible project proposals by the secretariat of the fund, at its twenty-third session the Board was presented with 37 applications for project grants to assist victims of contemporary forms of slavery worldwide, amounting to \$846,000. The Board accorded priority to the review of proposals that had been highly recommended for funding by the secretariat of the fund. Through a competitive review based on both geographical and thematic criteria, it recommended the approval of 29 applications, for a total of \$595,950. The recommendations were approved by the High Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary-General on 9 January 2019. Eight additional highly recommended project proposals – totalling \$200,000 – could not be financed owing to a lack of available funding.

16. In 2019, through the 29 grants, the fund will assist non-governmental organizations in 25 countries, as follows: 7 projects in Asia; 7 in Africa; 2 in Eastern Europe; 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean; and 8 in the countries of the Western European and other States group. More than 8,500 victims are expected to receive redress and rehabilitation services after having been subjected to contemporary forms of slavery, such as the worst forms of child labour, domestic servitude, bonded and forced labour, sexual exploitation and forced and early marriage. For example, the fund will partner with Restavek Freedom to implement a project in Haiti to provide social support to 250 children who are victims of the worst forms of child labour and domestic servitude under the *restavek* system. In Togo, the Centre Kékéli de la congrégation des sœurs carmélites de la charité Védruna will provide humanitarian assistance, including shelter, family mediation and reunification services and medical and psychological assistance, to 83 children who were victims of the worst forms of child labour, trafficking for forced labour, servitude and forced and early marriage. An Albanian organization, Different & Equal, will provide psychological, medical and legal support to 88 victims of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. In Colombia, a victims' organization, Corporación Humanas, will provide psychological support, educational and vocational training for income-generating activities in textile and design production and dance therapy to 18 victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in the context of armed conflict.

17. Figures I and II illustrate the breakdown, by region and by type of contemporary form of slavery, of the 29 grants approved for 2019.

Figure I
Grants awarded for 2019, by region

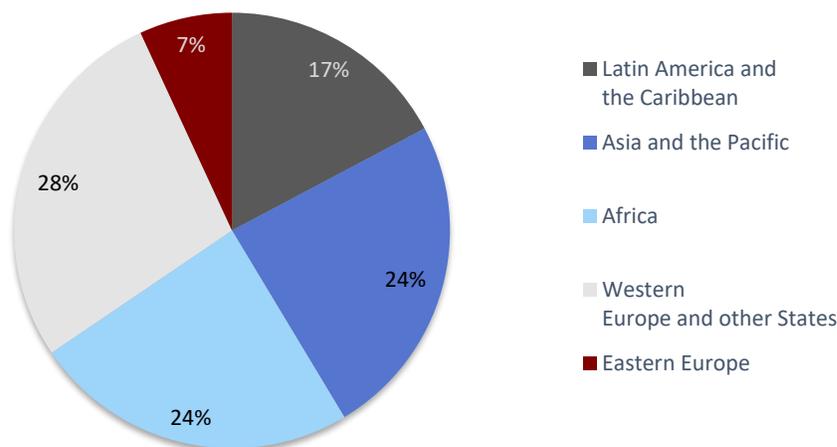
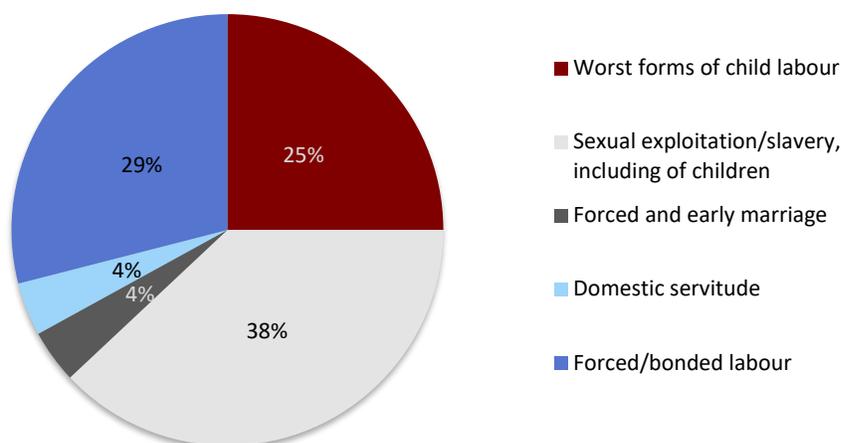


Figure II
Grants awarded for 2019, by type of contemporary form of slavery



B. Policy recommendations

18. At its twenty-third session, the Board focused its discussion on how to improve the visibility of the fund, in particular for fundraising purposes. The members also noted with concern the increasing number of threats and reprisals experienced by human rights defenders assisting victims of contemporary forms of slavery. In that regard, the Board recommended giving prominence to the issue of protecting human rights defenders who are anti-slavery activists by appealing to the United Nations senior management and relevant human rights mechanisms for increased advocacy. The Board also recommended continuing to hold an annual public event in commemoration of the abolition of slavery, as a way of sharing knowledge and best practices in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims of slavery.

19. Furthermore, for the 2020 call for project proposals, the Board recommended continuing to prioritize projects proposals providing specialized assistance to women and children and projects operating in conflict and humanitarian crisis scenarios and, in addition, prioritizing project proposals providing assistance to victims of slavery in the context of supply and value chains. All the recommendations were approved by the High Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary-General on 9 January 2019.

C. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery and expert panel on rehabilitation for victims of slavery

20. On the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, on 30 November 2018, the fund convened an expert panel entitled “Behind closed doors: how to identify and assist victims of domestic servitude”, with the participation of Sally Mansfield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva; Rosemyrtha M. Innocent, survivor of domestic servitude and beneficiary of Restavek Freedom (Haiti); Roslyn Phillips, Rural Programme and Development Director for Restavek Freedom (Haiti); Meytal Russo (via teleconference), Manager at Kav LaOved Workers’ Hotline (Israel); George Leonard Sayi, Coordinator of the Tanzania Domestic Workers Coalition (United Republic of Tanzania); and Benedicte Lavaud Legendre, founder of Ruelle (France). The above-mentioned organizations and rehabilitation centres are all current grantees of the fund. The event was attended by representatives of Member States, including Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Haiti, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Union, civil society organizations, United Nations entities and the general public. Australia, Germany and the Republic of Korea contributed financially to make the event possible.

21. Panellists highlighted that domestic servitude had serious short-term and long-term consequences for the individuals involved, their families and their communities. They also highlighted that victims were usually exposed to multiple violations and forms of abuse, including physical and social isolation; restriction of movement; psychological, physical and sexual violence; intimidation and threats; retention of identity documents by the employer; withholding of wages; and abusive working and living conditions, including excessive overtime. Practitioners, survivors and experts further noted that progress had been made in the identification, care, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims, but millions remained trapped in slavery-like conditions, with an ever-increasing number of migrants being pushed into domestic servitude.

22. The fund’s grantees provided a moving and direct account of the work in support of victims carried out with the assistance of the fund, in particular achievements to help victims of slavery through rehabilitation programmes, such as legal, psychosocial and economic empowerment. A public debate followed the panellists’ presentations.

V. How to contribute to the fund

23. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities are invited to contribute to the fund. Donors should indicate “for the slavery fund, account SH” on a payment order. For more information on how to contribute and further details about the fund, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the fund at the following address:

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
 United Nations
 CH 1211 Geneva 10
 Switzerland
 Email: slaveryfund@ohchr.org
 Tel: 41 22 917 9376
 Fax: 41 22 917 9017
www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

24. The Board of Trustees, jointly with the secretariat of the fund, has stepped up outreach initiatives to increase the visibility of the fund and enhance the coordination with other actors involved in the eradication of all forms of slavery, including the special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council.

25. The expert panel discussions on domestic servitude highlighted the continued prevalence of contemporary forms of slavery across the globe, notwithstanding its universal prohibition, including in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with panellists urging States and stakeholders to investigate abuses and provide rehabilitation to all victims of contemporary forms of slavery.

26. Member States and other stakeholders, in particular the private sector, are urged to contribute to the fund as a concrete manifestation of their commitment to eliminating slavery and attaining target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals.² The fund would need to receive \$2 million on a yearly basis to respond adequately to the demands for assistance received through project applications.

² Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.