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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 of 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-fifth session, held remotely from 23 to 27 November 2020. It also provides information on other recommendations adopted by the Board and activities of the fund.

* [A/76/150](#).



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-fifth session, held remotely from 23 to 27 November 2020. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved those recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General on 2 February 2021.

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 Hina Jilani (Pakistan), Suamhirs Piraino-Guzman (Honduras) and Ecaterina Schilling (Republic of Moldova), each appointed for a first three-year term from 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2023. The terms of Danwood Mzikenge Chirwa (Malawi) and Georgina Vaz Cabral (France) were renewed for the first and final time and run from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2023. Mr. Chirwa was appointed as Chair of the Board at its twenty-fifth session.

D. Impact of the pandemic and response of the fund

5. The fund adapted its working methods and grant-making criteria during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It sought to respond to the increased vulnerability of slavery survivors and civil society actors dedicated to assisting them as a result of the pandemic. That increased vulnerability was confirmed by an informal survey conducted by the secretariat of the fund of its grantees and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, among others (see [A/HRC/45/8](#)). The annual public event convened by the fund on 2 December 2020 shed further light on the matter (see paras. 20-23). In response, the Board allowed organizations flexibility in the implementation of grants for 2020, adjusted criteria for recommending grants for 2021 and made COVID-19 response a priority for outreach for grants for 2022 (see paras. 15 and 18). The secretariat adjusted the grant evaluation process to account for the inability to conduct on-site visits owing to travel restrictions (see para. 10). The Board held its annual session

remotely and conducted intersessional work to adapt its strategy and coordinate actions, including for fundraising, in that context (see paras. 13–14).

II. Management of grants

A. Admissibility criteria

6. 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 aim 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 child marriage, the sale of wives and inherited widows, trafficking in persons and in human organs, sexual slavery, sale of children, commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in armed conflict.

7. Priority in allocating grants is accorded to projects implemented by civil society organizations that are aimed at providing rehabilitation, reparation, empowerment and integration services for victims of contemporary forms of slavery through the provision of direct assistance. That 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 their impact on the lives of the beneficiaries, is available from the OHCHR website (www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund).

8. By 1 March 2020, the deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2021, the fund had received 80 applications. After the applications were screened by the secretariat of the fund, 61 requests for direct assistance to victims, amounting to \$1,594,000, were declared admissible and were examined by the Board at its twenty-fifth session (see paras. 15–17). Priority was given to project applications that contributed to achieving target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those intended to assist victims of contemporary forms of slavery in the context of supply and value chains.

9. The deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2022 was 1 March 2021. By the close of the call, the fund had received 127 applications. After the applications were screened by the secretariat of the fund, 94 requests for direct assistance to victims, amounting to \$2,424,390, were declared admissible and will be examined by the Board at its twenty-sixth session, to be held from 22 to 26 November 2021. In 2022, priority will be given to project applications aligned with the thematic priorities of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences (see A/75/166), in particular those responding to the needs of people at particular risk of being exposed to contemporary forms of slavery and requiring increased attention and protection, including indigenous peoples, minorities, people on the move, persons with disabilities, older persons, homeless persons, including children in street situations, and victims of slavery in the context of exploitation in the informal economy.

B. Monitoring and evaluation by the secretariat of the fund

10. At its twenty-fifth session, the Board was presented with 61 admissible applications for project grants for activities to be implemented in 2021. The fund's secretariat conducts a thorough evaluation of all grant applications through a desk review. In addition, as part of the evaluation process, as a rule, on-site visits to applicant organizations are undertaken before a grant is awarded to organizations submitting project proposals for the first time. An internal guide to conducting visits to projects that have been funded, or are to be funded, was developed by the secretariat of the fund to ensure coherence in the evaluation process. Owing to travel restrictions associated with the pandemic, however, all on-site visits were cancelled in 2020. Nevertheless, 36 current grantees had already received on-site visits from staff of the secretariat of the fund, OHCHR field presences, human rights components of peacekeeping missions and members of the Board before 2020. For those organizations submitting proposals for the first time whose projects had been pre-approved for funding for 2021 by the Board at its twenty-fifth session, remote evaluation meetings by the fund's secretariat were organized instead. That remote contact will temporarily replace on-site evaluation visits until travel restrictions are lifted.

III. Financial situation of the fund

11. The members of the Board and the secretariat of the fund pursued fundraising and outreach efforts. The fund reached \$848,419 in contributions and pledges by the end of 2020. Nevertheless, underfunding remains a major issue. Since 2002, the fund has received \$12.4 million in contributions from Member States, which represents an average yearly income of \$652,000. However, to meaningfully fulfil its mandate and adequately respond to the needs of victims by funding all deserving project applications submitted, the fund would require at least \$2 million in contributions each year. The contributions received in 2020 for 2021 covered only 42 per cent of that target. The fund aims to reach the yearly target of \$1.2 million, encouraged by the positive feedback received on its operations from an increasing number of State representatives and other stakeholders.

12. The table shows the contributions and pledges received in 2020.

Contributions and pledges received in 2020

(United States dollars)

<i>Donor</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Date of receipt</i>
Andorra	17 921	14 December
Australia	113 602	29 December
Germany	477 897	16 December
India	50 000	18 February
Luxembourg	17 605	26 October
Saudi Arabia	75 000	17 November
Spain	23 696	29 September
Republic of Korea	40 000	31 August
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	32 698	24 February
Total	848 419	

IV. Twenty-fifth session of the Board and intersessional activities

13. The twenty-fifth session of the Board of Trustees was held remotely, owing to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, from 23 to 27 November 2020. The fund convened an expert panel discussion entitled “Contemporary slavery and racial discrimination: civil society support to survivors during the global pandemic” on 2 December 2020 to commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (see paras. 20–23).

14. In addition, the Board continued to pursue closer coordination with other actors in the field of contemporary forms of slavery. The Board notably met with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Tomoya Obokata, and the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, Mama Fatima Singhateh, to discuss strategic synergies. On 2 December, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, those and other relevant United Nations mechanisms issued a joint statement in which they called upon Governments to increase their efforts to identify and protect victims of slavery and trafficking, including by ensuring their access to essential health services, psychosocial counselling, legal assistance, vocational training, income-generating support and remedies without discrimination, to ensure that no one was left behind as a result of the pandemic. They further urged Governments to strengthen social and labour protection frameworks by combating existing inequalities based on such grounds as sex, gender, age, race and other factors that increase the vulnerability of certain populations to slavery and exploitation. Lastly, they called upon Member States and other entities to address the structural causes that contributed to slavery and exploitation and continue to provide support to those offering comprehensive assistance to victims, including through contributions to the fund.

A. Grant-making recommendations

15. Following a thorough intersessional evaluation of admissible project proposals by the secretariat of the fund, the Board was presented with 61 admissible applications for project grants to assist victims of contemporary forms of slavery worldwide, amounting to \$1,594,000. The Board accorded priority to the review of project proposals that had been highly recommended for funding by the secretariat of the fund. Given the adverse impact of the pandemic on the already-fragile situation of slavery survivors and civil society organizations assisting them, the Board decided to maintain existing partnerships and prioritized funding for current grantees. The Board recommended the approval of 37 project grants, for a total of \$729,650. The High Commissioner, on behalf of the Secretary-General, approved the recommendations on 2 February 2021. Nine additional highly recommended project proposals – totalling \$135,000 – could not be financed owing to a lack of available funding.

16. In 2021, through those 37 grants, the fund will assist non-governmental organizations in 30 countries, as follows: 7 in Africa, 9 in Asia and the Pacific, 4 in Eastern Europe, 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 5 in the countries of the Group of Western European and other States. Through those grants, more than 17,877 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, bonded and forced labour, sexual exploitation and child and forced marriage. For example, the fund will support the Centro de Defesa da Vida e dos Direitos Humanos Carmen Bascarán, in Brazil, in providing social, legal and humanitarian assistance to 100 victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in agriculture. In Bosnia

and Herzegovina, Novi Put will provide legal, psychological, social and educational services to 30 Roma children who were victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced marriage, forced begging and domestic servitude. In the Philippines, the Preda Foundation will provide medical, psychological, social and legal assistance to 30 children who were victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

17. Figures I and II show the 37 approved grants in 2021 by region and by type of contemporary form of slavery.

Figure I

Grants awarded for 2021, by region

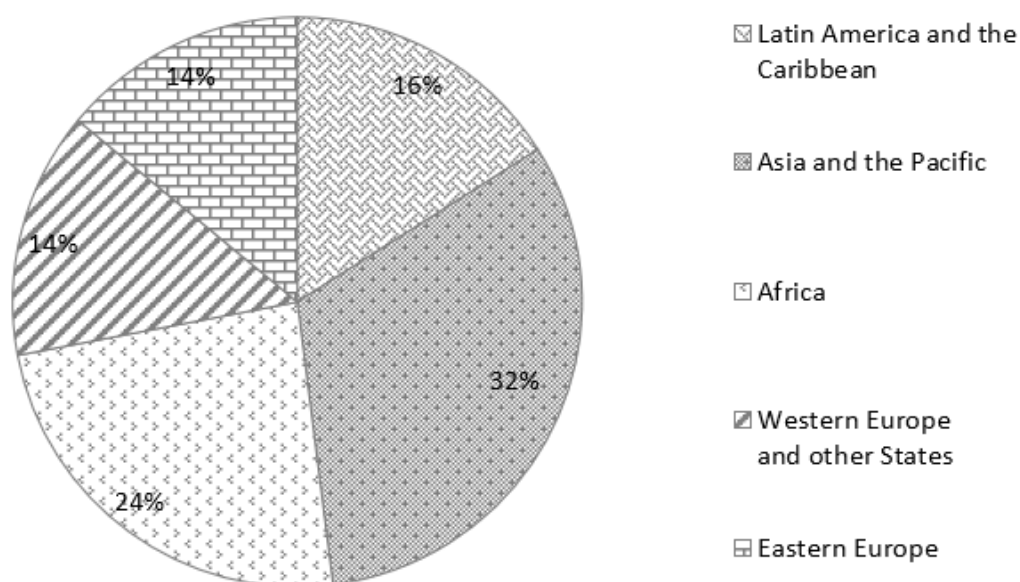
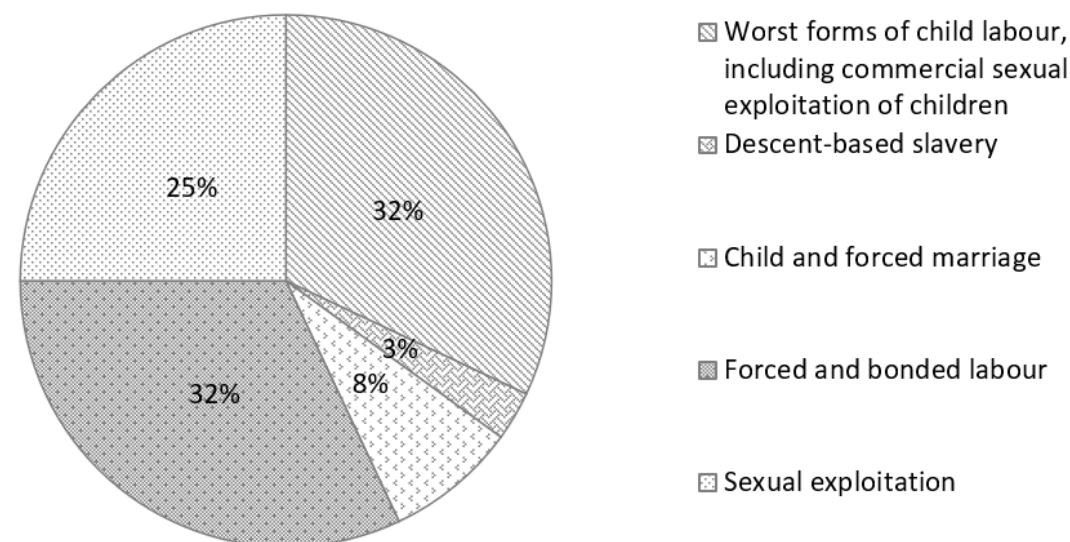


Figure II

Grants awarded for 2021, by type of contemporary form of slavery



B. Policy recommendations

18. At its twenty-fifth session, the Board adopted a revised version of the guidelines of the fund for the use of grantees and applicants to allow funding flexibility for organizations to respond to the fluctuating circumstances during the pandemic, as advised by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.¹ It decided to recommend a full revision of the guidelines, as well as the elaboration of written methods of work and rules of procedure, for review and adoption at its twenty-sixth session.

19. Owing to time constraints, the Board postponed other policy decisions until its next intersessional meeting. During that meeting, held remotely on 28 January 2021, the Board discussed the planned celebration of the thirtieth anniversary campaign of the fund, in 2021. The Board decided to use the opportunity of the planned celebration to conduct a stocktaking and strategic planning exercise to reflect on achievements and challenges and inform its future work at its twenty-sixth session. The anniversary campaign will be launched during a global webinar organized in relation to the forty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council and will be closed by a seminar or webinar organized in a field location. The anniversary campaign will be aimed at telling the story of the fund through a compilation of stories and voices of slavery survivors assisted by the fund from around the world over the past three decades. In addition, events, workshops and webinars will be organized in collaboration with OHCHR field presences and other United Nations anti-slavery mechanisms and civil society organizations.

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

20. To commemorate the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, the fund convened its fifth expert panel discussion, held remotely, entitled “Contemporary slavery and racial discrimination: civil society support to survivors during the global pandemic”. The High Commissioner opened the panel with a video message. The Director of the Geneva Human Rights Platform, Felix Kirchmeier, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and International Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, co-moderated the event. The Chair of the Board, a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Tina Stavrinaki, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, and a staff member of OHCHR delivered statements. In addition, the following civil society representatives delivered testimony: Tsigereda Birhanu, Co-Founder and Project Manager, Eгна Legna Besidet (Lebanon); Rahaf Dandash, Case Worker, Anti-Racism Movement (Lebanon); Irma Šiljak, Programme Officer, Medica Zenica Association (Bosnia and Herzegovina); and Roque Renato Pattussi, General Coordinator, Centro de Apoio e Pastoral do Migrante (Brazil). Those organizations and rehabilitation centres are all current grantees of the fund.

21. Representatives of the following 40 States attended the event: Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Egypt, Eswatini, Finland, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Norway, Panama, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia and State of Palestine.

¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “Proposal for a harmonized approach to funding flexibility in the context of COVID-19: IASC results group 5 on humanitarian financing”, June 2020.

22. Panellists highlighted the interconnectedness of contemporary forms of slavery and racial discrimination by stressing that racial discrimination facilitated contemporary slavery, as it made individuals vulnerable to exploitation on grounds of race, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin. The High Commissioner underlined pervasive and long-standing racial discrimination, deeply connected to unequal access to justice, education, health services, land, livelihoods or decent employment opportunities, as a key driver of people becoming victims of contemporary slavery. She highlighted the crucial role of the fund in supporting civil society organizations around the world that had responded to slavery survivors' increased humanitarian needs during the pandemic and called for increased financial support for the fund. The Deputy Permanent Representative acknowledged the fund's instrumental role in global anti-slavery efforts, saying that it was making a difference and changing lives. The Special Rapporteur underlined the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on minority groups and people affected by caste-based discrimination, giving examples of migrant workers being stigmatized as virus "carriers" during the pandemic. He urged Member States to put in place adequate measures to mitigate the increasing risks of contemporary forms of slavery and support the fund. Ms. Stavrinaki stressed the importance of establishing strong cooperation among all United Nations mechanisms and civil society actors for a stronger follow-up and monitoring process with regard to the implementation of the recommendations made by mechanisms to Member States.

23. During the panel discussion, the fund's grantees provided a direct account of the linkages between racial discrimination and contemporary forms of slavery through their first-hand experience working with victims. They also underlined the rapid deterioration of the living conditions of victims owing to the pandemic. The testimony of an Ethiopian woman who was a victim of domestic servitude in Lebanon illustrated the exposure of victims to multiple forms of human rights violations. Practitioners also shared their challenging experiences in delivering medical, psychological, social, legal and humanitarian assistance to victims of contemporary forms of slavery during the pandemic. Participants underscored the need for increased preventive measures and awareness-raising campaigns in marginalized communities, as well as for strengthened protective and reparation mechanisms to tackle impunity and ensure redress for victims. They further underlined the importance of empowering survivors to become leaders in their communities and agents of social change in order to deliver change for themselves and for future generations. They stressed that everyone had a responsibility to engage in a collective effort to end slavery. A public debate followed the presentations.

V. How to contribute to the fund

24. 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

25. 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 coordination with other actors involved in the eradication of all forms of slavery, in particular the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, the treaty bodies and Alliance 8.7.

26. The interest generated by the yearly expert panels convened by the fund is proof of the need for knowledge-sharing in the field of assistance for victims of slavery. The fifth panel discussion highlighted a further deterioration of the already-precarious situation of slavery survivors during the pandemic, as well as the vulnerability of certain groups to contemporary forms of slavery.

27. Member States and other stakeholders, in particular the private sector, are urged to contribute to the fund as a specific manifestation of their commitment to eliminating slavery and fulfilling target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The fund would need to receive a minimum of \$1.2 million on a yearly basis to respond adequately to the demands for assistance received through project applications.
