



Anti-Slavery International
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General Questions on Slavery

How long has Anti-Slavery International been working?

Anti-Slavery International is the world's oldest international human rights organisation. Its roots stretch back to 1787 when the first abolitionist society was formed. A new organisation, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, formed on 17 April 1839, declaring its commitment to abolishing slavery throughout the world. This organisation continues today under the name Anti-Slavery International.

What does Anti-Slavery International do?

Anti-Slavery International is the only charity in the United Kingdom working exclusively against slavery and related abuses, and is the leading organisation in this field. With your help we work at local, national and international levels to eliminate the systems of slavery around the world. By working with local partners we investigate and report on slavery and promote action to eliminate this abuse.

Anti-Slavery International works around the world by:

- Urging governments of countries with slavery to develop and implement measures to end it;
- Lobbying governments and intergovernmental agencies to make slavery a priority issue
- Supporting research to assess the scale of slavery in order to identify measures to end it;
- Working with local organisations to raise public awareness of slavery
- Educating the public about the realities of slavery and campaigning for its end

What is contemporary slavery and how is it different to historical slavery?

An enslaved person in the world today has one or more of the following characteristics:

- Forced to work through mental or physical threat
- Controlled by an 'employer' under the threat of some form of punishment
- Dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'
- Physically constrained or has restrictions placed on their freedom of movement

Slavery has taken different forms in all societies across the world across all ages. The most well known form of historical slavery is the Transatlantic Slave Trade which lasted for over 500 years and saw millions of Africans, captured, transported and enslaved in

the Caribbean or the Americas and forced to work on plantations growing cotton, tobacco, sugar and indigo. The enslaved Africans constantly fought for their freedom by destroying plantations and refusing to work. Their actions and mass anti-slavery campaigning in Britain led to the passing of the An Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade 1807, ending British participation in the slave trade and the subsequent 1833 act which abolished slavery in British colonies. Other countries followed suit with Brazil being the last country to abolish slavery in 1888.

A key difference between slavery today and that in the past is that slavery is illegal in every country where it was previously sanctioned by governments. But it has not been eliminated because these laws are not enforced. Even in Europe and North America, where slavery appeared to have been consigned to history, it has returned in the form of human trafficking and forced labour.

What forms does slavery take today?

All forms of slavery involve forced labour which the International Labour organization defines as *'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty for which the said person has not entered into of their own free will'*. The different forms of slavery that exist today are:

- **Forced labour:** any work or service which people are made to do against their will under the threat of some form of punishment. Can occur in any industry including agriculture, construction, mining, catering, domestic service, conflict, health and social care and forced commercial sexual exploitation
- **Bonded labour:** occurs when labour is demanded as the means of repayment for a loan or an advance on a loan. Once in debt they lose all control over their conditions of work. Their debt becomes inflated through charges for food, accommodation, transport and exorbitant interest, which traps individuals and families into a cycle of debt with little chance of escape.
- **The unconditional worst forms of child labour:** defined as child slavery affects children under 18 who are in forms of forced or bonded labour, forced recruitment for use in armed conflicts, prostitution, pornography and illicit activities (such as drug smuggling).
- **Descent based slavery:** occurs when people are forced to work or treated as if they were owned by other people simply because of the ethnic group or caste in which they were born into.
- **Trafficking:** involves the movement of an individual from one place to another using violence, coercion or deception for the purposes of forced labour or sexual exploitation.

Why does slavery still exist today?

Slavery has existed across all societies during human history and has taken many forms. During the Greek and Roman empires for example, people were taken as slaves if they refused to accede into empire expansion, and a slave class existed. The Transatlantic Slave Trade underpinned capitalist expansion and Western industrial revolution. Contemporary slave trade is underpinned by global inequality, poverty and most largely discrimination as victims of slavery are mostly drawn from socially excluded and marginalised groups.

How many enslaved people are there in the world today?

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the minimum estimate of the number of people who are living in forced labour internationally is 12.3 million of which some 40-50 per cent are thought to be children

It is a global problem. The regional distribution of forced labour is:

■ Asia and Pacific:	9,490,000	(77%)
■ Latin America:	1,320,000	(11%)
■ Sub-Saharan Africa:	660,000	(5%)
■ Industrialised countries:	360,000	(3%)
■ Middle East and North Africa:	260,000	(2%)
■ Transition countries:	210,000	(2%)

Forced labour is imposed by...

■ Private agents for economic exploitation:	7,810,000	(64%)
■ The State or the military:	2,490,000	(20%)
■ Private agents for commercial sexual exploitation:	1,390,000	(11%)
■ Mixed:	610,000	(5%)

The minimum number of people in forced labour as a result of trafficking at any one time is 2.45 million (counted in region of destination). Trafficked forced labour by form:

■ Commercial sexual exploitation:	43%	(98% women and girls)
■ Economic exploitation:	32%	(56% women and girls)
■ Mixed:	25%	

Where does slavery take place in the world today?

Although all countries in the world except China has made specific commitments to prohibiting the use of forced labour, slavery continues to affect all corners of the world today in various forms. That means that it affects richer countries like America and Britain, although in a much smaller scale than it affects poorer countries. According to the ILO, the breakdown for forced labour in the world is as follows:

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What is child labour and what is the difference between child labour and child slavery. How many children are in slavery in the world today?

The ILO estimated in 2002 that there are 352 million children in the world who work. Out of this figure, 106 million children perform work which is appropriate for their age and maturity meaning that the work may make useful and positive contributions to a child's development and the income can help to sustain children and their families.

Child labour affects 246 million children and is the unacceptable form of child work and is work which jeopardises the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child based on its nature or condition. This would include work in mining, construction and work which prevents children from receiving an education. Interestingly most child labourers work in the informal sector and only 5 percent of child labourers work in export related jobs.

180 million children work in the worst forms of child labour and 8.4 million are in the unconditional worst forms of child labour would constitute child slavery.

The unconditional worst forms labour constitute:

- Forced and bonded labour 5.7 m
- Prostitution and pornography 1.8 m
- Child soldiers 0.3 m
- Other illicit activity (drug smuggling) 0.6 m
- *Trafficked children (no of children trafficked into child slavery) 1.2 m

Where in the world does child slavery take place?

Like slavery affecting those over 18 (adults), child slavery can take place in all corners of the world, but higher incidences of child slavery are found in poorer regions of the world.

The geographical breakdown is as follows for economically active (working) 5-14 year olds internationally according to 2004 figures:

- Asia-Pacific 122 million (65% of world's total)
- Sub-Saharan African 49 million (25% of world's total)
- All other regions 13.4 million (6% of world's total)
- (Europe, North America, Middle East and North Africa)
- Latin America and Caribbean 5.7 million (3% of world's total)

Are people working in sweatshops slaves?

There have been numerous reports of people in the developing world working in factories making products for well known brands being subjected to sweatshop conditions (a working environment with very difficult or dangerous conditions, usually where the workers have few rights or ways to address their situation). Whilst there is gross exploitation and sometimes abuse, there is a distinction between exploitative labour and slavery.

For example is an 18 year old woman who cannot find other employment starts working for x factory making clothes for x UK owned company, working 15 hours a day with little or no breaks in between and takes home the equivalent of £1.50 at the end of the shift a slave?

Legally no, although subjected to illegal and exploitative labour conditions, she is not forced to work by anyone and can theoretically stop working at the factory if she chooses. A slavery situation would be if she was forced to work (through physical harm/threat to herself or any member of her family) and if she could not leave the factory.

Which companies use forced labour to produce goods which I use?

News stories of forced labour and sweatshop conditions in factories supplying well-known brands surface regularly in the media and consumers are unsure of how to react and question if the products that they buy are made under slavery conditions. Typically the final product you buy has passed through a long chain of producers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers who have all had a hand in its production, delivery and distribution. It is therefore very difficult to track a component of an end product back to a particular producer, for example a T-shirt back to a particular cotton farm. For this reason it is not always possible to certify that a product has or has not been produced using slavery.

In short although the Fairtrade scheme and others like Rugmark provide the best available guarantee of a slavery free supply chain, there are no ultimate guarantees that slavery has not formed part of the supply chain for the products that you buy. However the way a company operates can affect the likelihood of slavery being a part of the final product. For example if a UK based company producing clothes that are sold cheaply gives its supplier in a developing country a large order with a short turnaround time beyond the supplier's capacity, this could increase the likelihood of slavery as the supplier may subcontract work to factories or workers that are not regulated by the same standards as the supplier.

Should I boycott companies that use forced labour to produce goods?

In certain situations boycotting specific goods or countries can actually make the situation worse and undermine the economy of an already poor country. A boycott could hurt those in slavery like conditions as well as those employers who are not exploiting their workers and can worsen the poverty that is one of the root causes of the problem. You should support fair and ethical trade initiatives instead and use consumer power to encourage retailers and companies to move to the Fairtrade scheme. The Fairtrade scheme is the best available guarantee that a product has not been produced using slave labour as goods can only be Fairtrade certified if they have complied with Fairtrade standards, which incorporate international human rights standards.

You can also use your consumer power to lobby companies to ensure that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is respected across its whole supply chain to ensure that it is not unknowingly supporting slavery.

What can students do to help fight against contemporary slavery?

Students and young people have a vital role to play in the fight to eradicate slavery from the world today. The first step is awareness of the issue, once you are aware, you can make a lot of other people aware and they in turn can make more people aware. When a lot of people are armed with facts then they can start to lobby decision makers, both governments at home and internationally as well as international organisations. Sufficient lobbying can make a massive difference to decision makers, who will either be counting on your votes now or in a few years time. For example six years ago in the UK, not many people knew about trafficking, but with education, the general public and organisations like Anti-Slavery International lobbied the government started to take steps to address the problem and produce a protection and rehabilitation focused action plan. Whilst there is still a way to go, the UK government has now signed the Council of Europe Convention on Trafficking, which offers victims of trafficking minimum protections.

Activities that students can carry out to help raise awareness and fight for the eradication of slavery include:

- Visiting the Anti-Slavery International website and learning about the different forms of slavery
- Joining the Campaigns Network and taking regular actions on campaigns
- Writing a letter to your local MP and asking for action on a particular campaign
- Becoming a member of Anti-Slavery International
- Holding an awareness raising day at school/college/university/place of worship/youth club/community centre
- Organising a writing group and asking each one in the group to write a letter to your favourite shops asking what measures they are taking to identify, prevent and end the use of slavery in their supply chain
- Organising a fund-raising activity to raise funds to help support Anti-Slavery International's partners in their release and rehabilitation of enslaved people
- Supporting the Niger Schools Development project which provides education for children descended from slavery

How do you free slaves?

While some people think that enslaved people should be freed by buying their freedom for them, this can actually perpetuate the cycle of slavery. Enslavers can use the money to buy more people into slavery and released enslaved people can find themselves destitute without the necessary help to help prevent them from being re-enslaved.

Slavery functions as an institution which thrives on poor and marginalised people. Anti-Slavery International works with governments and partner organisations as well as the ordinary public to campaign for the implementation of laws which protect people against slavery and tackles the discriminative practices and poverty that are the causes and consequences of slavery. Anti-Slavery International works around the world by:

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All of these strands are equally important and an example of successful lobbying resulting in enslaved people gaining their freedom is in Brazil and Nepal, where over 100,000 slaves have been released since 2000.

Will slavery every come to an end in my lifetime?

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of people in slavery, the fact that it happens in so many countries across the world and that it is underpinned by issues of global poverty, discrimination and social exclusion.

However great strides have been made and countries like Niger and Mauritania that previously argued they had no incidences of slavery have introduced laws so that slavery practices are now prohibited and punished. The United Nations in 2008, decided to create a new Special Rappourter on Contemporary forms of slavery who will report

directly to the UN Human Rights Council on measures needed to fight slavery across the world.

One historical example to take inspiration from is the Transatlantic Slave Trade which was apologised after 500 years of being legally sanctioned by governments. The actions of the enslaved Africans fighting for their freedom inspired 12 people in 1787 who went on to raise awareness and changed the attitudes of millions of British people from viewing the slave trade as a normal and credible way of life to realising it was a great human injustice. Between 1787 and 1807, British participation in the slave trade came to an end buoyed by the general public signing petitions and boycotting sugar produced by slave labour.

This example shows what possibility the future holds. By making a small start such as signing up to the **No Slavery No exceptions** campaign <http://www.antislavery.org/noexceptions/> which calls on decision makers to eradicate the discriminative practices that make certain groups more vulnerable to slavery, you can harness the spirit of the abolitionists of the past and work towards seeing the eradication of slavery in your lifetime.