

The
United Nations
Voluntary
Trust Fund on
Contemporary
Forms
of Slavery



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HR/PUB/05/03

The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery





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United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
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Although slavery was the first human rights violation addressed by the international community, it is far from being a thing of the past. Major efforts are still needed to ensure its elimination. Slavery, however, is multifaceted. Its many faces change over time and reflect the socio-economic and religious context in which they are found. Trafficking, child labour, debt bondage, exploitation of prostitution and the forced labour of millions of human beings worldwide continue to be an appalling reality.

All such practices that diminish human beings to objects of ownership deprive the victims of their dignity and human rights, rights that are common to all humans irrespective of sex, nationality, social status or occupation. No human being should be the property of another; the physical and psychological wounds that ensue are permanent.

Eliminating the different aspects of slavery necessarily involves tackling the root causes that underlie their persistence. Success cannot be achieved without combating poverty, social exclusion, illiteracy, ignorance and all forms of discrimination. Healing the wounds inflicted on victims and society demands our full and urgent attention and commitment. Above all, justice must be ensured and recognition given to the victim's inherent dignity as a human being endowed with inalienable rights.

The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery was established to achieve these ends; to assist all victims of slavery and, above all, to combat slavery in all its contemporary forms. Its work today remains essential in helping to counter slavery and in guaranteeing the recognition everywhere that we are all equal members of the same human family.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Arbour', written in a cursive style.

Louise Arbour
United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights

Slavery is "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised" (Slavery Convention, 1926)

The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery

To many, slavery is synonymous with the transatlantic slave trade, but sadly slavery is not solely a historical phenomenon; it still exists in various contemporary forms. The United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery was established in 1991 (General Assembly resolution 46/122) to bring such vices to world attention in a bid to eliminate them, and to assist victims and those working to support them.

The Fund awards project grants:

- to organizations that extend humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery;

and travel grants:

- to victims and organizations assisting victims, in order to enable them to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

The Fund is:

- replenished from voluntary contributions by Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other private or public entities;
- administered in accordance with the financial regulations and rules of the United Nations, by the Secretary-General, so ensuring accountability to donors;
- supported in its programme by a five-member Board of Trustees drawn from all five geographical regions, who have expertise in human rights and particularly in contemporary forms of slavery;
- established by the United Nations General Assembly and serviced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva.

The Fund's major strengths are that it:

- is unique within the United Nations system - its victim-oriented approach has allowed it to channel funds to those in most need of assistance, such as vulnerable groups in society, many of them children, women and minorities;
- provides a rare opportunity for NGOs, often working at the grass-roots level, to assist a large number of victims directly, with relatively small amounts of funds;
- serves as a catalyst in raising financial resources - the modest grants awarded often have important multiplier effects by giving organizations, especially those at grass roots, the credibility to secure additional funding elsewhere;
- assists victims directly through the projects it supports and capitalizes on the relevant experience and expertise of the members of the Board of Trustees;
- enables both victims and NGO representatives to share first-hand experiences with United Nations experts and encourages information exchange at an international level.

*"It seems to me that the Trust Fund has enhanced the work of the experts by lifting the subject of slavery off the page and putting it fairly and squarely before us all".
NGO representative to the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (2003).*

Voluntary Fund activities

The Board of Trustees meets once a year to examine grant applications and make a selection (taking into account geographical and gender balance) for approval by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General. Grants are then paid within two to three months. Beneficiaries must provide satisfactory narrative and financial reports at the end of their activities, or they will not be eligible for future financial assistance. Evaluation missions may be conducted to monitor the implementation of projects. If a project grant is not used properly, a refund is requested.

The demand for grants continues to grow, with the result that the Fund is unable to respond favourably to the large volume of eligible requests. Between 2000 and 2004, only 45 per cent of applications for project grants and 26 per cent of applications for travel grants could be met. The Voluntary Fund must, therefore, raise substantial financial resources for the future.

Examples of recent project funding

The voluntary fund in Africa

Recent activities include:

Wao Afrique, Togo: funding in 1999 (US\$ 7,000) and in 2002 (US\$ 7,000) to a project assisting girl victims of trafficking for sexual and economic exploitation helped 55 girls in 1999 and 400 in 2002. The organization provides medical aid, food, shelter and vocational training for 4-6 months - especially in hairdressing and tailoring. Those wishing to return to school are helped to obtain birth certificates; essential for registering in Togolese schools.

Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization, United Republic of Tanzania: US\$ 11,000 given in 2003 helped a project to provide humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation to 200 girls rescued from commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking networks. The organization also ran a nationwide information campaign through radio discussions on sexual exploitation, which has had a significant impact in reducing the abuse.

The voluntary fund in America

Recent activities include:

Trois Quarts du Monde, Guatemala: US\$ 7,500 in 2003 and US\$ 10,000 in 2004 helped to support a rehabilitation centre for sexually and physically abused street children in Guatemala City. Food and shelter were provided for a total of 100 children, many of them pregnant or teenage mothers with babies. The assistance also included education advice and counselling.

Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil para la Reinserción Escolar (Elimination of Child Labour through Reintegration into Education) (ETIPRE), Argentina: US\$ 7,500 in 2003 and US\$ 10,000 in 2004 helped this project to assist 100 former street children engaged in informal labour to reintegrate into the education system and to take part in extra-curricular activities to complement classroom lessons. A holistic approach to the family involved parents in the programme and some of them were employed as cooks, cleaners and educators.

Two girls, who have been reintegrated into school, doing their homework at a shelter for street children, project grant No. 12 (2004)



The voluntary fund in Asia

Recent activities include:

Bandhuwa Mukti Samiti, India: US\$ 10,000 was used on a project to identify and release bonded labourers working in the carpet industry, stone quarries and agricultural sectors. A wide-scale awareness-raising campaign about bonded labour led directly to the liberation and release of 350 victims and made the public aware of the illegality of this practice.

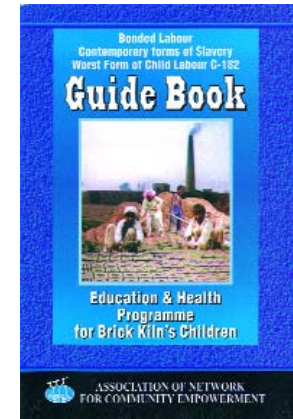
An awareness-raising campaign against bonded labour in the carpet industry and agricultural sectors, project grant No. 4 (2001)



Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women, Philippines: US\$ 10,000 in 2001 and US\$ 7,000 in 2002 was used to assist some 2,000 victims of sexual slavery by establishing drop-in centres and shelters offering numerous facilities - counselling, legal, medical and financial aid, literacy/numeracy classes, and vocational training in sewing, nursing and computing. Stays of 3-6 months in the centres empowered victims to begin a new life.

Association of Network for Community Empowerment (ANCE), Pakistan:

US\$ 6,000 in 2003 and US\$ 2,000 in 2004 helped an education and health programme for children working in brick kilns to establish three informal schools catering for 247 working children, including 211 directly involved in the worst forms of child labour. Medical camps were held twice a month for the children and their families and awareness-raising activities were organized on the abuse of child labour.



Booklet prepared for an awareness campaign against child labour, project grant No. 28 (2003)

The voluntary fund in Europe and Central Asia

Recent activities include:

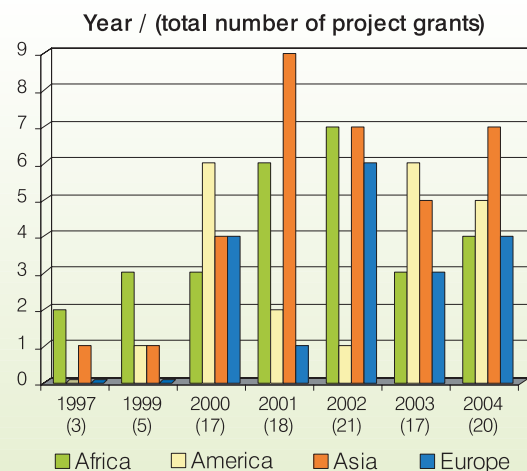
International Forum of Solidarity (IFS), Bosnia and Herzegovina: US\$ 5,000 in 2002 helped to provide shelter, and psychological and medical assistance to approximately 123 women and girl victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation - activities in the context of the implementation of the National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking.

Women's Support Centre, Kyrgyzstan: US\$ 2,000 in 2003 supported activities on the issue of trafficking for trainers in seven regions. As a result, several of the regions established crisis centres and hotlines for victims of trafficking. The trainers included educationalists, representatives of law-enforcement agencies, civil-society activists and the mass media.

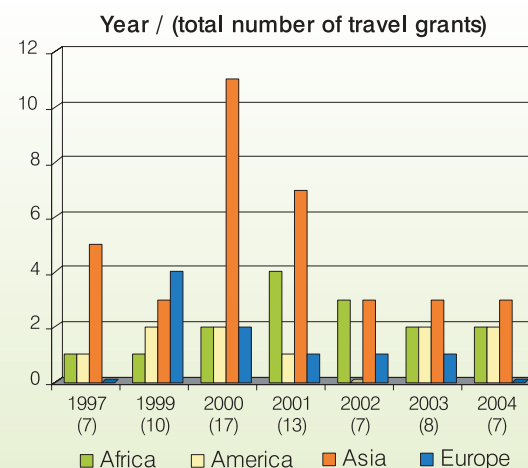
Further information on the activities of the Fund and Board of Trustees can be found in the annual reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and to the Commission on Human Rights. Information is also available from the address given at the end of this brochure.

At present the regional distribution of grants awarded is uneven. This correlates directly with the regional distribution of applications that are received. Fund activities need greater publicity and to be more widely known in some regions to correct this imbalance. This brochure should serve to this end.

Regional distribution of project grants allocated (1997-2004)



Regional distribution of travel grants allocated (1997-2004)



Project grants

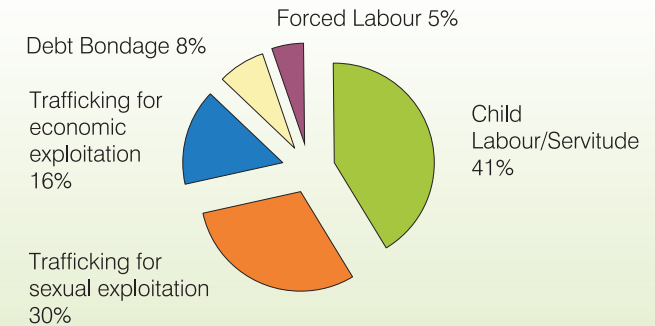
Awards to a maximum of US\$ 15,000 may be given to:

- Organizations that provide direct assistance to individuals whose human rights have been violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. This direct assistance accounts for the majority of the grants awarded. The funds are passed to the recipient through approved and established NGO or grass-roots channels that provide humanitarian, legal and financial assistance to victims;
- Organizations that provide indirect assistance to victims through prevention measures and training. Many of the projects selected involve rehabilitation and education programmes to help the victims become self-sufficient and less vulnerable to exploitation.

Activities to raise awareness on child labour and other contemporary forms of slavery, NGO: Association of Networks for Community Empowerment (ANCE), Pakistan



Thematic distribution of projects funded (1997-2004)

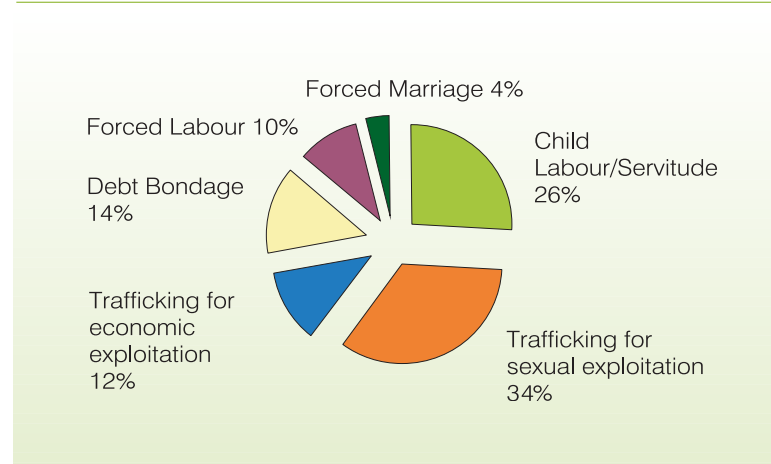


Travel grants

The experiences of victims and inputs of civil society are extremely important to the deliberations of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. Thus, travel grants may be made available to:

- Representatives of acknowledged NGOs working on contemporary forms of slavery who would not otherwise be able to attend sessions of the Working Group and who could contribute significantly to the content and discussions of the meeting;
- Leaders of projects financed by the Fund, who are thus able to report on progress and receive advice and guidance from the Working Group;
- Individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery and whose experiences can contribute to the discussions of the Working Group, such as former victims of bonded labour, child labour, trafficking for sexual and economic exploitation, and forced early marriage. Lesser-known types of contemporary slavery are sometimes exposed in the sessions, as in 2002, with information on the abusive Devadasi religious practices that violate children's human rights, particularly those of Dalit children, forcing them into sexual slavery and child marriages.

Thematic distribution of funding for representatives to participate in the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery (1997-2004)



Contemporary forms of slavery

Ownership and control, accompanied by the threat of violence, are essential elements in any definition of slavery (Slavery Convention, 1926). Men, women and children continue to be exploited through slavery-like practices.

Contemporary forms of slavery include:

Debt Bondage - one of the most widespread ways of enslaving people, whereby 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 impossible, with the result that the debt might even be inherited by the next generation.

Serfdom - a form of servile labour that binds a person by law, custom or agreement to work land that belongs to someone else. It is not the provision of labour in return for access to land, but rather the inability of the labourer to change status that makes this a form of slavery. Serfdom is often hereditary and can affect entire families over generations.

Forced Labour - involves coercion, force, threats, intimidation and the denial of freedom to oblige a person, against their will, to work for the benefit of another. The International Labour Organization (ILO) sees forced labour as an increasing feature of the illicit underground economy and thus it is not reflected in national statistics.

Child Labour and Child Servitude - in 2000 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ILO estimated that about 250 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 were forced to work under harmful conditions, putting their education, development, health and

often even their lives at risk. Of these, 186 million were under 15 years old and 110 million under 12. Child labour exists in all countries, whether developed, developing or in transition. The urgent need to protect children from exploitative practices resulted in the Programme of Action for the Elimination of the Exploitation of Child Labour, adopted by the Commission on Human Rights in 1993. Under the Programme, the sale of children, child pornography, trafficking in child pornography, international trafficking in children for immoral purposes and keeping underage maidservants in servitude are all identified as international crimes.



An education programme for children working in brick kilns, NGO: Institute of Development Education, Action and Studies (IDEAS), India, project grant No. 13 (2001)

Micheline Aklo's story

Micheline Aklo, from Benin, was sold by her aunt when she was only 8 years old and then physically and mentally abused by her host family for 8 years until she was rescued by an organization that offered her shelter and vocational training in hairdressing. She told her story to the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery in 2004. In 2001 the organization that helped Micheline received a grant from the Voluntary Fund to assist her and other victims to obtain vocational training.

Micheline Aklo giving her testimony at the 29th session of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery in Geneva (28 June - 2 July 2004), NGO: Tomorrow Children, Benin, travel grant No. 36 (2003)



*"The central strategy for combating sexual exploitation of children must be to render visible the invisible... Any chance of achieving a change in this situation must start by bringing it to light and accepting it as a contemporary form of slavery".
Working Group session, 2003, statement from a Guatemalan representative*

Trafficking - is prevalent and increasing. Human beings are recruited, using violence, deception or coercion, for the purposes of economic or sexual exploitation. The trafficker exercises control and ownership by:

- forcing victims to work against their will;
- controlling their freedom of movement, such as by confiscating their passports and withholding wages (if any);
- setting the location and hours of work and the level of pay (if any);
- using practices such as voodoo rituals, imposing oaths of silence, beatings and rape.

Human trafficking as a global business generates huge profits for traffickers and organized criminal groups. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that there are 15 to 30 million irregular migrants worldwide. UNICEF suggests that as many as 1.2 million children are caught up in the growing commerce of trafficking children for use in exploitative work, such as in agriculture, mining, factories or commercial sex. Human migration and trafficking are linked. Since poverty is a major driver of migration, migrants do not necessarily have the means to use safe migration channels. Lack of contacts and support abroad, and false information on possible employment opportunities, increase the danger of them becoming the victims of trafficking and slavery.



*Vocational training in styling hair and tailoring for victims of contemporary forms of slavery
NGO: Tomorrow Children, Benin.*

Sexual slavery - is dominated by absolute control of one person by another and does not necessarily involve any financial reward. It includes:

- the exploitation of prostitution, whereby the prostitute is exploited through the systematic transfer of her earnings from prostitution to others;
- forced prostitution against the will of the subject;
- sex tourism, whereby the client is transported to the prostitute - this makes it more a form of trafficking rather than purely an exploitation of prostitution.

Anita Khadka's story

Anita Khadka from Nepal told her story to the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery in 1998. As a child, she had been trafficked from Nepal to India, where she was forced to work as a prostitute in a Bombay brothel. This is part of her story...

"My name is Anita. I come from Nepal. When I was 12 years old, because of the poverty in my family I started to work in a carpet factory. There were many children like me who worked in the carpet factory. When I was working in the carpet factory, a young man promised me a better job and more money. Then he took me to a brothel in Bombay, India. I asked for the man, but he was gone. I was told that I had been sold to the brothel by this man. I cried a lot, but no one listened to me. When I was there, in the brothel, they started to torture me. They burned me with cigarette butts. They put current on me. They didn't give me food for days. They locked me up in a room. After that, I was raped by three persons. My daily routine at the age of 12 was to satisfy 12 to

25 men a day. Every day, girls were being sold like me. Girls were brought in and sold like goats and chickens. Today at the human rights meeting, I am speaking here in the United Nations, but there are some girls like me in Nepal who do not know about their human rights. I have a request to all of you who are present here, to give pressure on human rights concerned people in our country to stop this trade. When girls are sold they are like slaves...."

Anita also described her present work as a campaign awareness officer for an organization in Nepal warning of the dangers of traffickers luring young girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

Several months later, Anita Khadka was awarded the Paul Grüninger Human Rights Prize by the Administrative Council of the City of Geneva, in recognition of and as an encouragement for her work for the prevention of trans-border illicit trafficking of the girl child.

Forced Marriage and the Sale of Wives - various forms of slavery exist within the context of marriage, such as forced marriage, the sale or inheritance of wives, and a more recently defined sexual exploitation involving media advertisement of women available for marriage, the so-called mail-order brides.

Other forms of slavery are brought to light constantly. Practices resembling slavery, occurring in armed conflicts, export processing zones (sweatshops), illegal activities within certain religions and cults, as well as organ and tissue traffic, all need urgent attention and elimination.

"No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms" - Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (article 4).

Instruments and mechanisms of protection

International instruments

Vast efforts have been and are being made by national Governments, working individually and especially together, to draw up, adopt and implement various international instruments to eliminate slavery.

Relevant international instruments

- **The Slavery Convention** adopted by the League of Nations in 1926 - the first international agreement dealing with human rights - and the **Supplementary Convention** agreed in 1956 are the key documents defining the various forms of slavery and setting out recommended actions to prohibit these practices.
- Seven conventions constitute the core United Nations human rights treaties that define and prohibit slavery and slavery-like practices:
 - **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966)
 - **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** (1966)
 - **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** (1965)
 - **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (1979)
 - **Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment** (1984)
 - **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989)
- **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families** (1990).
- Many ILO conventions also prohibit slavery-like practices such as the provisions on the worst forms of child labour set out in **Convention 182** (1999).
- The 2000 **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children**, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (also known as the **Palermo Protocol**) defines clearly the term "trafficking in persons" (article 3(a)) and declares the intentional conduct of such practices to be of a criminal nature (article 5).
- The **Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking** (2002) have been developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to provide practical, rights-based policy guidance on the prevention of trafficking and the protection of victims of trafficking.

Mechanisms of protection

Treaty-monitoring bodies have been set up to monitor convention implementation and four of them have established systems to examine complaints from individuals about violations of any of the rights set out under the treaties by any State that signed those treaties.

The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery - established in 1974 - was set up to review and monitor developments in slavery, the slave trade, the slavery-like practices of apartheid and colonialism, human trafficking and exploitation of the prostitution of others. It consists of five expert members of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and hosts annual public sessions. The Working Group:

- functions as a discussion forum for Member States and NGOs;
- proposes policy measures for consideration by the Sub-Commission;
- requests information related to the focal topic of each session of the Sub-Commission in order to prepare recommendations for further action;
- regularly invites expert witnesses and victims of contemporary forms of slavery to make presentations on their experiences.

Special rapporteurs investigate specific areas of human rights violation, collect and analyse data, report annually to the Commission on Human Rights and formulate appropriate recommendations to national and international bodies to help protect human rights. Of particular importance are the:

- **Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography** - established in 1990, following the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, and the immense growth in international awareness of the sexual exploitation and sale of children;
- **Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences** - established in 1994 and based on the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Violence against women encompasses, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological violence in the family, the general community and that perpetrated by the State;
- **Special Rapporteur on trafficking** - established in 2004 to focus especially, but not exclusively, on the human rights of women and child victims of human trafficking and to respond appropriately to reliable information on human rights violations.

Annex: Criteria and guidelines for awarding grants

The criteria for awarding grants were established when the Fund was approved (General Assembly resolution 46/122). The Board of Trustees later developed various guidelines.

A. Travel grants

1. According to the criteria established by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/122, grants from the Fund shall be given to:

- (a) Representatives from non-governmental organizations from different regions dealing with issues of contemporary forms of slavery to assist them to participate in the deliberations of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery:
 - (i) Who are so considered by the Board of Trustees;
 - (ii) Who would not, in the opinion of Board, be able to attend the sessions of the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery without the assistance provided by the Fund;
 - (iii) Who would be able to contribute to a deeper knowledge on the part of the Working Group of the problems relating to contemporary forms of slavery;
- (b) Individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery.

2. In addition, the Board has developed other practices and guidelines:

- (a) Application forms for travel grants should include a letter of nomination and recommendation signed by an executive official of the applicant's organization, other than the applicant him or herself;
- (b) The Board will take into consideration the main theme of the Working Group's session when making recommendations for travel grants;

- (c) A non-governmental organization may apply for grants for a maximum of two representatives;
- (d) In proposing candidates, the applicant non-governmental organization should take gender balance into consideration;
- (e) The applicant must submit by airmail the original of the application duly signed and dated;
- (f) Representatives should be selected from all the geographical regions in order to provide the widest possible view of contemporary forms of slavery in the world (resolution 2000/12 of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights);
- (g) The organization should provide information on its legal status, year of foundation, annual budget, other sources of funding in relation to aspects of contemporary forms of slavery with which the organization deals, and specific experience and/or expertise in the relevant issues to be discussed at the Working Group;
- (h) The organization should provide information on the responsibilities of the applicant in the organization and on the theme of the applicant's presentation to the Working Group;
- (i) Beneficiaries of a travel grant should deliver their statements on behalf of the organization that applied for the approved grant;
- (j) The Board will not consider an application for which the secretariat has not received, at its request, additional satisfactory information after a second reminder.

B. Project grants

3. According to General Assembly resolution 46/122, grants from the Fund shall be given to extend, through established channels of assistance, humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery.

Contributions

4. The Board has developed the following practices and guidelines:

- (a) An organization can request a maximum amount of 15,000 United States dollars per grant from the Fund;
- (b) Projects should be selected from all the geographical regions in order to provide the widest possible view of contemporary forms of slavery in the world (Sub-Commission resolution 2000/12);
- (c) The project should take gender balance into consideration;
- (d) The original application, duly signed and dated by an executive officer of the applying organization, should be sent by airmail;
- (e) The organization should provide information on its present activities and the aspects of contemporary forms of slavery that it deals with;
- (f) If satisfactory narrative and financial reports on the use of a previous grant have not been received, a new grant cannot be released and should be kept pending;
- (g) Project grants should be allocated for direct assistance to victims and to local non-governmental organizations. As the case may be, grants can be channelled via an international non-governmental organization, provided that it does not keep any part of the grant for its activities;
- (h) The Board will not consider an application for which the secretariat has not received, at its request, additional satisfactory information after a second reminder;
- (i) If no satisfactory narrative and financial reports are received, the organization may be requested to refund the grant concerned.

Contributions

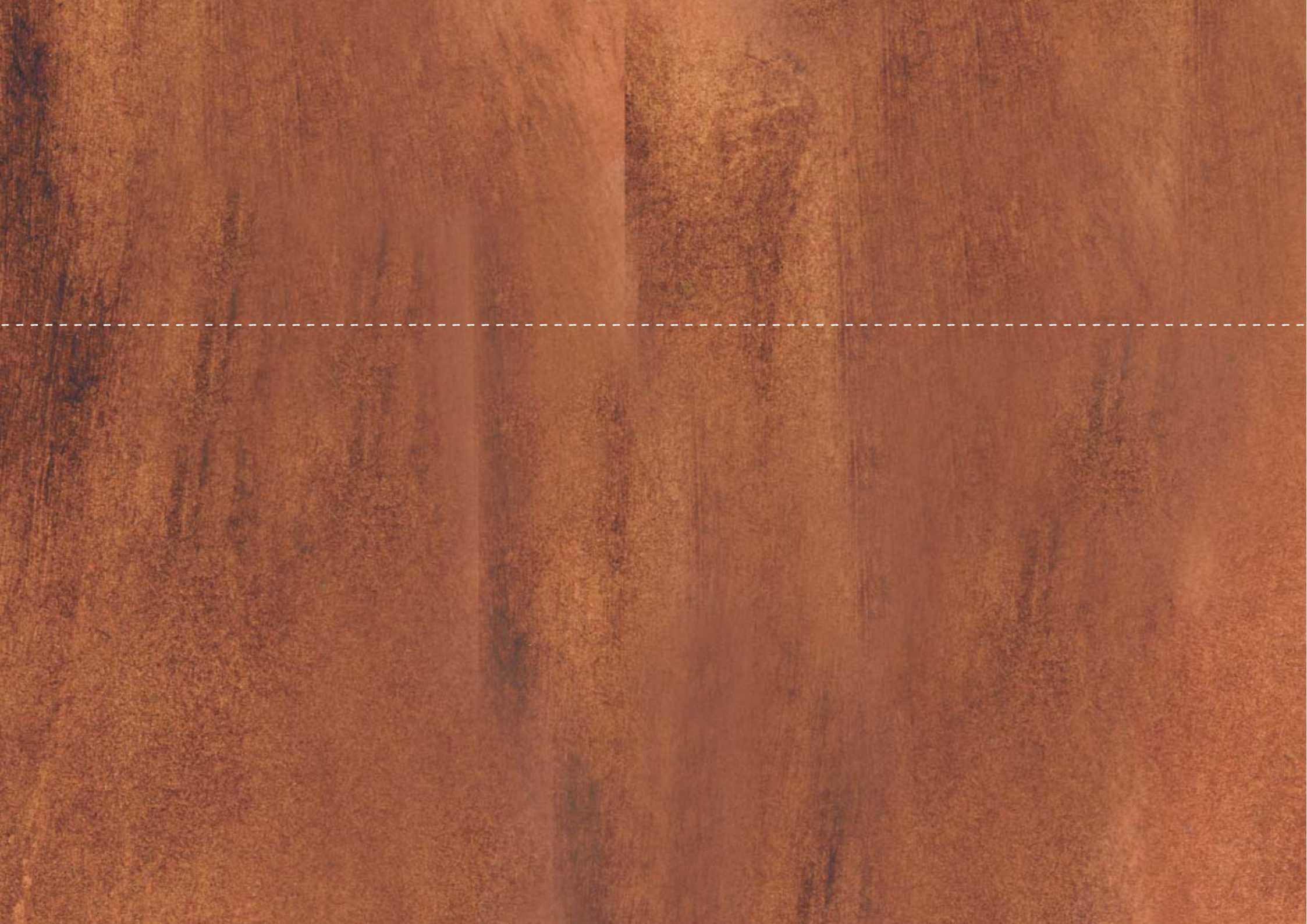
Governments, NGOs and other private or public entities can contribute to the Fund. Information on how to contribute can be obtained from the secretariat of the Fund.

Credit photo

Anne Pascal/les trois quarts du monde - Bandhuwa Mukti Samiti, India - Association of Network for Community Empowerment (ANCE), Pakistan -
Institute of Development Education, Action and Studies (IDEAS), India - Tomorrow Children, Benin

Cover-page illustration

Isabelle Buclez



Applications and contact

Application forms and additional information on the application process and the Fund are available at <http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/funds/slavery/>

or through the secretariat of the Fund:

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