

## **INNOVATIVE PROJECT TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL NORMS AGAINST THE USE OF MODERN SLAVERY IN THE DRC**

*The Home Office's Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MSIF) has three priority aims, one of which is to strengthen partnerships to prevent and remedy modern slavery in supply chains. The programme focuses upon strengthening the social norms around non-use of modern slavery in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and increasing the exchange of information between DRC businesses, DRC government, foreign private sector companies and the UK investor community.*

The initiative - Consortium Contre l'Esclavage Moderne (CCEM) - is a collaboration between international human rights experts and data scientists from Trilateral Research and the UN Global Compact Network UK, in strategic partnership with the DRC's largest business association - the Fédération des Entreprises du Congo (FEC) - and the Labour Inspectorates of North and South Kivu.

Over the next two years, the team will support the strengthening of social norms around non-use of modern slavery in Eastern DRC and implement comprehensive strategies to facilitate the exchange of information between the DRC government, its businesses, foreign private sector companies, and the UK investor community.

The CCEM will explore and develop methodologies for businesses to conduct human rights assessments and understand their supply chain risks against modern slavery issues in compliance with international standards and legislation. Utilising Natural Language Processing (NLP) abilities and data analyses, the project will develop new protocols for the way that safeguarding information and violations of human rights policies are categorised, measured, managed, and understood.

The project aims to create more meaningful and measurable data to provide greater transparency to investors, developing principles that can be used in other sectors and regions. It also aims to create an established partnership network so that actionable insights into addressing modern slavery in supply chains can be shared across organisations.

Kush Wadhwa, CEO at Trilateral said: "Our focus will be the development of an ethical AI application to further enable investors to understand exposure to modern slavery risks. Our approach includes the use of cutting-edge data science methods and tools to translate the lived experience of workers, victims, and survivors into insightful decision-critical data. We look forward to putting these insights into action, not only to help the private sector and investors understand material human rights risks, but to enhance the lives of workers, their families, and whole communities. Imagine you have over a thousand testimonies of reporting abuse in a workplace. In near real time, Trilateral's application can tell you, for example, how many of those people spoke of sexual harassment, how many complained about the lack of appropriate protective gear, or how many raised issues around adequate pay."

Part of the project focuses on training and capacity building for the FEC and the Labour Inspectorates of North and South Kivu to operationalise global frameworks and legislation. Context-specific training on modern slavery will deliver better communication between management, workers, and stakeholders, and upskill businesses to use their role to make a positive difference in the communities in which they operate.

Steve Kenzie, Executive Director of the UN Global Compact Network UK said:

"Strengthening social norms against modern slavery, in a context where it is difficult for DRC businesses and the wider private sector to engage, has the potential to be extremely powerful. My hope is that

the programme will promote greater transparency, increase the exchange of information, and demonstrate that it's possible to conduct more rigorous due diligence in difficult geographies.”

Representatives from FEC North and South Kivu commented that there was a strong appetite for training and capacity building. They also commented that the FEC is highly motivated to play its part in improving standards and advancing what is an exciting initiative between DRC businesses, the UK private sector, and the investment community.

This new phase of the MSIF programme - the latest in a series of projects funded by the UK Government - builds upon the valuable lessons learned from the Partnership Against Child Exploitation (PACE), a project supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, which implemented a range of innovative approaches to generate evidence on how to effectively reduce the worst forms of child labour, with a view to informing future policy and programming.

The CCEM's work will be completed in March 2025.

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#### **UK Home Office Modern Slavery Innovation Fund:**

The Modern Slavery Innovation Fund partners with civil society to deliver projects in over thirteen countries globally. It seeks to build the evidence base to strengthen the global response, prevent exploitation in the first place, and - in the case of this project - strengthen partnerships to prevent forced labour in global supply chains. The Modern Slavery Innovation Fund is part of a wider Fund seeking to reduce sexual exploitation, forced or bonded labour, criminal exploitation, and domestic servitude in the UK and internationally.

#### **Trilateral Research:**

Trilateral Research feel passionately about making the world a better place by providing Ethical AI solutions to tackle complex social problems. It applies the rigour of research to drive methodological innovation into their products and services. This continuous innovation ensures that they are always at the forefront of advancements in Ethical AI, emerging regulations, and standards.

#### **UN Global Compact Network UK:**

The UN Global Compact Network UK is an independent not-for-profit organisation. It aims to promote charitable sustainable development, relieve poverty, preserve and protect the environment, and promote ethical standards and conduct within businesses and the private sector in the UK. The United Nations Global Compact is a global platform for business and non-business entities to proactively network and engage in areas of human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption. Participation in the UN Global Compact is a widely visible commitment to the implementation, disclosure, and promotion of its ten universal principles.

#### **Fédération des Entreprises du Congo:**

The Fédération des Entreprises du Congo (FEC) is a non-profit. It is both a Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture, Mines and Handcrafts, and an Employers' Union. The FEC promotes the economic activities of its affiliated companies. As an employers' Union, it defends the interests of companies. The FEC includes among its affiliates associations, Chambers of Commerce, as well as companies from all sectors of activity such as: telecommunications, transport, commerce, construction, energy, petroleum, mining, services, industry, wood, agriculture, breeding and fishing. To date, the FEC has about 4000 members throughout DRC.

**The Labour Inspectorate:** The Provincial Division of Labour Inspectorate is a provincial service of the labour administration which supervises other technical services (urban labour inspectorate and local labour inspectorate in various territories). The labour administration is a public service under the Ministry of Labour. It is responsible for implementing laws issued by the labour legislation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.