



Transcript Q&A

Ending Modern Slavery

Kevin Bales

Co-Founder, Free the Slaves; Professor of Contemporary Slavery, Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation

Andrew Forrest

Chairman, Walk Free

Bharti Patel

CEO, ECPAT UK; Director, Svaraj, India (2005–11)

Anthony Steen

Chairman, Human Trafficking Foundation

Chair: Becky Anderson

Anchor, CNN

17 October 2013

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/ speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

Becky Anderson:

Let's just discuss where you think the biggest challenges, Kevin, are.

Kevin Bales:

Globally? Well, the biggest challenges I think are in two zones. The biggest challenges I think in one zone is all about those countries with the highest number of people in slavery, the highest prevalence and so forth. Those are also the countries that are most likely to have those conditions that create the vulnerabilities that we were hearing about earlier; high levels of corruption, high levels of conflict, armed conflict. Once conflict occurs and the rule of law breaks down completely the poor are not protected. If the rule of law works the poor can be protected, but when that breaks down slavers can walk in, use their weapons, whatever, to take control of other people. So when you have, as well as natural disasters and all kinds of things like that that can push a country to the brink, that creates a context in which lots of people are brought into slavery and it's very hard to begin that process of fixing the situation. Those are going to be some of the tough ones.

In a country like India it's very interesting that they don't actually have high levels of conflict. They do have significant corruption, but they also have stability in their democracy and so forth, and then you have to start thinking through very carefully about how do you intervene at the local and state levels because the federal laws are good, there are excellent laws in India, but at the local and state level they're simply not enforced well, and local powerful landowning men for the most part are abusing that situation and maintaining the kind of power structures and discriminations they've had in the past.

Becky Anderson:

Does that resonate?

Bharti Patel:

It resonates certainly with India, but actually I do want to come back a little bit to the UK. Kevin quite rightly said a lot of work is going on and the police is doing its bit, but many of you must have read the story about the 10-year-old girl who was trafficked into the UK, slipped through the Heathrow Airport. This is a woman who is 10 years old, her passport said she was 20, so there was a failure to recognize the fact that there is something wrong here and then

she was enslaved in the house, sexually abused, physically abused by her traffickers, forced to do domestic work, not just in that family but also for other families. Ten years later she is discovered, that this is wrong, so the system is clearly failing.

We also in this country have something like, I think, 50 to 60 identified victims of trafficking from Vietnam being forced to work in cannabis farms. Once they're discovered by the police, instead of treating them as victims and affording them protection what we've got is, again, the system fails and they're being imprisoned. So I think there is still a lot that needs to be done. Now here is a country, as Kevin quite rightly says, the rule of law, some good protection systems in place, but when it comes to children, trafficked children, when it comes to people coming from abroad there is somehow a different approach to how we deal with them. They are still seen as immigrants. They are not immigrants. These are children, these are victims of a crime and they need to be protected rather than be penalized.

Andrew Forrest:

Look, I'd actually like to take it out a bit because I'm sure once you've read the index you'll see where Britain ranks in it. It is a country which can stir its own prime minister to furious reaction and that's what we need, so I'm grateful for the concentration which we've had, but we've talked about one child here. One night in Addis Ababa a colleague of mine at Walk Free counted 1700 girls going through the airport who were young girls being trafficked as women into the Middle East, that was just one evening. So just to give you a bit of scale, please, we have millions and millions of slaves in, say, a stable country like India but we have also got hope there. The world leaders who I have spoken to, from Xi Jinping in China to – look, an hour and 20 minutes ago to Rahul Gandhi wished this launch well, wished us best luck of with the index, wished it a very successful launch in that the world takes keen attention to it, so there's another policy-maker on a global scale who is basically saying, we know the system needs to change.

Prime Minister [Manmohan] Singh has said to me on two separate occasions make it an Indian problem the world is judging then we may not be able to support Walk Free, and of course he's correct. India suffers because the world tolerates slavery. We need to, as members of the human race, no longer tolerate it. I like the fact we're getting down into the weeds here but we need to lift ourselves up and say, broadly and politically we need to challenge any system at all which in any way condones slavery, and this also means on

a religious and faith-based level. We've had excellent discussions with the Vatican, excellent discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury, with other faiths to look at moving to really proclaim against slavery. Now this is cooperation on a grand scale and it should give us all in this room hope that slavery can be put to the sword if we act collectively against it.

Becky Anderson:

Andrew, I was fascinated just before we started, you were discussing with me the conversation that you'd literally just had with Rahul Gandhi, and one of his criticisms, which I've heard before, was the very definition, the very use of the word slavery. And one expert in Oxford has been quoted as saying any attempt to gather unjust situations around the world and label them as slavery is counterproductive, say with sex trafficking, you're dealing with people with very constrained choices, we may be horrified by these choices but some people see poor options as great opportunities. How do we address the issue of accurate labelling, countering criticism that slavery is an emotive and inaccurate term?

Andrew Forrest:

Now look, I think you obviously haven't spoken to a slave about that, but how we at Walk Free define slavery is the systematic removal of liberty where you can be bought, sold or even destroyed. Now I think the professor, the academics can wade into this argument, I prefer what President [Barack] Obama said; look, whichever way you cut this, it's slavery. If you have had your liberty removed – and I've been challenged on CNN, on BBC, what do we call forced marriage? Well I consider if you're being taken out of one family or one country and put into another where you're entirely alien, as has just been pointed out, you are completely unfamiliar, you are there against your wishes and once you're there you can no longer change; slavery.

Becky Anderson:

Questions from the audience.

Question 1:

Andrew, you're in the mining industry and I know a little bit about the mining industry, what I'm surprised is that no one has mentioned other components of society and what they might do about this. Andrew, could you comment on what you've found, and I have had a conversation with you about this so I know a little bit about your answer, but could you comment on the role of the corporate world in solving this problem? I would like to move away from describing the problem, which is insidious. What's the role of the corporate world in solving this problem and why are they an important factor?

Becky Anderson:

Supply chain accountability.

Andrew Forrest:

I think the corporate world has an enormous role to play here, not only because they are involved in slavery inadvertently, but because they act as mentors to all other business. And just as I attended a private lunch with President [Bill] Clinton the other day – we had 18 of America's largest companies around the table and it was to investigate and discuss supply chains, and chief executive after chief executive got up and said, you know we're doing this and we're doing that and we've taken these steps and aren't we great, we've got no slavery in our supply chains. And so I said look, gentlemen, ladies, we have a very civilized country in Australia with a very strong enforcement of law, we all understand that you'd probably have some of the least chance of slavery in Australia, now I have slavery and I have discovered slavery in my own supply chains and, guess what, I have some of the same suppliers as you. Now the penny dropped with that and President Clinton immediately said right, well can we just get on with the reality, we have slavery in our supply chains, what are we going to do about it?

Denying it and saying how great we are isn't a good start, and so I think a ready acceptance that there is slavery in supply chains, that we need to equip our procurement officers, we need to equip those who have their trigger finger on the decision to employ a slave or not, inadvertently because they are not skilled. They are skilled at buying cheaply and in a timely basis. They are not skilled at identifying slavery, identifying forced labour, identifying a false set of books when you spring a random audit. They don't have those skills, so the corporate sector has to get those skills into their procurement departments

and when they do, like say the mining industry, then they will begin to set an example of good behaviour to the rest of all industry, and mining is but a small player in this, the big players as you can imagine are textiles, manufacturing and the like.

Bharti Patel:

The corporate sector does have a key role to play and I agree and endorse what Andrew has just said. Where I do believe also that a role can be played is to join us, the campaigners and the NGOs, who are looking for improvement in the protection of victims of trafficking as well as challenging some of those economic policies I was talking about. So rather than getting the governments to get on the fast track of economic development, actually question how far are these economic policies actually leading to forced migration from one area to another and then often leading to trafficking. So I think join hands with the NGO sector, rather than seeing us as enemies, see us as friends and say how do we move forward to protect the children.

Question 2:

Firstly thank you to Andrew and Nicola and Walk Free for making this possible, I think we should recognize that, but in terms of the problem it's cultural as well as financial and the cultural thing is going to be much harder to challenge over the longer term. In terms of the financial side as you talked about the corporate procurement side, companies don't do something for nothing, they have to have a reason to do it and that comes from customers or it comes from their banks. In the money laundering world the banks first off said not our problem, but governments made it their problem because they were the gateway to the finance, to the money flowing. In the same way banks can say to corporates if you fail on this index through your procurement we won't lend to you and customers can enforce that through the companies and also through the banking system, but thank you for this.

Andrew Forrest:

That's a great idea. We're going to run with that idea!

Question 3:

My question is really for Kevin. I'm very interested in the independent and dependent variables in the research that you've done and whether poverty is an independent or a dependent variable within trafficking and whether you found any global patterns in your research as well.

Becky Anderson:

Thank you. Can I just hold onto that one? Frank [Field], you put your hand up, are you going to talk about what the British government is doing, or ask a question?

Frank Field:

Could I actually say, not seeing the index, if we put the supply chains in and if we put in how dependent various economies are on those supply chains then Britain might not be amongst the good boys brigade but the dependence on slave labour might be much transformed, so that's perhaps edition two of your report, how our picture would change if the supply chains were actually put in. But Anthony was introduced as the home secretary's roaming ambassador quite rightly on this issue. He's my patron saint. So when we were at the launch of the most recent report on slavery, while he was clapping the rest of us agreed that we would lobby the government to have a bill, and within months the government is now committed to that bill and the government is committed that this bill should change the terms of trade on how slavery operates in this country. It is going to do so by both simplifying and making more workable our acts of parliament because the home secretary wants to change from eight prosecutions and convictions into 8,000, she wants to help make this a no-go country for slavery, not just by looking at the supply chains but stripping the evil ones who peddle this trade of their assets. For those assets to be used both to compensate and to put back into the position at least to what they were before, but also to help finance the actual work which will be involved here.

Two other things that we are concerned about; one is a commissioner, so just as we would be looking which country is best in using its police force, which country is best at prosecuting and getting convictions, which country is best at actually stripping assets away, we're looking at which country has built up that new machinery that is necessary for governments to combat this changing face. The net result of that will be this totally different position the victims of

slavery will find themselves in, first of all because this country will become less dependent upon them, but those who actually unfortunately are caught in this evil trade will actually see that the balance of power and the help given to them is actually changed. Now all of that could happen beyond the statute book and operating before the next election. That's the opportunity, the window of opportunity that we have and we've begun taking evidence on it.

Becky Anderson:

Thank you Frank. Just to answer the question from here.

Kevin Bales:

So very briefly is poverty dependent, is it independent, is it pushing, is it pulling and so forth. It varies a great deal from country to country and region to region, but one of the things that you'll find in the report of the 31 independent variables that we are using to understand what creates the context of vulnerability to enslavement, it varies of course from country to country according to their context and conditions, but it will give you a good sense of how we see them as independent pushing variables that create that context in which slavery can exist.

Becky Anderson:

Excellent. Do you want to take a question or just make a statement?

Anthony Steen:

No, I just want to make a statement. First of all, Frank's my hero so there's a mutual respect. But I want to say this to you because this is very high-powered, big money, and there's big brains and there's NGOs. I want to say one thing to you all. I am dealing with hundreds and hundreds of victims. Now there are hundreds of you here, Tatiana [Jardan] who is standing up there and Bharti there, all of us need jobs for victims. They don't want charity, they want jobs. If any of you are working in any place, even internships, I can't get anything from industry. They'll talk about it, they'll give me money but they won't do anything, so if any of you are prepared to give an internship to a victim, I am interested; one. Two is we've got to have training. Most of these victims don't speak English. They can't get money to go on English classes,

so while we're talking about these big issues and big money I'm concerned about individuals and if any of you are concerned about individuals that I know and Bharti knows, let me know or let Tatiana know, we'll immediately follow it up. That's all I wanted to say.

Question 5:

I think that along with all the excellent reports that have been made here tonight, in order both to really focus public attention here and also to sustain it, we have to draw very clearly the very strong connections between slavery right the way across the world, particularly slavery in international trade, and organized crime. For organized crime, people smuggling and slavery is the second largest source of their income after narcotics and in many areas it is corrupting whole societies. Equally there is involvement also with terrorist groupings in terms, often, of providing protection and transit. Mention was made of the Vietnamese working here. This is a sophisticated operation. It is taking young naive Vietnamese, bringing them all the way across Europe into the UK, into my own constituency, renting houses, setting up cannabis factories and then distributing the cannabis. You don't do that without a significant organization and we have to focus on this as a very serious part of the organized crime nexus across the world.

Becky Anderson:

Kevin, so what are you doing about that because these are sophisticated industries, this is not just human trafficking, although that's a big term in and of itself, we're talking drugs, we're talking arms, we're talking organized crime?

Kevin Hyland:

Well that's exactly how we view it. This is organized crime and that's why we work internationally with different police forces, different organizations. Andrew mentioned working with the Vatican. We are working with the Vatican and the churches, both Catholic, Anglican, to assist us with victims and the support of victims, and there's some very significant activity happening there. But what we do is we prosecute the whole gang. We have done operations, I told you about the numbers we're talking about and, although the numbers might seem small, what we do is we bring the whole gang from abroad, we do

European arrest warrants and bring them to justice. Also we do it the other way, so where there may not be prosecutions in the UK, it might be that we get all the people taken back to Romania or Poland and mount the prosecutions there which – it's whatever is actually right in law and what is most justified. But you're absolutely right, this is serious and organized crime.

Question 6:

I think the thing I'd like to say is that there is a lot of talk about the problem of slavery but the problem of slavery is actually that there isn't a solution to it. We shouldn't even be thinking of a solution to the problem. We should be thinking about a set of processes which will continually address the problem, because as long as there are human beings there is going to be the problem or the instinct and impulse towards slavery. I think what the report does is demonstrate what the breadth and scale of the problem is; does that well. It's important that it's brought on board the question of child marriage within this because that's something which the general discourse has missed for a long time, but what we need to do is look at how to shift this on a basis where we're having a long-term set of processes to respond to this. There needs to be a new set of approaches towards supply chains, there needs to be a new set of approaches toward trades. The fact that the British government and many other governments is continually engaging and establishing commercial relationships with countries like Uzbekistan and Qatar which have systematized slavery within their economies should be regarded as unacceptable. We can look beyond the broader humanitarian development programmes which aren't looking at the issue of slavery and haven't been for the past 30, 40 years. Slavery needs to be made a post-2015 development goal and that needs to be one of the starting points which engages us all in taking this forward.

Question 7:

I was very happy, Andrew, that you mentioned forced marriage. Every two seconds a girl under the age of 18 somewhere in the world gets married, so that's every two seconds somewhere a girl gets married. Now any marriage of a girl under the age of 18, I think, is a forced marriage, it has to be, and so I'm very curious, Kevin, how did you look at this issue that is so enormous and yet so invisible in your report?

Kevin Bales:

There is not good data on forced marriage of adult women existing in the world today. We're going to be digging into that to see if we can build it in. There is some data which is collected on child marriages and we elected to bring that in, to bring that into the work and to build and flesh out that variable for all the 162 countries, because we really don't understand how many of the marriages in the world are really bride slavery, nothing to do with marriage in the conventional sense of the meaning of that word, and we need to begin to understand that. I have to say, I run in fear from the fact that we may find millions of more slaves when we really come to understand the women who are hidden away in large sections of the world on this, but we wanted to introduce this into our index in order to put it out there into the public discourse, because it's one that tends to be ignored by nation states and international organizations.

Andrew Forrest:

If I can just make a very quick comment; the econometricians who are around do say our numbers in the slavery index are widely underestimated and a lot of that comes from forced marriage. The gentleman from the anti-slavery group who insisted on new processes, I would like to say, get to know us a lot better, we are all about new processes. I am a little used to being told something is completely impossible and going after it extremely hard, but we will not do it by doing it the same way, we will do it by doing it entirely differently in order to get an entirely different result.

Question 8:

Here we talk a lot about indices and processes and victims, nothing much about the customers of slavery, the end user. I wonder if you've got any comment.

Question 9:

I like very much the point that Andrew made at the beginning about if you can't measure it you can't manage it, and it's really important that this index is going to be updated every six months. So I'm wondering what the end goal is, where you're expecting the index to go, the different trajectories countries will

be on and how you're going to measure the effectiveness of the engagement with policy-makers.

Becky Anderson:

Okay, let's take customers and that, but firstly customers.

Andrew Forrest:

The five parts of Walk Free are really all aimed at the customers. Walk Free is at the unsexy end. My senior politician here would like to be kicking down brothels and helping people one by one, and I agree that's very, very satisfying. However, it's the customers who make it happen and we're about, all of Walk Free is about prevention, knowledge, government policy, corporate policy and prevention, so I thank you for raising that. That's the ethos of Walk Free, eliminate the customers and you'll eliminate the trade.

Becky Anderson:

Demand and supply; it's basic stuff.

Andrew Forrest:

Absolutely.

Becky Anderson:

Let's talk to the index.

Kevin Bales:

Well, and talk to the index in terms of how we push forward in this way. The answer is we are going to do the best job we can to improve measures as we go ahead. One of the parts of the index that we haven't really discussed in detail is the fact that we do in-depth country reports on the responses of each country, not just governments but businesses within those countries. We're measuring all the time what countries are doing at this moment. Now we're going to be looking at soon the impact of the release of the index on countries as best we can.

Andrew Forrest:

And that's going to be the exciting part.

Becky Anderson:

How often will that happen? How often will you release information?

Andrew Forrest:

Continuously.

Kevin Bales:

Continuously. Well releasing, there'll be an update at six months, a publication every year but where the team is working on this pretty much 24/7 because we're actually operating all the way around the world in research teams that hand off to each other at the end of each day.

Anthony Steen:

I just said what about the TIP (Trafficking in Persons) Report because the American government is producing a similar information, is that going to conflict with what you're doing or is it going to have more and more reports?

Kevin Bales:

The TIP Report sadly is – the content of the TIP Report is determined by legislation that was passed in the year 2000 and it's very tightly tailored to these political concerns that do not necessarily feed into usefully the global anti-slavery movement. What it does do is antagonize governments especially in the developing world. I think people in the State Department would love to retire the TIP Report and take ours on as their main publication.

Becky Anderson:

Go on, last word.

Andrew Forrest:

What I can say is when Secretary Clinton gets the US State Department to allow a full endorsement by her and Ambassador [Luis] CdeBaca of the Global Slavery Index then you know that we're moving on from the TIP Report.

Becky Anderson:

A very good point. Can you make your last point very quickly.

Bharti Patel:

A very, very quick point. It's, do remember that also citizens and customers are voters. There is so much pressure that we can put on governments to act. There are various protocols that every country in the world has signed but they are not adhering to, so we can actually use that effectively and get them to change.

Becky Anderson:

Enact and enforce. We thank you all of you here very much indeed.