



Rights Lab, University of Nottingham, response to the **UK international development white paper: call for evidence** (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office)<sup>1</sup>

Written by Dr Bethany Jackson, Lois Bosatta, and Dr Katarina Schwarz

## Question 2

- What are the specific innovative proposals that can accelerate progress in international development?
- What initiatives, policies, partnerships, or technologies could result in accelerated progress?
- Are there big ideas on which the UK is particularly well placed to play a role?

### Q2.1/2.2

In a recent [UN Special Rapporteur publication](#), technology was viewed as important for the achievement of tackling development issues (e.g., modern slavery). Satellite Earth Observation (EO) data was noted as an area where continued leadership and technological advancement is well placed. The recent re-entry into the Horizon Europe/Copernicus partnership enables the UK space research and innovation sector to continue to be a world leader in the development of applications and tools to support partners in developing nations and foster collaborative access to novel data. The [UK Space Agency \(UKSA\) has also been a leader](#) in providing funding to projects to explore the continued application and development of EO sources for social issues including anti-human trafficking applications.

Innovative applications of satellite EO are already being undertaken by several academics at the University of Nottingham. For example, [work led by Professor Doreen Boyd with partners including VSJ](#) have been linked to the liberation of workers from bonded labour resulting from the data provided through satellite mapping (see [Boyd et al. 2018, 2021](#); [Foody et al. 2019](#)); and a tool for inspecting agencies to both support workers and environmental compliance has been developed. Current research on the social-environmental effects upon brick kiln workers is ongoing through a Home Office funded project across India. Moreover, innovation in community access to data and public research has been undertaken. For example, work by [Professor Doreen Boyd and colleagues \(2022\)](#) note that there are useful engagement opportunities with communities as valuable scientists that can strengthen both domestic and international understanding of development issues when combined with technological partnerships.

Additional research at the Rights Lab by Dr Bethany Jackson has worked to explore the connection of climate change mitigation and livelihoods being threatened by risks

---

<sup>1</sup> Call details: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-international-development-white-paper-call-for-evidence/uk-international-development-white-paper-call-for-evidence>



of modern slavery in diverse forest environments ([Jackson et al. 2020a](#), [2020b](#)). Further, research has also sought to assess the innovative application of satellite data to support vulnerable mining communities ([Brown et al. 2020](#), [2022](#)) – with the additional benefit of addressing concerns around critical mineral supplies – and [agricultural workers](#).

These innovations if channelled into international development, pave the way for further innovation and collaboration to support globally diverse in-country partnerships and deliver meaningful societal changes aligned with Agenda 2030.

### Q2.3

In 2022, the British Standards Institute was the first national standards body to launch a guidance standard on corporate approaches to tackling modern slavery: [BS25700 Organisational Responses to Modern Slavery](#), chaired by the Rights Lab's Professor Alexander Trautrim. The BSI, with Trautrim, are now leading the development of the [ISO standard](#) for this topic, which has been supported by several other countries globally including China and St Lucia. The UK, since its leadership demonstrated in 2015 with the launch of its own Modern Slavery Act, including the inclusion of Section 54, is well placed to continue to drive the agenda to push corporate responsibility, accountability, and partnership in this area across the globe, and continue to engage businesses in good practice, particularly towards achieving SDG 8.

### Question 5

- How should scientific and technological expertise, private finance and the private sector, trade and investment, civil society networks and diplomacy be engaged to support global development action and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

Engagement with multiple sectors is required to address global progress towards the impact of modern slavery as an international development issue. Dr Bethany Jackson and colleagues summarised a series of combined requirements that are needed to address issues of modern slavery (target 8.7 of the SDGs) and climate change issues (Goals 13-15). This was undertaken through a discussion led by the [Rights Lab with experts](#) across the antislavery and development sectors. Here a series of intersectionalities were identified that are necessary to begin prioritising action toward the SDGs. Engagement with private business should be considered key for development through investment and supply chain monitoring. Further, development and finance sectors should be engaged to generate business engagement through financial incentives – for example, to gain access to public or private funding efforts should be shown to comply and improve supply chain transparency, and where efforts have not been made, funding eligibility may be constricted.

The workshop outcomes also noted that resources should also be focused on the development of opportunities for workers and local communities who are most affected by development issues included in the SDGs (including the example of modern slavery as the anchor in this research). Engagement of communities experiencing development issues should be centred moving forward – whether through direct engagement or the support of wider intervention and support programming in country



by civil society networks. Such connections were echoed by [Decker Sparks et al. \(2021\)](#) as a sustainable development issue, where affected communities should be at the heart of strategic agenda design with focused lenses applied to the frameworks under progress. In this case it was an ‘anti-slavery lens’ but examples included the mainstreaming of gender, and a human-rights approach may also be considered.

Having exited the European Union, the UK can leverage trade and investment in support of global development and the SDGs. Rights Lab research has comprehensively reviewed the role of international trade relationships and agreements in advancing the fight against modern slavery. [Schwarz et al. \(2019a\)](#) took stock of the UK’s position regarding advancing human rights through trade in Asia post-Brexit. This research indicated that an integrated approach that combined development cooperation with trade policy would be necessary in negotiations, as well as in implementation and monitoring ([Schwarz et al. 2019b](#)). Engagement with civil society in third countries at all stages of trade policy development and implementation was identified as vital to enhance legitimacy, ensure context-specific approaches, and facilitate monitoring. Lessons learned from EU external policy are particularly relevant for the UK moving forward, providing substantial guidance on the strengths and shortcomings of existing efforts to advance development through trade ([Schwarz et al 2022](#)). Forthcoming Rights Lab research by Dr Timothy Masiko and colleagues reveals that the UK is not currently utilising trade and investment policy to their full development potential. A systematic approach to the integration of modern slavery, human rights, labour rights, and sustainable development in trade and investment is needed.

### Question 6

- How can progress on tackling ending poverty, economic growth, and the challenges of climate change be best brought together, in the context of Agenda 2030 (including building resilience, adaptation, and sustainable growth)?
- How can the opportunities be maximised? How can the limits and trade-offs be managed?

First, there is growing evidence across antislavery research, that the intersection of modern slavery and climate change are important co-occurring risks that needed considered and combined responses. The [‘measurement and geographies’ programme at the Rights Lab](#) has been a leader in this area and we would call for climate change to be made more central to the expertise and intersectional policy activities undertaken at the FCDO as part of their international development strategy. This is due to the inherent global linkages and scale of harm likely to be associated with climate change – combining the two co-occurring issues on a national and international stage would promote more integrated and impactful responses from across sectors. This call to action arises from emerging evidence associated with a [Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre \(MSPEC\) funded research project led by Dr Bethany Jackson](#) (Rights Lab University of Nottingham), with staff from the School of Geography and our partners, Transparentem and IJM UK.



In response to climate change and intersectional issues associated with social challenges (i.e., modern slavery) calls from across the antislavery sector published by the Rights Lab, University of Nottingham, were noted in an event (see [Jackson et al. 2021](#)) with support from WWF US and Delta 8.7. Several [recommendations for policy makers](#) were noted to support the 2030 Agenda. First, strengthening or establishing due diligence frameworks would be a way of including accountability and supporting the international obligations of businesses, as well as reaffirming the UK commitment to supporting those communities impacted by socio-economic risks such as modern slavery. The report highlights the need for liability and inclusion of remuneration for those impacted by modern slavery.

Further to this, in recently published research by the Rights Lab with partners CAFOD, Caritas India and Bangladesh, and OKUP ([Jackson 2023](#)), loss and damage support was highlighted as an international development obligation that should be engaged with and used to support communities most at risk from climate change and intersecting risk factors. Additional considerations of the impact migration may have upon the vulnerabilities of populations to human trafficking because of climate change and loss of economic certainty are required at the multi-lateral governance level. The Sundarbans in Bangladesh and India were a region highlighted as at risk in this particular study, but the engagement and broadening of scope to include core social issues in the loss and damage financing and governance activities will be extremely important moving forward.