

Active citizenship: learning resources for topical issues

7. The abolition of slavery?

©CWIN/Anti-Slavery International



©Anti-Slavery International

©CDP/Anti-Slavery International



©Georgina Cranston/Anti-Slavery International

Introduction for staff

Two hundred years ago, on 25 March 1807, ‘The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act’ was passed in Parliament. This Act was the beginning of the end¹ of the transatlantic slave trade, in which people from the west coast of Africa were taken forcibly to the Caribbean islands and to America to work on sugar, cotton, rice and tobacco plantations.

This important Act came about as a result of a number of forces: pressure from the churches; campaigns led by people such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson; pressure from black activists such as Olaudah Equiano; slave resistance and revolts on plantations; and, more surprisingly, also as a result of the actions of ordinary citizens of Britain, including large numbers of women.

Although most ordinary people did not have the vote, or even free education, there were many committees and associations set up in different parts of the country to organise activities such as petitions and a sugar boycott, to persuade the government that the trade in slaves was wrong. Some of these people could have lost their jobs, since they made goods used in the slave trade, but there was a very strong feeling against slavery. Slavery was not new then, of course. It has existed throughout human history. For example, the Romans took slaves from many parts of Europe to work for them in their homes and businesses. In the 17th century, Barbary pirates from north Africa took captives from coastal areas of Europe and forced them to row ships as galley slaves. It continued into the 20th century in different forms: in Soviet Russia millions of people were forced to work in mines and forests in the 1930s, and the Nazis used slave labour before and during World War 2.

Citizenship learning opportunities

Citizenship education aims to develop understanding of the past, particularly in relation to things that need changing today. Sadly, slavery still exists today, despite it being condemned by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1949². Some estimates put a figure of 12 million people enslaved today. Different terms are used:

- bonded labour, where people are forced to work to pay off the huge interest on a debt
- forced labour, where people are kidnapped or tricked into leaving their homes to work for starvation wages
- sex slavery, where women and children are kidnapped or tricked into prostitution with the promise of a better life in a richer country
- domestic slavery, where children are sold to wealthy families to become their servants.

These materials provide some suggestions for activities³ and resources that will raise young people’s awareness of modern-day slavery and encourage them to consider what needs to be done about it. It is important that they recognise three points:

- slavery existed before the transatlantic trade
- slavery still exists today, and should be eradicated
- ordinary people can bring about changes when they campaign together.

The materials are aimed at levels 1/2 and help to meet learning objectives identified in *Play your part: post-16 citizenship* QCA guidance (QCA, 2004). A study of modern-day slavery can be used to illustrate the key concepts of democracy, justice, rights, responsibilities, identities and diversity in the programme of study for key stage 4 citizenship (from September 2008).

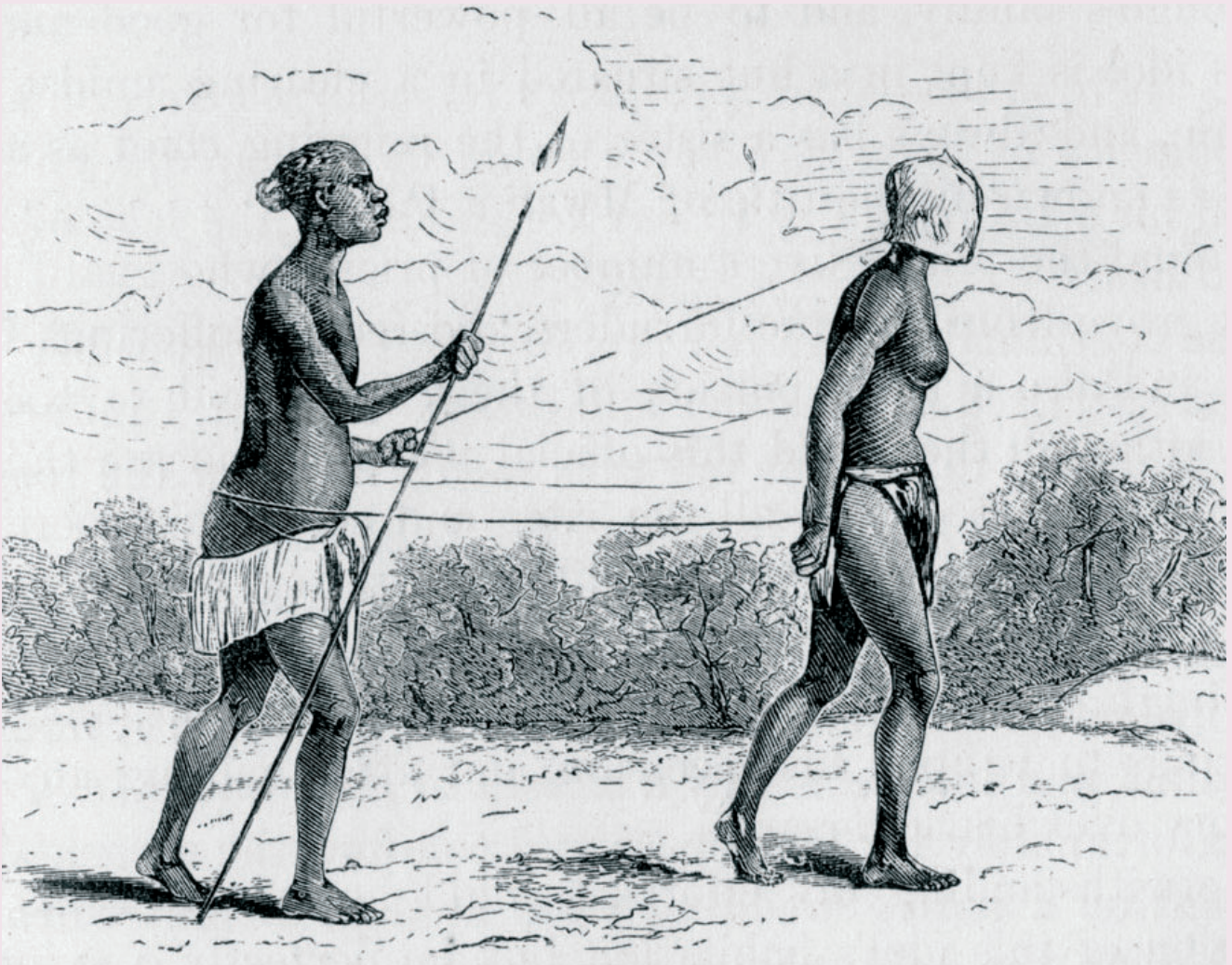
¹ Transatlantic slaves were not truly free until 1838

² ‘No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.’
Article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

³ With acknowledgement to *Ending slavery: an unfinished business* by Terry Fiehn, produced by the Citizenship Foundation and the Church Mission Society (2006)

Suggestions for using the materials

- Find out how much the learners already know about slavery and what they think it involves. Following the recent bicentennial anniversary of the beginning of the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, learners may wish to find out more about the conditions for slaves on the slave ships and in the plantations. The introductory sheet provides relevant websites.
- The most important aspect of the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, was the role ordinary people played in mounting campaigns. The page on public campaigns provides some of the actions that people in Britain took. Some of the actions were particularly relevant to the churches – hymns and prayers. Others involved communicating with others, using the technology of the time – pamphlets, newspapers, letters and drawings. Young people should compare these actions with those likely to be successful today, such as television, rock concerts and the internet.
- Having read about and researched modern-day slavery, young people can consider what action could be taken, drawing on their responses to the previous task, and using the ideas on the ‘Amazing Change’ website. This is an American website, run by a Christian organisation. There are other groups doing different things. Their websites are listed on the same page.



“Warua slave-driver and slave,” shows a captive African woman, with a mask over her head walking in front of a Warua male, with a spear.
Source: Verney Lovett Cameron, *Across Africa* (New York, 1877), p. 309.

The transatlantic slave trade

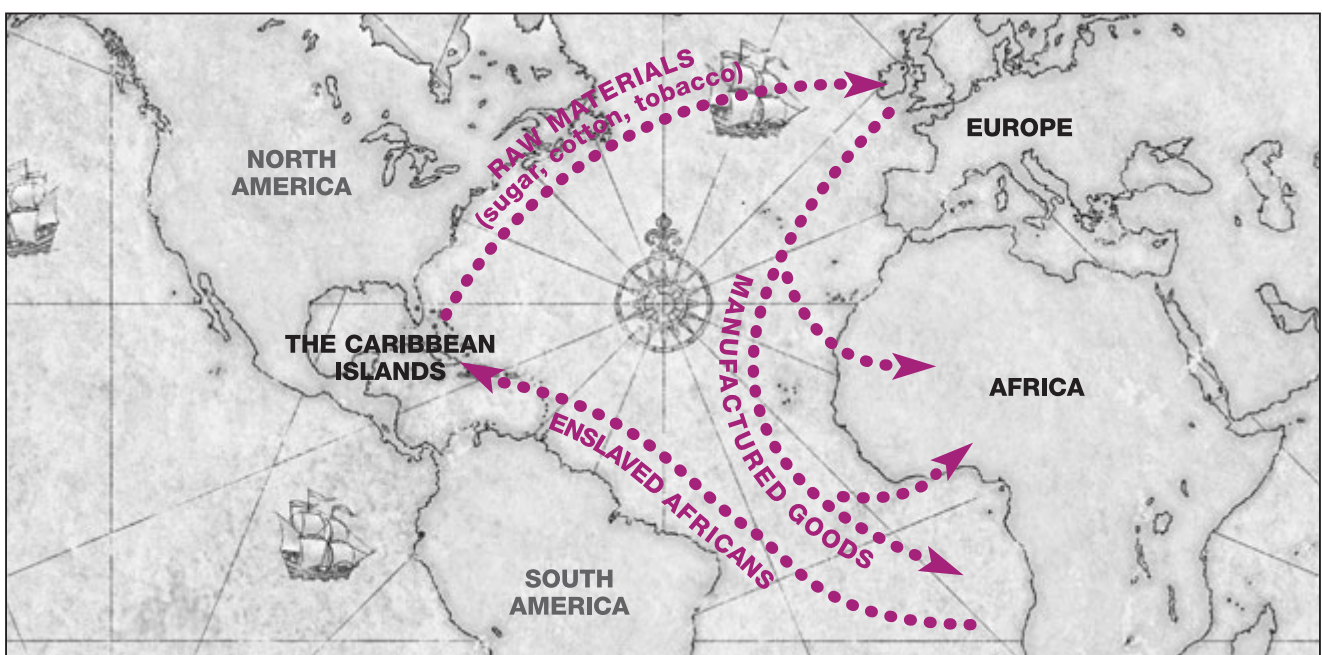
In the 17th century Europeans began to establish settlements in the Americas and on the islands of the Caribbean Sea. The division of the land into smaller units under private ownership became known as the plantation system. Crops grown on these plantations such as tobacco, rice, sugar cane and cotton were labour intensive. European immigrants had gone to America to own their own land and were reluctant to work for others. Convicts were sent over from Britain, but there had not been enough to satisfy the demand for labour. Plantations were also developed on the islands of the Caribbean Sea. After the arrival of the Europeans there was a sharp decline in the local population of most of the islands. This created a problem for plantation owners, as they needed labour to exploit the natural resources of these islands.

Eventually the Europeans came up with a solution: the importation of slaves from Africa. By 1540, an estimated 10,000 slaves a year were being brought from Africa to work in the plantations. In the next century British merchants became involved in the trade and eventually dominated the market. They built coastal forts in Africa where they kept the captured Africans until the arrival of the slave-ships. The merchants obtained the slaves from African chiefs in exchange for manufactured goods from Europe. At first, these slaves were usually the captured soldiers from tribal wars. However, the demand for slaves became so great that raiding parties were organised to obtain young Africans.

The enslaved Africans (up to 80,000 a year when the trade was at its height) were then transported in ships to the 'New World'. This was called the 'Middle Passage'. Conditions in the ships were cramped and filthy and the slaves were treated in the most brutal fashion. Thousands died on the voyages. Once they had arrived they were sold at auction. The vast majority were sent to work on sugar plantations. Slaves were in the fields from sunrise to sunset and at harvest time they worked an eighteen-hour day. Women worked the same hours as the men, and pregnant women were expected to continue until their child was born.

The death rate amongst enslaved Africans was high. To replace their losses, plantation owners encouraged the slaves to have children. Child-bearing started around the age of 13, and by 20 the women slaves would be expected to have four or five children. To encourage child-bearing some plantation owners promised women slaves their freedom after they had produced fifteen children.

- Find out more about conditions for the slaves and their stories from:
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/nof/slavery
- Make and display an exhibition about the transatlantic slave trade using images from:
<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/slavery>



Public campaigns against transatlantic slavery

Although a very small number of people were allowed to vote in the late eighteenth century, and women had virtually no role in public life, the campaign to abolish slavery was strong and had an important influence on the government. It is the first time that large numbers of people took part in the democratic process in order to bring about a change. The campaigners came from all walks of life and included women, Black activists, working men, Members of Parliament and church leaders. They were influenced by the actions of their leaders, like William Wilberforce, and also by tales of the slave rebellions in the plantations.

Some of the actions used by the campaigners are listed below.

- Decide which ones might have been most successful in the 1780s and 1790s.
- Think about which actions would be most successful today. Are there any actions that people can take today to add to the list?

Writing letters to
Members of Parliament

Boycotting of sugar and goods
produced by slaves

Holding meetings and
debates to inform people
about the slave trade

Using hymns, poems and
street songs to raise awareness
of the issue

Writing pamphlets and
newspapers about
the slave trade

Exhibiting pictures and
images of slaves that
shock people

Collecting donations to
support the campaign

Holding prayer meetings
to raise awareness

- Find out more about the public campaigns by visiting the website **www.understandingslavery.org**
- Download *Ending slavery: an unfinished business*, free from:
www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/resources

Modern-day slavery

Bonded labour

Bonded labour – or debt bondage – is probably the least known form of slavery today, and yet it is the most widely used method of enslaving people. Bonded labour has existed for thousands of years. A person becomes a bonded labourer when his or her labour is demanded as a means of repayment for a loan. The person is then tricked or trapped into working for very little or no pay, often for seven days a week. The value of their work is usually greater than the original sum of money borrowed. Millions of people are held in bonded labour around the world. It continues



to flourish in South East Asia where many people work on other people's land. Bonded labourers are often threatened with and subjected to physical and sexual violence. They are kept under various forms of surveillance, in some cases by armed guards. There are very few cases where chains are actually used (although it does occur) but the controls on the bonded labourers are every bit as real and as restricting.

Leelu Bai, former bonded labourer
adivasi (indigenous) woman, from
Thane District, India, 1999.
© Anti-Slavery International

"I became bonded after I got married to my husband 20 years ago – his family had been bonded for three generations to the same landlord – they took loans for marriage, for illness, for education and so it went on... I used to work from 6.00 am in the landlord's house – cleaning, fetching water... Then I would go to work on the farm... cutting, threshing and so on until 7.00 pm or later. Sometimes I would have to go back to the landlord's house to clean and wash everything. Only after I had finished could I go home to feed my family. My landlord never let me work with another landlord; he would abuse us and threaten to beat us if we ever went to work for someone else. If we were ill, the landlord would come to our houses and tell us that we were very lazy and so on... As women, we had to work more than men because women had to work in the landlord's house as well as the farm. Even after working on the farm, we had sometimes to go back to the landlord's house to work..."

Leelu Bai, former bonded labourer *adivasi* (indigenous) woman, from Thane District, India, 1999, quoted on www.antislavery.org/homepage/campaign/bondedinfo.htm

Sex slavery

A very large number of women and children around the world are currently living dreadful lives as sex slaves. There is a huge global sex market, which involves trafficking of women and children. Hundreds of thousands of these women and children are used in prostitution each year. Home Office figures show the number of trafficked women has increased dramatically. In 1998, in Britain, approximately 1,420 trafficked women were working as prostitutes. For 2003, the latest figure available, officials put the number at 4,000: police and charities believe the true figure could now be far higher, nearer 10,000. While the exact numbers may be difficult to ascertain, thousands of women and girls are deceived or simply abducted and sold into forcible sexual slavery. Some of them have been baited by promises of legitimate jobs and a better life. The legitimate jobs – waitress, nanny, dancer, carer – never materialise and the women are told they must pay off the debt of their transport costs by working in the sex trade. Many have been abducted; others have been bought from or abandoned by their impoverished families.



Desperate to escape relentless poverty, Irina, from Moldova, had applied for a job looking after the elderly in Italy, but had been abducted and taken to Belgrade where two Serbs 'seasoned' her – a pimping term for the technique of raping and beating girls until their resistance disappears. She was taken across the Serbian border to Belgrade, to the Mala Romansa, a bar owned by Tsitsa, a Serbian woman. Ten girls entertained their clients in three rooms at the top of the building and were kept locked in. There was no hot water, little food and drink. The windows were barred. Tsitsa claimed she had paid \$1,000 for her and that she must pay it back. Any dispute, Tsitsa beat the girls. After a month in Belgrade, Irina was sold on and taken through Macedonia to Albania and on to the Adriatic coast. In September 2001, she arrived by boat on a beach south of Brindisi. She had become the chattel of Zef, a pimp who had acquired her in the port of Vlore. They travelled by train to Paris, where for a few days she was put to work on the streets above Port Maillot. No one examined their papers. With passports borrowed from Zef's Albanian relatives in Nanterre, they took the Eurostar to London and on 25 January 2001 emerged unchallenged into the concourse of Waterloo Station. Irina stayed in a flat in Edmonton, north London, with Zef's cousin. The windows were barred and she was in a room with another girl from the Ukraine. She was there maybe two days and she was taken to a sauna near King's Cross where she met a man called Carlos, who agreed that she could work for him. She was paid £60 by the customer for sex, gave £20 to Carlos and the rest to Zef. Irina was working seven days a week and passing all her earnings to Zef.

The Observer, Sunday February 23, 2003

Domestic slavery

Many millions of children across the world work in other people's homes as domestic slaves, doing housework, gardening, care of animals and smaller children. They are usually sold to their employers by their impoverished parents. The practice of buying children to perform domestic duties is common in many parts of the world, particularly Africa, Asia, Saudi Arabia and Latin America. Children in domestic labour are usually "invisible" in their communities, toiling for long hours with little or no pay, frequently abused, and regularly deprived of the chance to play or go to school. However, the practice of employing child domestics, and the exploitative way in which they tend to be treated, are not seen as wrong in the countries where it happens. It is often regarded as a status symbol to have a child servant, and employers claim that they have helped a poor family by giving them money.



Child camel jockey, UAE.
Some boys are so young they
have to be tied onto the camel.
©CDP/Anti-Slavery International

When Ahmed was five years old he was trafficked from Bangladesh to the United Arab Emirates to be a camel jockey. He was forced to train and race camels in Dubai for three years. Ahmed was only returned home after a Bangladesh official identified him during a visit to Dubai in November 2002. "I was scared... If I made a mistake I was beaten with a stick. When I said I wanted to go home, I was told I never would. I didn't enjoy camel racing, I was really afraid. I fell off many times. When I won prizes several times, such as money and a car, the camel owner took everything. I never got anything, no money, nothing; my family also got nothing."

From: www.antislavery.org/homepage/antislavery/childlabour.htm

Dieusibon was sold by her parents to an employer in Haiti. "When I first moved to Port-au-Prince I cleaned dishes, the house, everything. My 'aunt' would beat me whenever I didn't get water. I worked so hard that my body ached and I couldn't move, but she would beat me if I didn't do more work. Her three children went to school... One day my aunt sent me to fetch water. I refused, so she took a pot of boiling water and threw it at me and burned my face and slammed the hot cooking pot on my hand." Dieusibon, 14, ran away and found help from a shelter in Haiti.

From: www.antislavery.org/homepage/antislavery/childlabour.htm



©CWIN/Anti-Slavery International

What can be done?

Bonded labour, sex slavery and domestic slavery are three kinds of modern-day slavery that have resulted from poverty and globalisation.

- Work in groups of four or five and choose one of the forms of slavery summarised.
- Research your issue to find out the background, the arguments and the possible solutions.
- Write a short PowerPoint presentation on the main points and make your presentation to the whole group.
- Design posters to raise awareness of the issues in your own organisation.
- As a whole group, discuss what action needs to be taken by governments and trans-national organisations (e.g. the European Union, the United Nations) and indeed, ordinary people, to eradicate slavery today.

The Amazing Change

Look at campaigns on www.theamazingchange.com. This website has been set up as part of the production of the film *Amazing Grace*, which tells the story of the campaigns, led by William Wilberforce, to end transatlantic slavery. It aims to continue his work by campaigning against modern-day slavery. The Amazing Change suggests...

THE AMAZING CHANGE

Ten Things You Can Do

How can you contribute to The Amazing Change? The ten examples below should give you some ideas – we would love to hear your suggestions as well!

1. **Sign the Petition** – Become an abolitionist by signing *The Petition to End Modern Day Slavery*.
2. **See *Amazing Grace*** – This film is a great introduction to the work of William Wilberforce, an original abolitionist. Learn how you can carry on his legacy.
3. **Raise funds to free slaves** – Use the tools on the website, such as 'Loose Change to Loosen Chains', to start your own fundraising campaign.
4. **Educate yourself** – Use the resources on the site to learn about the horrors of historical and modern day slavery.
5. **Show solidarity** – Buy The Amazing Change t-shirt and tell friends and family about your mission to abolish slavery.
6. **Create a Clapham Circle** – William Wilberforce was part of a group of friends and neighbours called the Clapham Circle. They met regularly to discuss ways to advance the cause of abolition. You can form your own Clapham Circle. Have weekly meetings with friends or neighbours in your community to discuss the issue of modern day slavery. Download tools from the website to facilitate your discussion.
7. **Blog** – Write about modern day slavery and The Amazing Change in our online community or on your MySpace, Xanga or Facebook profile. Include a link to our website so friends can learn how to get involved.
8. **Ask others** – Talk to leaders in your community, school or church about The Amazing Change. and encourage them to become involved.
9. **Read More** – Read books about modern day slavery like *Not for Sale* by David Batstone.
10. **Volunteer** – Pass on the legacy of William Wilberforce and donate your time to The Amazing Change by joining the street team, creating a Clapham Circle, or fundraising to free slaves.

There are other websites which can tell you about modern campaigns, how you can get involved and inform you about the current tactics and methods campaigners are using. These sites are:

www.cms.org.uk/settingcaptivesfree
www.amnesty.org/campaign
www.iabolish.com

www.antislavery.org
www.stopthetraffic.org

www.hrw.org/campaigns
www.setallfree.net



Resources

***Ending Slavery: an unfinished business,* by Terry Fiehn (2006)**

A resources pack for citizenship, history and RE. This free downloadable pack is produced by the Citizenship Foundation and the Church Mission Society. It is aimed at years 9 and 10, but is suitable also for post-16, and covers both the campaign to end transatlantic slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and also the enduring issues of slavery in the twenty first century.

www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/resource.php?s324

***The Atlantic slave trade and slave life in the Americas: a visual record,* by Jerome S. Handler and Michael L. Tuite Jr.**

The 1,200 images in this collection have been selected from a wide range of sources, most of them dating from the earlier periods of slavery. This collection is available as a tool and a resource that can be used by anyone interested in the experiences of Africans who were enslaved and transported to the Americas and the lives of their descendants in the slave societies of the New World.

<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/slavery>

Amazing Grace

The film, *Amazing Grace* (on release 2007), tells the story of William Wilberforce and the campaigns to end the transatlantic slave trade. Information, about the film and the issues it explores, is available on

www.amazinggracemovie.com. See also **www.theamazingchange.com** to get involved in the current campaigns.

Anti-Slavery International

This organisation, founded in 1839, is the world's oldest international human rights organisation and the only charity in the United Kingdom to work exclusively against slavery and related abuses. Its website details examples of modern-day slavery, gives details of campaigns it is running, and provides resources such as photographs, exhibitions and teaching packs.

www.antislavery.org

Act to End Slavery Now

This 22-page publication is for groups and individuals wanting to learn about modern slavery and the campaign to end it. It shows the connection with the past and how the Bible was used to condone or condemn slavery. ISBN: 0 900918 62 4, price £3.00.

Available from:

Anti-Slavery International
Thomas Clarkson House
The Stableyard
Broomgrove Road
London SW9 9TL.

Telephone: **020 7501 8920**

E-mail: **info@antislavery.org**

***1807–2007: Over 200 years of campaigning against slavery,* by M. Kaye (2005)**

A useful summary of the history, arguments and campaigns against all forms of slavery.

ISBN: 0900918616. Available from Anti-Slavery International, address as above.