

International counter slavery alliance launches, 100 years after Australia signed Slavery Convention

A group of Australian-based international NGOs have come together under the banner of the **Australian International Counter Slavery Alliance** to better address the issue of modern slavery in Asia and the Pacific.

Slavery refers to any situation in which people treat others (through force or coercion) as if they own them. In 2022, it was estimated that at least 50 million people worldwide are in some form of modern slavery (ILO, Walk Free, IOM). 6.8% (29.3m) of all people in Asia and the Pacific are in modern slavery.

100 years ago today, the 1926 Slavery Convention was signed in Geneva. It was the first comprehensive, worldwide, multilateral treaty designed to abolish slavery and the slave trade in all forms. Australia was one of the first countries to sign the Convention. John Latham, Australia's Attorney-General, signed the Convention on behalf of Australia. Reflecting on this moment in March 1927, he said that slavery "is a real evil, under which many thousands of human beings are suffering acutely to-day." As we recall the anniversary of the Convention's signing, we are reminded that the work to tackle and eradicate modern slavery is still ongoing.

It is now estimated that there is a US\$13 billion a year underinvestment in preventing modern slavery in Asia and the Pacific (UNDP & FAST, 2026). The crisis is now so deep that there is a misalignment exceeding 1000:1 between illicit profits generated by slavery and human trafficking and all prevention spending (UNDP & FAST, 2026). This is why six Australian NGOs are forming a new partnership to tackle this accelerating human rights crisis in our region.

The Alliance brings together several of Australia's leading international counter-slavery organisations: A21 Australia, Bloom Asia, Destiny Rescue Australia, Global Counter-trafficking Group, Hagar Australia, and International Justice Mission Australia. As an alliance of Australian-registered international counter-slavery agencies, we can work better - together - in the face of these challenges to support victims and survivors, assist governments and prevent exploitation.

This new Alliance exists to scale and amplify Australia's efforts to constrain the impact of slavery by driving partnerships between civil society, government, business, and international survivor leaders. Our vision is that by 2035, Australia's response to slavery has scaled and prioritises the protection of vulnerable people against slavery in our Asia-Pacific region.

Through collaborating with local partners and survivor leaders, Australia can support effective interventions, programs and survivor-informed solutions. Together we can dismantle trafficking networks, prevent exploitation, and build systems that protect those most vulnerable to modern slavery.