



Roundtable Discussion on Sports Trafficking

14 June 2022

"We are not here to blame, but to be inspired"

Adeline Dumoulin, Roundtable host, 2022

About the Roundtable

On Tuesday 14 June, CPA UK held a roundtable discussion with thirty-one attendees to discuss sports trafficking ahead of the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. The aim of the roundtable was to raise awareness on the issue and inspire stakeholders to take action against it by hearing from successful initiatives.

The event featured a range of speakers from FIFA, the Commonwealth Games Federation, Loughborough University, Mission 89, and Marshalls Plc.

The discussion opened with Dr. James Esson, from Loughborough University, explaining football trafficking through his research-backed 10-step migration process.

Following Dr. Esson, Lerina Bright, CEO of Mission 89, shared her own awareness-raising strategies.



Attendees were then exposed to a real-life case study on sports trafficking, grounding the discussion and highlighting the terrible implications of the crime. We then heard some concrete actions taken by the private sector to eradicate actions taken by forced labour in supply chains, including from the Commonwealth Games Federation and Marshalls Plc.



The roundtable was situated in an important context as the upcoming Birmingham Commonwealth Games is taking place between 28 July – 8 August 2022.

According to Sportscal, around 440,000 potential visitors and sports fans will travel from around the world to come to Birmingham and follow the action.

Unfortunately, the games will also be an opportunity for the exploitation of athletes in, through, and around the games. CPA UK, therefore, wanted to utilise this opportunity in light of the Games, to hold a multi-stakeholder roundtable, in an attempt to inspire attendees to look at what they can do to prevent sports trafficking.

Those among the roundtable discussion included: UNICEF; Birmingham City Council; the Commonwealth Games Federation; the Commonwealth Games organisers; the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Office; Loughborough University; The Wilberforce Institute; Baker McKenzie LLP; Anti-Slavery International; It's a Penalty; YES Friends; Love 146; as well as parliamentarians from the UK House of Commons and House of Lords.

Recommendations & Initiatives

During the Roundtable, the speakers shared their knowledge and research on sports trafficking, and ways of addressing and tackling the issue.



Dr. James Esson

Reader in Human Geography, Loughborough University

To tackle sports trafficking, Dr. Esson noted it is important to understand why people are forced into such situations to begin with. He posits that it is not poverty, but inequality, that fuels sports trafficking. He introduced the concept of those vulnerable to traffickers experiencing "involuntary immobility", where one is desperate to migrate to secure better living standards, but are unable to do so. Dr. Esson explained how some inspiring athletes may indeed be aware of the risks of trafficking, but their determination to pull themselves out of immediate poverty leads them to ask not whether they should take the risk, but how the risk can be mitigated.

As such, more research is needed on: the rights and responsibilities of those around victims; how survivor advocate input can be integrated into the approaches taken to address trafficking; and ensuring policy-making is evidence based.



Lerina Bright

CEO, Mission 89

Lerina Bright encouraged governments to work with stakeholders to inform laws that protect young people from sports trafficking. She distinguished between destination and transit countries, pointing out that vital questions are often asked in destination countries.

She also argued that a lack of data on sports trafficking must not act as an obstacle to designing solutions. Lerina highlighted that countries which experience patterns of migration due to sports trafficking (transit countries) are less concerned with the lack of data, and more concerned with understanding the experiences of victims. In both transit and destination countries, trafficking must be seen as a financial crime, not an immigration crime.

Lerina added that due to the effective marketing applied by traffickers, they are able to pose as sports agents even in the most remote villages. She pointed to the utility of delivering awareness-raising campaigns before mega-sporting events. Presently, the Uruguayan Football Association is collaborating with Mission 89 in delivering an awareness-raising campaign in response to an upsurge in the number of young people crossing Uruguay's borders.

Recommendations & Initiatives

During the Roundtable, the speakers shared their knowledge and research on sports trafficking, and ways of addressing and tackling the issue.



Ellen Chiwenga

FIFA Match Agent

As a football agent, Ellen Chiwenga suggested that direct engagement with young people, and their environments, is important in tackling sports trafficking. She encouraged Officials to engage with schools to raise awareness of sports trafficking, particularly with tangible communications materials that students can take with them.

Additionally, schools can be used as hosts of safe and legal sports academies. This, she argues, can reach and educate both young people and their families, and prevent young people from unknowingly entering illegal sports academies.

At major sporting tournaments, there should be a focus on awareness-raising. This can mean including an awareness-raising clause in advertisement contracts between tournaments and their partners.

Ellen also highlighted that to tackle the root cause of sports trafficking, there must be a focus on advancing the football economies within vulnerable countries themselves.



Claudia Villa-Hughes

Head of Safeguarding, Commonwealth Games Federation

Claudia Villa-Hughes recognised the importance of safeguarding in sport at all levels. The safeguarding approach should be athlete-centered. She puts forward that if victims are found, it is important to adopt an approach that is trauma-centered and informed by knowledge of survivorship. To do this, there should be a focused effort on training staff and raising awareness around the issues of trafficking.

She explained that the Commonwealth Games Federation wish to lead by example to ensure best practices are implemented before, during, and after the Games. The Commonwealth Games Federation has adopted a multi-agency approach by holding meetings with the city council and police to ensure a coordinated response.

The Federation have also ensured that parental consent forms have been required for all first-time athletes aged under 18. These forms require a vetted, designated lead for the child's safeguarding.

Recommendations & Initiatives

During the Roundtable, the speakers shared their knowledge and research on sports trafficking, and ways of addressing and tackling the issue.



Elaine Mitchel-Hill

ESG & Human Rights Director, Marshalls Plc

Elaine Mitchel-Hill presented initiatives taken by Marshalls Plc to address and tackle human trafficking, stating that the construction sector often carries the risk of human trafficking. As Marshalls Plc are supplying the materials for the Commonwealth Games 2022, they are currently mapping their supply chains on anti-trafficking mapping hubs.

Prior to the Games, Marshalls Plc has printed the contact number of a modern slavery hotline on the back of UK lorries entering construction sites. They have also provided training for lorry drivers to spot the signs of trafficking. In one instance, a driver was able to provide dashboard camera footage to a criminal case when he observed something suspicious.

Since 2018, their 'Power of Logistics Initiatives' has collaborated with CrimeStoppers to get monitoring capabilities where local law enforcement struggle.

She argued that even asking basic questions about one's supply chain is important in opening up an investigative approach to understanding where labour and materials are coming from. She used the case study of: small businesses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo not under the pressure to ask questions of due diligence; and contractors from Vietnam reporting that companies do not ask questions of their suppliers.

Elaine also explained that Marshalls Plc have overseas initiatives to address labour exploitation, and are working with the United Nations and International Labour Organisation working groups. Succinctly put, Elaine concluded "We should be looking to influence the context in which that supply chain lives"

CPA UK

Westminster Hall | Houses of Parliament | London | SW1A 0AA

T: +44 (0)207 219 5373

W: www.uk-cpa.org

E: cpauk@parliament.uk