

JULY 2022

# Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Newsletter



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### COMMONWEALTH GAMES 2022

Read about why this year's Commonwealth Games are about more than just sports.

### DR. MARCEL VAN DER WATT

In a fascinating interview, Dr. Watt explores how victims of trafficking can become traffickers themselves, and how the whole web of shadowy enterprise interlinks.

*"With multi-stakeholder participation, and a collaborative outlook, we can disrupt, and expectantly stop, the rules of this cruel game played by human traffickers."*

Rt Hon. Karen Bradley MP, The Parliamentarian

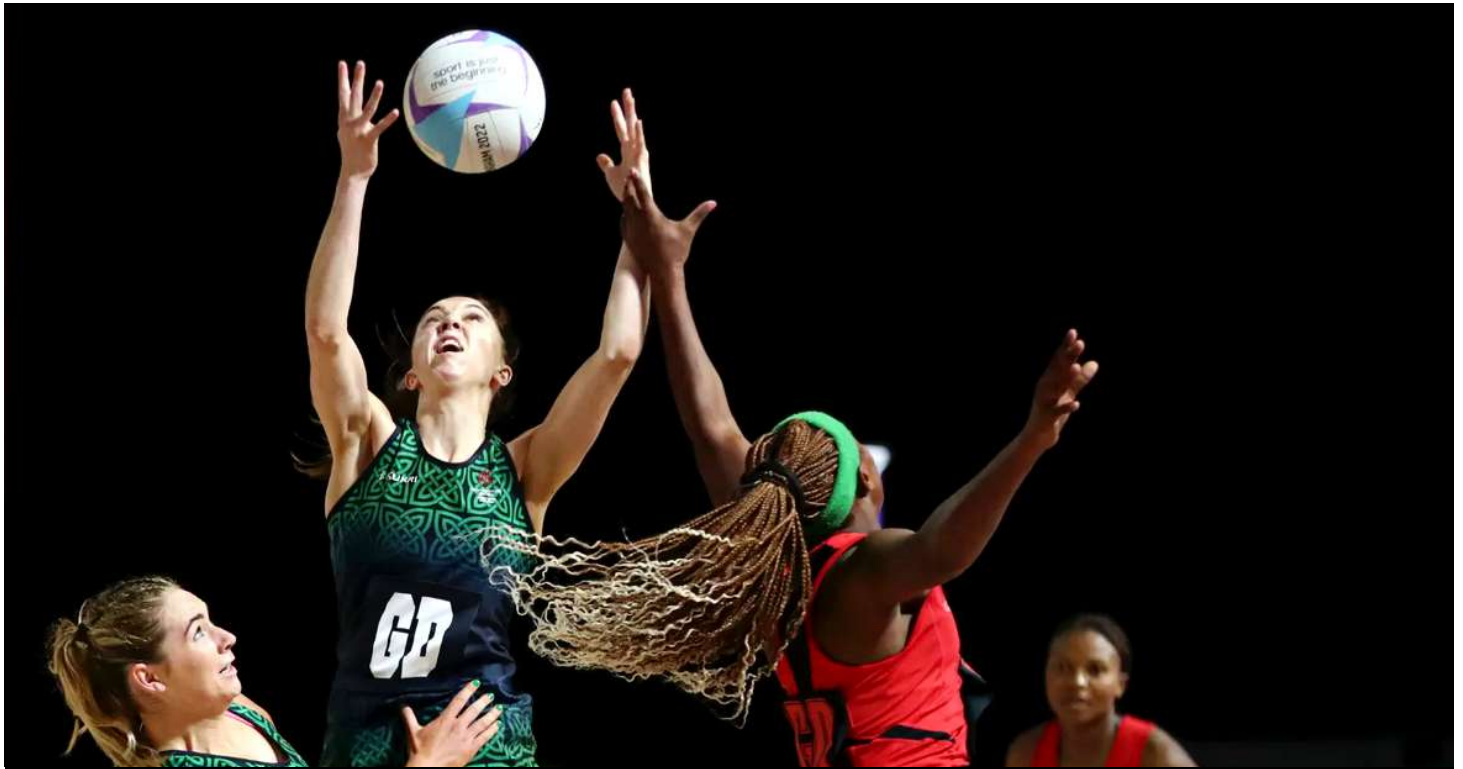
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# Commonwealth Games 2022



Netball players from Northern Ireland and Malawi compete in the Commonwealth Games 2022. [Photo credit: Morgan Harlow/Getty Images](#)

## The Commonwealth Games is a perfect metaphor for the progress that can be achieved when communities connect

On the evening of Thursday 28th July, the skies of Birmingham, UK, lit up in a show of colour and firework splendor. Just eleven days later, the Games closed after welcoming seventy-two nations and featuring the largest intake of female athletes and Para-sport competitors in its entire history.

This progressive development in the Games is indicative of the relevance of the Commonwealth community and affirms that keeping alive communication across communities and countries brings opportunity and cause for collaboration.

Just as the Commonwealth Games 2022 brought together those communities and countries, so does much of CPA UK's work on addressing issues of modern slavery and human trafficking.

Holding a diverse portfolio of events, CPA UK's work has invited parliamentarians, advocates, and experts to learn and network with a collaborative enthusiasm.

If you would like to learn more about CPA UK's work and access the resources from past events, [click here](#).

# Researcher in the field: Dr. Marcel van der Watt



## Police Investigator to Research Director: Dr. Watt on his eye-witness accounts and investigations into human trafficking

Whilst working in the South African police force, did you encounter a large amount of sports trafficking, or was it an underdiscussed topic?

During this time, I did not encounter any incident that was framed as 'sports trafficking' per se. However, during multiple sex trafficking investigations, where the focus was primarily on the actions of the trafficker, those I interrogated and/or charged with the crime of trafficking in persons did submit some interesting accounts.

This included descriptions of how they were lured to South Africa with prospects to make money in the run-up to the FIFA Soccer World Cup 2010. Some of these 'opportunities' included being able to work

for their fellow countrymen whose businesses will be 'booming' during this period, including the cellular industry, car

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washes, and spaza shops (informal convenience shops).

Others, however, claimed to have been skillful football players, including playing semi-professional football in their home countries, including Nigeria, Cameroon, and Uganda.

They would then pay a fairly large sum of money to the person who 'recruits' them and agree to start at the bottom of the football ladder. This could be as basic as a random group of guys playing football on a public field or joining a non-rated football club.

On arrival in South Africa, some of these men soon realize that their football skills are leveraged by others for small-time gambling operations associated with the football games, and they would be paid a small amount of money generated from the bets. Others stated that football became an ad-hoc activity to what they were now mobilised to do, namely selling drugs and/or helping in the prostitution business.

Both groups of men, those who played football and those who immediately became involved in crime, were usually under some form of debt bondage for all the costs incurred by their recruiter. Their income was menial, and they still had to pay rent, food, and transportation. Being undocumented in the country and/or being in possession of fraudulent travel documents also placed them in a precarious situation.

They alleged that within a matter of days or weeks, they were stranded with few options other than working within a network of pimps, drug dealers, and traffickers.

In a police service that is bogged down with massive caseloads and insufficient resources, it was very difficult to verify these claims. Moreover, the notion that traffickers themselves can also be victims of trafficking (i.e. criminal exploitation) received very little attention during this time.

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"Mitchell\* was given the option to play football and help manage a football club ... The promises were fleeting and Mitchell\* soon became acutely vulnerable. He was then pressured into getting involved with 'the business', which included drug dealing, pimping, and human trafficking"

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It was only during my own doctoral research in 2015 when I interviewed a participant from Nigeria, Mitchell\*, who self-identified as a former pimp turned human trafficker. He provided a very similar account to the others and ended up involved in drug dealing and human trafficking in South Africa, after he lost approximately one million Naira for failed attempts to obtain visas to play football in Ukraine and Denmark.

He, too, was given the option to play football and help manage a football club by a fellow Nigerian countryman. The promises were fleeting and Mitchell\* soon became acutely vulnerable. He was then pressured into getting involved with 'the business' which included drug dealing,

pimping, and human trafficking. As pointed out by Mitchell\*:

*"Every day I'm begging money for food, for airtime, so it's not gonna be good for me. So I have to decide 'cause I don't have a choice. So I told him that I will learn the business."*

What remains particularly striking to me is the largely unexplored role of sex buyers as a financial source used by traffickers and pimps to fund a range of overlapping illicit activities - fraud, forgery, corruption, smuggling - that intersperse with what we now refer to as 'sports trafficking'.

Sex buyers rarely even get a slap on the wrist, yet their contribution to both unthinkable physical and psychological violence to many trapped in the sex trade, and their fingerprints on money that is used to fund a range of criminal activities cannot be discounted. We know that traffickers pocket the money from sex trafficking operations, but it is sex buyers who pay the money.

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These crimes and the methods used to commit them - the football ruse, debt bondage, and induced vulnerability - do not exist in isolation, but form part of an arsenal of tactics that are effectively used by human trafficking networks.

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**Why is there such great importance in including the stories of survivor advocates in legislative writing and policymaking? How can these stories be included in these practices more frequently?**

Survivors have actually 'lived' what many others only hear or hypothesize about. They play an integral role in paving the bridge between theory and practice. Survivor advocates can help identify the

blind spots and unintended consequences of laws and policies that are incongruent with real-world realities.

Moreover, survivors often have an in-depth understanding of the different components, processes, and actors in criminal networks and can provide valuable insights into how networked operations are configured.

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The nuanced and agile nature of these criminal activities, and their physical, emotional, and psychological burden on victims, must be fully grasped and acknowledged by legislators and policy makers. Briefings and testimonies by survivor advocates must be elevated as a prerequisite for legislative writing and policymaking.

**Despite increased awareness around sports trafficking, why do you think the issue still remains so evident?**

The crime remains immensely complex and the multidisciplinary approach to on-the-ground investigations is often lacking.

As pointed out elsewhere: "The complexity of human trafficking results from the interaction of a range of factors, which includes: The nature of the crime, which should be understood as a process rather than a singular event; the range of perpetrators, from single perpetrators to large international organizations; the seemingly endless ways in which humans are exploited, such as through sex, labour, domestic, baby farms, organ harvesting, and so on; and the variety of contextual social, economic, and cultural factors (Van der Watt & Van der Westhuizen, 2017, p. 219).

These factors are equally present in what we now refer to as sports trafficking. The vice and the value of technology and the fact that the crime is committed in both the online and offline arena makes this a phenomenon that is hard to pin down.

The scoreboard in the ongoing 'battle of wits' between the counter-trafficking community, and the human trafficking system that it seeks to combat currently slants in favour of agile human trafficking networks. Meaningful change will come when consumer-level demand for commercial sex and forced labour are constrained, and when the barter in human beings is financially disincentivised.

This requires collective compassion and commitment to a world where all people can live and love with dignity and be free from any form of sexual violence and exploitation.

**Marcel van der Watt is the Director of the Research Institute at the National Center on Sexual Exploitation in Washington, D.C.**



# PHOTO OF THE MONTH

# UK

Commonwealth Games 2022  
competitors in the 100m event.

Photo by Ryan Pierse/Getty Images



If you would like to feature a photo as our Photo of the Month,  
email us at [cpauk@parliament.uk](mailto:cpauk@parliament.uk)



# The Parliamentarian on the Roundtable



## A Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with a Single Step: 'What Now' after the Roundtable?

The Sport Trafficking Roundtable featured in The Parliamentarian was a brilliant opportunity for parliamentarians, researchers, activists, and industry practitioners to share experiences and ideas on how to address sports trafficking.

Chairing the Roundtable was Rt Hon. Karen Bradley MP, who delivered an article to The Parliamentarian, a journal for parliamentarians around the Commonwealth. The article details the crucial differences between human trafficking in, through, and around sport, and makes reference to discussions in the Roundtable as to why these distinctions are important to understand.

She also provides a concluding piece on what professionals can do, and points to the expertly informed resources by CPA UK.

Read the full article [here](#).

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*"In January of this year, I discussed with CPA UK about my role as a Parliamentarian concerned with issues of human trafficking...and CPA UK's recent Roundtable Discussion on Sport Trafficking delivered just that."*

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# Resources

To address the issue of human trafficking through sport, CPA UK and Mission 89 have teamed up to produce tailored resources for parliamentarians, the public, and border officials. These resources are completely free to download and easily printable. They can be used at any time, at your own discretion. You will find advice on distributing these materials in the pages below.


We ask that you keep intact the CPA UK, Commonwealth-in-Chair, and Mission 89 logos on the leaflets and posters.


## Resources to share with the public

 [Animation video](#)

 [Leaflet for the general public](#)

 [Poster for the general public](#)


 [E-Banner](#)

 [Workshop Resource Pack](#)




## For Parliamentarians


 [Leaflet for parliamentarians](#)

 [Poster for parliamentarians](#)



## For Border Officials

 [Leaflet for border officials](#)

 [Poster for border officials](#)





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