



KALAYAAN

justice for migrant domestic workers

Response to Draft Modern Slavery Bill

December 2013

Kalayaan considers the lack of additional support measures for victims of trafficking in the Draft Modern Slavery Bill, published on the 16 December 2013 to be a missed opportunity. In particular we had hoped for a parallel commitment to reinstate the original Overseas Domestic Worker visa, a system proven to allow some protections against the abuse of this particularly vulnerable group of migrants. We consider the Government's defence that information leaflets are supposedly given to migrant domestic workers when they apply to enter the UK absurd: In our experience most migrant domestic workers do not receive this information and without rights which they can access in practise an information leaflet is no help anyway.

Domestic servitude remains both prevalent and hidden in the UK and evidence shows that measures introduced in April 2012 which tie migrant domestic workers to their employer, preventing them from leaving have both increased the abuse of migrant domestic workers while criminalising and driving the victims underground¹. To date there has only been one successful prosecution for trafficking an adult for domestic servitude. As we submitted in our written and oral evidence to the Modern Slavery Bill Evidence Review, in order for migrant domestic workers to come forward and give evidence to allow for successful prosecutions they must be supported in law to do so. In contrast the current immigration rules play into the hands of their exploiters.

We are encouraged that the Report of the Modern Slavery Bill Evidence Review acknowledges the problems with the current tied visa and states that it exposes domestic workers to the risk of exploitation. However we believe that the recommendations to 'consider the reinstatement of the right to change employer' do not go far enough. The original visa was recognised internationally as best practise and should be reinstated in its entirety. In the meantime, while considerations are made and debated we are failing the victims.

For more information please contact Kate Roberts at Kalayaan kate@kalayaan.org.uk

¹ See Kalayaan briefing 'Slavery by another name: the tied migrant domestic worker visa' on impact of tied visa one year on, May 2013.