

Donor shortage threatens rare-blood carriers



Wang Rui



Cheng Juanping



Bao Sanming



Wang Mang



Zhao Cui'ai



Liu Qianjing



Shen Zhilong



Zhu Qi



Cheng Ling

Volunteers proudly display their blood donation certificates. The China RH Union is looking for more donors to help the small number of people with rhesus negative blood in China. [Photos/China Daily]

Only a small number of people in China have rhesus negative blood, and a lack of supplies can be potentially life-threatening if they need an urgent transfusion. Zhou Wenting reports from Shanghai.

Xie Yingfeng recently quit his job to devote himself to an NGO that helps people with a rare blood type find donors who could potentially save their lives.

There are four human blood types: A, B, AB, and O. Each has a rhesus factor, either positive or negative. Generally, people with rhesus negative blood can only receive transfusions of their own type, while rhesus positive carriers

can receive blood from both positive and negative donors.

Only three in every 1,000 Chinese has rhesus negative blood, so in the words of an old phrase they are “as rare as a panda”, which has led to it being known as “panda blood”. Moreover, many people have no idea whether their blood type is rhesus negative or positive until they need a transfusion.

The small number of people with rhesus negative blood means there is an equally small number of donors, which poses serious problems for people who require urgent transfusions, especially women who have postpartum hemorrhages.

Volunteers

Xie, 38, is the Shanghai regional head of the China RH Union, an NGO founded by volunteers in Beijing, most of whom have rhesus negative blood. Nationally the organization has about 4,000 members.

Every year, the Shanghai branch assists about 40 people who approach it in search of blood donations. For each case, Xie may receive as many as 200 phone calls from the patient’s family, volunteers, friends and even strangers who have read online posts for donors.

“It’s hard for me to do 9-to-5 office work because my phone is likely to ring constantly,” said the former construction materials salesman, who is currently living on his savings, but is considering selling delicacies from his hometown of Urumqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, to earn more money.

On a typical day, he spends hours confirming patients’ requests, rushing to the hospital or calling their physicians, and accompanying volunteers when they donate blood.

“The aim behind the union is that when people of the same kind are in trouble, we can stand up for each other,” said Xie, who is rhesus negative himself. In the 12 years since it was founded, the union has helped more than 3,000 people nationwide.

Having spent 12 years helping other people, Xie has become less interested in material wealth, which is another reason he quit his job.

The union was founded in 2005 by Beijing resident Wang Yong, who was deeply touched by media coverage of a rhesus negative leukemia patient who had been forced to abandon medical treatment because of a shortage of suitable donors.

Although Wang has a positive blood type, he began researching the condition and discovered that millions of people across the country are carriers: “I was an IT engineer, so I set up an online platform to make it less difficult to obtain blood for this small group.”

At first, the union—which has branches in 26 provinces and municipalities—received just one or two calls a week, but it now fields as many as 20 a day. The regional heads, who never turn off their cellphones in case they are

called for help, collect information about patients, verify their medical information, post messages to volunteers via an online chat group and search for donors.

A precious resource

According to the union's rules, six months must elapse between each donation, while people recovering from a cold or who have taken medicine have to wait a week after the all-clear before they are allowed to give blood. Women who are menstruating or breastfeeding are not allowed to donate. "Most of us don't visit centers to donate blood regularly. Our resource is fairly precious, so we must make every drop count," Xie said.

According to Wang, the largest amount donated by a single volunteer was 20,000 cubic centimeters, roughly five times the volume of blood in the average adult body, which required at least 50 separate donations.

"Some volunteers have stopped smoking or drinking alcohol and going to bed late to ensure they are healthy enough to make an urgent blood donation. Some slender women have even attempted to gain weight to meet the requirement that donors must weigh at least 45 kilograms," he said.

The regional heads usually look for candidates within their home province or municipality, but sometimes volunteers rush to distant locations to donate blood.

In February, the union's branch in Anhui province was looking for donors with B negative blood for a 60-something woman who was awaiting surgery. No one could be found within the immediate locality, but Kang Huiming, a primary school teacher in Lianshui county, Jiangsu province, volunteered to help. That night she asked a friend to drive her to the hospital, six hours from her home.

"It's not about showing your benevolence—it's about saving a life," Kang said.

Although the number of members has grown gradually, some quit the union after a couple of years.

"When they first join, some people feel like they are superman and can help anybody. But if their help fails to save a life, it's hard to drag them out of the low mood," Wang said.

Xie, in Shanghai, recalled an unsuccessful attempt to save the life of a 7-year-old girl with leukemia. Having received a phone call from the girl's mother, he immediately started looking for donors. Eventually, he contacted a suitable volunteer, but the man was on a business trip to Henan province in Central China. Desperate to help, the volunteer concluded his trip, flew back to Shanghai and rushed to the hospital. Unfortunately, the girl died just as he arrived.

"Many of the volunteers were sleepless that night. The volunteer who flew back even blamed himself for taking the trip," Xie said.

Others have been lured away by money. Trading in blood is illegal under Chinese law, but “black” collection and supply agencies still exist. According to Xie, 400 cc of rhesus negative blood can fetch more than 20,000 yuan (\$2,900) on the black market.

Decisions and pressure

The biggest pressure Xie faces comes when he has to decide whether to ask volunteers to donate blood to someone with a minimal chance of survival.

In May, he was approached by the father of a 2-year-old boy who had double kidney failure and was about to have a transplant. The man was hoping to obtain 3,000 cc of rhesus negative blood.

“The hospital said the transplant stood very little chance of success. To provide 3,000 cc, we would have needed eight donors, but their blood might save eight other patients who have a better chance of survival,” he said. Reluctantly, Xie declined the father’s request. He later discovered that the parents had bought blood from illegal dealers, but the boy died during surgery.

“In such cases, I shoulder overwhelming pressure from the volunteers, the patient’s family and my friends, but after all these years, I’ve become more rational. The truth is that we can’t always provide assistance in time or help people endlessly,” he said.

Wang has considered leaving the union on several occasions, but hasn’t been able to bring himself to abandon the cause.

“The simple act of disseminating a message can sometimes save the life of someone who may have no other way out,” he said.

Speech: “We need a more forceful and unified UN approach to human trafficking and modern slavery and forced labour”

I’d like to begin by thanking all four of our excellent briefers. And by paying particular tribute to our civil society briefer Ilwad Elman for bringing home to us the devastating impact of trafficking and slavery in conflict. She gave voice to the 46 million men, women and children caught up in this tragedy across the world.

I’m glad that so many Ministers are here today to hear that testimony – and

I'm grateful to them and to all Council members for their statements. The fullest response from each and every member of the United Nations is needed and I look forward to hearing the views of countries from outside the Security Council shortly.

Because, as we have heard so clearly, modern slavery is a global problem; one that extends far beyond the fifteen countries sat at this table. It exists in nearly all societies, including my own. It does not respect borders or jurisdictions. It does not recognise the dignity or worth of the human person. It just sees opportunities to exploit, lives to destroy.

If we could hear the millions who are being coerced and exploited today, their unwavering message to us would be that we have simply not done enough. That we have shut our eyes and dulled our senses to a crime we hoped had been consigned to history.

And that's why the United Kingdom called this open debate today. It's why my Prime Minister Theresa May first raised this issue at UNGA last year and plans to do so again later this year. And it's why we are taking such strong action in our own country and across the world, so that together we can eradicate it.

We know the root causes. Poverty, conflict and instability lie at the heart of so many victims' suffering. When a state's authority is eroded, when its responsibility to its people is unfulfilled, organised criminal networks thrive, partnering with armed groups and terrorists to prey on the vulnerable, to prey on those who have already suffered far too much.

We know what follows. Sexual exploitation and sexual slavery. Forced labour and child labour. Human rights in tatters. Conflict exploited, conflict sustained.

This should be a familiar tale to this Council. We heard it ourselves in north-eastern Nigeria only last week. We saw it in the hands in the air when we asked the women there whether they'd lost a child to Boko Haram. We saw it in their tears as they spoke of abducted daughters, of mass rapes, of grandchildren being born only to be enslaved.

And in response, we need a more forceful and unified UN approach to human trafficking and modern slavery and forced labour. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report in November on exactly that. And we encourage him to focus on making existing structures work effectively, including the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons.

We also need to combine our efforts across the mandates entrusted in us. We in this Council have a responsibility, no a duty, to maintain international peace and security, to end the instability in which modern slavery thrives. And as UN members, we have frameworks for action; the 2030 Agenda commitment to end trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour, and the General Assembly's Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

But we also need to take responsibility as individual Member States. This

means doing more to disrupt and disband serious organised criminal networks engaged in people trafficking. It means all of us ratifying the 1956 Convention and the ILO Forced Labour Convention Protocol. And it means taking real steps to strengthen our own national systems to identify, investigate and prosecute those committing these abhorrent crimes.

If we take these steps, at home and here in the UN, we will have begun to turn the page. But for us truly to consign this terrible tragedy to the history books, we will need sustained commitment that endures long after this session is over. Modern slavery must become a recurring theme for this Council, and one for other parts of the UN to return to – including at this year's UNGA – so that we can accelerate our efforts to end this abhorrent practice once and for all.

Thank you.

[Press release: New grant for council homelessness services](#)

The government is transforming the way councils fund homelessness services, giving them greater flexibility to prioritise homelessness prevention, Communities Minister Marcus Jones has confirmed.

The new 'flexible homelessness support grant' is a radical replacement of the tightly controlled funding currently given to source and manage temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and their families.

Under the existing 'temporary accommodation management fee', funding can only be used for expensive intervention when a household is already homeless, rather than on preventing this happening in the first place.

The new grant will empower councils with the freedom to support the full range of homelessness services. This could include employing a homelessness prevention or tenancy support officer to work closely with people who are at risk of losing their homes.

Communities Minister Marcus Jones said:

This government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society, which is why we're investing £550 million to 2020 to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

We've brought in a raft of measures over the last few months, from funding homelessness projects in 225 local authorities to changing the law by backing Bob Blackman's Homelessness Reduction Bill to

support for more people at risk of losing their homes.

We're now going further and giving councils greater flexibility, so they can move away from costly intervention when a household is already homeless, to preventing this happening in the first place.

Councils across England will receive £402 million over the next 2 years. No local authority will receive less annual funding under the grant than we estimate they would have received under the Department for Work and Pensions fee. First year allocations will also include an additional amount to authorities with high temporary accommodation commitments.

Compared to the old system, we estimate that London councils will receive around £20 million more next year and that other high pressure areas, including Leeds, Birmingham, Reading, Peterborough and Portsmouth, will also gain significant additional funding.

In recognition of the particular pressures which London councils face, we are also setting aside £25 million of the funding across the 2 years while we work with the Greater London Authority and London boroughs to look at how we might help councils collaborate in the procurement of accommodation for homeless families in London.

The new grant forms part of the wide range of measures the government is taking to prevent people from becoming homeless.

This includes:

- protecting and maintaining the funding for councils to provide homelessness prevention services at £315 million over the 4 years to 2019-20; £20 million to support innovative approaches in local areas to tackle and prevent homelessness
- a £20 million rough sleeping prevention fund to help individuals at risk or new to the streets get back on their feet
- a £10 million Social Impact Bond programme to help long-term rough sleepers
- £61 million for councils to implement the measures in the Homelessness Reduction Bill, which will change the law to provide vital support for more people at risk of losing their homes

The former Chancellor announced at Autumn Statement 2015 that the Department for Work and Pensions' temporary accommodation management fee would be replaced by a Department for Communities and Local Government grant from April 2017.

The new flexible homelessness support grant will come in from 1 April 2017. It is based on a completely new funding model so resources are directed to the areas with the greatest need and which allows councils to plan their homelessness services with certainty.

The funding allocated for the 2 years from 2017 to 2018 is £186 million and £191 million. A further £25 million has been set aside for London boroughs to work together to provide accommodation for homeless families in the capital.

See the [allocations for the new grant](#).

[Speech: Working together to end modern slavery](#)

I am delighted to be here today at the launch of RUSI's new report into the role financial institutions can play in tackling modern slavery.

Events like these are so important because however hard we might try – slavery is not something that the government can tackle alone.

We need all of you in this room to collaborate – bringing your tools, expertise and knowledge together to combat what the Prime Minister has rightly called 'the greatest human rights issue of our time'.

And I want to start today by telling you a story about a young woman – I'm going to call her J.

J was a bright girl who came to the UK to study from Asia. She met a woman from her own community at a local temple who encouraged her to come to the cafe she owned to speak to customers to practice her English.

At first it went well. J spent time at the cafe and her English improved.

But slowly the cafe owner began to demand more and more and became abusive towards J.

She found herself totally trapped and forced to work for 14 hours a day, with limited toilet breaks, no heating and no food or drink at all during working hours.

Life became intolerable. She lost contact with friends and was kicked out of college because she wasn't turning up anymore because she was always manning the cafe.

She was too scared to go to the police because her captor threatened her and her family and her health deteriorated.

But in 2014, supported by a British Transport Police officer, J escaped and was referred to the Salvation Army who placed her in a safe house which helped her to rebuild her life.

And when I met J in the summer, it was clear that although she had been controlled, degraded and mistreated, a much better future was now in sight for her.

J's story is a reminder to all of us that slavery is not consigned to history. It is happening here and it is happening now.

200 years ago Britain abolished the slave trade and the British Navy set out to eradicate slavery overseas. And yet there are currently 10-13,000 people enslaved in Britain and an estimated 45.8 million victims of modern slavery worldwide.

But as Home Secretary I am determined to do all I can to protect and support victims of this horrible crime and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

In 2015 the government introduced the world-leading Modern Slavery Act. We gave law enforcement agencies new powers to tackle modern slavery, we introduced maximum life sentences for perpetrators and we enhanced the protections available for victims.

Introducing the act sent a clear message that the UK will not tolerate this terrible crime.

We also introduced the ground-breaking transparency in supply chain provision, requiring large businesses to set out the steps they have taken in the last 12 months to ensure there is no modern slavery in their business or in their supply chains. Since these statements became compulsory, thousands of businesses have published them. Other countries now look to our work in this area as the gold standard.

But just because we have legislation in place does not mean that the problem is solved. That's why the Prime Minister personally chairs the first ever modern slavery taskforce with every relevant department attending, to keep a grip on the issue and drive forward our operational response. This is a priority for her as it is for the government.

And we are seeing the results of our efforts. More victims of modern slavery are being rescued and supported and more perpetrators are being brought to justice. There were 113 convictions in 2015 and we expect more convictions under the Modern Slavery Act this year.

At the end of January, 2 brothers who trafficked 18 people from Poland to the UK and conned and threatened them were jailed for 6 years after being prosecuted for offences under the Modern Slavery Act.

They had forced the vulnerable men to work at the Sports Direct warehouse in Shirebrook in Derbyshire and they had controlled their bank accounts and kept most of their wages.

These men had hoped for a new life in Britain but the reality was squalid living conditions and near total control by their captors.

These men came from Poland but were trafficked to Britain, a reminder that modern slavery spans countries and borders and we need to have an international and not just a national approach.

And I am proud that we are leading work to develop a global response to slavery and that this is one of our top foreign priorities.

We need to make sure that we are working collaboratively with law enforcement agencies around the world to stop gangs that operate across borders and across jurisdictions.

And we have committed to investing £33.5 million of overseas aid funding to tackle the root causes of modern slavery.

We will focus on those high-risk countries where we know victims are regularly trafficked to the UK. And as I announced in October, £11 million of this money is for our dedicated Modern Slavery Innovation Fund used to support, trial and test new innovative ways of tackling modern slavery overseas.

And today I am very pleased to announce that we will be spending £6 million from this £11 million fund on 10 new projects. These projects will support victims directly, tackle slavery in supply chains and help to share skills and expertise with overseas partners.

Working with NGOs, academics and international organisations, the projects will test a range of activities to build up evidence of what works in addressing modern slavery.

So let me tell you about some of these projects.

We will be investing over £1 million in UN University, the research and academic arm of the UN. Funding will allow them to gather together modern slavery data from around the world and encourage its use by researchers and policy makers.

UN University will accelerate and coordinate the global exchange of data and research on modern slavery and will therefore improve the work done to tackle modern slavery right across the globe.

We will also be giving funding of over £140,000 to St Mary's University to support research into the role of organised criminals in modern slavery. Looking at a number of countries and known trafficking routes, they will provide valuable insights into the networks that transport vulnerable people from overseas into the UK to be exploited.

And we will work with GoodWeave, an NGO transforming the South Asian rug sector with its work to end illegal child labour in manufacturing. GoodWeave has done excellent work with exporters and importers to ensure their supply chains are free from child labour. Our funding will allow them to expand this

work to other sectors in India which are known to be at high risk from modern slavery.

We want to make sure that the impact of this work is carefully assessed and we will commission a full review to examine the results.

But as the RUSI paper published today sets out, human trafficking and other forms of slavery continue to exist because they are profitable business models which are seen as relatively low risk by criminal groups. The International Labour Organisation estimates that the trade in human beings generates an enormous \$150 billion of profit a year for instance.

So if it's the money that's the incentive, then it's the money that we need to follow to really get to grips with the scourge of modern day slavery.

Indeed, following the money trail is a highly effective technique to attack organised crime.

And law enforcement agencies and the financial sector both hold information which is of great value to one another. By sharing this, law enforcement agencies can get vital intelligence to pursue the traffickers; and the banks can better understand the 'red flags' they need to look out for which could identify modern slavery, and better protect themselves.

In 2015 we launched the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce which is the mechanism that allows for this information sharing and I am very glad that so many of you here today are involved with this.

This is an example of public-private sector collaboration at its very best and we've already seen some great results.

In the last 18 months, the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce has provided tactical intelligence to law enforcement agencies on 21 human trafficking and modern slavery cases; work that has already supported a number of arrests and prosecutions.

The Criminal Finances Bill will make this taskforce even more effective, giving new protections to enable bank-to-bank information sharing as well as new powers for law enforcement to investigate the money laundering linked to modern slavery and to confiscate the proceeds of crime.

And I hope that banks will continue to support the strengthened partnership working that the taskforce has helped build and the more targeted intelligence that it is generating.

But as the RUSI paper explains, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for financial institutions in disrupting human trafficking and modern slavery.

All businesses and all banks need to ask themselves – what does modern slavery mean for us? What are we doing to prevent it?

In the audience we have representatives from the financial sector, the NCA and wider law enforcement and I want to see you all working together to

combat modern slavery.

And I want to see you sharing best practice. Financial institutions are often global and those of you based in the UK can play an important role promoting best practice and encouraging partner institutions to take a similar path to your own in overseas branches.

And I want to see you all implementing due diligence – ask the questions – who are my customers? What are they up to?

And if you're a business which buys goods and services, are you taking ambitious steps to ensure your own supply chains are slavery free and are you producing detailed and thorough transparency in supply chains statements?

If you're an investor – are you asking to see the transparency in supply chains statements of businesses before you invest in them? Are you considering that modern slavery is a potential business risk and calling for the businesses which you invest in to do more to address that risk?

And if you're a lender, what due diligence are you undertaking to ensure that your money will not be used to support projects involving modern slavery?

By doing all of this, you will not only manage your own company's financial, legal and reputational risks more effectively, you will also be significantly contributing to our collective efforts to end modern slavery in the UK and globally.

Tackling modern slavery is not and will not be easy, but we have a moral imperative to do all that we can.

Two centuries ago, it was a team effort to get slavery on English soil banned. Parliamentarians, women, slave revolt leaders and Quakers all played their part. And in 2017, tackling modern slavery still needs to be a group endeavour.

The more of us involved in the fight to stop the traffickers and the slave drivers, the more winnable the battle becomes.

[At Security Council, UN officials urge governments to implement rules on prosecuting traffickers](#)

15 March 2017 – Human trafficking thrives in countries where the rule of law is weak or non-existent, top United Nations officials today told the Security Council, calling on Governments to make better use of the tools created under

the UN flag to stop the victimization of men, women and children.

“At a time of divisions in so many areas, this should be an issue that can unite us,” Secretary-General António Guterres told the 15-member Council, stressing that “slavery is not a thing of the past.”

“Let us come together around the key issues of prosecution, protection and prevention, and thereby build a future without human trafficking,” he added.

The Secretary-General outlined a number of UN tools that exist which can be used to punish human trafficking, and to prevent it in the first place. Among them is the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol, which includes the first internationally agreed definition of the crime of trafficking in persons and provides a framework to effectively prevent and combat it.

He noted also the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions and the complementary Global Plan of Action on Human Trafficking. Approved in 2010, the Plan aims to better coordinate national responses to this scourge, and includes a UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

In his speech, Mr. Guterres called on Member States to strengthen intelligence-sharing and other law enforcement, while also addressing the underlying vulnerabilities of victims, such as educating girls, respecting the rights of minorities, and creating safe paths for migration.

He also called for engagement with the private sector, and cautioned that any support needs to incorporate the voices and views of the people affected.

RELATED: Treaties against human trafficking key to combating the scourge, supporting victims – UN anti-crime official

According to UNODC’s 2016 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, issued in late-December, victims of trafficking are found in 106 of 193 countries. Many of these are in conflict areas, where the crimes are not prosecuted.

“For organized crime networks, human trafficking is a low-risk, high-reward criminal business, a perception reinforced by the inexcusably low conviction rates still reported around the world,” told the Council Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of UNODC via videoconference from Vienna.

In addition to an estimated 21 million people around the world who are victims of forced labour and extreme exploitation, Mr. Fedotov discussed the threats facing refugees and displaced persons.

“As conflict displaces countless people, as the rule of law breaks down, as cooperation between countries falter, criminals see a clear business opportunity,” he noted.

The best way to counter trafficking and protect the most vulnerable is to fully implement and make sure of the frameworks already in place, Mr. Fedotov underscored.

He noted that the Global Plan of Action will be reviewed this October, and will focus on trafficking in conflict situations.

“I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity,” Mr. Fedotov told the Council.

Among the numerous speakers addressing the UN body today is Ashraf El Nour, Director, International Organization for Migration (IOM).