THE ELKES FOUNDATION

FREEDOM from SLAVERY FORUM

OCTOBER 5-7, 2017

Executive Summary

The Freedom from Slavery Forum is an annual gathering designed to bring leaders from the anti-slavery field together to coalesce, create partnerships, discuss promising practices, and develop a shared agenda for action. Each year, Forum participants build relationships and prioritize actions in areas such as advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, and collaboration with other sectors. Additionally, the Forum is meant to educate the public about the issues of modern slavery and human trafficking.

Accordingly, the 2017 Forum was a two and a half day event comprised of a public event, featuring author Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick, and private meetings for anti-slavery experts. As the fifth iteration of the Forum, this convening was designed with input from participants of the 2016 Forum along with the guidance of an Advisory Committee representing participating organizations. Five primary themes were prioritized for the 2017 Forum in response to the priorities established by participants. Each theme had an associated working group of Forum participants who met throughout the spring, summer, and fall to design their topic's session and prepare presentations on their group's findings.

Over fifty different organizations were represented at the Forum, and participants discussed the state of the anti-trafficking field as well as the following five major thematic priorities:

- Prevalence Studies and Determinants of Slavery: This group provided Forum attendees with an overview of the newly released global estimate of modern slavery, which was recently announced by the International Labor Organization and Walk Free Foundation. Additionally, this group also discussed the determinants of slavery.
- Applications of Technology: This breakout session provided participants with an opportunity to discuss how to use a design-thinking framework to solve complex problems. After an overview presentation, participants discussed the utility of technology for addressing both internal operational problems and challenges in the field. The group focused on applying the framework to specific challenges identified by participants.
- Intervention: What Works?: The goal of this breakout session was to take advantage of the wisdom and expertise of the Forum participants by discussing successful and challenging anti-slavery interventions, paying particular attention to voices of those participants working "on the ground." All participants were sent a two question survey ahead of the Forum asking for a specific recent success and a specific recent challenge they experienced with their work, and the group then used this information to guide discussions around the following topics: 1) Enforcement of Victims Rights; 2) Criminalization of Victims; 3) Corruption; and 4) Labor Rights and Worker Protection.
- Survivor Leadership and Inclusion: This group began with three main objectives for their presentation: 1) that participants would understand the importance of survivor leadership and involvement in anti-slavery work; 2) that a framework for what a survivor leadership program should look like would be clear; and 3) that participants would walk away feeling empowered to start a survivor leadership program at their own organization.
- Network and Coalition Building: The final group's topic was sparked by conversations had at the 2016 Forum around the idea of mobilizing the anti-slavery field to engage with Alliance 8.7. The group presented participants with an overview of Alliance 8.7, a draft strategy for civil society engagement with the Alliance, and a draft of potential shared principles and goals for the field to adopt. Forum participants were then asked to break into groups to strategize and offer feedback on the proposed ideas.

The evening before these conversations began, the Forum held its traditional public event, this year featuring a conversation between Maurice Middleberg of Free the Slaves and author Austin Choi-Fitzpatrick. The discussion centered around Choi-Fitzpatrick's new book, *What Slaveholders Think: How Contemporary Perpetrators Rationalize What They Do*, which unveils both slaveholders' moral blindness and the intricate power relationship that can make it difficult to emancipate enslaved workers.

Participants' evaluations of the Forum gave it a 4.3 out of 5 overall, including content, logistics, and venue. There was a marked interest in continuing to hold the Forum in 2018 and beyond, with consideration given to how to make it more inclusive and

representative while still maintaining its productivity. Participants agreed that the Forum should extend more invitations to survivors, grassroots workers, experts from developing countries, and perhaps leaders from other related fields in order to diversify and strengthen future conversations.