

# AFRICA REGIONAL FORUM

**Actionable Justice:**  
Implementing  
Effective Strategies  
and Raising  
Awareness to  
Combat Human  
Trafficking

**DATES: JULY 23-25, 2024**  
**LOCATION: ONLINE**



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# FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY FORUM SERIES



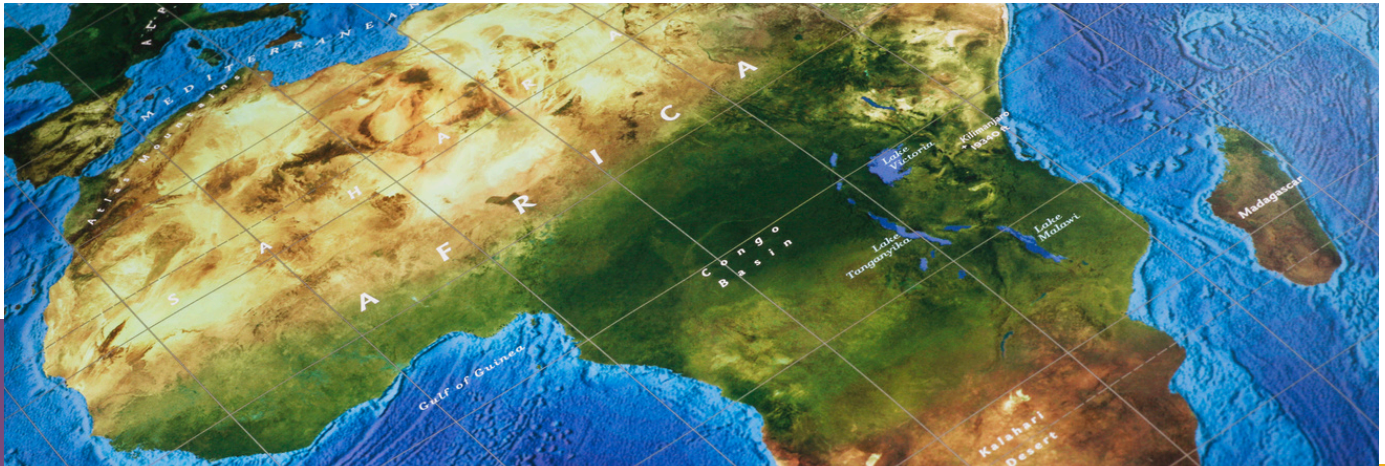
The Freedom from Slavery Forum was established in 2013 to gather anti-slavery leaders worldwide to create a space to merge, create partnerships, discuss promising practices, and develop a shared agenda for action. Participants have built relationships and prioritized actions in advocacy and collaboration with other sectors. In 2021, a series of Regional Forums supplemented the annual Global Forum. The 2022-2023 series took place online and in person, providing opportunities to increase access and ensuring grassroots ideas and voices were amplified within the movement. In 2024, the European Forum also became a separate entity, resulting in 7 forums held throughout the year: three in-person forums (North America, Caribbean, Europe) and four online forums (Latin America, Asia, Africa, and MENA). The series will conclude with the Global Forum in 2025.

# SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUMS



The objectives of the Regional Forums are **to explore and define critical strategies for local engagements, identify the best approaches to revitalize the movement, increase resilience and resistance to modern slavery, and determine how these engagements may inform the global synergies**. The Forum is a collegial space to unite stakeholders and strengthen the anti-modern slavery movement. The panels and workshops discuss opportunities, challenges, practices, strategies, and actions to eradicate modern slavery in the regions.

# AFRICA REGIONAL FORUM



The 2024 Africa Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum, which took place online on July 23-25, was organized around the theme “Actionable Justice: Implementing Effective Strategies and Raising Awareness to Combat Human Trafficking” The agenda for the forum was developed by an external committee that included the following organizations: Emmanuel World Children Foundation, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, HAART, Survivors’ Network SN, Africa Nalia, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

**Online**

**July 23-25, 2024**

**Actionable Justice:  
Implementing Effective  
Strategies and Raising  
Awareness to Combat Human  
Trafficking**

Through this forum, stakeholders from various sectors worked together to address the complexities of modern slavery and exploitation in Africa, while fostering a strategic and multi-stakeholder response to create lasting change.



## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM

The Forum seeks to unite a diverse network of justice advocates within the African anti-modern slavery movement under a shared framework. By integrating perspectives from survivors, civil society, governments, businesses, and NGOs, this framework will foster a more cohesive and coordinated continent-wide response to modern slavery.

Another core objective is to inspire collective action. By bringing together key stakeholders—governments, NGOs, businesses, civil society actors, and survivors—we aim to drive the development of an actionable plan. This plan will prioritize justice across three critical pillars: preventing modern slavery, protecting and empowering victims, and ensuring the effective prosecution of perpetrators.

## THE PLANNING OF THE FORUM

While Free the Slaves served as the Forum's secretariat, the success of this event was the result of collaborative efforts. We extend our gratitude to the external planning committee members, whose expertise, dedication, and partnership were essential in making this gathering possible.

**Forum Team:** Giselle Balfour, Aline Gaju, Bryon Lippincott, Bernadette Agano and Jackline Mwende.

### **External Committee:**

- Emanuel Adaramola – Emmanuel World Children Foundation
- Evans Munga - Terre des Hommes Netherlands.
- Brenda Odhiambo - HAART Survivor Advisory Board
- Eunice Foloh - Survivors' Network SN Cameroon
- Shivan Pavin Alungnat – Africa Naila
- Valeria Falaschi - Voice of the Free (Bulod Laya – Survivor Network)
- Linda Kola Odeko - Mindanaw

## Day One

The Forum kicked off with a dynamic focus on policy and advocacy, emphasizing the critical role of legal and systemic reforms in the fight against modern slavery. Speakers and experts highlighted strategies to strengthen legal protections for victims, ensure the prosecution of offenders, and prevent trafficking through more robust preventative measures. Collaborative discussions also explored how partnerships across sectors can drive impactful reforms and set realistic, yet ambitious, expectations for sustainable change across Africa.



### OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Bukeni Waruzi - Free the Slaves
- Awah Mbuli - Survivor Network
- Jackeline Mwende - Free the Slaves
- Nassima Gabrielle Clerin - IOM
- Evans Munga - Terre Des Hommes
- Dr. Mody Guirandou Ndiaye
- Brahim Abeid - Sahel Foundation of Human Rights
- George Achibra - PACODEP
- Issa Saka - Free the Slaves
- Annette Mbogoh - Kituo Cha Sheria
- Andrews Kananga - Legal Aid Forum
- Libere Ntamashimikiro - UNODC
- Ruth N.W Njuguna - CTIP, Government of Kenya
- Folashade Bamigboye - Kids and Teens Resource Center
- Angela Namatovu - Azali Women



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## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



Bukeni Waruzi opened the Africa Forum with a warm and passionate welcome, setting the tone for a collaborative and solution-driven event. He acknowledged the ongoing crisis of human trafficking and forced labor in Africa, where millions of individuals—many seeking better opportunities—find themselves trapped in exploitative practices.

Emphasizing the power of community-led solutions, Waruzi reminded participants that while these challenges arise within local contexts, the most sustainable and effective solutions must also be rooted in the knowledge and resilience of those communities. He highlighted the critical role of survivors, civil society leaders, academics, and international organizations in building a united front against modern slavery.

Drawing on firsthand experiences, Waruzi shared powerful stories of exploitation he witnessed on the ground: young boys in Ghana forced to work in the fishing industry instead of attending school, and Nigerian women trafficked into sexual exploitation in Senegal. These stories, he said, are not just statistics—they reflect the human cost of inaction and the urgency of addressing root causes through education, awareness, and practical interventions.

As he closed his remarks, Waruzi encouraged participants to fully engage in the Forum's discussions, share their expertise, and collaborate across sectors to drive meaningful action. He expressed hope that this gathering would spark new partnerships and result in actionable solutions that protect the vulnerable and hold perpetrators accountable.



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*"This forum is a better place, a space that helps us come together to discuss these issues, share knowledge, learn from each other, and work together as a network and coalition to tackle modern slavery, forced labor, and child labor. We all know that these issues happen locally in our own communities, and the solutions will come from our own communities as well."* - Bukeni Waruzi, Executive Director at Free the Slaves

## KEYNOTE SPEECH: WHAT DOES ACTIONABLE JUSTICE LOOK LIKE IN AFRICA?



Awah Francesca delivered a powerful and urgent keynote address, calling for actionable justice to be at the forefront of Africa's fight against human trafficking. She stressed the need to move beyond awareness campaigns and declarations toward concrete actions that center survivors' needs and dismantle the systems that fuel exploitation. Human trafficking, she said, is a crime that robs Africa of its most valuable resource—its people—and is perpetuated by poverty, weak governance, and impunity.

Francesca outlined key pillars of actionable justice, starting with prioritizing comprehensive support for survivors. She emphasized that justice is incomplete without ensuring that survivors have access to physical and mental health services, legal assistance, and meaningful opportunities to participate in anti-trafficking initiatives.

She also called for the empowerment of law enforcement, urging African governments to invest in equipping officers with the training and resources needed to dismantle trafficking networks, arrest perpetrators, and build strong cases that lead to successful prosecutions. Strengthening judicial systems is equally critical, Francesca noted, with reforms such as establishing specialized courts and training judges to handle trafficking cases swiftly and fairly.

Francesca further emphasized the importance of cross-border collaboration to combat trafficking networks that operate across national lines. She urged African nations to share intelligence, harmonize legal frameworks, and collaborate on investigations and prosecutions to improve outcomes.

Another critical focus of her speech was community engagement. She called for grassroots awareness campaigns that educate communities on how to identify warning signs, report suspected trafficking cases, and challenge the cultural norms that allow exploitation to persist. Francesca also highlighted the importance of recognizing intersectionality, explaining that individuals facing overlapping forms of discrimination—based on race, gender, class, disability, and more—are often at greater risk of being trafficked. Addressing these vulnerabilities is key to creating inclusive and effective solutions.

In closing, Francesca offered a message of hope and urgency. "Actionable justice is not a distant dream," she declared. "It is an attainable goal." She urged this generation to seize the moment and "break the chains of human trafficking," making justice a reality for all.



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*“Actionable justice for human trafficking is not a distant dream; it is a fight we can and will win. Let us hold ourselves and each other accountable. Let this be the generation that breaks the chains of human trafficking in Africa.” - Awah Francisca Mbuli, Survivor Network Cameroon*



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Prioritizing Victim Support: Prioritizing Survivor Support**

Comprehensive care is essential, including access to physical and mental health services, legal assistance, and opportunities for survivors to lead anti-trafficking efforts.

## **Empowering Law Enforcement**

Equipping law enforcement with proper training and resources is key to dismantling trafficking networks, apprehending perpetrators, and securing convictions.

## **Strengthening the Justice System**

Legal reforms, specialized courts, and trained judges are needed to ensure swift, fair trials that hold traffickers accountable.

## **Cross-Border Collaboration**

Regional cooperation is critical. African nations must share intelligence, align legal frameworks, and improve coordination in investigations and prosecutions.

## **Community Engagement**

Grassroots awareness campaigns and community action can help identify trafficking, report cases, and challenge the societal norms that enable exploitation.

## REFLECTING ON THE NUMBERS: WHAT ARE THE EMERGING TRENDS IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN AFRICA




Jackeline Mwende and Nassima Clerin provided a comprehensive overview of emerging trends in human trafficking across East, Central, West, and Horn of Africa regions, stressing how migration patterns, conflict, economic inequality, and environmental changes create fertile ground for exploitation. Mwende focused on East and Central Africa, where vulnerabilities are driven by a combination of factors, including political instability, corruption, economic disparity, and climate change-induced displacement. Labor trafficking remains the most common form of exploitation, affecting individuals in sectors such as agriculture, mining, construction, and domestic work. Other forms of trafficking include sexual exploitation, child soldier recruitment, and the alarming rise of organ trafficking. Mwende highlighted that over 5,200 trafficking cases were reported in East Africa in 2023, though underreporting likely conceals a much larger crisis.

She identified several systemic obstacles that hinder anti-trafficking efforts, including resource constraints, data gaps, and inadequate victim support services. Without shelters, legal aid, and trauma-informed care, many survivors face prolonged vulnerability even after escaping exploitation. To address these challenges, Mwende called for increased funding, more effective data collection, improved law enforcement training, and the expansion of survivor networks, which have shown success in countries like Kenya and the DRC, where survivors play a critical role in policy development and advocacy.

Nassima Clerin's presentation centered on West and Central Africa, where inter-regional migration plays a key role in human trafficking. With 83% of migrants moving between neighboring countries, many seek economic opportunities or family reunification, while others are forced to migrate due to conflict and environmental changes. However, irregular migration routes to Europe and North America expose thousands to trafficking networks and abuse. Clerin highlighted the dangers of the Western African Atlantic Route, which saw a rise in migrant deaths in 2023, making it one of the deadliest maritime pathways globally. A new migration route to Latin America is also emerging, as migrants attempt to reach the U.S. through Central America, increasing the risks of exploitation along the way.





In West and Central Africa, trafficking takes multiple forms. Women and girls, especially from Nigeria, are trafficked for sexual exploitation, while men, women, and children face forced labor in domestic work, agriculture, and mining. Traditional practices, such as entrusting children to Quranic schools, contribute to child trafficking, where boys are forced to beg under abusive conditions. An emerging concern is trafficking in sports, where young people are deceived by promises of professional football careers but are abandoned and exploited upon arrival. Clerin emphasized that addressing these issues requires cross-border collaboration, with African nations working together to share intelligence, harmonize legal frameworks, and improve investigative and prosecutorial outcomes. She also stressed the need for public awareness campaigns to help communities recognize and report trafficking and to challenge societal norms that allow these exploitative practices to persist.



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*"Survivors are the heart of our work. We need to move beyond seeing them only as victims and instead involve them as leaders and partners in shaping anti-trafficking strategies and policies."* -  
Jackeline Mwende, Senior Regional  
Manager for East and Central Africa,  
Free the Slaves



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Identifying Migration Patterns

Most migration in Africa occurs within the continent, with 21 million Africans living in another African country as of 2020. In West and Central Africa, 83% of migration remains within the region, driven by economic opportunities, family reunification, education, conflict, and environmental changes. However, tens of thousands take high-risk routes, facing abuse and trafficking. Particularly dangerous routes include the Western African Atlantic Route to the Canary Islands and an emerging migration path through Latin America, where migrants attempt to reach the U.S. via Panama or Nicaragua.

## Shared Challenges Across Regions

Human trafficking is closely tied to migration, poverty, and systemic issues such as conflict, corruption, and climate change. Both East, Central, and West Africa face critical gaps in data collection, resource shortages, and insufficient victim support systems, limiting the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts.

## Forms of Exploitation

Labor trafficking is the most widespread form of exploitation, particularly in agriculture, mining, construction, and domestic work. Sexual exploitation remains a major issue, disproportionately affecting women and girls. Child trafficking, including forced begging linked to traditional practices, child soldier recruitment, and hazardous labor, remains a serious concern. Emerging threats such as organ trafficking and trafficking in sports, where individuals are deceived with false promises of professional careers, highlight the evolving nature of exploitation in the region.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION 1 - WHAT IS STOPPING US: IDENTIFYING CRITICAL GAPS IN THE PREVENTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN AFRICA**

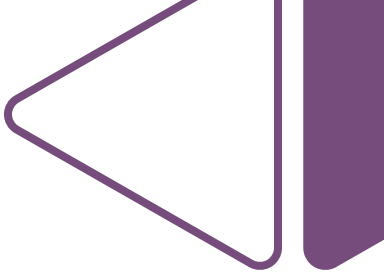


The panel discussion, moderated by Evans Munga, examined critical gaps in Africa's efforts to combat human trafficking, focusing on legislative weaknesses, data limitations, and the need for stronger regional collaboration. Panelists included Nassima Clerin (IOM), Dr. Mody Guirandou Ndiaye (Senegal National Agency on TIP), Brahim Abeid (Sahel Foundation of Human Rights), and George Achibra (PACODEP, Ghana).

George Achibra highlighted several pressing challenges, including weak legislation, limited public awareness, and inadequate survivor support. He underscored the need for better collaboration among stakeholders, increased funding, and stronger regional coordination. He also pointed to the lack of reliable data and the role of cultural norms and corruption in sustaining trafficking networks. To address these issues, he called for unified African efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, expand education initiatives, and address root causes like poverty and social vulnerabilities.

Nassima Clerin discussed the specific challenges facing West and Central Africa and introduced the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC), a global database tracking trafficking cases. She noted a troubling gap between the number of identified victims and those who actually receive assistance. Among the key obstacles she identified were limited alignment with the Palermo Protocol, confusion between smuggling and trafficking, underfunded national mechanisms, and insufficient resources for child victims. She stressed the importance of strengthening prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships, advocating for better referral mechanisms, capacity building, and cross-border collaboration to improve victim support and coordination between countries.

Dr. Mody Guirandou Ndiaye explored how globalization fuels human trafficking, facilitating illegal migration, deepening economic inequalities, expanding criminal networks through digital platforms, and enabling unchecked financial transactions that sustain traffickers. He also pointed to gaps in public policy, where weak government action and insufficient preventive measures fail to address the root causes of exploitation.



Beyond policy failures, public perception remains a major barrier—some communities are unaware of the realities of trafficking, while others normalize certain exploitative practices as part of tradition. Legal frameworks also pose challenges, as trafficking often overlaps with other crimes like forced labor and sexual exploitation, complicating prosecution efforts. Dr. Ndiaye emphasized that education is the foundation for change, calling for large-scale awareness campaigns to shift societal attitudes and drive stronger action against trafficking.



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*“National counter-TIP efforts and anti-TIP agencies lack resources and capacities to implement national action plans, referral mechanisms, and SOPs to protect and assist victims and survivors. There remains a lack of dedicated counter-trafficking funding in Central Africa, despite substantial needs.” - Nassima Clerin, IOM*

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Legislative and Structural Gaps**

Weak laws, misalignment with international frameworks like the Palermo Protocol, low public awareness, and insufficient survivor support undermine efforts to combat trafficking. Strengthening legal protections and victim services is critical.

## **Data and Information Deficiencies**

The lack of reliable trafficking data—and the gap between identified victims and those receiving assistance—hampers progress. Expanding data collection efforts through tools like the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC) is essential for informed policy and intervention.

## **The Need for Cross-Border Collaboration**

Strengthening regional coordination and ensuring the implementation of existing agreements between countries is key to improving victim protection and addressing shared challenges.

## **Cultural and Societal Barriers**

Corruption and deeply rooted cultural norms contribute to trafficking, while public perception often ranges from denial to normalization. Challenging these barriers through education and awareness campaigns is crucial to prevention.



## **PANEL DISCUSSION 2 - SAFEGUARDING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING: EVALUATING POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN AFRICA**



The second panel, moderated by Issa Saka, Free the Slaves' West Africa Regional Manager, focused on safeguarding trafficking victims and evaluating policies designed to protect them. Panelists included Andrews Kananga, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Forum Rwanda, and Ruth Njuguna, Deputy Director at Kenya's Counter Trafficking in Persons Secretariat under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

Andrews Kananga provided an overview of key legal frameworks, including the UN Palermo Protocol and the African Union's Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons, particularly its focus on women and children. He highlighted promising regional initiatives, such as Rwanda's one-stop centers for victim support, which offer integrated services for trafficking survivors. Kananga also underscored critical legal safeguards, including the right to remain in a host country if repatriation poses a risk and the non-punishment principle, which protects victims from prosecution for crimes they were forced to commit. However, he pointed to significant challenges in implementation, including limited funding, corruption within enforcement agencies, and weak cross-border coordination. Strengthening legal protections, increasing resources for victim services, and fostering greater collaboration across institutions were key recommendations.

Ruth Njuguna expanded on these insights by discussing regional and international frameworks, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration and the African Union's Agenda 2063. She emphasized the need for joint training for law enforcement agencies, awareness campaigns to prevent trafficking, and the establishment of national referral mechanisms to streamline victim support. Njuguna also highlighted gaps in victim services, noting that the absence of safe houses for male survivors in Kenya reflects broader regional challenges in ensuring comprehensive survivor care.

Njuguna also stressed the importance of regional agreements and collective bargaining when engaging with destination countries—particularly those in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—to protect migrant workers and reduce their vulnerability to exploitation. She pointed to Kenya's National Assistance Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking as a model for other nations, advocating for similar funding mechanisms to support victim recovery and reintegration.



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*“Human trafficking knows no borders. We need stronger regional agreements and coordinated efforts across Africa to disrupt trafficking routes and dismantle trafficking networks.” - Andrews Kananga, Executive Director, The Legal Aid Forum*



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Strengthening Legal Frameworks**

The UN Palermo Protocol, African Union's Action Plan, and Global Compact for Migration are critical tools in combating trafficking, yet enforcement remains inconsistent across Africa. Greater commitment is needed to implement these frameworks effectively.

## **Expanding Survivor Protections**

Policies such as the non-punishment principle and the right to remain for at-risk individuals are essential safeguards for trafficking survivors. Standardizing and expanding these protections across the continent is crucial.

## **Enhancing Survivor Support Services**

Integrated support models, like Rwanda's one-stop centers, demonstrate how combining legal, psychological, and medical assistance can improve survivor recovery. Expanding such initiatives regionally is key.

## **Addressing Resource and Infrastructure Gaps**

Limited funding, lack of safe houses (especially for male survivors), and corruption within enforcement agencies continue to weaken anti-trafficking efforts. Increased investment in infrastructure and accountability measures is necessary.

## **Improving Cross-Border Coordination**

Given the transnational nature of trafficking, stronger regional collaboration and enforcement agreements are needed to disrupt trafficking networks and improve survivor reintegration.

## **WORKING GROUPS: CLOSING THE GAPS: IDENTIFYING CRITICAL STEPS TO ADDRESS GAPS IN PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE REGION - CHILDREN**



Folashade Bamigboye, representing the Kids and Teens Resource Center in Nigeria, shared key insights from a breakout session focused on combating child labor and trafficking. A major challenge identified was the lack of adequate funding to support interventions against child labor and forced labor. Participants emphasized that addressing this funding gap is crucial to ensuring the success of anti-trafficking initiatives. The session highlighted the need to leverage existing regional networks, such as the West African Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons and Illegal Migration, to strengthen cross-border and multi-sectoral collaboration. These platforms play a vital role in coordinating efforts across countries and sectors.

Participants also stressed the importance of targeted awareness campaigns in rural areas, where knowledge of trafficking risks and referral pathways remains limited. While awareness efforts are often concentrated in urban centers, expanding outreach to rural communities and informal sectors is essential to empowering at-risk populations. Education—both formal and informal—was identified as a key tool in preventing child labor and trafficking. Community-wide engagement, beyond just school-based programs, is necessary to equip families and local leaders with the knowledge to recognize and respond to exploitation.

Finally, the session emphasized the need to strengthen family support systems to reduce vulnerabilities. Economic hardship often forces families into desperate situations, increasing the risk of trafficking. Bamigboye shared that her organization is working with the government to update social registers of vulnerable groups, ensuring at-risk families have better access to essential services and support systems. Strengthening social safety nets is critical to preventing exploitation before it happens.



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*“We need to make sure we go to the informal sector and not just the schools to educate people and orient them on the issues of child labor and child trafficking.”* - Folashade Bamigboye, Kids and Teens Resource Center, Nigeria



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Expanding Awareness in Rural Areas**

Trafficking is often more prevalent in rural communities, yet awareness efforts remain concentrated in urban centers. Strengthening rural gatekeeping systems and educating communities about reporting mechanisms are essential to improving prevention and response.

## **Balancing High-Level Advocacy with Local Action**

Effective anti-trafficking efforts require both policy-level advocacy and grassroots engagement. Involving local influencers and community gatekeepers can enhance awareness and drive meaningful change at the local level.

## **Leveraging Education as a Prevention Tool**

Raising awareness about child labor and trafficking must go beyond schools to reach informal sectors and underserved communities. Both formal and informal education systems should be used to empower communities with knowledge and prevention strategies.

## **Strengthening Family Support Systems**

Economic and social hardships often push families into situations of vulnerability. Expanding access to social services and financial support—such as updating social registers of at-risk families—can help reduce susceptibility to exploitation.



## WORKING GROUPS: CLOSING THE GAPS: IDENTIFYING CRITICAL STEPS TO ADDRESS GAPS IN PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE REGION - LGTBI+ PERSONS



Angela Namatovu from Azali Women, Uganda, highlighted the heightened risks LGBTQ+ individuals face in the context of human trafficking. A major concern is the lack of inclusive policies that specifically protect LGBTQ+ persons. While Uganda has a strong legal framework to combat trafficking, it fails to address discrimination based on sexual orientation, leaving LGBTQ+ individuals especially vulnerable. Existing laws focus on discrimination related to race and economic status but overlook protections for sexual minorities, increasing their risk of exploitation.

Namatovu emphasized the need for greater awareness and societal attitude shifts to ensure LGBTQ+ trafficking survivors receive the support they need. Many LGBTQ+ survivors fear discrimination and stigma, which prevents them from seeking help or reporting their experiences. She called for inclusive strategies that integrate LGBTQ+ individuals into anti-trafficking efforts, ensuring they have access to justice and survivor-centered support.

She also stressed the importance of funding and capacity building for LGBTQ+ organizations that assist trafficking survivors. A critical gap remains in LGBTQ+-friendly shelters and services, as existing support systems often fail to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ+ victims. Expanding inclusive shelters and survivor assistance programs is essential to ensuring protection and long-term recovery for all trafficking survivors.



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*"Most of the laws in place now are not LGBT inclusive. Even when they talk about discrimination, they talk about race or economic status. Still, they never talk about discrimination based on sexual orientation, and that makes LGBTQ persons very prone to human trafficking." - Angela Namatovu from Azali Women, Uganda*

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Advocating for Inclusive Policies**

While Uganda has strong anti-trafficking laws, they lack protections for LGBTQ+ individuals, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. Legal frameworks must be expanded to address discrimination based on sexual orientation.

## **Ensuring Survivor Inclusion**

Fear of discrimination prevents many LGBTQ+ survivors from reporting trafficking or seeking help. Targeted strategies are needed to integrate LGBTQ+ persons into anti-trafficking efforts and ensure they receive equal access to justice and support.

## **Expanding LGBTQ+-Friendly Services**

Existing shelters and survivor support services fail to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ+ victims. Establishing LGBTQ+-inclusive shelters and assistance programs is essential to providing safe and effective recovery options.



## REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY ONE

### 01. Inconsistent Enforcement of Legal Frameworks

While international frameworks like the UN Palermo Protocol and the African Union's Action Plan provide essential guidelines, their enforcement remains uneven across Africa. Weak implementation allows traffickers to exploit legal loopholes and undermines coordinated anti-trafficking efforts.

### 02. Inadequate Survivor Support and Protections

Many survivors endure severe physical and psychological trauma yet lack access to essential services such as medical care, mental health support, and legal assistance. Without victim-centered protections—such as the non-punishment principle—survivors risk criminalization or deportation, discouraging them from seeking justice or support.

### 03. Severe Resource and Infrastructure Gaps

Anti-trafficking efforts suffer from limited funding, corruption, and a lack of safe housing, particularly for male survivors. These constraints weaken governments' and organizations' ability to provide effective interventions.

### 04. Diverse Forms of Exploitation

Labor trafficking is the most widespread form, particularly in agriculture, mining, construction, and domestic work. Sexual exploitation remains a major issue, especially for women and girls. Child trafficking, including forced begging, child soldier recruitment, and hazardous labor, is often linked to traditional practices. Emerging trends such as organ trafficking and sports trafficking further illustrate the evolving nature of exploitation.



## **05. Weak Law Enforcement Capacity**

Many agencies lack specialized training, resources, and dedicated anti-trafficking units, leading to poor investigations and low conviction rates. As a result, traffickers often operate with impunity.

## **06. Fragmented Regional Coordination**

The transnational nature of trafficking requires strong cross-border collaboration, yet many countries struggle with inconsistent legal frameworks, weak agreements, and poor coordination. This hinders efforts to dismantle trafficking networks, prosecute offenders, and reintegrate survivors returning to their home countries.

## **07. Lack of Protections for LGBTQ+ Individuals**

Many legal frameworks fail to address discrimination based on sexual orientation, leaving LGBTQ+ individuals especially vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Inclusive policies and survivor-centered strategies must be developed to ensure LGBTQ+ survivors can access justice and support without fear of discrimination.







## SOLUTIONS PROPOSED TO IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

### **01. Enhancing Survivor Support and Empowerment**

Survivors need comprehensive, trauma-informed care, including medical and mental health services, legal assistance, and economic empowerment opportunities. Ensuring survivors can actively participate in anti-trafficking efforts strengthens prevention and advocacy.

### **02. Cross-Border Survivor Reintegration**

Establish safe return protocols and access to counseling, vocational training, and community reintegration programs to support survivors post-rescue. Survivors must not face retraumatization during repatriation and should receive ongoing support in their home countries.

### **03. Strengthening Law Enforcement and Justice Systems**

Well-trained, well-resourced law enforcement units are crucial for dismantling trafficking networks and securing convictions. Legal reforms, specialized courts, and trained judges are essential to ensuring swift and fair prosecutions.

### **04. Harmonizing Legal Frameworks**

Align anti-trafficking laws and penalties across the region to close legal loopholes. Standardizing definitions of trafficking, survivor rights, and prosecution protocols will improve cross-border cooperation and victim protection.

### **05. Expanding Advocacy and Public Awareness**

Launch regional awareness campaigns to educate communities on trafficking risks, survivor rights, and the need for regional cooperation. Engaging civil society and survivor leaders will strengthen grassroots advocacy efforts.

### **06. Building Shared Regional Resources**

Develop a centralized database to track trafficking cases, routes, and offenders, accessible to all participating countries. Implement regional training programs for law enforcement, judicial officers, and social workers to enhance victim identification, trauma-informed care, and prosecution strategies.

## Day Two



### OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Lamine Daffé - The International Center for Migration Policy Development
- Cecilia Rutembesa - The Legal Aid Forum
- Evans Munga - Terres Des Hommes
- Jhon Grace - Uganda Minority Shelters Consortium
- Lilian Obiye - International Detention Coalition
- Racheal Wahome - Kituo Cha Sheria
- Claire Bolton - CENHTRO
- Umaru Fofanah - CENHTRO
- Brook Bello - More Too Life



## KEYNOTE SPEECH: WHERE ARE WE REGARDING ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING POLICIES IN AFRICA? WHERE ARE THE GAPS?



Lamine Daffe, representing the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), provided a comprehensive overview of anti-trafficking policies in West Africa, highlighting both achievements and ongoing challenges. He emphasized the need for context-specific interventions that align with cultural norms and institutional frameworks to enhance effectiveness and minimize resistance within communities.

Since the adoption of the Palermo Protocol, West Africa has made significant strides in combating human trafficking. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has played a proactive role, establishing a 2001 declaration on trafficking, a regional reporting mechanism, and an action plan to guide national efforts. All ECOWAS member states have enacted anti-trafficking laws, yet victim protection remains a critical gap, with inadequate shelters and limited resources available during criminal proceedings. Weak National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs) often fail to meet victims' basic needs, undermining rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

Daffe also highlighted systemic challenges, including corruption and collusion between law enforcement and trafficking networks, which erode trust and hinder operational success. The lack of coordination between investigative units—such as those tackling cybercrime and money laundering—further weakens anti-trafficking responses. Additionally, data inconsistencies across member states create obstacles for cross-border victim referrals and reintegration efforts. To address this, ICMPD has supported the adoption of regional referral guidelines, though their success depends on the strength of national implementation frameworks.

Looking ahead, Daffe called for a broader strategic approach that addresses precursor crimes, such as gender-based violence, forced labor, and child exploitation. He cited Nigeria's National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) as a model, integrating trafficking and violence-related offenses within its mandate. He also highlighted community-driven initiatives in Guinea and Sierra Leone, where local protocols have improved gender-based violence case referrals. Strengthening such integrated approaches will be key to enhancing victim protection and building resilient anti-trafficking systems across the region.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Context-Specific Approaches**

Anti-trafficking strategies must be tailored to each country's socio-cultural and institutional realities. Ignoring local contexts can lead to resistance and reduce effectiveness.

## **Strengthening Regional Cooperation**

ECOWAS has played a key role in coordinating anti-trafficking efforts through declarations, action plans, and reporting mechanisms. However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent data collection and effective cross-border collaboration.

## **Addressing Data Inconsistencies**

Inconsistent reporting across member states makes it difficult to assess the full scope of trafficking and allocate resources effectively. Improving data collection and analysis is essential for informed decision-making.

## **Sustained Investment in Anti-Trafficking Efforts**

Long-term success depends on continuous investment in victim support, data systems, and regional cooperation to strengthen prevention and response efforts.

## **Enhancing Law Enforcement and Judicial Capacity**

Building the capacity of law enforcement and judicial systems through training, data analysis, and better resource allocation is critical for ensuring successful prosecutions and comprehensive victim support.

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*"One of the key challenges is engaging with victims during criminal proceedings, as law enforcement often lacks appropriate shelters or resources."* - Lamine Daffe, ICMPD





## PRESENTATION: PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKING CASES



Cecilia Rutembesa, representing the Legal Aid Forum Rwanda, shared insights on the prosecution of human trafficking cases in Rwanda, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges. Rwanda formally recognized human trafficking as a distinct crime with the introduction of its 2018 anti-human trafficking law. Between 2018 and 2022, 90 cases were investigated, but only 37 proceeded to prosecution, reflecting systemic challenges rather than a lack of trafficking incidents. Key obstacles include insufficient evidence, lengthy judicial processes, and gaps in law enforcement capacity to effectively handle trafficking cases.

Rutembesa outlined best practices in Rwanda's approach, such as protecting victims' identities, exempting survivors from legal fees, and ensuring they are not held liable for crimes committed under coercion. Additionally, the confiscation of traffickers' assets serves as both a punitive and preventative measure. However, she pointed out ongoing challenges, including limited shelter support—where victims are only housed for three months—and financial instability that prevents survivors from engaging in lengthy legal proceedings.

She stressed the urgent need for specialized training for law enforcement and legal professionals. Many survivors struggle to provide consistent testimony due to trauma, and traditional interrogation methods fail to account for their vulnerabilities. Strengthening legal processes, reducing trial delays, and expanding victim support services are critical to ensuring more successful prosecutions.

Rutembesa concluded by emphasizing the importance of collaboration between government agencies, legal practitioners, and civil society to enhance Rwanda's anti-trafficking response and deliver justice for survivors.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### Case Study on Successful Collaboration

Effective coordination between law enforcement, immigration officials, and legal aid organizations led to the rescue, repatriation, and legal resolution of two young Rwandan women trafficked to Uganda. Best practices included protecting victim identities, waiving legal fees, and ensuring survivors were not criminalized for offenses committed under coercion.

### Gaps in Victim Support

Survivors face significant challenges due to limited shelter support (only three months) and a lack of sustainable financial aid, making long-term rehabilitation and participation in legal processes difficult.

### Need for Specialized Training

Law enforcement and legal professionals require trauma-informed training to handle trafficking cases sensitively. Traditional interrogation methods often fail to consider survivors' vulnerabilities and may retraumatize victims, highlighting the need for more survivor-centered approaches.



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*"One of the most significant challenges in prosecuting trafficking cases is the lack of sufficient evidence, which often stems from the limited capacity of law enforcement to properly investigate these crimes. This impacts not just the legal process but also the survivors, who may lose trust in the system." - Cecilia Rutembesa, Head of legal empowerment unit, The Legal Aid Forum*



## **PANEL DISCUSSION 3 - THE IMPACT OF LEGISLATION TARGETS VULNERABLE GROUPS IN AFRICA**




This panel, moderated by Ivan Munga, explored the impact of legislation on vulnerable populations in Africa, including children, migrants, asylum seekers, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Panelists included John Grace from the Uganda Minority Shelters Consortium, Lilian Obiye from the International Detention Coalition, and Racheal Wahome from Kituo Cha Sheria.

Lilian Obiye focused on the impact of migration policies on vulnerable groups, advocating for alternatives to immigration detention. She emphasized that irregular migration should be treated as an administrative issue, not a criminal offense, to protect migrants' rights to liberty and freedom of movement. Criminalizing migrants increases their vulnerability to exploitation and contradicts international human rights principles. She highlighted progress in Africa, noting that Uganda and Djibouti have Refugee Acts that prohibit the detention of asylum seekers, while Ethiopia, Kenya, and Malawi have implemented child-specific case management systems to safeguard migrant children. These efforts prioritize community-based solutions over detention, ensuring greater support for vulnerable groups, including trafficking survivors.

John Grace addressed the severe impact of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act on the LGBTQ+ community. Reports from the Uganda Minority Shelters Consortium documented 242 cases of LGBTQ+ individuals being left homeless, as the law empowers landlords to evict tenants suspected of being LGBTQ+, often based on baseless accusations. This legal framework has also emboldened mob violence and increased employment discrimination, particularly affecting LGBTQ+ professionals such as teachers and doctors.

LGBTQ+ individuals fleeing persecution often fall prey to traffickers posing as allies, exploiting their desperation for safe passage and shelter. Grace emphasized the need to expand inclusive shelters, provide mental health services, and ensure legal protections for LGBTQ+ victims of violence. He also called for sensitivity training for law enforcement and service providers and increased funding for civil society organizations, which currently lack sufficient resources to support affected individuals.

Racheal Wahome highlighted the hidden crisis of human trafficking within refugee communities in Africa. Refugees face extreme vulnerability due to lack of documentation, language barriers, and limited access to information and resources. Traffickers exploit these conditions, subjecting refugees to forced labor, sexual abuse, and fraudulent schemes.



She pointed out legislative gaps in The Refugee Act 2021, which lacks specific provisions to address human trafficking and protect victims. One major concern is the Act's provision that allows the Cabinet Secretary to repatriate victims, raising due process concerns and potential risks of abuse. Wahome recommended a multi-pronged approach, including stronger inter-agency collaboration, technological tools for reporting trafficking, the establishment of safe migration routes, and awareness campaigns within refugee communities to improve protections for displaced populations.



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*“Irregular migration is not a crime and should, therefore, never be considered a criminal offense or have consequences similar to those arising from criminal activity. Similarly, children should never be penalized for their migration status or that of their parents because they cannot make those decisions themselves.” - Racheal Wahome, Kituo Cha Sheria*

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Detention of Migrants**

The discussion emphasized the need to move away from criminalizing irregular migration and instead prioritize alternatives to detention. Treating migration as an administrative matter aligns with human rights principles and helps protect migrants from exploitation.

## **Impact of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act**

The Act has had severe consequences for the LGBTQ+ community in Uganda, leading to widespread homelessness, increased violence, and employment discrimination.

## **Legislative Gaps**

Existing laws, such as the Refugee Act 2021 and the Trafficking in Persons Act, do not adequately address the specific needs and rights of refugee victims of trafficking, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.

## **Recommendations for Action**

The discussion underscored the need to implement community-based solutions for migrants, strengthen support systems for LGBTQ+ individuals, and address legislative gaps that hinder the protection of refugee victims of trafficking. Key recommendations included improving inter-agency collaboration, developing accessible reporting mechanisms, establishing safe migration routes, and increasing awareness within refugee communities.

## PARTNERSHIPS CASE STUDY PRESENTATION: LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION AND ENFORCEMENT IN THE REGION.



Claire Bolton and Umaru Fofanah from the Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CHTRO) presented on their partnership with UNODC in Sierra Leone to combat child trafficking. The project focused on strengthening the capacity of law enforcement and judicial actors to address child trafficking more effectively. Key activities included developing a comprehensive training manual, conducting specialized training for law enforcement and judicial officers, and contributing to the development of a new anti-trafficking act that prioritizes survivor support and restitution.

A crucial aspect of the project was ensuring long-term sustainability by actively engaging key stakeholders, including the Judiciary, police, and Ministry of Justice, in both the design and implementation phases. The initiative also emphasized the creation of user-friendly training materials and the establishment of a UNODC office in Freetown to enhance local expertise and facilitate ongoing collaboration.

The presentation highlighted the importance of collaboration, strong partnerships, and sustainability in anti-trafficking efforts. By centering the needs and perspectives of local stakeholders, the project aims to create lasting improvements in child protection and strengthen Sierra Leone's capacity to combat human trafficking effectively.



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*“We've worked to support UNODC in reviewing the training manual, ensuring it aligns with the needs of the criminal justice system while also reflecting the real experiences shared by survivors and victims of trafficking in Seirra Leone.” - Umaru Fofanah - Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### **Project Overview**

The project aimed to assess and reduce child trafficking in four districts of Sierra Leone through research, program development, and policy advocacy. It prioritized community engagement and long-term sustainability.

### **UNODC Partnership**

A key aspect of the project involved collaborating with UNODC to develop a training manual and provide specialized training for law enforcement and judiciary actors on identifying, investigating, and prosecuting child trafficking cases.

### **Addressing Legislative Gaps**

The project contributed to the development of a new anti-trafficking act in Sierra Leone, focusing on critical areas such as survivor support and restitution to strengthen legal protections for victims.





## BUILDING A MOVEMENT NARRATIVE



Dr. Brook Bello's presentation emphasized the urgent need for a unified global narrative to drive stronger action against modern slavery. Despite affecting millions worldwide, modern slavery remains overlooked due to misrepresentation, victim stigmatization, and the historical legacy of slavery, which complicates recognition and response. The current discourse often oversimplifies the issue by focusing primarily on sex trafficking while neglecting other forms of exploitation.

Drawing inspiration from the global response to climate change, the presentation called for a cohesive and widely recognized framework that acknowledges the systemic nature of modern slavery. This new narrative would highlight the vulnerabilities of at-risk populations and promote a whole-of-society approach that includes holding traffickers accountable, supporting survivors, and engaging governments, civil society, businesses, and individuals in collective action.

Participants were encouraged to review the draft narrative document and provide feedback. The ultimate goal is to develop a compelling and unified message that can mobilize global efforts to end modern slavery and create a world where exploitation cannot thrive.

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*"This document aims to create a narrative that truly resonates with the public. It needs to convey the urgency of the situation, highlighting how modern slavery impacts communities worldwide. It needs to be a wake-up call, making people realize that this is not just a distant problem, but something that affects us all."* - Dr. Brook Bello - More Too Life

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### **The Need for a Unified Narrative**

Many governments and organizations struggle to fully recognize modern slavery due to social misrepresentations, victim stigmatization, and the historical legacy of slavery. The current discourse is often too narrow, focusing primarily on sex trafficking while failing to address the full scope of exploitation.

### **Call to Action**

Dr. Bello stressed the urgency of a collective response to modern slavery, highlighting key priorities: addressing systemic vulnerabilities such as climate change, economic instability, and the misuse of technology; strengthening law enforcement and prosecution to hold traffickers accountable; providing trauma-informed care and recovery support for survivors; and fostering a whole-of-society approach that engages governments, civil society, businesses, and individuals in the fight against modern slavery.

### **Next Steps**

Participants were invited to review the draft narrative document, share feedback, and contribute to its refinement. The objective is to develop a unified and compelling message that can drive global action to end modern slavery.

## REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY TWO

### **01. Data Inconsistency Hinders Progress**

Inconsistent data reporting across countries makes it difficult to assess the true scale of human trafficking and slows down effective resource allocation. Strengthening data collection and analysis is essential for informed decision-making and targeted interventions.

### **02. Lack of Capacity Building**

Law enforcement and legal professionals need specialized training to handle trafficking cases with a survivor-centered approach. Traditional interrogation methods often fail to account for trauma and may retraumatize victims, underscoring the need for trauma-informed practices.

### **03. Gaps in Victim Support**

Limited shelter availability and a lack of sustainable financial aid create significant barriers to survivor rehabilitation and their ability to participate in legal processes. Expanding long-term support services is critical to ensuring survivors can rebuild their lives.

### **04. Criminalization and Detention of Irregular Migrants**

Treating irregular migration as a criminal offense leads to the detention and stigmatization of migrants, denying them basic rights and increasing their vulnerability to forced labor, trafficking, and exploitation. Shifting to an approach that addresses the root causes of migration is essential for protecting migrants from harm.

### **05. Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act**

The Act has had severe consequences for Uganda's LGBTQ+ community, leading to widespread homelessness, increased violence, and employment discrimination. These conditions have heightened the vulnerability of LGBTQ+ individuals to human trafficking and exploitation.



## SOLUTIONS PROPOSED TO IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

### 01. Giving Importance to Localization

Anti-trafficking efforts must be adapted to the socio-cultural and institutional contexts of each country in West Africa. Ignoring local realities can lead to resistance and reduce the effectiveness of interventions.

### 02. Continued Investment is Required

Long-term success in combating human trafficking depends on sustained investment in victim support services, data collection, and regional cooperation to strengthen prevention and response efforts.

### 03. Improving Legislative Gaps

Existing laws, such as the Refugee Act 2021 and the Trafficking in Persons Act, require improvements to better protect vulnerable populations. Speakers emphasized the need for community-based solutions for migrants, stronger support systems for LGBTQ+ individuals, and legal reforms to address gaps in refugee protection. Key recommendations included strengthening inter-agency collaboration, developing accessible reporting mechanisms, establishing safe migration routes, and raising awareness within refugee communities.

### 04. Specialized Training

Law enforcement and legal professionals should receive training to handle trafficking cases with a survivor-centered approach. Traditional interrogation methods often fail to account for trauma and may retraumatize victims, highlighting the need for more sensitive and effective investigative techniques.

## Day Three



### OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Annette Twahirwa - Rahab Uganda
- Jackeline Mwende - Free the Slaves
- Bernadette Agano - Free the Slaves
- Aidah Muli - Survivor Network
- Grace Banya - ILO
- Donat Bagula - Labour Ministry, DRC
- Blaise Sonia Adu-Gyamfi - Free the Slaves
- Wanja Kimani - Counter Trafficking Consultant
- Shivan Pavin - Africa Nalia
- Dorothee Hasskamp, PhD - HAART Kenya
- Ngwepekem Eunice - Survivor Network
- Emmanuel Adaramola - Emmanuel Foundation
- Chylian Ify Azuh - Female Returned Migrants Network
- Aliou Bakhoun - La Lumiere



## OPENING REMARKS: THE IMPORTANCE OF SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT IN ACHIEVING ACTIONABLE JUSTICE



Dr. Annette Twahirwa Kirabira, Executive Director of Rahab Uganda, delivered a keynote speech emphasizing the critical role of survivor engagement in achieving meaningful justice for victims of human trafficking. She highlighted that survivors possess unique insights into their experiences, including the challenges they face and the most effective ways to support their recovery and well-being.

She stressed that survivors understand the full impact of trafficking—not just the legal implications but also the psychological, social, and economic consequences. Their perspectives on justice often extend beyond criminal prosecution to include healing, personal stability, and access to essential resources. Authentic survivor engagement, she noted, involves empowering survivors to take control of their own journeys and make informed decisions about their recovery. This requires ensuring they have the necessary information, support, and resources to navigate complex legal and social systems.

Dr. Kirabira offered several recommendations to strengthen survivor engagement. She called for prioritizing survivor input at all stages of anti-trafficking efforts, from policy development to program implementation and evaluation. She emphasized the need for dedicated resources to equip and empower survivors to actively participate in the justice process. Regularly assessing and adjusting strategies based on survivor feedback and evolving needs was also highlighted as a key component of an effective approach. Finally, she underscored that survivor engagement must move beyond tokenism. Genuine listening, meaningful participation, and a willingness to adapt approaches based on survivor input are essential to ensuring justice and long-term recovery.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

### Empowering survivors

Meaningful survivor engagement requires providing survivors with the information, support, and resources needed to make informed decisions about their recovery and justice. Empowering survivors to take ownership of their journeys ensures they can navigate complex legal and social systems with confidence and autonomy.



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*“The importance of engaging survivors eliminates the whole idea of tokenism. It also brings in relevance: is what is being proposed relevant to the Survivor? Because I feel that all of us who are in the anti-trafficking space come with different perspectives when we think about actionable Justice. For instance, the perception of law enforcement may be different from the perception of service providers and may also be different from the Survivor themselves.”*  
- Dr. Annette Twahirwa Kirabira,  
Rahab Uganda

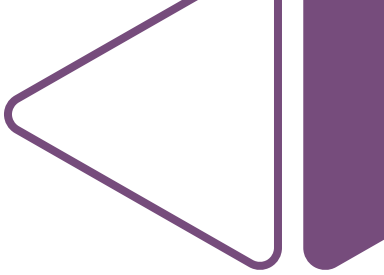
## **PRESENTATION 1: SURVIVOR AND GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE ALLIANCE 8.7 PATHFINDER PROCESS IN DRC AND KENYA**



The panel discussion, “Survivor and Government Collaboration: Lessons Learned from the Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Process in DRC and Kenya,” moderated by Jackeline Mwende, explored key insights from the implementation of Alliance 8.7 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Kenya. Panelists included Honorable Donald Bagula from the Labour Ministry, DRC, Grace Banya from ILO Kenya, Bernadette Agano from Free the Slaves, and Aidah Muli from Survivor Network Kenya. The discussion provided a comprehensive overview of how collaboration between survivors and governments can strengthen efforts to eradicate forced labor, human trafficking, and modern slavery.

Honorable Donald Bagula highlighted the role of Alliance 8.7 in eliminating child labor, forced labor, and modern slavery in the DRC. He emphasized the importance of survivor participation in policymaking, facilitated through the government’s partnership with Free the Slaves. The initiative prioritized survivors’ psychological and mental health needs while building their capacity to contribute to trafficking prevention. Additionally, modern slavery crimes were incorporated into the DRC Penal Code, and a mid-term evaluation confirmed that survivor inclusion significantly influenced public policy. Bagula reaffirmed the government’s commitment to ensuring survivors’ access to justice, medical and psychological care, and social reintegration in collaboration with civil society and key partners.

Building on the DRC’s progress, Bernadette Agano emphasized the need for meaningful survivor engagement in combating modern slavery. She stressed the importance of capacity-building, survivor-led task forces, and leadership platforms, ensuring that survivor testimonies shape prevention and protection strategies. Aidah Muli, a survivor of forced labor and human trafficking, reinforced this message, describing how survivor involvement in Kenyan policymaking has transformed well-intentioned policies into targeted and effective interventions. She urged governments to recognize survivors as stakeholders, not just beneficiaries, and to actively integrate their perspectives into policy frameworks.



Grace Banya, the ILO's Regional Program Manager, discussed Kenya's progress toward becoming an Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder Country. She credited Free the Slaves for their technical and financial support in developing Kenya's roadmap and highlighted the ILO's role in guiding the process. Kenya began its journey toward Pathfinder status in 2020, with significant advancements in 2023. Banya emphasized that survivor-centered approaches are critical in ensuring that lived experiences inform policies and interventions. Key lessons included the need for effective stakeholder engagement, leadership, context-specific roadmaps, and cross-country knowledge sharing. Kenya's roadmap is set to be finalized and submitted for cabinet approval by September 2024, with the goal of achieving Pathfinder Country status by November 2024.

The panel concluded with a strong call to action, urging accelerated efforts to leverage partnerships and ensure survivor leadership in achieving Alliance 8.7 goals. Panelists emphasized that survivors play an indispensable role in combating modern slavery and must be fully included in decision-making processes as advocates and leaders.



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*“We are talking about the involvement of survivors—are they in the whole process? Can we put them at the center stage? And that's what we've been doing in Kenya. We've had exciting interventions from the survivors. They've brought their energies and are leading the clusters, and we've learned a lot from just listening to their perspectives.” - Grace Banya, ILO*



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Key Initiatives in the DRC**

With support from the ILO, a strategic roadmap was developed and adopted in 2022, incorporating survivor voices and integrating modern slavery crimes into the Penal Code. Key priorities included mental health support, social reintegration, and capacity building to enhance prevention efforts.

## **Advances in Kenya's Roadmap**

Kenya's roadmap prioritizes survivor-centered approaches, with survivors leading thematic clusters on child labor, forced labor, human trafficking, and modern slavery. Lessons learned emphasize the importance of stakeholder engagement, leadership, context-specific strategies, and cross-country knowledge sharing. Kenya aims to finalize its roadmap and achieve Pathfinder Country status by late 2024.

## **Empowerment of Survivors**

Initiatives in both the DRC and Kenya demonstrate the impact of empowering survivors through capacity building, leadership training, and the creation of survivor networks. Survivors are recognized not just as victims but as experts whose lived experiences are essential for shaping effective policies and interventions.

## **Importance of Collaboration**

Partnerships with organizations like Free the Slaves and the ILO have provided technical expertise, financial support, and capacity building to advance Alliance 8.7 goals. Collaborative frameworks that involve governments, civil society, and survivor networks are key to sustainable progress.

## Call to Action

Governments and organizations must actively involve survivors in decision-making, recognizing them as stakeholders rather than beneficiaries. Survivor-centered approaches must be prioritized in policymaking, with mechanisms for leadership development and psychosocial support. Collaboration, accelerated action, and leveraging partnerships are essential to achieving the goals of Alliance 8.7.



## PRESENTATION 2: SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT POLICY RESEARCH



Dorothee Hasskamp from HAART Kenya, along with survivor leaders Wanja Patriciah Kimani and Shivan Pavin Alungnat, presented findings from the research study *Survivors and Organizations Working Together Against Human Trafficking: Insights from East and Central Africa*, conducted by Free the Slaves and HAART Kenya.

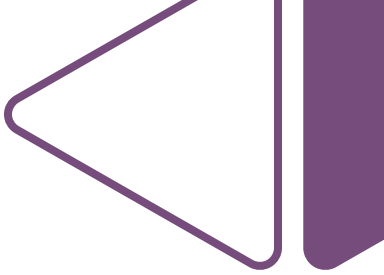
The research underscores the critical role of individuals with lived experience in anti-trafficking efforts. It found that many survivor advocates were already socially active before engaging with anti-trafficking organizations, participating in individual efforts or broader social justice causes. However, the study identified a significant gap in pathways for survivors without prior activism experience and highlighted the need for engagement opportunities beyond personal storytelling.

Survivors face multiple challenges in their advocacy work, including security risks such as threats from traffickers, government repression, and community backlash. Some organizations have begun implementing ethical storytelling policies and risk assessments to address these dangers. Despite progress, survivor engagement remains limited, with most opportunities confined to entry-level roles like volunteering or internships. While leadership roles are rare, there is a growing push to diversify survivor participation through roles such as panelists, paralegals, and ambassadors.

Financial insecurity is a major barrier to survivor engagement. Compensation remains inconsistent, with most survivors receiving stipends or in-kind benefits rather than salaries. Many survivors aspire to paid roles within the movement but often lack professional qualifications. Survivors expressed strong interest in education, training, and networking opportunities, identifying scholarships and funding as critical to advancing into specialized roles. Survivor networks play a crucial role in offering support, motivation, and mentorship for advocates.

To improve survivor engagement, organizations should foster a safe, inclusive culture that values lived experience while moving beyond limiting survivors to personal storytelling. Key recommendations include trauma-informed policies, mental health support, accommodations, and childcare to ensure meaningful inclusion. Organizations must also avoid tokenism by engaging diverse survivor communities, establishing feedback mechanisms, and dedicating resources to survivor leadership development. Survivor networks should be supported with funding and opportunities for leadership roles.





Ensuring fair remuneration, creating tailored job roles, and implementing affirmative action policies are essential for integrating survivors into professional positions within anti-trafficking organizations. Capacity-building efforts, including training on ethical storytelling and peer mentoring, are crucial to equipping survivors with the skills needed for leadership. Partnerships with external organizations to provide scholarships and higher education opportunities can help survivors gain professional qualifications. Finally, safeguarding policies and security training are essential to protecting survivor advocates and leaders, ensuring their safety and well-being in their advocacy work.



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*"If you have been through something like human trafficking, you'll be able to understand somebody who is going through what you went through. It's a different kind of passion; it gives you a kind of joy because we are all working towards the same goal."* - Wanja Patriciah Kimani - Survivor Network, Kenya



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Valuing Survivor Contributions**

Survivors bring invaluable perspectives to anti-trafficking efforts, not just through sharing personal stories but as researchers, advocates, and leaders. However, pathways for survivors without prior social justice experience remain limited, signaling a need for expanded opportunities and inclusivity.

## **Challenges in Survivor Engagement**

Survivors face significant security risks, including threats from traffickers, governmental repression, and backlash from communities. Organizations are beginning to adopt policies like ethical storytelling and risk assessments to address these threats, but meaningful survivor inclusion remains underdeveloped in many cases.

## **Barriers and Opportunities in Employment**

Compensation is often inadequate, with most survivors receiving stipends or in-kind benefits instead of salaries. Survivors aspire to professional roles but often lack the necessary qualifications. Capacity-building, scholarships, and higher education opportunities are critical to addressing these gaps and empowering survivors.

## **Supportive Structures and Policies**

Trauma-informed organizational cultures, accommodations for survivors' individual needs, and mental health support are essential for meaningful engagement. Avoiding tokenism and creating diverse roles for survivors ensures their inclusion as contributors, leaders, and decision-makers.

## **The Role of Survivor Networks**

Survivor networks play a vital role in fostering mutual support, sustaining engagement, and encouraging new advocates. Organizations should actively support these networks with funding and opportunities for survivors to lead and collaborate.



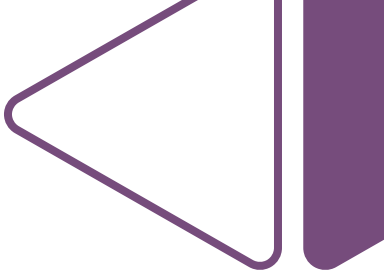
## INTERACTIVE SESSION: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN ANTI-SLAVERY EFFORTS



The interactive session on the Survivor Leadership Academy, moderated by Ngwepekem Eunice Foloh, featured insights from survivor leaders Awah Francisca Mbuli, Brenda Odhiambo, and Antonia Musunga from Freedom Fund Kenya. The discussion provided an overview of the Academy's mission, achievements, challenges, and key lessons learned while emphasizing the importance of survivor-centered initiatives in combating human trafficking. The Survivor Leadership Academy is an initiative of the Survivors' Network, a female-led, community-based organization formed by individuals rescued from human trafficking. Survivors' Network focuses on addressing the root causes of trafficking, particularly economic vulnerabilities, through awareness campaigns, storytelling, and survivor empowerment. The Academy builds on this foundation by training survivors to become advocates and leaders, equipping them with the skills to drive change in their communities.

Francisca Mbuli shared her personal journey as a survivor trafficked to the Middle East and Norway, which inspired her to become a vocal advocate against human trafficking. Under her leadership, the Survivors' Network has grown to empower survivors through economic programs and leadership training. By promoting intersectionality and diversity, the Academy ensures survivors from various backgrounds and communities can unite and advocate for systemic change. One of the Academy's key achievements is its success in empowering survivors to take leadership roles and implement innovative, localized solutions. Brenda Odhiambo, a graduate of the Academy, shared how the program contributed to her personal growth and leadership development.

Despite its successes, the presentation highlighted several challenges faced by the Academy. Global funding for anti-trafficking efforts has decreased in recent years due to competing emergencies, leaving survivor organizations underfunded. Limited grant amounts, often impacted by inflation and local economic disparities, make it difficult for organizations to stretch resources. Logistical barriers, such as bureaucratic delays in accessing funds, also pose significant hurdles. Internal challenges within survivor-led organizations were also noted, including gender power dynamics that sometimes undermine women's leadership after funding is received.



Key lessons from the Academy's work include the value of a trust-based approach, which allows survivor organizations to operate with greater flexibility and creativity. Devolving resources directly to survivor leaders has enabled localized and innovative solutions, while reduced reporting burdens have allowed organizations to focus on impact rather than administration. However, the need for better documentation of outcomes and stronger partner connectivity remains an area for growth. The presentation concluded with a call to action to expand survivor-inclusive convenings and strengthen survivor networks globally.



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*"We want every community to have active survivors to lead in this fight, so that's why two years counting, we have been so much engaged in raising or grooming survivors to participate in this fight."* - Awah Francisca Mbuli - Survivor Network, Cameroon



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### **Survivor-Centered Leadership**

The Survivor Leadership Academy equips survivors with the skills and knowledge to take on leadership roles in anti-trafficking efforts. By drawing from their lived experiences, survivors develop impactful, locally relevant solutions that address trafficking within their communities. The academy empowers them to advocate for change, ensuring their voices play a central role in shaping anti-trafficking strategies.

### **Importance of Intersectionality and Diversity**

The academy prioritizes inclusivity by engaging survivors from diverse backgrounds, fostering unity and collective action in the fight against human trafficking. This approach ensures that anti-trafficking efforts are not only survivor-centered but also responsive to the intersecting identities and challenges survivors face, leading to more holistic and effective solutions.



## PRESENTATION 4: SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT IN WEST AFRICA



This panel brought together anti-human trafficking leaders, including Mamadou Wane from the Platform of Human Rights Promotion in Senegal, Emmanuel Adaramola from the Emmanuel Foundation in Nigeria, Chylian Ify Azuh from the Female Returned Migration Network in Nigeria, and Aliou Bakhoum from La Lumière in Senegal. The discussion focused on the critical need to understand and address the unique needs of survivors in West Africa.

Drawing from his own experience as a survivor of multiple trafficking incidents, Emmanuel Adaramola highlighted the profound emotional and psychological challenges survivors face. These often include trust issues, a bleak outlook on the future, and the lasting impact of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. He emphasized the importance of viewing survivors as individuals in need of compassion and support, regardless of past experiences, and stressed that rebuilding trust is essential to recovery. Adaramola also highlighted the success of peer-to-peer engagement in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts across West Africa, noting the role of survivor-led initiatives in fostering long-term healing.

He further acknowledged the influential role of religion and the importance of considering family and community structures in supporting survivors' recovery journeys. Concluding his remarks, Adaramola called for increased collaboration among survivors across the region, encouraging their active participation in policy development, advocacy, and decision-making processes. He stressed the need for capacity building for both survivors and professionals working with them to enhance the effectiveness of support programs. He expressed hope for stronger regional collaboration to improve the conditions for survivors.

Chylian Ify Azuh challenged common misconceptions about survivors of human trafficking, particularly the portrayal of survivors as helpless individuals incapable of contributing meaningfully to anti-trafficking efforts. She shared a personal experience in which her expertise was dismissed, highlighting the systemic exclusion of survivors from leadership and decision-making roles.

She emphasized that genuine survivor engagement must go beyond tokenism. True engagement requires survivors' active participation at all stages of projects, from planning to implementation, rather than solely using their stories for awareness. Azuh stressed the importance of prioritizing survivor safety and well-being in all anti-trafficking initiatives. She also advocated for a paradigm shift within the sector, calling for survivor leadership to be recognized and invested in. This requires significant investment in capacity building and acknowledging survivors' unique expertise, ensuring they play a central role in developing and implementing sustainable solutions.





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*"There is a need to mobilize and bring together survivors in Nigeria and West Africa, creating a larger and more coordinated effort to engage in policy development, advocacy, and decision-making. It is crucial to build the capacity of survivors across West African countries, as we've heard from survivors in Cameroon and Kenya, and there is a need to extend this effort to other regions."* - Emmanuel Adaramola - Emmanuel Foundation

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## **Advocating for Survivor Leadership**

The speakers challenged negative stereotypes that portray survivors as helpless or entitled. They emphasized the need for greater survivor leadership in the anti-trafficking movement, calling for their active participation in policy development, advocacy, and decision-making processes.

## **Building Trust and Collaboration**

Establishing trust between survivors and organizations is essential for meaningful engagement. This requires open communication, mutual respect, and a genuine commitment to investing in survivor-led initiatives.

## **Addressing the Needs of Survivors**

The discussion highlighted the importance of meeting survivors' specific needs, including trauma-informed care, mental health support, and economic empowerment. Speakers stressed the need for capacity-building initiatives, such as training, mentorship, education, and networking opportunities, to empower survivors and support their long-term recovery and leadership.



## CLOSING REMARKS



Bukeni Waruzi, Executive Director of Free the Slaves, delivered the closing remarks, expressing gratitude to participants for three days of insightful discussions. He reaffirmed that the fight against modern slavery, forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor remains ongoing, despite global efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating child labor by 2025. He emphasized that addressing these challenges requires collaboration across all sectors, including governments, civil society, survivors, journalists, and academics.

Waruzi highlighted the effectiveness of partnerships between governments, civil society, and survivors in combating modern slavery. He called for strengthening the justice system, pointing to corruption and capacity constraints as major barriers to progress. He also stressed the need for greater investment and resources to support anti-slavery initiatives, urging all sectors to contribute to these efforts.

Looking ahead, he emphasized the importance of improved coordination and strategic partnerships, particularly in preparation for the 2025 Global Forum. He thanked the organizers, sponsors, and participants for their contributions, recognizing the Forum as an inclusive space for collaboration. Special appreciation was given to the interpreters and the organizing team for their efforts in facilitating discussions. Waruzi concluded with a call for continued engagement and commitment to ending modern slavery.



***“We need cooperation and engagement with everybody—governments, survivors, local communities, civil society, journalists, and academics—because the fight against modern slavery is complex and requires a complex response. Don’t underestimate your power. Everybody, from government to survivors, let’s put together to combat modern slavery in Africa.”***  
**- Bukeni Waruzi - Free the Slaves**

# REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY THREE

## **01. Challenges in Survivor Engagement**

Survivors face serious security risks, including threats from traffickers, government repression, and community backlash. While some organizations have begun implementing ethical storytelling policies and risk assessments to address these threats, meaningful survivor inclusion remains underdeveloped in many cases.

## **02. Lack of Access to Funding**

The shrinking global funding pool, rising costs due to inflation, and bureaucratic delays in accessing funds create significant challenges for survivor-led initiatives. In some countries, such as Brazil, logistical barriers further complicate funding access. Additionally, gender power dynamics within survivor collectives and safeguarding risks must be addressed to prevent exploitation and ensure equitable participation.

## **03. Barriers and Opportunities in Employment**

Many survivors receive only stipends or in-kind benefits rather than sustainable salaries, limiting their ability to build stable careers. While survivors aspire to professional roles, many lack the necessary qualifications. Expanding access to capacity-building programs, scholarships, and higher education opportunities is essential to equipping survivors with the skills needed for long-term employment and leadership.



## SOLUTIONS PROPOSED TO IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

### **01. Survivor Engagement**

Governments and organizations must actively involve survivors in decision-making, recognizing them as stakeholders rather than beneficiaries. Survivor-centered approaches should be prioritized in policymaking, with mechanisms for leadership development and psychosocial support. Collaboration, accelerated action, and strategic partnerships are essential to advancing the goals of Alliance 8.7.

### **02. Support Survivor Networks**

Survivor networks are crucial in providing mutual support, sustaining engagement, and fostering new advocates. Organizations should strengthen these networks through dedicated funding and by creating opportunities for survivors to lead and collaborate.

### **03. Improve Structures and Policies**

Establishing trauma-informed organizational cultures, accommodating survivors' individual needs, and providing mental health support are key to meaningful engagement. Avoiding tokenism and creating diverse roles for survivors ensures their inclusion as contributors, leaders, and decision-makers.

### **04. Knowledge Sharing and Trust-based Approaches**

Trust-based approaches help reduce administrative burdens and encourage creativity and flexibility in addressing challenges. However, improved documentation and knowledge-sharing practices are needed to connect partners and build upon existing efforts. Survivor-led approaches have proven especially effective in strengthening safeguarding measures and generating innovative solutions to local issues.

# OUTCOMES OF THE FORUM

1. Survivor networks in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo participated in a training session with a representative from the UN Human Rights Office on the UN Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.
2. Free the Slaves is conducting a comprehensive mapping of anti-human trafficking organizations across Africa to strengthen regional collaboration and enhance collective efforts.
3. Additional webinars are being planned to foster cross-border collaboration and facilitate knowledge-sharing on best practices for combating human trafficking in Africa.





# PARTICIPANTS EVALUATION

The Forum brought together 373 participants from across Africa, fostering discussions on key strategies to combat human trafficking. In a post-event survey, attendees highlighted the importance of community engagement and collaboration with local communities, stakeholders, and survivors as essential to effective anti-trafficking efforts. Many participants found sessions on victim identification and comprehensive survivor support particularly impactful. Raising awareness about modern slavery and implementing effective advocacy strategies emerged as key lessons, alongside insights into prosecution processes, legislative gaps, and policy approaches to strengthen anti-trafficking responses. Networking and building partnerships with like-minded organizations were highly valued, as was the inclusion of survivors in anti-trafficking efforts to ensure meaningful progress. Attendees also appreciated the facilitation methods, shared experiences, and research presented, which provided practical tools and inspiration for their work. Overall, the Forum equipped participants with diverse strategies, actionable insights, and opportunities for collaboration, reinforcing their commitment to advancing the fight against human trafficking across the continent.





*"I formed new connections that could turn into future partnerships and collaborations; also deepened connection with previous connections to discuss potential collaborations"* –  
**Anonymous**

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