

THE ELKES
FOUNDATION

**FREEDOM
FROM
SLAVERY**

FORUM



ASIA REGIONAL FORUM

**Empower,
Expose,
Eradicate:**
Uniting Against
Modern Slavery
and Exploitation
in Asia

DATES: AUGUST 6-8 2024
LOCATION: ONLINE



FreedomfromSlaveryForum.org

The Hub of the Anti-Modern Slavery Movement

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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.

ASIA REGIONAL FORUM



The 2024 Asia Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum, which was held online on August 6th, 7th, and 8th, was organized around the theme "Empower, Expose, Eradicate: Uniting Against Modern Slavery and Exploitation in Asia." An external committee that included the following organizations developed the agenda: [MSEMVS](#), [Hagar International](#), [Shanti Foundation](#), [BRAC](#), [Voice of the Free \(Buklod Laya-Survivor Network\)](#), and [BALAOD Mindanaw](#).

Online

August 6-8, 2024

**Empower, Expose, Eradicate:
Uniting Against Modern Slavery
and Exploitation in Asia**

This theme encapsulated a comprehensive approach to addressing modern slavery, including human trafficking, forced labor, and other forms of exploitation, through three key pillars:

Empower

Focused on equipping individuals and communities with the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to resist and overcome exploitation. This included providing education about rights and risks, creating economic opportunities through vocational training and microfinance, ensuring access to legal aid, advocating for stronger legal frameworks, and offering mental and emotional support to survivors.

Expose

Aimed at shedding light on modern slavery thorough research, using media to highlight personal stories, advocating for transparency in supply chains, and pressuring governments to be accountable.

Eradicate

Centered on eliminating all forms of modern slavery by strengthening legislation, promoting international collaboration, engaging local communities, and focusing on the long-term rehabilitation of survivors. Through this Forum, stakeholders from various sectors worked together to address the complexities of modern slavery and exploitation in Asia while fostering a strategic and multi-stakeholder response to create lasting change.

THE PLANNING OF THE FORUM

While Free the Slaves serves as the Forum's secretariat, we were not the sole actors involved in planning the event. We would like to express our gratitude to all external committee members, without whom this event would not have been successful.

External Committee

- **Dr. Bhanuja Sharan Lal** - Manav Sansadhan Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan (MSEMVVS), India
- **Giang Thi Thu Thuy** - Hagar International, Vietnam
- **Kranti Tamang** - Shanti Foundation, Nepal
- **Rojisha Adhikari** - Shanti Foundation, Survivor Network, Nepal
- **Md. Shariful Islam Hasan** - Migration Programme and Youth Platform, BRAC, Bangladesh
- **Nicholine Zaragosa** - Voice of the Free (Buklod Laya – Survivor Network), Philippines
- **Ritz Lee B. Santos III** - BALAOD Mindanaw, Philippines

Forum Team: Giselle Balfour, Aline Gaju, Bryon Lippincott, Kuldeep Chauhan, Tsering Diskit, Romecito Madronio

Day One: Empower

Empowerment lies at the heart of sustainable change. This pillar equips individuals and communities with the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to resist and overcome exploitation. Day 1 of the Forum focused on the topics below:

Education and Awareness

Educating vulnerable populations about their rights and the risks of exploitation. This includes community outreach programs, school curricula, and public awareness campaigns.

Economic Empowerment

Creating economic opportunities and support systems for at-risk communities. This includes vocational training, microfinance initiatives, and business partnerships to ensure fair labor practices.

Legal Empowerment

Ensuring access to legal aid and support for victims of modern slavery. Advocacy for stronger legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms is crucial to protect and empower survivors.





OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Bukeni Waruzi, Free the Slaves
- Sudipa Dhungana, RHEST Nepal
- Loan Luong, Pacific Links Foundation
- R.Karuppusamy, Rights Education and Development Centre (READ)
- Sandhya Basini Sitoula, Terre des hommes Foundation
- Lucy McCray, The Freedom Story
- Prof. Ishrat Shamim, Centre for Women and Children Studies
- Tanka Aryal, Winrock Nepal (USAID Hamro Samman II)
- Vivian Isaac, Operation Red Alert, My Choices Foundation
- Ma. Cecilia Oebanda-Pacis
- Nitchaya Laohaphan, React Asia
- James Arputharaj, Asian Youth Centre
- Brijesh Kumar, Azad Shakti Abhiyan
- Mirasol F. Quiamco, TISAKA
- Kranti Tamang, Shanti Foundation
- Atty. Khristine Kay M. Lazarito-Calingin, Balaod Mindanaw



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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION



Bukeni Waruzi, Executive Director of Free the Slaves, addressed the Asia Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum, highlighting the Forum's role as a neutral and inclusive space for stakeholders to collaborate on combating modern slavery. Waruzi emphasized that the Forum brings together activists, governments, survivors, academics, and union leaders to share knowledge, identify best practices, and develop region-specific strategies. He particularly highlighted the vital role of survivors in shaping responses to modern slavery, noting that their lived experiences offer crucial insights into what works on the ground.

He also acknowledged the importance of government involvement, underscoring that collaboration across sectors is essential to address modern slavery effectively. Waruzi emphasized the value of collective efforts in empowering communities, exposing the realities of slavery, and working towards eradication. He concluded by thanking all contributors and expressing optimism that the ideas generated in the Forum will inspire meaningful change.



"The Forum is a very unique neutral, independent space where everyone can come, speak their mind, learn, and really try to share and find out what are the promising practices and solutions to address modern slavery and trafficking in local communities." - Bukeni Waruzi - Executive Director at Free the Slaves

PANEL DISCUSSION: EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES TO COMBAT MODERN SLAVERY



The panel discussion on "Educational Strategies to Combat Modern Slavery" focused on raising awareness and preventing modern slavery through education, community engagement, and support services. Panelists emphasized the importance of tailoring interventions to local contexts and fostering stakeholder collaborations. Miss Loan Luong from Pacific Links Foundation highlighted the success of their outreach programs in Vietnam, which provide scholarships and raise trafficking awareness, particularly in vulnerable areas near the Vietnam-China border. R. Karuppusamy from READ discussed efforts to support exploited interstate migrant workers in South India's textile industry, offering education, legal aid, and health resources while advocating for labor rights with governments and brands. Sandhya Sitoula of Terre des Hommes shared the ["Sport for Protection" toolkit](#), which empowers at-risk youth and trafficking survivors across Asia by building leadership and self-efficacy through sports. Lucy from The Freedom Story discussed preventing child trafficking in Northern Thailand by strengthening families and communities through education, mentorship, and government partnerships. The panel also acknowledged the broader challenges in addressing modern slavery at a regional policy level, citing political, social, and economic complexities while encouraging individuals to support ethically sourced products to combat trafficking.



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“Our outreach efforts are designed to meet people where they are at local markets, schools, or community centers. We use storytelling and personal testimonies to make the issue of human trafficking real and relatable. Understanding each community's cultural nuances and specific vulnerabilities is important to craft messages that resonate and drive action.” - Loan Luong - Program Director at Pacific Links Foundation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Local Context Matters

Effective strategies to combat modern slavery must be tailored to each region's specific cultural, social, and economic contexts. Panelists emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity and community involvement for success.

Holistic and Multi-Level Approaches

Programs like those from Pacific Links Foundation, READ, Terre des Hommes, and The Freedom Story focus on addressing root vulnerabilities. This includes educational support, legal aid, income generation, and building community ecosystems to protect at-risk populations from trafficking and exploitation.

Collaboration with Stakeholders

Successful interventions require partnerships with local authorities, schools, community leaders, and government agencies. Engaging multiple stakeholders strengthens the impact of anti-slavery efforts and provides a broader protective network for vulnerable individuals.

Continuous Engagement

Short-term interventions need to be increased. Long-term, sustained engagement, such as the "Sport for Protection" program, helps build trust, self-efficacy, and leadership skills among vulnerable populations, especially youth.

Individual Action

The panel encouraged individuals to become more informed about trafficking and to support ethically sourced products, emphasizing that consumer choices can play a role in combating modern slavery.

WORKSHOP: BUILDING ECONOMIC RESILIENCE IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES



The workshop on "Building Economic Resilience in Vulnerable Communities" focused on strategies to reduce vulnerabilities to human trafficking by empowering local populations and supporting survivors.

Cecilia Oebanda-Pacis, founder of Voice of the Free in the Philippines, discussed the Ventures of Freedom program, which helps women increase family income and access government services to reduce economic risks related to trafficking. The organization partners with businesses and offers livelihood programs for trafficking survivors through the Center of Hope. Community ownership and youth engagement are key to preventing exploitation.

Tanka Aryal from Winrock Nepal highlighted the [USAID Hamro Samman II project](#), which builds economic resilience for trafficking survivors by collaborating with over 350 businesses to offer job training, seed funding, and subsidized services. The project emphasizes the importance of digital literacy for survivors, equipping them with skills for long-term economic empowerment. Vivian Anthony Isaac, Program Director at My Choices Foundation, shared insights on [Operation Red Alert in India](#), which uses educational tools to raise awareness in vulnerable communities. The Safe Village Program trains local stakeholders to recognize and prevent trafficking. Isaac underscored the need to delay child marriages and foster economic resilience, working with micro-finance and agricultural experts to ensure community sustainability.

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“We train grassroots organizations, and they go out in different villages to do this community program we call the Safe Village Program. This program was developed based on behavioral research, neuroscience, and behavioral economics to understand what drives vulnerable and marginalized communities into situations like trafficking. The goal is to strengthen communities economically and socially so they can become resilient to vulnerabilities.” - Vivian Isaac - Program Director at My Choices Foundation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Economic Empowerment as Prevention

Empowering vulnerable individuals economically reduces their risk of falling into human trafficking. Programs like Ventures of Freedom and Hamro Samman focus on providing income opportunities, education, and access to essential services to strengthen community resilience.

Partnerships with Businesses

Collaboration with the private sector is critical in anti-trafficking efforts. Initiatives in both the Philippines and Nepal partner with businesses to offer job training, seed funding, and economic opportunities, fostering survivors' reintegration and long-term independence.

Importance of Digital Literacy

Many survivors lack digital skills, which are crucial for economic independence in today's world. Tailored digital literacy programs are essential for helping survivors leverage technology for their empowerment and resilience.

Community Engagement and Ownership

Sustainable anti-trafficking efforts rely on deep community involvement. Programs in the Philippines and India stress the need to engage local stakeholders, including families, schools, and local leaders, in awareness-building and long-term prevention strategies.

CASE STUDY PRESENTATION: SUCCESSFUL LEGAL INTERVENTIONS IN ASIA



Nitchaya Laohaphan discussed the importance of corporate accountability in addressing forced labor and modern slavery, particularly within global supply chains. She emphasized the need for local NGOs to move beyond seeking individual compensation and consider broader corporate accountability strategies. Laohaphan outlined various legal mechanisms for corporate accountability, such as state-based judicial and non-judicial systems, non-state judicial systems, and arbitration, and stressed the need for a multifaceted approach to achieve remedy for victims presented a case study involving the Cambodian villagers displaced by Midpoint Sugar Corporation, a Thailand-based multinational. Civil society organizations (CSOs) used a combination of grievance mechanisms, buyer engagement, and legal action to seek accountability for human rights abuses. Despite challenges with non-binding mechanisms and a slow judicial process, the case advanced through a class-action lawsuit in Thailand, marking a significant step in holding multinational companies accountable. Laohaphan emphasized the long-term commitment required for such cases, including resource allocation, victim protection, and coordination across jurisdictions, while underscoring the importance of victim-centered approaches to legal interventions.

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"Corporate accountability in cases of forced labor is fundamental to the systemic eradication of modern slavery. It takes a combined and concerted effort across multiple jurisdictions and strategies to seek remedy for human rights violations, and victims must be fully informed and consulted at every stage of the process." - Nitchaya Laohaphan - Program Manager at React Asia

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Corporate Accountability is Crucial

Effective strategies for eradicating modern slavery must focus on corporate accountability, especially with multinational companies involved in global supply chains.

Challenges in Corporate Accountability

Corporate accountability efforts can be hindered by limited enforcement power, lack of binding legal decisions, and challenges securing adequate remedies for affected communities.

Legal Mechanisms for Accountability

Various legal mechanisms, including state-based judicial systems, non-judicial grievance mechanisms, and arbitration, are essential for providing remedies and ensuring accountability.

Sustained Commitment and Resources

Long-term legal actions require substantial resources and sustained efforts, including funding, documentation, expert witnesses, and ongoing support for affected communities.

SURVIVORS LEADING ANTI-TRAFFICKING EFFORTS



The workshop "Survivors Leading Anti-Trafficking Efforts" brought together survivors from across Asia to discuss their role in leading anti-trafficking initiatives. Kranti Tamang from Nepal's Shanti Foundation shared her perspective as a survivor leader, drawing from her personal experience as the daughter of a sex trafficking survivor. She emphasized the importance of recognizing the lived experiences of survivors as a source of invaluable knowledge in shaping effective anti-trafficking strategies. Kranti highlighted challenges such as lack of education and confidence among survivors, stressing that they are not just statistics but crucial leaders in the movement capable of creating real change in their communities.

Mirasol F. Quiamco of TISAKA, a grassroots survivor-led organization in the Philippines, shared success stories of survivors who, with the support of TISAKA, have transitioned from prostitution to pursuing education and professional careers. She highlighted the organization's collaborations with local government and national networks to address human trafficking, prostitution, and HIV/AIDS. Brijesh Kumar, representing Azad Shakti Abhiyan in India, recounted his experience as a former bonded laborer and the collective strength of survivor-led groups in combating human trafficking. He noted the challenges of illiteracy and employer resistance but emphasized the power of survivor-led efforts to raise awareness and advocate for change. The workshop underscored the leadership of survivors in advancing the anti-trafficking movement through community mobilization and advocacy.



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"Survivors are much more than just their stories. They are much more than the reports, statistics, and paperwork we present at conferences or offices. Their experiences are valuable treasures that can help shape the anti-trafficking movement and improve support services"- Kranti Tamang - Organization Development Officer at Shanti Foundation

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survivors as Leaders

The workshop underscored the crucial role of survivors in leading anti-trafficking initiatives. Their lived experiences provide unique insights that shape more effective strategies and support systems for combating human trafficking and bonded labor.

Community Mobilization

Survivor-led organizations, such as TISAKA and Azad Shakti Abhiyan, demonstrated the power of grassroots mobilization in raising awareness, providing education, and creating livelihood opportunities. These efforts help survivors escape exploitation and rebuild their lives.

Recognition of Survivor Expertise

It was emphasized that survivors are not just stories or statistics but are experts on the issues affecting them. Their leadership and voices are critical to shaping the future of anti-trafficking efforts.

LEGAL SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS



Atty. Lazarito-Calingin's presentation focused on legal empowerment for victims of human trafficking, emphasizing that legal assistance must extend beyond traditional litigation and court processes. She discussed Balaod Mindanaw's holistic approach, which integrates legal services with community-based paralegal education and awareness campaigns to empower vulnerable groups, especially in Northern Mindanao.

Through grassroots campaigns, Balaod raises awareness about human trafficking, targeting students, youth leaders, community officials, and service providers. The aim is to equip these groups with the necessary legal knowledge to protect vulnerable populations and actively participate in anti-trafficking efforts. In addition, Balaod facilitates case monitoring, evidence gathering, and legal support, while public prosecutors handle the actual litigation. The organization also employs meta-legal strategies, such as protests and public visibility, to raise awareness and pressure legal institutions to take action.

Balaod Mindanaw further strengthens its impact by forming partnerships with government agencies and other NGOs, fostering collaborative efforts to institutionalize legal training and develop referral systems for trafficking cases. Atty. Lazarito-Calingin emphasized the importance of empowering communities to address human trafficking issues themselves, as this is seen as the most effective and sustainable way to ensure justice and protect vulnerable populations.



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“Empowerment is the most effective and sustainable way to improve the lives of others, be it legal empowerment or economic empowerment, and it requires collaborative effort, especially among the stakeholders.” - Atty. Kristine Kay M. Lazarito-Calingin - Balaod Mindanaw

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Legal Empowerment Beyond Litigation

Effective anti-trafficking efforts require not just formal legal action but also empowering communities with legal knowledge and resources to address human trafficking on their own.

Engaging Vulnerable Communities

Educating students, community leaders, and service providers about trafficking risks and legal protections helps create informed and resilient communities that can better protect themselves.

Collaborative Networks for Greater Impact

Partnering with government bodies, NGOs, and local communities enhances the effectiveness of anti-trafficking initiatives through shared resources, knowledge, and coordinated efforts.

Non-Litigation Advocacy

Advocacy efforts such as public demonstrations, community support during court cases, and media engagement are important tools for complementing traditional legal strategies in the fight against human trafficking.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY ONE

01. Cultural Sensitivity and Local Context

Strategies to combat modern slavery must be adapted to specific cultural, social, and economic contexts. A lack of cultural sensitivity or community involvement can hinder success.

02. Economic Vulnerabilities

Economic insecurity increases the risk of trafficking and exploitation. Addressing this requires programs that provide income opportunities, education, and essential services, but scaling and sustaining such programs remain challenges.

03. Gaps in Corporate Accountability

Limited enforcement mechanisms, weak legal frameworks, and difficulty securing adequate remedies pose significant challenges in holding multinational corporations accountable for labor violations in their supply chains.

04. Digital Literacy Deficits

Survivors of trafficking often lack the digital skills necessary for economic independence and reintegration. Implementing tailored digital literacy programs is resource-intensive and requires consistent effort.

05. Community Involvement

Deep engagement with local stakeholders, including families and community leaders, is crucial but can be difficult to achieve due to mistrust, resource limitations, or lack of awareness.

06. Sustainability of Efforts

Anti-trafficking initiatives often struggle to sustain long-term engagement and resources essential for building trust and achieving lasting impact.

07. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

While partnerships with businesses, schools, community leaders, and government agencies are important, coordinating these efforts is complex and resource intensive.

08. Legal and Judicial Challenges

Legal mechanisms for accountability face obstacles such as insufficient funding, lack of expertise, and limited access to affected communities, which undermine their effectiveness.

09. Lack of Awareness Among Individuals

Raising awareness among the general public about trafficking and ethical consumer choices is critical but remains an ongoing challenge, especially in regions with limited education or media access.





SOLUTIONS PROPOSED TO IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

01. Culturally Sensitive Strategies

Develop anti-slavery strategies that align with each region's specific cultural, social, and economic contexts to ensure their effectiveness.

02. Economic Empowerment Programs

Implement initiatives like Ventures of Freedom and Hamro Samman that provide income opportunities, education, and access to essential services to reduce vulnerabilities to trafficking.

03. Corporate Accountability Mechanisms

Advocate for stronger enforcement mechanisms, binding legal decisions, and effective grievance and arbitration systems to ensure multi-national corporations are held accountable for labor violations.

04. Digital Literacy Programs

Create tailored digital literacy initiatives to equip survivors with the skills needed for economic independence and resilience in the modern economy.

05. Community Engagement and Ownership

Foster deep involvement of local stakeholders, including families, schools, and community leaders, to build awareness and sustain long-term prevention efforts.

06. Sustained and Holistic Interventions

Design long-term programs that address root causes of trafficking and exploitation, including educational support, legal aid, income generation, and community-building activities.



Day Two: Expose

Exposure involves shedding light on the hidden and often overlooked issue of modern slavery. This entails uncovering and publicizing the extent and nature of the problem to mobilize action and resources.

Research and Data Collection

Conduct thorough research to map the prevalence and patterns of modern slavery in Asia. Accurate data is essential for developing targeted interventions.

Media and Storytelling

Utilizing media platforms to highlight personal stories and the human impact of modern slavery. This can be achieved through documentaries, social media campaigns, and investigative journalism.

Transparency in Supply Chains

Advocating for corporate responsibility and transparency in supply chains to ensure that products are not produced through exploitative practices. This involves pushing for stricter reporting requirements and consumer awareness initiatives.

Government Accountability

Pressuring governments to recognize and address modern slavery through policy changes and international cooperation.



OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Dr. Marta Furlan, Free the Slaves
- Ranjana Sharma, Children Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH)
- Mustafa Qadri, Equidem.
- Carmina Charmaine G. Domingo, Eleison Foundation
- Atty. Jaye de la Cruz Bekema, Office of Senator Risa Hontiveros
- Mina Chiang, Humanity Research Consultancy
- Bryon Lippincott, Free the Slaves
- Matt Friedman, The Mekong Club
- Jen Green, Labour Solutions
- Yogita Bajracharya, National Business Initiative
- Sarah Lince, Verite
- Dr. Brook Bello, More Too Life



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WORKSHOP: CURRENT TRENDS AND DATA ON MODERN SLAVERY IN ASIA



During the Research and Data Collection Workshop, moderated by Dr. Marta Furlan, speakers explored the latest trends and data on modern slavery in Asia, focusing on how external factors like climate change exacerbate vulnerability. Dr. Furlan presented a [study](#) by Free the Slaves and JPIC IDC in the Philippines, which identified five key pathways—poverty, displacement, food insecurity, health insecurity, and lack of education—through which climate change increases vulnerability to trafficking. These factors push vulnerable populations toward exploitative situations, particularly in high-risk sectors. Ranjana Sharma from CWISH Nepal highlighted similar issues, discussing the intersection of modern slavery with climate change and disability in Nepal and the challenge of addressing hidden child labor in sectors like adult entertainment. She called for holistic approaches to combatting modern slavery, which include empowering both children and families while also addressing the economic vulnerabilities of business owners in exploitative sectors.

Carmina Charmaine G. Domingo of the Eleison Foundation and Mustafa Qadri from Equidem emphasized the importance of survivor-led research and empowerment in anti-slavery efforts. Domingo discussed how the Eleison Foundation has used community-based participatory research (CBPR) since 2016, particularly the ["photovoice"](#) method, to enable trafficking survivors in the Philippines to share their experiences through photography, giving them a central role in both research and advocacy. Qadri shared Equidem's unique approach of using investigative teams of survivors and workers to reveal exploitation in supply chains across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf region. He highlighted rising inequality, weak regulatory frameworks, and economic pressures as key drivers of modern slavery while stressing the need to protect civic spaces for activists fighting against exploitation. Both speakers emphasized that survivor leadership is essential to crafting authentic and effective anti-trafficking solutions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Impact of Climate Change on Vulnerability

The workshop highlighted how climate change exacerbates vulnerability to modern slavery in Asia, identifying five pathways through which it affects vulnerable populations: poverty, displacement, food insecurity, health insecurity, and lack of education. These factors push people into exploitative situations.

Intersectionality in Exploitation

Speakers discussed the complex intersection of modern slavery with climate change, disability, and hidden child labor. They called for holistic solutions that empower children and families while also addressing the economic vulnerabilities of business owners in exploitative sectors.

Survivor-Led Research and Advocacy

Speakers stressed the importance of survivor leadership in research and advocacy, highlighting it as key to creating authentic and effective anti-slavery solutions.

Structural and Economic Drivers of Exploitation

Panelists identified rising inequality, weak regulatory frameworks, and economic pressures as primary drivers of modern slavery in Asia.



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“Rising inequality and weak regulatory frameworks are pushing vulnerable people into exploitative, high-risk jobs. Survivor leadership is key to shaping solutions and empowering communities, but we must also protect civic space for the activists fighting these battles on the ground.” - Mustafa Qadri - Equidem

CASE STUDY PRESENTATION: EXPOSING PASTOR QUIBOLOY'S TRAFFICKING BUSINESS AND THE SIARGAO ISLAND CASE, PHILIPPINES



Atty. Jaye de la Cruz Bekema, representing the Office of Senator Risa Hontiveros, discussed the use of legislative hearings in the Philippines to expose human trafficking and support victim-survivors. She highlighted Pastor Apollo Quiboloy's case involving large-scale sex and labor trafficking with victims, including minors and foreign nationals. Legislative hearings played a crucial role in uncovering these abuses, leveraging media attention to shift public opinion, and assisting law enforcement in building cases against traffickers. Bekema emphasized that legislative hearings allow victims to testify in a less restrictive environment than court proceedings, aiding in the identification of policy gaps such as the issue of coerced consent in religious cults and the exploitation of volunteers. Bekema emphasized the need for such legislative action to not only bring perpetrators to justice but also push for legal reforms to better address human trafficking in complex contexts, particularly within secretive and geographically isolated communities.



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"Legislative hearings allow us to put front and center the voices of the victims... We're allowed to present witnesses without the exact requirements of courts, and it allows us basically to present witnesses via Zoom." - Atty. Jaye de la Cruz Bekema - Office of Senator Risa Hontiveros

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Role of Legislative Hearings

Legislative hearings in the Philippines play a crucial role in exposing human trafficking and other abuses, as they offer a platform for victims to testify without the stringent requirements of court proceedings.

Policy Gaps and Recommendations

The cases highlighted gaps in legislation, particularly around issues like coercive consent in religious organizations and the legal status of religious "volunteers" who are often exploited for labor.

Impact of Legislative Hearings on Law Enforcement

Bekema emphasized how legislative inquiries assist law enforcement by providing leads and evidence that authorities may not easily obtain. These hearings also help build public pressure for action, especially against influential figures.



CYBER SLAVERY: THE DARK SIDE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS



Mina Chiang, Founder and Director of Humanity Research Consultancy, delivered a presentation on the growing issue of "Cyber Slavery," focusing on exploiting individuals through digital platforms. She explained that cyber slavery often involves trafficked individuals being forced into scam operations, such as fraudulent activities in scamming compounds, where criminals exploit vulnerable people while defrauding others globally. These compounds operate with alarming sophistication, often involving multiple layers of criminal organizations and corrupt authorities that protect their operations. Mina highlighted how traffickers target people worldwide, often luring them under false pretenses before trapping them in forced labor situations. She emphasized the need to combat the organized criminal networks behind these operations, noting that cyber slavery has become a massive global issue, with estimates of its economic impact reaching trillions of dollars.

Chiang called for urgent global action, stating that raising awareness is insufficient. Governments, law enforcement, and international organizations must focus on dismantling the criminal networks that enable cyber slavery. She also noted the challenges in rescuing victims, often misidentified as criminals. Humanity Research Consultancy advocates for including cyber fraud in global legal frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to address the issue more effectively. Collaborative international efforts are essential to stopping this emerging form of modern slavery.



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“We are still in a very early stage of this crime.. scam and human trafficking for cyber slavery; it's so new that many people still struggle to comprehend it. If we don't even have the awareness, it's really hard to convince the government to spend budget to make sure they allocate personnel to address the issue” -
Mina Chiang - Humanity Research Consultancy

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Emergence of Cyber Slavery

A growing form of modern slavery where trafficked individuals are forced into digital scam operations, often within sophisticated, organized criminal networks.

Global Scope and Impact

Cyber slavery is a widespread global issue, with victims recruited from around the world and trapped in forced labor situations. The economic impact of these operations is estimated to reach trillions of dollars.

Victim Misidentification

Victims of cyber slavery are often misidentified as criminals themselves, complicating rescue efforts and legal responses.

Call for Legal Frameworks

Humanity Research Consultancy advocates for including cyber fraud under global legal frameworks like the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to combat this issue more effectively.

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS AND AMPLIFYING WORKER VOICES



This panel discussion, moderated by Bryon Lippincott, explored strategies for promoting transparency and accountability in supply chains. Yogita Bajracharya highlighted the role of business associations, like chambers of commerce, in facilitating collective action among companies to foster ethical behavior and accountability in labor practices. She discussed NBI's efforts in developing a code of conduct and providing training and tools to help businesses identify and address vulnerabilities in their supply chains.

Matt Friedman emphasized the urgent need to address forced labor in global supply chains, particularly the involvement of the private sector. He highlighted the scale of the problem, with millions of people trapped in modern slavery, often linked to private sector supply chains. Friedman advocated for a supportive approach to work with the private sector, focusing on raising awareness, building trust, and providing training to ensure compliance and worker protection. He stressed the importance of businesses taking responsibility for their supply chains and engaging in meaningful collaboration with NGOs and other stakeholders.

Jen Green emphasized the importance of a worker-centered approach to transparency and accountability. She highlighted the role of technology in empowering workers and making supply chains more transparent and inclusive. Green advocated for including workers in transparency and prevention efforts, using trauma-informed, technology-driven solutions that allow workers to share their experiences safely and anonymously.



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"Much of what I think is needed is for us not to wag a finger at the factories and say you're terrible is to find a way of engaging with them to sit down with them to figure out what they know what they don't know and then offer training and awareness raising." - Matt Friedman - CEO of The Mekong Club

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Business Associations as Catalysts

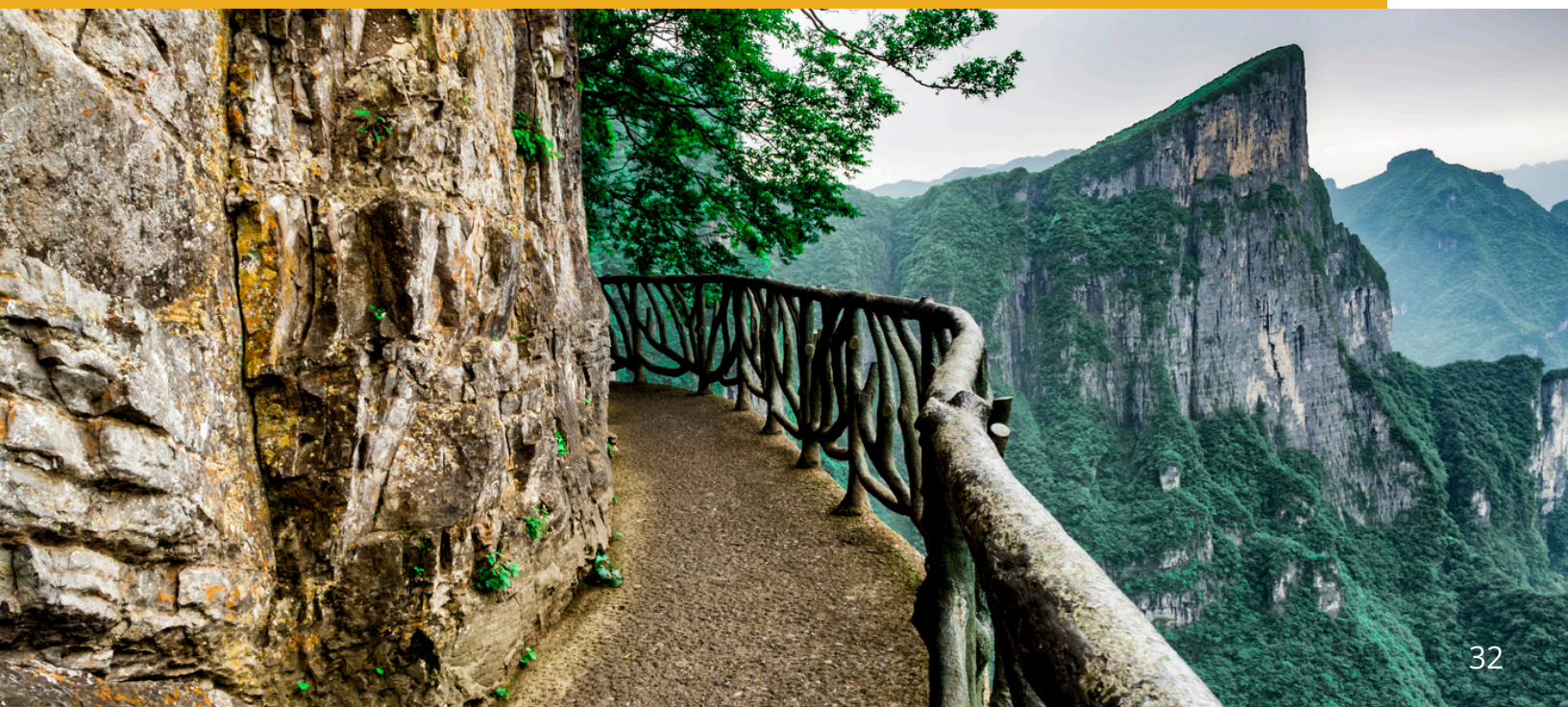
Business associations, such as chambers of commerce, can play a pivotal role in promoting responsible and transparent supply chains by facilitating collective action among companies.

Worker Empowerment Through Technology

Technology can empower workers by helping them understand and exercise their rights and making it easier for employers to adopt responsible practices.

Transparent and Inclusive Supply Chains

Building transparent and inclusive supply chains where workers' voices are heard, and their rights are respected is essential to ensure ethical and sustainable business practices.



PROMOTING CSO CAPACITIES TO PROVIDE DATA FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DUE DILIGENCE INITIATIVES IN SUPPLY CHAINS



Sarah Lince, Senior Program Manager at Verité, presented the Fostering Fee Accountability and Cost Tracking (FFACT) project, which focuses on improving data collection for human rights due diligence in supply chains, particularly regarding migrant workers at risk of debt bondage. Debt bondage occurs when workers are forced to pay high recruitment fees, leading to exploitation. The project aims to support adopting an "employer pays" recruitment model, where employers cover recruitment costs, to eliminate such risks. By partnering with community-based organizations, the FFACT project collected accurate data on recruitment costs from over 600 migrant workers in India, Bangladesh, and Malaysia.

The presentation highlighted the growing pressure from human rights due diligence legislation, such as the EU Forced Labor Import Ban, pushing companies to document better and verify recruitment costs to prevent exploitation. The FFACT project's digital survey tool, designed with input from migrant-led organizations, enabled more reliable data collection. Sarah emphasized the importance of trust-building with workers, using short and accessible surveys, and employing worker-led data collection to overcome the challenges of gathering sensitive information on exploitation risks. This approach helps companies understand recruitment costs and implement ethical practices in their supply chains.



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"Debt bondage is considered a key indicator of forced labor... workers are obliged to borrow funds to pay these recruitment costs, which leads to a risk of debt bondage and other exploitation" - Sarah Lince - Senior Program Manager, Verite

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Data Collection Innovation

The FFACT project developed a digital survey tool to collect reliable recruitment cost data from migrant workers. This tool, designed to be accessible and straightforward, helped gather data from over 600 workers across India, Bangladesh, and Malaysia.

Worker-Led Research

The project emphasized the importance of engaging with community-based organizations and worker-led initiatives to build trust and obtain more accurate data, as workers are often reluctant to share sensitive information due to fear of reprisals.

Human Rights Due Diligence Legislation

Increasing pressure from legislation, such as the EU Forced Labor Import Ban and the U.S. Forced Labor Ban, pushes companies to ensure employers pay recruitment costs and prove that their workers are not subjected to debt bondage.



BUILDING A MOVEMENT NARRATIVE



Dr. Brook Bello's presentation focused on the importance of creating a unified, inclusive narrative to address modern slavery and human trafficking. She emphasized the need for a global movement that encompasses all forms of exploitation, including labor and sex trafficking, and calls for greater awareness of how these issues intersect. She pointed out the confusion surrounding the scope of trafficking, with estimates varying widely. She discussed how social and political narratives around modern slavery need to be reshaped, much like the climate change movement. Dr. Bello also highlighted the "Dirty Dozen" list, targeting major corporations for enabling exploitation, and emphasized the role of survivor voices in driving the movement forward.

Dr. Bello underscored the scale of modern slavery, affecting millions worldwide, and stressed that securing long-term funding and resources remains a challenge. She advocated for the development of sub-narratives tailored to specific regions and forms of exploitation, enabling a nuanced approach to combat trafficking. She called on stakeholders globally to collaborate, share perspectives, and contribute to building a comprehensive narrative to unite efforts in eradicating modern slavery and supporting survivors.



"To truly combat modern slavery, we must embrace a narrative that reflects the diversity of experiences, centers the voices of those affected, and unites the world in addressing every form of exploitation—because no one is free until everyone is free." - Brook Bello - More Too Life

KEY TAKEAWAY

Unified and Inclusive Narrative

A cohesive global narrative is essential to effectively address modern slavery and human trafficking in all its forms, including labor and sex trafficking. The narrative should encompass regional and exploitation-specific sub-narratives for a more nuanced approach.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY TWO

01. Climate Change and Vulnerability

Climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities to modern slavery through pathways such as poverty, displacement, food insecurity, health insecurity, and lack of education, driving individuals into exploitative situations.

02. Intersectionality of Exploitation

Modern slavery intersects with various issues, such as climate change, disability, and hidden child labor, requiring complex and multifaceted solutions.

03. Structural and Economic Inequities

Rising inequality, weak regulatory frameworks, and economic pressures create systemic vulnerabilities perpetuating exploitation.

04. Policy and Legal Gaps

Legislative and policy gaps, particularly regarding coercive consent in religious organizations and the exploitation of religious "volunteers," leave certain groups unprotected.

05. Challenges in Legislative Hearings

While legislative hearings help expose abuses, their reliance on public testimony may limit participation from victims who fear retaliation or stigma.

06. Emergence of Cyber Slavery

Cyber slavery is a growing and sophisticated form of exploitation, often involving trafficked individuals forced into digital scam operations, with victims misidentified as criminals, complicating rescue and legal efforts. Existing international legal frameworks do not adequately address cyber slavery, limiting the ability to combat this global issue effectively.

07. Limited Survivor Participation

Survivor leadership is recognized as crucial but needs to be sufficiently integrated into research, advocacy, and solution-building efforts.





SOLUTIONS PROPOSED TO IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

01. Addressing Climate Change Vulnerabilities

Implement targeted interventions such as livelihood programs, disaster resilience initiatives, and educational support for affected communities to reduce poverty, displacement, food insecurity, and health insecurity caused by climate change.

02. Holistic Approaches to Intersectional Exploitation

Develop programs that address the intersection of modern slavery with climate change, disability, and hidden child labor by empowering families and children while supporting economic stability for business owners in vulnerable sectors.

03. Building Transparent and Inclusive Supply Chains

Promote collective action among businesses, facilitated by associations like chambers of commerce, to create ethical and transparent supply chains. Also, adopt technologies that improve supply chain traceability and empower workers by providing platforms to report abuses and access rights information.

04. Leveraging Technology for Worker Empowerment

Develop technology tools that educate workers about their rights and connect them with resources while helping businesses adopt responsible labor practices.

05. Long-Term Community Investments

Focus on community-driven approaches, including education, skill development, and economic empowerment programs, to address root causes of exploitation and build resilience.

06. Tackling Cyber Slavery

Develop specialized law enforcement units and task forces to dismantle organized cyber slavery networks. Raise awareness about the issue among governments and communities to improve victim identification and response efforts. Train law enforcement and judicial officers to recognize victims of cyber slavery and differentiate them from perpetrators, facilitating better legal responses and rehabilitation efforts.

07. Incorporating Survivor Leadership

Actively involve survivors in research, advocacy, and program development to ensure authentic solutions reflect lived experiences



Day Three: Eradicate

Eradiation is the ultimate goal of this collective effort, aiming to eliminate all forms of modern slavery and exploitation.

Strengthening Legislation

Advocating for comprehensive and enforceable laws against modern slavery and ensuring their effective implementation. This includes harsher penalties for traffickers and protections for victims.

International Collaboration

Promoting cross-border cooperation to tackle trafficking networks that operate transnationally. Sharing best practices, resources, and intelligence can significantly enhance efforts.

Community Mobilization

Engaging local communities in the fight against slavery by fostering a culture of vigilance and action. Grassroots movements and local NGOs play a critical role in this.

Long-term Rehabilitation

Focusing on the long-term needs of survivors, including health care, education, and job placement, to prevent re-victimization and ensure their full reintegration into society.



OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Md. Shariful Islam Hasan, BRAC
- Eugenio Gonzales, PDAP
- Adrian Pereira, North South Initiative
- Aaboo Varghese, Purnata
- Shom Luitel, People Forum for Human Rights
- Kuldeep Singh Chauhan, Free the Slaves
- Kosal Hor, Chab Dai Coalition
- Mallika Karunan, A21
- Benu Maya Gurung, Alliance Against Trafficking of Women and Children in Nepal
- Luong Le, Blue Dragon Children's Foundation
- Bart Van Oost, CURE Foundation
- Brittocia Franklin, Global Shepherds
- Adheen Raj Shakya, READ Nepal
- Dr. Bhanuja Sharan Lal, MSEMVS
- Sreyna Sam, Hagar International Cambodia
- Nicholine Zaragosa, Voice of the Free



CLICK THE VIDEO ICON TO WATCH ON YOUTUBE

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS FOR ERADICATING MODERN SLAVERY



This panel discussion was led by Md. Shariful Islam Hasan from BRAC, panelists discussed developing and implementing legislative frameworks to eradicate modern slavery. Eugenio Gonzales of USAID-CTIP PDAP highlighted the Strengthening City Partnerships project in the Philippines, which tackles human trafficking through multi-level collaborations with local governments, NGOs, and the private sector. Despite a Tier 1 ranking in the U.S. TIP report, vulnerabilities remain due to the Philippines' significant OFW population and its role in trafficking-related materials. Gonzales emphasized local action, such as ordinances like Olongapo City's, which focus on survivor protection and trafficking prevention. Adrian Pereira of the North-South Initiative criticized systemic inefficiencies, corruption, and donor-driven agendas in anti-slavery efforts, advocating for structural reforms, ethical labor practices, and worker-centric approaches to address root causes like debt bondage and exploitative recruitment.

Aaboo Varghese of Purnata underscored the importance of prevention by targeting trafficking vulnerabilities in source, transit, and destination areas while ensuring traffickers face justice through legal aid partnerships. He called for stricter penalties, a trafficker database, and laws targeting demand in sex trafficking. Shom Luitel from the People Forum for Human Rights addressed the exploitation of Nepali migrant workers despite strong legal frameworks, stressing bilateral agreements, civil society collaboration, and reforms to counter challenges like social media-based recruitment. Across presentations, the need for systemic reforms, international collaboration, and local empowerment emerged as critical strategies for combating human trafficking.



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“Our focus is on preventing human trafficking by addressing its root causes in source, transit, and destination areas. While we engage in rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration, our primary aim is to reduce vulnerability in source areas, increase risks for traffickers along transit routes, and decrease demand in destination region” - Aaboo Varghese - Purnata

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Localized Action

Human trafficking often originates at the village or local level. As seen in Olongapo City's proactive measures in the Philippines, strengthening local governments' capacity to implement anti-trafficking laws and ordinances is critical.

Legislative Reform and Policy Reforms

Continuous updates to laws are necessary to address emerging trends such as deceptive and insidious social media-based recruitment. Stricter laws targeting traffickers and consumers of trafficked goods and services are essential to reduce demand and deter repeat offenders.

Support for Survivors and Legal Assistance

Comprehensive survivor protection, including free legal aid and capacity-building for stakeholders, is critical.



PANEL DISCUSSION: CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND NETWORKING STRATEGIES



On the panel titled "Cross-Border Cooperation and Networking Strategies, panelists discussed the importance of cross-border collaboration to combat human trafficking. Kosal Hor from Chab Dai Coalition emphasized the organization's work in Southeast Asia, where it unites over 50 NGOs to tackle trafficking through prevention, intervention, protection, and advocacy. He highlighted Cambodia's unique role as a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking and stressed the need for stronger cross-border cooperation, particularly to improve repatriation and reintegration processes. Hor called for increased government accountability, political will, and resources for survivor reintegration, emphasizing collective action from governments, UN agencies, and NGOs.

Mallika Karunan from A21 Thailand shared her organization's holistic approach, focusing on prevention, recovery, and restoration. She highlighted successful cross-border collaboration between Thailand and Cambodia, where partnerships with governments, law enforcement, and NGOs ensure effective survivor identification, legal support, and safe repatriation. Mallika also stressed the importance of income generation programs and follow-up support to help survivors reintegrate into their communities and avoid re-trafficking.

Benu Maya Gurung, Executive Director of AATWIN, discussed Nepal's challenges in cross-border cooperation, citing the open border with India and the lack of formal agreements like MOUs or Mutual Legal Assistance treaties. She pointed out the absence of victim identification guidelines in Nepal, leading to inconsistent rescue and repatriation efforts. Benu also highlighted emerging trafficking trends such as scam trafficking and fake marriages. Despite these challenges, AATWIN continues to push for stronger regional cooperation and accountability, working with survivors, government bodies, and international mechanisms to address trafficking effectively. All panelists emphasized that overcoming the challenges of human trafficking requires strengthened cross-border collaboration, improved policies, and comprehensive support for survivors, urging a united effort from all stakeholders to create lasting, systemic change.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Necessity of Cross-Border Collaboration

Human trafficking is a complex, transnational issue, and effective solutions require strong partnerships between governments, NGOs, and local communities across borders. Government Accountability: Panelists stressed the importance of greater political will, better resource allocation, and stronger bilateral and multilateral agreements to combat trafficking effectively.

Challenges in Repatriation and Reintegration

Despite formal agreements, inefficiencies in repatriation and reintegration processes often hinder effective victim support, necessitating more proactive and coordinated actions.

Emerging Trends in Human Trafficking

New forms of trafficking, such as scam trafficking and fake marriages, require updated understanding and responses from all stakeholders, including the recognition of victims holding labor permits.



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"The thing is, how do we make the destination and transit countries accountable and responsible? Nepal lacks formal agreements like MOUs or Mutual Legal Assistance treaties, even with our neighboring countries. This creates major challenges for victim identification, rescue, and repatriation, leaving efforts fragmented and ad hoc."
- Benu Maya Gurung, Executive Director of the Alliance Against Trafficking of Women and Children in Nepal (AATWIN)

CASE STUDY PRESENTATION: “SUCCESSFUL CROSS BORDER RESCUE AND REPATRIATION”



Luong Le of ATIP at Blue Dragon Children's Foundation presented a case study on successful cross-border rescue and repatriation. Her organization has been rescuing victims of human trafficking, particularly children and women, in Vietnam since 2004. Blue Dragon's first rescue occurred in 2005, and since then, they have rescued over 1,500 victims and provided repatriation support to nearly 1,200 individuals.

Luong shared a particular case of a Vietnamese woman who was trafficked to China as a bride but managed to escape with Blue Dragon's help. The foundation works closely with local authorities and embassies, providing immediate support and repatriation assistance to victims from Vietnam and other countries in Southeast Asia. A significant challenge is the reintegration of victims, particularly those from ethnic minority communities who face cultural and language barriers. Blue Dragon has developed a community-based case management (CBCM) model that involves local social workers who understand the community and can provide tailored support for survivors. The foundation also focuses on long-term support, including psychosocial care, legal advocacy, and livelihood programs to ensure that victims do not fall back into vulnerable situations.

Luong also highlighted the changing landscape of trafficking, particularly the increasing trafficking of men for online scams and forced criminality, a shift from the predominantly female victims of the past. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities, leading to new trafficking patterns and emerging social groups at risk. Finally, she shared key lessons learned, emphasizing the importance of victim-centered approaches, cross-border cooperation, and the flexibility to adapt to changing trafficking patterns. Partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and local communities are crucial to the success of rescue and reintegration efforts. Training and capacity building for local authorities and social workers are essential for effective long-term victim protection.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Comprehensive Support for Survivors

Blue Dragon focuses not only on rescuing victims but also on providing long-term support for reintegration, including psychosocial care, legal advocacy, and livelihood programs to prevent re-trafficking.

Cross-Border Cooperation

Effective rescue operations rely on collaboration between local authorities, NGOs, and embassies across countries. Blue Dragon has successfully worked with authorities in Vietnam, Cambodia, and China to repatriate victims.

Community-Based Case Management (CBCM)

The CBCM model, which involves local social workers, is crucial for supporting survivors from ethnic minority communities, addressing language and cultural barriers, and ensuring sustainable reintegration.

Changing Patterns of Trafficking

Trafficking patterns have shifted, with an increasing number of male victims trafficked for online scams and forced criminality, alongside the continued trafficking of women and children for exploitation.



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"Our goal is to end human trafficking in Vietnam. Rescuing victims is just the first step; they need appropriate psychosocial support to reintegrate into society and avoid re-trafficking and other forms of exploitation" -
Luong Le - Blue Dragon Children's Foundation



INTERACTIVE SESSION: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN ANTI-SLAVERY EFFORTS



The session, moderated by Bart Van Oost, Managing Director of CURE Foundation, featured Brittocia Franklin, Executive Director of Global Shepherds; Adheen Raj Shakya, Senior Project Coordinator of READ Nepal; and Dr. Bhanuja Sharan Lal, Executive Director of MSEMVS. The discussion focused on trust-building, cultural influences, and the role of education and awareness campaigns in combating modern slavery.

Building trust with vulnerable communities was identified as a foundational step in anti-slavery efforts. Adheen stressed the challenges of balancing funding deadlines with the time required to build trust, emphasizing that progress cannot happen without it. Dr. Bhanuja added that working within complex social systems, such as generational bonded labor and caste-based hierarchies, demands careful navigation to earn credibility and foster change.

Cultural and social factors play a significant role in shaping anti-slavery initiatives. Adheen illustrated how tailoring messages to local languages and values helps communities take ownership of solutions, as seen in a mobile learning center project that led to community-led fundraising. Brittocia highlighted the dual nature of cultural norms, which can both perpetuate and help address trafficking, underscoring the importance of sensitivity and strength-based approaches. Dr. Bhanuja elaborated on how entrenched practices, like unpaid labor tied to land tenancy, are complicated interventions that must be addressed with cultural awareness.

Education and awareness campaigns were emphasized as critical tools for mobilizing communities. Brittocia emphasized the importance of listening to communities to design context-specific initiatives. Adheen shared examples of successful school programs that influence parents' decisions and community events like street dramas that make information accessible in familiar settings. These efforts empower individuals and create ripple effects within families and communities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Cultural Sensitivity is Critical

Anti-slavery efforts must be tailored to each community's cultural and social context. Panelists shared how localized solutions, such as the use of local languages and community-endorsed values, empower communities to take ownership of interventions.

Community-Led Solutions are Key

Facilitating community-driven initiatives ensures sustainability and inclusivity. Examples such as a community-led mobile learning center show how communities can take charge of their own development when supported with resources and guidance.



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“We believe in human-centered design. Communities identify their own problems and solutions—we simply facilitate. This ensures strategies are grounded in the lived realities of those we aim to support” - Adheen Raj Shakya - READ Nepal

REBUILDING LIFE AFTER EXPLOITATION - LONG-TERM SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS



Sreyna Sam, Country Director of Hagar International Cambodia, shared insights into the organization's approach to supporting survivors of human trafficking, slavery, and abuse. During her presentation, she emphasized Hagar's commitment to restoring lives through a holistic, trauma-informed care model. Sreyna highlighted how Hagar addresses the complex needs of survivors, providing long-term support that encompasses safety, emotional recovery, legal aid, education, and economic empowerment. She outlined the structured process survivors undergo upon returning to Cambodia, starting with temporary accommodation in Hagar's "Home of Love." This provides a secure space for survivors to regain emotional stability, receive medical care, and participate in victim identification processes.

Sreyna underscored the importance of equipping survivors with tools for long-term independence. She discussed Hagar's partnerships with schools, vocational training programs, and businesses to ensure survivors gain education and employment opportunities. Survivors with limited education or job experience receive career counseling, on-the-job training, and support to start small businesses. Sreyna shared that many survivors have successfully secured jobs or launched businesses, reducing their vulnerability to re-trafficking and exploitation.

The presentation also addressed the role of legal support in survivors' healing journeys. Sreyna emphasized that justice is vital to recovery, and Hagar's legal team provides representation and guidance through court proceedings. Survivors and their families receive full support to ensure their voices are heard and their rights upheld. Sreyna concluded by celebrating the resilience of survivors who have gone on to become leaders in their communities.



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“Survivors are not just healed—they become leaders in their communities, advocating for others, raising awareness, and helping protect the vulnerable from the issues they once faced. - Sreyna Sam – Hagar International Cambodia

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Trauma-Informed Care for Survivors

Sreyna highlighted the importance of addressing survivors' physical, emotional, and social needs through a comprehensive approach. Services include trauma-informed counseling, healthcare, legal aid, education, and economic empowerment to ensure survivors can rebuild their lives sustainably.

Structured Reintegration Process

Survivors repatriated to Cambodia are provided temporary housing in Hagar's "Home of Love," ensuring their immediate safety and emotional stability. This transitional phase includes victim identification processes, health assessments, and preparation for family reintegration or alternative care placements.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Effective survivor support relies on partnerships with local authorities, NGOs, community stakeholders, and families. These collaborations enable tailored care plans, legal advocacy, and access to education and employment opportunities.

Long-Term Commitment and Sustainability

Sreyna underscored the importance of long-term support to enable survivors to transition from healing to independence.

CLOSING REMARKS AND SUMMARY OF DAY 3



Nichole Zaragosa, a survivor and advocate against human trafficking, delivered an empowering closing speech emphasizing hope, collaboration, and survivor leadership. She highlighted critical steps to eradicate modern slavery and encouraged active community involvement and policy improvements to combat trafficking. Nichole called for recognizing survivors as leaders and advocates, not just victims, and encouraged collective action to make freedom a universal right.



“Survivors are not just victims—we are leaders, advocates, and change-makers. Together, we can make a real impact in the fight against trafficking. Every action counts, every voice matters, and we can create a world where freedom is not a privilege, but a right for all.” - Nichole Zaragosa - Voice of the Free

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Collaborative Action

Countries must work together to address human trafficking, as it is a global issue that requires cross-border cooperation. Sharing information, training officials, and addressing the demand for trafficking are crucial.

Strong Legislative Frameworks

Robust laws are essential to protect victims, punish traffickers, and prevent trafficking from occurring.

Survivor Inclusion and Leadership

Survivors' insights are invaluable for shaping policies and support systems.

Community Engagement

Local communities play a pivotal role in spotting, reporting, and preventing trafficking. Schools, churches, and local groups can create safe spaces and educate the public.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY THREE

01. Legislative and Policy Reforms

There are inadequate legislative frameworks to address emerging trafficking trends such as social media-based recruitment, scam trafficking, and forced criminality. The lack of strict penalties for traffickers and consumers perpetuates the demand for repeat offenses.

02. Survivor Protection and Legal Assistance

Limited access to comprehensive survivor support, including trauma-informed care, psychosocial counseling, legal aid, and economic empowerment. Gaps in capacity-building among stakeholders to provide adequate survivor protection.

03. Cross-Border Challenges

Ineffective cross-border collaborations, particularly in rescue operations, repatriation, and reintegration processes. Poor coordination among governments, NGOs, and local communities in addressing transnational human trafficking.

04. Repatriation and Reintegration Gaps

Delays and inefficiencies in repatriation and reintegration processes despite formal agreements. Inadequate support systems to address survivors' immediate safety, health, and long-term stability post-repatriation.

05. Collaboration and Partnerships

Insufficient partnerships with local stakeholders to develop tailored care plans and ensure survivor-centered solutions.



SOLUTIONS PROPOSED TO IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

01. Strengthening Localized Action

Building the capacity of local governments to implement anti-trafficking laws effectively, as demonstrated by proactive measures in Olongapo City, Philippines. Employing community-based case management (CBCM) models with local social workers to address cultural and language barriers, especially in ethnic minority communities.

02. Legislative and Policy Reforms

Regular updates to anti-trafficking laws to address emerging trends like social media-based recruitment, scam trafficking, and fake marriages. Implementing stricter laws with heavier penalties to deter traffickers and reduce demand for trafficked goods and services.

03. Cross-Border Collaboration

Strengthening partnerships between governments, NGOs, and embassies for effective rescue, repatriation, and reintegration operations. Blue Dragon's success in coordinating with authorities in Vietnam, Cambodia, and China serves as a model for cross-border cooperation.

04. Streamlining Repatriation and Reintegration

Proactively addressing inefficiencies in formal repatriation processes through better coordination between agencies and stakeholders. Creating structured reintegration pathways, including transitional housing, health services, and family or community reintegration plans.

05. Fostering Partnerships

Leveraging partnerships with local authorities, NGOs, and community stakeholders to tailor care plans, provide education, and create employment opportunities. Encouraging multi-sectoral collaborations to maximize resources and create survivor-centered solutions.

OUTCOMES OF THE FORUM

Empowering Students to Combat Modern Slavery

Over 1140 students participated in the forum, and as a follow-up activity, FTS, in collaboration with Xavier University and the Ateneo de Cagayan's National Service Training Program (NSTP), conducted a series of workshops educating over 110 students on human trafficking and its links to global challenges. Held from November 12 to 15, these sessions empowered students to develop actionable solutions, including leveraging social media for advocacy and integrating anti-slavery efforts into their initiatives.



OUTCOMES OF THE FORUM

Development of the South Asia Network for Migrant Rights

The conversations at the forum regarding migrant rights and strengthening collaboration among civil society in the region encouraged the idea of creating a network to coordinate solutions for these pressing issues. The South Asia Network for Migrant Rights aims to address the challenges faced by millions of migrant workers from South Asia, who often endure exploitation and abuse. By facilitating joint training, sharing best practices, and lobbying for the rights of migrant workers, the network aspires to enhance protection mechanisms and ensure the safety and dignity of people on the move.

The founding members of the network include:

- People Forum for Human Rights, Nepal
- Manav Sansadhan Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan, India
- Centre for Women and Children Studies, Bangladesh
- Free the Slaves, USA

ACTION STEPS



- 01. Host a business and human rights workshop on identifying forced labor in supply chains.**



- 02. Organize a webinar to present a fact sheet created by experts who participated in the forum on the intersection of Online Scamming and Human Trafficking.**

PARTICIPANTS EVALUATION

The forum attracted substantial participation across both Zoom and YouTube platforms.

On YouTube, the forum reached 227 unique viewers on Day 1, 255 unique viewers on Day 2, and 454 unique viewers on Day 3, indicating a growing audience over the course of the event. These viewers engaged with the content via the live-streamed sessions, contributing to the global visibility of the forum.

On Zoom, a total of 393 attendees participated from 110 organizations and 26 countries, engaging interactively in real-time during the forum. Zoom allowed for direct interaction, including discussions, Q&A sessions, and networking opportunities.



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

THE ELKES
FOUNDATION

FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY FORUM



FreedomfromSlaveryForum.org

The Hub of the Anti-Modern Slavery Movement