

EUROPE REGIONAL FORUM

**Collaboration
for Freedom:**
*The Road to
2030*

DATES: JUNE 10TH -12TH 2024
LOCATION: BRUSSELS, BELGIUM



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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.

EUROPE REGIONAL FORUM



The first ever European Regional Freedom from Slavery Forum is the most recent Forum facilitated by Free the Slaves along with a committee of European anti-trafficking stakeholders. On June 10th -12th 2024, up to 48 participants gathered in-person and 52 online from across European countries including Belgium, United Kingdom, France, Finland, Romania, Germany, Netherlands, and more. Among the participants were government officials from both pathfinder and non-pathfinder countries, representatives from businesses, survivors, NGOs, labor unions, UN agencies, and academics.

Brussels, Belgium

June 10 - 12, 2024

Collaboration for Freedom: The Road to 2030

The objectives of the Regional Forums are to explore and define key 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 global partnerships. 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.

Over the course of three days, the Forum focused on two key areas:

Pathfinder Countries and SDG 8.7

This section explored how countries, both those designated as pathfinders and those not, were engaging to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, which targets the eradication of forced labor.

EU Legislation and Forced Labor

The Forum examined the implications of the newly introduced EU laws - the CSDDD and FLR. It also aimed to learn from best practices employed by non-EU countries in legislating against forced labor.



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 members of the external committee without whom this event would not have been successful.

- **Bukeni Waruzi**, Free the Slaves
- **Lois Bosatta**, Rights Lab
- **Martin Niblett**, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)
- **Natasha Jung**, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- **Okundaye Itohan**, Shinning Hope Foundation Against Human Trafficking
- **Malaika Oringo**, Footprint to Freedom
- **Vlad Bauer**, eLiberare
- **Abigail Monroe**, Walk free

OPENING RECEPTION

On the evening before the Europe Forum kicked off, we hosted an Opening Reception that set the stage for an inspiring gathering. Survivors, advocates, experts, and stakeholders committed to the fight against modern slavery came together, engaging in meaningful conversations over refreshments while fostering connections and a shared sense of purpose.

The evening began with opening remarks from Malaika Oringo, founder of Footprint to Freedom, and Bukeni Waruzi, Executive Director of Free the Slaves. They welcomed participants and emphasized the power of collective action in advancing freedom and justice.

The keynote address featured compelling insights from Irene Wintermayr of the International Labour Organisation and Marcia Eugenio from the U.S. Department of Labor. Their messages underscored the persistent challenges of forced labor and the urgent need for collective and sustained global efforts to combat exploitation.

A special moment of the evening was the recognition of Marcia Eugenio, who was honored by Bukeni Waruzi for her outstanding dedication and contributions to the fight against forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor. Her remarkable 30 years of public service have marked real progress, while her ability to confront the challenges of our time continues to inspire others in the global movement against modern slavery.



Marcia Eugenio is recognized for her 30 years of public service by Bukeni Waruzi.

Day One

Day one of the Forum served as an opportunity for participants from non-pathfinder countries to learn from pathfinder countries such as France. Participants explored successful models that are shaping effective policies and programs against modern slavery, including the inclusion of survivors at every step, as well as close collaboration between different sectors, such as government, businesses, NGOs, and survivor networks, to address modern slavery.

By sharing best practices for cross-sector partnerships, the Forum equipped stakeholders with the tools they need to collaborate more effectively.





OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Jasmine O'Connor, Anti-Slavery International
- Dr. Hyab Yohannes, University of Glasgow
- Bukeni Waruzi, Free the Slaves
- Anousheh Karvar, Government of France (absent, video speech)
- Hellen Apiyo, Government of Kenya
- Joseph Murhula, Government of DRC
- Irene Wintermayr, ILO Brussels
- Aidah Muli, Survivor Network Kenya
- Bernadette Agano, Free the Slaves, DRC
- Marco Dubbelt, Global March Against Child Labour
- Dr. Minh Dang, Survivor Alliance
- Lois Bosatta, Rights Lab, University of Nottingham
- Vlad Bauer, eLiberare
- Mustafa Qadri, Equidem
- Lois Bosatta, Rights Lab, University of Nottingham
- Abigail Munroe, Walk Free
- Dr. David Okech, University of Georgia
- Malaika Oringo, Footprint to Freedom
- Okundaye Itohan, Shinning Hope Foundation Against Human Trafficking
- Dr. Brook Bello, More Too Life



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OPENING REMARKS



The European Forum was opened by the Forum's host, Davina Durgana, who welcomed all participants to the Forum. This was followed by opening remarks from Jasmine O'Connor, the Chief executive of Anti-Slavery International. O'Connor highlighted Europe's diverse landscape as a key factor influencing modern slavery challenges. She recognized the vulnerabilities of specific groups, including Roma, Muslim minorities, and migrants, and the complexities arising from the continent's numerous borders. O'Connor emphasized the importance of understanding the diverse dynamics to address these challenges effectively. O'Connor acknowledged the contributions of existing networks like the Business and Human Rights Network, Enforce Network, and LRDA Network while stressing the need for a comprehensive mapping of anti-slavery efforts across Europe. She expressed enthusiasm for the Forum's potential to connect European initiatives with the global movement, fostering sustainable partnerships and collaboration.



"The importance of this forum is that it connects up some of the dots globally as it brings together an array of participants of this movement from different parts of the globe" – Jasmine O'Connor, Anti-slavery International

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Importance of Networks

O'Connor highlighted the role of various networks in combating modern slavery, such as ENFORCE (focused on forced labor) and the Business and Human Rights Network, which push for stronger legislation and cooperation across countries.

Cross-Border Collaboration

O'Connor stressed the importance of global partnerships. The Forum provides an opportunity to connect European anti-slavery efforts with international movements, creating a more cohesive global strategy.

Sustainable Partnerships

A key message was the need to build sustainable, long-lasting partnerships that lead to effective action rather than isolated efforts.

KEYNOTE SPEECH: REFRAMING MODERN SLAVERY IN EUROPE



Dr. Hyab Yohannes from the University of Glasgow delivered a keynote speech where he characterized modern slavery as a "muted war" against human dignity. He critiqued existing legal frameworks, such as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Palermo Protocol, for failing to address ethical responsibilities and hold states accountable. Dr. Yohannes highlighted Europe's historical role in slavery, colonization, and imperial domination, emphasizing that this legacy still influences modern conditions, particularly through forced migration, war, famine, and global warming, which perpetuate exploitation. He pointed out the gap between the aspirational goals of SDG 8.7 and the harsh realities on the ground, advocating for a shift in approach. Ultimately, Dr. Yohannes called for an epistemological shift that moves away from Eurocentric paradigms to embrace the lived experiences of the oppressed as central to understanding and addressing systemic violence. His speech invited stakeholders to reimagine justice and equality through radically inclusive and transformative pathways, challenging established norms to create a more equitable and compassionate world.



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"Modern Slavery is a war without explosives; it is a profound wound to human dignity." – Dr. Hyab Yohannes
- University of Glasgow

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Gaps in Legal Frameworks

Existing laws like the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Palermo Protocol fall short of fully addressing ethical responsibilities, particularly in holding states accountable for their role in modern slavery.

Rethinking Inclusion

The concept of "inclusion" is inherently exclusionary; instead, societies must strive to be "radically open," ensuring no one is marginalized or left behind.

Learning from the Global South

Collective action, community resilience, and practices from the Global South offer valuable insights for combating systemic violence and advancing social justice.

Epistemological Shift

There is a need to shift away from Eurocentric paradigms and instead center the lived experiences of oppressed communities in understanding and addressing systemic violence.



PANEL DISCUSSION: LEARNING FROM THE PATHFINDER COUNTRY FRAMEWORK



The panel, moderated by Bukeni Waruzi, Executive Director of Free the Slaves, brought together a diverse group of speakers to discuss lessons learned and ongoing efforts to combat modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labor under the UN's Alliance 8.7 initiative. Anousheh Karvar from the government of France shared that France achieved Pathfinder country status in 2021 through its national acceleration strategy and ongoing initiatives, including a national action plan and over 4,000 audits conducted in 2022-2023. Karvar reinforced the role of governments in taking ownership of the process, ensuring that national action plans are aligned with practical roadmaps. Karvar also noted that CSOs, when organized around shared values, are better equipped to influence government action. Irene Wintermayr of ILO Brussels emphasized the Pathfinder Country framework's success in creating national roadmaps, with 37 countries now participating. She noted that the Pathfinder framework requires strong government leadership to implement effective action plans, with CSOs serving as critical partners to ensure these plans are grounded in practical realities.

Joseph Murhula from the Government of DRC discussed the challenges in DRC, particularly the exploitation of children in mining and armed conflicts. He detailed the 2023 Pathfinder country roadmap revision workshop, where the inclusion of survivor voices became a priority. Hellen Apiyo from Kenya explained that Kenya has applied for pathfinder country status and developed a roadmap that includes the input of civil society and survivors. She echoed the importance of including survivors in policymaking and highlighted Kenya's efforts to repatriate citizens working in the Middle East.

Survivor leaders Bernadette Agano and Aidah Muli emphasized the critical role of survivors in shaping policies. Bernadette discussed how survivor involvement in the DRC's policymaking process, facilitated by Free the Slaves, has ensured that survivors' real-world experiences inform the national roadmaps despite challenges like stigma and marginalization. Aidah Muli echoed these points, describing how the Survivor Network Kenya has empowered survivors to advocate for their rights and influence government policies. Aidah noted that survivor inclusion has been transformative, ensuring governments consult survivors and actively partner with them to create survivor-centered policies. Marco Dubbelt of Global March Against Child Labour highlighted the necessity of CSOs being well-organized and strategic in their engagement with governments, stressing the importance of survivor inclusion in advocacy efforts. He also underscored the need for CSOs to advocate with long-term vision rather than short-term project-based goals to ensure credibility in influencing policy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survivor Involvement

The panel stressed the critical role of survivor leadership in shaping policies. They emphasized survivor participation in DRC and Kenya in developing the countries' roadmaps to becoming pathfinder countries. This has led to more effective and survivor-centered policymaking, with survivors not just consulted but actively involved in the process.

Government and Civil Society Collaboration

Several panelists, including those from France, Kenya, and DRC, discussed the vital role of government in facilitating the implementation of national and regional frameworks, such as the Alliance 8.7 process. Governments must lead the process while engaging CSOs, trade unions, and survivor networks as active partners in developing and executing action plans.

Practical, Actionable Roadmaps

Panelists emphasized the need for clear, actionable roadmaps and action plans tied directly to national action plans. These roadmaps should avoid vague language and aim for practical, achievable goals with clear timelines for implementation, allowing governments and partners to track progress effectively.



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"By providing adequate time and resources, we can truly tap into the collective wisdom and engagement of both Survivor voices and the broader Civil Society." – Anousheh Karvar, Government of France

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP IN POLICY AND PROGRAM DESIGN



The session, facilitated by Dr. Minh Dang of Survivor Alliance and Lois Bosatta from the Rights Lab, University of Nottingham, focused on the critical role of survivors in shaping policy and program decisions. Participants emphasized the need to move beyond tokenistic engagement, empowering survivors as active contributors and compensating them fairly. The discussion stressed the importance of valuing survivors' diverse identities and lived experiences, tailoring support to their specific needs, and building their capacity to engage effectively. By fostering diversity and intersectionality within survivor engagement, organizations can create more inclusive and impactful anti-trafficking initiatives. The session encouraged participants to reflect on their own practices and take steps to integrate survivor leadership meaningfully, such as learning from survivor collectives, building partnerships, and ensuring equitable compensation structures. Several case studies were shared, illustrating successful survivor engagement. Examples included survivor leadership academies, offering internships and retreats, and survivors actively shaping corporate strategy and contributing to reports. Participants noted that survivors are also increasingly involved in policy advocacy, including the drafting of legislation. Participants voiced apprehensions about limited resources, ensuring accountability, and the risk of breaching confidentiality, which could lead to stigma. The need for trauma-informed approaches was emphasized, particularly in avoiding practices that may re-traumatize survivors. Examples of effective survivor leadership in policy development were discussed, with the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking highlighted as a model for integrating survivor voices into policymaking.



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“We need to train our staff to avoid seeing survivor colleagues solely as individuals defined by their past experiences. Instead, we must foster a mindset that values them as equal partners recognized for their skills and expertise – not as token participants or a way to check a box.”

– Mina Chiang, Survivor Alliance

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Empowering Survivor Leadership

Survivors should be engaged as active contributors in shaping policies and programs, moving beyond tokenistic involvement. Equitable compensation and capacity-building are crucial to enable survivors to participate effectively.

Valuing Diversity and Intersectionality

Recognizing and respecting survivors' diverse identities, lived experiences, and unique needs is essential. Tailored support can help create more inclusive and impactful anti-trafficking initiatives.

Practical Examples of Survivor Engagement

Case studies highlighted successful initiatives, such as Survivor leadership academies, Internships and retreats for survivors, Survivor contributions to corporate strategies, reports, and legislative drafting. The U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking was cited as a strong model for integrating survivor perspectives in policymaking.

Addressing Challenges in Survivor Engagement

Participants expressed concerns about Limited resources for meaningful engagement, maintaining accountability in survivor-led initiatives, safeguarding confidentiality to avoid stigma and re-traumatization.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

Emphasis was placed on the importance of trauma-informed practices to prevent re-traumatization. Organizations were encouraged to prioritize survivor well-being throughout their engagement.

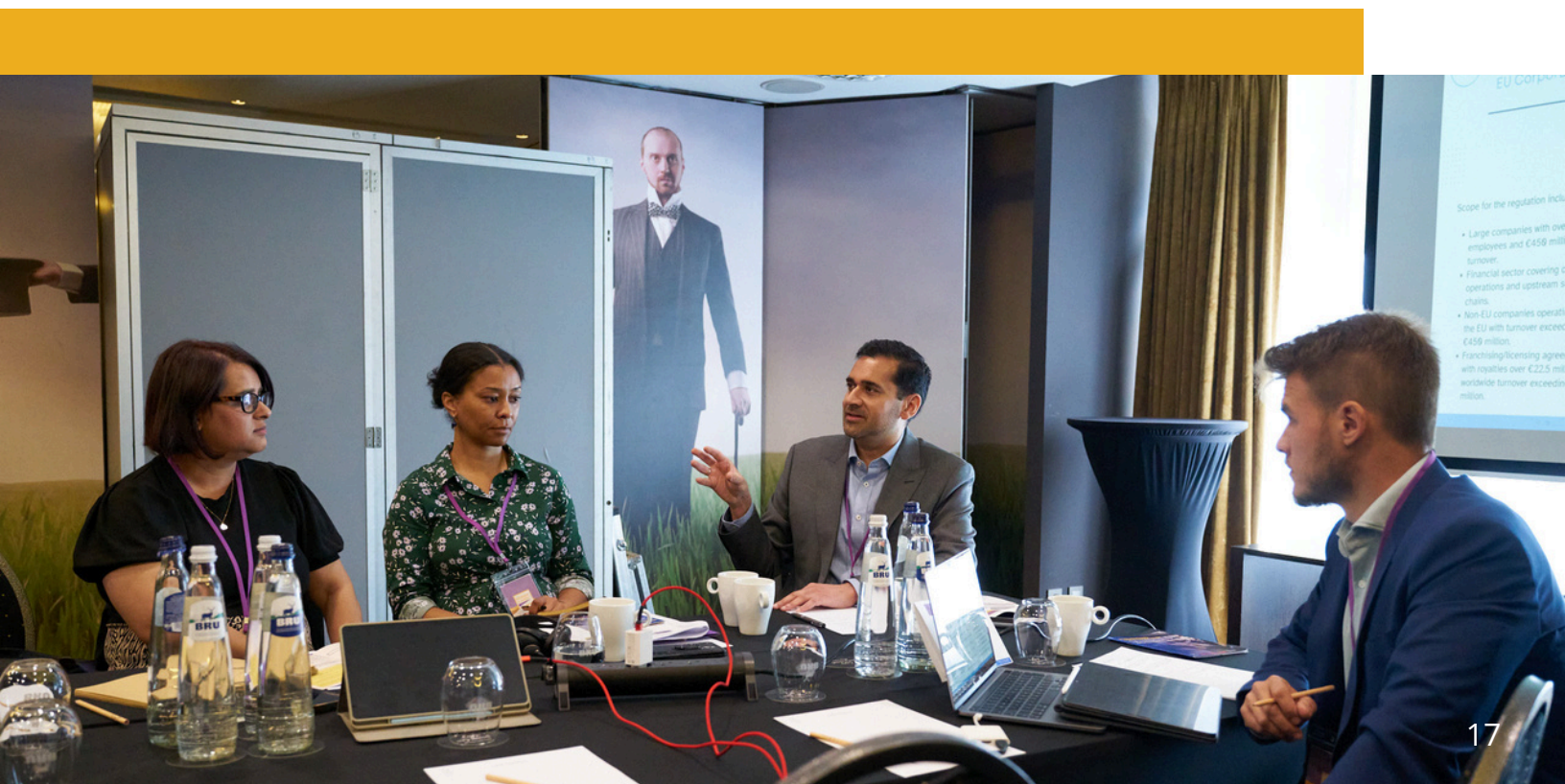
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION MODELS



The Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Models session led by Vlad Bauer from eLiberare and Mustafa Qadri from Equidem focused on the need for collaborative efforts across sectors to combat labor exploitation. Engaging the business sector was highlighted as critical, as businesses can help prevent exploitation while maintaining brand reputation and boosting investor confidence. Practical solutions for businesses include conducting risk assessments and establishing grievance mechanisms to ensure compliance with the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, which aims to increase accountability among smaller companies.

The discussion also emphasized the fragmented nature of national efforts to address child labor, forced labor, and modern slavery, which are often handled separately and not coordinated at the European level. Alliance 8.7, a global initiative, was recognized for its ability to unite these issues under one framework, but there is still a gap in connecting NGOs to this broader effort. A multi-stakeholder approach involving specialized NGOs and survivors was suggested as a way forward, though adequate resources and managing conflicting stakeholder expectations are essential.

Finally, business challenges, especially in the U.S., were discussed, including the fear of legal liability if forced labor is discovered in their supply chains. This fear sometimes discourages companies from addressing exploitation. The session concluded by emphasizing the need for clear frameworks that encourage transparency and collaboration, balancing stakeholder demands while pushing for sustainable anti-labor exploitation strategies.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Business Sector Engagement

Businesses play a crucial role in preventing labor exploitation. Engaging businesses in combating forced labor helps them maintain their brand reputation, build consumer trust, and boost investor confidence.

Fragmented National Initiatives

Many national efforts to combat child labor, forced labor, and modern slavery are disjointed and do not always align with international frameworks like Alliance 8.7, which seeks to unify these issues globally.

Managing Stakeholder Expectations

A multi-stakeholder approach, including collaboration between NGOs, businesses, and survivors, is necessary but requires careful resource allocation and coordination.

PANEL: LEARNING FROM THE SCIENCE OF COMBATING MODERN SLAVERY AND THE SDG 8.7 FRAMEWORK



The panel on "Learning from the Science of Combating Modern Slavery and the SDG 8.7 Framework," moderated by Jasmine O'Connor, brought together experts from different fields to discuss the global scale of modern slavery and how research and survivor engagement can drive meaningful change. According to the [Global Slavery Index](#), nearly 50 million people are currently trapped in modern slavery, with 28 million in forced labor and 22 million in forced marriage. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to forced labor, and while slavery occurs globally, the most significant impact is felt in regions with political instability, conflict, and authoritarian governments. Despite efforts, there has been a lack of substantial progress since 2018.

The panel emphasized using data and research to guide anti-slavery strategies. Lois Bosatta from Rights Lab highlighted their use of innovative tools like geospatial technology to map forced labor and their [Modern Slavery Risk Barometer](#), which screens countries, industries, and businesses for slavery risks. Additionally, panelists underlined the need for research that not only identifies where and why slavery occurs but also involves survivor voices to create effective solutions. Engaging survivors in counter-trafficking provides them with means, income, and psychological support while contributing to prevention efforts.

Key findings included the importance of survivor leadership, with examples such as survivor co-authorship of action plans and participation as research assistants or advisors. The panel also highlighted challenges, including competition among NGOs and the need to prioritize human trafficking on national agendas. Successful antislavery efforts must involve a diverse range of stakeholders, from survivors to local leaders, while fostering a humanized approach that bridges gaps between survivors, academics, and policymakers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Research and Data as Tools for Change

Innovative tools like Slavery from Space and the Modern Slavery Risk Barometer were highlighted as critical in identifying high-risk areas and guiding policy decisions. Collaborative research that includes survivor input is essential to shaping effective responses to human trafficking and forced labor.

Survivor Engagement and Leadership

Survivors play a crucial role in counter-trafficking efforts by contributing to policy creation, research, and leadership roles. Involving survivors not only aids their psychological recovery but also enriches the movement by offering unique, lived perspectives essential for impactful change.



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"If we don't know how many people are trafficked, how do we know if our programs or policies are making any difference?" – Dr. David Okech, University of Georgia

SURVIVOR AND GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS



The "Survivor and Government Partnership" discussion, led by facilitators Malaika Oringo from Footprint to Freedom and Okundaye Itohan from the Shining Hope Foundation Against Human Trafficking, focused on the importance of strengthening collaborations between survivors and governments in the fight against human trafficking. One of the key points raised was the need for a coordinated approach to survivor engagement, emphasizing that survivors are not just victims but individuals with diverse skills, expertise, and the capacity to contribute as key stakeholders. However, the most significant gap identified was the need for meaningful government engagement with survivors, often due to a power imbalance and limited opportunities for survivors to influence decision-making.

The discussion highlighted that survivor inclusion should extend beyond token gestures, involving survivors in decision-making processes and seeing them as whole individuals. Survivors bring valuable insights, shaped by their lived experiences, that are crucial for developing more effective policies. The work on the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Handbook was cited as an example of survivor involvement, where survivors came together to provide suggestions. This emphasizes the need for survivors to have "a seat at the table" where their voices are heard and respected.

One of the major challenges discussed was the power hierarchy within governments, making it difficult for survivors to engage directly. The Alliance 8.7 initiative was mentioned as a mechanism that has successfully bridged the gap between survivors and governments, creating opportunities for collaboration. However, the facilitators stressed that institutionalizing survivor-led engagement practices must become a standard approach rather than a one-time initiative, requiring political will and cooperation from all sectors to overcome barriers. Institutions with power must act as connectors between survivors and governments, supporting long-term partnerships.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Survivor Inclusion as Stakeholders

Survivors are not just victims; they are experts and key stakeholders in combating human trafficking. Their inclusion in decision-making processes is essential for developing effective policies, but governments often fail to engage them meaningfully.

Power Hierarchy Challenges

The power imbalance between governments and survivors is a significant barrier to collaboration. Survivors need institutional support to engage with governments, and institutions must act as intermediaries to bridge this gap.

Institutionalizing Survivor Engagement

Survivor-led practices must be institutionalized, making survivor engagement a standard policy rather than an isolated initiative. This requires political will and sustained collaboration between governments, survivors, and advocacy organizations.



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“If a survivor shares their experience to create impact, it must be paired with skills, knowledge, and a trauma-informed structure. Otherwise, they risk being left alone to deal with the emotional fallout.” – Okundaye Itoham, Shinning Hope Foundation Against Human Trafficking

BEST PRACTICES IN RESEARCH ON MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING



The panel on best practices in modern slavery and human trafficking research, facilitated by Dr. David Okech and Dr. Hyab Yohannes, brought attention to key challenges and opportunities in the field. One of the primary difficulties highlighted by Dr. Okech was the challenge of accurately estimating the prevalence of human trafficking. While gathering reliable data within small areas is possible, scaling these estimates to larger populations proves difficult. Despite this, policymakers continue to demand quantitative evidence to guide policy decisions, making the need for accurate data a crucial, albeit complex, priority.

A significant issue raised during the discussion was the influence of external funders on the research agenda. Both Dr. Okech and Dr. Yohannes pointed out that in many cases, research priorities are dictated by funding sources, particularly in the Global North, which often limits the scope and direction of studies. They also noted the need for a more multidisciplinary approach, as research tends to focus on narrow areas rather than integrating diverse perspectives. Furthermore, conducting research in Global South countries driven by Global North institutions was seen as problematic, raising questions about the fairness and balance of research efforts.

The discussion also underscored the importance of actively engaging survivors in research. Survivors who have firsthand experience with trafficking often feel that more prevalent studies are unnecessary. They advocate for research that focuses on practical solutions to real-world challenges. The panel concluded with a call to reimagine research systems to include survivor voices better, ensuring that survivors' priority questions are addressed. With universities now being measured by the impact of their research, this shift toward survivor-led research is seen as essential for creating meaningful and effective outcomes in the fight against human trafficking.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Challenges in Estimating Human Trafficking Prevalence

Accurately estimating the prevalence of human trafficking is difficult, especially on a large scale. Reliable data can only be gathered in smaller areas, making it challenging to provide policymakers with the quantitative evidence they need.

Influence of Funding on Research Agendas

Research is often driven by the priorities of external funders, particularly those from the Global North. This can skew the focus of studies and limit the scope of research, particularly in Global South countries where research is conducted.

Reimagining Research Systems

There is a growing call to rethink research approaches, emphasizing multidisciplinary efforts and prioritizing survivor engagement. As universities are now being measured on research impact, there is a shift toward more meaningful, survivor-centered research in combating human trafficking.



BUILDING A MOVEMENT NARRATIVE



This session, led by Brook Bello, centered on the collaborative development of the "Building a Movement Narrative" document. This document is intended to serve as a unified framework to galvanize the anti-trafficking movement by providing a comprehensive, inclusive, and global narrative on human trafficking and modern slavery.

Dr. Bello highlighted the ongoing process of creating this document, which involves gathering participant feedback at various stages of the 2024-2025 Freedom from Slavery Forum series. She emphasized the importance of including survivor stories, different voices, and perspectives from around the world in the narrative. This is part of an effort to shift from a purely quantitative approach—focused on raw numbers and statistics—to a more qualitative, story-driven approach that better reflects the lived experiences of survivors. She pointed out that the current draft still has some gaps, especially regarding universal calls to action and how the document can reflect a global and inclusive approach to combating human trafficking. Brook asked for feedback and collaboration from participants so the document could be refined and finalized for presentation at the 2025 Global Freedom from Slavery Forum.



"This movement must be unified and cohesive. If we don't bring together a collective understanding, we will fail to effectively combat this issue. The work is about a shared humanity, and it must include everyone who has been impacted." – Brook Bello, More Too Live

REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY ONE

Lack of Meaningful Survivor Engagement

Governments often fail to fully involve survivors in policymaking, overlooking their expertise and key role in shaping effective anti-trafficking strategies.

Research Driven by External Agendas

Studies on human trafficking are frequently influenced by the priorities of external funders, particularly from the Global North, which may not align with local needs or contexts.

Resource Limitations and Confidentiality Risks

Addressing human trafficking is hindered by inadequate resources and the need to maintain confidentiality, which can further complicate survivor protection and support.

Insufficient Trauma-Informed Practices

A lack of trauma-informed approaches risks re-traumatizing survivors, highlighting the need for more sensitive and effective interventions.

Eurocentric Bias in Inter-Ethnic Contexts

There is a challenge in ensuring that research and programs avoid a Eurocentric lens, particularly in diverse, inter-ethnic settings.



ACTION STEPS FOR DAY ONE

01. Holistic Inclusion of Survivors

We must recognize survivors as individuals with diverse contributions and ensure that organizational policies and programs account for their inclusion throughout their work.

02. Purposeful Multistakeholder Collaboration

To enhance inclusivity and impact, we must define clear goals for collaborative initiatives, evaluate practical outcomes, and identify the need for new stakeholders.

03. Direct Involvement of Survivor Leaders

We should Facilitate the direct engagement of survivors' leaders in policymaking and governmental discussions, minimize reliance on intermediaries, and enable allies to support their contributions effectively.

04. Ethics and Innovation in Research

Advancing community-based and survivor-led research while balancing theoretical insights with actionable data, challenging current systems, and fostering fresh perspectives.

05. Uniting the Antislavery Movement

Building a shared narrative incorporating diverse lived and learned expertise amplifying all voices to collectively shape a unified path forward.

Day Two

The last day of the Forum shifted the focus to the role of regulations in combating forced labor within Europe. The recently introduced Corporate Supply Chain Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and its potential to prevent forced labor were central topics. Participants also explored the possibilities and challenges associated with import bans on goods produced through forced labor. The Forum acknowledged the unique vulnerabilities of migrants in Europe to labor exploitation, particularly considering the ongoing war in Ukraine. It recommended that migrant workers benefit from the labor justice system in Europe. Participants also discussed the potential impact of global regulations on businesses and workers in developing economies, such as the cost of compliance falling onto smallholders, confusion over compliance requirements, and limited access to European markets. Finally, the Forum addressed the need for effective grievance mechanisms to ensure proper support for victims of labor exploitation. By fostering collaboration and generating concrete commitments, the Forum aimed to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 8.7 in Europe by 2030.





OVERVIEW OF SPEAKERS

- Dr. David Okech, University of Georgia
- Irene Wintermayr, International Labor Organization
- Jeff Morgan, Sucden Trading
- Dr. Sofia Gonzalez De Aguinaga, BIIIC
- Jasmine O'Connor, Anti-Slavery International
- Marcia Eugenio, U.S. Department of Labor
- Javier Martin-Cerracin, European Commission
- Charlotte Demuijnck, Sucden Trading
- Ira Rachmawati, ITUC
- Natasha Jung, FCDO
- Justin Bedford, FCDO
- Pauline Watine, Ethical Apparel Africa
- Emmanuel Arthur, Kuapa Kokoo Limited
- Martin Muriuki, Ngaca Farms
- Apollo Kiarrii, Apollo Consulting
- Vlad Bauer, eLiberare
- Suzanne Hoff, La Strada International
- Lilana Keith. PICUM
- Mustafa Qadri, Equidem
- Diane Truong, Pacific Links Foundation
- Dr. Minh Dang, Survivor Alliance
- Lois Bosatta, Rights, Lab, University of Nottingham



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OPENING REMARKS



In his opening remarks, Dr. David Okech emphasized the urgency of addressing child labor, highlighting that there are about 18 months left to meet the targets of SDG 8.7. He pointed out that factors like climate change and failing governance systems are exacerbating child labor and human trafficking issues. He called for unity within the anti-trafficking community, emphasizing the importance of NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) collaborating more closely to avoid working in silos.

Dr. Okech encouraged stakeholders to embrace a mindset of action, saying it is better to try and fail than not to try at all. He underscored the need for the new generation to respond to the current challenges with innovative strategies and thinking, emphasizing the importance of guiding and supporting emerging leaders in the anti-trafficking movement.

Additionally, Dr. Okech pointed out the complexity of ensuring decent jobs and wages, particularly in an economic environment where corporations prioritize profit maximization. He stressed the need to protect human rights and prevent exploitation within Europe, calling for comprehensive efforts to address these interconnected issues.



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"It is time to change course. We call on governments to have a more united focus in funding and trafficking efforts, and also a more coordinated policy and execution framework."

– Dr. David Okech, University of Georgia

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Impact of Climate Change and Weak Governance

Climate change and unstable governments are worsening the problem of trafficking and child labor, requiring coordinated global efforts.

Collaboration is Crucial

Dr. Okech emphasized the importance of unity, calling for better communication between NGOs, CSOs, governments, and survivors to develop effective solutions.

Balancing Profits and Human Rights

He highlighted the tension between corporate profit motives and the protection of human rights, stressing the need to prevent exploitation, especially in Europe.



KEYNOTE SPEECH



In his keynote speech, Mustafa Qadri focused on the importance of regulatory measures in Europe to combat human rights violations, particularly forced labor and modern slavery. He highlighted the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) as landmark legislation adopted by the EU. This directive requires large companies to integrate human rights due diligence into their strategies and publicly disclose the results. It offers a unique opportunity for stakeholders across sectors to collaborate, as no single group has all the answers.

Qadri emphasized the role of survivor-led groups in shaping the directive and stressed the need to build on these established relationships. He shared findings from investigations into European companies, particularly in the renewable energy sector in the UAE, where many workers were subjected to forced labor and modern slavery due to climate-driven migration. A recurring problem was that companies often lacked awareness of exploitation within their own value chains.

His closing message called for a collective effort from experts to strengthen the EU's regulatory system and for an open, honest debate to address gaps in human rights laws and improve corporate accountability.



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"The directive would not have been possible without the support of Civil Society, including survivors and Survivor leader groups, trade unions, and even some of the largest business actors and Industry bodies in Europe."
– Mustafa Qadri, Equidem

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Corporate Accountability in Supply Chains

Investigations into sectors like renewable energy revealed forced labor and modern slavery due to climate change migration. Companies often lack visibility into their value chains, making it vital for them to monitor and address abuses.

Businesses as Agents of Change

Companies can lead change by addressing workplace discrimination and exploitation. Ensuring workers' voices are heard is critical to identifying and resolving these issues.

Collaboration and Open Debate

Qadri stressed the need for experts and stakeholders to work together, strengthen the EU regulatory system, and engage in an open and honest debate to close gaps in human rights laws and improve corporate practices.



PANEL DISCUSSION: REGULATORY LANDSCAPE ON FORCED LABOR IN EUROPE AND COORDINATION: CSDDD, FLR, IMPORT BANS AND OTHER MECHANISMS



The panel discussion on the regulatory landscape surrounding forced labor in Europe, moderated by Irene Wintermayr of the International Labor Organization, brought together a diverse group of experts to discuss key mechanisms like the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), Force Labor Regulation (FLR).

Dr. Sofia Gonzalez De Aguinaga from the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL), highlighted the importance of human rights and environmental due diligence laws, focusing on the short-term effectiveness of forced labor import bans, such as those implemented in France and Germany. However, she cautioned that these measures often fall short in the long term and raised concerns about how these Global North-driven directives could negatively impact Global South economies.

Javier Martin-Cerracin from the European Commission spoke about the EU's upcoming forced labor market ban, a landmark piece of legislation that has strong support but also faces significant challenges. He pointed out the difficulty of verifying forced labor cases, the limited resources available for enforcement, and the lack of clear guidelines on remediation for victims. He stressed the importance of creating clear implementation guidelines to help companies comply with the new rules, noting that they have three years before the legislation is fully applied.

Jasmine O'Connor from Antislavery International emphasized the need for more robust engagement with unions and civil society, especially in the Global South, where representation is often inadequate. While some progress has been made, she pointed out that the CSDDD lacks diverse victim remediation options.

Marcia Eugenio from the U.S. Department of Labor spoke about the shared goals between the U.S. and the EU in fighting forced labor. She stressed the importance of aligning U.S. and EU policies to avoid companies exploiting gaps between regulations in different regions. She also highlighted the need for a more standardized approach to forced labor regulation to make it easier for companies to comply globally.

Finally, Jeff Morgan from Sucden Trading discussed the cocoa sector's ongoing challenges in addressing forced and child labor. He reflected on the lessons learned from the Harkin-Engle Protocol and noted the complexity of the cocoa supply chain, where small farmers often lack the necessary training and resources. He expressed the need for more detailed guidance on what constitutes acceptable due diligence in industries like cocoa, where forced labor is often hidden.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Short-term Effectiveness of Forced Labor Bans

While forced labor import bans in countries like France and Germany have been influential in the short term, they often fail to address long-term challenges, particularly in the Global South, where the effects of Global North directives can be detrimental.

Consideration for the Global South

Top-down laws must be designed carefully to avoid imposing undue burdens on businesses and workers in the Global South, ensuring they drive positive change without causing disengagement or economic harm.



"We need to consider how these top-down laws impact the Global South, ensuring we are not imposing undue burdens." – Dr. Sofia Gonzalez De Aguinaga, British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL)

EU Forced Labor Market Ban

The EU's upcoming forced labor market ban has strong support but faces challenges, including difficulties verifying forced labor cases, limited enforcement resources, and clearer victim remediation processes.

Collaboration Between U.S. and EU

The U.S. and EU share common goals in combatting forced labor, but harmonized policies are needed to prevent companies from exploiting regulatory gaps between regions.

EU Forced Labor Market Ban

The EU's upcoming forced labor market ban has strong support but faces challenges, including difficulties verifying forced labor cases, limited enforcement resources, and clearer victim remediation processes.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: BUSINESS, UNIONS AND ALLIES: DISCUSSING THE IMPLICATION AND COLLABORATION ON CSDDD AND FLR



The discussion centered around the challenges and potential solutions for ensuring fair labor practices and sustainable supply chains, particularly in the agricultural sector. Key topics included farmer empowerment, labor rights, and public-private partnerships.

One major challenge discussed was the difficulty of organizing and empowering small farmers, especially in the face of globalization and corporate dominance. Participants suggested alternative organizing models like cooperatives and community-based organizations and fostering collaboration between civil society organizations (CSOs) and unions.

The importance of local leadership and leveraging existing community networks was also emphasized. Another key concern was ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and the elimination of forced labor, particularly in informal and seasonal sectors. Participants discussed the need for robust verification and monitoring systems, transparent supply chains, and worker empowerment initiatives.

The role of public-private partnerships was also highlighted. Participants stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, government support for labor laws and policies, and corporate social responsibility initiatives.



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"We often hear about the importance of cross-sector collaboration, but achieving it is easier said than done. How do we convene diverse groups—such as those in Côte d'Ivoire's cashew, coffee, cotton, gold mining, and cocoa industries into a cohesive effort?" – Jeff Morgan, Sucden Trade

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Farmer Empowerment

Small farmers need to be empowered through alternative organizing models, such as cooperatives and community-based organizations.

Labor Rights and Ethical Sourcing

Ensuring fair wages, safe working conditions, and eliminating forced labor, particularly in informal and seasonal sectors.

Public-Private Partnerships

To address labor and sustainability issues, collaboration between businesses, governments, and civil society organizations was emphasized.



ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: EXPLORING CROSS-NATIONAL AND CROSS REGIONAL SYNERGIES ON IMPORT BANS AND OTHER MEASURES ON FORCED LABOR

This roundtable discussion, led by Ira Rachmawati, ITUC, and Jasmine O'Connor, Antislavery International, centered on the pressing issue of forced labor and emphasized increased international cooperation and coordination. Speakers highlighted the importance of regional cooperation between governments to develop and implement effective policies and regulations. They also stressed the significance of leveraging existing international frameworks and addressing specific products where forced labor is prevalent.

To ensure the effectiveness of these efforts, speakers called for increased worker empowerment and voice, particularly for vulnerable groups like undocumented migrants. They also advocated for utilizing public pressure and advocacy campaigns to compel companies and governments to take action.

Finally, the discussion emphasized the crucial role of strong government policies and enforcement mechanisms, including enforcing labor laws, protecting the rights of undocumented workers, and using tools like import bans to compel compliance. By fostering collaboration between governments, businesses, civil society organizations, and trade unions, significant progress can be made in combating forced labor and promoting fair labor practices globally.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Targeted Sectoral Approach

We need to address specific sectors, such as cocoa and apparel, where forced labor is prevalent.

Worker Empowerment and Protection

The critical importance of empowering workers, particularly vulnerable groups like migrant workers, and ensuring their protection.

Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

To achieve sustainable solutions, we must foster strong partnerships between governments, businesses, civil society organizations, and labor unions.



OPPORTUNITIES AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBAL REGULATORY MEASURES FOR EMERGING MARKETS AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES



Panelists Natasha Jung, FCDO, Justin Bedford, FCDO, Pauline Watine, Ethical Apparel Africa, Emmanuel Arthur, Kuapa Kokoo Limited, and Martin Muriuki, Ngaca Farms delved into the complex interplay between global regulatory measures and their impact on emerging markets and developing economies. While these regulations aim to improve human rights and environmental standards, they can inadvertently create challenges for businesses, particularly small-scale producers.

Key concerns raised included increased compliance costs, confusion over regulatory requirements, and potential barriers to market access. Participants emphasized the importance of capacity building, tailored approaches, and effective communication to mitigate these challenges. They called for targeted interventions to support smallholder farmers and SMEs and encouraged investors to prioritize human rights and sustainable practices in their decision-making.

By carefully considering the potential consequences of global regulations and implementing targeted strategies, it is possible to harness their benefits while minimizing negative impacts on emerging markets and developing economies. This requires a collaborative approach involving governments, businesses, civil society organizations, and international institutions to ensure a balanced approach that promotes economic development and social justice.



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"Human rights regulations drive positive change, yet their rigid application risks alienating local contexts—underscoring the need for adaptable solutions that reflect grassroots realities." – Natasha Jung, Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Knowledge Gaps

Many stakeholders, particularly small-scale producers, lack sufficient knowledge and awareness of global regulations.

Unintended Consequences

Global regulations can lead to unintended negative consequences, such as increased costs, confusion, and barriers to market access.

Need for Tailored Approaches

A one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective; tailored strategies are necessary to address the specific needs and challenges of different regions and sectors.

Capacity Building

Investing in capacity-building programs can help stakeholders comply with regulations and benefit from their positive impacts.

Effective Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

Open dialogue and stakeholder collaboration are crucial for addressing challenges and finding solutions.

PANEL DISCUSSION: LABOR EXPLOITATION RISKS AND MIGRATORY POLICIES IN EUROPE

Panelists Vlad Bauer, eLiberare, Suzanne Hoff, La Strada International, Lilana Keith, PICUM, Ira Rachmawati, ITUC, and Mustafa Qadri, Equidem discussed the complex and challenging landscape of labor exploitation and migration policies in Europe. They expressed concerns about the erosion of labor rights and the increasing use of anti-trafficking rhetoric to justify restrictive migration policies. Despite existing legal frameworks, many migrant workers, including victims of trafficking, face significant barriers to accessing justice and obtaining remedies.

The complex European migration landscape involving EU citizens and third-country nationals further complicates the issue. The power imbalance between source and destination countries can exacerbate labor exploitation and limit workers' ability to organize and advocate for their rights. Strong trade unions and worker representation were emphasized as crucial factors in addressing these challenges.

To effectively combat labor exploitation, the panel called for a comprehensive and humane approach to migration policy that prioritizes the rights and well-being of migrant workers. Addressing the root causes of migration, such as poverty, inequality, and conflict, is essential to prevent labor exploitation and human trafficking.



"What we have as leverage is the ILO supervisory mechanism. It's our tool to hold governments and employers accountable for their obligations to implement conventions. Collaboration—across unions, sectors, and stakeholders—is essential to increase our impact and ensure justice for workers worldwide."
– Ira Rachmawati, ITUC

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Erosion of Labor Rights

Participants expressed deep concern over the gradual deterioration of labor rights, particularly for migrant workers. The increasing use of anti-trafficking rhetoric as a pretext for restrictive migration policies was a major point of contention.

Barriers to Justice

Despite existing legal frameworks, many migrant workers, especially victims of trafficking, face significant hurdles in accessing justice and obtaining remedies. This includes challenges in reporting crimes, accessing legal aid, and securing fair compensation.

Power Imbalance and Worker Representation

The power imbalance between source and destination countries can lead to exploitation and abuse. Strengthening worker representation through trade unions and collective bargaining is crucial to address these issues.

Addressing Root Causes

To effectively combat labor exploitation and human trafficking, it is essential to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty, inequality, and conflict. This requires a comprehensive approach that involves both domestic and international cooperation.

Human-Centered Migration Policies

The panel emphasized the need for a more humane and rights-based approach to migration policy. This includes ensuring access to essential services, such as healthcare and education, and protecting the rights of all migrants, regardless of their legal status.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: DISCUSSING EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS OF GRIEVANCE MECHANISM AND REMEDIATION IN THE CASE OF LABOR EXPLOITATION



The discussion on grievance mechanisms for labor exploitation, led by Lilana Keith of PICUM and Ira Rachmawati from ITUC, highlighted vital challenges workers face in accessing justice. While tools like whistleblower mechanisms, hotlines, and apps exist, many workers struggle to use them due to language barriers, fear of retaliation, and lack of awareness. For grievance systems to work effectively, an initial rise in reports is necessary, as it builds worker trust before corrective action can be taken. Workers' organizations and labor unions play a critical role in guiding workers through these processes, helping them connect with government institutions with the power to act.

The conversation emphasized the importance of civil claims as a more practical option for workers to secure compensation for exploitation, compared to criminal prosecutions. However, securing even partial wages remains a significant challenge, especially for undocumented workers who face hurdles in proving their claims. Rather than just focusing on grievance mechanisms, access to justice was stressed as vital. Workers need meaningful outcomes that address their specific needs, but the burden of proof, especially around documentation, often limits their ability to recover what they are owed.

Additionally, the panel underscored the importance of protecting workers from retaliation, advocating for third-party anonymous reporting systems. They also pointed to innovations, like Wi-Fi on Taiwanese fishing boats, which allow remote reporting of violations. Ultimately, ensuring that grievance mechanisms are accessible, culturally sensitive, and offer real remedies for workers is crucial in addressing labor exploitation effectively.



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"Even though undocumented workers theoretically have access to labor inspection complaints mechanisms and employment tribunals, in practice, there are significant barriers. The main issue is the time it takes, and the burden of proof required in labor courts." – Lilana Keith, PICUM

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Barriers to Accessing Grievance Mechanisms

Tools like hotlines and whistleblower apps exist but are underutilized due to language barriers, fear of retaliation, and lack of awareness among workers. Trust-building is essential for increasing usage.

Civil Claims vs. Criminal Prosecution

Civil claims offer a more practical route for exploited workers to secure compensation. However, challenges like proving documentation often limit the outcomes, particularly for undocumented workers.

Anonymous Reporting and Protection

Third-party anonymous reporting systems are vital to protect workers from negative repercussions, and engaging workers in developing grievance mechanisms is necessary for these systems to be effective.

Innovative Solutions

New developments like Wi-Fi on Taiwanese fishing boats allow for real-time reporting of labor exploitation, showing the potential for technology to enhance access to justice.

Access to Justice and Meaningful Remedies

The focus should be on ensuring workers have access to justice, with outcomes that address their specific needs, rather than just developing grievance systems as a means to an end.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: MIGRATION AND LABOR EXPLOITATION: POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN EUROPE

Vlad Bauer, Diane Truong, and Dr. Minh Dang facilitated the discussion on migration and labor exploitation in Europe. It addressed the complex relationship between migration policies and labor exploitation, especially in the context of overlapping crises such as climate change and the war in Ukraine. Bauer highlighted the [Compass Model](#), which focuses on prevention, intervention, and capacity-building to mitigate trafficking risks as migrants seek work. Vulnerabilities increase due to unstable legal status and inadequate workforce integration, which leave migrants at higher risk of exploitation.

The conversation also explored how recruitment practices can exacerbate trafficking vulnerabilities, particularly when migrants lack legal status, limiting their access to essential services and legal protections. Many migrants in Europe find themselves "on the wrong side of the law," leading to widespread distrust of systems that are supposed to protect them. There is often a fear that reporting labor rights abuses to law enforcement could result in deportation, discouraging victims from seeking help.

Finally, the panel underscored the indivisibility of human rights, asserting that migrants should not be treated as second-class citizens in the workforce. Ensuring equal rights for migrants and providing them with full access to legal services, regardless of their legal status, is essential to addressing labor exploitation and trafficking vulnerabilities across Europe.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Increased Trafficking Risks for Migrants

Crises like climate change and the war in Ukraine exacerbate trafficking risks for migrants, especially as they seek work. Legal status and recruitment practices play a critical role in heightening these vulnerabilities.

Distrust in Law Enforcement

Migrants often fear that reporting labor rights abuses could lead to deportation, resulting in a reluctance to seek legal help. This widespread distrust hampers efforts to combat labor exploitation.

Equal Rights for Migrants

Migrants need to be given the same rights as citizens in the workforce. Addressing labor exploitation requires treating human rights as indivisible and ensuring migrants have access to legal services and protections regardless of their status.



CLOSING REMARKS



In her closing remarks, Lois Bosatta summarized each day and thanked participants for their work and efforts in rebuilding a world free from slavery and all forms of exploitation. In her recap, Bossata reminded participants that the Forum's theme, "Collaboration for Freedom," resonated as it allowed them to explore barriers to working together and embrace intercultural dialogue, accountability, and non-exclusion as guiding principles. She summarised key messages from the Forum, such as how Dr. Yohannes challenged participants to humanize the fight against modern slavery, emphasizing the importance of survivor voices in shaping country frameworks, as seen in examples from the DRC, Kenya, and Europe.

Discussions highlighted applied research methods, the role of survivor-researchers, and the need for persistence and local engagement to drive change. Workshops and roundtables underscored the importance of inclusive policies, multistakeholder collaboration, and direct survivor involvement in policymaking, emphasizing ethical research and the power of shared stories to unite the movement. The Forum also focused on systemic shifts, particularly in Europe, where new regulations like the CSDDD and forced labor market bans present opportunities for meaningful change. Mustafa Qadri reminded participants of the transformative role businesses can play, while panels urged us to support worker-driven remediation, equip stakeholders, and address the global inequities workers endure.

Key discussions examined migration, fair work structures, and balancing regulatory costs with rewards, emphasizing the necessity of safe migration routes and dignified labor practices. The Forum concluded with a call to center lived experiences in all efforts, uniting antislavery champions to reimagine and rebuild a just world free from exploitation.



"We discussed the ethics of research and the need for community-based, survivor-led research, as well as the balance between data and theory. It's crucial that we ask new questions and reimagine systems in the anti-slavery movement." – Lois Bossata, Rights Lab, University of Nottingham

REFLECTIONS AND COMMITMENTS ON ADVANCING STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION



Bukeni Waruzi, the Executive Director of Free the Slaves, delivered a closing speech expressing deep gratitude to all participants, speakers, organizers, and donors for their contributions to the Forum's success. Bukeni emphasized the importance of creating a permanent European Regional Forum, noting that this would ensure ongoing discussions about addressing all forms of modern slavery.

He highlighted the collaborative efforts of diverse stakeholders, including governments, businesses, survivors, unions, and civil society organizations. Bukeni stressed that these forums are part of a larger global movement and must lead to concrete actions. He also recognized that coordination among stakeholders is essential for meaningful change, and all voices—including those not represented—should be included in future discussions.

He shared the exciting news that the European Regional Forum will now be held annually in Brussels. The goal is to sustain momentum, improve coordination, and ensure that Europe's evolving regulations benefit everyone globally.

Finally, Bukeni called for actionable steps in future forums, encouraging participants to think beyond discussions and to focus on real, measurable actions to combat modern slavery in all its forms.



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"The forum is not the movement but an essential part of it. It's an open space for all stakeholders to come together, collaborate, and discuss the actions we need to take. Coordination is complex, but it's crucial—without it, we cannot make meaningful progress. As we advance, let's be realistic and focus on concrete actions that will drive real change in the fight against human trafficking and modern slavery." – Bukeni Waruzi, Free the Slaves.

REGIONAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED ON DAY TWO

Barriers to Survivor Inclusion

Despite progress, there are still significant barriers to fully including survivors in policy conversations, particularly the challenge of avoiding reliance on intermediaries.

Effective Collaboration Among Stakeholders

Uniting the antislavery movement with a standard narrative remains challenging, as it involves balancing the perspectives of various stakeholders, including businesses, unions, and communities.

Impact of Migration and Labor Exploitation

The Forum recognized the ongoing challenge of labor exploitation exacerbated by migration, with migrant workers often facing exclusion from legal protections and exploitation in the labor market.

Increased Trafficking Risks for Migrants

Crises like climate change and the war in Ukraine exacerbate trafficking risks for migrants, especially as they seek work. Legal status and recruitment practices play a critical role in heightening these vulnerabilities.

Distrust in Law Enforcement

Migrants often fear that reporting labor rights abuses could lead to deportation, resulting in a reluctance to seek legal help. This widespread distrust hampers efforts to combat labor exploitation.



ACTION STEPS FOR DAY TWO

01. Promote Survivor Leadership

Expand opportunities for survivors to engage directly with governments and other stakeholders, ensuring their voices are central to policy development and implementation.

02. Strengthen Worker-Driven Remediation

Equip workers, civil society organizations (CSOs), and enforcement bodies to develop and implement worker-driven remediation processes, ensuring meaningful outcomes for victims.

03. Cross-National Collaboration

Foster collaboration across regions, focusing on cross-national initiatives to address forced labor and trafficking, considering the unique challenges different countries and markets face.

04. Support Migration with Dignity

Advocate for organized migration systems that provide safe routes, secure legal status, and decent work opportunities while also challenging negative narratives around migrant labor.

05. Addressing Root Causes of Human Trafficking:

To effectively combat labor exploitation and human trafficking, it is essential to address the root causes of migration, such as poverty, inequality, and conflict. This requires a comprehensive approach that involves both domestic and international cooperation.

06. Survivor Involvement in Policy

There was a strong call for survivors to be directly involved in decision-making processes rather than being represented by intermediaries. Survivor-led research and initiatives were encouraged, with an emphasis on bridging the gap between survivors and policymakers.

07. Research and Evidence-Based Action

The need for applied, localized research was underscored, including a focus on mixed methods, engaging with local communities, and integrating survivors as researchers. This approach would inform the antislavery sector and help develop more effective interventions.

OUTCOMES OF THE FORUM

Europe Regional Forum will be held in Brussels with the support of the Belgian government every year.

The government of Belgium, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will co-host the Europe Regional Forum in 2024.





"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