



University of
Nottingham
Rights Lab

Voices

Ideas for using survivor testimony in antislavery work

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Introduction

In 2019, the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham launched a new collection of survivor testimony, named **Voices: Narratives by Survivors of Modern Slavery**. The work to gather these narratives was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Antislavery Usable Past project and the AHRC/Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Antislavery Knowledge Network project. Representing 900+ survivor voices from around the world and continuing to grow, the database is publicly available for use by the global community that is working towards Target 8.7 of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): to end modern slavery by 2030.

The purpose of this report is to suggest a guide for how to use this groundbreaking collection of survivor testimony for antislavery work. The report is split into three sections. The first covers the database itself; the second relies on testimony from survivors in Sub-Saharan Africa, Cambodia, Pakistan and North Korea to show how survivor testimony can help to answer questions about slavery definitions, causes, interventions and aftermath; and the third section is a case study about forced marriage, highlighting how survivor narratives can shape our understanding of the practice. In selecting sample narratives, we focused on countries that, according to the Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index, have the top 10 highest prevalence rates of slavery (including North Korea, Pakistan, Cambodia, Eritrea, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi).

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To view the Voices narratives, visit: www.antislavery.ac.uk/narratives

Left: Community Mural by Joel Bergner and partners. Cover: James Bullough, 'Release', 2014

Trigger warning: the following report contains descriptions of slavery, including violence.



Executive summary

Throughout history, formerly enslaved people have spoken out, shared their testimony, supported their communities and educated the public about slavery and human trafficking. In the modern antislavery movement, survivors must be at the forefront, as their insight into the world of slavery is unparalleled. Organisations globally can use the Voices database to understand how survivors themselves define slavery and what solutions survivors suggest for achieving SDG 8.7.

In summary:

- Voices is a publicly available database providing access to over 900 survivor testimonies from around the world
- survivor testimony represents an evidence-base for antislavery work. Organisations can use the Voices database to understand forms of slavery, what survivors require in regard to their own welfare in the wake of enslavement, and how organisations can design interventions to better prevent slavery and support survivors
- survivor testimony reveals the need for site-specific interventions, particularly within war-torn countries or those that have a high prevalence of corruption, poverty and gender inequality
- the narratives highlight the urgent requirement for survivors to receive medical treatment and emotional support beyond the immediate end of their enslavement
- as the experts in the antislavery field, survivors can inform and influence how we all tackle slavery, and antislavery organisations should create spaces to include their voices intervention design and evaluation

The Voices database

1. What is the collection?

Over a five-year period from 2014-2019, two AHRC funded projects enabled Rights Lab researchers to collect over 900 narratives by survivors of slavery and human trafficking. Led by Professor Zoe Trodd from the University of Nottingham, this archive is currently the largest collection of survivor voices in the world. The narratives vary in length and describe numerous forms of slavery, including forced labour and forced marriage. They are by survivors from countries all around the world including the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Italy, Albania, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Croatia, Russia, China, North Korea, Philippines, Indonesia, Australia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Mozambique, Ghana, Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala.

Across more than a million words spoken or written by survivors of modern slavery, we see why slavery persists in particular hotspots around the world. We can analyse patterns to uncover trafficking routes, identify vulnerabilities and the challenges survivors face in liberation, and discover new antislavery solutions. Now, as in the 19th century, the survivor narrative is at the centre of abolitionism: it offers the chance to systematically design new antislavery strategies based on the experiences, ideas and solutions of enslaved people themselves.

Trodd and a research team that included Andrea Nicholson, Rosemary Pearce, Lauren Eglén and Olivia Wright gathered the narratives from a variety of sources, including their own new interviews, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), court cases, and public hearings in policy settings. The researchers aimed to create a new dataset that would allow a fuller understanding of survivor experience and self-representation. The Rights Lab will continue to add survivor narratives to the archive.

2. How do I use the collection?

This section provides a short guide on how to use the collection. The database is publicly available via the website www.antislavery.ac.uk/narratives. A navigational bar on the left-hand side provides sub-headings for ordering your search. Narratives can be viewed either in a list or map form, so if you search testimony from a specific country, you can see how many narratives originate from that location.

The collection as a whole is searchable by country, name, themes (for example, domestic slavery or forced marriage), and the date that the narrative was recorded. For example, if a user chooses the theme of forced marriage, narratives related to this subject can be viewed in list, or again, in map form. From this point, the search can be broken down further through the country of enslavement and the date the narrative was recorded. Survivor testimony relating to forced marriage forms a substantial part of the database, and women are represented from North Korea, China, Iraq, India, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Central African Republic, Italy, Albania, the United States and the United Kingdom.

At the beginning of each narrative, a small introduction provides context, which is followed by the testimonial itself. Occasionally, a narrative will contain an audio recording or a link to an interview, or a United Nations testimonial. The provenance of each narrative as well as tags and themes, are located at the bottom of each narrative. Testimonies that have similar content, or are within the same country, can be explored at the bottom of the page in order to build a more comprehensive picture of the different forms of slavery, as well as the similarities and differences within the survivor experience.

To view the Voices narratives, visit: www.antislavery.ac.uk/narratives. If you wish to cite a particular narrative, please acknowledge the survivor's name, the provenance of the narrative and cite: Voices Database, the Rights Lab, University of Nottingham. At the point of collection, the Rights Lab sourced full permissions.

3. Why is the collection useful?

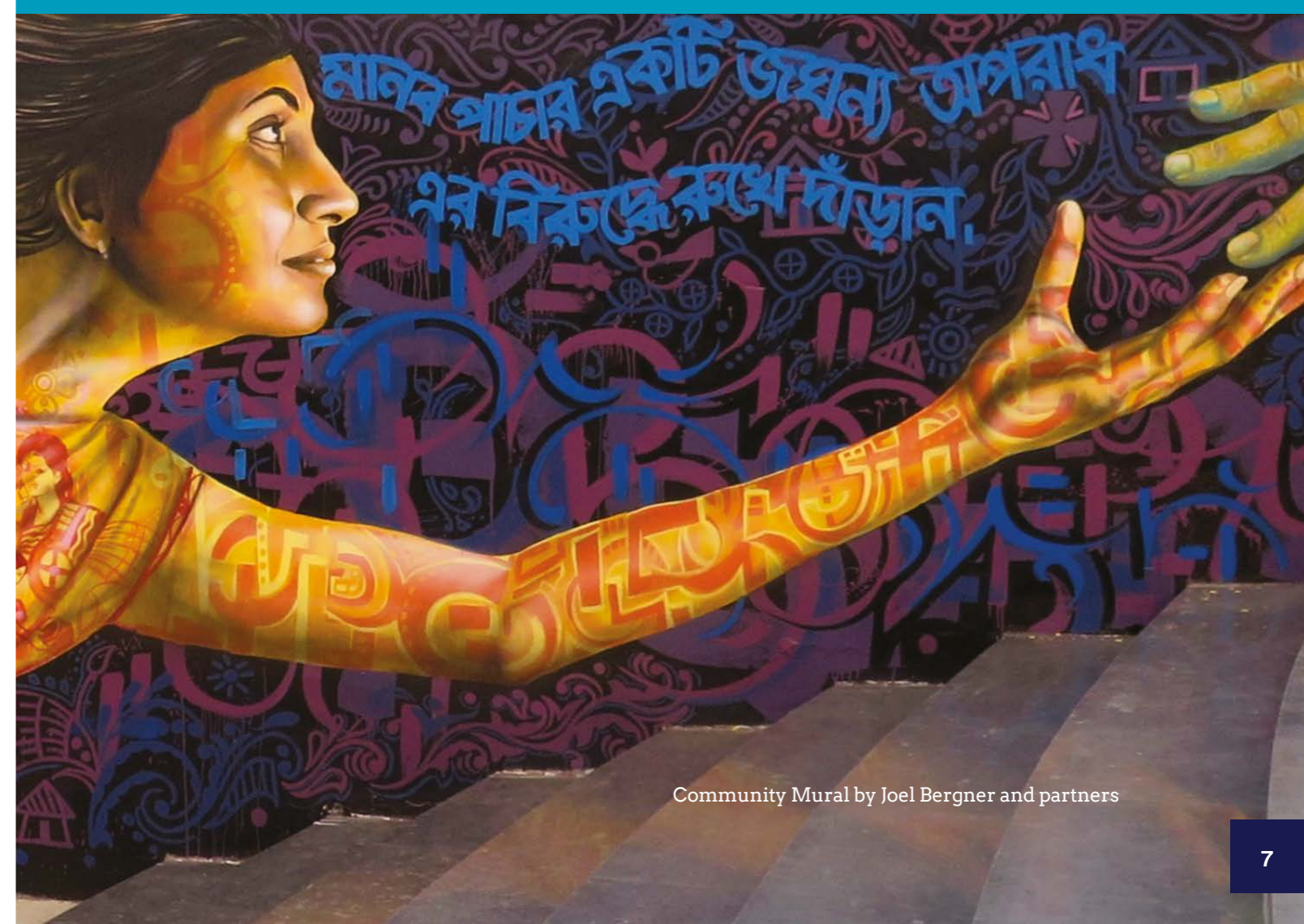
Currently, the antislavery movement is not survivor-informed. Survivors of slavery and human trafficking are often marginalised or tokenised in the antislavery movement: expected to tell their trauma story of what happened to them or what they witnessed, rather than being asked for their expertise in learning what could prevent slavery or help someone in a similar situation. Antislavery organisations can provide opportunities for the inclusion of survivor voices – whether through direct engagement with survivor leaders or by using Voices. This can help prevent marginalisation and encourage others to see the benefit of a survivor-informed antislavery movement.

The sheer breadth of knowledge resulting from the Voices database is useful to any practitioner or specialist working in the antislavery field. It is possible to learn about the drivers of slavery, the journeys of survivors within their own country or their pathways to slavery in other countries, cultural or religious practices and identities, survivor requirements in the immediate wake of slavery, and the operational definitions of slavery.

Narratives offer a more specialist knowledge of how slavery operates and what it will take to end it.

Narratives can also help us create more specialised aftercare packages for survivors. Children or young adults who were married as children, for example, will require particular medical treatment, often for the rest of their lives. How can agencies provide access to therapy, or build resilience strategies for forced marriage survivors to become part of their local community? How susceptible are survivors of forced marriage, as compared to forced labour, to re-trafficking?

Organisations with a business focus can use survivor testimony to learn more about the hidden processes and manufacture of materials, and to understand how slavery begins in certain supply chains. Organisations focused on the intersection of slavery and environmental destruction can use detailed descriptions of geographies to understand spatial patterns in where slavery occurs. As the narratives can be organised in chronological order, it is possible to examine whether there was a spike in trafficking after events such as environmental disasters.



Community Mural by Joel Bergner and partners

Research questions

The policy community has rarely sought input from survivors on definitions, antislavery policies and programmes. By including survivor voices at the heart of antislavery strategy, the antislavery movement could be dramatically propelled forward towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7. The second section of this report will focus on four research questions, the answers to which can be enhanced by using survivor testimony from Voices. The four questions are as follows:

1. How should we define slavery?
2. What are the causes – or who are the driving individuals behind enslavement?
3. What happens in the immediate aftermath of enslavement, and what do survivors need?
4. Where can interventions be made?

Taking each question as a distinct case study, survivor testimony from five different regions will provide insight into how we should define slavery, the causes of enslavement, the events immediately after a survivor becomes free, and the opportunities for intervention. For example, what would a definition of forced marriage look like from the perspective of a survivor in Pakistan or North Korea? How often are family members the driving individual behind enslavement? What healthcare needs do survivors require in the wake of their freedom, and what do they need beyond it? How successful are NGOs or local authorities with their interventions, and what is missing?

The selection criteria for each country follows the Global Slavery Index 2018 list of the top ten countries with the highest prevalence of slavery:

1. North Korea
2. Eritrea
3. Burundi
4. The Central African Republic
5. Afghanistan
6. Mauritania
7. South Sudan
8. Pakistan
9. Cambodia
10. Iran

Survivor narratives were sourced from Pakistan, Cambodia, North Korea and regions within Sub-Saharan Africa. While we recognise that insight from survivors around the world varies between each country, those listed here have two things in common: either they have a history of, or are currently experiencing, conflict, or the prevalence of state-imposed forced labour is extremely high. The accounts of survivors all highlight the need for organisations to provide survivors with urgent health care and support beyond the immediate end of their enslavement.

1. Definitions of slavery

The term ‘modern slavery’ refers to “situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power.”¹ Forced labour is defined as “all work or service that is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.”² These definitions capture the *physical* state of slavery, but survivors emphasise other aspects of their condition that should be factored into the operational definition of modern slavery.

For example, numerous survivors whose narratives are included in the Voices database refer to being treated like property. Sook Joo, who was trafficked from North Korea and forced to marry a Chinese man, describes how “the worst moments in that house were when they treated me like a product they had bought, not as a human. You had no choice but to follow their orders...I was not a human in that house.” Kim Young-Ae stated “we are treated worse than animals. They take care of their animals better, as they’ll make money selling them some day, but North Korean women are locked up inside the house, sometimes forced to live with three widowers in the same household, constantly facing the aggression and contempt of those surrounding us.”

The concepts of inhumane treatment and the theft of opportunities (or of life itself), is prevalent in several of the narratives. Christina, who was enslaved in Cameroon, explained:

“I consider myself a slave because I worked for so many hours without getting paid, and without going to school. And I couldn’t leave. I feel like they stole my life from me. We didn’t know anything like this happened. It’s like we were brainwashed so we didn’t know the laws, we didn’t know the rules. All we knew was what they were telling us. And we believed all that they were saying. We were blind then.”

For Christina, her exploitation reached beyond the lack of payment and violence. Her enslavers “stole” her life, “brainwashed” her and manipulated her into believing she was worthless, and that she had nowhere to go.

Others compared their condition to that of animals. Park Ji-hyun described how Chinese men would “come to take a look” at her before she was forced into marriage. “They would come and haggle over my price. It was no different from an animal being sold in the marketplace.” John, a former child soldier, described how he and other young children were “treated like slaves. We cook, clean and collect firewood and if we refuse they beat us. They treat us like animals.” Similarly, Ker Deng was abducted and sold into slavery in Southern Sudan and described his status:

“I was treated worse than the animals I slept with. Like them, I was property... But the animals weren’t beaten every day. I was. Every single day, with a horsewhip. Sometimes on my front, sometimes on my back. Sometimes with my clothes on, sometimes not. But every day. The animals were fed every day. But I wasn’t. To the man who owned me and my mother, the animals had worth. They were valuable. We weren’t.”

¹ International Labour Organisation and Walk Free Foundation, 2017: ‘Global estimates of modern slavery: forced labour and forced marriage’. Geneva: Alliance 8.7, p. 9.

² Forced Labour Convention, 1930, No. 29



Community Mural by Joel Bergner and partners

From Cameroon to North Korea, survivors compare themselves to property or animals. They were treated as non-human.

Finally, Dina, who was sold into sexual slavery in Cambodia, points not only to a definition of slavery, but also the definition of a formerly enslaved person, a *survivor* of slavery:

“I want you to remember we are not “problems,” we are not animals, we are not viruses, we are not garbage. We are flesh, skin and bones, we have a heart, and we have feelings, we are a sister to someone, a daughter, a granddaughter. We are people, we are women and we want to be treated with respect, dignity and we want rights like the rest of you enjoy.”

Through analysing hundreds of survivor narratives, scholars at the Rights Lab have identified³ five additional elements to the legal definition of slavery, which place the focus on the *impact* of slavery on those who experience it, rather than the *intent* of those perpetrating it.

These additional elements include:

1. **Stasis** – being denied temporal and spatial movement and a lack of access to the future
2. **Destruction of identity** – being dehumanised and treated as a ‘non-person’
3. **Lack of purpose** – where one’s actions lose meaning
4. **Denial of privacy** – losing one’s dignity and sense of agency
5. **Disregard for well-being** – where one’s personal needs are deemed irrelevant

Not only can survivors provide a vital new perspective to the debates around definitions of slavery – helping non-survivors in the anti-slavery movement better understand how and when slavery occurs and the impact it can have on individuals and communities – but they can also offer a blueprint for their recovery: by understanding what is lost through slavery, we can understand what needs to be restored in freedom.⁴

³ Andrea Nicholson, Minh Dang and Zoe Trodd - ‘A Full Freedom: Contemporary Survivors’ Definitions of Slavery’. Published in the Human Rights Law Review, Volume 18, Issue 4, December 2018, Pages 689–704.

⁴ Rights Lab MSEU Briefing 1: Contemporary survivor definitions of slavery. Available at: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/mseu/mseu-resources/2019/may/survivor-definitions-2pg-final.pdf>

2. Drivers for enslavement

Survivors within the Voices database point to the catalyst for their enslavement and the risk factors that made them vulnerable to exploitation. By mining this information, we can understand *who* or *what* is creating conditions of exploitation, which provides us with a blueprint about *when* and *where* interventions can be made to prevent enslavement. By mapping the narratives to the 169 SDG targets, we can see that multiple SDG target issues work simultaneously to create vulnerability to slavery, and, consequently, only a multi-SDG approach will bring an end to modern slavery.⁵

The key drivers that emerge from the narratives are poverty, vulnerability, a lack of education or awareness of potential risks, and family or cultural dynamics. Mee Yon escaped from North Korea to China after the death of her son from starvation. Manipulated into believing she had a job in China, she eventually found out she had been sold to a Chinese man for marriage: “it was my first time in China so I trusted those people. I followed them thinking about the money I would make.” Coming from a position of vulnerability and sheer desperation, Mee Yon trusted Chinese brokers who could save her from famine and death in North Korea. Yeonmi Park concurs, stating that “we found a broker who wanted to send us to China. I do not know why she wanted to help me to go to China, I simply wanted to go because if I don’t leave North Korea I’m going to die from starvation.” Suffering a similar fate, Paek Sun-Joo describes how brokers or traffickers would sometimes go even further in their deception.⁵

“[They] would gather people wearing rags, appearing to be compassionate and pity them, giving them something to eat and telling them that in China they would be able to feed and clothe themselves adequately. It is easy to be tricked when you are starving, and somebody gives you some food, telling you that there will be plenty more for you if you go with them.”

Poverty and vulnerability forced these women into exploitative situations, at the hands of criminals who were skilled at deception. Unsurprisingly, traffickers use all the tools at their disposal to appear friendly, legitimate or even professional. Posvak was born into rural poverty in Cambodia, and was enslaved as a domestic worker after she heard about the job on the radio: “the reason I believed it was legal was because I found the advertisement pretty reliable.” She urges others, and local authorities, to raise awareness of employment rights and

to ensure legal documents from employers are legitimate. In other cases, the police or even local authority members could be corrupt and complicit. Many are given bribes to look the other way. Dina recounts how the police in Cambodia “live off our blood. Money is too important to everyone money and more money.” In Channery’s case, corrupt officials presiding over her forced marriage in Cambodia purposely did not establish whether she was there out of her own free will.

The narratives also confirm that the actions of family members can play a part in enslavement. In many cases, parents or guardians are deceived into releasing their children into the care of others, believing they will receive an education, employment or a job. Others are complicit in enslavement, sometimes because of poverty or vulnerability. Chaivoern trusted her aunt to find her work in Cambodia, but was sold into the sex industry. “The reason why I trusted her was because firstly, I thought she was my aunt, and secondly, my family was so poor. So, I had no option to choose but to go with her.” Lina, a native of Cambodia, was sold into a forced marriage in China by her cousin, and Amalsi was manipulated by a friend who claimed she could work as a domestic in Mombasa, but instead was led into sexual slavery: “because she was a friend, I trusted her and decided to go to Mombasa.” In Tanzania, when Matilda was 12, her father said:

“You cannot continue with your education. You have to get married because this man has already paid dowry for you. I felt very sad. I couldn’t go to school, dowry was paid, and I could not disobey my father. I did not know my husband before. The village elders supported my father’s decision for me to get married. I had nothing to do. I had no way out but to allow to get married.”

Four out of ten girls are married before they reach 18 in Tanzania. Matilda’s father pushed her into a forced marriage, which resulted in physical and emotional abuse, and numerous health problems. Driven by factors of poverty, vulnerability, and sometimes cultural practice, women and men are placed in difficult positions where they trust friends or family members to help them. By giving us access to the motives and drivers for slavery, the narratives show us what remaining challenges exist to the goal of ending slavery by 2030.

⁵ Zoe Trodd, Andrea Nicholson & Lauren Eglen - ‘Survivors’ Solutions: Contemporary Slave Narratives as a Blueprint for Sustainable Development’. Cambridge University Press. Forthcoming 2020.

3. Aftermath

Once survivors of slavery escape or are freed, the long road to recovery begins. Unsurprisingly, survivors face extreme trauma, stress and often require medical treatment, but the level of after-care varies depending on available resources or a society's willingness to provide them. In their narratives, survivors themselves identify what care and support they need post-enslavement.

First and foremost, survivors recognise the urgent necessity of physical, emotional and psychological support. Semira and Fnan, who were physically and sexually assaulted by the smugglers who took them across the Egyptian border into Israel, demanded access to medical care and a social worker to aid their transition into 'normal' life. Borey was trafficked from Cambodia to Thailand to work on a fishing boat, and recounts his mental health problems:

“I want to be assisted very much, because I want my mental health to be like before I went to Thailand. I have forgotten many things, I am sometimes dizzy, sometimes have headaches, and I'm always worried... I also have dreams and nightmares, dreaming of the time on the boat. Every time I dream I am not well at all.”

Borey's narrative demands access to medical care so he can support himself and his family.

Many survivors require time to heal from a constant fear of death and the psychological torment of being subjected to the power of another human being. After being tricked into an offer of false employment, Dalyn was sold into prostitution at the age of 12:

“The psychological impact was horrendous. It lives with me even to this day. When it finally dawned on me that I was a prostitute, I felt a sense of utter disgust. I had become the very thing I most despised. It is slavery of the worst kind. They have total power over you - they get you to do anything they want. You feel like dirt and there is nothing you can do except follow orders. You could end up dead. I was scared right up until the brothel owner was arrested.”

Disgusted with her situation and her experiences, Dalyn describes the “horrendous” psychological

anguish of enslavement and how it has robbed her of her very identity. Similarly, Sina was sold into sexual slavery in Cambodia, and experiences complex post-traumatic stress:

“I still have the bad dreams in my life. Nowadays I have freedom to do whatever I want, to go wherever I want. But my spirit is dead... Though I have freedom to do whatever I want, to go wherever I want, I cannot look at myself in the mirror alone. Even in my room I don't have a full-length mirror because looking at the mirror I would think about my past life.”

Sina does not recognise her own reflection because it sparks too many painful memories of the things she was forced to do while enslaved. While she has the freedom to do what she wants, her “spirit is dead” and life is barely worth living.

Concy, a former child soldier from Uganda, describes a similar social death:

“Life was difficult. I suffered from extreme insomnia, haunted by memories of the rebels. I was still breathing, but somehow I didn't really feel alive. My mind kept replaying the past. I tried to return to school when I was 12, but I couldn't concentrate on what my teachers were saying. I found other people who had suffered like me, but I still felt so alone.”

Survivors like Concy or Charlotte, another former child soldier from Uganda, suggest solutions to these problems. Charlotte demands that “affected people should be given support to recover psychologically, they should be given counselling, accepting them back into the community. They should have physical support, health provision of basics, like shelter, and others. They should be given educational support.”

Other survivors encourage the state to provide better care. Evelyn Chumbow, a survivor leader who was trafficked from Cameroon to the United States (U.S.) to become a domestic worker, states that the U.S. foster care system in which she was placed after enslavement was very “dangerous.” There were “bad influences [from] drug dealers, prostitutes, gang members.” When she managed to move to her own accommodation when she was 21, she “still faced many struggles”:



Shepard Fairey, 'Duality of Humanity', 2011

“For example, even though I was a green card holder, I still didn't have the documents necessary for many social services, including food stamps. There is no additional help available after you leave the foster care system. A lot of people are really interested in your story and getting you out of your situation, but after we are rescued, nobody cares what you do. Survivors need more help once they escape their traffickers. We continue to suffer. When I left my trafficker, I was talking to trees and still insisted on sleeping on the floor. I have physical scars that I carry with me, scars that I have to explain to my husband and young son. I also have many emotional scars. Survivors need psychological services. If I had the money to go to therapy, I would go. Accessing services is hard. Finding long-term care is hard. Our lives were taken away from us and we need help getting back into everyday life. Some of us are able to do it, but some are not able. It's important for us to have long term care for the trauma that we've gone through.”

Accessing necessary medical and emotional support was very difficult for survivors like Evelyn. Once she and others were freed, “nobody cares what you do”, and they were simply left to their own devices and fend for themselves, often in a new nation where language could be a barrier. Any solution of long-term care is also difficult to access, and she demands help from local authorities to help get her life and the lives of others back on track. She also identifies how some survivors are in a position to help themselves, while others are not: if the right services are not provided, the survivor may once again be placed in a position of vulnerability and susceptible to re-trafficking.

Since vulnerability is a major catalyst for enslavement in the first place, it is hardly surprising that many survivors find themselves in a vulnerable position, when they become free. In Cambodia, Samnang's life in poverty made him extremely vulnerable to re-exploitation: “If an organization came here to recruit I would attempt to go again. I would try and make sure the company was legal with insurance and things like that. But then I would go again.” Similarly, Yum writes of his declining health but also his desperate need to find employment to support his wife and new-born child. There are “no prospects of work” where he lives and he considers trying “to find work again in Thailand.” In Zimbabwe, Faith was tricked into sexual slavery by her uncle, and although she tried to escape, she states “I had no place to go to, so I had to go back there.”

Finally, in Pakistan, Mohammed describes his enslavement through debt bondage in a brick kiln. The driver for his situation was vulnerability due to poverty after being removed from a previous exploitative situation:

“We were so happy at the time of release as we thought it was an end of the dark time. We have a large family and without a home of our own and any other source of income we were unable to live. They [the activists] just helped us to get released and then suddenly we were on our own feet. It was a really difficult period. We decided to find work at a kiln. The owner is nice and we didn't take any advance...I know this is a bondage but don't know how to get rid of it. I tried once but that did not work out. It would be better if we were provided with more wages for the same work rather than simply “releasing” us from the bondage. Look even my daughters and daughter-in-law work, still we cannot eat three times a day.”

Mohammed believed his family's situation improved once they had been released, but in his testimony, criticises local activists for not providing a safe environment to avoid the risk of re-enslavement. His reference to being “suddenly on our own feet” illustrates the need for antislavery organisations to create conditions where survivors can learn new skills, increase their confidence and build individual and community resilience. If local agencies on the ground had raised awareness of the potential risks of employment in the area – the dangers of becoming involved in brick kiln labour for example – perhaps the case of re-enslavement could have been avoided. A cycle of poverty and vulnerability played a large part in Mohammed's continuing family crises, but he suggests one solution to the problem: wages for fair work, instead of “releasing” individuals and expecting them to carry on their lives with few skills or opportunities.

Other survivors also demand paid work or compensation and some pursue legal redress. Samnang and Ki Pheakdey were trafficked from Cambodia and enslaved in Thailand on a fishing vessel. Samnang states that he needs “justice” and demands “compensation for the work I have done.” Ki Pheakdey concurs:

“By filing a complaint, I would just like to ask for the amount of money that the agency promised me for my three years of work on a vessel. The amount would be between around USD 6,000 and USD 7,000. It would reach around USD 10,000 including bonus

and overtime. I would like to get this money back. I don't want to claim more.”

While this option may not be feasible or even available in certain countries, these men wanted to make clear they are only filing for the amount they feel they deserves.

4. Interventions

Throughout the previous three sections, it is easy to begin identifying how survivor voices can offer key insights into the definition and drivers of slavery, and the nature of the support required post-enslavement.

Numerous survivors also point to specific ideas for antislavery interventions, including the value of raising awareness and providing education. In Kenya, Helena Kaitira was forced to undergo child marriage, and she advises that education is the most important weapon to end the practice, since “female children are the victims simply because their parents want to acquire wealth by receiving dowry.” Similarly, in Malawi, Dorothy was forced into marriage by her relatives, until she met an organisation that had the support of Plan International, who helped her divorce her husband. Dorothy seeks to help other girls avoid the same fate:

“Our biggest challenge, especially when we're talking to parents, is that it's hard to offer any good alternatives. For many, desperate poverty is what makes them marry off their daughters, and we can't provide them with the money they need to keep them in school. What I want to tell other young girls is not to just go with it because it seems like an easy way out, or a romantic wish. Go to school! That's the only thing that will give you opportunities in the future. Child marriage summarized into one word for me is: Problems!”

For Dorothy, education is not only a human right; it is a shield in which to protect yourself from further exploitation. While poverty and often cultural practice inhibit progress, she believes access to educational programmes will help. For example, in Tanzania, Angel worked in exploitative conditions as a domestic worker after she fled home to avoid a forced marriage. Her connection to the Kivulini Women's Rights Organisation “changed [her] life completely.” She learned skills, educated herself and as a result used that knowledge to reject sexual advances by her employer: “by then I knew my rights and was confident enough to stand up to him.” Education allowed Angel to feel empowered enough to protect herself.



James Bullough, 'Release', 2014

Other survivors place a large emphasis on the education of others, including immediate family members. Enslaved in Cameroon, Christina advocates that “you shouldn't send your child away, especially with strangers,” as this can lead to physical and sexual exploitation, and in other cases, death. Dara, who was enslaved in Cambodia's sex industry, identifies in particular how the education of men is important to combat sexual slavery: “I think we should educate men and I think that we should ask the woman to educate their children too. We can ask a woman to teach their sons. We should start when they are young, because after it's too late. We all matter. Women matter. Please educate your son.” Born in Cambodia, Sopheap was forced into begging in Vietnam: “I want to say to the government, please help destitute people before their poverty forces them to leave home to beg or to commit crimes. Please help them from falling into these traps, even if it's just by giving them advice.”

Survivors also point to the ignorance of those living in western countries. Yeonmi Park, a North Korean citizen forced to marry a Chinese man, criticised the public for supporting politicians such as President Donald Trump, particularly when the media mocked both Trump and Kim Jong-Un together:

“Seriously, that was the main news. I couldn't believe that, what's so funny about this dictator? What is so funny about people getting killed? And I think now finally we are going towards the right direction, we know this is not a joke, and we know this is happening and we can stop it...As a media you have a power to redirect this conversation that this is not funny and this is something that we need to work on right now. And it should come above anything that we are doing in this free world.”

Park advocates that those who have the power to make positive changes – especially within the media – should change the direction of conversation and champion human rights instead of willingly participating in hurtful and traumatising mockery against a dictator. Similarly, Evelyn, who was trafficked from Cameroon to the United States, argues that the public should change their language regarding illegal immigrants, because “especially when it comes to children, you have to wonder how the children got here. So I'm an example of an illegal immigrant, an undocumented child. I came here illegally which I did not know. I did not know. I did not know that I need a green card to be here. I did not know I need a working permit for me to be here.”

As a result, survivors demand more action from individual countries or international organisations such as the United Nations (UN). At a UN hearing, Songhwa – a survivor of forced marriage in North Korea and China – targeted the lack of commitment from the United States to accept North Korean refugees:

“I earnestly plead and beg of you, refugees of other countries have been accepted in the United States numbering in the tens of thousands of people or more. But after the North Korean Human Rights Act passed in 2004, only about 130 North Korean refugees have been granted asylum in the United States.”

Similarly, Concy, a former child soldier from Uganda, noted that even if the conflict has ceased, “men continue to abuse women.” Uganda does not “provide enough support for child soldiers” and while “many of us survived the conflict, [sic] we can do nothing but cry about our past since we have no family, food, money or skills.” The government should focus on providing physical and emotional support, particularly for girls who were forced to become ‘wives’ of the rebel soldiers. Charlotte, another former child soldier in Uganda, concurs, arguing that the nation:

“...should protect its citizens, and especially the vulnerable women and children during wars and conflicts. A mechanism must be put in place to track and trace missing people and the means must be put in place to identify the trafficked persons. The UN protection law should be translated in local languages globally. Whoever wants to fight against the government or opposition groups must be made aware that they have responsibilities not to kill or abduct the local people. Signatories to the UN statutes should practically commit themselves to the laws they commit themselves to. Uganda is a signatory country but it did not protect people like me during war. I left so many children behind me still in captivity. Some of them are already young adults. What can the UN do for them? Other trafficked children are going to become prostitutes, rebels or terrorists, like I was?”

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madeleine was forced to become a child soldier when she was 12 years old. While she received counselling and money for her education, “not many of my friends got the same chance.” Those who were raped or sexually exploited require further support, yet the justice system refuses to include “charges of rape, which would be great relief for us.” These survivors identify the areas in which governments or international organisations can directly provide assistance.

While survivors identify important gaps in support, in many cases local authorities or NGOs have been performing successful work in communities. Ashiana provided safe accommodation, education and benefits to Azra in the United Kingdom (U.K.) after she escaped a forced marriage in Pakistan. Amani was supported by HAART in Kenya who offered “a good home, [and] a supportive environment” after she escaped a forced marriage. After Bella was sold into sexual slavery in Cambodia, Agape sent two “foreigners” to her under the pretence of buying sex, but who instead helped her to leave the brothel in which she was held captive. Agape provided an education, gave her advice and most importantly to her, “always encourage[d] me that I am special.” This organisation built Bella’s confidence, educated and empowered her to make her own choices and to feel self-love, which had been denied to her for years.

Equally, when the police conducted a raid on the brothel where she was enslaved, Kolab was referred to the Accommodation of Social Affairs department,

“...so I could learn some skills and get a proper job. After meeting the non-profit organization AFESIP Cambodia there, I finally was able to leave the sex industry, where I never wanted to be in the first place. I have decided to study hairdressing in the AFESIP center to make a living. I’d like to become a good hairdresser or a staff member of AFESIP, so I can help other victims.”

Working with a local community organisation meant that Kolab had the skills to re-enter society and earn a new living, instead of becoming vulnerable to re-enslavement or entering the sex industry. Kolab also spoke of helping others to avoid or escape slavery.

Overwhelmingly, the testimony within the VOICES database illustrates survivors’ desire and expert capacity to help other survivors:

- In Uganda, Anywar Ricky Richard, a former child soldier, founded Friends of Orphans, an organisation dedicated to the empowerment and rehabilitation of former soldiers.
- In Kenya, trafficking survivor Fr. Jean now works as an antislavery activist and aims “to promote the awareness, to protect those who were trafficked and also to involve in the kind of influencing those who make the policies, the government and the different organisation.”
- In Cambodia, Sina – a survivor of sexual slavery – recounts her numerous plans to help her fellow victims, including educating and providing skills for them, as well as giving them “a goal in their life.” She spends her own money on AIDS medication to help young women “until their last breath... what we want to see is that the victims can stand on their own, that they can survive, that they can stand in the society. And my hope is that the voices of the victims are heard worldwide.

- In Pakistan, Veero escaped her enslavement in the agricultural industry and has helped over 700 individuals escape slavery.

These and other survivors from around the world are sharing their expertise and becoming leaders in the antislavery movement. Evelyn, who was trafficked from Cameroon to the United States, explains that it is “rare to hear about real solutions, informed by survivors, that can make long-term change,” but goes on to suggest these solutions: “I will like to recommend long-term assistance for survivors of human trafficking including education and job opportunities.” She and many other survivors use their skills and knowledge to help others, provide site or community-specific solutions, and focus on raising awareness of exploitation and empowering others to prevent further vulnerability or re-enslavement. By engaging with these voices, antislavery organisations can learn from their ideas and adapt their community-based solutions to the antislavery movement as a whole.



Community Mural by Joel Bergner and partners

Forced marriage, a case study

The most recent Global Estimates by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Walk Free Foundation (2017) indicate that there are 15.4 million people in forced marriages worldwide. The Global Estimates define forced marriage as “situations in which persons, regardless of their age, have been forced to marry without their consent. A person might be forced to marry through physical, emotional, or financial duress, deception by family members, the spouse, or others, or the use of force, threats, or severe pressure.” The regions with the highest prevalence of forced marriage are Africa, Asia and the Pacific, however there is insufficient data on forced marriage in the Arab States and Central Asia. 84% of survivors of forced marriage are estimated to be women and girls, and 65% are believed to have been adults at the time of marriage.

Girls Not Brides, a coalition of civil rights groups who have pledged to raise awareness of child marriage, state that cycles of poverty, inequality and insecurity sustain the practice. They note that if little is done to prevent this, the number of child brides will extend to 1.2 billion by 2050.⁶ Girls Not Brides offers a global map of where child and early forced marriage usually occurs, which identifies 20 countries with the highest prevalence, including Niger, Central African Republic, Chad, Bangladesh and South Sudan as the top five.⁷ Alarmingly, UNICEF has stated that no region is on track to meet the SDG target 5.3 of ending child marriage.⁸ In order to meet the target by 2030, global progress would need to be 12 times faster than the rate observed over the past decade.

Organisations that tackle forced marriage can use the Voices database to analyse:

- The prevalence of early, child and adult forced marriage around the world, and what forced marriage looks like in India, North Korea, the UK, or Albania (to name a few examples).

- What or who was the driving individual behind the survivor’s enslavement, where—for example—as over 100 narratives mention a family member in this capacity, future interventions could be directly targeted at family education and prevention.
- How child and adult forced marriage differ, and what intervention strategies we need for each: for example, how many people escaped forced marriage because they fled? Did a member of the family help? Was there a solid intervention by an NGO or local authority? What was the role of the community in aiding – or hindering – the escape?
- If women or men are trafficked across borders to undergo forced marriage, are they enslaved or married first? What impact does that trafficking process have on the experience of enslavement, and what changes in the enslavement process if there is a marriage ceremony, if that ceremony takes place in a particular site, or if the victim is very young?
- How understanding the consequences of both child and adult forced marriage can help us create aftercare packages for survivors. What do survivors require after they have freed themselves, or were freed by NGOs or local authorities?
- The success rates of prevention strategies for child or early forced marriage.
- How many narratives involved physical and sexual violence?
- The ‘steps’ on an individual’s journey (i.e., whether they were married or enslaved first).
- The level of education of a survivor.
- The geographic region in which the marriage takes place, and even the country of origin, to determine any movement of survivors from their home country to the place of enslavement.

- In what circumstances and why are adults forced to marry?
- What are the consequences of forced marriage for adult women and men?

Currently, there is a large evidence gap in the experiences of adults who undergo forced marriage. Within the SDGs, 5.3 specifically refers to forced marriage, but primarily focuses on child or early marriage. As the indicators under 5.3 do not reflect the full situation of forced marriage worldwide, this kind of forensic analysis of survivor narratives can help to focus

on the problem. Gaps in knowledge hinder the antislavery community’s ability to tackle this problem effectively, but using survivor testimony can provide new routes to deep knowledge.

⁶ International Labour Organisation and Walk Free Foundation, 2017: ‘Global estimates of modern slavery: forced labour and forced marriage’. Geneva: Alliance 8.7, p. 17.

⁷ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/> accessed 31 July 2019 at 13:45

⁸ United Nations Children’s Fund (2018): ‘Child Marriage: Latest trends and future prospects’. New York: UNICEF



ArtLords, ‘Say No to Child Marriage’, 2016

Conclusion

This report has highlighted the need for the antislavery community to use survivor testimony within its work, whether to understand definitions of slavery comprehend the breadth of drivers underpinning slavery and what survivors need for their welfare, or how to make more effective interventions.

The Voices database brings first-hand knowledge of survivors to the fore. It offers an opportunity to take seriously the narratives of survivors and acknowledge them as the experts in this antislavery field, with evidence-based solutions.

The breadth of survivor voices within the database also reminds us that in some cases,

a testimony represented the last courageous action of someone who believed their suffering would be used to help others, and would mean something. Chantha, who was trafficked from Cambodia to China and sold into prostitution, recorded her narrative when she was dying from AIDS at 24 years old. She related: “my life has had no significance, no value...I hope that by sharing my story, my life will finally have meaning. And can help prevent others from the deep sadness of my life.” She hopes to give her life meaning through sharing her story. By placing her testimony, and countless others, at the heart of its work, the antislavery community can find that meaning.




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 To view the Voices narratives, visit:
www.antislavery.ac.uk/narratives

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