



SUMMARY REPORT

Technical convening: Methodologies for measuring the prevalence of modern slavery

Thursday 6th to Friday 7th June 2019

Foreword

Robust measurement of modern slavery is fundamental to identifying effective interventions, prioritising finite resources, and tracking our collective progress towards Sustainable Development Goals 8.7. In particular, prevalence estimates to assess the scale and nature of severe exploitation underpin evidence-based policies and programming.

In the last five years, there has been growing attention and investments into prevalence estimates, most notably the 2016 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery produced by the International Labour Organization and Walk Free. At the Freedom Fund, we have focused on sub-national estimates, including eight prevalence studies to produce estimates on forced labour, debt bondage, sex trafficking, worst forms of child labour and forced marriage.

The increasing investment into prevalence estimates is much welcomed, but it has also led to fragmented efforts among researchers. We have observed disparate groups of experts - often separated by geographies and subject areas - developing definitions, methodologies and tools in parallel and not always in accord with one another.

To help foster alignment, the Freedom Fund hosted this Technical Convening with three explicit objectives:

1. To bring together leading researchers in the global modern slavery movement;
2. To build consensus around promising methods; and
3. To encourage cross-pollination of techniques and tools.

For the first time, this Technical Convening brought together 37 leading modern slavery researchers and funders from around the world to discuss prevalence methodologies. This report is a summary of the collective insights and recommendations from this diverse group, drawing on their experiences conducting modern slavery research in over 60 countries and from disciplines ranging from public health, criminal law to machine learning.

In particular, I am especially grateful for the contribution of civil society groups and local researchers in the Technical Convening, whose voices and operational expertise are immensely important, yet often missing in research discussions. At the Freedom Fund, we firmly believe that measurement efforts must be inclusive, and that means equipping frontline activist to partake in, and if necessary, challenge official statistics.

On behalf of the Freedom Fund, I would like to thank all the participants for taking the time to share their advice and lessons learnt. We hope the promising practices summarised in this report can be a foundation for you to all build upon, and the recommendations will help unite future efforts and funding towards jointly agreed priorities.



Nick Grono
CEO
Freedom Fund
August 2019

Participants list

Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)

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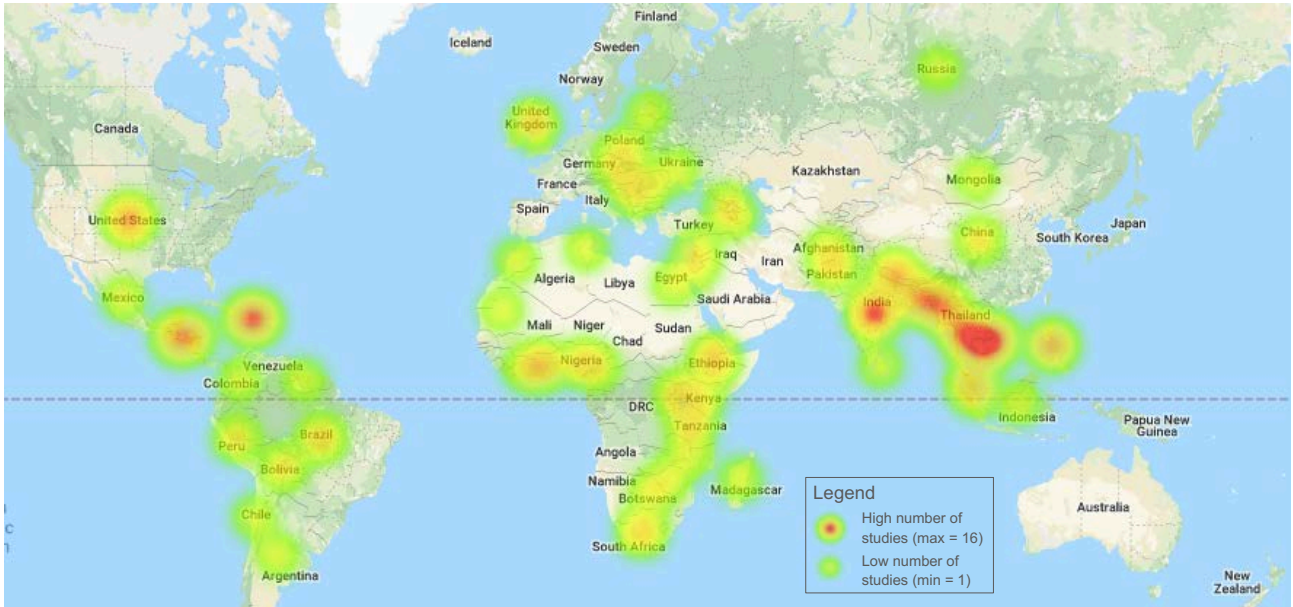
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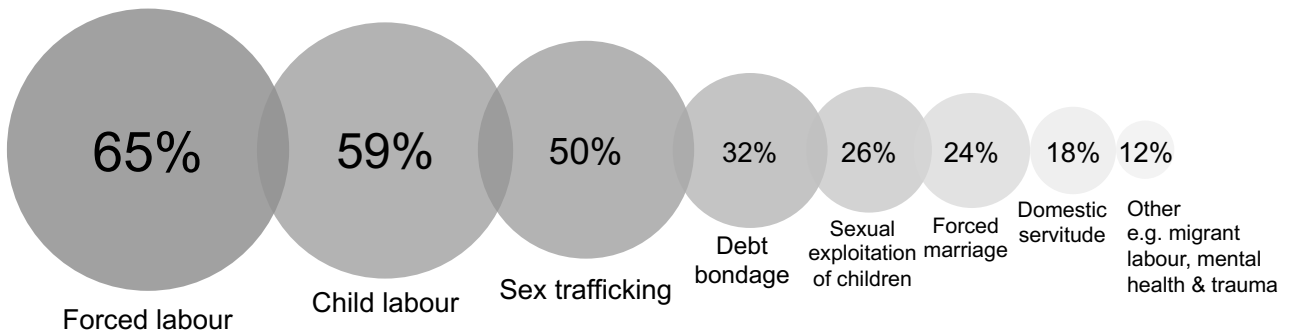


Profile of participants

Location of modern slavery research



Topic of modern slavery research



Agenda

Evening reception

Thursday 6th June 2019, 5 - 7pm

17:00 **Panel discussion: Measuring the hard to measure in modern slavery - is it worth the investment?**

Panelists: Jacqueline Joudo Larsen, Minderoo Foundation
Lauren Damme, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs
Nalini Tarakeshwar, UBS Optimus Foundation
Sudharsanam Manni Balasubramaniam, Children's Investment Fund Foundation
Moderator: Dan Vexler, Freedom Fund

Technical convening

Friday 7th June 2019, 9:30am - 5:30pm

09:30 **Welcome, introductions and scene setting**

10:10 **Session 1: Operational definitions of modern slavery**

Panelists: Annabel Erulkar, Population Council Ethiopia
Courtland Robinson, Johns Hopkins University
Meredith Dank, City University of New York
Pradeep Narayanan, Praxis Institute for Participatory Practices
Moderator: Cathy Zimmerman, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

11:10 Tea/coffee

11:30 **Session 2: Primary data collection for measuring hidden populations**

Panelists: Jacqueline Joudo Larsen, Minderoo Foundation
Laura Gauer Bermudez, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery Ligia Kiss, University College
London Sheldon Zhang, University of Massachusetts Lowell
Moderator: Yuki Lo, Freedom Fund

13:00 Lunch

14:00 **Session 3: Use of existing government data for prevalence estimation**

Panelists: Luis Fabiano de Assis, Federal Labor Prosecution Office Brazil
Meredith Dank, City University of New York
Michaëlle de Cock, International Labour Organization
Nick Wise, OceanMind Limited
Moderator: Katharine Bryant, Minderoo Foundation

15:00 Tea/coffee

15:20 **Session 4: Operational realities and ethical considerations**

Panelists: Andee Parks, International Justice Mission
James Goulding, University of Nottingham
Lucy Jordan, University of Hong Kong
Ramanathan S, Development Solutions Inc.
Moderator: Abigail Long, U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

16:40 **Round up and next steps**

17:20 Evaluation survey

17:30 Close

Summary of discussion

The Freedom Fund's technical convening - titled 'Methodologies for measuring the prevalence of modern slavery' - took place in London on 6th to 7th June 2019. The event brought together leading researchers, government representatives and funders to discuss the methods and challenges of measuring child exploitation, forced labour, debt bondage, commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage. Through a series of panel and group discussions, the convening sought to build consensus on future directions for the field, and to encourage collaboration, cross-pollination and sharing of expertise. This report summarises those discussions but does not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

Research priorities

Building on existing efforts to measure modern slavery

- **Global efforts:** Research today on forced labour and exploitation builds on the work of international projects such as the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery. Conducted by the ILO and the Walk Free Foundation, the Global Estimates focused international attention on the **40.3 million people** in conditions of modern slavery today, including approximately 24.9 million people in forced labour and 15 million in forced marriage.
- **National efforts:** The Global Estimates are supported and strengthened by numerous national efforts by countries around the world to measure forms of modern slavery, through use of **census data** as well as techniques such as **labour force surveys**.

Understudied topics

- **Sectoral estimates:** Participants highlighted the need for sectoral based research into forced labour, to elucidate the different **scales, forms and mechanisms** of exploitation in **different industries**.
- **Children in institutions:** The exploitation of **children in institutions** (educational, correctional, religious) is not captured by common techniques such as household surveys. Commitment is needed in developing research to better identify this population.
- **Transient populations:** Participants across multiple sectors highlighted the importance of investigating **migrant populations**. Although research can be time, resource and expertise intensive, it is essential to invest in, as migrant communities are often **excluded from state and local protections** against exploitation and experience compounded risks.
- **Long-term needs of survivors:** More work needs to be done on the **long-term needs** of people in, and exiting, exploitation. Research should focus on **long-term effects** of exploitation as well as **building resilience to re-exploitation**.
- **Decision making of people in exploitation:** People identified as being in exploitative situations may not always accept assistance in leaving them. A better understanding is needed of the **motivations** and **profiles** of individuals that refuse interventions versus those that accept, as well as the long-term effects of those decisions.

Refining measures of modern slavery

- **Aligning global definitions, national/legal frameworks and community perspectives:** Research definitions of modern slavery should be **harmonised** with **international standards** (such as the Palermo Protocol) **and national laws** on worst forms of child labour and forced marriage, as well as with **community perceptions** of harmful/non harmful practices. This would allow greater relevance of measures to inform policies and programming.
- **Building on national estimates:** Anti-slavery efforts would benefit from building on national prevalence estimates with more refined geographic estimates.
- **Longitudinal measures:** Research programs are needed to capture not only individuals' current experience of exploitation, but measures of **exploitation across their lives**. This could more fully describe the often-transient **cycles of exploitation** in which people are caught.
- **Building on exposure:** In addition to measuring individuals' exposure to exploitative situations and loss of liberty, it is also important to commit research to uncovering the **determinants** of different forms of slavery. Similarly, it is essential to understand the **varied risks** of exploitation that different populations are exposed to. Research should also investigate the **physical and mental harm** that exploitative practices cause to people's lives.
- **Profile of exploitation:** Research could also investigate the **spectrum** of exploitative practices resulting from modern slavery. Identifying the **worst forms** of exploitation, as well as the **most commonplace** and the **most chronic** forms could disentangle the negative impacts of each form on the well-being of affected communities.

Common challenges with prevalence research

Funding new research

- **Funding for understudied topics:** Participants noted that **existing evidence** is often needed in order to secure funding for **novel research** in understudied topics, which can create a 'chicken and egg' situation.
- **Funder priorities:** Research directions can also be shaped by the different **priorities** and **constraints** inherent to various types of funders, especially when taking risks or developing new methods.
- **Government priorities:** Government bodies often invest in projects with **direct policy and programmatic relevance**, however there are increasing opportunities for governments to fund **pilot measurement processes** and ensure greater effectiveness of research.
- **Philanthropy priorities:** Philanthropy funding is often **flexible** in the topics it covers, but may also be averse to projects without an **immediate practical output**. There are considerable opportunities for philanthropic funding to commit to **longer term programs** and **longitudinal research**, to maximise impact.
- **Securing support for longitudinal research:** Participants voiced concern at the general low level of **long-term research** in the sector, often reflecting the aversion of funding bodies to engaging in longitudinal projects.

Methodological hurdles

- **Comparisons over time:** As methods improve over time, issues can emerge in comparing previously collected data. For pre-post interventions, **definitions** of exposures may change between **baseline** and **endline**. Likewise, new techniques may not be **directly comparable** to previous **cruder estimates**. Comparing point prevalence of modern slavery at different timepoints may not accurately capture underlying trends or an intervention's effect.
- **Intervention effect of research:** Carrying out research can itself **raise awareness** in studied communities to issues of exploitation. This can affect methods such as Network Scale Up Method (NSUM) which require participants to identify levels of exploitation in their community. As awareness grows, NSUM estimations may capture **perceived rather than real changes** in exploitation over time.
- **Self-identification and non-disclosure:** Individuals in exploitative situations may **not define themselves** as so, either to avoid self-disclosure or if research definitions do not feel applicable to them. Creating indicators of exploitation can help overcome this, however indicators require **community input and buy-in** to ensure situational relevancy.
- **Reactive exploitative systems:** Participants highlighted that exploitative systems can be **highly reactive to interventions**. Focusing on reducing exploitative practices in one area of an industry may **shift those practices to less regulated areas**. Regulating international garment production may shift exploitative practices to national production chains. Empowering local communities to reject exploitative employment may lead for those roles to be filled by **less organised groups** e.g. seasonal workers.

Ethical considerations in prevalence research

Developing responsible research plans

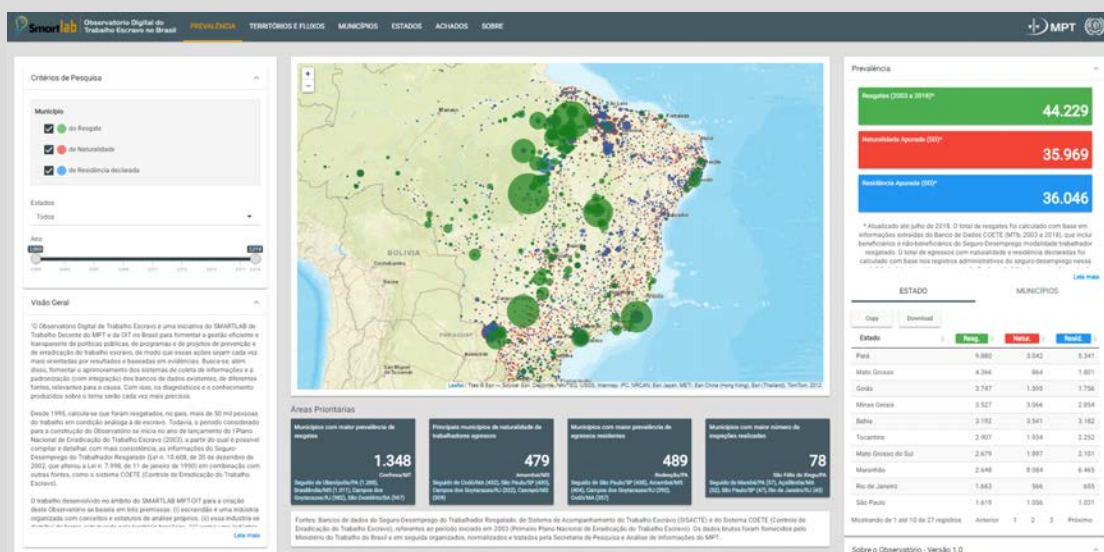
- **Safeguarding of individuals and communities in studies:** Participants shared best practices for conscientious research. Research plans should consider the possible negative impacts of projects on studied individuals and communities. Planning should aim to mitigate risks for participants of **re-traumatisation**; be aware of possible **stigmatisation** for participating individuals and communities; and ensure research projects avoid **identifying or exposing** vulnerable and marginalised communities to persecution and violence.
- **Safeguarding of research staff:** Research plans must also ensure the safety of **frontline staff** and data collectors. Planning should identify and mitigate possible **risks to staff of violence**, and reduce **risks of secondary trauma** through data collection, as well as planning for ongoing support of staff.
- **Maximising benefits of research:** Participants highlighted the need for research projects to secure community, as well as individual, **consent** to research. Communities can also positively influence research through **co-creation** of studies. Research should also aim to **follow up** with studied individuals, to ensure that no lasting harm had been created through participation, and to direct survivors of exploitation to care resources. Finally, researchers highlighted the need to **feedback knowledge** generated by research back to **communities** from whom the information was gathered, so that the process is not extractive.

Improving accountability

- **Current mechanisms:** Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) often provide ethical oversight for research projects. However, their processes often **lack transparency** and may suffer from **conflicts of interest**. Academic IRBs may privilege protection of the institution above other factors, and government IRB decisions may be tied to current political goals.
- **Need for better mechanisms:** IRBs require a high degree of both **situational** and **methodological expertise** in order to fully identify gaps in research planning.
- **Possible solutions:** To remedy this, participants suggested **building capacity of local review boards**, who would have high situational expertise, or creating **dedicated IRBs** for the field of modern slavery, which may have greater theoretical and methodological input.

Case study: Brazil

Luis Fabiano de Assis, from the Federal Labor Prosecution Office Brazil, presented on the integration of multiple government databases for prevalence estimation of trafficking in Brazil. Data was pulled together from different criminal data sources (judiciary, prosecution, police) and from different levels (municipalities and census blocks), using ILO guidelines to make output comparable. Both time series and cross-sectional data were included and integrated with state demographic information to create a central data observatory, providing trafficking data to stakeholders. This allowed the mapping of national and international migratory routes, policy redesign of anti-trafficking programs, and media engagement. The databases were at their most effective when brought together, and this was accomplished through a legal framework of freedom of information and transparency of public data.



Promising methodologies to measure prevalence in hidden populations

Participants compared methods that may aid in the identification of populations affected by different forms of modern slavery.

- **Multiple Systems Estimation (MSE):** MSE integrates data from a wide range of sources to identify populations in exploitation e.g. people being trafficked. It aids in the investigation of less-visible populations and can assess what proportion of these populations are being reached by state or civil society interventions, and what proportions are hidden to service providers. However, MSE is most effective in smaller countries with centralised referral bases, and less suited to larger countries or those with less robust data systems.
- **Network Scale Up Method (NSUM):** In NSUM, participants are asked to estimate how many people they know in the target population e.g. how many people do you know in bonded labour. This is then adjusted to the size of the participant's network to estimate the size of the target population. NSUM is **less resource intensive** than other methods and can be served by **online platforms** (like Facebook). However, it can be influenced by recall and social desirability bias.
- **Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS):** RDS uses networks of participants to recruit further participants from **less visible populations**. However, since this a passive recruitment process, control of sampling is limited and can be constrained by unseen **geographical or social boundaries** of networks. It can be combined with **capture/recapture** or **time-space sampling** methods to produce more statistically robust population estimates.
- **Hybridisation:** Through combining methodologies, it may be possible to overcome their **respective weaknesses**. For example, RDS could be combined with probability sampling as well as link tracing network sampling to increase control of sampling and overcome geographical boundaries. NSUM may also be nested within RDS to increase its spread to relevant populations.
- **Comparing methodologies:** Participants recommended carrying out **comparison studies** of different methods of population estimation in **known populations**, in order to investigate their suitability of application in different situations.
- **Technological solutions:** Participants shared experiences of utilising technological solutions to facilitate research. **Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)** allows surveys to be self-administered among low-literacy populations, this has the potential to reduce non-disclosure and other biases commonly observed in modern slavery research. There was also a discussion of the use of **artificial intelligence techniques** for geographic mapping of hidden populations. However, researchers highlighted that technological advances are only as good as the research methods and contextual knowledge underlying them.

Building sustainability of prevalence research

- **Government commitment to data collection:** High quality routine local and state data are essential for ongoing research and require **investment** in order to build capacity. Government ownership and commitment to data processes can also contribute to **sustainability of reporting practices**. The research community must incentivise governments to strengthen data sources. This can be done by framing current deficits in quality data and reporting as impacting **resource allocation**. Likewise, quality data can **streamline provision of services** and lead to evidence-based policy formulation. Internal government structures (departments, agencies) should likewise be prompted to **share data** for better provision of care to exploited populations.
- **Supporting community-led research:** Likewise, collection of data in hidden populations requires **collaboration of local communities**. By embedding a central role for communities in data collection and analysis, reporting is more likely to be trusted and research may be more sustainable.
- **Multi-stakeholder approach:** As local entities may be complicit in maintenance of exploitative processes; it is essential to use multi-stakeholder approaches in order to find **common ground between actors** and protect against the counterproductive actions of any one.

Strengthening collaboration

- **Sharing knowledge and resources:** To continue to untangle the causes and effects of child exploitation, forced labour, debt bondage, commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage, we must commit to sharing knowledge and resources. Through collaboration, researchers can **avoid duplication, refine methodologies** and learn from each other's **best practices** and maximise the impact of our work. One suggested forum for this is the **Monitoring & Evaluation of Trafficking in Persons (METIP)** group, where researchers can share expertise through regular virtual meetings and online discussions. To join METIP listserv please contact [metip-steering \[at\] googlegroups.com](mailto:metip-steering@googlegroups.com) .
- **Adoption of standardised measures and tools:** Through adoption of standardised measures, we can ensure that research output is **comparable** and **more easily integrated**. Tools such as the ILO's *Guidelines Concerning the Measurement of Forced Labour* set out an agenda for harmonising measures.
- **Ensuring diverse community of stakeholders:** We must also commit to including survivors and their communities into research development and analysis, in order to best use their **lived experiences**.
- **Future convenings:** Participants shared that future meetings in the sector should aim to have more discussion of **qualitative** and mixed methods, be dedicated to amplifying a **greater diversity of voices** within the field, and allocate time for more in-depth discussions.
- **Sharing failures:** Lastly, as researchers we must be willing to share **our failures and missteps**. This allows our community to learn which practices work and which don't, so we can continue to build on each other's work and improve the **credibility** and **real-world impact** of modern slavery research.

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Cover image: ILO Asia-Pacific, 2013