

# Unveiling consistency in the use of standard terminology: a study of international anti-slavery policy and programming in Africa

November 2023

Author: Benedetta Wasonga, Regional Consultant, Africa



Research hosted by:

## Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a study examining the use of standardised terminology, concepts, and definitions in the fight against modern slavery in Africa. The study is intended to encourage policymakers, donor funders, NGOs, and regional and international organisations to reconsider the use of existing terminologies and/or adopt new terminologies, concepts, and definitions related to the phenomena covered by Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7. It advocates doing so in partnership with People with Lived Experience (PWLE) and communities most affected by modern slavery.

The study involved research with various stakeholders to explore the use of terminology in addressing SDG 8.7, its impact on survivor engagement, and to understand what contributes to or inhibits the effectiveness of these terminologies in policy and programming. The analysis covers key areas of concern for policy and programming about what is referred to as human trafficking and modern slavery within the domains of media, development, and policy. Furthermore, it provides an overarching framework of considerations and approaches in designing, implementing, and evaluating policies and programs related to human trafficking and modern slavery to address emerging exploitation forms often excluded from standard definitions.

The findings reveal that, while forced and child labour are identified and understood as exploitation, the broader concepts of human trafficking and modern slavery have been less well recognised. The term 'modern slavery' appears to be used as a symbolic rather than substantive notion. More recently, there has been a tendency to use 'modern slavery' as an umbrella term to capture all these forms of coercion. It is an emotive term, and it has caused much debate regarding what is covered. While human trafficking, slavery, and forced labour are all defined in international legal instruments, which have enjoyed a high level of ratification, the term 'modern slavery' is not defined in international law.

The lack of standardised or adequate terminologies explaining or justifying the use of 'modern slavery' at the national and regional levels is identified as one of the major obstacles in the fight against exploitation.

There is an understandable desire to harmonise definitions, concepts, and terminologies to develop procedures and cooperation at the national and regional levels in accordance with international standards. However, this should be done while integrating ideas from People with Lived Experiences, as well as incorporating all forms of exploitation, including those that have emerged or are left out. Developing appropriate guidelines for PLWE that are consistent with relevant regional and international instruments and standards will also play an important role in preventing exploitation through survivor engagement in policy and programming. Meaningful inclusion of survivors in all stages of policy and programming design, implementation, and evaluation is emphasised. If there is a lack of proper definitions guided by the PWLE, we tend to lose the key aspect of survivor engagement and programmatic decisions by policymakers and donor funders based on evidence.

## Acknowledgement

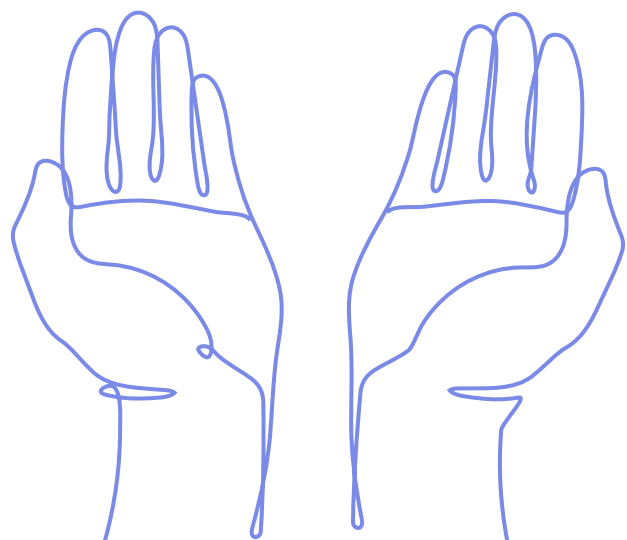
The author wishes to express her deepest gratitude to all those who gave her the opportunity to complete this research.

She acknowledges, with great appreciation, the crucial role of the research participants – Dr. Alemaheyu Ragassa from the University of Addis-Ababa, Ms. Dora, a gender specialist from Kenya, and Ms. Frida Baiye, the Executive Director for Blessed Associates for Women and Children Cameroon – who allowed her to complete this research work. Special thanks go to the African Union, BBC Tunisia, ILO Somalia, UNICEF Zimbabwe, and Comoros Judiciary, who helped provide the data for this project.

The author is especially grateful to Dr. Allen Kiconco and Prof. Alex Balch for their project leadership and support in stimulating suggestions, guidance, and encouragement, which helped the author coordinate the project, especially in writing this report.

Other contributors of the project, including Ling Li, Sutirtha Sahariah, Chris Ash, Ake Achi, Azadi Kenya team, and Adam Burns, deserve many thanks for their comments and advice. This network provided a collaborative space for learning and relearning the dynamics of modern slavery survivor engagement.

This project was funded by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC), which in turn is funded and supported by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily of the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre or the Arts and Humanities Research Council.



## Introduction

This project explores ways to involve People with Lived Experience (PWLE) in modern slavery policy and programming. It builds on previous research identifying promising practices for meaningful engagement that highlight issues around terminology such as 'human trafficking' and 'modern slavery'.<sup>1</sup> A common frustration was the lack of standardised definitions that did not speak to communities most affected by these issues.

This study examined three key terms in the anti-slavery and anti-trafficking movement: survivor engagement, modern slavery, and trafficking. While international agreements, treaties, and national legislation have attempted to define these terms, the absence of a victim-centred definition of human trafficking and modern slavery is notable. Moreover, the term 'survivor' is often disregarded in favour of the term 'victim', which is more commonly used by government departments, investment institutions, and multilateral organisations. On the other hand, civil society and NGOs tend to avoid these terms and use less demeaning and more understandable language that resonates with survivors at the grassroots level.

Describing and defining exploitation is difficult to separate from politics because survivor engagement, slavery, and human trafficking are tied to power relations and geographical locations. Different interpretations of these terms exist, and their meanings are shaped by the goals and desired outcomes of those using them. A key finding from previous research was a lack of cognition among policymakers and survivor leaders on the use and uptake of standardised terminologies and given definitions by practitioners in addressing exploitation.

This study examines the understanding, inconsistencies, and differing usage of terminologies and the relevance of standardised and/or harmonised terminology. The focus is primarily on forms of exploitation linked to UN SDG 8.7, but the study covers various others. The aim is to identify and reveal the underlying tensions between international, regional, and local understandings of the standard concepts, definitions, and terminologies, and how stakeholders negotiate and navigate these tensions to carry out their work, particularly in the African context.

The study had three objectives: to deepen understanding of the usage and interpretation of terminologies and definitions for professionals and experts, including those with lived experience; to identify the effects of using or not using standard definitions, concepts, and terminologies to address issues related to modern slavery and human trafficking; and to explore how to arrive at more meaningful and sustainable use of terminologies and definitions that are contextualised, comprehended, and appropriate for general purpose through the inclusion of survivors in the development of policies and programs.

---

1. Wendy Asquith, Allen Kiconco, and Alex Balch, *A review of current promising practices in the engagement of people with lived experience to address modern slavery and human trafficking* (London: Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre, 2022). Available at: <https://modernslaverypec.org/resources/best-practice-engagement-lived-experience>.

The study adopted a broad perspective, encompassing various policy domains and initiatives relevant to addressing human trafficking and modern slavery in six African countries. Although areas of action can be organised under different policy domains, the boundaries between them are often blurred. Particular actions may cross multiple domains or sit outside them, with different implications during the various stages of the project cycle and beyond at the strategic level.

## Research methodology

Interview respondents in this study were drawn from a range of key stakeholder groups, including the media, international organisations, government, education sector, and civil society organisations. The participants had experience working on the issues of human trafficking and modern slavery at the national, regional, and international levels. This helped ensure a thorough breadth and diversity of perspectives on core research questions. However, the number of interviews conducted within the study was limited by project timeframes, which reduced the strength and generalisability of the conclusions obtained from these interviews. Further research seeking responses from a wider cross-section of stakeholders would strengthen the evidence base and supplement the conclusions of this study.

The interviews included participants from human trafficking 'hot spots' on the African Continent, specifically Rwanda, Comoros, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Somalia, and Tunisia. Requests for interviews resulted in positive responses from six participants: three males and three females between the ages of 25 and 56. One participant was in policy design and formulation in government, four were in intergovernmental organisations, and one was in the media at the time of the study.

The demographics of the respondents paint a picture of professionals with multiple roles and responsibilities, including directors, managers, and heads of departments. The most common areas of exploitation covered by their work were as follows:

- Worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers<sup>2</sup>
- Child labour, including domestic servitude.
- Trafficking men and women into prostitution, marriage, forced labour, and bonded slavery.

Accessing, recruiting, and interviewing participants were obtained from the author's professional network. Participants were eager to be interviewed. However, they requested anonymity to protect themselves from potential harm at work and within society from which they came.

---

2. See [Convention C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No. 182\) \(ilo.org\)](#)

The interview process happened smoothly via zoom, phone calls, and face-to-face interviews. This semi-structured interview method was selected because it uses broad open-ended questions, inviting participants to respond freely across a wide range of answers. Overall, this method enabled participants to engage effectively with the objectives and aims of the study.

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed later. The respondents were provided with an opportunity to review and revise their responses prior to the analysis.

The diversity and breadth of the participants in this study provided a well-rounded overall picture of the use and application of terminologies by various like-minded stakeholders in Africa. However, the qualitative approach and small sample size did not provide a representative or overarching picture of the usage and application of terminologies in the region. This was partly mitigated by selecting participants from a wider geographical area. However, further research on the effectiveness of standardised or global terminologies at a larger scale would be useful to strengthen the evidence.



## Key findings

### Differing terminologies, concepts and definitions

A core concern among those interviewed was the way in which the International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards define 'forced labour', as 'all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.'<sup>3</sup> In contrast, other international instruments define Trafficking in Persons, also known as human trafficking, as

*[T]he recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control of another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*<sup>4</sup>

International Organisations describe modern slavery as when a person is exploited for personal or commercial gain, including human trafficking, forced labour, and debt bondage, resulting in the loss of freedom.<sup>5</sup> The study participants observed that these terms were defined or described despite a significant overlap in the phenomena they were addressing. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), forced labour includes various practices. Indeed, it includes:

*Traditional practices of forced labour, such as vestiges of slavery or slave-like practices, and various forms of debt bondage, as well as new forms of forced labour that have emerged in recent decades, such as "human trafficking," also called "modern-slavery" to shed light on working and living conditions contrary to human dignity.*<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the issue is how a standardised definition can be obtained. As one participant stated:

---

3. [Convention C029 – Forced Labour Convention, 1930 \(No. 29\) \(ilo.org\)](#)

4. See UN (2000). Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.

5. For example, [What is modern slavery? | Anti-Slavery International \(antislavery.org\)](#)

6. [What is forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking \(Forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking\) \(ilo.org\)](#)

*The problem arises when collaborating with other organisations whose definitions tend to differ from the ILO international definitions, while others tend to use their own definitions that resonate with the victims. For example, most NGOs rely on the definitions provided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, which has left out some forms of exploitation, such as organ harvesting. (Head of Department, International Organisation, Rwanda).*

Besides the ambiguity surrounding the usage of the term 'modern or contemporary forms of slavery,' it was also affirmed that there is no recognised legal definition for other commonly referenced terms like 'exploitation.' Participants reported that considerable confusion prevailed around the precise meanings and 'boundaries' of forced labour, human trafficking, and 'modern slavery', as well as their extent of overlap. Also, there remains uncertainties over terms where there is indeed a formal and legal distinction, such as between the terms 'smuggling' and 'trafficking'.

This muddle of definitions is not helpful for anyone, at least for people whose lives are affected by severe forms of abuse and exploitation. As stated by one participant, 'the focus should be abolishing slavery and do away with it. This idea of it being modern or not should not arise. Let us apply the correct terminology, concepts, and definitions that cut across as a global problem.' (Head of Department-International Organisation, Comoros).

Interviewees suggested that a consolidated definition would be helpful in initiating discussions. One proposed consolidated definition was 'Enslaved Person', offered by the Head of the Department of International Organisation in Somalia. 'Slavery' was preferred by almost all participants, and a desire to unlink human trafficking from slavery was expressed. Thus, 'slavery and trafficking are two experiences with similarities and should not be conflated.' (Head of Department, International Organisation, Zimbabwe).

Another issue surrounding the term 'modern slavery' is that historical slavery never ended. It has evolved and changed to fit the exploitation of times. As stated by one of the participants, the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution, which abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, made an exception concerning punishment for crime and was intentionally created to ensure a free workforce. Therefore, 'To say "modern-day slavery" is to ignore the continuation of historical slavery into this century and today. This existed back then and has continued today.' (Government Officer, Comoros).

Despite the consensus among the participants to have harmonised terminology, they disagreed with the form it would take. The application of terminology depends on the situation and the context in which they find themselves. Interviews suggested that policymakers should reconsider their approach to the externalisation of terminologies as it yields serious problems in terms of the protection of survivors and engagement of survivor leaders in Africa, as well as prevention of slavery. These problems include the exclusion of survivors in policymaking and programming,



the formulation of ineffective intervention programmes, and non-compliance with globally accepted norms of protection and prevention based on survivor engagement. Instead of relying solely on textbook definitions, policymakers should seek alternative policy guidelines regarding terminology to tackle slavery. These policies should be formulated inclusively with survivors, ensuring more protection for those in vulnerable situations, and using language that resonates well with their experiences and perspectives.

The consultations conducted for this study propose working with local stakeholders and survivor leaders in hotspot areas for these initiatives. This approach involves gathering 'on-field', context-specific practices for effective interventions. It would also identify potential roles for survivors in the formulation of implementing policies and programmes that may also include frontline workers such as storytellers, advisors, grantee partners, and staff.

The participants expressed the view that the terms 'human trafficking' and 'modern slavery' require further definitions of their function, intent, and scope. Otherwise, there is a risk of losing the connection between the terms and their underlying purpose. One participant expressed the following:

*[An] enslaved person emphasises an individual's humanity within a slave-holding society over their condition of involuntary servitude. While slavery was a defining aspect of an individual's life experience, this term [...] clarifies that humanity was at the centre of identity while also recognising that this person was forcibly placed into the condition of slavery by another person or group. (Head of Department, International Organisation, Somalia).*

The study's findings postulate that specific terminology should be limited to a set of scope(s) within which specific objectives are pursued. Doing so allows for discussions around relevance and appropriateness; one or more objectives can be assigned to a term. This makes terminology an invaluable asset for combating modern slavery.

## The concept of modern slavery and related challenges

A range of different practices is covered under the umbrella of modern slavery, with no established international definition and varying approaches in law, policy, practice, and research. This results in significant deviation in what is 'counted' as modern slavery in different contexts, presenting challenges for harmonising the work of different actors, including survivors and for comparability of data. A lack of consensus manifests as clashes over the interpretation and definition of different practices. It also inhibits action, shifting attention and energy from efforts to address exploitation.

These debates occur not only in discussions of 'modern slavery' but also in relation to specific exploitations like human trafficking, serfdom,<sup>7</sup> servitude, and practices like slavery. As one of the participants emphasised, 'There is no single globally agreed definition of modern slavery. This makes us lean more on the terminologies provided by the donor funders or sponsoring organisations' (Director NGO, Cameroon). Another participant believed that the differences in terminology in the country context present a challenge in policy and programming, factoring in the age of survivors as to whether they are youth or adults in terms of protection. Thus, 'In some areas, youth start from 15 years and some 18 years, 22 years, means the beginning of youth 29 years it [be]comes adults. These variations can influence your work' (Education Specialist, Ethiopia). Moreover, terminologies and conceptualisations are often foreign and contextualised. Consider the following reflections.

*Terminologies [that] are given by donor funders or sponsoring organisations: You [will] find that these organisations might have [a] specific agenda or priorities that influence the terminologies that they promote, and this can shape the focus of the policy and the programming efforts and overlook certain forms of exploitation and biases on how modern slavery is understood (Gender Specialist-Kenya).*

For example, Somalia does not have legislation prohibiting child trafficking or the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The same applies to Cameroon and Comoros, which have no legislation prohibiting child trafficking. Zimbabwe has no law prohibiting forced labour. This kind of challenge creates a vulnerability for actors to decide on the terminologies to use, especially for those countries that do not have legislation concerning any forms of 'modern slavery' and human trafficking. This lack of consensus is problematic for survivors, as it leaves them at the mercy of the government in which they find themselves. In some countries, protection will be offered, while others do not.

7. The United Nations defines serfdom as a form of servile labour that binds a person by law, custom or agreement to work on land that belongs to someone else. The labourer's inability to change status makes this a form of slavery.

Essentially, this issue blocks survivor leadership in the anti-slavery movement. For example, one participant brought forth the issue of slavery by diplomatic mission staff. Diplomats are typically protected from criminal charges and civil cases in their posted countries. The exploitation of migrant domestic workers by foreign diplomats is a significant problem, raising the following question: Has it been captured in human trafficking and modern slavery?

The issue of foreign policy to combat trafficking was also highlighted in the interviews, with participants calling for foreign and financial policies to support, prevent, or protect them from being trafficked in the first place.

*Consider, for example, domestic servitude. It is a pure form of slavery, yet not captured in all definitions, depending on the location. Are you aware that we have slavery in most embassies with victims who work for international staff as domestic servants? (Head of Department, International Organisation, Zimbabwe).*

During the discussion, another participant from Ethiopia echoed similar sentiments, expressing support for the notion that individuals ought to receive assistance within their native regions as a means to deter migration. This perspective highlights the significance of addressing the root causes of migration and fostering self-sufficiency in local contexts.

## Trafficking and slavery as two separate concepts

It emerged from interviews that the conflation of human trafficking with the concept or definition of 'modern slavery' is confusing and does not rightly connote its meaning. Participants were of the view that the two terms should be separated with a focus on complementing one another.

*Trafficking occurs first before slavery. The victim is first trafficked, which is the process, and then placed in servitude and slavery. Trafficking should be defined on its own as the process of moving the victims and then slavery, which is the exploitation that includes forced labour and sexual exploitation. (Media Personality, Tunisia).*

The trafficking definition includes multiple parts, but the word itself implies cross-border movement. There are instances where such a definition is not necessary as 'harbouring' or 'recruiting' can occur without cross-border movement. Such a distinction is not straightforward for nonexperts.

While discussing trafficking in persons, the issue of whether the two terms resonated with practitioners arose. When consultations first began with stakeholders for this study, it was intended to use modern slavery as an umbrella term for human trafficking. However, it emerged that the two terms were applied hand-in-hand to indicate two different issues that marry each other. These three examples help to explain this point.

*Trafficking involves moving a human being, whether dead or alive, from one location to another. This is followed by slavery. Therefore, in my opinion, trafficking occurs before slavery. You traffic or smuggle and then enslave. (Media personality, Tunisia).*

*Slavery and trafficking are two very different words with different meanings that complement one another. Split the two. Trafficking and slavery. Slavery and trafficking are similar experiences and should not be conflated. (Head of the International Organization, Zimbabwe).*

*I define slavery as the act of owning slaves the way our slave masters did and de-linking it from trafficking, which includes moving a human being from one point to the next for criminal activities. (Head of Department, International Organisation, Rwanda).*

Such examples demonstrate the necessity and urgency for national and regional harmonisation of terminologies with international terms and concepts, and the adoption of missing forms of exploitation. Indeed, 'every country has its own laws and regulations regarding human trafficking and slavery. Some do not. It is important that they are harmonised since it is a global conundrum' (Head of Department, International Organization, Rwanda). This can only happen when policymakers recognise the disparities in power between themselves and those with lived experience. Consider the following reflections.

*There is an urgent need to work collaboratively to share power by ensuring individuals with lived experience not only have a seat at the table but also can meaningfully contribute to decision-making throughout the full programme['s] life cycle as well as compensation of people with lived experience for their contributions at a level that is at least commensurate with compensation provided to other experts. (Head of Department, International Organization Rwanda).*

Some participants viewed the terms as synonymous, whereas others argued that important differences existed. For example, slavery represents the extreme end of the human exploitation continuum. Human trafficking is inextricably linked to the increased vulnerability of people subjected to poverty, corruption, and inequalities and the need for concerted efforts to address this issue.

*Trafficking is more than a technical problem that can be solved by trained professionals working quietly behind scenes. Because slavery has many root causes such as poverty, corruption, and gender inequality, political will is needed to implement many solutions. (Media Personality, Tunisia).*

Thus, it is necessary to distinguish it from 'non-trafficked' forced labour or smuggling. Establishing clear operational definitions would seek to identify common elements that cut across all relevant phenomena and concepts while omitting those that are not.

To develop a universal standard, participants agreed upon the necessity of establishing an agreed-upon statistical or 'operational' definition. This participant further explained that: 'it will bring about global compliance. All stakeholders apply standard concepts in the fight against slavery, as it is a global problem. It will seal loopholes' (Head of Department, International Organisation, Comoros).

An important consideration is what would be the most useful approach to defining these terms? Should the definitions distinguish between different applications and meanings when applied to the context? What would be most helpful in stimulating effective policy response? Evidence evaluating the impacts of the two concepts is mixed, with different levels of evidence for different stakeholders. Overall, there is a specific consideration of impacts on survivor engagement in policy and programming where trafficking (rather than modern slavery) is more substantively used.

## Implications for addressing SDG 8.7

The findings strongly reveal the inconsistent use of terminology, which could relate to differing responses, legislation, and understandings of the same issue. The absence of an international agreement on related approaches and policies to operationalise these terms has impacted the global fight to eradicate human trafficking and modern slavery. The levels of protection afforded to survivors at the national level are inconsistent; identification of different methods of exploitation and abuse suffers from inaccuracy and imprecision, communication of information between international stakeholders can be misunderstood, and advocacy work is undermined by confusion in the use of language and terms. One participant explained this as follows.

*The ongoing debate over the term 'child pornography' is a prime example; it is rejected by many law enforcement agencies and the international child protection community on the basis that it is not a victim-centred language and can inadvertently legitimise child sexual abuse material by using the term pornography. (Judicial officer, Comoros).*

Some ambiguities can also be linked to important contextual factors, such as cultural and religious beliefs, affecting application at the community level, which may be inconsistent with legal terms. For example, one participant stated that some parents offer their children for exploitation as debt bondage but insisted that it is not in any way a form of exploitation: 'The gaps in the concepts and terminologies in Cameroon is something that we need to work on because of [the] cultur[al] and religious background[s] of some communities.' (Director, NGO Cameroon).

This ambiguity is further enlarged when terms are used interchangeably or when the distinction between them is not clearly defined. This causes challenges in developing targeted services for victims and survivors of exploitation; 'when the terminologies overlap or are imprecise, it becomes difficult to identify and provide specialised support to survivors who have experienced coercion and exploitation within a forced marriage context' (Gender Specialist, Kenya).

However, evidence of the specific impact of this ambiguity is not comprehensive. Therefore, policymakers should initiate stakeholder engagement efforts and consider expanding engagement with survivors and survivor-led organisations to clarify the ambiguity of terminologies to enhance clear communication and advocacy work. Similarly, this confusion and overlap of terminologies could potentially exclude survivors who may not identify with the definitions used and, therefore, refrain from engaging in policy formulation and programme participation.

## Conclusion and recommendation

The findings of this study suggest that the complexity of standardised definitions and ambiguous terminologies has hindered efforts to address human trafficking and modern slavery. The study discussed the challenges faced by practitioners in applying concepts and definitions while also indicating some ways forward. Greater clarity on the use of universally agreed terminology related to modern slavery and human trafficking would enable information and ideas to be communicated rapidly and legibly among all stakeholders. Given the absence of robust engagement frameworks among countries, African policymakers and programmers can gather good practices and experiences. This, in turn, could help develop guidelines on how to support the application of terminologies within the continent through engagement frameworks that are consistent with relevant international instruments. There should be a new regional initiative to establish the local interpretation and use of terms, since regional initiatives have thus far failed to address this matter.

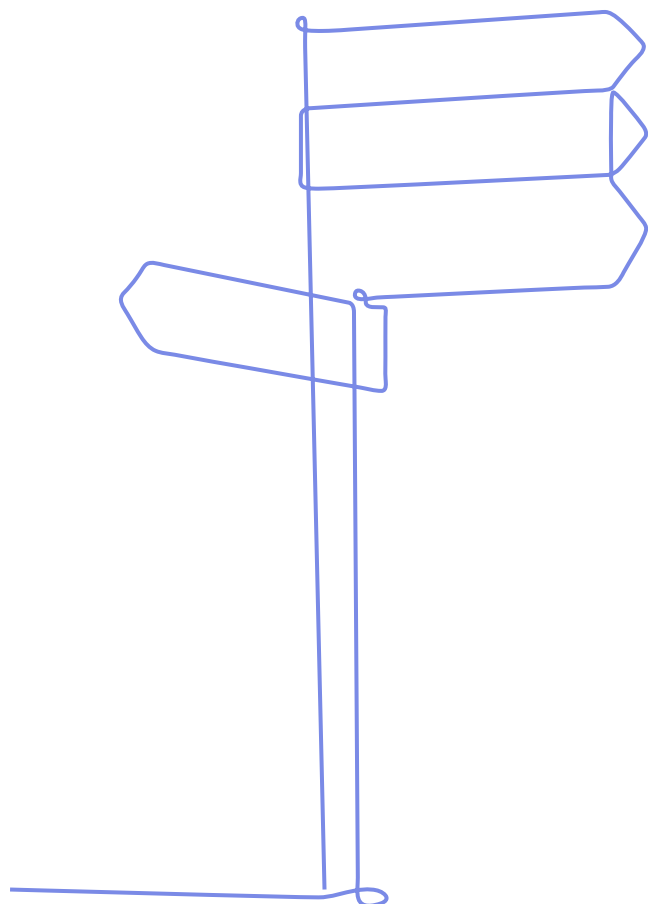
States and regional organisations should consider amending or adopting national legislation in accordance with international standards. This should clearly explain the exact implementation of these standards within national legislation, so that detailed guidance can be provided for policymaking and programme execution. A more comprehensive list of practices covered by these definitions, such as debt bondage, child fostering, forced labour, and enforced prostitution, should also be defined. Standardising definitions can improve the consistency of statistical information collection. Currently, the term 'human trafficking' overlaps with 'modern slavery' under common definitions. However, for a better understanding and ease of use by survivor leaders and professionals in the anti-trafficking movement, it would make sense to separate the two terms and avoid merging them to form one meaning.

This research indicates a need to commission larger-scale research on the effective and ethical use of standardised terminologies to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking. This would greatly benefit the policy community, be useful to donor institutions, and contribute to the agenda led by universities and research institutions by identifying the roles of PWLE in formulating and implementing policies and programmes through storytellers, advisors, grantees, partners, and staff. In committees and boards, lived experience experts could serve as advisors for initiatives that develop national programmes, policy recommendations, and capacity-building efforts.

States and regional organisations should consider amending or adopting national legislation in accordance with international standards and clarifying how these should be applied. This would ensure that the terms are precisely defined in national law, and detailed guidance is provided for policy and programming. A more comprehensive list of practices covered by these definitions, such as debt bondage, child fostering, forced labour, and enforced prostitution, should also be defined. This standardised the collection of statistical information.

Furthermore, this research initiated the elaboration of existing terminologies and the adoption of new terminologies, concepts, and definitions relating to human trafficking and modern slavery which resonate with PWLE and affected communities. This would involve recognising and examining disparities in power that exist among policymakers and individuals with lived experiences. The research shows that working collaboratively to share power is essential, by ensuring that individuals with lived experience have a seat at the table and can meaningfully contribute to decision-making throughout the programme's life cycle.

Finally, there are many ways to integrate PWLE perspectives in programming and policymaking. While asking people with lived experiences to speak at events can be important, meaningful engagement is intentional. Ideally, it provides opportunities for those with lived experiences to substantively impact decision-making and outcomes. Policymaking and programme initiatives should involve people with lived experience from the beginning of the engagement, (e.g., identifying programmatic or policy goals and providing opportunities to them as partners rather than only soliciting minor input after work is nearly complete.) It is also essential to compensate PWLE for their contributions at a level that is commensurate with compensation provided to other experts.





# MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS

POLICY &  
EVIDENCE  
CENTRE

Led by the Bingham Centre

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) was created by the investment of public funding to enhance understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of law and policies designed to address it. The Centre funds and co-creates high quality research with a focus on policy impact, and brings together academics, policymakers, businesses, civil society, survivors and the public on a scale not seen before in the UK to collaborate on solving this global challenge.

The Centre is a consortium of six academic organisations led by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and is funded by the Art and Humanities Research Council on behalf of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

Our partners:



The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre is funded and actively supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), from the Strategic Priorities Fund.

Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre  
c/o British Institute of International and Comparative Law  
Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5JP

A company limited by guarantee  
Registered in England No. 615025  
Registered Charity No. 209425

[office@modernslaverypec.org](mailto:office@modernslaverypec.org)

[www.modernslaverypec.org](http://www.modernslaverypec.org)