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# SYMPOSIUM: LOCAL APPROACHES TO MODERN SLAVERY



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## Authors

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Nathaniel Erb is a specialist on human trafficking public policy and strategy. He is the founder of Erb & Associates, a consulting and lobbying practice that provides support to a wide range of human trafficking and forced labour stakeholders, such as survivor-run organizations, direct service providers, multi-national aid implementers, government task forces and policymakers from the local to multi-national scale. Key areas of focus have included: developing superior data- and evidenced-based policies, modernization of core anti-trafficking statutes, justice for wrongfully incarcerated victims, and improving resource allocation.

Nathaniel regularly enjoys lecturing on human trafficking, youth leadership and public policy at The George Washington University, University of Baltimore and elsewhere. He is the Chair Emeritus of the Youth Working Group of the US National Commission to UNESCO, serves as an advisor on projects with various multi-stakeholder bodies and co-coordinates a working group of think tanks across the globe endeavouring to improve the next phase of anti-trafficking policy.



Amanda Finger is the Executive Director and co-founder of the Denver-based non-profit Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, which has focused on anti-trafficking efforts since 2005. She led project management and conducted research for the Colorado Project to Comprehensively Combat Human Trafficking (2013 and 2019). Her professional background includes teaching human trafficking and women's health courses, health advocacy in Washington, DC, Congressional campaign organizing, serving as a Legislative Aide for the Colorado General Assembly, and field research on human trafficking and forced migration in Johannesburg, South Africa.



Dr Alison Gardner leads the Governance Programme at the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab, a research platform focused on helping to end slavery by 2030. She was the winner of the 2018 Marsh Prize for Community Activism in Combatting Slavery and named in the UK Top 100 Modern Slavery Influencers for 2018. Her work focuses on place- and community-based responses to modern slavery, including campaigning work to develop slavery-free cities. She has career experience and expertise in local government and public policy.





Megan Tackney is a Program Manager for Humanity United, overseeing the Partnership for Freedom, a public-private partnership dedicated to promoting innovative solutions to end human trafficking in the United States and around the world. She is currently leading its final Challenge, Pathways to Freedom, which works with US cities to advance a more comprehensive response to labour and sexual exploitation. Megan joined Humanity United after serving as a political appointee in the Obama Administration at the Administration for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services. She acted as Special Advisor to the Acting Assistant Secretary where she provided policy and programmatic support for a diverse set of large-scale federal human services programmes, including those addressing trafficking, domestic violence, homelessness, refugees, migrant unaccompanied children at the border, child welfare, early childhood education and teen pregnancy. Prior to her time in the Obama Administration, she spent six years with the National Women's Law Center leading advocacy campaigns on gender equity and served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during graduate school. Her work has been published in Vanity Fair Magazine, The Center for Advanced Studies for Child Welfare, MinnPost, WBEZ Chicago, Governing Magazine, Cities Today and Re-Wire News. Megan holds a master of public administration degree in human rights from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and a bachelor's degree in international affairs from George Washington University



Dr Annie Miller is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Washburn University and a Consultant for the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking.



# Introduction

The Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham has been exploring what makes local anti-slavery approaches effective through the Slavery-Free Communities Programme. Dr Alison Gardner, head of the Rights Lab's Governance Programme, has been leading much of this work, which includes mapping anti-slavery partnerships in the United Kingdom together with the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and developing an Anti-Slavery Partnership Toolkit to help existing partnerships as well as people planning multi-agency anti-slavery activities.

Delta 8.7 asked Gardner to discuss her and the Slavery-Free Communities Programme's work, highlighting promising practices in the context of Nottingham and the UK. We also invited Nathaniel Erb of Erb & Associates, Megan Tackney of Humanity Unity, and Amanda Finger and Annie Mills of the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking to respond to Gardner's work and discuss their own experiences fighting modern slavery and human trafficking on the local level in the United States. Gardner was given the opportunity to respond to the other interventions.

## About Delta 8.7 Symposia

Delta 8.7 symposia offer experts the opportunity to discuss technical details of their research and receive commentary from the wider research and anti-slavery community. Researchers are then able to give a response to the previous commentaries received. We hope these symposia will spark

further conversations and build the dialogue around research and data in the fight to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour. Read the previous Delta 8.7 symposium on modelling modern slavery risk.

# LOCAL APPROACHES TO TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY

Alison Gardner  
Head of the Governance Programme,  
University of Nottingham's Rights Lab

Modern slavery is both global and local. In the past two decades we've started to recognize modern slavery as a global issue, and to understand that exploitation exists in many different cultures and societies. But we think less often about what this means for our local services and daily life.

In legislative terms, the momentum to address modern slavery and human trafficking has never been greater. In theory, slavery is illegal in every country, and 186 states have domestic laws addressing human trafficking, although nuanced investigation shows that gaps remain in relation to internal trafficking, slavery, forced labour and servitude.<sup>1</sup> Networks between NGOs, political, business and faith actors are also starting to connect disparate social action agendas through initiatives such as Alliance 8.7 and the Global Freedom Network. However, development of coherent anti-slavery policy at the sub-national and local level is frequently ignored or underfunded, and sometimes constitutes a missing link in the implementation of legislation.

## Why do we need a local focus for anti-slavery action?

Similar to other global challenges, such as climate change, modern slavery requires local action to underpin international and domestic legislation. Efforts to prevent slavery, discover victims and provide support for survivors draw upon a complex web of services provided by sub-national government, law enforcement, faith organizations and NGOs working at the locality-level. The *2018 Trafficking in Persons Report* also highlights how communities can be part of the policy solution to problems of modern slavery and trafficking, for example, by acting as eyes and ears for law enforcement or providing a supportive environment for survivors. But communities can just as easily form part of the problem, if cultural and economic practices—such as the mistreatment of domestic servants or hostile attitudes towards migrants—contribute to normalizing exploitation. Diverse leadership for the anti-slavery agenda within communities is therefore important to enable positive action and address potentially harmful practices.

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<sup>1</sup> Katarina Schwarz, "Prohibiting Slavery, Criminalising Enslavement: The Failures of the International Regime Governing Human Exploitation", conference paper, May 2018. Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325155352\\_Prohibiting\\_Slavery\\_Criminalising\\_Enslavement\\_The\\_Failures\\_of\\_the\\_International\\_Regime\\_Governing\\_Human\\_Exploitation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325155352_Prohibiting_Slavery_Criminalising_Enslavement_The_Failures_of_the_International_Regime_Governing_Human_Exploitation).

At the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab we have been exploring what underpins effective local anti-slavery action through our Slavery-Free Communities programme. Our research has included national mapping of anti-slavery partnerships across the UK, in collaboration with the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC).<sup>2</sup> Regional action-learning has explored how we can more effectively construct an evidence base to improve local anti-slavery interventions, and we are also working alongside statutory and community partners towards creating a slavery-free Nottinghamshire. This "place-based" approach to addressing slavery is receiving increasing attention from a number of other cities in the UK and internationally, for its potential as a means to join up fragmented initiatives and promote increased momentum.

Research has shown that frontline actors emphasize the importance of building partnerships in order to create a system-wide overview of anti-slavery action. UK police forces reported more than 40 sub-regional multi-agency partnerships in UK in 2017, despite there being no dedicated funding or guidance from government on how partnerships should be configured. Police respondents were clear that they could not act effectively on the anti-slavery agenda in isolation from other agencies, in part due to the complex inter-agency connections required to provide effective victim and survivor support, as well as enabling prosecution.

Yet despite this widespread recognition of the need for partnership, there was less clarity on what actions partnerships should most usefully pursue, as well as how to locate funding for joint work. This absence of resources and coordination in the UK has resulted in an inconsistent patchwork of partnership development, sometimes prompting non-governmental partners such as NGOs, private consultants and churches to step in to convene joint action.

We also uncovered an urgent need to improve data sharing, monitoring and evaluation to reflect a "whole systems" perspective encompassing the work of all partner agencies. For instance, in the UK we currently understand little about survivor journeys, from the route into exploitation to the point of discovery, and then through experiences of different forms of support. Such information would assist with improving prevention of slavery and promoting detection at local level, as well as shaping support services.

Partnerships were also concerned that they lacked examples of good practice to inspire their work, and prevent re-invention of the wheel. In response to this research we have recently launched a collaborative anti-slavery partnership toolkit, which includes a library of resources, governance documentation and training packages to facilitate further multi-agency action, and we welcome further contributions.<sup>3</sup> We aren't yet at a place of understanding exactly what best practice looks like, but we can do more to share innovation and action in a joined-up way.

## Towards slavery-free communities

Although multi-agency work is a part of the puzzle, changing personal and cultural practices will also be important to building a society that is sustainably slavery-free over the long term. This implies a need to learn from existing awareness raising campaigns and to develop more sophisticated strategies of co-production and behaviour change in the future. For instance, is it possible to work with communities and local businesses to encourage a culture of fair work, which does not depend on regulation and enforcement?

<sup>2</sup> University of Nottingham and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, "Collaborating for freedom: anti-slavery partnerships in the UK", October 2017.

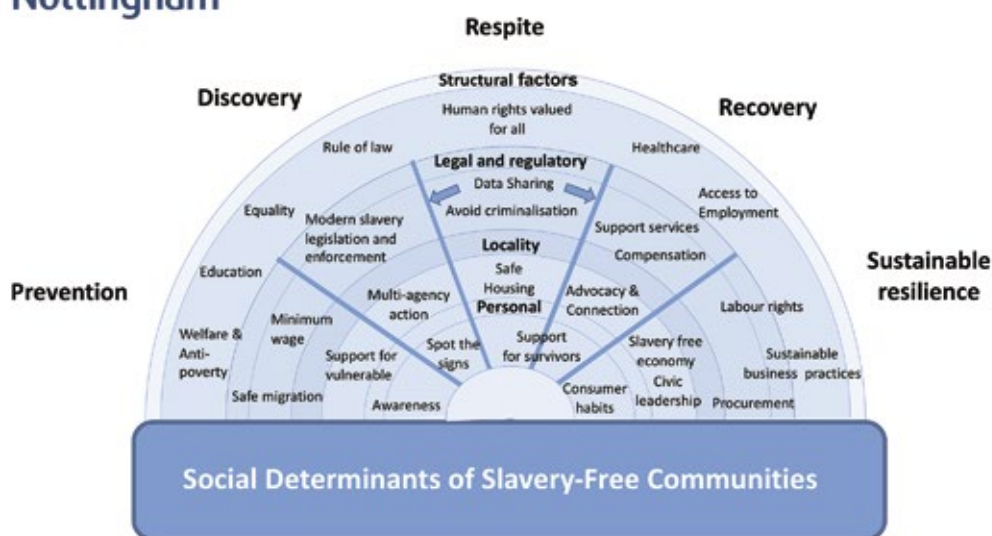
<sup>3</sup> University of Nottingham and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, "Anti-Slavery Partnership Toolkit", Available at <https://iasctoolkit.nottingham.ac.uk/>



Building on Dahlgren and Whitehead's model of social determinants of health,<sup>4</sup> we have started to theorize social determinants of slavery-free communities (see figure 1) setting them in context with a systemic view of the anti-slavery agenda, that stretches from prevention through discovery to respite, recovery and sustainable resilience. This framework also recognizes that locality-level action is underpinned by personal behaviours on one hand, and legislative and structural influences on the other.

The framework requires further testing, but eventually we hope that it might assist with analysis of the components required to develop slavery-free communities in diverse social and economic contexts. Ultimately, if we can understand the factors contributing to slavery-free communities, we'll be able to measure and compare resilience across a wide range of local settings, with the hope that an index of this type might both challenge and inspire communities to further action.

Figure 1: Social Determinants of Slavery-Free Communities



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<sup>4</sup> Göran Dahlgren and Margaret Whitehead, "Policies and strategies to promote social equity in health. Background document to WHO - Strategy paper for Europe", *Institute for Futures Studies*, January 1991.

# IMPORTANCE OF A CITYWIDE APPROACH TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Megan Tackney**  
*Pathways to Freedom Program Manager,*  
*Humanity United*

Alison Gardner's exploration of what underpins effective local anti-trafficking action is focused on the importance of diverse local partnerships.<sup>5</sup> She examines what might be learned from looking at local multi-agency partnerships across the UK and, at the same time, is testing the impact of a "place-based" approach to addressing human trafficking by working to create a slavery-free Nottinghamshire. Humanity United is supporting similar work to encourage and share learnings from new collaborative approaches in US cities. While not all lessons may be transferrable, there are common themes and learnings that may be useful more broadly.

In 2012, Humanity United launched the Partnership for Freedom, a public-private partnership aimed at catalysing new ideas, data, commitments and actions in the anti-trafficking movement. Part of the challenge, Pathways to Freedom, was launched in 2017 with the NoVo Foundation and in collaboration with 100 Resilient Cities. As a sign of growing need and interest, 14 major US cities applied, and three were selected to receive support in developing new comprehensive approaches to the problem of human trafficking: Atlanta, Chicago and Minneapolis. With our investment, these US cities join Houston as being the only ones with a full-time position dedicated to human trafficking.

This challenge was motivated by the exactly the same gaps Gardner identifies: a complex web of local services and law enforcement with no guidance on what should be prioritized or how coordination should work; government agencies working in isolation with poor or no data on what human trafficking is and what's needed to stop it; and lack of dedicated funding to resolve such challenges.

Cabinet-level Senior Fellows in the Mayor's offices in Atlanta, Chicago and Minneapolis are now receiving dedicated funding for two years to bring together multiple city agencies, NGO groups and service providers to develop new policies, practices, funding streams and relationships with communities impacted by trafficking. They are developing and implementing policy blueprints for their cities, and our hope is that the benefits of this approach will move the cities to continue the investment themselves after our funding period ends.

## Prioritizing prevention in cities

To the extent that US cities are engaging in anti-trafficking efforts, it has generally been through local police departments or federally funded law enforcement task forces. While law enforcement is crucial to stopping trafficking after it is uncovered, its interventions are typically applied after human trafficking has already created victims, and, as noted by Gardner, local police do not always coordinate with other departments or highlight trends, patterns or non-prosecutorial needs.

If cities expand their view of human trafficking beyond what's possible with law enforcement resources, we believe they can play a critical role in identifying who might be at risk or may currently be experiencing exploitation, and as a next step, tailor existing initiatives and add resources to better meet the needs of trafficking survivors.

We know that women, men and children who are vulnerable to exploitation often pass through multiple US city systems such as labour enforcement, child welfare, housing and homelessness services, hospitals, health and safety

<sup>5</sup> Alison Gardner, "An Introduction to Local Approaches to Tackling Modern Slavery", *Delta* 8.7, 27 March 2019.

inspections, drug treatment programs, immigrant services and more. At the same time, we want our fellows to consider an anti-trafficking lens, as Gardner notes, that allows them to see that there might actually be a community problem that normalizes exploitation. They must consider who is facing discrimination in their city: The immigrant? The youth who is transgender or homosexual? The person who can't leave their violent home? Those who continue to be poor or addicted, unassisted by the city? It's past time to think that finding one or two perpetrators means the work is finished.

One of the greatest challenges in our cities is that we are asking people to think about a holistic, coordinated response that doesn't easily match how they have understood human trafficking. A lack of data, misperceptions fueled by the media, limited resources and competing political agendas all contribute to city departments' reluctance to act on an issue they don't identify as their own. We've seen this most concretely in encouraging cities to work on both labour and sexual exploitation. For example, while most people understand why a sex trafficking victim needs a safe home to go to, some are slower, or even reluctant, to recognize how the city's weak labour laws or lack of services for immigrants are relevant to labour trafficking.

We know that in the US, increased threats of deportation and heightened anti-immigrant rhetoric may cause immigrant communities to become even more vulnerable to exploitation. They are also less likely to seek help or services for fear of deportation or other immigration consequences. This problem is especially challenging today as a notice of proposed rulemaking was recently released by the federal government that would use an immigrant's usage or likely use of government benefits like food stamps, housing assistance or Medicaid as a reason to deny them a Green Card or visa. Fortunately, some local governments are responding with innovative policies and practices to protect immigrants in their communities as well as ensure that immigrant victims of human trafficking and other crimes can access needed services.<sup>6</sup> These cities may not think of this work as part of their anti-trafficking program, but it is just that.

## Diverse leadership in city anti-trafficking efforts

As Gardner pointed out, we must recognize that in the absence of city leadership and resources until now, non-governmental partners have had to step up to create an inconsistent patchwork of services with little help from city government. Our city leaders have had to step into their roles with some humility for the action and leadership that has already been taken, and instead offer themselves as an ally and new resource.

At the same time, as funders, we are supporting local grassroots organizations in each Pathways city because we believe government efforts must be matched by leaders and organizations that can reach deep within their communities and lift the voices of the most vulnerable. These groups have the ability to reach thousands of low-wage worker communities that have traditionally been vulnerable to exploitation, including immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, communities of colour and women. Our hope is that these organizations will become part of the cities' fabric of anti-trafficking efforts.

In her paper, Gardner makes the point that understanding survivors' journeys is critical to developing effective policies and support services. For just that reason, we also believe it is crucial that survivors be part of any local partnership working to identify problems and shape solutions. We are partnering with the Survivor Alliance to identify and train survivor leaders in each Pathway city. Our hope is that other cities and philanthropists will see the value of survivors' involvement and invest similarly.

Local communities have the best understanding of their own unique challenges and are best positioned to design the reforms and solutions needed. When efforts by city governments are matched by organizations that can reach deep into impacted communities, we may be able to finally reach the most vulnerable.

<sup>6</sup> Pathways to Freedom, "Cities Can Help Reduce Immigrant's Vulnerability to Exploitation", Available at <https://pathwaystofreedom.org/cities-can-help-reduce-immigrants-vulnerability-to-exploitation>.

# TAKING OWNERSHIP OF LOCAL APPROACHES

**Nathaniel Erb**  
*Founding Partner, Erb & Associates*

A review of the report produced by the Rights Lab demonstrates that the experience of stakeholders in the United Kingdom in coordinating collaborative groups at a local and regional level is parallel to what I have experienced in the United States. Two things stand out as keystone issues that appear to hold true in both the UK and the US, based on Erb & Associates' experience in serving as a coordinator for multi-stakeholder task forces and other working groups focused on human trafficking and forced labour policy development at the local, national and international level. The first is the need for a local entity to take ownership of coordinating policy and strategy development. The second is a sense of over-focus on criminal justice responses. These findings are critically important to acknowledge and address.

Regarding the first issue raised, governments, law enforcement, civil society, survivors and other stakeholders often do not focus enough time on coordinating the development of policies and strategies among themselves. While there are a number of stakeholders able to devote time to this important task, the majority often focus on implementing their own theories of change as opposed to developing strategies and policies organically with the communities of focus. Not building policies and strategies from the ground up often leads to a splintering of efforts at best, or a lack of sustainable solution building at worst. The field is in dire need of resources and actors who are willing and able to focus on coordinating efforts among regional stakeholders in order to cultivate ideas and promote joint ownership of implementation among the appropriate parties. Sustainability hinges on the ability of a policy or strategy to continue, even if a particular stakeholder is no longer active. Development of strategies among all stakeholders does not wholly protect against failure, but it does increase the likelihood of multiple entities being willing to lead when needed and facilitates future dialogue.

It should not be assumed that policies and strategies to fight modern slavery on the local level will be different in every environment, nor that they should be developed anew in every local context. However, even if many policies are replicable in different contexts, failing to engage regional stakeholders in the strategy development process can lead to incorrect prioritization of time and resources, missed opportunities to cultivate new strategies that could benefit other local communities and a failure to secure sustained buy-in among stakeholders, particularly those with implementation responsibility.

To the second issue, there is a resounding call from the stakeholder community at large to expand—but not ignore—the focus of anti-slavery programmes beyond criminal justice. Stakeholders generally wish to see more emphasis placed on addressing the needs that cause individuals to be vulnerable and remain vulnerable to exploitation, instead of a strict criminal justice approach. By working to develop anti-slavery strategies organically, stakeholders can cultivate a better understanding of other priorities and develop ways to integrate them with law enforcement priorities.

Lastly, I have a concern that the stakeholder community at large has sought to address these issues with a top-down, policy implementation approach. A substantial portion of the national and international dialogue on “local ownership” of human trafficking and forced labour is focused on how local entities can better carry out what the macro-level community has determined to be appropriate. However, the experience of Erb & Associates found that the greatest utility is in first recognizing local actors as the key resource for strategy and policy cultivation.

One of the first policy initiatives that Erb & Associates was asked to undertake around these issues was improving the accessibility of education for those affected by modern slavery and human trafficking. While vocational training—and

education access more broadly—had already been rightly identified by macro-level stakeholders as important, at the time Erb & Associates teams found no discussion between the project partners of key issues related to education. For instance, what should be done for individuals who lack proper documentation or for survivors who fear for their safety when seeking education in areas where they were exploited? It was direct service providers and front-line stakeholders who identified these issues during consultations with our teams so that they could be properly addressed. Further, time spent working and listening with stakeholders to address these complex, multifaceted issues helped develop trust and solidify partnerships necessary for successful future endeavours.

As the global community looks to address human trafficking, forced labour and other forms of exploitation in the coming decade, it is imperative that the anti-slavery community takes the time to ensure that the voices and experiences of those on the front lines, particularly survivors, are at the centre of discussions on the anti-slavery approaches to use. Not only are they vital assets who provide nuance and knowledge of how these issues actually play out, but successful implementation of strategies hinges on their buy-in.

While strategies must be developed to identify and disseminate learned experiences that could develop into best practices, sufficient time has not yet been devoted to creating—let alone vetting—evidence-based proven practices. The emergence of Alliance 8.7, the Freedom Collaborative, Delta 8.7, the Freedom from Slavery Forum and many other venues has given the field myriad avenues to develop multi-stakeholder efforts and share knowledge. However, there is a concerning lack of multicultural perspectives surrounding strategies to address the issue. More needs to be done to develop practices, particularly those that are not “Western” in origin.

Human trafficking and forced labour are inherently local issues. It is fundamentally important to take a step back and uncomplicate what needs to be done to address the issues on the ground. Rather than implementing any of our ideas first, national and international stakeholders would do well to simply take time to meet, listen to and learn from those working every day to help those in need within the target communities. Their most pressing needs may not be—and likely are not—what we had in mind originally.

# FROM THE GRASSROOTS UP: COMPREHENSIVE EFFORTS TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Annie Miller**  
Assistant Professor, Washburn University

**Amanda Finger**  
Executive Director, Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking

Dr Alison Gardner published a refreshing and much-needed examination of partnership approaches to tackling modern slavery,<sup>7</sup> or human trafficking in our vernacular at the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking (LCHT). The guiding international “4P framework” of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership needs to be tested as a comprehensive model, as it is touted, and Dr Gardner’s work advances our understanding of partnership promising practices.

Further, while each role and strategy in the anti-trafficking movement is important, no single organization can address human trafficking comprehensively. An investment in any single part of a community response will ultimately fail to address all root causes of human trafficking and risk that survivors will continue to slip through the gaps. As the anti-trafficking movement reflects upon the 19 years since the passage of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol), the crime has expanded and the response to it has become more sophisticated.

## Manifestation of a Global Issue in Local Communities

With the signing of the Palermo Protocol, countries implemented their own national laws drawing from the UN definition, such as the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which was passed in the United States in 2000. But in contrast to other social movements, the national anti-trafficking movement began with a top-down approach based on legislative definitions and directives, rather than as a bottom-up, grassroots experience. Federal disbursements of taskforce funding poured out for cities around the U.S. to prioritize the development and coordination of a response to human trafficking.<sup>8</sup> At the local and statewide level, this was viewed as a mandate to examine a crime that was allegedly occurring within a given geographic scope, but the priority emerged from “outsiders” who lacked contextual knowledge of how trafficking looks locally.

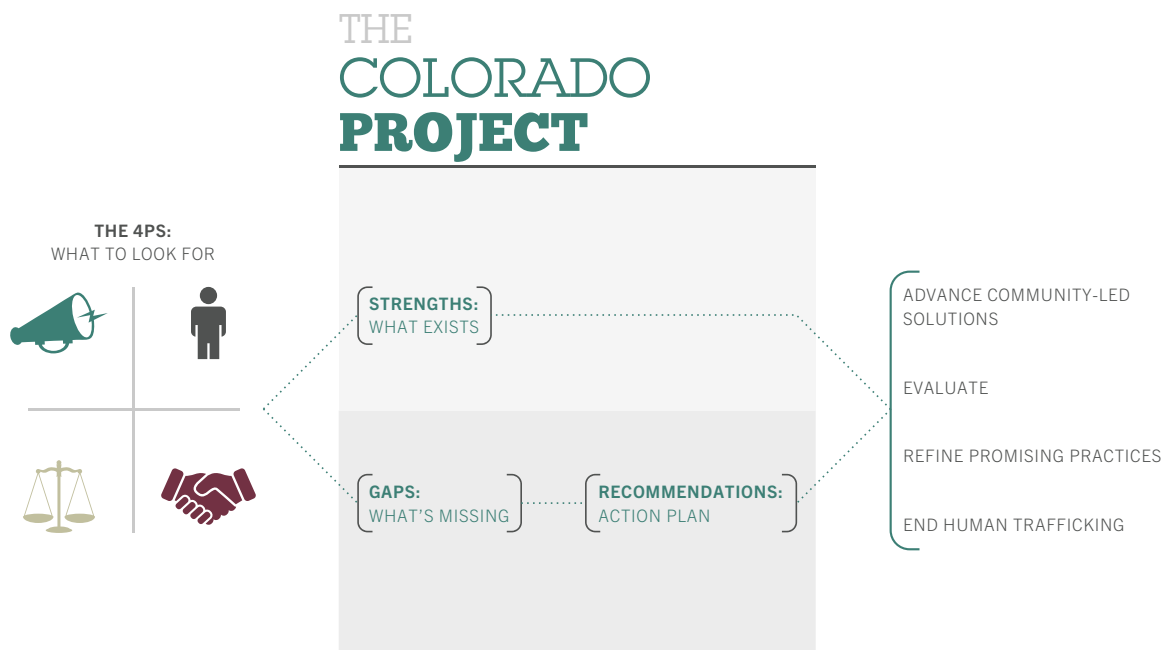
In response to that top-down approach, LCHT launched research efforts to explore our state’s understanding of the crime. Since 2012, we’ve tracked efforts in a single U.S. state, Colorado, aimed at ending human trafficking – our baseline assessment. The Colorado Project to Comprehensively End Human Trafficking follows one broad research question: What would it take to end human trafficking in Colorado?

<sup>7</sup> University of Nottingham and IASC, “Collaborating for freedom”.

<sup>8</sup> Amy Foerster, “Contested Bodies: Sex Trafficking NGOs and Transnational Politics”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 11, No. 2 (May 2009), p. 151.



Figure 2: How the Colorado Project Works



\*Figure 2 from the Colorado Project 2.0

The Colorado Project 2.0 (CP2.0) represents an important milestone in that journey as this is the first replication of the original Colorado Project published in 2013.<sup>9</sup> The community-based, participatory research project collected data on each of the 4Ps. We appreciate and echo the national, regional and local focus that Dr Gardner utilized.

Dr Gardner's research points to seemingly similar strengths and challenges in the United Kingdom that we found in Colorado. Strengths consistent across geographies appeared in the capacity of partnerships to raise awareness, share information, and conduct extensive efforts to train on human trafficking, especially trainings targeted at front-line staff in public-serving

agencies. It would appear that UK multi-agency partnerships face similar challenges that we find in our home state of Colorado: a lack of shared language, including a definition of trafficking; a lack of dedicated funding or resource streams; the need for more representative membership, especially survivor involvement; goals or outcomes that are not clearly defined; and the need for better data tracking and/or sharing.

Based on our research in Colorado and Dr Gardner's work in the UK, we would like to draw further attention to two specific issues. First, measurement and evaluation of partnership efforts remains lacking. Second, there must be room for survivor leadership in each and every partnership effort.

<sup>9</sup> Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, *The Colorado project to comprehensively combat human trafficking 2.0*, (Denver, Colorado, 2019).

The IASC toolkit creates a useful starting point for setting shared partnership goals, developing trust among partners and identifying outcomes as markers of progress. Established partnerships, and long-established, parallel movement groups adopting trafficking as a mission, provide bounded samples and a visual mapping of anti-trafficking momentum across a given community, region or state. Engaging with practitioners, as in Dr Gardner's study, allows for "boots-on-the-ground" perspectives. The research design, data collection and analysis stages of the Colorado Project incorporated survivors, researchers and practitioner perspectives. By embedding this array of voices, one sector is not prioritized over another, and a level playing field is established in terms of expertise. The outcome of that shared research effort is the Colorado Project 2.0 Action Plan.

The Action Plan 2.0 created a roadmap to prioritize statewide and regional efforts against human trafficking. Practitioners, survivors and researchers viewed data from 17 partnerships and 29 focus groups across the state, combined with 76 additional organizational-level interviews and 183 survey responses, to guide the creation of this Action Plan. Survivors led the review of each recommendation in the Action Plan to ensure our guidance is both trauma-informed and supported by voices with lived experience. Supporting and sharing lessons learned from local partnerships will be paramount to global progress in ending human trafficking.

## Going Beyond Piecemeal Approaches

A piecemeal approach has proven ineffective in ending human trafficking. Like many human rights movements, collaborative work takes time and requires carefully tended trust between sectors and disciplines in order to lay the groundwork for social change. We suggest that one key indicator of successful partnerships will be the trust they are able to build and maintain through achieving shared goals. Trust, a fundamental aspect of the movement, will be the key as we strive to connect across top-down and grassroots efforts.

Participants in both studies cite funding as one additional challenge for maintaining successful, long-term partnerships. Unlike the UK, Colorado participants observed that funding was not exactly the limitation, instead, a lack of key community services like healthcare, housing, addiction treatment or living wage jobs appeared to be root causes of trafficking. We wholeheartedly embrace the recommendations across leadership, engagement, accountability and funding in the Collaborating for Freedom research report, while simultaneously suggesting that attention to addressing root causes, seamless integration across other forms of protection services, survivor-led partnerships and support for prosecution of adult and labor trafficking crimes are essential to multi-agency efforts. In our minds, focusing efforts to end trafficking in these ways will help maintain a sustainable, effective and comprehensive movement that coalesces across the gap between top-down and grassroots approaches.



# LOCAL APPROACHES TO MODERN SLAVERY *A RESPONSE*

**Alison Gardner**  
*Head of the Governance Programme,  
University of Nottingham's Rights Lab*

The United States and the United Kingdom are sometimes described as two nations divided by a common language, but aside from differences in the terminology that we use to describe modern slavery and human trafficking, the degree of consensus in these articles is striking. The fascinating contributions to this symposium emphasize two points that at first sight might appear contradictory: despite our different contexts we have many shared experiences to draw upon in constructing local responses to modern slavery and human trafficking. However, in applying those general points of learning, we also need to acknowledge—and work alongside—the specific and unique characteristics of each community that we engage.

Future opportunities for knowledge exchange centre around identification of the mutual challenges that we face and sharing ideas for effective local policy responses. This symposium shows, for example, that there is strong agreement on the need to look beyond a criminal justice framing of the issue, towards addressing the root causes of exploitation through services and interventions that serve the whole community. Some of the policy levers will remain national or regional; for instance, anti-immigration discourse and policy provide a stumbling block for anti-trafficking efforts on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet each of our contributors also emphasizes that effective regulatory, housing, health and

well-being provision by local statutory and non-statutory agencies can make a decisive difference to those most at risk. It seems that societies that are resilient against slavery start with ensuring fair working practices, caring for the vulnerable, tackling discrimination and promoting social cohesion.

Another common refrain within these articles is the need for a whole-systems perspective that takes account of all actors. The methods we use to engage in this conversation are important. Rather than a top-down process of policy implementation, each contribution describes the value of a more iterative and locally responsive action-research approach, which engages local stakeholders over an extended time period. As Erb points out, “it is imperative that the anti-slavery community take account of the voices and experiences of those on the front-lines” as “successful implementation of strategies hinges on their buy-in.”<sup>10</sup>

This becomes increasingly important, given the resource challenges that seem to be another all-too-familiar feature of local anti-slavery policy and practice. It also raises an interesting question about the degree to which we should focus on mapping vulnerabilities—producing a needs-based or “deficit”-focused analysis, to which we may not be able to respond within current resources—compared to discerning community strengths and assets that can act as the building blocks for future action. Both insights are essential, but an “appreciative” analysis of assets arguably has greater capacity to promote innovation and practical action.

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<sup>10</sup> Nathaniel Erb, “Taking Ownerships of Local Approaches”, *Delta* 8.7, 29 March 2019.

All contributions highlight the issue of leadership, particularly survivor leadership, as an essential means to ensure partnership activity remains grounded and relevant. For Tackney, this takes the form of diverse and distributed leadership that unites both government and grass-roots organizations.<sup>11</sup> For Erb, local communities should provide the key resource for strategy and policy, “not through any complex process but by simply making time to listen, learn and assist”. However, Miller and Finger recognize that the process of building a shared vision takes time and requires the key ingredient of trust; indeed for Miller and Finger “one key indicator of successful partnerships will be the trust they are able to build and maintain”.<sup>12</sup> This has also been a key learning point from our action-learning in the UK, which found trust and a shared vision to be fundamental to the effectiveness of local partnerships, an important first step towards action that was impossible to circumvent.

Trust is also core to the challenge of framing monitoring and evaluation at the local level, which continues to frustrate policy actors on both sides of the Atlantic. While distributed leadership is essential in mobilizing populations, it may also be a source of conflict or disagreement when attempting to establish what evidence should be collected, and the process and methods for data collection. In addition, resource constraints also impact monitoring: how are we to build a systems

perspective, when there is a lack of coordination to create that “helicopter view”? Both Tackney and Erb point to the importance of coordination in focusing local efforts, and it was interesting to see that this has been an important aspect of the Pathways to Freedom project. Monitoring and evaluation is perhaps also an area that might benefit from some level of regional or national steer, in order to establish common evaluation processes and standards, although any solution must retain sensitivity to local priorities and strategies for change.

Finally, there is a welcome reminder in these responses that in the drive to look for universal lessons to share we must practice humility in recognizing the limitations of our knowledge and perspectives, and not forget the specific and local features in every community. In particular, Erb highlights the need to move beyond a dialogue that comes from the experience of policymakers and actors in the global north, to avoid imposing narrowly-conceived theories on communities in very different social and cultural settings. Local action can lead to global change, but only by recognizing the unique features and experience of each community in the solutions we propose, not by imposing solutions that are distinctive to one particular social or economic context on another. Listening to our communities and learning from them should always precede action.

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<sup>11</sup> Megan Tackney, “Importance of a Citywide Approach to Prevent Human Trafficking”, *Delta 8.7*, 28 March 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Annie Miller and Amander Finger, “Comprehensive Efforts to End Human Trafficking from the Grassroots Up”, *Delta 8.7*, 30 March 2019.



