



University of
Nottingham
Rights Lab

Research to help end modern slavery

Rights Lab
Beacon of Excellence

nottingham.ac.uk/rights-lab



The world's largest and leading group of modern slavery researchers

Pictured: A mural created by slavery survivors. Courtesy of Joel Bergner and local partners. The Rights Lab is committed to ensuring that survivors have leadership roles and influence antislavery policies.

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Research to create the Freedom Blueprint: a plan for achieving the end of slavery

Introduction

There are 40.3 million people enslaved around the world today. The global modern antislavery effort is nearly 20 years old and a commitment to end slavery by 2030 is part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (target 8.7). But to achieve this goal, we need evidence-based strategies for abolition.

We have therefore built a large-scale research platform for ending slavery. We tackle a key challenge of global development and one of the great human rights issues of our time. The largest group of modern slavery scholars in the world, and home to the world's leading academic experts on modern slavery, the Rights Lab is underpinning antislavery with an advanced research agenda.

We have five Rights Lab research programmes, each focused on answering a major question:

1. **Data and measurement** – how many people are enslaved in the world and where are they?
2. **Communities and society** – why does slavery persist and what creates resilience against slavery?
3. **Ecosystems and the environment** – how is environmental change interconnected with slavery?
4. **Law and policy** – how can we close the implementation gap, between principle and practice?

5. **Business and economies** – what are the impacts of slavery on our economies and how can businesses tackle slavery?

Our team leads for stakeholder impact and engagement work across all five programmes and bring together the Rights Lab's research to answer a sixth big question:

6. **What works to end slavery and what difference does freedom make?**

As our programmes unfold, we use their results to update what we call a Freedom Blueprint: a plan for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 – the end of slavery. We update this roadmap as we make discoveries, test intervention techniques, and complete our evaluation processes.

Each of our five programmes has flagship projects, some of which we describe in this brochure. By scaling up these and other initiatives to become global research-led strategies, we hope to help end slavery by 2030. This is an ambitious goal. But this would be a watershed moment – when the world finally rejects the great lie of history, that some people are sub-human, and embraces *the* great antislavery truth: that labour must not be forced and that people are not for sale.

Pictured left: A mural created by slavery survivors. Courtesy of Joel Bergner and local partners.

We now estimate that more than
a third of the world's slavery –
trapping 40 million people
– is visible from space



Data and Measurement Programme

How many people are enslaved in the world and where are they?

To tackle modern slavery, we need to know how many people are enslaved and where they are. Robust measurement and analysis give the antislavery movement credibility, confidence and the foundations from which to build effective action: governments need to be able to measure slavery prevalence in order to design and resource appropriate policy responses; an accurate understanding of the location and prevalence of slavery can help NGOs plan more effective programmes on the ground; and businesses benefit from understanding slavery prevalence linked to particular commodities.

In our Data and Measurement Programme, geographers, political scientists, sociologists, mathematicians and business systems specialists have made globally recognised advances in measuring the risk and prevalence of modern slavery. Using new machine-learning techniques and citizen science, we have uncovered sites and industries with high levels of slavery.

This includes our Slavery from Space initiative which uses geospatial observation to map and measure slavery. We now estimate that more of a third of the world's slavery—trapping 40 million people—is visible from space. Working with data

providers, imagery analysts and AI experts, we are harnessing the value of satellite data for antislavery action: analysing imagery to find and predict the locations of high slavery-prevalence industries and hotspots.

For example, we have used satellite remote sensing data to:

1. Provide a rigorous estimate of the number of brick kilns, known to be sites of modern slavery, across the 'Brick Belt' that runs across south Asia
2. Assess the relationship between tree loss and modern slavery across four countries, Brazil, Ghana, Indonesia and Mozambique
3. Monitor fluctuations in the location and number of informal settlements in southern Greece where migrant labourers were in conditions of labour exploitation
4. Map and track artisanal cobalt mining activities known to use child labour in the Democratic Republic of Congo over a ten-year period

Pictured left: An enslaved worker in a north Indian brick kiln; the Rights Lab has mapped slavery across the Brick Belt from space. Courtesy of Free the Slaves.

Our resilience framework is revealing how cities can become slavery-free



Communities and Society Programme

Why does slavery persist and what creates resilience against slavery?

If we understand why slavery exists today, we will have a better chance of ending it. Efforts to prevent slavery, discover victims, and provide support for survivors draw upon a complex web of services at locality-level. Yet development of coherent antislavery policy at the sub-national and local level is frequently ignored or underfunded. Similar to other global challenges, such as climate change, modern slavery requires local action to underpin international and domestic legislation.

In our Communities and Society Programme, sociologists, political scientists, health scientists, philosophers, and scholars of education, law, cultures, and business are showing that community engagement remains—as across history—an essential facet of the antislavery movement. Our slavery-free communities project aims to establish how we might work locally, as well as nationally, to create sustainable and resilient localities where slavery cannot flourish. We are developing transferable, scalable and sustainable initiatives which can help communities to become slavery-free.

This includes national comparative research on multi-agency antislavery partnerships, research

to understand the contribution of faith groups to antislavery action, projects about online communities that are high-risk for trafficking, and work alongside statutory and community partners towards creating a slavery-free Nottinghamshire, and an expansion of our place-based approach to address slavery in a number of other cities around the world.

For example, we have built a resilience framework that supports our place-based approach to addressing slavery. We have theorised the social determinants of slavery-free communities, setting them in context with a systemic view of the antislavery agenda, that stretches from prevention through discovery to respite, recovery and sustainable resilience. By understanding the factors contributing to slavery-free communities, we can measure and compare resilience across a wide range of local settings, and so challenge and inspire communities to further action.

Pictured left: Local volunteers work with the Rights Lab to assess data and model slavery vulnerability in the city of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

We are understanding what causes the prevalence of Slavery at Sea



Ecosystems and the Environment Programme

How is environmental change interconnected with slavery?

Modern slavery activities create, exacerbate, and are shaped by climate change and environmental degradation. Better understanding this nexus is imperative to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and advancing a more equitable and ecologically resilient and adaptive society in the context of a warming Earth, altered ecosystems, and environmentally-induced migration.

In our Ecosystems and the Environment Programme, environmental scientists, geographers, development studies experts, and sustainable business specialists are working across disciplines to identify, understand, and measure how modern slavery immediately and distally contribute to climate change and environmental degradation, and how climate change and environmental degradation, in turn, increase vulnerabilities to slavery.

This includes mapping the ecological dimensions of human vulnerability to modern slavery and the synchronous occurrence of environmental degradation and modern slavery in agricultural, forest, marine, and freshwater ecosystems. We identify modern slavery risk factors in specific settings and help to develop mitigation strategies. This research moves beyond the use of extrapolated data and proxies, collects empirical qualitative and quantitative evidence, and builds models to aid in causal inferencing.

For example, our Slavery at Sea project is delivering the first systematic measurement of fisheries management policies' impacts on forced labour in marine capture fisheries. Forced labour is a distal outcome of overfishing-induced marine fish stock declines in 60% of countries with coastline. Vulnerable populations facing extreme poverty disproportionately depend on marine fish for food, nutrition, and livelihood. We are uncovering the social justice dimensions of environmental policies to reduce overfishing, using an applied social-ecological systems approach and mixed methods to construct longitudinal prevalence estimates.

Pictured left: Burmese migrants in Thailand's fishing industry. Courtesy Kay Chernush for the US Department of State.

We can create blueprints for antislavery law and policy enactment, reform and implementation around the world



Law and Policy Programme

How can we close the implementation gap—the gap between principle and practice in antislavery governance?

From the global to the domestic, States are increasingly engaging with the issue of modern slavery in their legal frameworks. Yet significant gaps remain in antislavery laws and national approaches often fail to satisfy international commitments. Disparities between States' legal frameworks create confusion, prevent effective cooperation, and result in incomplete coverage of the phenomenon—particularly in its transnational manifestations.

In our Law and Policy Programme, legal scholars, political scientists, sociologists, and scholars of business and area studies are interrogating the law and policy frameworks that operate at the global, regional, and domestic level. They are working to determine the elements of effective antislavery governance and to map trends, successes, and failures in its realisation and implementation. This includes work defining the parameters of slavery and related forms of exploitation, investigating the full range of potential mechanisms for modern slavery governance, and engaging victim-centred approaches.

For example, we have launched the world's first comprehensive database of the domestic legislation and international obligations of all 193 UN Member States with regard to slavery and related forms of exploitation. From this Antislavery Legislation Database, we can construct blueprints for antislavery law and policy enactment, reform, and implementation around the world, working with government, legislators, and practitioners to lay the legal foundations for a future free from slavery. The database allows States to learn from global practice and comparative analyses in order to develop robust governance frameworks that respond to the changing dynamics of slavery.

As the database expands, it will include new areas of law, national policies, international and regional frameworks, and information on implementation. Placing a world of law and policy evidence at stakeholders' fingertips, the database allows us to access, understand, interrogate, and ultimately achieve prohibition in practice, as well as on paper.

Pictured left: Members of the Rights Lab team in conversation with parliamentarians from Malawi and Namibia about antislavery legislation.



We are helping businesses to understand the risks of slavery in their global supply chains

Business and Economies Programme

What are the impacts of slavery on our economies and how can businesses tackle slavery?

We know that slavery exerts a disproportionate drag on economies, inhibiting social and economic development for free people as well as the enslaved. The UK Government's own analysis calculates the economic cost of modern slavery in the UK at between £3.3 and £4.3 billion. We argue that ending slavery would mean a better economic situation for everyone.

In our Business and Economies Programme, business scholars, economists, sociologists, political scientists, and computer scientists are measuring demand and supply for slave labour, demonstrating slavery's impact on a country's economy and economic benefits of ending slavery. Our analyses are revealing the economic value of slavery-free production and making the business, as well as the ethical, case for slavery-free supply chains.

This includes extensive work on slavery in supply chains. We work with partners to change supply chain design in response to findings—from international businesses to local government procurement. Some of our experts also focus on key high-risk sectors for labour exploitation, including social care, car washes, agriculture and construction.

For example, we have built on sector-specific work to create a slavery Risk Barometer. By incorporating modern slavery risk into the decision-making of global supply chains and investors, we can enable stakeholders to measure their exposure to slavery, measure progress, and build a commercial case for modern slavery prevention. The Barometer helps us understand at which point in the supply chain modern slavery is likely to occur, and so enables businesses to understand the impact of their decisions and allocate resources towards improvement.

Pictured left: Enslaved person harvesting cotton, a high slavery prevalence commodity. Courtesy of Trafficking in Persons Office, US Department of State.

Spotlight on survivor-informed research



INSPIRE: Involving Survivors of Slavery in Policy and Intervention Research

A commitment to survivor-informed research

In 2018, we incubated Survivor Alliance—now an independent NGO and our closest partner. Survivor Alliance's mission is to unite and empower survivors of slavery and human trafficking to be leaders of the antislavery movement. Led by and for survivors, its network of over 200 individuals supports survivors to develop community-based solutions to every day challenges, elevate their lived-experience knowledge, and collectively engage in social change efforts.

Together with Survivor Alliance we run the INSPIRE Project. This elevates survivor-informed research as a key part of knowledge production to help end slavery and support survivors to achieve a full freedom. It works across our five research programmes to ensure all our research is survivor-informed, and works globally with survivor-scholars to develop and deliver survivor-informed and survivor-led research.

INSPIRE co-produces original research that supports sustainable freedom for survivors of slavery and human trafficking. It disseminates and translates research for antislavery policy

makers and practitioners whose work directly impacts survivors of slavery. It trains and develops survivors of modern slavery into community-based scholar-activists. And it shares best practices for conducting survivor-informed and survivor-led research.

We also have built the world's first large-scale database of contemporary slave testimonies. These millions of words reveal why slavery persists in particular hotspots around the world. This VOICES database lets us analyse patterns to understand trafficking routes, uncover reasons for slavery's emergence across different sectors, identify vulnerabilities and the challenges survivors face in liberation, and discover new antislavery solutions. Across thousands of narratives, we see ways to design new antislavery policies and legislation based on the solutions of enslaved people.

Pictured left: Rights Lab researcher and Survivor Alliance Executive Director Minh Dang and Survivor Alliance member Valentine Nkoyo at the launch of the Rights Lab's Post-Slavery Mental Health Managed Innovation Network.

Snapshot of discoveries

Discovery: more than a third of the world's slavery—**40 million people**—is visible from space

Half of all countries have not yet made it a crime to enslave people

Slavery is the third largest **emitter of CO₂** after China and the United States

90% of the **3,000 conflicts** since World War II have involved slavery

ISIS could not have operated without using slave sales for its financing



High levels of **globalization** and **democracy** are linked to lower levels of slavery

Modern slavery makes a major contribution to **deforestation** and **tree loss** globally

Modern slavery is linked to **environmental decline** in **marine fisheries**

Multiple Systems Estimation generates a reliable estimate of **slavery numbers** in **developed countries** and even at city level

Some of our Rights Lab leaders and researchers



Zoe Trodd, Rights Lab Director



Todd Landman, Rights Lab Executive Director



Kevin Bales CMG, Rights Lab Research Director



Doreen Boyd, Rights Lab Associate Director: Data and Measurement Programme



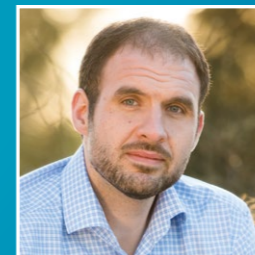
Alison Gardner, Rights Lab Associate Director: Communities and Society Programme



Jessica Sparks, Rights Lab Associate Director: Ecosystems and the Environment Programme



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Hannah Lerigo-Stephens, Rights Lab Head of Business Engagement and Impact



Laoise Ní Bhriain, Rights Lab Head of Civil Society Engagement and Impact



Vicky Brotherton, Rights Lab Head of Policy Engagement and Impact



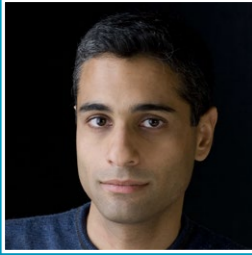
Minh Dang, Director of INSPIRE and the Survivor Alliance



Sir Bernard Silverman, Rights Lab Professor of Modern Slavery Statistics



James Cockayne, Rights Lab Professor of Global Politics and Antislavery



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Discover more about our world-class research

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Cover image: Mural created by slavery survivors.
Courtesy of Joel Bergner and local partners.

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