



The Anti Slavery  
Knowledge  
Network

# Using the arts and humanities to address contemporary forms of slavery in Africa

Contemporary forms of slavery affect millions around the world – in richer and poorer countries – with human trafficking and severe forms of exploitation prevalent among populations in Africa that are facing development challenges and lack of economic alternatives.

The core members of the Antislavery Knowledge Network link the UK with African researchers and civil society by joining three of the main centres on research into slavery in the UK (CSIS – University of Liverpool, WISE – University of Hull and Rights Lab – University of Nottingham) with the University of Ghana, Legon.

Together we aim to grow our network and explore how approaches from the arts and humanities can address contemporary forms of enslavement by adopting a community-engaged, human rights focus that delivers development impacts.

Throughout the first phase of our project, the network has expanded to include leading antislavery NGOs and a range of academic and non-academic partners across West and Central Africa in Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Our outputs, the way we plan to synthesise findings, the way we will speak to policymakers - will help us provide a pathway and a blueprint for the creation, implementation and evaluation of arts-based approaches to address these issues.

The second phase of our network involved commissioning a new group of projects. We invited applications from NGOs, universities, research institutes, arts and cultural organisations, or social enterprises working in low and middle-income countries in Africa to submit project ideas that addressed slavery as a core development challenge. We then asked them to develop innovative approaches from the arts and humanities and deliver community-engaged antislavery work.

Focusing on the idea of activated community memory, the projects all champion the use of arts and humanities as a resource for social change. One of the core aims of the network is to explore the ways in which participatory arts-based strategies, rooted in heritage and memory, can empower Global South communities to play a central role in tackling contemporary slavery.

We asked our second phase projects to relate to at least one of three overarching themes.

‘Voices for Freedom’, ‘Liberating Heritage’, and ‘Picturing Emancipation’

Each of these themes was designed to encourage projects to develop innovative, interdisciplinary and rights-based challenges to slavery and related forms of exploitation (including child labour and forced marriage). The first theme, ‘Voices for Freedom,’ centres on narratives and the lived experience of slavery, with projects imagining new and challenging ways to collect, record and archive testimony from individuals and communities in the area of focus. The ‘Liberating Heritage’ theme joins projects that connect space, place and memory around slavery with contemporary human rights and development challenges. Finally, ‘Picturing Emancipation’ covers projects that utilise visual arts and photography to expose and reflect upon the experiences and legacies of slavery and efforts to resist and overcome its consequences.

Please read further to find out more about our second phase projects.

## Emerging Voices



From the left Rebecca Osborne; Elizabeth Bruku; Karen Bianchi; Lillian Dafeamekpor

Principal investigator:  
**Phillip Clayton**, City Hearts

Co-investigators:  
**Karen Bianchi** (City Hearts Africa); **Professor Gary Craig** (Research Consultant)

Project Title:  
**Emerging Voices**

Duration:  
**18 months**

Country:  
**Ghana**

“Emerging voices is a bold, new and exciting project using the arts, heritage and technology as tools to explore past and present slavery in Ghana. The project will inspire young people to influence social change, creating a future free from slavery.”

City Hearts are excited to announce the expansion of their work with children in Africa through a new and innovative research based project entitled Emerging Voices. The project involves working with children and young people in the capital city of Accra, to explore the next generation’s awareness of historic and modern forms of slavery in Ghana, and to understand how this helps develop community antislavery strategies, empowering lasting freedom and protection from modern day slavery. During the project the children and young people will visit heritage sites, meet and hear from both heritage experts and Ghanaians who have been experienced exploitation. The project aims to equip young people with the knowledge needed to build antislavery strategies. It also aims to measure the effectiveness of the use of heritage sites, artefacts and modern narratives in order to challenge slavery as a severe human rights abuse. Emerging Voices aims to explore the next generation’s awareness of historic and modern slavery in Ghana, and to understand how this can help develop antislavery strategies.



# LESLAN



(from the left): Issoufou Mamoudou Altine, Aicha Mohamed KolanKolan, Maimouna Chaibou Maman, Hamissou Rhissa Achaffert, Oumarou Moussa, Moussa Zangaou, Ilguilas Weila, Agali Agalher, Hadijatou Mani, Benedetta Rossi, Ali Bouzou, Almou Wangara, Mahaman Tidjani Alou.

LESLAN supports the activities of the national Anti-Slavery Task Force and Timidria, Niger's main anti-slavery NGO, in their efforts to improve the circumstances of persons of slave descent in the Republic of Niger. Numerous reports highlight the continuing existence in Niger of descent-based slavery; widespread discrimination against former slaves and their descendants; and forms of sexual slavery (such as the waheya practice) that account for ongoing trafficking in women and girls. This situation has complex causes, including poverty, weak law enforcement, and the persistence of hierarchical ideologies that stigmatise slave descendants and see slave ownership as a sign of honour. LESLAN's specific objective is to change the way in which slavery and slave ownership are imagined, to end stigma directed against slave descendants, to support national measures to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery and analogous practices, and to start an unprecedented public dialogue about slavery in Niger.

LESLAN conducts research on the historical and contemporary dimensions of slavery in Niger, with communities self-identifying as slave descendants participating in the design, implementation, and analysis. It uses arts and humanities approaches to reverse the derogatory connotations associated with slavery in Nigerien society. It develops an exhibition entitled 'The World the Slaves Built', which foregrounds the important contribution that enslaved persons made to the history of the country. It documents the historical exploitation of those enslaved while highlighting their many positive roles in production, reproduction, and politics. It provides accessible information about the process of abolition and it illustrates Niger's government and civil society's combat to end contemporary forms of slavery and slavery-like practices.

Find out more and follow LESLAN's activities on its website and blog: <https://leslan.org/>

Principal investigator:  
**Benedetta Rossi**, University of Birmingham

Co-investigators:  
**Ali Bouzou** (Timidria), and **Mahaman Tidjani Alou** (Abdou Moumouni University, Niamey)

Project title:  
**LESLAN – Legacies of Slavery in Niger: Mobilising Memory, Heritage and Politics to End Abuse.**

Duration:  
**15 Months**

Country: **Niger**

# Bil pi Kuc



Left to right: Jassi Sandhar, Kichican David, Acan Bridget, Omony Geoffrey, Chua Collins Kisebo, Alaroker Diana, Jimmie Briggs

Principal investigator:  
**Geoffrey Omony**  
Youth Leaders for Restoration and Development (YOLRED)

Co-investigators:  
**Jassi Sandhar** (University of Bristol). The Goldin Institute (Chicago) are also collaborating on the project in an advisory capacity

Project title:  
**Bil pi Kuc: Creative Art Based Therapies' for the prevention, reintegration and healing of ex-child combatants in Northern Uganda.**

Duration:  
**14 months**

Country:  
**Uganda**

Geoffrey Omony (YOLRED, Uganda) and Jassi K. Sandhar (University of Bristol) are implementing a community-led research project, utilising the creative art-based therapies of drama, music, film and dance as a tool for social healing and reintegration of ex-child combatants in war-affected Northern Uganda. This project aims to deconstruct dominant – often white, European and top-down – narratives about child-soldiers and those held in captivity. Such dominant narratives become a hindrance when trying to provide assistance for former child soldiers, as their association with the Lords Resistance Army is the cause of much stigma and such discourse perpetuates this, resulting in further disempowerment for many former child combatants. Consequently, these returnees get negatively stereotyped which impacts their social, economic, and cultural rehabilitation as well as their emotional wellbeing. This project, therefore, attempts to provide a new narrative that is inclusive of the voices of former child soldiers in a way which humanises them and their experiences, and elicits an empathetic understanding which encourages support for their realities.

Three main outputs will be produced which directly address SDG8.7 and will document or display the marginalised voices and experiences of 150+ formerly abducted child-combatants during their time in captivity and their lives post-conflict. These voices will be featured in the following outputs: the first was an in-country cultural festival held in December 2018 that brought together 300+ people for a day of creative arts-based performances, with the aim of facilitating dialogue on several issues related to child-soldiery that were not addressed during post-conflict peacebuilding and remain overlooked even today. The second has been the production of a comic, which amalgamated the stories collected from in-depth interviews and oral histories with 27 former child soldiers to form one narrative. The third will be an animated film using the voices of former child-abductees as the narration of the script. This project intentionally pays more attention to girl soldiers, to inform and challenge the dominant discussions about child fighters and to provide more space for this marginalised group.

# Community Stories



CM4K team at Cham gi Wadu

A series of community-based participatory research planning meetings discussed the meaning of modern slavery in their communities and how the 2 studio community radio station that the Community Media 4 Kenya (CM4K) partnership is building can assist in raising awareness of the dangers of modern slavery whilst advocating for policy change. CM4K is a partnership between students and staff at the Universities of Brighton (UK) and Rongo (Kenya) and the remote rural community of Cham gi Wadu in Migori County.

The community determined that in Migori County, where life, culture and identity revolve around agriculture, modern day slavery focuses on the exploitation of subsistence farmers by large companies as well as the mistreatment of local labour by 'foreign' land owners who pay very low wages with no regard to the health, welfare and rights of their workforce because they know the workers are desperate and have little power to do anything about it. The community meeting all agreed that women and children suffered the worst from slavery - citing forced and under-aged marriages and child and forced labour on farms, sugar plantations, gold mines, domestic service and fishing industry as being among the worst examples of slavery. Poverty, familial deaths, mistaken hope for a brighter future, running away from domestic violence and sexual abuse, as well as outdated tribal customs often lead victims to end up in slavery. Damaging tribal customs were also identified as being the cause of another form of slavery -female genital mutilation. This is not often identified as being part of the modern-day slavery discourse but there were strong feelings among the community participants that it should be.

Drawing on community media tools and practices this project aims to coproduce, document and archive survivor stories about child slavery in Migori, Kenya in order to build public awareness; influence policy development; and facilitate change that combats modern slavery.

The objectives are:

- i) Conduct community-based participatory research mentoring and media practice training for students and community members
- ii) Co-produce, record, analyse and archive community stories from survivors of child labour and child marriage for use by the Antislavery Knowledge Network, local radio stations and policy makers;
- iii) Establish effective community based anti-slavery groups;
- iv) Publish, disseminate and archive research findings for the Antislavery Knowledge Network;
- v) Evaluate the impact of the project.

Principal investigator:  
**Dr Peter Day**, University of Brighton

Co-investigators:  
**Jerry Agalo** (Rongo University);  
**Enock Mac'Ouma** (Rongo University); **Isabell Zattu** (Rongo University)

Project title:  
**Stories of modern day slavery from Mogori County, Kenya - Empowering voices and sharing knowledge for change through community media.**

Duration:  
**18 months**

Country:  
**Kenya**

# Hidden Histories



Collins Seymah Smith, Dr Stephen Collins, Ruth Leticia Annom, Josephine Quaynor, Samuel Lamptey, Stephen Djan, Susana Dartey, Nii Kwartelai Quartey. Outside the James Town Community Theatre Centre

Principal investigator:  
**Dr Stephen Collins**, University of the West of Scotland

Co-investigators:  
**Collins Seymah Smith** (James Town Community Theatre);  
**Nii Kwartelai Quartey** (James town walking tours)

Project title:  
**Hidden Histories: The Untold stories of James Town and Slavery**

Duration:  
**12 months**

Country:  
**Ghana**

This project is a collaboration between the University of the West of Scotland, James Town Community Theatre Centre and James Town Walking Tours.

Project updates are available on the JTCT blog:  
<https://act4changegh.jimdofree.com/blog/>

Working with the local community, the project is investigating, interrogating and developing narratives around the connection between historic and modern slavery in James Town, Accra, Ghana. Locally known as British Accra, James Town is an area of multiple deprivation and significant economic poverty (Tutu et al. 2017). It was one of the first settlements built by the British in Ghana and its architecture and urban development retain many features from that time. James Town has a majority Ga population, as opposed to the larger Akan population of Accra; it has its own language, cultural expressions and identity that are often under-represented in Ghanaian media. (Newell, 1999, Wiggins and Nketia, 2005)

The depiction of slavery in Accra's museums, and more broadly in Ghana, emphasise the role of colonial exploitation in the slave trade. (Perbi, 2004) Moreover, these narratives tend to emphasise a national history, rather than more nuanced local experiences. Similarly, Ghana has well documented issues with modern slavery, particularly in terms of people trafficking and forced labour, for which it is noted as a 'source, transit and destination country for men, women and children' (TIP, 2017; 2018). Indeed, in 2017 the Western Regional Minister, Gifty Kusi, stated that 'as many as 1.86 million Ghanaian children were 'victims of forced labour' (Wamakor, 2017). However, there is little research concerning the specific nature or extent of these issues in James Town. Equally, there is little interrogation of the links between historic and modern slavery, with historic slavery being regarded since the Kufour government of the early 2000s as part of heritage and tourism,

Hence, this project addresses modern slavery by interrogating the continuing legacy of slavery in James Town and its representation on a local and national stage. To do this, we are drawing on interviews undertaken in December 2018, to create a theatre performance for local schools, and a new walking tour of James Town that will highlight sites connected to historic and modern slavery. These outputs, supported by academic articles, will engage the community and visitors to the area in considering the role of James Town in historic slavery, the links between historic and modern slavery and the scale and nature of modern slavery in James Town.

# Visualising Liberté



The project team with Bouillagui's villagers: Marie Rodet, Graphic artist Massiré Tounkara, Donkosira team: Mamadou Cissé and Mariam Coulibaly, John Moussa Kalapo (taking photo-not pictured), main village partners in the project: Hawa Sissoko, Diangou Diakité, Aboubakar Adama Traoré, Wally Traoré, Salou Diarra (not pictured).

Today the history of internal slavery is still a taboo subject in West Africa. Despite this taboo, Marie Rodet's research in Mali on the subject for the past ten years have shown that there is demand from local communities in Kayes to know and understand better this complicated past, especially as populations of slave descent are still discriminated against and stigmatized in Mali today. They are amongst the most vulnerable to economic uncertainties, and thus subjected to further exploitation, including modern forms of slavery. The main goal of this project is to capitalize on historical resistance against slavery in Kayes (Mali), to produce resources about human rights, citizenship and social justice, to raise awareness among young generations about the importance of fighting against all forms of discrimination and exploitation, including modern slavery. It is a joint project with Donkosira (a Malian NGO working on the dissemination of local community knowledge in West Africa – Donkosira meaning "The road to knowledge" in Bambara) which will create with Malian villagers, including schoolchildren, a graphic novel, an animation, a website and a mobile app, on the history of their village, Bouillagui, which was founded by formerly enslaved communities following a rebellion against former slave masters in the Kayes region, Mali, in the 1910s.

The timing is particularly crucial as Mali has been encountering a deep political, economic and social crisis for almost one decade now, a situation which risks increasing further discrimination and exploitation of already marginalized communities, as recently demonstrated by the heightened violence encountered by descendants of enslaved populations in the Kayes region.

By making visible in an accessible way little-known historical resistance against slavery in their own communities in an art and digital form, the villagers are recognized as knowledge producers in their own right and thus producers of long-term solutions for their own community to tackle marginalization and exploitation, including modern slavery.

Principal Investigator:  
**Marie Rodet, SOAS**

Co-investigators:  
**Moussa Kalapo** (Association Donkosira); **Mamadou Cissé** (Association Donkosira)

Project title:  
**Visualising Liberte: Producing a graphic novel and an animation on the history of slavery and emancipation in Kayes, Mali.**

Duration:  
**18 Month**

Country:  
**Mali**

# From Hope to Despair



Mr. Bwibo Adieri (left) and Dr. Willis Okumu (right)

Principal Investigator:  
**Dr Willis Okumu, Anglican Development Services**

Co-investigators:  
**The Reverend Rachel Carnegie** (Anglican Alliance)

Project title:  
**From Hope to Despair: An Ethnography of Youth Experiences of Human Trafficking**

Duration:  
**18 Months**

Country:  
**Kenya**

The main goal of this research project is to document the lived experiences of human trafficking and modern-day slavery among the youth in Kenya. Through this study, we seek to trace and establish human trafficking networks in Kenya by engaging victims. To document the lived experiences of human trafficking victims in Kenya, the study seeks to conduct a Social Network Analysis of human trafficking agents using the victims as focal points. Through this we hope to establish the motivations between youth hopes and aspirations and how exploitative networks that take advantage of them by painting blissful images of hope and success in the Middle East and elsewhere. The study further seeks to analyse the characteristics of human trafficking hotspots in Kenya to inform local policy formulation. Thirdly, the study seeks to trace the major human trafficking routes in Kenya. Through the study, we seek to trace and establish human trafficking networks in Kenya by engaging returnees and rescued youth who have been victims. The main research question of the study is what are the lived experiences of victims of human trafficking in Kenya?



# Healing Spaces



Pictured: James Mitchell, Carolina Larrazabal, Andrew Perkins, George Wekesa, Stanley Kahahu, Wambui Munene, Cameo Roehrich, Jaime Velasco, Geoffrey Masinde, Johnpaul Muwanika, Peter Ndungu, Mtamu Kililo, Lillian Beuttah, Julius Ogada, Rachel Njeri, Robert Sutton, Alex Ndirangu, Brenda Gititu, Beatrice Waithira, Udears Betty Maina, Linda Mule, Boaz Nandwa, Dexter Ghikas, Etienne Nell, Shivani Patel, Grace Ngugi, Naveeta Brar, Victor Baraza

There is a growing body of research on evidence-based healthcare design, which has informed the creation of better and safer health facilities globally. Ulrich et al. (2008) revealed strong evidence of the impact of certain design characteristics on healthcare outcomes. However, it found key limitations in the quality of existing evidence, in particular, the prioritisation of physical recovery over the state of psychological health when measuring outcomes. Levine (2016) highlights that most survivors of trafficking have disorders of extreme stress (DESNOS) rather than a mental illness. Such studies demonstrate the need for research focussing on the psychological benefits of treating and supporting sufferers of slavery and human trafficking in well-designed physical environments.

The project will address the themes of 'Voices for Freedom' and 'Liberating Heritage' by drawing on the memory and direct testimony of survivors in Uganda, and of those currently resident in a recovery facility, using observational, participatory and digital media methods to determine the key design characteristics impacting mental health. We will do this through our co-investigator Agnes Igoe from Dream Revival Centre, a residential facility for survivors of human trafficking in Kampala, Uganda, which offers shelter to female survivors and access to support services, to rebuild their confidence and psychological wellbeing, and revive their dreams.

The findings of this research will be disseminated as a design framework setting out evidence-based approaches for purpose-built, human-centred facilities – including shelters and care centres – aimed at supporting survivors.

Principal Investigator:  
**James Mitchell**, Orkidstudio

Co-investigators:  
**Agnes Igoe** (Deputy National Coordinator - Prevention in Trafficking in Persons),  
**Prof Christopher Platt** (The Mackintosh School of Architecture- The Glasgow School of Art), Architect  
**Mtamu Kililo** (Orkidstudio)

Project title:  
**Healing Spaces for Human Trafficking Survivors: Developing an Evidence-based design framework for care facilities serving human trafficking survivors in East Africa**

Duration:  
**15 Months**

Country:  
**Kenya and Uganda**

# More about the Antislavery Knowledge Network



## Network Plus

The project is one of a group of international academic networks funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and led by universities based in the UK. They have been set up to conduct collaborative arts and humanities-based research into some of the world's most pressing development challenges.

The five networks will be funded using more than £9m from the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), using the AHRC's 'Network Plus' model. This is designed to bring together a wide range of UK arts and humanities research expertise with researchers and non-academic partners in low and middle income countries.

To find out more about Network Plus, please visit the AHRC website. ([www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk))

## GCRF

The Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) is a £1.5 billion fund to support cutting-edge research and ensure the UK takes a leading role in global development. By working with world-leading researchers and institutions, the fund contributes to addressing the complex global issues faced by developing countries.

It focuses on challenge-led, multidisciplinary research, providing an agile response to emergencies in need of urgent analysis and strengthening the UK and developing countries' capability for research.

GCRF forms part of the UK Government's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment and is overseen by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

[www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf/](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/gcrf/)

## Core Team

- Alex Balch (Principal Investigator - University of Liverpool)
- Lennon Mhishi (Post-Doctorate Researcher - University of Liverpool)
- Helen Bryant (Project Administrator - University of Liverpool)
- Charles Forsdick (Co-Investigator - University of Liverpool)
- Benjamin Kanpeyeng (Co-Investigator - University of Ghana Legon)
- Wazi Apoh (Co-Investigator - University of Ghana Legon)
- Zoe Trodd (Co-Investigator - University of Nottingham)
- John Oldfield (Co-Investigator - University of Hull)

