

AFRICA



Regional heat map: prevalence



Africa is a vast and diverse region that accounts for 17 per cent of the world's population. Modern slavery in Africa is driven by ongoing political instability, poverty, displacement of people due to conflict and climate change, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Modern slavery manifests differently throughout Africa; it occurs in every country in the region, while those with higher prevalence typically experience compounding vulnerability factors. More than 3.1 million Africans are in forced marriage, the drivers of which depend on factors in their location, such as the presence of conflict, poverty, or persistence of certain traditional practices. There are more than 3.8 million people in forced labour across Africa. At particularly high risk are adults and children who travel from rural and remote areas to urban centres seeking work. Higher rates of descent-based slavery and forced begging continue to occur in parts of the Sahel.

Over the past four years, many African countries have taken actions to improve their response to modern slavery. Nigeria and South Africa have taken the most action, while Eritrea and Libya have taken the least. South Sudan was excluded from the assessment of government action on modern slavery due to ongoing conflict and extreme disruption to government function. Much more needs to be done to provide support for survivors, strengthen laws to protect people, and develop national strategies to combat modern slavery.

What is the extent and nature of modern slavery in the region?

On any given day in 2021, an estimated 7 million men, women, and children were living in modern slavery in Africa, a prevalence of 5.2 people in modern slavery for every thousand people. Africa had the fourth highest prevalence of modern slavery among the five regions of the world, following the Arab States (10.1 per thousand), Europe and Central Asia (6.9), and Asia and the Pacific (6.8). Forced labour was the most common form of modern slavery in the region, at a rate of 2.9 per thousand people, while forced marriage was at 2.4 per thousand.

When considering the total number of people in forced marriage worldwide, 13 per cent (3.2 million) were in Africa, second to Asia and the Pacific, which at 65 per cent has by far the highest share of the world's forced marriages. Fourteen per cent of all people in forced labour were in Africa (3.8 million), the third highest behind Asia and the Pacific (55 per cent) and Europe and Central Asia (15 per cent).

The countries with the highest prevalence of modern slavery in Africa are Eritrea, Mauritania, and South Sudan. The countries with the lowest prevalence of modern slavery in Africa are Mauritius, Lesotho, and Botswana.

Nearly 4 million men, women, and children experience forced labour in Africa, particularly in the mining, agriculture, fishing, and domestic work sectors.¹ African job seekers misled by traffickers with false promises are subjected to forced labour abroad, such as in the Gulf states.² Children are also exploited in their pursuit of education. For example, under the *confiage* (trust) system in Togo, children from rural areas are sent to cities to complete their education and live with relatives, who may force them into domestic servitude.³ Nigerian girls seeking employment as domestic helpers to help pay for schooling are also subjected to domestic servitude.⁴ In Senegal, *talibe* (student, seeker) children in Quranic schools are forced to beg.⁵

In Africa, forced marriage particularly impacts women and girls. One in every 300 females in the region was in a forced marriage compared to one in every thousand males.⁶ In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of child marriages increased in Sudan, Egypt,⁷ and parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC),⁸ and they nearly doubled in communities across Senegal and Uganda.⁹ Women and girls living in conflict zones also experience forced and child marriage, including as a negative coping mechanism by families to protect them from further violence¹⁰ and by fighters who abduct, marry, and exploit women and girls as domestic and sexual slaves.¹¹ Forced commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls is used as a weapon of war by both state and non-state groups, reportedly in the Central African Republic, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan,¹² and by both parties to the civil war in Ethiopia's Tigray region.¹³

"My father introduced me to husbands since I was twelve."

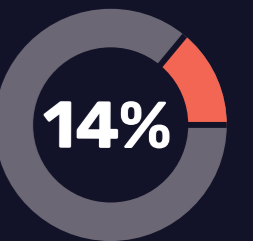
Sudanese female on her forced marriage at age 17

Although these figures are the most reliable to date, they are conservative estimates given the gaps and limitations of data collection in Africa. It is not possible to conduct nationally representative surveys in countries experiencing profound conflict, which leads to an underestimate of forms of modern slavery such as the recruitment of child soldiers. Despite gaps in data, reports indicate children have been recruited into armed groups in the DRC, Mali, Central African Republic, Mozambique, Nigeria, Libya, South Sudan, Sudan, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Somalia.¹⁴

Estimated number living in modern slavery:

7.0 MILLION
(5.2 per thousand)

Regional proportion of global estimate:



Forced labour

54%

Forced marriage

46%

Average vulnerability score:

64%

Average government response rating:

36%

Top 3 countries:

Nigeria	54%
South Africa	53%
Rwanda	50%

Bottom 3 countries:

Eritrea	5%
Libya	10%
Somalia	18%

Table 5
Estimated prevalence and number of people in modern slavery, by country

Regional rank	Country	Estimated prevalence of modern slavery (per 1,000 of population)	Estimated number of people in modern slavery	Population
1	Eritrea	90.3	320,000	3,546,000
2	Mauritania	32.0	149,000	4,650,000
3	South Sudan	10.3	115,000	11,194,000
4	Republic of the Congo	8.0	44,000	5,518,000
5	Nigeria	7.8	1,611,000	206,140,000
6	Equatorial Guinea	7.8	11,000	1,403,000
7	Gabon	7.6	17,000	2,226,000
8	Burundi	7.5	89,000	11,891,000
9	Côte d'Ivoire	7.3	193,000	26,378,000
10	Djibouti	7.1	7,000	988,000
11	Libya	6.8	47,000	6,871,000
12	Gambia	6.5	16,000	2,417,000
13	Ethiopia	6.3	727,000	114,964,000
14	Somalia	6.2	98,000	15,893,000
15	Chad	5.9	97,000	16,426,000
16	Cameroon	5.8	155,000	26,546,000
17	Central African Republic	5.2	25,000	4,830,000
18	Mali	5.2	106,000	20,251,000
19	Zambia	5.1	94,000	18,384,000
20	Kenya	5.0	269,000	53,771,000
21	Zimbabwe	5.0	74,000	14,863,000
22	Malawi	4.9	93,000	19,130,000
23	Niger	4.6	112,000	24,207,000
24	Madagascar	4.6	127,000	27,691,000
25	Democratic Republic of the Congo	4.5	407,000	89,561,000
26	Guinea-Bissau	4.5	9,000	1,968,000
27	Egypt	4.3	442,000	102,334,000
28	Rwanda	4.3	55,000	12,952,000
29	Uganda	4.2	190,000	45,741,000
30	Angola	4.1	136,000	32,866,000
31	Guinea	4.0	53,000	13,133,000
32	Sudan	4.0	174,000	43,849,000
33	Burkina Faso	3.7	77,000	20,903,000
34	Eswatini	3.6	4,000	1,160,000
35	Sierra Leone	3.4	27,000	7,977,000
36	Togo	3.3	28,000	8,279,000
37	Liberia	3.1	16,000	5,058,000
38	Benin	3.0	37,000	12,123,000
39	Mozambique	3.0	93,000	31,255,000
40	Senegal	2.9	49,000	16,744,000
41	Ghana	2.9	91,000	31,073,000
42	Tanzania	2.9	171,000	59,734,000
43	South Africa	2.7	158,000	59,309,000
44	Namibia	2.4	6,000	2,541,000
45	Tunisia	2.3	27,000	11,819,000
46	Morocco	2.3	85,000	36,911,000
47	Algeria	1.9	84,000	43,851,000
48	Botswana	1.8	4,000	2,352,000
49	Lesotho	1.6	4,000	2,142,000
50	Mauritius	1.5	2,000	1,272,000

What drives vulnerability to modern slavery in the region?

Africa has the highest vulnerability to modern slavery of all regions and is home to the four most vulnerable countries: South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, and the DRC (Table 6). Mauritius had the lowest vulnerability in the region. The largest driver of vulnerability was discrimination towards migrants and minority cultural and ethnic groups. Common to the most vulnerable countries are issues such as conflict, political instability, mass displacement, and poverty. The impacts of COVID-19 have compounded risk of modern slavery across the region.

Vulnerability to modern slavery was driven by a higher risk of discrimination on the basis of migration status, race, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation. Contemporary reports of slavery exist in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, and Sudan, where people, often from minority ethnic groups, are born into slavery and bought, traded, and sold.¹⁵ In Mauritania, Niger, and Mali, widespread ethnic or caste-based discrimination manifests in descent-based slavery.¹⁶ In Mauritania, for example, slavery tends to follow racial lines, as black Haratine people are typically forced to work for the lighter-skinned “white Moor” community in agriculture and domestic work.¹⁷ Despite some legal reforms, the practice of *Wahaya* (put in the bedroom) continues in northern Nigeria and Niger, where girls born into slavery are sold as a “fifth wife” and subjected to domestic and sexual servitude.¹⁸

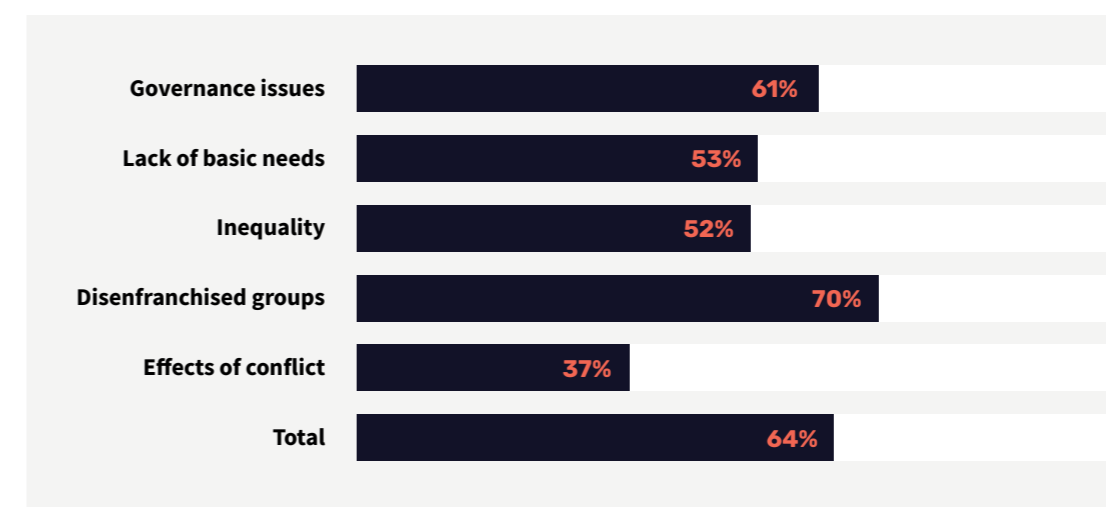


Figure 13
Level of vulnerability to modern slavery, by dimension



Lome, Togo, June 2021.

A young fisherman pulls the net with his catch from the water to the beach. Children reportedly as young as five years are trafficked from within the country as well as from neighbouring countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, and Niger, and are forced to work in sectors like fishing, agriculture, and domestic work, among others. Photo credit: Ute Grabowsky/Photothek via Getty Images.

Table 6
Level of vulnerability to modern slavery, by country

Country	Total (%)
South Sudan	100
Somalia	98
Central African Republic	98
Democratic Republic of the Congo	94
Chad	84
Sudan	82
Libya	80
Guinea-Bissau	80
Republic of the Congo	77
Burundi	77
Niger	76
Nigeria	76
Zimbabwe	75
Mali	73
Cameroon	71
Equatorial Guinea	69
Ethiopia	67
Mozambique	67
Kenya	66
Mauritania	66
Eritrea	66
Guinea	66
Uganda	62
Angola	61
Madagascar	60
Lesotho	59
Eswatini	59
Gabon	59
Egypt	59
Côte d'Ivoire	59
Zambia	58
Gambia	58
Djibouti	57
Togo	57
Liberia	56
Burkina Faso	56
Sierra Leone	55
Malawi	55
Tanzania	53
Rwanda	53
Senegal	53
South Africa	52
Benin	48
Tunisia	48
Namibia	47
Ghana	45
Botswana	45
Morocco	44
Algeria	43
Mauritius	20

Some countries in the region continued to exhibit political instability, weak rule of law, and corruption, all of which increase the risk of modern slavery. Overall, governance issues were the second greatest driver of vulnerability in the region. South Sudan and Somalia have faced violent clashes and political instability.¹⁹ From 2020 to early 2022, there have been multiple military takeovers in the region: in Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, and Sudan,²⁰ in addition to failed military coups in Niger and Guinea-Bissau.²¹ This political unrest can cause displacement and disrupt national responses to modern slavery, putting people at higher risk.

Poverty and economic inequality drive vulnerability in the Africa region. Thirty-five per cent of people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in poverty.²² Poverty can drive desperate families to marry off daughters to reduce household costs and generate an income through obtaining a bride dowry.²³ Families living in extreme poverty may also require their children to enter the workforce. In 2020, there were more child labourers in Sub-Saharan Africa than in the rest of the world combined.²⁴ Widespread child labour increases the risk of the worst forms of child labour.²⁵ Poverty and limited job opportunities in Africa also drive migration, which increases risk of exploitation by labour recruiters.²⁶ This migration is predominantly intra-regional and marked by the movement of low-skilled workers, particularly in sectors characterised by high demand such as agriculture, aquaculture, construction, resource extraction, and domestic work.²⁷

Compared to other regions, parts of Africa are heavily impacted by conflict. At the end of 2020 there were more than 24 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sub-Saharan Africa, most of whom were displaced due to conflict and violence.²⁸ In Nigeria, the DRC, and South Sudan, modern slavery and related abuses were not only prevalent among IDPs but were inextricably linked to conflict. Perpetrators of slavery-related abuses were largely members of the armed groups or armed forces who deliberately exploited displaced populations to further their conflict-related operations.²⁹ Risks also persist within IDP camps. For example, some camps in Eastern Sudan have decreased security, thereby becoming targets for traffickers.³⁰ The number of people displaced from their homes will only increase further with climate change. It is estimated that without any action on climate change there will be 86 million internal climate migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050.³¹ Displaced populations are highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

“When [armed group] kidnapped me, I was forced to marry one of their leaders.”

Nigerian female on her forced marriage at age 28



What are governments in the region doing to address modern slavery?

Walk Free assessed government responses to modern slavery in 51 countries in the region. Governments across the region scored an average of 36 per cent, the weakest average response of all regions. Overall, while governments improved identification measures and legal frameworks, gaps in services available to survivors remained and only limited action has been taken to address systemic risk factors to modern slavery. While three countries have identified and taken action with high-risk sectors to address modern slavery, no country has taken further action to combat modern slavery in government and business supply chains. South Sudan was excluded from the assessment of government action on modern slavery due to ongoing conflict and extreme disruption to government function.

GDP per capita PPP (current international \$) varies widely across the region. Of the four countries with the strongest responses (Nigeria, South Africa, Rwanda, and Tunisia — see Table 7), it varies from US\$2,494 in Rwanda to a high of US\$14,420 in South Africa.³² Relative to their wealth, both Nigeria and Rwanda are outperforming their wealthiest neighbours in Africa, such as Seychelles, Libya, Mauritius, Equatorial Guinea, and Botswana.³³ Given Rwanda has the lowest GDP per capita of all four countries, but with relatively strong government responses to modern slavery, it is outperforming all countries in the region on action taken to address modern slavery relative to its wealth.

Nigeria (54 per cent), South Africa (53 per cent), and Rwanda (50 per cent) have the strongest responses to modern slavery in the region. Nigeria and South Africa both strongly address risk factors to modern slavery and provide adequate protection to citizens overseas.

Eritrea has the weakest government response to modern slavery in Africa and the second weakest response globally (5 per cent), followed by Libya (10 per cent). Eritrea’s and Libya’s responses are undermined by state-imposed forced labour. Eritrean citizens aged 18 to 40 years are forced into labour indefinitely in the government’s compulsory national service scheme.³⁴ They are threatened with torture, prison, or harm to their family members for refusing to comply.³⁵ In Libya, migrants continue to be trafficked and sold in “slave markets” where they are then tortured for ransom or exploited in forced labour.³⁶ In some instances, the only way out of detention centres for migrants is to be sold to employers.³⁷

Many countries in Africa have taken action to improve their response to modern slavery since our 2018 assessment. Angola introduced the National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and allocated funding and support to the operation of shelters.³⁸ Namibia implemented a National Referral Mechanism and provided police and immigration officials with pocket manuals on procedures.³⁹ The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and Similar Practices in Guinea introduced standard operating procedures for victim identification and referral, however it is unclear if these procedures have been operationalised.⁴⁰

Manica Province, Mozambique, May 2022.

A woman sits outside of a dormitory at a refuge for women and children who have survived sexual violence, gender-based violence, and abandonment. Studies estimate that half of all Mozambican women are married before the age of 18, and more than one in five have experienced violence. Photo credit: Alfredo Zunigo/AFP via Getty Images.

Table 7
Government response score, by country and milestone

Country	Survivors identified and supported (%)	Criminal justice mechanisms (%)	National and regional level coordination (%)	Risk factors are addressed (%)	Government and business supply chains (%)	Total (%)
Nigeria	68	58	50	57	0	54
South Africa	45	69	63	57	0	53
Rwanda	55	62	38	57	0	50
Tunisia	50	54	50	57	0	47
Kenya	55	50	50	50	0	46
Uganda	50	50	75	43	0	46
Ethiopia	41	54	50	57	0	45
Ghana	45	54	63	36	13	45
Mozambique	50	54	50	43	0	45
Zambia	50	46	50	57	0	45
Angola	59	46	63	29	0	44
Egypt	55	42	38	57	0	44
Namibia	55	46	25	57	0	44
Botswana	32	54	63	50	0	42
Madagascar	41	65	25	36	0	42
Tanzania	45	54	50	36	0	42
Cameroon	55	46	38	36	0	41
Liberia	50	42	50	43	0	41
Benin	32	54	50	43	0	40
Lesotho	36	50	50	43	0	40
Morocco	23	54	50	57	0	40
Senegal	36	50	63	36	0	40
Malawi	55	46	38	21	0	38
Côte d'Ivoire	18	50	63	43	13	37
Niger	23	54	50	43	0	37
Algeria	23	54	38	43	0	36
Burkina Faso	45	42	38	29	0	36
Democratic Republic of the Congo	32	42	50	36	13	36
Djibouti	41	46	38	29	0	36
Eswatini	27	38	50	57	0	36
Gambia	23	58	25	43	0	36
Guinea	36	50	38	29	0	36
Mauritius	32	50	25	43	0	36
Mauritania	27	54	38	29	0	35
Guinea-Bissau	32	35	25	57	0	33
Seychelles	23	46	38	43	0	33
Sierra Leone	27	46	38	36	0	33
Togo	27	42	38	43	0	33
Cabo Verde	23	35	50	43	0	31
Mali	23	50	50	14	0	31
Burundi	23	42	63	14	0	29
Republic of the Congo	41	27	38	21	0	28
Central African Republic	23	42	25	21	0	27
Zimbabwe	27	35	38	21	0	27
Sudan	9	46	38	21	0	26
Chad	14	38	13	36	0	24
Gabon	27	31	25	21	0	24
Equatorial Guinea	27	27	25	14	0	22
Somalia	9	27	25	21	0	18
Libya	-9	35	25	-7	0	10
Eritrea	-5	23	25	-21	0	5

“After I reported [my employer] to Labour, they bribed someone at Labour and I was told to return to work.”

29-year-old female domestic worker in Botswana

No country in Africa has fully criminalised all forms of modern slavery, yet legal frameworks have improved in Africa over the last four years. For example, during this period the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 has entered into force in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Côte d'Ivoire.⁴¹ Further, the Republic of the Congo criminalised human trafficking in domestic legislation in 2019.⁴² Encouragingly, 48 out of 51 governments we assessed have provided basic training on victim identification to general police. Only Mauritania, Libya, and Sudan have not.

“Governments should be providing training to government officials, public awareness campaigns, outreach education and advocacy campaigns, and prosecute human trafficking by providing training and technical assistance for law enforcement officials such as police.”

Survivor of modern slavery, Kenya, 2020

The coordination of modern slavery responses has shown some improvement across the region. While 12 countries in the region introduced or implemented National Action Plans (NAPs) to address modern slavery over the past four years, three countries failed to renew their previous plans, and 10 countries remained without formal strategies to combat any form of modern slavery. Only nine of the countries with NAPs have fully funded the activities within those plans (Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, and Mali). Just under half of the governments we assessed in Africa ensure services are provided to all survivors of modern slavery and 28 governments ensure child-friendly services are provided. In Kenya, five child protection centres provide child trafficking and child labour survivors with specialised services.⁴³

Risk factors such as attitudes, social systems, and institutions that enable modern slavery are weakly addressed in the region. There are only five countries in Africa where all children have access to birth registration systems and where over 95 per cent have a registered birth certificate (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Republic of the Congo, and Algeria). No government in the region ensures universal access to healthcare. Further, children

under the age of 18 can legally marry in all countries except Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.

A draft bill in Somalia was proposed in August 2020 that allowed minors to marry based on reproductive maturity, independent of age.⁴⁴ While the bill was ultimately not passed, it reveals a backwards step in terms of gender equality.

Systems are in place that allow asylum seekers to seek protection in 22 countries in the region. No country in Northern Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia) has appropriate systems in place for those seeking to flee humanitarian crises, despite the subregion being a regular migration route. The Libyan and Egyptian coastguards are supported by the European Union to intercept those fleeing and return them to Libya and Egypt where there is evidence of systemic discrimination, arrest, detention, and deportation. In Libya, migrants are additionally vulnerable to being bought and sold in slave markets.⁴⁵ Corruption and complicity also impede efforts to combat modern slavery in 36 out of the 51 countries. In Libya, officials working for coastguard, defence, immigration, and security authorities commit modern slavery crimes without fear of investigation or consequence.⁴⁶ In addition, state-imposed forced labour reportedly occurs in Libya,⁴⁷ Eritrea,⁴⁸ Egypt,⁴⁹ Mali,⁵⁰ Rwanda,⁵¹ and Zimbabwe.⁵²

“The government should be aware of the people migrating, know the reasons why they are migrating, ensure that the contracts and agreements made are valid, and ensure safety and work with the family to know that the migrant is safe.”

Survivor of modern slavery, Kenya, 2020

Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and more recently the DRC are the only countries in the region that have identified high-risk sectors and have taken action to eradicate modern slavery within supply chains. Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire are part of the Harkin-Engel Protocol to combat child labour in the cocoa sector,⁵³ while in 2019 the DRC created a regulatory authority to tackle child labour in cobalt and coltan mines.⁵⁴ However, governments in Africa have not taken broader action such as the introduction of legislation or human rights due diligence laws to ensure government and businesses stop sourcing goods and services produced by forced labour.

Freedom through faith

Faith leaders play an important role to identify, prevent, and remediate modern slavery in their communities. They occupy a unique position as they can see into the hearts of communities and are often a trusted source of information and advice.

“As faith leaders...you can see changes in people that would pass many others by. And you understand what poverty and desperation can do to men, women, and children. So you are uniquely placed to identify victims and help victims by putting them in touch with professionals who can help them and who can help deal with the perpetrators.”

Sheikh Armiyawo Shaibu, spokesperson for Ghana's national chief Imam addressing fellow faith leaders at a Global Freedom Network event in Ghana, 2021

Faith leaders, together with faith-based organisations already working to protect vulnerable people, can empower their communities to act by providing them with the information and tools to understand modern slavery. Walk Free, through its faith-based arm the Global Freedom Network, works with religious leaders across the world to address modern slavery.

In 2014, faiths leaders from many Christian denominations, including Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox, and representatives of Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim faiths came together to sign the “Joint Declaration of Religious Leaders Against Modern Slavery,” pledging to do everything in their power to eradicate modern slavery. Since then, more than 100 of the world's most influential faith leaders from the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania have also pledged to help end modern slavery. The Global Freedom Network is developing a range of tools to support their efforts.

One tool, the Faith for Freedom smartphone app, was developed in consultation with a faith leaders advisory panel and gives faith leaders and their staff information on how to identify, respond to, and prevent modern slavery within their communities. The app has been launched in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa, and will expand to other countries. Further information on Walk Free's work with faith leaders and religious organisations is available from the Walk Free website: <https://www.walkfree.org/projects/global-freedom-network/>.



Nouakchott, Mauritania, June 2018.

Mabrouka was a child when she was taken from her mother, also a survivor of forced labour, and was made to work as a domestic servant for a family in the Rosso area. When Mabrouka was 11 years old, she was badly burned while cooking for her abusers. Although freed in 2011, she was never able to go to school, and was married two years later when she was aged just 16. Now a mother, she is pictured with her own child. Photo credit: Seif Kousmate.

Promising Practices in Africa

Over 20 per cent of evaluated programs housed in the Promising Practices Database are delivered in Africa. These programs cover 42 countries in the region and target several types of modern slavery, including human trafficking, forced, servile or early marriage, the worst forms of child labour, and the use of child soldiers or exploitation of children by armed groups. Awareness-raising awareness campaigns and formal education were the most common interventions delivered in the evaluated programs. Overall, more than 80 per cent of programs delivered in Africa met some or all of their objectives, yet only 13 evaluated programs had a reliable evaluation methodology, scoring 3 or above on the Maryland Scale.⁵⁵

Spotlight on what works

An evaluation of the impact of two government-run unconditional cash transfers programs on early marriage and fertility rates in Malawi and Zambia raises interesting questions about the role of cash transfers in tackling modern slavery. The evaluation found that the impact on safe transition of youth aged 14 to 21 to adulthood (i.e., delayed pregnancy and marriage) was limited in both countries, with the exception of protective impact on marriage for male youth in Malawi.⁵⁶ This might point to the limited impact of cash transfers; however, the Promising Practices Database⁵⁷ and other systematic reviews have found that cash transfers are some of the most promising interventions, particularly when viewed as part of a multisectoral and holistic suite of interventions.

Recommendations for governments

- 1** Ensure support services are available for all survivors of modern slavery – women, men, and children – and that these support services are appropriately resourced.
- 2** The governments of Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Mali, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe should immediately end state-imposed forced labour by repealing legislation and criminalising practices that allow it to occur.
- 3** Raise the minimum legal age of marriage to 18 without exception and support the economic empowerment of women and girls through increasing access to education and providing community empowerment programming.
- 4** Strengthen social protections, such as birth registration, access to education, unemployment insurance, universal healthcare, and sick leave to reduce vulnerability to forced marriage and to provide workers with basic income security. Extend social protection to workers in the informal sector in particular.
- 5** Identify sectors at high risk of forced labour and work with businesses and civil society to develop initiatives to eradicate forced labour and labour exploitation.

Frontline voices:

Modern slavery and the LGBTQI+ community

SHIVAN PAVIN ALUNGNAT

Musician, artist, queer activist, feminist and survivor leader. Founder of Africa Nalia.

Experiencing marginalisation and discrimination is a key factor that can drive people into forms of modern slavery, intensify the lived experience of exploitation, and create barriers to accessing support. Despite some progress, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) community still faces discrimination and marginalisation around the world today, which increases their vulnerability to modern slavery. Shivan Pavin Alungnat is a musician, artist, queer activist, feminist, and survivor leader based in Kenya. Shivan is the author of upcoming research on the intersection between queer communities and human trafficking. Here, Shivan shares their experience and expertise on how the modern slavery movement can best recognise and respond to the unique experiences of the LGBTQI+ community.

Being LGBTQI+ has been viewed as criminal as well as politically, religiously, and traditionally “un-African” across the African continent. The LGBTQI+ community faces systemic discrimination, violence, and exclusion, with society maintaining conservative views on gender identities and roles. Because these factors contribute to vulnerabilities to modern slavery, LGBTQI+ individuals are more vulnerable to various forms of exploitation.

In many African countries, members of the LGBTQI+ community are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and enslavement due to legislation that limits, and in some cases eliminates their rights. For example, some countries, such as Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and, more recently, Uganda, have laws that criminalise homosexuality and impose severe punishments, including imprisonment and even the death penalty. In many other countries, such as Kenya and Zimbabwe, there are laws that restrict the rights of LGBTQI+ people by prohibiting “promoting” homosexuality or denying them access

to health services. These laws have a devastating impact on the LGBTQI+ community, making it difficult for them to access basic services, such as healthcare and education, and putting them at risk of violence and persecution. Despite ongoing efforts by human rights organisations and LGBTQI+ activists, the rights of LGBTQI+ people remain under threat in many African countries. To compound this issue, LGBTQI+ people who flee their home countries to escape persecution may find themselves trapped in exploitative situations, including forced labour and sex trafficking, in countries of asylum.

As well as facing legal barriers to inclusion, research has revealed widespread social intolerance and discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community in Africa. According to one survey, the vast majority of respondents across 34 countries said they would not want to live next door to homosexuals.¹ Only 7 to 14 per cent of respondents in a similar study conducted in Kenya, Tunisia, and Nigeria agreed that homosexuality should be accepted by society.² Wage discrimination and underemployment related

to sexual orientation and gender expression persists across Africa, with one study estimating that such disparity costs South Africa alone US\$316.8 million each year.³

For many LGBTQI+ people, structural disadvantages and societal rejection begin in childhood. Cultural responses can force young members of the LGBTQI+ community into early and forced marriages to “convert” their identities, and access to education can be restricted.

The intersection between the LGBTQI+ community and modern slavery in Africa highlights the need for greater recognition of the unique challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals in the global fight against slavery. To date there has been limited knowledge sharing between both the modern slavery movement and the LGBTQI+ community. As a result, LGBTQI+ people are not always adequately informed about modern slavery risks to which they are likely more vulnerable and service providers in the space frequently lack the required knowledge and training to effectively respond to their needs. This creates multiple barriers to LGBTQI+ survivors accessing support and increases the risk of survivors returning to their situations of exploitation.

In order to address this intersection, it is crucial for governments, NGOs, and the LGBTQI+ community to work together to raise awareness and implement effective prevention and response strategies. This should include:

- Providing safe spaces for LGBTQI+ individuals who are at risk of exploitation, including shelters and support services for survivors of slavery.
- Developing anti-trafficking laws and policies that are inclusive of LGBTQI+ individuals and address their unique needs and experiences.
- Strengthening anti-trafficking efforts by working with LGBTQI+ organisations and advocates to increase awareness and advocacy on this issue.
- Providing training and education to law enforcement, immigration officials, and other relevant stakeholders on the specific challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals in the context of modern slavery.
- Implementing modern slavery programs and services that are specifically designed to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ individuals and ensure their access to justice and protection.



Kigali, Rwanda, May 2022.

Prince, a Rwandan model gets his make-up done before the Isano Fashion Show in Kigali to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. “Families are rejecting their family members because they’re gay, and we are in 2022, people need to get used to LGBTQI+ people”, says model Tonia. Around the world, many LGBTQI+ people face increased risks to modern slavery, included forced into ‘corrective’ marriages. Photo credit: Simon Wohlfahrt/ AFP via Getty Images.