Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach

2023 Impact Report

CenHTRO

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The Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach (CenHTRO), based at the University of Georgia School of Social Work, is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary, and international research hub in the global effort to combat human trafficking.

CenHTRO conducts research, develops programming, and influences policies that drastically and measurably reduce human trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

CenHTRO seeks to address vast gaps in measuring the prevalence of human trafficking worldwide and in implementing evidence-informed interventions. We respond to these disparities by grounding our work in an innovative approach that prioritizes empirical data and values input from survivors of human trafficking.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The power of time never ceases to amaze me. For example, one year has passed since I last wrote the introduction to the Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach Annual Impact Report. 2023 felt as if it passed in an instant. Yet that same year was filled with more achievements and memories that I can fully recount. Thankfully, that's what documents like this one are made for—condensing a multitude of accomplishments and innovations by CenHTRO faculty, staff, and students into a convenient almanac.

Framing our work by way of a calendar, however, doesn't accurately express its scope. Our impact this year stands upon what we've built before, and it supports, in turn, what we will be able to achieve going forward. Our work is a process of time—the past, present, and future are in constant conversation. This is key to the sustainability of our work.

Keep time in mind when thinking of CenHTRO. We are a young organization, formed not long ago in 2021. Yet we draw from our team's decades of interdisciplinary and international experience to tackle a serious problem. We have already established ourselves as a prominent influence on the science of human trafficking estimation and proved the potency of our evidence-informed approach to anti-trafficking program implementation. In the pages that follow, you'll witness how CenHTRO is shaping upcoming phases of the global anti-trafficking movement through ground-breaking research methods and survivor-informed interventions.

This report celebrates the successful completion of our first project in Sierra Leone and Guinea (page 20). Thinking of the past, present, and future, I hesitate to view this moment with any sense of closure, simply because our work in West Africa, particularly in Senegal and Sierra Leone, will continue (page 10).

We are strengthening and broadening these programs. Building upon their success, we have expanded into new areas. Our work on labor trafficking in Southern Africa will gain incredible speed in 2024—we're excited to disseminate our research and begin our financial capability programs in Malawi and Zambia (page 24), where we appreciate the opportunity to once again showcase the effectiveness of our mission.

If 2023 disappeared quickly, I believe this year will pass by in a flash. We are in the final stages of the Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum project, which has redefined the field of human trafficking prevalence measurement (page 30). Our work to create universal legal definitions of human trafficking alongside three United Nations agencies has reached a critical phase, with CenHTRO conducting a series of stakeholder workshops in Asia, Africa, South America and Europe (page 33). There's certainly more, on which this report will elaborate.

With the anticipation of another busy year buzzing as I conclude this message, I can't wait to sit down and do it all again. Until next time!

Sincerely,

David Okech
Director

IMPACTBY THENUMBERS

4233 INDIVIDUALS TRAINED IN PREVENTION, PROTECTION, AND PROSECUTION RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

268 HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES IDENTIFIED AND PROVIDED WITH SHELTER, PSYCHOSOCIAL, REINTEGRATION AND OTHER SERVICES

124 LEGAL ACTIONS TAKEN: INVESTIGATIONS, ARRESTS, AND PROSECUTIONS

16 COMMUNITY BY-LAWS TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING CREATED

12 JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS TRAINED TO REPORT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

4 BASELINE REPORTS PUBLISHED AND DISSEMINATED

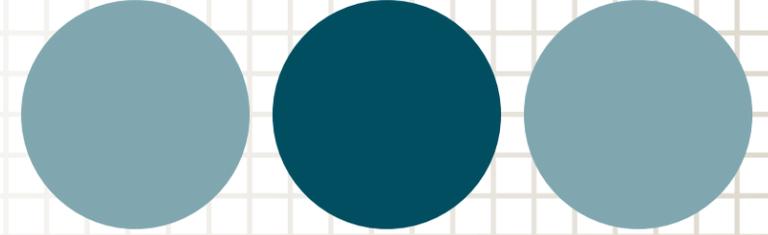**1** REGIONAL AGREEMENT DEVELOPED

1 NATIONAL LEGISLATION SUPPORTED

SENEGAL

Combating Sex Trafficking in the Gold Mining Areas of Kédougou, Senegal

CenHTRO works to combat the sex trafficking of girls and young women in the gold mining areas of Kédougou, Senegal, in the country's southeast regional along the Mali and Guinea borders. Accompanying the early 2023 release of baseline research, CenHTRO made significant progress in its efforts to identify cases of sex trafficking and provide protective care to survivors, train stakeholders in prevention measures, help survivors seek justice, and strengthen a sustainable national anti-trafficking response.

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PUBLICATIONS
Sex Trafficking in the
Gold Mining Areas of Kédougou, Senegal

New Evidence on Sex Trafficking in the Gold
Mining Areas of Kédougou, Senegal:
Implications for Policy

PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS
Free the Slaves (FTS)
United Nations Office on
Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
La Lumière

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

DISSEMINATION OF BASELINE FINDINGS
CenHTRO held two dissemination workshops of our baseline research in July and October of 2023. Attended by a wide spectrum of anti-human trafficking stakeholders from the Senegalese government, international and regional embassies, academia, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations, the interactive workshops allowed CenHTRO to present a detailed understanding of our research and debate ways to improve services delivered to sex trafficking survivors.

EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
CenHTRO's Senegal Think Tank developed nine policy briefs based on our baseline findings targeted for specific Senegalese government ministries, including the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Women and the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning. Accompanying the Think Tank's networking with key stakeholders, the briefs are serving as educational tools that will improve trafficking-related policymaking and delivery of survivor services across the government agencies.

COMMUNITY-LED PROTECTION + PREVENTION
In Kédougou, community vigilance committees (CVCs) formed by FTS helped identify 163 sex trafficking survivors, most of whom came from Nigeria, and refer them to services with our shelter partner, La Lumiere, where they receive trauma-informed care. To date, FTS has established 19 CVCs in Kédougou.

GRASSROOTS SURVIVOR CARE
CenHTRO's partnership with Free the Slaves has developed the technical capacity and coordination skills among grassroots implementing partners to more effectively deliver services to survivors of sex trafficking and their families. Shelter partners, community health workers ("bajenu gox"), as well as social service and healthcare providers have received training, monitoring, and technical assistance via the project.

INCREASING AND IMPROVING PROSECUTION
FTS and partner Association of Senegalese Jurists (AJS) conduct consultation interviews with survivors to identify their legal assistance needs, should they wish to pursue prosecution. To date, the project has led to at least four convictions and possibly more, pending verification. More than a dozen other cases are currently in process via Malian and Senegalese courts.
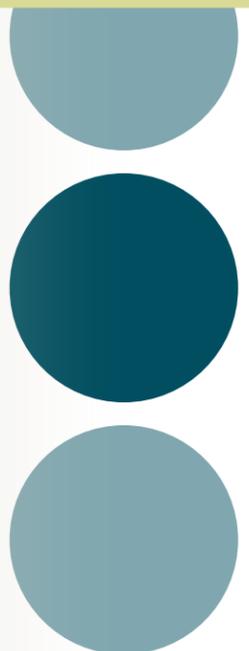
This year, UNODC conducted capacity building training of 17 magistrates and law enforcement officers in human trafficking identification, investigation and prosecution. UNODC also trained at least 22 local Kédougou actors, including members of the local child protection committees, gendarmerie, and civil society representatives, on the referral mechanism for the provision of assistance to victims of human trafficking
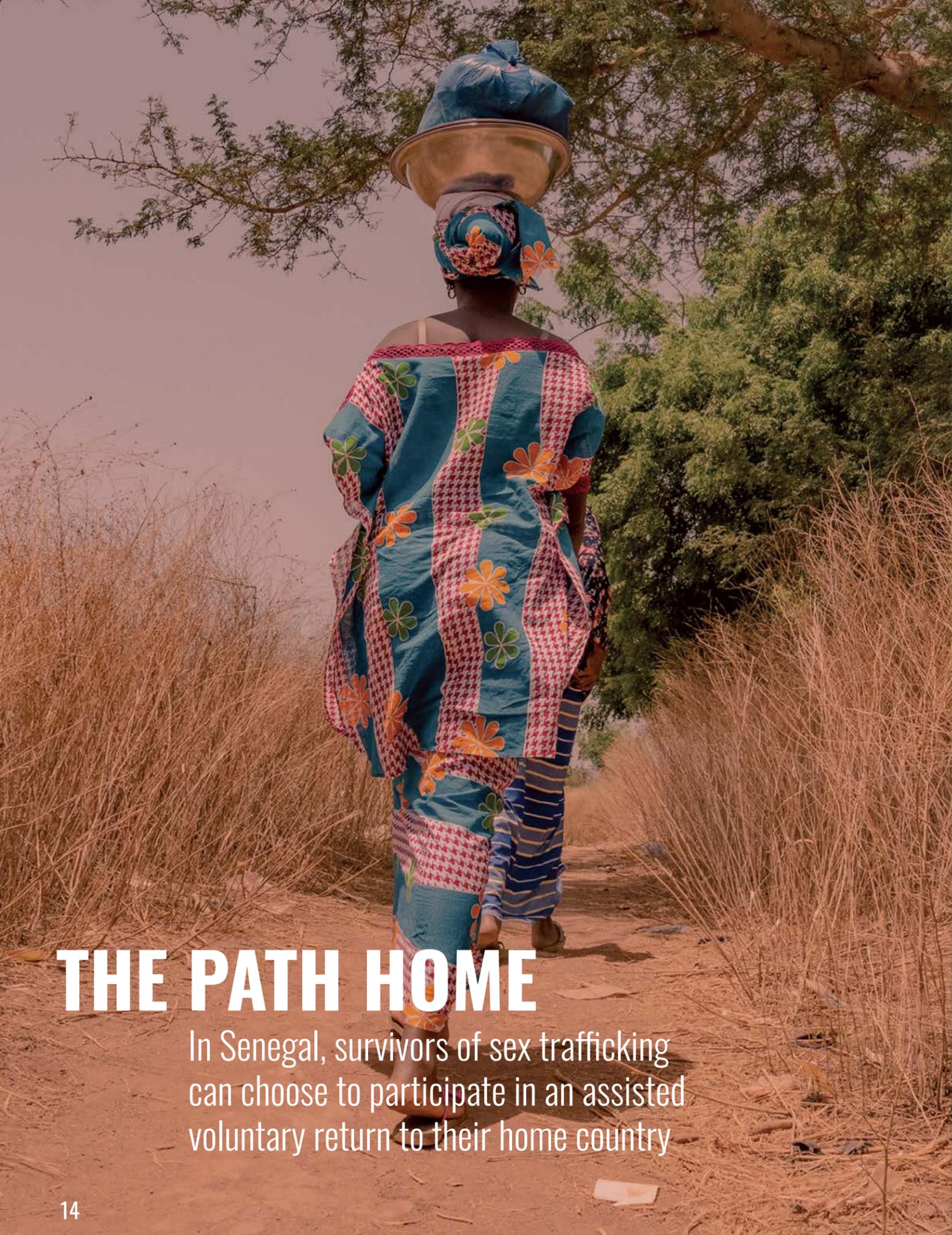
MINING SECTOR ADVANCEMENT
UNODC has also delivered technical assistance to government stakeholders and mining representatives, with an aim to integrate anti-sex trafficking provisions in national mining legislation. This effort will increase protections for victims and promote measures to suppress sex trafficking, and human trafficking in general, in the artisanal gold mining sector by enlisting local leadership in becoming anti-trafficking actors.

ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURNS
To date, 84 survivors have been assisted with their voluntary return to Nigeria, coordinated with the Nigerian Embassy in Senegal. The returned survivors have been provided with reintegration livelihood services in their home country, and at least 37 survivors have been enrolled in various education programs. Our work to return survivors to their home countries was noted in the U.S. Department of State 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report.

THE PATH HOME

In Senegal, survivors of sex trafficking can choose to participate in an assisted voluntary return to their home country

In the gold mining communities of Kédougou, girls and young women from across West Africa are experiencing sex trafficking. They left their homes in search of good jobs abroad, but were instead forced to participate in commercial sex.

As we work to reduce the prevalence of this exploitation in Senegal, CenHTRO emphasizes survivor care in its response. From identification and removal from a trafficking situation, to reintegration and return, our partnership with Free the Slaves guides survivors on a sustainable path to healing and, in some cases, back home.

The journey often begins with community vigilance committees, who are trained through our program to help identify survivors of sex trafficking and collaborate with law enforcement to remove them from their exploitative situations. Survivors are then placed in a rehabilitation center operated by La Lumière, where they receive gender-sensitive and trauma-informed care and psychosocial services as part of their recovery. At the shelter, survivors also receive legal assistance through a partnership with the Association of Senegalese Jurists (AJS). They are helped, if they so choose, to pursue justice through the appropriate judicial system.

As the majority of survivors helped through our programs have come from other countries, usually Nigeria, survivors can then decide to participate in an assisted voluntary return to their home country. Of the 163 survivors served so far, 83 have selected this option.

Back home, their journey continues.

Survivors receive extended rehabilitation care through a partnership developed with Emmanuel World Children Foundation in Nigeria, and they participate in life and financial skills workshops. Vocational training, general education, and income-generating opportunities are made available to them, and many survivors have benefitted from these programs.
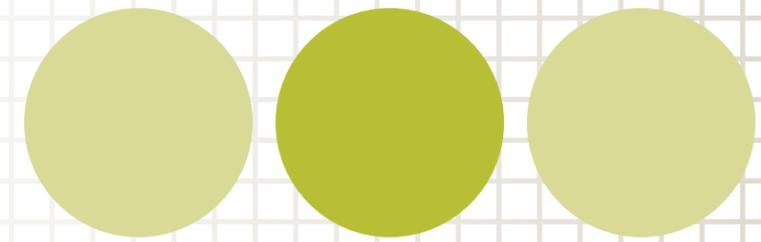
One survivor now sells footwear. She was supported to rent a shop, and later, a vendor was engaged to supply footwear, furniture, electronics, and other materials for sale. Her business continues to expand. Other survivors have been trained in trades, like cosmetology and the culinary arts. Overall, survivors are becoming less vulnerable to trafficking and, going forward, our partners are maintaining connection and communication to ensure their journey's progress.

SIERRA LEONE
Combating Child Trafficking in Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, & Kono

CenHTRO works to combat child trafficking in four districts in Sierra Leone: Kambia in the Northwest Province and Kailahun, Kenema, and Kono in the Eastern Province. In addition to projects that have successfully increased and improved protection and prevention efforts in Sierra Leone, in 2023 CenHTRO advanced its work to strengthen judicial and law enforcement response in human trafficking. Additionally, Sierra Leone has been a launchpad for a promising regional partnership to address human trafficking.

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PUBLICATIONS
Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Sierra Leone

Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Kambia, Sierra Leone

Recommendations for Policy

The New Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act: Implications for Policy and Practice

PROGRAM PARTNERS
World Hope International
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Antobert Consultancy
Journalism Centre on Global Trafficking

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL COLLABORATION TO FIGHT TRAFFICKING

Alongside the Government of Sierra Leone, CenHTRO hosted the Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking in Freetown in April 2023. The event brought together over 300 ministers and delegates representing West African governments, NGOs, civil society organizations, and anti-trafficking professionals to share their experiences in implementing strategies to combat human trafficking.

ENHANCING ECOWAS RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

During the regional conference in April 2023, high-level meetings between ECOWAS ministers produced the conference's key outcome: the drafting and signing of the Freetown Roadmap on Enhancing the Combat of Trafficking in Persons in the ECOWAS Region, which will become part of the next ECOWAS Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons. CenHTRO played an essential role in the document's development, following substantial engagement with the Sierra Leone Office of the Vice President and the National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Secretariat/ Task Force over more than two years.

EXPANDING RESEARCH ON CHILD TRAFFICKING

A new baseline report on child trafficking and child labor in Kambia, a northern district in Sierra Leone that borders Guinea, extends CenHTRO's 2022 research on the topic covering the Eastern Province: Kailahun, Kenema, and Kono districts. Findings demonstrated similar prevalence to our Eastern Province baseline and have been used to expand our programming by WHI in Kambia, involving community leaders, law enforcement, and district officials in prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts.

ANALYZING NEW LEGISLATION

Sierra Leone Think Tank consultant Reuben Lewis developed a policy brief concerning the new Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act of 2022, which was drafted with considerable input from CenHTRO and was signed into law by President Julius Maada Bio in August 2022. Lewis examined the law's potential impact and limitations, providing a short, detailed explanation of its implications for future policy and programming efforts.

EXPANDING COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO CHILD TRAFFICKING

CenHTRO worked with WHI to fund the first child trafficking shelter outside Freetown in 2023. At the Self Help and Development Everywhere (SHADE) shelter in Kambia, we provided anti-trafficking capacity building and robust salary support, and also offered regular consulting services to government social workers outside of existing shelters. In addition, CenHTRO supported WHI in continuing their community prevention efforts with anti-trafficking community groups, who received income-generating support to maintain their grassroots child protection work in the future.

INCREASING INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTIONS

CenHTRO worked to establish a UNODC office in Sierra Leone in 2023, whose project director has roots in Sierra Leone's justice system. UNODC and CenHTRO worked together to hold two consultation workshops with practitioners working at national and local levels to inform a critically needed training resource for law enforcement and judiciary personnel. Bringing together a variety of actors who do not often work closely together proved to be very fruitful, as rural community leaders and Freetown justices alike left with a desire to work together to strengthen survivors' access to justice.

CREATING ANTI-TRAFFICKING HEROES:

Freetown-based Antobert Consultancy, working closely with CenHTRO Sierra Leone team, gave the first ever training on human trafficking to 66 members of the Parliament of Sierra Leone. This training is part of advocacy efforts to not only raise awareness among Parliamentarians on trafficking issues, but create anti-trafficking champions among members of Parliament and civil and public servants alike. Despite political differences, Parliamentarians from both parties attended at an impressive rate.

TRAINING SIERRA LEONE JOURNALISTS ON INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

CenHTRO partnered with the Journalism Centre on Global Trafficking in 2023 to create an impactful training fellowship for 12 Sierra Leone journalists to increase and improve reporting on human trafficking in the country's media organizations. Stories from the project covered multiple districts across Sierra Leone and topics included child labor exploitation in mining and agriculture, with many creating community dialogue and impact. The project continues with a new cohort in 2024.

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMING IN WEST AFRICA

In 2023, CenHTRO concluded a five-year project that aimed to study and combat child trafficking in Sierra Leone and Guinea, funded by the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Our work produced a baseline prevalence estimation report for each country and led to significant awareness of and impact on child trafficking, and human trafficking in general, across the region. While a military coup in Guinea in 2021 led to the closure of our project in the country, CenHTRO is proud to have made tremendous progress in Sierra Leone. Our multi-faceted, collaborative approach has laid the groundwork for sustainable anti-trafficking responses by local partners, which continues through 2024 via ongoing federal funding.

CenHTRO sought to understand the prevalence of child trafficking, as well as its key drivers and vulnerabilities, in select hotspot districts—Kailahun, Kenema, and Kono. The mixed-method study, which is the largest-ever study on the topic produced in Sierra Leone, highlighted what was required of international, national, regional and local actors to reduce child trafficking. The report helped develop evidence-based and targeted interventions that effectively reduced exploitation. The report noted that abuse of informal fostering arrangements was a common circumstance in child trafficking cases; its recommendations included improving support for survivors of child trafficking and strengthening preventative laws.

Collaborating with implementing partner World Hope International (WHI), our anti-trafficking programs improved outcomes for survivors and built a strong network of committed anti-trafficking actors throughout Sierra Leone society, including government officials, law enforcement, and grassroots community groups. Together, we increased and enhanced services for survivors, namely through WHI's Recovery Centre in Freetown, the only shelter of its kind for trafficking survivors in the country. We collaborated with law enforcement to increase referrals of survivors to support services. We partnered with local communities to successfully reintegrate survivors back into safe environments in their home villages. Our programs supported the families of survivors with income generating activities that would prevent future vulnerabilities to re-trafficking.

Our efforts trained hundreds of officials, social workers, law enforcement, and community members to identify and prevent child trafficking in various capacities, leading to an increase in arrests and prosecutions of child trafficking cases. Additionally, partnering with the Journalism Centre on Global Trafficking, we helped local media develop investigative reporting skills to produce impactful stories on human trafficking. Those stories sparked widespread community conversation and created immediate impact, including village leaders to improve monitoring of child labor exploitation in mining.

As we take a moment to celebrate our success today, the work continues tomorrow.

THE WORK CONTINUES

KEY PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act of 2022
- National Stakeholder Conference on Trafficking in Persons, February 2022
- Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking, April 2023
- The Freetown Roadmap

SUSTAINABILITY

In 2023, the Government of Sierra Leone announced 27 new government-funded positions dedicated to anti-trafficking efforts. We also learned that the government plans to fund the Recovery Centre shelter in Freetown. Given that our project aimed to persuade the Government of Sierra Leone to fund the Recovery Centre and make other critical allocations to human trafficking issues, we consider these developments as achievements. In our ongoing work, we continue to advocate with the Government of Sierra Leone for more dedicated funding to specific anti-trafficking needs. We have heard from many partners that CenHTRO is perceived as the leading organization on human trafficking in Sierra Leone, and that our consistent advocacy has raised human trafficking among priorities for national and local governments.

PROTECTING SURVIVORS

One of our goals in Sierra Leone was to better protect children by increasing community awareness about how child trafficking was happening in these communities. In turn, trafficking situations would be recognized and referred to relevant agencies and authorities. Additionally, we wanted to ensure that children who'd experienced trafficking were being cared for in ways that put them on a path to healing. An intervention devised with WHI strengthened trauma-informed practices at the Recovery Centre. We looked at what survivors needed to successfully reintegrate into their home communities—like education or skills training—and we made sure they were ready to go home. Survivors and their families received extended reintegration support and income-generating activity (IGA) support.

The story of Baindu Momoh, a mother of a child trafficking survivor, exemplifies CenHTRO's work in survivor care. Find her story on page 23.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Communities in Sierra Leone faced knowledge and access barriers to reporting cases of child trafficking, and community-based protection was minimal if available at all. Parents, typically mothers, who were opposed to their child being sent into menpikin placements, lacked support. Concerns about a culture of silence around child trafficking were noted as a key barrier for community-level child trafficking prevention.

In response, CenHTRO worked with Village Parent Groups (VPGs) and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) in rural communities to strengthen knowledge and preventative action around child trafficking. We trained 576 members of

VPGs and CWCs to identify and refer trafficking cases. We also provided key resources to these groups. For example, VPGs were given office space in Kenema where community members can report cases of child trafficking and where parents can find peer support. We also conducted school training with children, teachers, and other school representatives on appropriate identification and response to child trafficking.

In addition to directly combating the culture of silence around human trafficking, our approach empowered community members to effectively respond to child trafficking, knowing what to report, where to report, and why to report.

PREVENTING TRAFFICKING

CenHTRO worked directly with local leaders, particularly paramount chiefs, to develop contextually relevant, community-driven prevention and response strategies. This included working with these traditional leaders to draft community bylaws that addressed child trafficking that were consistent with national policies while maintaining contextual relevance. Additionally, we assisted paramount chiefs in implementing the bylaws locally, including identification and follow-up procedures. Our work with paramount chiefs began in Kenema and has since expanded to include Kono, Kailahun, and Kambia. By increasing collaboration between traditional leaders and local government structures, we built the capacity of communities to identify trafficking situations and provide timely responses.

Hassan Konteh, VPG Chairman of the Gumbu Community, Kenema.

Patrick and Frances Jimmy, CWC representatives from the Nyandeyama community, Kenema.

"We have one bylaw for every district now. Any child going to a foster parent must be registered, That cautions everybody. It is not as rampant as it was. Gradually, we are succeeding."

— Paramount Chief
Foday Stephen Fabah (right)

BAINDU'S STORY

Life in rural Sierra Leone offers few economic opportunities to parents like Baindu Momoh and even fewer to her children. Surviving through subsistence farming and small-scale trading, Baindu has struggled to feed and educate her daughter.

So when a distant relative living in a larger town offered to take Baindu's daughter into her home and send her to school, Baindu felt relief. It was an opportunity for her child to secure a future and one fewer hungry belly for her to worry over.

But solace soon turned to dread. Instead of attending school, the girl was forced into domestic servitude. She suffered beatings when she protested her treatment. Informal fostering situations, in which a child lives apart from their biological parents, are common across Africa and have helped generations of children attend school and escape extreme poverty. But bad actors abuse the tradition, meaning children wind up being forced to work in agriculture or cleaning houses when they should be learning math and science.

When Baindu's daughter mustered the courage to escape, she began a long walk back to her mother's village, a roughly 30-minute car ride away down unpaved roads. Along the way, village leaders noticed the young girl walking alone and inquired about her condition. Having been trained to identify and respond to human trafficking by CenHTRO and WHI, the villagers notified local authorities. Cared for in a trauma-informed facility run by CenHTRO's partner, the girl and her mother would soon find a path to healing.

To help recover from her experiences, Baindu's daughter was taken to WHI's Recovery Centre. Social workers trained in trauma-informed practices cared for the girl. Baindu met with her daughter at the shelter. Counseled by therapists, they prepared to return home. As CenHTRO's research noted that poor families required additional post-trafficking support, the family received school supplies and food. Baindu received income-generating support, meaning social workers helped her buy goods to sell at her local market. This small amount of help, Baindu said, relieved the economic pressure on her family.

Today, Baindu's daughter is attending school and doing well.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Combating Labor Trafficking in Malawi & Zambia

The first phase of CenHTRO's anti-trafficking research and programming in Southern Africa made essential progress in 2023. In January, CenHTRO faculty traveled to the project countries on scoping visits, establishing key relationships with local stakeholders and finalizing target districts for research and programs: Mangochi and Blantyre in Malawi; Sesheke, Chipata, Lusaka, and Livingstone in Zambia. In June, our financial capability partners also made scoping trips, meeting with policymakers, financial institutions, NGOs, and others in preparation for interventions in Phase 2, which begins in 2024.

CenHTRO again traveled to both project countries in September to participate in data collector training. The qualitative component of our baseline study began not long after. This element of our mixed-methods approach included in-depth interviews with survivors and at-risk young adults in the target demographic and key informants. We conducted focus group discussions with community members, national anti-trafficking task forces, and other relevant stakeholders to document existing service, policy, and knowledge gaps that drive and facilitate labor trafficking. Additionally, our team completed a quantitative household survey to estimate the prevalence of labor trafficking among our target population. The quantitative research continues in early 2024, employing respondent-driven sampling to conduct a survey with young adults who have returned from working abroad. As our project in Southern Africa enters the implementation phase in 2024, we will continue to collect qualitative and quantitative data to adapt our financial capability interventions. The programs we've designed, which may include digital savings groups and financial guidance, will address identified gaps and barriers in accessing vocational training and affordable loans, and promise to achieve a significant reduction in labor trafficking.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Reduce the prevalence of cross-border labor trafficking of at-risk 18-37-year-olds by 15% by 2028 in six districts in Malawi and Zambia.

- Increase by 50% the number of at-risk 18-37-year-olds and labor trafficking survivors who demonstrate financial capability.

- Increase by 30% the number of equitable financial programs, services, or policies adopted.

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Washington University in St. Louis
University of Malawi
University of Zambia

REGIONAL
COLLABORATION
IN WEST AFRICA

PERSONNEL
Hope Dockweiler, Policy Officer
Ansoumane Bangoura, ECOWAS Officer

The cross-border nature of human trafficking across West Africa has been affirmed continually since CenHTRO began working in the region. Children from Sierra Leone are trafficked as domestic servants in Guinea. Nigerian girls and young women are forced into commercial sex in Senegal. Our baseline research has pointed to the necessity for West African governments and regional entities to work in partnership to curb human trafficking.

The call for improved cross-border collaboration has been repeated in documentation from partner organizations, discussions with law enforcement and diplomatic stakeholders, and engagements with regional anti-trafficking leaders.

CenHTRO is responding. The first step was co-facilitating the Regional Conference of ECOWAS States on Ending Human Trafficking in April 2023. CenHTRO has subsequently been working to identify a strategic opportunity to expand our country-specific experience to an engagement that is regional in scope and builds on the objectives outlined in the Freetown Roadmap.

In February 2024, CenHTRO will launch the West Africa Regional Cohort with an in-person convening set to take place in Abuja, Nigeria. The cohort will consist of focal leaders representing the national anti-trafficking task forces of four West

African countries: Senegal, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Nigeria.
Over the span of the next two years, cohort members will work towards two primary goals: harmonizing practices and mutualizing efforts for context-specific trauma-informed protective care of victims across the region, and enhancing cross-border collaboration and communication frameworks. The tools and mechanisms developed in coordination with these initial four countries are intended to be replicable across the region at-large.

Although trauma-informed care training and implementation frameworks have been integrated on some level within the region, the identified gap lies in connecting these psychosocial, evidence-based ideals to the nuanced specifics of localized cultural norms, country contexts, and survivor experiences.

By facilitating collaboration between West African national and regional governing entities with survivor advocates, trauma experts, and frontline responders, this engagement seeks to establish a way forward in protective services that is intricately informed by West African perspectives.

International Social Services-West Africa (ISS-WA) will be joining CenHTRO in facilitating this effort as consultative experts on the regional implementation of protective service instruments.

'INNOVATION POWERHOUSE'

CenHTRO researchers are untangling the complexities of human trafficking to make a real difference in the lives of people around the world

By Lydia Aletraris, Anna Cody, and Hui Yi

Human trafficking is often described as an incredibly complex problem to solve. We say this because human trafficking occurs in many variations across the world. But there's emotional complexity as well: The exploitation of real people is at the core of the crime. Responding to it as social scientists who are guided by social work principles requires us to reckon with immense suffering and not turn away.

Human trafficking presents research challenges that only deepen to the complexity we've described. To begin, it's a nascent field of study. Many well-meaning qualitative and quantitative scientists have struggled to know exactly what to count as human trafficking and how best to count it. For years, researchers worked in silos, employing independent definitions to guide their surveys, which made comparative analysis impossible. An overreliance on administrative records versus primary data limited what we knew. As a result, governments and NGOs designed responses to human trafficking based on distorted data. Funding was spent inefficiently, making it difficult to evaluate the true impact of our efforts.

Untangling these complexities is a core part of CenHTRO's aim to improve the science of human trafficking research. An early benchmark we met was standardizing our research-specific understanding of human trafficking—or, simply put, deciding what to count. Through the Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum, we developed definitions and indicators that are currently being used by researchers across the world. These standards allow us to study, compare, and analyze human trafficking in its many forms in a multitude of contexts.

We've also experimented with how best to estimate its prevalence. People experiencing trafficking are a hidden population: victims and survivors are difficult to reach for interviews and surveys. While hard-to-reach-population survey techniques have been employed for decades in measuring other social issues, many existing methods didn't always work for human trafficking. To create a novel approach, we borrowed from other fields and hybridized promising estimation methods, like network scale up method and respondent-driven sampling, adapting them for the human trafficking context. It was a learning process beset by challenges with sample sizes and survey biases.

But we've developed a menu of responses and can now adapt our strategy to a multitude of contexts. We began by leaning on other disciplines to help us understand and combat this problem and became pioneers along the way. Researchers in other fields can now borrow elements from our ground-breaking human trafficking work.

A theme has emerged in our approach to tackling human trafficking: interdisciplinary innovation. CenHTRO's faculty and research team come from social work, public health, economics, political science, statistics, law, education, and sociology. These pieces have built a strong whole that has been able to interrogate human trafficking in new ways—both our qualitative and quantitative understandings of the problem improve with each survey we design. For example, our interdisciplinary knowledge has made questionnaires more trauma-informed and incorporated voices from the communities where we conduct research. When we encounter an issue in our design, we find there is often a solution contained somewhere in our diverse experience and expertise. In short, we've set a standard for robust, multidimensional research that views obstacles as opportunities to improve.

Our recent research on labor trafficking in Southern Africa showcases the synergy CenHTRO applies to research. In Malawi and Zambia, we're employing a rapid qualitative analysis approach, increasingly common in sister fields, that promises to deliver both data and context quickly. The process adds a dynamism to our quantitative work, and vice versa. Additionally, we can quickly deliver research into practitioners' hands where it can make an expeditious impact.

In the fight to end human trafficking, CenHTRO has become an innovation powerhouse. And this innovation is driven by great purpose. Because real people's lives are involved, the stakes are high. Our tenacity to make a difference should match.

2023 PUBLICATIONS

Yi, H., Vincent, K., Okech, D., Kewashima, T., Edgemon, T., Clay-Warner, J., & Aletraris, L. An empirical comparison of a traditional strategy and network scale-Up method for prevalence estimation of child trafficking in Sierra Leone. *Crime & Delinquency*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287231170122

Schroeder, E., Okech, D., Yi, H., Bolton, C., & Aletraris, L. Do social service interventions for human trafficking survivors work? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231204885
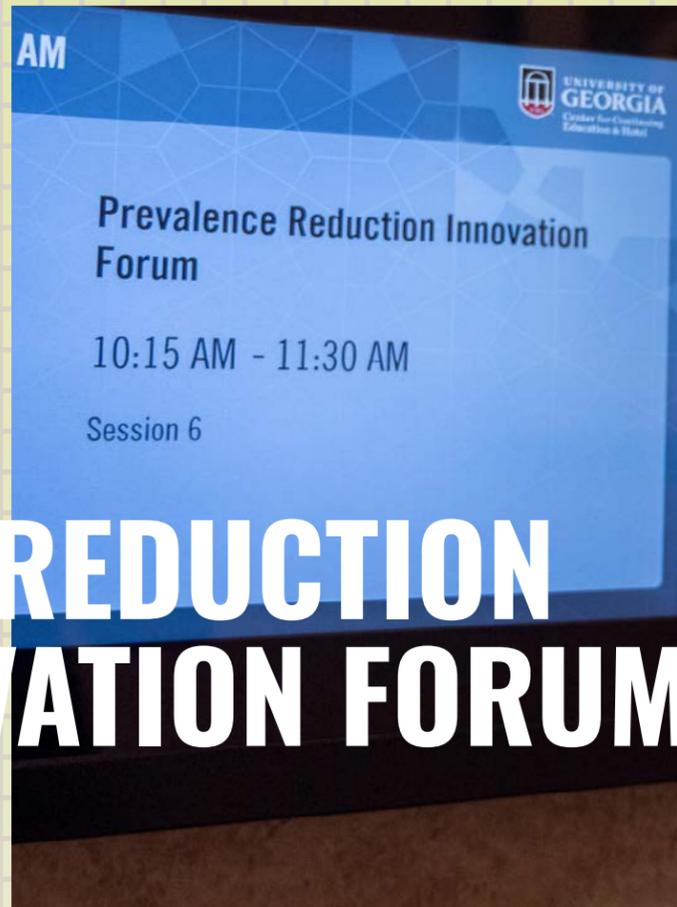
Cody, A., Okech, D., Yi, H., Aletraris, L., Clay-Warner, J., & Calland, T. When child trafficking and informal fostering intersect: A mixed methods study. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*. https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v24i2.2026

Balch, A., Cody, A., Okech, D., Callands, T., Fofanah, U., Wurie, H.R., Unveiling Child Trafficking: Local Perspectives and Context in Addressing Sustainable Development Goals in Sierra Leone. *Global Policy*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13322

Okech, D., Cody, A. Callands, T. Afroz, F, Balch, A. Bolton, C., Fofanah, U., Aletraris, L. Stakeholder perceptions of gaps and solutions in addressing child trafficking. *Children and Youth Service Review*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2024.107475

Edgemon, T., Clay Warner, J., Kewashima, T., Okech, D., & Anarfi, J., Violent victimization increases psychological distress among women trafficking survivors in Ghana. *Violence Against Women*. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012241231780

Burns, A., Balch, A., Wurie, H. *The Role of Data in Strengthening the Response to Trafficking in Persons: Opportunities for Replicating and Scaling in West Africa*. Center on Human Trafficking Research & Outreach, University of Georgia. https://cenhtro.uga.edu/_resources/documents/Role_Data_Human_Trafficking_CenHTRO_C.pdf
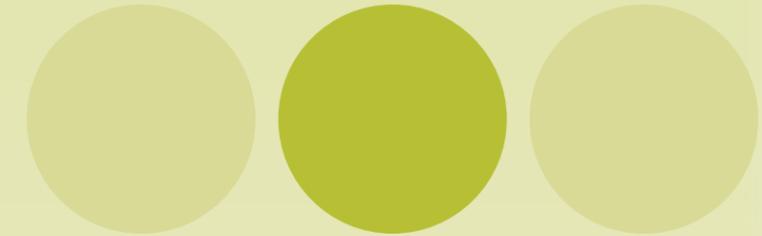
PREVALENCE REDUCTION INNOVATION FORUM

F or the past three years, the Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum (PRIF) has supported seven international teams of researchers in testing the effectiveness of various methodological approaches to measuring human trafficking in six countries. Each team has worked in different trafficking contexts—across geography, demographics, and type of trafficking—to test various estimation methodologies, like network scale up method and respondent-driven sampling. Employing a common set of statistical definitions and indicators developed by CenHTRO, the teams worked collaboratively toward a goal of improving the science of human trafficking prevalence estimation.

In May 2023, CenHTRO hosted the PRIF research teams on the University of Georgia campus to present findings and discuss insights from their ground-breaking experiments to enhance the science of human trafficking prevalence estimations. The conference featured sessions on challenges in implementation of field activities, implications for estimation and measurement, ethics of conducting research with vulnerable populations, and implications for policy and programming. Additionally, a key component of the PRIF project is a meta-analysis conducted by WZB Berlin Social Science Center, which assessed the robustness of PRIF study designs, specifically sampling and estimation strategies, based on simulated and real data coming. The conference included a robust discussion of the meta-analysis and its implications for producing cost-effective human trafficking estimations in various global contexts.

CenHTRO convened the PRIF teams again in November for the virtual Results from the Field conference that attracted a global audience of researchers, funders, and practitioners. CenHTRO Director David Okech detailed project findings and what lessons can be gleaned for the greater community working to research and combat human trafficking. Results from the Field marked the first public dissemination of the results so far.

In December, CenHTRO launched the PRIF Learning Series, a sequence of virtual events that allows PRIF researchers the opportunity to present their findings in-depth to a public audience. The inaugural learning series featured Sheldon Zhang from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. The series continues in 2024 with events led by each PRIF team.

In early 2024, the Journal of Human Trafficking will publish a special issue with the PRIF prevalence findings. The manuscript is edited by Okech and Aletraris, and guest reviewed by Lisa Johnston and Katie McLaughlin (Oregon State University) from the Hard-to-Reach Population Methods Group and CenHTRO Research Scientist Hui Yi.

PERSONNEL
David Okech, PRIF Director
Lydia Aletraris, PRIF Coordinator

PUBLICATIONS
Human Trafficking Statistical Definitions
Human Trafficking Core Indicators (coming soon)
Prevalence Estimation Methodology Explainers

RESEARCH TEAMS
New York University
*Estimating the Prevalence of Forced Labor
in the Fishing Industry in Costa Rica*

*Estimating the Prevalence of Domestic Servitude
among Tanzanian Migrant Domestic Workers*

The Freedom Fund
*Estimating the Prevalence of
Child Sex Trafficking in Brazil*

NORC at the University of Chicago
*Estimating the Prevalence of
Forced Labor Among Domestic Workers in Morocco*

University of Massachusetts Lowell
*Estimating the Prevalence of
Forced Labor Among Domestic Workers in Tunisia*

Johns Hopkins University
*Estimating the Prevalence of
Forced Labor in the Brick Kiln Industry in Pakistan*

Stanford University
*Estimating the Prevalence of
Human Trafficking in Brazilian Agriculture*

SNAPSHOTS

UGA OPEN HOUSE

For a banquet event at the Georgia Museum of Art on the University of Georgia campus, CenHTRO welcomed a diverse audience from our academic community, as well as international partners and colleagues from the United Kingdom, Guinea, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. We shared an overview presentation of the evidence-to-action approach that we employ in our global projects and celebrated the successes we've achieved so far.

PARTNERSHIP WITH UN AGENCIES

In 2023, CenHTRO's David Okech and Lydia Aletraris participated in meetings in Geneva, Switzerland at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and in Vienna, Austria at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) that were pivotal in advancing several key aspects of the Standard Tools for Analysis of Trafficking in Persons (STATIP) project that CenHTRO . So far, the ILO, UNODC, the International Organization for Migration, and CenHTRO have worked together on defining forced labor and trafficking in persons, exploring the use of administrative data for prevalence estimation, evaluating existing survey tools, and aligning the Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum human trafficking indicators with the corresponding ILO indicators of forced labor.

FACULTY RESEARCH SEED GRANTS

CenHTRO's two inaugural faculty research seed grants concluded activities with great success and an eye toward future development.

Comprehensive Training Protocol for Stakeholders Serving Trafficked Youth
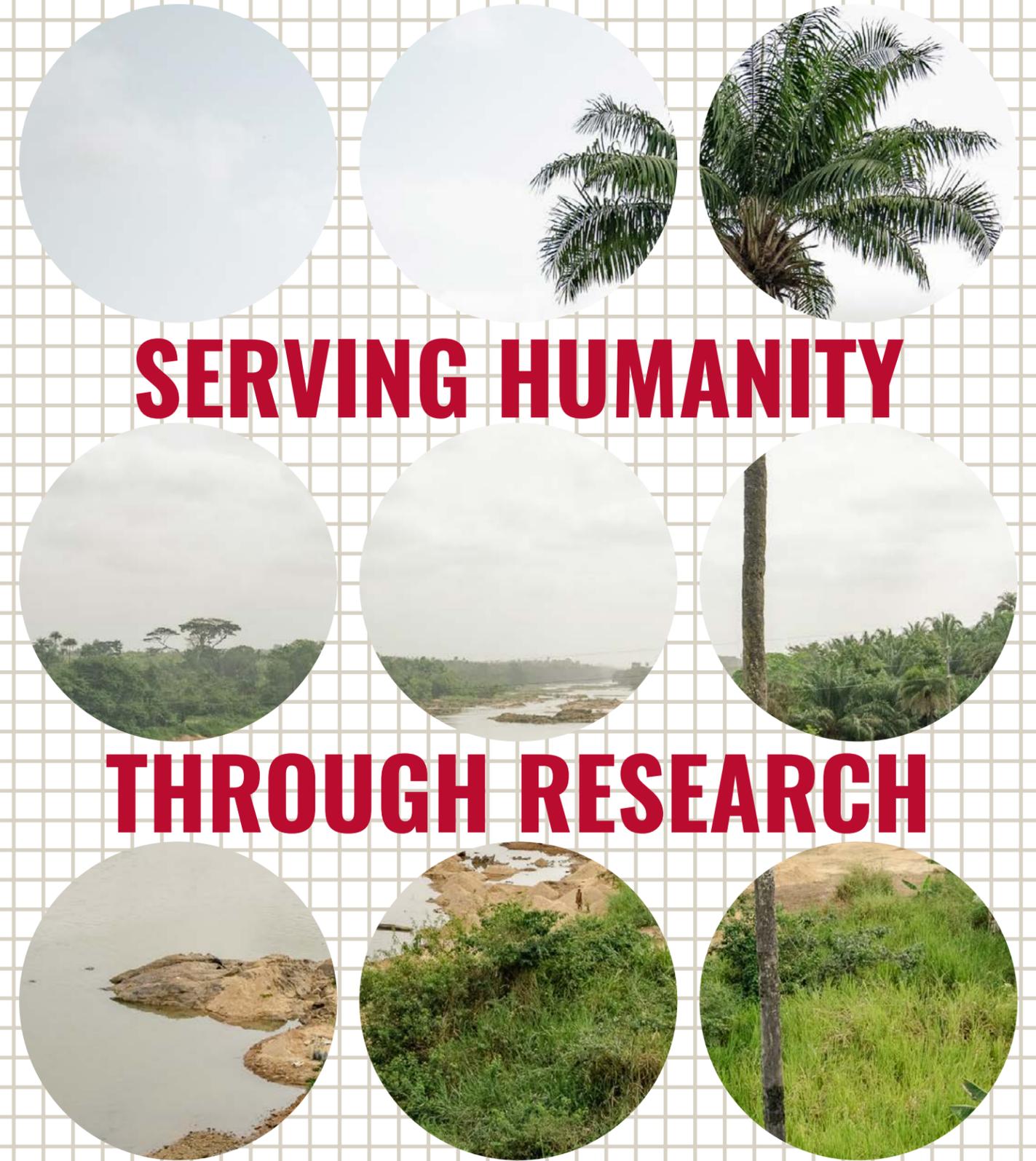
UGA School of Social Work Associate Professor Allison Dunnigan led a team that included Emma Hetherington (Law), Rachel Fusco (Social Work), and Jennifer Elkins (Social Work), to provide training aimed at improving trauma-informed court processes in Chatham County, Georgia. Services were targeted to the Healing Opportunities for Positive Empowerment (HOPE) Court for juveniles who are confirmed or at risk for commercial sexual exploitation. This treatment team included court staff, probation staff, mental health services specialists, law enforcement, and educational support services. As a result of the CenHTRO seed grant, the HOPE Court team now has the capacity to engage in ongoing training and implementation of trauma-informed services. The judge sits at a table, not on the bench, during staffings without wearing her robe. In addition, youth are given the opportunity to speak first. The courtroom has water and snacks available to aid in self-regulation as well as fidgets and manipulatives for the youth, family, and MDT members to use during staffings. These simple changes have resulted in a noticeable shift in the court experience for youth.

Trauma-Informed Work with Native Trafficking Survivors

UGA School of Social Work Clinical Associate Professor Kate Morrissey Stahl developed effective and culturally-sensitive interviewing practices for Native youth survivors of sex trafficking, a population little is known about. The team was successful in developing an interview guide for the target population and for professionals who work extensively with Native youth who had experienced sex trafficking. They also successfully conducted extensive interviews with three professionals working with Native survivors of sex trafficking. The project highlighted crucial insights into the complexities of conducting respectful research within Indigenous communities, particularly with regard to tribal IRB engagement and the risk of fraudulent participation. The groundwork laid and the insights gained hold promise for future endeavors in this critical area of research. The project was able to secure additional funding through a team member at the University of Colorado. The team will share their findings in a forthcoming special issue of Research in Human Development.

GLOBAL FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY FORUM

CenHTRO's Claire Bolton and Nnenne Onyioha-Clayton attended Free the Slave's Global Freedom from Slavery Forum in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. They gave a presentation titled "The Role of Governments in Combating Modern Slavery: Case Studies from Senegal and Sierra Leone,"which examined how governments can combat modern slavery at different levels, including international, national, regional, and local. The presentation drew on our work in West Africa, where government support has been crucial to the success of the projects. The event will explore successes, challenges, and lessons learned from efforts to build a strong sense of buy-in and 'ownership' at these different levels of government in both countries.

SERVING HUMANITY
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