

Institution: University of Liverpool			
Unit of Assessment: UoA19 Politics and International Studies			
Title of case study: Transforming approaches to tackling modern slavery and improving outcomes for survivors			
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020			
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:			
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:	by
Alex Balch	Professor of Politics	2010-present	
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020			
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N			
1. Summary of the impact			
<p>Balch's research on longer-term outcomes for survivors of modern slavery led to the co-development and expansion of a programme of work-based remediation and safeguarding, which has grown to include 21 businesses and 28 NGOs. His analysis of policy, regulation and enforcement has influenced approaches to modern slavery in the UK by the government and the private sector, helping to set up the Policy and Evidence Centre on Modern Slavery and Human Rights. His research identifying a lack of effectiveness in the international anti-trafficking regime led to a series of community-led research projects tackling modern slavery across 8 African countries. Based on his research, Balch and his team produced the first safeguarding guidelines for the UK Collaborative on International Development Research (UKCDR) which have subsequently been widely adopted by funding bodies and policymakers.</p>			
2. Underpinning research			
<p>The issue of modern slavery became a high priority for the UK government from 2013/2014 in the lead up to the Modern Slavery Act (2015). The UK's definition of modern slavery covers a range of different forms of severe exploitation including human trafficking and forced labour, and affects communities across the UK and in every country in the world. Modern Slavery was included as part of the United Nations' 'Agenda 2030' and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which came into force on 1st January 2016.</p> <p>Balch's research on work-based remediation in partnership with City Hearts and other charities supporting victims of modern slavery in the UK (3.3) provided powerful evidence about the long-term impacts of this crime on survivors. Obstacles to employment were shown to directly hinder re-integration into society, despite support via the UK's National Referral Mechanism (NRM). More than 10,000 individuals were placed in the NRM in 2019 (a rise of 52% on 2018). Research by Balch into outcomes for survivors supported by one of the NRM subcontractors (the Fresh Start report, 3.3) found significant issues around long-term unemployment, destitution and mental health risks. A key finding from this research was that sustainable partnerships with businesses were essential to overcoming the considerable barriers to employment and the creation of much needed opportunities for survivors.</p> <p>Subsequent research into the results, appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of the Co-op's Bright Future Employment Programme led by Balch (5.1a, 5.1b) generated a series of recommendations to support the improvement and scaling up of this initiative. These included specific guidance for partners and beneficiaries of the Bright Future scheme: on support systems and communications to improve partnership working and create a community of practice which could also advocate for government policy change.</p> <p>Balch's research on the UK policy and regulatory system for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) identified gaps in the protection and enforcement of workers' rights in the UK labour market, conflicts between policy objectives, and lack of business engagement (see 3.4, 3.6). His work to develop more effective modes of engagement between government, business and civil society sought to address the weaknesses identified by the JRF project through proposals on reframing policy to a rights-based approach to more directly benefit those individuals and groups affected by exploitation (3.4). In October 2020 he was appointed Director</p>			

of Research for the Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) on Modern Slavery and Human Rights, a GBP10,000,000 investment funded through the Strategic Priorities Fund to improve the transmission of high-quality research into UK law and policy.

Balch's research into global efforts to address human trafficking and modern slavery (3.5) identified the missed opportunities for the international community in pursuing an approach based on human rights, rather than criminal justice, in order to improve effectiveness. The combination of this research with his findings on outcomes for modern slavery survivors in the UK enabled Balch to develop a range of funded projects seeking to address modern slavery as a Sustainable Development Goal. This work has attracted significant funding from a range of competitive funding bodies. He is Principal Investigator (PI) on the Antislavery Knowledge Network (AKN), a GBP2,000,000 GCRF (Global Challenges Research Fund) project working with academics, charities, human rights groups and survivor advocates in 8 countries across Africa. He is Associate Director of APRIES (African Programming and Research Initiative To End Slavery) led by University of Georgia which has more than GBP18,000,000 funding from the US State Department's Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS) developing programmes in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Senegal.

Balch is leading the field in developing new approaches and evaluating international efforts to address modern slavery through the SDGs. This includes research assessing and synthesising outputs produced through the AKN to establish evidence of impact for beneficiaries, and develop guidance for local and international policymakers. APRIES is pioneering a collective impact approach, working with local experts and service-providers, and combining qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the scale and nature of human trafficking and modern slavery in West Africa. This research has produced evidence that will be directly used to enhance community-based programming and improve services for survivors of human trafficking and policy frameworks to address the issue.

The findings from Balch's work through AKN and APRIES led to further research into the adequacy of safeguarding provisions, policies and frameworks in international development work that address modern slavery. This research was highly collaborative and inter-disciplinary, including a team of practitioners, international development consultants and academics based in Sierra Leone, India and Guatemala to identify gaps, best practice, and to establish key challenges for the researchers, funders, and all participants in the research process. This work showed how the rights of victims (and whistleblowers) could be understood in the context of overarching principles of transparency, accountability and equity and fairness in the research process, properly involving the communities where research takes place.

3. References to the research

- 3.1. Balch, A., Garimella, S., Mansaray, B., Renton, L., Smith, A., and Vaughn, L. (2020) ['Safeguarding in International Development Research'](#) UKCDR: London
- 3.2. Craig, G., Balch, A., Lewis, H., & Waite, L. (Eds.) (2019). *The Modern Slavery Agenda: Policy, Politics and Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press. [Available from the institution on request]
- 3.3. Balch, A (2017) ['Fresh Start: Integrating Survivors of Modern Slavery'](#). Liverpool: University of Liverpool with City Hearts
- 3.4. Balch, A. (2015). Understanding and Evaluating UK Efforts to Tackle Forced Labour. In *Vulnerability, Exploitation and Migrants* (pp. 86-98). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. [Available from the institution on request]
- 3.5. Balch, A. (2015). Assessing the International Regime Against Human Trafficking. In *Handbook of the Int. Political Economy of Migration* (pp. 98-119). Cheltenham: Elgar. [Available from the institution on request]
- 3.6. Balch, A. (2012). ['Regulation and Enforcement to Tackle Forced Labour in the UK: A Systematic Response?'](#). York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

4. Details of the impact

a) Enabling service providers and businesses to support modern slavery survivors

Balch identified problems around longer-term re-integration of survivors of modern slavery in the

UK. This is an area where the UK government's system for support (the National Referral Mechanism) has been criticised by survivors and survivor advocates and where individuals are known to be left in situations of destitution and precariousness. Recommendations from the 'Fresh Start' report on the need for sustainable longer-term support for survivors of modern slavery and the importance of facilitating re-integration through employment (3.3.) were adopted by City Hearts leading to an enhancement of their work and direct impacts on the lives of those who have been most affected by modern slavery. As the Head of Development for City Hearts explains, the research *"was influential in the further development of City Hearts' long-term support programme. The research was carried out through co-design and collaboration, and it produced evidence that has been very valuable in moving our work forwards."* Their Integration Support Programme (ISP) is now the largest long-term support programme in the UK (5.1a).

'Bright Future', a groundbreaking initiative to support victims and survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery, was designed/implemented in direct response to Balch's research on long-term support for survivors (3.3), which incorporates a role for charities and businesses working in partnership. The evidence from Fresh Start was instrumental in the launch of the Bright Future initiative by City Hearts and Co-Op (5.1a) offering a programme of work placements for those who had experienced modern slavery, directly benefiting the lives of survivors by helping them into secure and stable employment (5.1b, 5.1c)

Balch subsequently conducted research to assess and evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of Bright Future. Recommendations by Balch ((5.2a: p24, 5.2b: p55) were used to scale up this programme, improve processes and systems, include more organisations from the business and charity sectors, and ultimately to allow a greater number of individuals to directly benefit. In 2017 Bright Future was awarded the Thomson Reuters 'Stop Slavery Award'. Balch's research on Bright Future was used as a best practice case study for impact on survivors in a report produced for the UK's Independent Antislavery Commissioner (5.2c). As the Senior Public Affairs Manager at the Co-op explains: *"The research undertaken by the University of Liverpool team, led by Professor Alex Balch, has been key in helping the Co-op develop and scale-up the Bright Future programme... It was key in making the case to prospective partners, both charities and businesses, that they should sign up. The second review, published in June 2019, has provided key additional insight which will now be used to develop a roadmap for Bright Future to become an initiative that will be independent of the Co-op in 2020."* (5.2d)

Balch's recommendation to convert Bright Future into an independent business to improve sustainability was implemented in June 2020. The significance of Balch's research for work with survivors was confirmed in an interview with Bishop Alastair Redfern (Chair of the Clewer Initiative on modern slavery) who said *"it is vital that we have expert analysis. It is a model of how practice can be developed... and how good reflective skills can illuminate it [Bright Future] and take it in the right direction... I am very impressed with it"* (5.2e). Within 3 years Bright Future has expanded to include 21 businesses and 28 charity partners, and over 100 referrals leading to 59 work placements and resulting in more than 34 permanent jobs (5.1d).

b) Informing the UK government approach to modern slavery, improving the relationship between evidence and policy

Balch's research highlighting gaps in the framework of regulation and enforcement around forced labour (3.5), and his work developing and deepening collaboration between researchers, policymakers, charity and business sectors has contributed to the development of UK policy on modern slavery.

His research from 2007-2014 identified and explained the systematic weaknesses in labour market regulation and enforcement, leading to risks of forced labour. This work informed the development of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA), a key agency in the UK's efforts to tackle forced labour (5.4a) which as the re-named Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) now has an economy-wide remit to protect workers and prosecute those who exploit. His research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2012 formed part of a body of work that was cited in policy discussions leading up to the passage of the UK's Modern Slavery Act (2015) (5.4b). Balch's work was used as evidence by the Group of Experts (GRETA) during the drafting and passage of the Bill (5.4c), Balch provided oral evidence in Parliament to the Joint Committee (House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee on the Draft Modern Slavery Bill) on his EU-funded research on corporate social responsibility and human trafficking, arguing

for stronger requirements for business to tackle slavery in their supply chains, eventually incorporated in the Act. He also presented evidence to the 2018-2019 independent review of the Modern Slavery Act, led by Frank Field, MP, contributing to the conclusions about strengthening these requirements (5.4d). His research on the hotel sector (5.5a) led to further work with Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the International Slavery Museum (ISM) to produce tailored guidance for their membership, helping businesses “*navigate what can be quite a new area for them...*” and providing an “*excellent example of co-development with University researchers and joint working with local businesses helping to feed into our national policymaking process.*” (5.5b)

Balch has built a team (the ‘Slavery and Unfree Labour’ research theme) at the University of Liverpool and has connected researchers, policymakers, practitioners and survivors to improve the response to modern slavery. Balch’s research on policy and implementation gaps (3.2), as part of the JRF programme, led to the formation of the Forced Labour Monitoring Group, now re-named the Modern Slavery Research Consortium, a network of more than 200 groups and individuals engaged in or supporting research.

In 2020 Balch was appointed Director of Research for the UK’s Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC), hosted by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law. His role includes working with stakeholders such as the UK’s Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to develop a comprehensive strategy and delivery plan (expected to be published February 2021) to enhance the translation of research into policy (5.3). The UK’s Independent Antislavery Commissioner described Balch’s research as making “*an important contribution*” and that “*his research and leadership supports our common goals – to improve the relationship between evidence and policy, and of bringing policymakers and stakeholders together in the field of modern slavery.*” (5.3).

c) Leading a new generation of community-driven research projects and partnerships across Africa to tackle modern slavery

Previous approaches to tackle modern slavery as an international development issue have been widely criticized for being too focused on criminal justice measures and not enough on human rights and social justice (3.4, 3.5). As PI on the Antislavery Knowledge Network (2017-2021), Balch has directed and overseen the development of a commissioning programme leading to 14 innovative, community-engaged projects across 8 countries in Africa involving 32 partners (including community enterprises, universities, faith-based organisations and charities) and 18 different disciplines (e.g. politics, history, heritage, archaeology, film-making, communication studies, drama and architecture). All these partnerships responded to the call designed by Balch and the AKN team to develop new collaborations with community groups to deliver arts-based projects. According to internal reporting, these projects directly reaching a minimum of 2,000 beneficiaries by November 2020 (5.6b). Each of these projects are working to address modern slavery, are impact-driven and have led, among other things, to capacity development of local researchers and activists, large national-level events and the production of artworks designed to shift public opinion, raise awareness, and improve services to the most vulnerable, with projects co-developed and co-led by survivor groups. One project run by former child soldiers said that the AKN project has had clear benefits and had been “*very effective in creating community cohesion and allowing former child soldiers and also the community members to come together and interact and to learn and know better each other... I want to, to say a very, very big thank you to AKN because it’s almost impossible to find people being interested in the work former child soldiers are doing, and often they are left out*” (5.6a)

Another example is LESLAN (Héritages de l’esclavage au Niger – Legacies of Slavery in Niger) which is a partnership with Timidria, a human rights NGO dedicated to the eradication of slavery in Niger. This project contributed to addressing a specific aspect of Niger’s development challenges, namely, the national fight against contemporary slavery and the marginalisation of the descendants of enslaved people. This partnership was acknowledged by engagement and public statements on national news by the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Education, Support of Human Rights Office and Office of Presidency. Build X, an architectural firm based in Nairobi which operates as a social enterprise carried out research on the role of design in healing spaces for human trafficking survivors and created a framework to be implemented across East Africa.

Balch’s research addressing modern slavery in Africa through the AKN was the basis for

a further funding award for a network in collaboration with University of Georgia (Athens) and Resilient Africa Network (RAN) at Makerere University (Uganda): APRIES (African Programming and Research Initiative to End Slavery), where Balch is Associate Director. The project will run 2018-2024 and has more than GBP18,000,000 funding from the US Department of State's Office to Monitor Trafficking in Persons to work in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Senegal with local partners to reduce the prevalence of child trafficking through a devolved funding model that was partly based on the framework pioneered by AKN.

d) Producing guidance to improve safeguarding in international development research that has been widely adopted by funders.

Safeguarding issues have been at the top of the agenda in the field of international development since the Oxfam scandal of 2018. As part of his research through AKN and APRIES, Balch and his team identified a range of issues around policies, systems and practices on safeguarding for projects addressing modern slavery as a development issue. In partnership with the community-based AKN projects Balch and his team highlighted a number of key principles for research on modern slavery. This research led to a collaboration with UKCDR (the UK Collaborative on Development Research) and further work on safeguarding issues in international development research involving a global team of experts from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, the George Institute for Global Health (India) and independent development experts from Sierra Leone and Guatemala. This research identified the importance of rights and duties, transparency, accountability and equity in research, and led to guidance that was launched by UKCDR in April 2020 (5.7). A webinar discussing implementation of the guidance by funders in July 2020 attracted 767 attendees; the guidance is referenced as a key achievement and 'flagship' project in UKCDR's annual (2019-2020) report (5.8b: p5)

This guidance developed through the research of Balch and his team has had practical impact directly related to research and has since been incorporated into institutional processes, research design and implementation, including by the University of Liverpool (5.8a). The guidance has been downloaded 3,343 times in the first 6 months since launch and has been used by UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) and the Department of Health and Social Care/NIHR (National Institute for Health Research) to develop their own safeguarding policies (5.8a). The guidance is listed by the FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) on its safeguarding resources hub, and the underpinning research carried out by University of Liverpool is referenced in the FCDO's two-year progress report (5.8a).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Testimony from City Hearts and affected individuals regarding the impact of Balch's work on improved long-term outcomes for survivors of modern slavery

5.2 Reports demonstrating the input and influence of Balch's research into the Co-op bright future programme and testimony regarding the contribution of Balch's research from the Co-op and the Chair of the Clewer Initiative on modern slavery)

5.3 Testimonial from the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner regarding Balch's research and leadership in the modern slavery field

5.4 Reports and testimony from Joseph Rowntree Foundation regarding Balch's influence on the developing UK legal, regulatory and policy response to modern slavery including evaluation of the Gangmasters Licensing Authority, written evidence to the joint committee drafting the Modern Slavery Act, and the Independent Review

5.5. Evidence of Balch's engagement with stakeholders in the private (hotels and small businesses) and museum sectors to impact upon business responses to modern slavery

5.6 Interview and statistics demonstrating the impact and reach of Balch's leadership of the Antislavery Knowledge Network

5.7 Evidence of translation of research into guidance on Safeguarding in international development research

5.8 Evidence regarding impact of Safeguarding research with UKCDR