

Challenging Coloniality in the International Anti-Trafficking Agenda to Reimagine Research Practice

Wednesday 23 June 2021 11:00 (1h 30m)

This roundtable discussion will focus on experiences of developing decolonial research practice within the field of human trafficking/anti-slavery, especially in relation to UN Sustainable Development Goal 8.7. There has been steadily growing international attention on this topic since the Palermo Protocol established an agreed definition of human trafficking in 2000. The main driver until recently has been the US, with its State Department producing an annual Trafficking in Persons report ranking performance, where low rankings can mean cuts to countries' aid funding. More recently the UK government has sought to carve out a role and assert international leadership, notably with the issuance of a global 'call to action' in 2017, and an increase in the share of funding allocated through ODA (official development assistance). Despite this political focus, there has been widespread criticism of the effectiveness of interventions, particularly in relation to the dominant criminal justice paradigm and the lack of a human rights or social justice dimension, but also as a neo-colonial discourse (Okyere 2017). Scholars have raised concerns about the use of colonial imagery and appropriation of black suffering to further conservative agendas around immigration and sex work (O'Connell Davidson 2015, Beutin 2017). Scrutiny of international efforts has also criticised governments for a lack of strategic thinking, and an absence of a solid evidence base to inform programmes and actions (Independent Commission on Aid Impact 2020).

Participants bring expertise in relation to undertaking research in this field in East, West and South Africa, as well as developing practices and methods for research in the development sector. They have worked together to develop the recent (2020) UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR) guidance on safeguarding in international research, and as part of the Anti-Slavery Knowledge Network (AKN), funded through the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council through the Global Challenges Research Fund and hosted by the University of Liverpool in partnership with the University of Ghana (Legon), Universities of Nottingham and Hull. The AKN has commissioned and supported community-based and creative approaches to modern slavery as an international development issue working with a range of different partners.

Track Classification: Africa and International Studies Working Group