



Learning and Research Agenda

Human Trafficking Research Initiative

I. Overview*

By its illicit and clandestine nature, human trafficking is a difficult topic to study. Victims and perpetrators are not easily identified. Often, trafficking victims do not identify as having been trafficked and perpetrators of trafficking do not necessarily see themselves as traffickers given definitional confusion or lack of familiarity with the term. Public misconceptions regarding human trafficking also abound. Moreover, measuring the prevalence of human trafficking, vulnerability to human trafficking, and the antecedents of human trafficking are not straightforward enterprises given the sensitive and varied nature of the crime.

Due to the challenges inherent in studying the topic, policymakers, implementing partners, and researchers have faced consistent challenges collaborating to develop large-scale studies that strengthen the evidence base on counter-trafficking. These challenges include, but are not limited to:

- Disagreements in measurement of trafficking activities, including assessing how to accurately determine whether someone is a victim or perpetrator in an ethical, trauma-informed, and cost-effective manner.
- Tensions between prevailing local cultural norms (for example, with respect to child labor) and the international community's definition of TIP, which can reduce local cooperation in both implementation and data collection.
- Large body of gray literature that provides interesting context on various interventions but is not peer-reviewed and/or has weak study designs.
- Tendency to implement national programs (e.g., capacity building of anti-trafficking in persons (ATIP) units within the justice sector) that, while important, do not lend themselves easily to rigorous impact assessment.
- Tendency of new entrants in the anti-trafficking space to fund lower-cost/low-barrier but unproven interventions (e.g., awareness campaigns with untested messaging strategies).
- Limited monitoring and evaluation/research funding built into large donor-funded anti-trafficking programs (e.g., USAID, Department of State, DFAT, Norad, FCDO/UKaid).
- Widespread external validity concerns across countries and type of exploitation; it is problematic to think that there is universal applicability with any promising intervention found in one context, as context matters significantly for trafficking.

Purpose of the Human Trafficking Research Initiative's Learning and Research Agenda

The Human Trafficking Research Initiative (HTRI) is a five-year program funded by the Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS) at the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP Office) and implemented by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). HTRI seeks to expand the

* This publication was funded by a grant from the United States Department of State. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the United States Department of State.

evidence on the primary drivers of human trafficking and the most effective ways to prevent this pervasive problem. HTRI has developed this research and learning agenda to guide the project's research and policy efforts by:

- Identifying inefficiencies and critical evidence gaps hindering the success of international anti-human trafficking initiatives;
- Providing information and evidence to guide HTRI's grant-making selection process; and
- Shaping HTRI's knowledge management and policy change agenda through new knowledge and data gathered from HTRI-funded research.

This document outlines the current priority research questions and working analytic framework to promote analysis of programs spanning the 4Ps framework of human trafficking initiatives: prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. HTRI will use this research and learning agenda to guide the development and selection of exploratory and pilot grants as well as full-scale impact evaluations/randomized control trials. The HTRI research will likely take place in lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs) or in high-income countries if the intervention in question serves individuals from lower- and middle-income countries, but lessons from research findings will impact a wide variety of anti-trafficking initiatives. Given PEMS investments in Brazil, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Guinea, India, Kenya, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, and Vietnam, HTRI will pay special attention to anti-trafficking work that benefits the people of the listed countries.

II. Existing Human Trafficking Research and Evaluation Findings

Trajectory of Human Trafficking Research

Research on human trafficking began in earnest in the 1990s with a focus on sex trafficking of women and girls, especially from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Interventions and research continued this focus into the 2000s despite the fact that the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol) noted that exploitation should not be limited to "the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation" and makes no mention of gender. The focus of human trafficking began shifting in the late 2000s, with the discussion of human trafficking growing to encompass a broader picture of subversion that was more neutral with respect to gender and type of exploitation.¹ For example, counter-trafficking actors began to increasingly acknowledge the large scale of trafficking and abuse of migrant workers (both male and female), especially in and from South and Southeast Asia. The number of organizations working on human trafficking began to ramp up, while human trafficking research as its own specialized field began to establish itself, with an initial focus on crossover research from public health.

In the 2010s, research on human trafficking moved towards more explicit counter-trafficking programming for labor trafficking and migrant workers with the development and implementation of large programs funded by a variety of donors, including USAID, the Department of State, AusAid, international organizations (UN ACT, UNODC, IOM, ILO), DFID/UKaid, and others. The number of both small and large organizations focusing their work explicitly on human trafficking also grew significantly in the 2010s. In the latter part of the decade, the body of research on human trafficking saw another shift as donor governments began to pass major human trafficking acts and put a stronger emphasis on monitoring and evaluation and research of human trafficking interventions. Donors also began to incorporate a focus on

¹ Bonilla, T., & Mo, C. (2019). The evolution of human trafficking messaging in the United States and its effect on public opinion. *Journal of Public Policy*, 39(2), 201-234. doi:10.1017/S0143814X18000107

systemic approaches that engaged the private sector and demanded more robust research around intervention effectiveness and prevalence estimates, notably through the creation and funding of the Freedom Fund (founded in 2013 by Humanity United, the Legatum Foundation, and the Walk Free Foundation) and the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) (founded in 2015). In the academic sphere, the Anti-Trafficking Review, an open access, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the issue of human trafficking, was established by the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) in 2011 and publishes two special issues per year. The first issue of the Journal of Human Trafficking was published in 2015, and new issues are published quarterly every year.

In the 2020s, counter-trafficking programs are increasingly incorporating worker voice/migrant worker organizing as well as technology interventions (e.g., satellite technology to identify forced labor camps and mines, remote connectivity on fishing vessels) to combat abuse and trafficking of both domestic and migrant workers (see **Box 1**). The more “traditional” 3P approaches are still prioritized and funded by the US Government - primarily the Department of State, USAID, and Department of Labor - and other major donors. The US Government currently funds over 100 trafficking-focused projects that are implemented primarily by international/UN agencies and national/international NGOs to combat trafficking through the 3Ps (as well as a 4th P, Partnership, in some cases). USAID’s Center of Excellence for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) has funded a variety of research efforts on TIP, including Randomized Control Trials (RCT) in Cambodia and Nepal, vulnerability mapping in Asia, dataset of minors trafficked into the US from Latin America, and desk studies in Colombia, Libya, Mali, and South Africa. The Program to End Modern Slavery at the TIP Office has also bolstered scholarship in this space with funding provided to GFEMS, Freedom Fund, the Warnath Group, and the University of Georgia to conduct prevalence and vulnerability studies in a variety of contexts, including domestic servitude in Ethiopia, labor trafficking of Vietnamese migrant workers, forced labor within the construction sector in India, and trafficking of overseas Filipino workers.

Box 1: Technology partnerships and interventions to combat human trafficking

Governments, civil society groups, and universities have increasingly partnered with private sector actors to harness technological interventions to combat trafficking. Some examples of civil society and for-profit organizations working in this space include: Verité, which uses online platforms to facilitate ethical recruiting practices; Ulula, which leverages global connectivity to promote transparency; ELEVATE, which has created supply chain traceability tools; BanQu, which uses financial technology to identify and prosecute traffickers; Migrasia, which leverages machine learning in social media to connect vulnerable individuals to resources; and Isaara Institute, which connects migrant communities to generate and disseminate online ethical recruitment feedback.

There are also several promising consortiums emerging around technology. ELEVATE, Diginex Solutions and Winrock International are piloting a cell phone app in Bangladesh that uses mobile and other forms of technology to provide up-to-date and interactive information, services, and content to prospective migrants, while MarsPetcare has partnered with Diginex and Winrock to pilot connectivity at sea for Southeast Asian migrants working on Thai fishing boats. On a larger scale, the Bay-area based group Tech Against Trafficking, a consortium of technology companies, hosts an Accelerator Program to identify promising uses of technology in the anti-trafficking field, harnessing the expertise and resources of member companies to advance and scale the work of organizations deploying technology that assists victims, law enforcement, business, and civil society.

By most measures, the body of research on human trafficking has grown exponentially since the US Government first began implementing programs to combat trafficking in the 1990s. Since the mid-2000s, calls for experimental, rigorous data on HT interventions have increased, though the added demand for experimental and quantitative work has not always been accompanied by higher levels of funding needed for this work. As a result, the majority of human trafficking research continues to focus on descriptive and ethnographic studies that, while important, may suffer from limited generalizability and ability to establish

causal relations. Despite large-scale collaborative efforts by IOM and others, the field also continues to be challenged by a lack of comprehensive, publicly available, high-quality datasets that can be used to measure the scope of trafficking as well as interventions designed to combat trafficking.

Current Causational and Descriptive Research on Human Trafficking

HTRI conducted a rapid desk review of existing research based largely on the identifying RCT research (see **Annex 1**). This was not a formal literature review, but instead prioritized searching for experimental elements of research in human trafficking, followed by compiling a list of strong descriptive research and research on interventions likely to impact trafficking. The goal of this review was to examine the state of empirical literature across methods (qualitative and quantitative) and identify promising areas of human trafficking programming for potential RCTs. Below we describe the main types of research outputs, their main contributions, and their limitations.

Evidence Reviews. A number of evidence reviews of human trafficking have been published in the past five to ten years. In line with HTRI's mission, all of these reports conclude that there continues to be a shortage of rigorous research needs to be conducted in this field.² Three of these evidence reviews particularly stand out: *Combatting human trafficking since Palermo*³ does an excellent job of parsing out the practical value of different types of research; the Body of Knowledge compiled by the Winrock-implemented ATLAS project⁴ provides a comprehensive review of law enforcement and civil society coordination efforts focused on human trafficking, forced labor, and child labor; and *Helping Survivors of Human Trafficking*⁵ sifts through a mountain of programmatic publications to bring forward scant - but promising - data around mental health programs' impact on commercially sexually exploited children and young adults. Organizations have also put together various "evidence maps" of existing information in human trafficking, although some focus on theory- or operations-based best practices. For example, the Institute of Development Studies put together a user-friendly *Evidence Map and Rapid Evidence Assessment on Modern Slavery*,⁶ while the ILO is developing an evidence gap map to identify areas of improvement and promise in the three areas of focus in SDG Indicator 8.7 – forced labor, child labor, and human trafficking (expected late 2021). This learning and research agenda intends to complement these efforts and go a step forward by focusing in particular on knowledge gaps and on identifying the most promising avenues for future work in the HT space.

Descriptive and qualitative research. The evidence reviews noted above mostly draw on a large body of descriptive literature on human trafficking. This literature spans a wide variety of subsets within human trafficking research (anthropology, criminology, economics, law, political science, public health, social work, sociology) and provides in-depth information on specific forms of trafficking in country, state, and community-level contexts. This qualitative work is vital to contributing to our understanding of human trafficking on a number of fronts; for example, ethnographic studies on human trafficking have provided rich information describing the living experience of victims. The findings from research related to specific

² For example, as defined by the Maryland Scientific Methods scale: The Maryland Scientific Methods Scale (SMS) | What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (whatworksgrowth.org)

³ Bryant, K., & Landman, T. (2020). *Combatting human trafficking since Palermo: what do we know about what works?* *Journal of human trafficking*, 6(2), 119-140.

⁴ Winrock International. *Body of Knowledge on Legislative, Enforcement, and Coordination Efforts: Collating Quality Evidence to Better Address Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking*. April 10, 2020. <https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20200924-ATLAS-Body-of-Knowledge.pdf>

⁵ Dell, N. A., Maynard, B. R., Born, K. R., Wagner, E., Atkins, B., & House, W. (2019). *Helping survivors of human trafficking: A systematic review of exit and postexit interventions*. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 20(2), 183-196.

⁶ The Institute of Development Studies and Oxford Policy Management undertake this work as part of HEART (Health and Education Advice and Resource Team). HEART is a framework programme supporting the use of evidence and expert advice to underpin development decision-making. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/projects/evidence-map-and-rapid-evidence-assessment-on-modern-slavery/>

contexts and types of trafficking can be very instructive for organizations working to combat trafficking in those same conditions and contexts, but the small scale and localized focus can make it difficult to apply and replicate the findings of the research to other contexts. Another challenge is that much of the research to date has been conducted in high-income countries, but most of the donor-funded programming to combat trafficking is in low and middle-income countries, exposing a gap between research and practice. Moving forward, more efforts are needed to link this existing body of research to the design of impact evaluations and other quantitative research study designs.

Guides for HT practitioners and researchers. Human trafficking practitioners and researchers have benefitted in recent years from the development and publication of a number of useful guides, toolkits, and manuals. These include the IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse and associated guidance documents on referral mechanisms and response planning⁷, and NEXUS Institute's Practitioner Guide Series on Victim Protection⁸ for frontline/implementing organizations; Stanford University's Center for Human Rights and International Justice's series on Getting to Good Human Trafficking Data⁹ and the Winrock International-implemented USAID Asia CTIP project's Indikit platform¹⁰, which aim to improve human trafficking data collection and M&E practices; and IJM's Assessment of Survivor Outcomes Validation Study (ASO Tool¹¹) to measure of survivor outcomes. However, the impact of these guidelines and resources on outcomes for survivors and trafficking prevalence (and on the operations of counter-trafficking organizations) remains to be seen.

Prevalence measurement. The Department of State's Office to Combat Trafficking is actively working to address the gap in funding for research on trafficking prevalence with funding (through the Program to End Modern Slavery, or PEMS) provided to GFEMS, Freedom Fund, the Warnath Group, and University of Georgia and its Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum (PRIF) to test innovative methods of study and develop standardized measures of human trafficking.¹² Additionally, in the Global North, the RAFT (Rapid Appraisal for Trafficking)¹³ project has a team of psychometricians examining measuring trafficking in the healthcare context, while RTI International has produced a review of promising methods for estimating human trafficking prevalence in the US and is field-testing at least two methods of prevalence estimation within one U.S. industry and one U.S. geographic location (an effort funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and in collaboration with PRIF).¹⁴ HTRI welcomes this development, as better measurement of prevalence is a first order concern for measuring the efficacy of anti-trafficking programs.

Causational and experimental research. With respect to research aimed at identifying effective human trafficking reduction methods and programs, a top-level review of academic literature and trusted sources for causational research (e.g., the World Bank Group) reveals a stark lack of randomized control trials and impact evaluations with counterfactual components. This is true for both the global north and the global south, although the global north has some emerging research around how healthcare providers can better

⁷ <https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-handbook-migrants-vulnerable-violence-exploitation-and-abuse>

⁸ <https://nexusinstitute.net/past-projects/practitioner-guideseries/>

⁹ <https://humanrights.stanford.edu/publications/getting-good-human-trafficking-data-everyday-guidelines-frontline-practitioners>

¹⁰ <https://winrock.indikit.net/>

¹¹ International Justice Mission, The Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO) tool. <https://www.ijm.org/aso>

¹² Human Trafficking Statistical Definitions, <https://apries.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PRIF-Human-Trafficking-Statistical-Definitions-1.pdf>

¹³ Chisolm-Straker, M., Singer, E., Rothman, E. F., Clesca, C., Strong, D., Loo, G. T., ... & Richardson, L. D. (2020). Building RAFT: trafficking screening tool derivation and validation methods. *Academic emergency medicine*, 27(4), 297-304.

¹⁴ Barrick, K. & Pfeffer, R. (2021). Human Trafficking Policy and Research Analyses Project: Comprehensive review of prior prevalence studies and recommendations for field testing in the United States, OPRE Report No. 2021-87, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

identify and intervene in cases of human trafficking.¹⁵ In the course of this review, a total of nine RCT-level studies were identified (four of which are ongoing with no public results) (see **Annex 1**).

The scant causal research being conducted in human trafficking has focused, to date, on safe migration and fair labor practices, school curriculum development, content and targeting of counter-trafficking messaging, and assessing the effectiveness of large-scale awareness campaigns. All the RCTs have been registered within the last six years and were funded by a wide variety of donors, including USAID, Freedom Fund, Humanity United, IOM, and the World Bank. 3ie and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs have also funded rigorous evaluations.

Research that explicitly targets sex trafficking is complicated to assess, as there are many *a priori* assumptions related to sex work that are tied to perceptions about sex trafficking. For those who believe sex work is inherently morally repugnant, there is a split between those who consider the sex workers criminal agents and those who consider the sex workers inherently abused. These different perspectives lead to muddled research designs, with some researchers failing to account for the lack of agency for sex workers who are victims of sex trafficking, while others conflate all sex workers as trafficking victims. There are, however, researchers investigating the impact of regulations on trafficking, while trying to explicitly parse out trafficking components.¹⁶ However, these researchers lament the dearth of data, and there are currently no empirical conclusions on the different impacts of regulations and other interventions on trafficking within the sector of sex work. That said, there are some studies using powerful research designs such as difference-in-difference estimation strategy, examining changes in sex work regulations, and attempting to link them to trafficking outcomes in the global north.^{17 18}

Human Trafficking-Adjacent Research

Finally, this review identifies many promising avenues for research on human trafficking in “trafficking-adjacent” domains—areas of study that can impact trafficking and/or be used to develop interventions to prevent trafficking or support trafficked persons. Some promising examples include studies focused on minimizing unsafe migration¹⁹, improving the mental health outcomes of conflict-affected youth^{20 21}, modifying the curriculum at schools for adolescent girls to engender stronger life skills²², understanding the impacts of the illicit mining sector²³, and the role that large-scale private sector involvement can play

¹⁵ Grace, A. M., Lippert, S., Collins, K., Pineda, N., Tolani, A., Walker, R., ... & Horwitz, S. M. (2014). Educating health care professionals on human trafficking. *Pediatric emergency care*, 30(12), 856.

¹⁶ Cameron, L., Muz, J., & Shah, M. (2016). Crimes against morality: Unintended consequences of criminalizing sex work. Mimeo.

¹⁷ Esfahani, Saideh Shahrokh, Michael J. Cafarella, Maziyar Baran Pouyan, Gregory J. DeAngelo, Elena Eneva, Andrew E. Fano, “Context-Specific Language Modeling for Human Trafficking from Online Advertisements”. Proceedings of the 57th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics, pp. 1180-1184.

¹⁸ Waltman, Max (2011). “Prohibiting Sex Purchasing and Ending Trafficking: The Swedish Prostitution Law”. *Michigan Journal of International Law*, vol. 33, 133-157.

¹⁹ Barham, T., & Kuhn, R. (2014). Staying for Benefits: The Effect of a Health and Family Planning Program on Out-Migration Patterns in Bangladesh. *Journal of Human Resources*, 49(4), 982-1013.

²⁰ Betancourt, T. S., McBain, R., Newnham, E. A., Akinsulure-Smith, A. M., Brennan, R. T., Weisz, J. R., & Hansen, N. B. (2014). A behavioral intervention for war-affected youth in Sierra Leone: a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 53(12), 1288-1297.

²¹ O’Callaghan, P., McMullen, J., Shannon, C., Rafferty, H., & Black, A. (2013). A randomized controlled trial of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for sexually exploited, war-affected Congolese girls. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 52(4), 359-369.

²² Edmonds, Eric; Feigenberg, Ben; and Leight, Jessica. Advancing the agency of adolescent girls. Review of Economics and Statistics. Article in press. First published on July 9, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_01074.

²³ Parker, D. P., Foltz, J. D., & Elsea, D. (2016). Unintended consequences of sanctions for human rights: Conflict minerals and infant mortality. *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 59(4), 731-774.

on rural livelihoods.²⁴ The experimental data around child labor are particularly robust, with many findings suggesting promising solutions.²⁵ ²⁶ This research includes promising solutions and interventions that have already been tested, but because they are not labeled as human trafficking or modern slavery interventions, are largely unknown to the human trafficking implementation and research community. HTRI will highlight evidence-based practices that intersect with interventions common in human trafficking-focused programs (e.g., women’s empowerment initiatives, referral mechanisms, economic development, social protection programs) throughout the course of this program (see *IV. HTRI Competitive Research Fund, Learning Activities, and Knowledge Products* below).

III. HTRI Learning Questions

HTRI’s desk review and consultation process pointed to several emerging themes and trends in the field. Together, these emerging themes and trends yielded a set of learning questions and sub-questions (**Table 1**). These learning questions are intended to identify gaps and provide suggested research questions for human trafficking researchers and organizations broadly. HTRI will prioritize applications for its Human Trafficking Competitive fund that incorporate pilot or full RCT study opportunities noted in column three in Table 1 below.

²⁴ Simon, M. (2012). Welfare impact of private sector interventions on rural livelihoods: the case of Masvingo and Chiredzi smallholder farmers. *Russian Journal of Agricultural and Socio-Economic Sciences*, 10(10).

²⁵ Dammert, A. C., De Hoop, J., Mvukiyeh, E., & Rosati, F. C. (2018). Effects of public policy on child labor: Current knowledge, gaps, and implications for program design. *World development*, 110, 104-123.

²⁶ Edmonds, E. V., & Schady, N. (2012). Poverty alleviation and child labor. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 4(4), 100-124.

Table 1. HTRI Learning Questions

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
<p>1. How can counter-trafficking actors disrupt behaviors and social norms that normalize or promote human trafficking and related forms of exploitation? (Prevention)</p>		
<p>1.1 Are current tools and methods to identify and assist populations vulnerable to trafficking accurate and effective with respect to reducing trafficking risk?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What social protection programs, or program packages, best protect against trafficking risks for potential victims? ● What is the role of traditional poverty alleviation and humanitarian programs (e.g., cash transfers, refugee placement programs, climate change/agricultural resilience programs, child education incentives, psychosocial care) in reducing human trafficking rates? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assumptions about which geographic areas and groups are most vulnerable to trafficking (e.g., comparative poverty rates, proximity to national borders, internal migration rates) do not always equate to high trafficking source areas. ● There is an assumption that improved social programs/safety nets promote individual resilience and reduce risks for labor and sex trafficking, but more evidence is needed on direct links/ability of social programs to protect individuals from being trafficked. ● Programs that use social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp) to promote safe migration messaging and connect migrants with support/migrant communities need to be studied for their effectiveness. ● Preliminary findings show that increased skills and livelihoods for individuals can lead to increases in migration.²⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved government administrative data practices and use of global indicators on human trafficking (forthcoming from IOM/UNODC) to track trafficking flows ● Human trafficking prevalence measurements combined with RCTs on measuring the effect and impact of social protection and human trafficking prevention programs ● White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining current and recent research in trafficking-adjacent fields relevant to prevention, targeted to policymakers and implementing organizations that are developing new/adjusting existing prevention interventions

²⁷ Bazzi, Samuel. 2017. "Wealth Heterogeneity and the Income Elasticity of Migration." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9 (2): 219-55.

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
<p>1.2 What kinds of government and private sector-focused interventions can disrupt trafficking and reduce exploitation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do labor voice interventions to identify and provide support and restitution to migrant workers with irregular/illegal employment status adequately identify and provide necessary support to victims of trafficking? Are NGO-led worker voice platforms effective? If so – are they significantly different in their effectiveness from company-led platforms? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governments that restrict migrant workers' ability to organize and/or have policies that allow limited due process for identified illegal migrant workers tend to have worse outcomes for exploited workers. There are some emerging studies on labor voice applications conducted by relevant actors (Ulula, BanQu, LaborLinks/ELEVATE) that should be tracked²⁸, including a worker voice RCT, though more work is needed in this area.²⁹ Effectiveness of different models of worker voice interventions (industry-led vs. community-based; top-down vs. bottom-up) on identification of labor trafficking and restitution measures.³⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCTs to measure the effect and impact of different models of labor voice programs (including behavior change based on information provision, ability to report abuse, ability to access restitution) Rigorous quantitative and qualitative research on connections between migration policies, private sector actions, and consumer behavior (including impacts of Withhold Release Orders (WROs) for products coming from countries that implicitly or explicitly allow the use of forced labor in their supply chains)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3 How effective are awareness-raising and behavior-change interventions that target i) those considered vulnerable to trafficking, ii) those who increase the demand for trafficking activities (e.g., 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One recent study shows null results on trafficking incidence from safe migration interventions (e.g., pre-decision training, pre-departure training, smart phone apps, info cards, awareness campaigns in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCTs to examine the effect and impact of safe migration programs on migrant behavior (e.g., risk taking) and outcomes Right-fit evidence support for

²⁸ <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-innovation-atlas-interactive.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.antitraffickingreview.org/index.php/atrjournal/article/view/444/356>

³⁰ Lisa Rende Taylor and Elena Shih (2019), 'Worker feedback technologies and combatting modern slavery in global supply chains: examining the effectiveness of remediation-oriented and due-diligence-oriented technologies in identifying and addressing forced labour and human trafficking', *Journal of the British Academy*, 7(s1): 131–165. DOI <https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/007s1.131>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
<p>consumers of particular products); iii) those in a position to exploit (e.g., individuals who employ domestic workers), and/or iv) those in a position to assist or identify human trafficking victims (e.g., health & social workers)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What discrete prevention approaches and/or packages of support should be provided to migrants who seek to migrate for work due to a lack of other options (esp. those affected by climate change, emergencies, & conflict)? • How might macro conditions affect behavior-change interventions (for example, do perceptions of relative deprivation alter risk-taking in migration decision-making)? • What awareness-raising and behavior-change interventions can reduce the incidence of recruitment and trafficking of children for begging, domestic work, and sex? 	<p>destination countries) for women in Southeast Asia³¹. An ongoing study in Nigeria is examining whether improved knowledge about risks and information about economic opportunities at home affects the likelihood of irregular migration attempts.³²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies on individual decision-making, aspirations, and risk-taking show that aspirations have a strong role in escaping poverty traps³³ and that perceptions of relative deprivation induce more risk-seeking behavior, speaking to the interaction between inequality and risk tolerance, and how economic and social forces that alter perceived relative deprivation can increase vulnerability to exploitation (i.e., when an aspirations window is open, an exploitation window for egregious human rights violations like human trafficking also opens).³⁴ • There are mixed results on the impact of awareness campaigns on trafficking 	<p>organizations to develop sound theories of change for safe migration interventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous qualitative and quantitative research on the role of decision-making, aspirations, local norms, and risk preferences in making migration decisions • Rigorous qualitative and quantitative research on the role of family and religious institutions in recruitment and trafficking of children for begging, domestic work, and sex

³¹ Zimmerman C, Mak J, Pocock NS and Kiss L (2021) Human Trafficking: Results of a 5-Year Theory-Based Evaluation of Interventions to Prevent Trafficking of Women From South Asia. *Front. Public Health* 9:645059. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2021.645059

³² <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/effect-information-irregular-migration-decisions-nigeria>

³³ Dalton, P. S., Ghosal, S., & Mani, A. (2016). Poverty and aspirations failure. *The Economic Journal*, 126(590), 165-188.

³⁴ Mo, C.H. Perceived Relative Deprivation and Risk: An Aspiration-Based Model of Human Trafficking Vulnerability. *Polit Behav* 40, 247–277 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9401-0>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<p>incidence; some show no long-term impact³⁵ while others show a positive impact on the general population as well as individuals who may be committing abuse or be able to stop the occurrence of such abuse³⁶.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies on both awareness-raising and safe migration studies point to the importance of the design stage in setting up a successful intervention (e.g., targeting communities with high out-migration rates, assessing baseline levels of awareness and previous exposure to awareness-raising activities prior to allocating scarce resources to conducting information campaigns). They also note that while information campaigns and safe migration programs can increase individual and community awareness, they are no substitute for the more complex tasks of addressing the economic, legal, and political underpinnings of labor exploitation: the structural conditions that cause vulnerability. • Little research to date on effectiveness of 	

³⁵ Archer, Dan, Margaret Boittin, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo. 2016. "Reducing Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: An Experimental Intervention Using Anti-Trafficking Campaigns to Change Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices in Nepal." <https://www.iie.org/en/Researchand-Insights/Publications/DFG-Vanderbilt-Publication>.

³⁶ Mo, Cecilia Hyunjung, *title*, results forthcoming 2021.

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<p>behavior change programs working with religious leaders to eliminate talibe system (practice of sending children to cities to work in extended family/strangers' households) or familial trafficking (for child domestic work, forced begging, prostitution, and other abusive practices).</p>	
<p>1.4 What impacts do migration policies have on migrant workers and their treatment/vulnerability to trafficking?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What policies and programs can promote ethical practices by labor recruiting agencies in trafficking source countries? • How have reforms to countries with restrictive laws/fixed-term sponsorship systems impacted the cost of migration and incidence of human trafficking for labor migrants? • How have no-fee migration policies (including the Employer Pays Principle) impacted migration flows and trafficking incidence? • What changes need to be made in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An impact evaluation of a fair recruitment pilot in the Nepal-Jordan migration corridor³⁷ showed positive impacts to worker wellbeing and productivity, but further exploration of the effectiveness of efforts under ILO's Fair Recruitment Initiative and similar initiatives is needed (these can potentially use data collected by the Global study on recruitment fees and related costs (ILO)) • Impacts of asylum and refugee policies for people fleeing untenable situations, earning potential in refugee camps and host countries, the use of smugglers/opportunities for traffickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCTs to examine the effect and impact (as well as the cost effectiveness) of fair recruitment programs on migrant behavior and outcomes • Rigorous qualitative and quantitative research on the rollout of national no-fee recruitment policies and the impact on workers, governments, and businesses • White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining current and recent research in the peace & recovery sector, specifically on interventions examining the impact of refugees' ability to earn an income and become productive members of

³⁷ Integrated Programme on Fair Recruitment. (2019). "The Benefits of Fair Recruitment: Results of the Impact Study on the Nepal-Jordan Corridor", International Labor Organization, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_727143.pdf

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
countries' migration and asylum policies to reduce the vulnerability of migrants and refugees to traffickers?		their host communities
2. How can counter-trafficking actors most effectively support trafficking victims and improve short- and long-term outcomes for trafficking survivors? (Protection)		
<p>2.1 What are best practices in identifying victims of trafficking and referring them to services?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are effective methods for promoting victim self-identification? • How much does stigma impact victims' willingness to self-identify as a trafficking victim? • What are best practices of use of frontline workers to identify victims of trafficking (e.g., training and partnerships with physical and mental health care providers, identification guidelines/trainings/standards of care for immigration officials)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is anecdotal evidence that conducting outreach in victims' peer communities (e.g., religious organizations, Asia Pacific Islander groups) can encourage victim self-identification, but there is a lack of rigorous evidence that current interventions to support victims' self-identification are effective. • Awareness campaigns and trainings have been shown to improve people's ability to identify what trafficking is or is not.³⁸ • There is a solid evidence base around behavior change communication (BCC) and behavior economics that can be used to inform efforts to change community social norms that enable trafficking and reduce stigma for survivors³⁹ (for example, a pilot project being conducted by IPA in Uganda is examining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCTs (or added research arm for existing research study) to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions that aim to increase rates of victim self-identification • White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining current and recent research in BCC interventions as well as Peace and Recovery sector interventions to reduce stigma towards outgroups such as human trafficking victims, refugees, and others • Pilot research to evaluate the effectiveness of training and engaging frontline workers in victim identification and support (leading to full RCT) • White paper/synthesis of evidence

³⁸ Mo, C.H. Perceived Relative Deprivation and Risk: An Aspiration-Based Model of Human Trafficking Vulnerability. *Polit Behav* **40**, 247–277 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9401-0>

³⁹ For example: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29907/rethinking-trafficking-prevention.pdf>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<p>interventions to reduce stigma (including negative beliefs and behaviors) towards outgroups⁴⁰).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkits are being developed and launched to improve identification and referrals (such as HEAL Trafficking and Hope for Justice’s Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of Human Trafficking in Health Care Settings) but evaluations of their effectiveness have not yet taken place. 	<p>outlining current and recent research on Intimate Partner Violence/Domestic Violence sector to examine the potential use of screening tools (e.g., danger and lethality assessments from the domestic violence high risk team model) to identify those most at risk of human trafficking</p>
<p>2.2 How can survivor support and reintegration interventions be survivor-informed and designed with the needs of vulnerable groups in mind?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the best approaches to support effective short-term and long-term trauma- and survivor-informed reintegration of victims of human trafficking? • What are proven models for engaging survivors of trafficking to facilitate entry/re-entry into local job markets? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence on the effectiveness of savings groups, microcredit, cash transfers, graduation programs, vocational training, soft skills training, and other interventions is very robust; however, counter-trafficking implementing organizations often develop service programs for human trafficking survivors without knowing about this evidence base or using pertinent information to inform program design. • The use of different types of psychosocial interventions and trauma- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining current and recent research focused on poverty alleviation programs (including programs focused on individuals who have experienced traumatic life events⁴²), targeted to policymakers and implementing organizations that are developing new/adjusting existing protection interventions (specifically livelihoods support, job and entrepreneurship training, and other economic support

⁴⁰ <https://www.poverty-action.org/program-area/peace-and-recovery/funded-projects>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<p>informed care are also areas that have been rigorously studied⁴¹ and can be applied to protection programs; however, there are widespread misunderstandings about what trauma is and how trauma-informed care can and should be provided to survivors of trafficking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is also a lack of information about robust mental health interventions that can be utilized in resource-poor environments (e.g., the use of paraprofessionals such as para-social workers). Information on interventions to support LGBTQI+ survivors is even more scarce. • Psychosocial support interventions – see https://freedomfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Evidence-in-Practice-2-Final.pdf • Toolkits are being developed and launched (such as HEAL Trafficking and Hope for Justice's Protocol Toolkit for Developing a Response to Victims of 	<p>interventions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining current and recent research in the Peace and Recovery sector to provide healing and reconciliation interventions for populations in post-conflict (or active conflict) areas that have faced extreme trauma • RCT to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of paraprofessionals to support the mental health needs of survivors of trafficking, potentially using the ASO tool or other recent measurements developed to measure survivors' progress toward restoration and reintegration • Engage donors that are conducting pilot programs that provide survivors of trafficking with counseling and training to move into existing jobs in local markets⁴³ and discuss options for RCT

⁴² For example, an IPA-implemented study in Colombia that is looking at motivation and internal barriers to learning and decision-making, which may be particularly relevant for victims of conflict: <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/impact-entrepreneurship-training-using-imagery-techniques-colombia>

⁴¹ For example: van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015).

⁴³ For example, see SDC's Ashshash program in Bangladesh: <https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SDC-Ashshash-2-Pager-Final.pdf>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<p><i>Human Trafficking in Health Care Settings</i>) but evaluations of their effectiveness have not yet taken place.</p>	<p>development for future project phases</p>
<p>2.3 Are gendered approaches to the provision of shelter and out-of-shelter services for trafficking victims potentially harmful?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do the design of shelter and out-of-shelter services affect the welfare of identified victims, and the efficacy of those services? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative research on trafficking shelters notes that very few shelter spaces are offered to male clients, leaving a large gap in available services for boys and male victims. The gray literature also suggests that both male and female trafficking victims avoid shelters for several reasons: government-run shelters can limit or prohibit individuals' ability to work, and clients sometimes fear swift deportation if they do not meet the national definition of a trafficking victim; while NGO-run shelters can drastically limit clients' movement and recreate the prison-like environments that some victims have just escaped. More research is needed to examine the impacts of shelter and out-of-shelter support for men, women, boys, and girls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot research to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter vs. out-of-shelter service provision with randomized control and treatment groups (leading to full RCT) Examination of evidence from domestic violence/intimate partner violence shelters providing vocational training and job services to shelter clients White paper/publicly available synthesis of evidence regarding the psychosocial impacts on men and women of forced idleness in refugee camps (which are also limited by regulations outlawing formal work, in addition to movement restrictions that limit access to informal work in urban centers near the camps)⁴⁴

⁴⁴ <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/psychosocial-value-employment-refugee-camps>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
3. How can governments improve judicial effectiveness, combat corruption, and disrupt criminal networks and systems that allow trafficking to continue? (Prosecution)		
<p>3.1 To what extent do police, prosecutorial, and other judicial trainings and legal support programs improve prosecution rates and reduce trafficking?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the most effective methods for improving the ability of law enforcement and judicial officials to successfully conduct counter-trafficking investigations and prosecutions? • How does the efficacy of these methods differ for actors at different levels (e.g., national anti-TIP units vs. beat-level officers)? • What are some of the reasons there are so few cases of human trafficking prosecutions and convictions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While law enforcement and judicial officials around the world have taken part in counter-trafficking capacity-building and training programs for nearly two decades, the impact of these trainings and capacity-building efforts is not yet established. There is some evidence that conducting follow-up activities to provide additional support and/or training helps ensure that long-term behavioral change is occurring⁴⁵, but more research is needed. • Police trainings have been shown to increase procedural knowledge (e.g., how to handle suspects and how to recognize human trafficking) and greater appreciation of male victimhood.⁴⁶ • Various models are being tested to speed up and prioritize human trafficking-related trials (special tribunals, trafficking-focused task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCT to evaluate the effectiveness of law enforcement and judicial training and law enforcement capacity-building programs • Pilot research to examine the effectiveness of specialized human trafficking courts to prosecute human trafficking cases more rapidly and successfully • Pilot research to examine the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams/human trafficking prosecution units to prosecute human trafficking cases more rapidly and successfully • White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining interventions in human trafficking and related fields (e.g., narcotics) using predictive programs and big data to assist with prosecution efforts

⁴⁵ Winrock International. Body of Knowledge on Legislative, Enforcement, and Coordination Efforts: Collating Quality Evidence to Better Address Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking. April 10, 2020. <https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20200924-ATLAS-Body-of-Knowledge.pdf>

⁴⁶ Boittin, Margaret, Nicole Hinton, Cecilia Hyunjung Mo, and Georgina Pizzolitto. 2019. "The Effects of Awareness-Raising Police Training to Combat Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking: An Experimental Study in Nepal." Prepared for U.S. Department of Labor.

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<p>forces) but there is a lack of rigorous research that examines their effectiveness.</p>	
<p>3.2 What law enforcement, policy, and private sector strategies are available to combat structural/institutional factors that enable exploitation and human trafficking?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What demand-side interventions are most effective to reach traffickers (particularly the end exploiters) whose greed motivates the victimization of vulnerable individuals? ● How can restitution measures outside of official human trafficking laws/prosecution processes be used to support victims? ● How can police engage the trust of trafficking victims specifically and the community more widely, leading to better cooperation on trafficking cases? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The evidence around demand reduction strategies for sex trafficking conducted over the past decade has not been promising (for example, efforts that were touted as effective, such as John Schools, were widely replicated but have since been shown to demonstrate attitude change but not behavior change⁴⁷). Anecdotal evidence also shows that traffickers do not view arrest/prosecution as a deterrent because so few cases are successfully brought to trial. More research is needed in this area. ● Counter-trafficking donors and implementing organizations have increasingly focused on the use of alternative dispute mechanisms and other restitution measures as a better option for victims because the process is shorter and the burden of proof is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rapid literature review of current counter-trafficking demand reduction interventions and their impacts; pilot research to examine one or more of the most promising demand reduction strategies ● White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining evaluations of community policing models to create opportunities for more positive, mutually respectful interactions between civilians and the police by allowing officers to respond more proactively to the needs of citizens and communities, providing mechanisms to report acts of corruption and abuse, and encouraging citizens to rely on state security and justice sector

⁴⁷ Lovell, Rachel, and Ann Jordan. "Do John Schools Really Decrease Recidivism? A Methodological Critique of an Evaluation of the San Francisco First Offender Prostitution Program." <https://esplerp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/John-Schools.Lovell.Jordan.7.12.pdf>.

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<p>lower. However, prosecution actors point out that reducing the crime to civil cases and payment of fees allows traffickers to keep perpetrating this crime with other victims. More research is needed in this area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how potential traffickers assess risk and benefits of engaging in trafficking could help counter-trafficking actors successfully identify the levers to minimize entry into the field (and facilitate exiting the field/turning to legitimate forms of work). 	<p>institutions when crimes are committed or violence occurs⁴⁸</p>
<p>3.3 How can counter-trafficking interventions (including anti-corruption and anti-money laundering efforts) reduce the economic returns from this crime?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can law enforcement and civil society work together effectively to combat online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC)? • How can human trafficking programs and policies promote ethical practices by labor recruiting agencies in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of counter-OSEC efforts have been launched that focus on online platforms, apps, and other tools that contribute to the recruitment of victims, but the effectiveness of these efforts is not yet known. • Preliminary evidence suggests that interventions to assess and improve ethical recruitment practices by recruiting agencies can be helpful, but after several years of implementation, most of these efforts are still at a pilot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot research to examine the effectiveness of law enforcement and civil society efforts to rapidly identify and prosecute traffickers engaged in OSEC, leading to an RCT • Pilot research leading to an RCT evaluating the effectiveness of ethical job recruitment programs • White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining promising themes from

⁴⁸ For example: <https://www.poverty-action.org/study/impact-community-policing-citizen-trust-police-performance-and-crime-uganda>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
<p>trafficking source countries?</p>	<p>stage, which suggests that they face sustainability and cost effectiveness challenges.</p>	<p>economic theory regarding methods to increase risk and difficulty and reduce profitability (e.g., ensuring there are more profitable routes of commerce/employment available than trafficking; reducing the ease of business, such as targeting the areas that require corruption and making them more difficult to manage; and disrupting the capacity for networks to form or for networks to engage in trafficking)</p>
<p>3.4 How can the use of victim-centered principles of investigation (including adoption of multi-disciplinary teams to support victims) be used to improve justice for victims and increase prosecution rates?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can enforcement of labor and trafficking laws be improved to provide clarity around labor abuses vs. human trafficking and enhanced restitution measures available for victims of abuse and trafficking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A 2020 evidence review⁴⁹ notes that programs that provide support on implementing labor and trafficking laws at both the national and subnational levels – and clearly defining human trafficking, forced labor, and child labor – are effective practices in the prosecution space. ● Preliminary evidence suggests that the use of victim-centered principles and multi-disciplinary teams can be impactful, but resource constraints in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● RCTs to evaluate the effectiveness of legal support programs conducted at the national and sub-national levels ● White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining the use of MDT models with GBV victims ● Pilot research to examine the impact and cost effectiveness of MDT model to support victims of trafficking

⁴⁹ Winrock International. Body of Knowledge on Legislative, Enforcement, and Coordination Efforts: Collating Quality Evidence to Better Address Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking. April 10, 2020. <https://winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/20200924-ATLAS-Body-of-Knowledge.pdf>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do multi-disciplinary TIP response teams lead to more investigations/prosecutions and better results for victims? 	<p>many countries results in a struggle to put MDTs and other intensive investigation and care models into place.</p>	
<p>4. How can the private sector strengthen its actions and accountability to eliminate human trafficking in global supply chains? (Partnership)</p>		
<p>4.1 What is the role that private sector supply chain regulation can have in changing employer behavior, deterring trafficking practices, and influencing the behavior of consumers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effective are private sector efforts to institute supply-chain transparency? How effective are external mandates and enforcement on individual companies in-country? How effective are cross-border trade regulations at reducing trafficking incentives? What are effective measures for engaging private sector companies in improving their efforts to combat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know the Chain, the Ethical Trading Initiative, and others have a comparatively large – if potentially incomplete – collection of data. In addition, over the past two years, the retail sector has reported a number of updates to their processes and procedures to address trafficking in supply chains; there is the potential to leverage this administrative data to assess impact in addition to their current reporting. Examinations of industry certification programs (chocolate, coffee, palm oil) have shown mixed results. These and other partnerships between governments, NGOs, and private sector to eliminate elements of forced labor and trafficking in supply chains (e.g., government to government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White paper/synthesis of evidence outlining supply chain interventions and their impact on labor, changing employer behavior, and influencing the behavior of consumers RCT to evaluate impact of certification programs Rigorous qualitative and quantitative research on the impacts of WROs and other policies on the flows of restricted goods

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
<p>labor trafficking in their supply chains?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can policymakers leverage isolated commerce transaction points, such as customs crossing for cross border trade or commercial licensing, to reduce the use of products produced by forced labor and trafficking victims? 	<p>agreements, crowdsourcing apps, watchdog groups) need to be rigorously assessed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A promising area of study is the effectiveness of Withhold Release Orders (e.g., under Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, which prohibits selected imports from Xinjiang) and California Transparency in Supply Chains Act (impacts on goods originating from lower- and middle-income countries). 	
<p>5. How can all counter-trafficking actors leverage technological advancements to combat trafficking? (Partnership)</p>		
<p>5.1 What role can technology, big data, and machine learning have in promoting improved identification of human trafficking/forced labor sites, vulnerabilities on social media sites, and predictive data on future human trafficking flows within and across borders?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are technology interventions (such as the use of social media platforms) to reach prospective and active migrants effective at mitigating/reducing trafficking rates? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some pilot efforts are being developed but are not far along enough to be evaluated (e.g., Stanford University's creation of a decision-support tool that the labor sector and prosecutors can use to detect and catch traffickers⁵⁰) • Many counter-trafficking actors are also testing the impact of social media outreach/interventions on trafficking in supply chains, which needs to be rigorously studied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage implementing organizations and universities that are conducting pilot technology and machine learning programs and discuss options for RCT development for future phases • A/B testing on social media platforms combined with user surveys to track behavior change, migration patterns, and engagement with worker

⁵⁰ <https://fsi.stanford.edu/news/melding-ai-and-algorithms-health-care-and-policy-combat-human-trafficking>

Learning question	State of the evidence and program/knowledge gaps	Proposed learning and research activities and methods to address these questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some evidence that data mining chat rooms on the dark web can uncover HT activities. 	<p>protection groups and apps</p>
<p>5.2 Are no-fee migration policies, blockchain, and other cloud-based documentation and payment/contract tracking approaches effective at reducing vulnerability to trafficking?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores of human trafficking hackathons and other Silicon Valley/tech-focused interventions have been conducted in the past decade, leading to widespread interest in and excitement about the role that technology can play in combatting trafficking, but the impact of these efforts to the reduction of trafficking or support for survivors is unknown. The effectiveness of these apps and other interventions produced as part of these strategies needs to be rigorously studied. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCT to evaluate the effectiveness of blockchain, cloud-based documentation, and payment/contract tracking approaches using various apps and platforms • White paper summarizing the main technology interventions to date, including an overview of the various methods used to engage private sector actors and professionals (accelerator programs, hackathons, and other tech-based activities) and assessment of the existing evidence around the impact of these interventions to identify survivors, increase awareness, and/or enhance the use of information to prosecute human trafficking crimes

IV. HTRI Competitive Research Fund, Learning Activities, and Knowledge Products

HTRI learning activities will include seed funding (research pilots, data analysis, travel/exploratory funds) and full research studies (large-scale RCTs/impact evaluations) as well as training, dissemination, coordination, and policy-related activities. The learning activities will draw on a variety of knowledge sources to enhance understanding and uptake of evidence-based human trafficking interventions.

Competitive Research Fund Project Selection

HTRI will begin by funding seed and partnership development grants to promote early-stage efforts to explore potential projects between researchers and practitioners. IPA anticipates providing numerous seed grants to support partnership development activities such as project/research design workshops, researcher field visits, diagnostic studies using administrative data, and other formative activities. IPA will also fund pilot and exploratory grants that will allow project teams to develop and iteratively test promising potential programs and policies, as well as provide partial and full funding for randomized evaluations and other experimental research projects that have a clear research question, committed implementing partner(s), well-defined research designs, and sufficient statistical power estimates for impact assessment.

HTRI will prioritize and fund research that seeks to answer the learning questions noted above and addresses policy priorities, as guided by the following criteria:

- **Relevance to HTRI priorities:** Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical evaluation and underlying theories about human trafficking?
- **Credibility of findings:** (use of causal inference methods to test counter-trafficking strategies that can be used to design evidence-based programs and policies). Is the proposal likely to isolate causal mechanisms or contribute to research design for anti-trafficking work more broadly?
- **Project viability:** Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? What is the credibility and policy influence of the implementing partner? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review)?
- **Academic contribution:** Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical evaluation and underlying theories about human trafficking? Is the proposal likely to isolate causal mechanisms or contribute to research design for anti-trafficking work more broadly?
- **Policy relevance:** Is the proposal addressing demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? Will this research be “usable” by decision-makers?
- **Research funding and value for money:** Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected contributions to science and policy?
- **Relevant experience:** Does the research team have a track record of implementing successful projects similar to the one being proposed? Is the composition of the research team well-suited to carry out research on this sensitive topic, and is the level of effort proposed sufficient? Is the project adequately staffed to meet all deliverables?

Ethical Standards in HT Research Efforts

HTRI will develop and disseminate guidance on ethical standards and requirements to research projects funded under this initiative. This guidance will include provisions around relevant legal frameworks, Institutional Review Board processes, and flow-down provisions for funding recipients undertaking TIP data collection (see **Annex 2**).

Dissemination, Training, and Policy Support

As in other social science sectors, implementing organizations, practitioners, and policymakers focused on human trafficking often lack access rigorous human trafficking studies given a range of access barriers: they are not aware of them due to limited dissemination activities; research papers are not written for easy uptake by busy policymakers and practitioners; the papers are not available in local languages; and/or they are not open source and only available behind expensive paywalls.

IPA will engage in communities of practice, webinars, conferences, and other information platforms and venues to share information on evidence around effective human trafficking interventions as well as build contextual knowledge of how, why, and when HTRI-funded research efforts worked or didn't work as planned. Specific opportunities for engaging the human trafficking community include:

- Participation and presentations at quarterly meetings of the Monitoring and Evaluation of Trafficking in Persons (METIP) Community of Practice
- Participation in quarterly meetings with PEMS implementing organizations (under the leadership of the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons)
- Participation and panel presentations at targeted human-trafficking focused conferences and forums (e.g., Freedom Network USA (March), [Asia Region Anti-Trafficking Conference](#) (July), METIP annual working group session (September/October), Freedom from Slavery conference (October), [UN Business and Human Rights Forum](#) (November))
- Input into USG anti-trafficking products and initiatives (e.g., submission of photos and write-ups of special topics of interest for USDOS's annual Trafficking in Persons report; information provided to JTIP to share in interagency groups and advisory groups such as the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons ([PITE](#)), Senior Policy Operating Group (SPOG), and [U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking](#); recommendations for uptake of USAID's revised C-TIP policy; inputs into USDOL/ILO's Research to Action project)
- Participate in academic and global efforts to improve evidence-based practices in combatting human trafficking (e.g., Alliance/Delta 8.7, University of Nottingham's Rights Lab, Stanford University's Human Trafficking Data Lab) and provide information to policymakers and implementing organizations on evaluation methodologies appropriate to evidence needs (experimental, quasi-experimental, and qualitative/non-experimental).
- Develop podcasts, white papers, and/or short, targeted presentations for policymakers and implementing organizations highlighting relevant evidence from human trafficking-adjacent fields, to inform the development of new human trafficking-focused projects.
- Informing and referring donors, policymakers, and implementing organizations to groups (e.g., IPA's Right-Fit Evidence unit) that can support the development of strong theoretical frameworks, particularly evidence-based theories of change, to help organizations create actionable and credible data that can be used for impact evaluations.

Learning and Adaptation

The introductory sections of this research and learning agenda outline the state of human trafficking research and point to directions for research under HTRI. This synthesis of existing research and literature review/list of references (**Annex 1**) will be continually updated (at least quarterly) and assessed annually through a “pause and reflect” session that will engage JTIP and other relevant stakeholders. Stakeholder outreach will be targeted and limited to keep HTRI efforts moving forward and avoid consensus fatigue. These reflection points will help promote an iterative, consultative process for the learning and research agenda that will ensure the results from HTRI-funded research and policy efforts are relevant, usable, and impactful.

Annex 1: References

A. Human trafficking RCTs and experimental impact evaluations

[Ongoing] Barsbai, T., Licuanan, V., Steinmayr, A., Tiongson, E., & Yang, D. (2016). Harnessing the Development Benefits of International Migration: A Randomized Evaluation of Enhanced Pre-Departure Orientation Seminars for Migrants from the Philippines. Randomised Control Trial, Ongoing 3ie Funded Studies. <https://developmentevidence.3ieimpact.org/search-result-details/impact-evaluation-repository/harnessing-the-development-benefits-of-international-migration-a-randomized-evaluation-of-enhanced-pre-departure-orientation-seminars-for-migrants-from-the-philippines/9000>

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Annex 2: Research Ethics and Challenges to Carrying Out Research on Human Trafficking

Human trafficking methods and contexts are constantly evolving, stymieing the research field's capacity to draft a "standard" set of rules for research ethics. However, in addition to the ethical considerations that impact all projects, there are additional questions about ethical conduct we expect every project interacting with potential victims of trafficking to address.

Benefice

Human trafficking can be incredibly destructive to its victims. Accumulating evidence to effectively stop trafficking and mitigate its harm is clearly valuable. However, this means the targeting for research questions and resources has a higher burden justification, both to avoid "waste" (e.g., a prevalence survey without programmatic outcomes) and design that incorporates respondents' inherent risks. Researchers must definitively demonstrate that the research will benefit the respondents, specifically those who are trafficked.

Piloting

Small-scale survey pilots should be followed by a critical reflection period. The ethical reflection period with research staff and enumerators should discuss how the surveys are going, how respondents are reacting to the sensitive questions, any adverse events that the team did not anticipate, and, most importantly, should the team continue with the survey as-is. Stopping the survey based on feedback from the research field team should always be an option on the table.

Trauma-informed design

Each researcher will design their projects assuming all respondents are impacted by trauma. Survey tools and enumerator training must reflect this assumption. For every point of researcher interaction with respondents, both during research activities and the intervention activities, a trauma-informed risk assessment will be conducted and piloted. If the respondent appears to be experiencing discomfort or negative reactions due to the questions, the enumerator should remind her that she does not have to answer any of the questions. If the respondent indicates she wants to end the survey or take a break, it is imperative the enumerator does her best to share the referral pathway information. Trauma-informed updates will be made to protocols as appropriate.

Context-specific informed consent

As always, before any personal information is collected, the enumerator must obtain voluntary informed consent. The consent needs to be specific to the types of risks the respondent is facing, often this is specific to the type of trafficking being researched. The language used should be scrutinized and stripped of any superfluous or confusing language. If there are any situations in which the respondent's personal information will be shared—such as if they disclose that they are engaged in any type of illegal activity—this must be shared in the consent process. While not always feasible, all enumerators should be trained to pause any interview and remind the respondent about this clause if the enumerator believes the respondent may be about to trigger a mandatory reporting law or similar forced disclosure of respondent information.

Referrals for all respondents

Each project must demonstrate extra care for identifying potential referral services for respondents and basic vetting for appropriateness of care. However, we recognize that referral services will not be available

in all research settings. In these instances, extra attention will be focused on the researchers' outline of how their research will directly benefit the respondent community.

All respondents interviewed will receive a full referral pathway that includes comprehensive services for victims of trafficking, including medical facilities, psychosocial support, protection information, and police information for reporting abuse. They will be actively connected to any resources they are interested in pursuing if they provide consent to the surveyor to make the direct connection.

Mandatory reporting laws for human trafficking exist in many nations. All researchers must identify if there are laws relevant to their research and consult social services to construct the most care-centric pathway for any respondent who triggers a mandatory report. For example, if all instances of sex trafficking must be reported to officials, researchers should work to identify a partner in law enforcement (preferably from a designated sexual violence unit) and identify any additional advocates who can assist the respondent in navigating the system. All consent forms should contain language that outlines when/if the respondent's personal information may be shared with a social worker. Surveyors should be trained to pause interviews and alert the respondent if they believe the respondent is about to trigger a mandatory reporting law. They should then explicitly state that the respondent is not obligated to answer any questions.

Annex 3: Definitions of Terms

HTRI uses the following definition of human trafficking from the Trafficking Victim Protection Act

- **Sex Trafficking:** When a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person to engage in a commercial sex act or when a trafficker causes a child who has not attained 18 years of age to engage in a commercial sex act.
- **Forced Labor:** When a trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains a person for labor or services by using force, fraud, or coercion.
- **Trafficking in persons:** “Trafficking in persons” and “human trafficking” are interchangeable umbrella terms that refer to a crime whereby traffickers exploit and profit at the expense of adults or children by compelling them to perform labor or engage in commercial sex. The United States recognizes two primary forms of trafficking in persons: forced labor and sex trafficking.
- **Child sex trafficking:** When a person younger than 18 is used to perform a commercial sex act, it is considered sex trafficking regardless of whether there is any force, fraud, or coercion. Children (under the age of 18) can never consent to a commercial sex act; therefore, any child engaged in commercial sex is a victim of child sex trafficking.