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## Exploring Human Trafficking in Hawai'i from the Perspective of Local Service Providers: Report to Stakeholders

Kristen D. Gleason PhD  
*University of Southern Maine, kristen.gleason@maine.edu*

Alyssa Carangan  
*University of Hawai'i, Manoa*

Jared Espinueva  
*University of Hawai'i, Manoa*

Alma Herrera-Mendoza  
*University of Hawai'i, Manoa*

Denali Lukacinsky  
*University of Hawai'i, Manoa*

*See next page for additional authors*

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## **Authors**

Kristen D. Gleason PhD, Alyssa Carangan, Jared Espinueva, Alma Herrera-Mendoza, Denali Lukacinsky, and Andreas Remis

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From the Perspective of Local Service Providers**

**Report to Stakeholders**

Kristen Gleason, M.A., M.Ed.  
Alyssa Carangan, B.A.  
Jared Espinueva, B.A.  
Alma Herrera-Mendoza, B.A.  
Denali Lukacinsky, B.A.  
Andreas Remis, B.A.

University of Hawai‘i at Manoa

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## Executive Summary

**Introduction:** Human trafficking is an issue of national importance, but it is also an issue that touches communities at the local level. While progress is being made with regards to better understanding this phenomenon nationally, examining how human trafficking and the policies crafted to address it take shape within the local context is also important. One-size-fits-all approaches to human trafficking are not likely to understand local contextual variation. It is important to understand the local context so that efforts to address human trafficking can be sensitive to the situational needs of different communities. This report seeks to examine the local context of human trafficking in Hawai'i from the perspective of local service providers.

**Methods and Analysis:** Several local service providers ( $N = 13$ ) across three Hawaiian Islands were interviewed and recorded using semi-structured qualitative interviews. The service providers came from a variety of backgrounds and had a range of experiences. Some were knowledgeable about issues related to labor trafficking and some had experience in the area of sex trafficking. These recordings were analyzed to identify themes and subthemes related to the topics of: 1) how to help victims of human trafficking (Helping); 2) challenges to addressing human trafficking in Hawai'i (Challenges); 3) how to best prevent human trafficking (Prevention); and 4) what has changed over the years with regards to human trafficking in the local context (Change).

**Results:** Several major themes were identified in each of the four categories of Helping, Challenges, Prevention, and Changes. The Challenges category was by far the most robust, yielding 5 themes and several subthemes. The major themes from each category are presented in the figure below. Throughout the report verbatim participant comments are used to illustrate themes where appropriate.

Helping	Challenges	Prevention	Changes
Provide for Needs  Create Trust  Foster Good Collaboration	Identification  Active Services  Long-Term Adjustment  Systemic Challenges  Hawaii Specific Challenges	Education and Awareness  Policy-Level Prevention  Better Coordination  Societal Attitudes	Positive Changes: Awareness, Collaboration, Laws, and Experience  Setbacks: Prominence, Collaboration, Failed Cases

Participant recommendations for helping victims of human trafficking were centered around three types of suggestions. Participants stressed that helpers needed to provide for victim needs, create trust with groups who are vulnerable to being trafficked (e.g., immigrant communities), and foster good collaboration between service providers, community members,

and authorities. When discussing strategies for preventing human trafficking, participants also stressed the need for better coordination and collaboration among stakeholders as well as more education and awareness about the issue, including the need to change “*societal attitudes*” towards trafficking and related issues (e.g., immigrant labor and the sex industry).

However, participants discussed a number of challenges that hinder their efforts to both help victims and prevent trafficking. These included challenges related to identifying victims in the first place (Identification), such as lack of awareness among some segments of the community regarding how human trafficking may present in Hawai‘i and reluctance of victims to come forward because of fear. After potential victims have been identified a number of logistical challenges were discussed related to providing services and ensuring that clients received the social and legal help that they needed (Active Services). Because of the multiple challenges related to overall service provision, such as limited resources and time-intensive bureaucratic processes, several participants discussed a particular lack of services for the long-term adjustment of formerly trafficked persons (Long-Term Adjustment). This lack of support for long-term adjustment was thought to leave former victims vulnerable to renewed situations of trafficking or exploitation.

Additionally, a number of overarching systemic and local challenges were discussed. Systemic challenges to helping victims and preventing trafficking included difficulties maintaining steady funding streams, issues related to interagency collaboration, and struggles in generating accurate data about the extent of the problem in the state. Participants also discussed challenges specific to Hawai‘i, with its unique geographical and cultural contexts. In particular, the fact that the state is composed of several islands seems to have created challenges related to interisland collaboration and uneven diffusion of resources and strategies across those islands.

However, despite the numerous challenges discussed, when asked about changes related to addressing trafficking in the state, most participants discussed multiple instances of progress they have seen. They discussed improvements related to collaboration and creating awareness about the problem. Many also discussed how they themselves were able to develop more sophisticated strategies for approaching their trafficking-related work over the years.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** Throughout the interviews participants returned again and again to themes of awareness and collaboration. Community awareness about human trafficking, as well as the targeted awareness of particular groups, such as law enforcement officers, employers, and social service agencies, was seen as central to efforts to both help victims and prevent future trafficking. Likewise, good collaborative relationships between service providers and with law enforcement and community members was seen as an necessary and important tool for addressing human trafficking in the islands. While it is clear that much progress has been made in the state with regards to addressing human trafficking, participants still identified a number of important difficulties they encounter in their trafficking-related work.

Participants discussed challenges related to faulty and competing understandings of human trafficking that make efforts to increase awareness and collaboration difficult. Four recommendations are made for intentionally targeting awareness and collaboration efforts: 1) Increase the clarity and specificity of awareness efforts to counteract disinformation or

confusions about human trafficking; 2) Continue to work towards collaboration, especially with regards to neighbor islands; 3) Focus collaborative efforts with community groups on the long-term adjustment of victims as an area for targeted improvement; 4) Use data to set trafficking in context by describing the range of exploitative practices vulnerable groups often face.

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## Introduction

Human trafficking has received much public attention over the last two decades, resulting in several new federal, state, and local policy initiatives. However, social science research on the phenomenon of human trafficking and the effectiveness of these policies is sparse (Gozdziak & Collett, 2005; Potocky, 2010). Much of what has been written about human trafficking has examined it at the national level and has been based on “official” cases that have been documented by the courts or in newspaper articles (Bales & Soodalter, 2009; Gozdzia & Collett, 2005; Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005). Victims of human trafficking are a hidden population and, therefore, many instances of trafficking never come to the attention of authorities (Tyldum & Brunovskis, 2005). This project sought to add to the body of available literature on human trafficking by attempting to understand human trafficking from the perspective of service providers in Hawai‘i. The project seeks to understand human trafficking in a particular local context and from the perspective of those who are “on the ground” interacting with potential trafficking victims in the context of their advocacy and work.

### Human Trafficking in Hawai‘i

The Hawaiian Islands possess several characteristics that are thought to be markers of areas with a high probability for both sex and labor trafficking. These include the presence of several large military bases, high rates of tourism, a thriving agricultural industry, and large immigrant populations (Richard, 1999). Indeed, Hawai‘i has had two high profile human trafficking cases in recent years (Star-Advertiser Staff, 2012). Both of these cases were brought against large agricultural companies and garnered national attention when federal prosecutors dropped the charges against the accused traffickers. One of these cases (against Global Horizons Manpower) was touted as the largest suspected human trafficking case ever uncovered in the U.S. (Park, 2010).

Given the presence and potential for human trafficking abuses in the islands, the State of Hawai‘i has enacted several new human trafficking laws (Zoellick, 2013). In addition to efforts to enact statewide legislation, state officials and local service providers used federal funding to establish the Hawai‘i Coalition against Human Trafficking (HCAHT) (Leone, 2002). Currently, bimonthly HCAHT meetings provide an opportunity for state law enforcement officials and service providers to discuss and address issues related to human trafficking. The participants in these meetings are primarily from the metropolitan center of Honolulu and the island of O‘ahu on which it is located. These coalition meetings and the collaborations between partners constitute the state’s primary locus of on-the-ground implementation of federal and state human trafficking policy. Because much of the infrastructure for addressing human trafficking exists on O‘ahu, but large immigrant populations and agricultural industries exist on other islands, one goal of this report is to explore the implementation of human trafficking policies on the neighbor islands as well as on O‘ahu.

## Methods

This study examined human trafficking at the local level in Hawai'i by conducting interviews with local service providers. Local service providers were chosen because they have a more sophisticated understanding of trafficking than the general public and are likely influential stakeholders with regards to how local human trafficking policy is implemented.

### Participants

Local service providers ( $N=13$ ) were interviewed from three different islands in the State of Hawai'i (O'ahu = 6; Maui = 3; Hawai'i = 4). Interviews were conducted in person and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants included advocates ( $n = 2$ ) and service providers who have helped or are likely to help human trafficking victims with legal services ( $n = 6$ ) or social services ( $n = 5$ ). Participants who had experience with or knowledge related to both sex trafficking and labor trafficking were recruited for the project (sex = 5, labor = 5, both = 3). The majority of the participants were women ( $n = 10$ ).

There was a wide range in the participants' years of experience with human trafficking related issues. Those on neighbor islands had very little direct experience with human trafficking as the relatively few trafficking victims identified on those islands were typically referred to O'ahu for help. Many of these individuals did have several years of experience in domestic violence or immigration relief services, but were fairly new to human trafficking issues. Several participants on O'ahu had been involved with human trafficking issues since shortly after the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) was enacted in 2000, but a few were fairly new to this work. These participants were chosen in order to draw from a variety of experiences and backgrounds among service providers in Hawai'i, and in doing so, to explore a variety of perspectives and to better understand the range of challenges faced by these service providers.

### Measures

Participants' thoughts about human trafficking were solicited using semi-structured qualitative interviews. Generally, the questions focused on how participants' work in the area of human trafficking has changed over the years and their perspectives on what could improve their work in this area. Several initial questions gathered background and contextual information. These included, "In what area of human trafficking to you have experience working?" and "How long have you been involved with human trafficking issues?" These initial questions were generally followed by asking participants about the challenges they face in their work with regards to human trafficking. Follow-up probes related to challenges usually included questions about challenges specific to Hawai'i or to neighbor islands.

Following these, a set of questions was asked to elicit information on how human trafficking issues have changed over the years: 1) "In your experience, what has changed about how people address human trafficking issues since the time you began working in this area?" 2) "Has anything changed that makes your work easier/better?" 3) "Harder/worse?" If participants did not spontaneously discuss state legislative policies during this part of the interview, follow-up probes were used to illicit their knowledge or opinions of these changes, if appropriate. Two additional questions were used to prompt discussion about participants' ideas

for both helping victims and preventing human trafficking: “In your opinion, what is the best way to help those who have been trafficked in Hawai‘i?” and “In your opinion, what is the best way to prevent human trafficking in Hawai‘i?”

## **Analysis**

Each interview was examined using thematic qualitative analysis techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). First, the interview content was grouped into four major categories. These categories were based on the question structure of the interviews:

- 1) Participant opinions about the best way to help human trafficking victims
- 2) Challenges of addressing human trafficking in Hawai‘i
- 3) Participant opinions about the best way to prevent human trafficking
- 4) Changes participants have noticed in how human trafficking is addressed in Hawai‘i

After this initial coding according to broad interview question topics, each of the four major categories (Helping, Challenges, Prevention, and Changes) was analyzed to develop themes and subthemes based on participant responses. In order to insure that each theme and subtheme accurately reflected the content provided by participants to the maximum extent possible, each was re-examined, discarded, combined, or refined at multiple stages during the analysis process. These results are presented below with the themes and subthemes that were found in participant interviews organized under the four main categories of Helping, Challenges, Prevention, and Changes.



## Results I: Helping

When talking about their thoughts on the best way to help survivors of human trafficking, participants discussed: concrete suggestions for helping with particular survivor needs ( $n = 12$ ), the importance of building trust and ensuring safety for potential victims ( $n = 8$ ), and the importance of good collaborative relationships among stakeholders ( $n = 6$ ). Each of these themes will be discussed below and relevant or representative excerpts from the participant interviews will be used as needed to illustrate these points.

### “Provide for their needs”

When asked how to best help victims of human trafficking, one participant responded simply, “*provide for their needs.*” Another participant mentioned that, “*you have to have a response that is better than where they are.*” This sentiment was echoed by several other participants, and many spoke about how providing for survivor needs was important to helping them recover. A few participants suggested specific areas of victim need. One of the most commonly mentioned survivor needs was the need for stable and secure housing. Eleven of the 13 participants discussed the need for victim housing either as a challenge they face or as an important factor in helping victims of human trafficking.

Other needs discussed included the need for language access and interpreters, medical care, employment related needs, and other “*social resources.*” At least three participants mentioned the particular need for long-term support of survivors. These participants noted that while some resources are available for short-term support, many survivors would benefit from services that would help them in the longer-term, such as English as a Second Language and employment training and longer-term housing and care for sex trafficking victims. For example,

*But they’re dealing- they need some back end support to teach them life skills, or ESL, job training. They need that on the back end, because do you want to trust the victim to go back to the same thing they were doing before they- why they were trafficked?*

While providing for victim needs seems rather straightforward, as will be illustrated below, there are a number of challenges related to providing for both immediate and long-term needs.

### Create Trust and Safety

In addition to providing for the material and social support needs of the victims, at least 8 of the 12 participants who provided suggestions for how to best help victims mentioned in some form the importance of creating a safe environment and building trust with victims and potential victim groups. Building trust was seen as an important part of providing services, and even as necessary to understanding victim needs:

*And then they will talk to you about their lives and where they came from and through that, through that relationship, that trust building, you will understand what they need the most.*

Building a safe environment was also seen as critical to identifying victims of human trafficking in the first place. Potential victim groups, such as immigrants and sex workers, viewing the community or authorities with trust was seen as an important part of creating a willingness to come forward. For example, in reference to sex trafficking victims one participant said:

*Because a big element that the pimps and traffickers used to control women and girls is the shame element, is the guilt element, just saying, you know, "This is what you were made to do; This is where you belong," like, "You try and get out of this and I'm gonna tell everybody what you did"... I think it would be quite empowering if everyone knew that there were places that they could go to that they would be loved, and supported and encouraged and would not be shamed, and would not be guilted by those things.*

When speaking about potential immigrant victims another participant discussed a similar need to create a safe environment for victims to seek help:

*So creating a safe haven, I think, for the victims. Which would include the police, the prosecutor's office, you know, all of those, reassuring them, "look we're here to help you." I think that could make a difference as well... So there is a place that they can go to and receive whatever services they can receive, including providing the knowledge that they can be protected. They, you know, a lot of these people, the fact that they're "illegal," you know, without status, or whatever... they don't wanna be part of society. You know, they're scared. They don't wanna do this; they don't wanna do that.*

In these comments it is apparent that participants are acknowledging that both immigrant communities and those in the sex industry tend to view the authorities or the larger mainstream community with distrust and/or fear. Thus, in order to help potential victims in these groups, participants stressed the need for agencies, the community at large, and authorities to build trusting relationships with immigrant and sex worker communities.

### **Foster Good Collaboration among Stakeholders**

At least 6 participants discussed the need for good collaboration among service providers and between service providers and authorities to ensure a smooth and successful helping process for victims of human trafficking. The majority of these participants ( $n = 4$ ) discussed the need to coordinate services among service providers. They reasoned that often the sheer number of services and requirements needed to help clients can be overwhelming for victims and that the service system can be very difficult to navigate. Several of these participants suggested either a centralized location for victims to receive different types of service, such as legal, medical, counseling, etc., or a designated case manager to help them keep track of services, documentation, and appointments. A better system of collaboration was thought to aid in the process of providing for victim needs.

Another way that collaboration was seen to help victims is in helping to ensure their trust and safety in the system. At least three participants mentioned that good collaboration between service providers and authorities would ensure that victims feel safe enough to come to stakeholders for help.

*So for example, if I say, "You know what? If I take you here, talk to the police, they'll help you." You know, "this is how they can help you." And then sort of explain to them the protocols, you know from going to the prosecutor's. Let them understand the whole process. Then, like anybody, once you understand how something is done and you're comfortable and you realize what's gonna happen next, then you're more comfortable in – whether it's participating and, you know, undertaking the past, whatever. Whenever you have a clear understanding of a process then it's easier for you to participate.*

## Results II: Challenges

While providing for needs, creating trust, and engaging in collaborative relationships were seen as ideal strategies for helping victims, participants also discussed a number of challenges with regards to addressing human trafficking in Hawai'i. In fact, this was the most robust and dense of the four major categories.

The challenges of addressing human trafficking are organized below around 5 specific areas. The first three areas organize the challenges that were discussed according to three major stages in the helping process. These three stages were suggested by one participant and proved to be a useful way of organizing many of the challenges that participants discussed. These stages are: 1) identifying/locating victims; 2) the active helping process that occurs after victims are identified and services have begun; and 3) the long-term outlook for victims once the bulk of the services available to them are complete. Each of these three stages (identification, active services, and long-term adjustment) was seen to present unique challenges for victims and service providers alike.

The fourth type of challenges discussed focused on systemic issues related to addressing trafficking in the state. These were challenges related to maintaining funding streams, justifying the need for services, and collaborating with other entities. These challenges did not fall neatly into one of the three stages of victim services, but were instead overarching challenges that affected all three stages.

Finally, because local context is often very important with regards to understanding needs and challenges, an additional category was created in order to understand how participants view the challenges they face as unique to Hawai'i. Each of these five challenge areas (Identification Challenges, Active Services Challenges, Long-Term Adjustment Challenges, Systemic Challenges, and Hawai'i Specific Challenges) yielded multiple subthemes that will be discussed in detail below.

Identification Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Victim-Level Issues (Fear)</li><li>•Perpetrator Actions (Coersion)</li><li>•Community-Level Misunderstandings</li></ul>
Active Services Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Deficits in Resources and Services</li><li>•Psychological Trauma</li><li>•Immigration and Certification Issues</li></ul>
Long-Term Adjustment Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Challenges for Immigrant Labor Trafficking Victims</li><li>•Challenges for Sex Trafficking Victims</li></ul>
Systemic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Communication and Collaboration</li><li>•Accurate Numbers</li><li>•Funding</li></ul>
Hawai'i Specific Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Island-Related Challenges</li><li>•Ethnic Diversity of Potential Victims</li><li>•Relatively Less Institutional Support</li></ul>

## Identification Challenges

Challenges related to identifying victims were mentioned in some way by all 13 of the service providers who were interviewed. Of the 13 participants, 9 discussed victim-level issues that might prevent individuals from coming forward, 8 mentioned perpetrator actions that might prevent victims from coming forward, and 10 mentioned community-level misunderstandings that might prevent victims from being properly identified.

The barrier cited most often as preventing victims from coming forward was fear. Victims may have been involved in illegal activity (such as prostitution), they may have issues related to their immigration status, or they may fear losing their job if they come forward. The following passage illustrates this fear barrier:

*So that's pretty much what we've done in order to mobilize and prepare and, you know, getting somebody to come forward in a trafficking case is difficult because, you know, obviously they're afraid. And sometimes they're afraid to call the police because there's a lot of stories in the community about being a victim or a witness and then calling the police and then having them ask you, the victim or the witness, what your [immigration] status is and, you know, if there's children involved they might not want to get, you know, them- themselves deported or get the kids in trouble or, you know.*

That victim fear of reaching out to authorities was identified so frequently as a major challenge in addressing human trafficking underscores the importance of creating a safe environment for victims to come forward.

In addition to the fear and other barriers that might make potential victims reluctant to come forward, participants ( $n = 8$ ) also mentioned perpetrator actions that attempt to prevent victims from reaching out for help. The following passages provide examples from study participants that illustrate ways perpetrators can prevent victims from coming forward:

*You know, I'm sure traffickers teach their young girls what to say when the police stop you. "That's my boyfriend." That's always what you hear, "that's my boyfriend."*

*Then, you know, they shared with me how they were forced to stay in their home, forced not to leave the area of- except work. They- I'm told about how they're not even able to read their newspaper, how, um, you know, all these directives, basically, "you can't do this," "you can't do that." You know, they were, they're lives were dictated by how the, um, proper- or the business owners, property owners wanted them to...yeah.*

Finally, the majority of the participants also mentioned issues at the community-level that may be preventing potential victims from being properly identified. Community-level issues related to identifying potential human trafficking victims are likely the most effective target for improving victim identification. While it is important to understand the barriers victims may experience related to coming forward or that perpetrators may build to prevent victims from being identified, community barriers to proper victim identification can more easily be addressed through policy or education initiatives. The major community-level barrier to properly identifying victims was inaccurate community member understandings of what constitutes human trafficking.

Ten out of the thirteen participants spontaneously identified challenges they faced related to competing or faulty understandings of human trafficking. The following groups were identified by one or more participants in relation to not knowing, understanding, or using the proper definition of human trafficking: parents of minors, victims themselves, members of law enforcement, the general public, other service providers in the community, and employers/landowners. Several participants discussed issues and challenges related to this confusion over what constitutes human trafficking, including one participant's experience with providing education about human trafficking:

*And then aside from those who of us who are practitioners and police and stuff like that- but as far as the more general public; I think trafficking is a hard thing because of the language. Like, even the term of our "trafficking" is confusing for people. They're like, "Well, what does that mean..." Like trafficking sounds like you're moving something from one place to another- which is part of it, but there's also an element of it, you know, against a person's will. And then people are thinking, "Well how does that happen?" Because they're not immigrants themselves, so they don't understand how somebody could be told, "You have to work here" or "You have to do this thing sexually." And people are like, "Well why don't they just say "no" or why don't they just leave?" Those are options for citizens but they're not options for- for some other people. And so it's a hard thing for people to wrap their minds around.*

Here the participant discussed the observation that both the label of "trafficking" and the phenomenon of trafficking with immigrant victims are hard for the general public to understand. In this passage, "people" have a hard time understanding human trafficking because they do not understand the subtle ways in which immigrants can be coerced into labor or sex trafficking situations.

The fact that there are several different kinds of activities that are considered to fall under the umbrella of human trafficking may add to the confusion on the topic. For example, many community members may not be completely aware that anyone under the age of 18 who has engaged in a commercial sex act is considered a victim of human trafficking. Others may be less aware of the coerciveness of comparatively subtle labor abuses, such as confiscating employee immigration documents, which are now part of a definition of human trafficking. Far from concrete and straightforward, human trafficking seems to be a phenomenon that is often at the center of competing definitions:

*Well, sometimes we believe that for certain victims, it is trafficking victim, and they [law enforcement] disagree with us. You know, essentially it's a matter of identification. There's different standards for each agency.*

*Well, one of the biggest challenges I think... well, there's a bunch, combating the social stigma surrounding the victims. To keep them- prevent the public from viewing them as, if they're sex trafficked victims, prostitutes, and if they're labor trafficked, uh, illegal aliens. Umm, that's a challenge.*

These competing definitions and the lack of clarity among the public were seen as significant barriers to identifying potential trafficking victims and to addressing the issue of human trafficking in Hawai'i. As a direct result of these competing or faulty understandings of human trafficking, participants discussed concerns that many in the islands did not believe that human trafficking was a problem in their communities. The belief that it does not exist was

thought to be a huge impediment to both finding and addressing instances of human trafficking in Hawai'i.

### Challenges to Providing Services

After potential trafficking victims are identified, there are additional post-trafficking challenges related to service provider attempts to provide for their needs. Service providers described encountering issues related to deficits in the resources and services available to provide for the material and social service needs of trafficking victims ( $n = 9$ ), issues related to the psychological trauma experienced by victims ( $n = 3$ ), and issues related to addressing the immigration status and certification needs of victims ( $n = 4$ ).

Most participants (9/13) discussed concerns they had or challenges they faced in obtaining resources for trafficking victims. Many spoke generally of a lack of or a need for more resources. Some resources specifically mentioned included translation/language access, job-training and placement, housing, health care services, mental health services, and English as a Second Language services. The importance of adequate housing for victims was a recurring concern among participants and echoes similar concerns addressed in the human trafficking literature (for examples see Clawson et al., 2003; Macy & Johns, 2011). These participants and authors discussed the unique housing needs of trafficking victims. Finding a secure, safe shelter for victims who have been traumatized, speak little English, are underage, or have engaged in stigmatized activities (such as prostitution) is a challenge for many communities.

In addition to material or service needs, at least 5 participants discussed issues of victim emotional distress or trauma that presented challenges for the victims themselves. Most references to trauma were made with regards to sex trafficking victims. Trauma was seen to create difficulties related to victim recovery, to victims being able to participate as witnesses in criminal cases, to maintaining contact with victims, and even to victim willingness to receive services. The following passages illustrate some of these difficulties:

*They're used to being manipulated...to a very huge degree. So sometimes, you know, we get, like a girl who's been in the game for a really long time...She'll chew up some of our advocates and spit them out...And she would just throw it back at them and just cripple 'em, cut their legs off so they would be out of the picture so she didn't have to deal with them.*

*Um, other challenges as far as working with survivors that I don't think would be specific to Hawai'i would be: addictions, um, self-hate, guilt, shame. Um, pimps and traffickers, they tend to target individuals who are vulnerable to begin with...Um, [they do not come from] a healthy family environment, so just emotionally, there's some lack of maturity there, socially there might be lack of maturity.*

While issues of trauma were not often discussed in relation to labor trafficking victims, several participants ( $n = 4$ ) who had experience working with immigrant victims of human trafficking discussed specific challenges related to the process of obtaining immigration relief for these victims. Federal law provides a mechanism, in the form of T-visas and U-visas, by which immigrant victims of human trafficking can pursue an eventual path to residency and citizenship. Immigrant victims are also eligible once they are certified as trafficking victims (by the federal government) to receive benefits from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. However,

this process can be slow and complicated, which creates challenges for victims and service providers alike. Participants discussed the need for more private attorneys to help with filing for immigration relief, the difficulties related to maintaining contact with clients through the lengthy certification and immigration relief processes, the overwhelming nature of these processes for many victims, and challenges related to specific requirements. According to one participant:

*There are timing issues, in terms of...when the client gets their certification, there's a date put on that certification letter. And then they have access to 8 months of benefits from the federal government as refugees. But a lot of times, once they put that date on, we may not even know, or the client may not even know they have a trafficking certification letter, until later, a couple of months down the road. Because the mail- they move a lot. Sometimes they don't even get the letter and then 8 months is gone.*

When discussing challenges related to specific requirements to obtain immigration relief, participants mentioned 1) the burden of having to prove that a trafficking victim would experience hardship if they returned to their home country; 2) the difficulty of obtaining a waiver for criminal activities if the victim had been involved in these activities (such as prostitution) prior to their trafficking situation; and 3) challenges related to the fact that victims cannot call the government on their own behalf to inquire about the status of their applications.

### **Challenges to Long-Term Adjustment**

In addition to the immediate housing, resource, psychological, and immigration-related needs that victims have after leaving situations of human trafficking, there are also several challenges to the long-term adjustment of these victims. At least 4 participants specifically discussed these long-term challenges. Two of these participants discussed challenges related to immigrant victims' adjustment; one discussed challenges to the long-term adjustment of sex trafficking victims; and one discussed long-term challenges for both these groups. In these conversations there seemed to be concern about preventing both labor and sex trafficking victims from returning to the situations in which they were being trafficked.

When discussing the long-term prospects for immigrant victims, participants discussed a need for more services to help with English language training, job training, and life skills training so that victims can better support themselves and their families independently. Without these skills victims have been known to return to the same type of exploitative work circumstances, and even the same employers, that were associated with their trafficking (see also Brennan, 2010). According to one participant:

*And then the other problem is working. Once they did get their papers, like, they're certified and they got to go get their employment authorization, a lot of the farmers that could employ them are very leery about hiring former trafficking victims. 'Cause they weren't sure whether- they didn't wanna get caught in being considered a trafficking operation. So we had a hard time sometimes re-employing them. And that's all they knew, farming. And their language, a lot of them couldn't even speak English.*

Interviewees seemed to see economic security as the major long-term challenge for immigrant labor trafficking victims and lack of language or job training as barriers to obtaining this security. When speaking about long-term challenges for sex trafficking victims, it seems

that psychological recovery is the major long-term challenge and trauma and lack of stable relationships are seen as the major barriers to this recovery. One participant who had some experience working with sex trafficking victims also expressed concerns about victims returning to former trafficking situations. In the case of sex trafficking victims these relapses were thought to be the result of psychological coercion:

*And just because a victim relapses doesn't mean that that's the life they're choosing. You know, like understand, what is a meaningful choice for a victim if they're looking at having really been victimized as a child or whatever and don't have a stable home life. They feel like traf-going back to the trafficking scene or whatever is kind of their only alternative. Or especially if the trafficker has implemented whatever brainwashing techniques are exerted, psychological coercion, over them. I mean, that's not gonna just all of the sudden disappear if you try to rescue the victim, or whatever. There's still gonna be elements of that for however many years.*

While there are some grants and programs available for post-trafficking needs, many are time-limited and few are focused on developing the skills and capacities for long-term self-sufficiency and success that are needed for both domestic sex trafficking victims and immigrant victims of human trafficking. The need to consider the long-term outlook of trafficking victims has also been noted in national human trafficking research (e.g., Brennan, 2010). However, considering the long-term needs of victims often requires an investment of time and money that many tightly budgeted social service agencies find beyond their means.

## **Systemic Challenges**

Lack of available funding for both immediate and long-term services for victims was an overarching concern for many attempting to address human trafficking in Hawai'i. These kinds of challenges that seemed to be systemic or overarching concerns affect many agencies and organizations and impede attempts to address human trafficking in a coordinated way. The most frequently mentioned systemic concern was that of communication and collaboration ( $n = 12$ ) between stakeholders. The collaboration challenges tended to be framed differently by neighbor island participants than by participants on O'ahu.

Specifically, O'ahu participants discussed challenges they face in maintaining good coordination with other service providers and with law enforcement. These issues seemed to be two-fold. Some participants discussed difficulties created by interagency rivalry, tension, or differing philosophical approaches to addressing human trafficking. For instance:

*I think the only thing that I see is I would wish that they would- I know that there's sometimes you can't talk to the other parties because of what you're doing due to privacy issues, confidentiality, and privilege issues. But probably, I would hope that it would go back to the golden days of the task force where there was more open communication, less acrimonious, less tension between some of the group. Because it rises once in a while, but sometimes it gets really non-productive.*

It is important to note that, like the participant above, a good number of O'ahu participants discussed how working on the Hawai'i Coalition against Human Trafficking (HCAHT) had facilitated useful connections and had improved coordination between service providers and law enforcement and among service providers. In addition to periods of tension between stakeholders that have disrupted this process, a few participants also had concerns related to

the high turn-over of human trafficking-knowledgeable employees in the various stakeholder organizations (both with service providers and law enforcement) which made continued coordination more challenging.

*I've met a lot of great people who really care about the issue through the coalition. But like I said, people are always rotating in and out of the coalition. It's not always their choice. It may be their superiors, or just, I don't know, other things are happening. And so you may get a really good team at one point who are working well together and then suddenly people start getting moved around and they're out of that position, and somebody new is in. You're basically starting new from scratch.*

Thus, it seems that on O'ahu the major issue related to effective coordination and collaboration is a challenge of maintaining good relationships with stakeholders in the face of different priorities, tensions, and high turnover.

All but one of the neighbor island participants ( $n = 6$ ) also discussed issues of collaboration among stakeholders. Most of the challenges discussed by this group of participants centered on collaboration between islands, especially between O'ahu stakeholders and neighbor island stakeholders. As most of the knowledge and infrastructure related to anti-trafficking efforts are centered on O'ahu, several neighbor island participants discussed a desire to see more coordination with the main hub of resources there. While some interisland coordination has happened among law enforcement and prosecutors, a few neighbor island participants discussed concerns that this coordination had not "trickled down" to other stakeholders in these communities.

In addition to the challenge in collaborating across islands, both Maui and Big Island participants discussed a lack of coordination between stakeholders within their particular island communities. In contrast to the O'ahu participants who were concerned with maintaining a system of coordination, this group spoke largely about the more preliminary need to develop an intentional system for coordinating efforts to address human trafficking on their islands.

*One of my early concerns when this issue surfaced, and I noticed, was the protocol that I thought was lacking. You know, how do we- Okay, who do I contact? Where do I go? I actually approached the prosecutor's office and they- supposedly they do have a protocol, but that's not openly shared. So I wasn't aware, you know, what was their protocol? That was one of the challenges. How can I- what do I do? How can I safely bring these victims and assure them they'd be helped? That was never clear. Never- it was never clear to me.*

Several participants, representing all three islands, also discussed particular challenges related to coordinating efforts with law enforcement agencies. These challenges largely had to do with differing priorities related to or understandings of human trafficking between law enforcement and service providers. There seemed to be some concern that at least some segment of the law enforcement community was still lacking in sensitivity and understanding about both phenomena related to sex trafficking and phenomena related to labor trafficking. This lack of understanding was seen as harmful to attempts to address human trafficking:

*There's always the challenge of attitude with law enforcement. I think that's a pretty big challenge, not to point fingers or anything, 'cause I know that there's stuff that we can all do better. But sometimes it feels like pulling teeth, trying to get them to be sensitive to trafficking victims...*

Another systemic problem that was discussed by at least four participants was the difficulty in compiling accurate counts of the number of human trafficking victims who have been identified and helped. This problem is related to issues of collaboration, as different stakeholders have different standards for victim privacy and cross-comparison between agencies is necessary to ensure that victims are not double-counted. The reason these participants placed a good deal of emphasis on numbering victims is that most granting agencies require specific data about the need for services and the outcomes of these services. Additionally, according to one participant:

*But you know the hard part too though? We cannot even say how many. I mean, if you ask the people in the field, "Okay, how big is the problem?" Ah, we don't know. We don't know the counts. So people just can just say, "Well, then it must be small if you don't know all what the counts are." You know, "So it's not a big problem."*

The lack of accurate numbers documenting human trafficking victims in Hawai'i is thought to contribute to the myth that it is not a big problem or does not exist in the islands. Thus, service providers seem concerned with providing the public and important decision makers with concrete support for the need to address the issue of human trafficking in the state.

The final major systemic problem that was discussed by at least nine participants was that of funding. Many of these participants discussed a general lack of adequate funding for trafficking-related work, resulting in an over-reliance on volunteers and pro bono work on the part of immigration attorneys, mental health professionals, and other supportive services. The lack of a continuous funding stream was also thought to result in a tendency for clients to fall through the cracks of the system when funding for one type of program runs dry. The process of helping human trafficking victims often takes several months, during which funding may dry up, leaving agencies to struggle to provide services:

*I think in our experience...they run short and sometimes we have to continue to work on our cases, because they take a long time to get processed. So we have to carry cases after a grant runs out. And it is hard to [get] a continuing grant to complete the same work. And then when we get a new grant on trafficking, they want new victims. So we can't work on the old victims and count them.*

Current attempts to track the numbers of victims needing services are at least partially motivated by a need to locate better funding streams by documenting the extent of the problem and the need for services. This is an overarching, or systemic, concern rather than an individual agency concern because lack of funding across domains makes providing for the complicated multi-faceted needs of both sex trafficking and labor trafficking victims very difficult.

### **Hawai'i Specific Challenges**

While many of the challenges discussed above, such as lack of continuous funding, difficulties in providing adequate housing, or issues related to effectively identifying victims, are common challenges for addressing human trafficking in other parts of the United States, there were also several challenges that victims described that could be considered unique to the context of Hawai'i. It is important when studying human trafficking in the U.S. to call attention to local variation in the types of trafficking, victims, and challenges. It is important to

understand local context so that efforts to address human trafficking can be sensitive to the situational needs of different communities. Hawai'i, as the only island state in the U.S., has a unique geographical and historical context that produces specific challenges for those who wish to help and advocate for trafficking victims. Participants identified three main challenges that they thought were particular to the local context of Hawai'i: island-related challenges ( $n = 10$ ), the great ethnic diversity of potential victims ( $n = 7$ ), and relatively less institutional support for anti-trafficking efforts ( $n = 7$ ).

Several challenges related to the state being an island chain were identified by most of the participants (10/13) as presenting particular difficulties for trafficked and formerly trafficked persons. The fact that Hawai'i is a geographically remote set of islands creates a situation where 1) potential victims are often isolated on a particular island; 2) patterns of both sex and labor trafficking are different from much of the U.S.; 3) trafficking exists in relatively small rural communities where anonymity is difficult; and 4) statewide collaboration is much more difficult.

Living on an island makes escape from traffickers more challenging as it is "*not an easy place to get away.*" In order to travel between islands or to leave the state, one must possess valid identification. Those who are undocumented immigrants or who have lost their documents while being trafficked can be stranded on an island, often in the same small community where their traffickers live. The limited ability of some immigrant workers in Hawai'i to leave the community in which they experienced labor abuse is certainly an important challenge to consider when trying to understand human trafficking in the state.

This island geography also shapes the patterns of trafficking that tend to predominate in Hawai'i. Whereas on the mainland many migrant workers come to the U.S. across the Mexican or Canadian borders, in Hawai'i, workers fly in by airplane on either travel or agricultural visas. Some then overstay their visas. Thus, in Hawai'i, trafficking victims may fall prey to abuses in terms of how they were recruited to come work in the U.S., how they are treated by employers once they arrive, or whether they are coerced by threats of reporting lapsed immigration status. Additionally, sex trafficking in the islands is thought to involve the movement of victims between islands and between Hawai'i and the mainland of the United States. The fact that victims can be moved by air can pose a special challenge in that it effectively separates, often by thousands of miles of ocean, victims from those who might try to help them. Furthermore, at least one participant discussed the problem of sex tourism in the state. That Hawai'i's economy is largely centered on tourism, may make the state particularly vulnerable to sex tourism, which is thought to create a greater prevalence of sex trafficking.

Another result of the island geography is that each island represents a relatively small and interrelated community. At least 5 participants discussed this as a particular challenge for addressing human trafficking in Hawai'i. Formerly trafficked persons often live in these small communities with their traffickers. Anonymity is difficult. For example, according to one participant:

*Um, well, I can say specific to Hawai'i, it's an island. So trying to have safe houses with confidential locations is hard to manage. It's hard for the survivors when they're trying to get back on their feet to be able to go anywhere without running into a customer or a pimp...It's hard to separate yourself from it because it is such a small community here.*

Additionally, as an island chain, Hawai'i faces unique challenges related to the distribution of resources among different islands. The neighbor islands of Hawai'i State are different from the main hub of O'ahu in that they are relatively isolated rural communities. Much of the expertise, funding, service programs, and other infrastructure to address human trafficking are located on O'ahu. Almost all of the participants from the neighbor islands cited lack of resources as a big challenge facing those who would like to address human trafficking on those islands. There are significant challenges related to coordinating statewide attempts to address human trafficking. Travel between islands requires airplane flights and is costly, time-consuming, and tedious. This often results in an uneven distribution of resources and knowledge, centered on O'ahu. This leaves the rural neighbor island communities relatively isolated from the state human trafficking support and infrastructure systems.

Another state-specific challenge is that the ethnic make-up of Hawai'i's migrant labor population is more diverse than the typical mainland state. Agricultural laborers in Hawai'i are as likely to come from Mexico, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Micronesia, or other Pacific Islands. Micronesian workers alone could speak several different languages. This diversity makes it difficult for service providers to access appropriate translation services, as well as implement effective outreach programs to target victims of trafficking in an effort to inform them of their rights. Additionally, the diverse range of cultures poses a challenge to service providers who may not be knowledgeable about the cultural practices, norms, and understandings of all the groups they encounter. This increases the chances of misunderstandings based on culture and language differences. One participant also discussed the particular challenge of sourcing social service workers and interpreters from small ethnic communities where either victims or traffickers may have some personal connection with potential interpreters:

*Um, workers: language capacity and the gender. You know, and luckily we had a male person who spoke Thai. He learned it in the Peace Corps and so he was a neutral person. Hawai'i is kinda small and the people know each other. And so there's a lot of stuff that people don't wanna share. So the worker can learn a lot of information. And whoever that worker is hopefully doesn't compromise confidentiality. And finding someone like that, that's kind of neutral, is very difficult.*

Finally, at least 7 participants mentioned concerns related to an impression that there was less institutional support for addressing human trafficking in Hawai'i than there seemed to be in other states. In several instances participants discussed concerns and observations that there was a certain level of acceptance of human trafficking-related practices (such as labor abuse and prostitution) within some segments of the community in Hawai'i. One participant discussed how the definition of human trafficking covers a "range of activities [that] are broad and some would be more tolerated and some less tolerated." If this is true, it is important to understand what practices may be more tolerated and why. Trafficking-related practices that experience a level of acceptance by some segments of the community were identified in both the areas of sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

With issues related to sex trafficking, several participants discussed the acceptance of prostitution by some segments of the community and linked this to challenges in addressing human trafficking. For example:

*But it's so normal or mainstream for men to go to the hostess bars. And I'm talking dignitaries. Like, one of the challenges that we have with that, I feel like even our politicians, our cops, our prosecutors, go*

*to hostess bars... So some of our most, you know, high end of authority officials go to these bars and so it's really- that's why we don't talk on Maui about human trafficking.*

*So they try to pass legislation for that [stiffer penalties for pimps] and it's always opposed by the DA's office over there, which is, you know, just that's the weird dynamic that I was talking about. Like other [places]... on the mainland, the DAs were the ones that sponsored that legislation. Like, they wanted to be able to impose stiffer penalties. But in Hawai'i for some reason, they're the ones that oppose the legislation.*

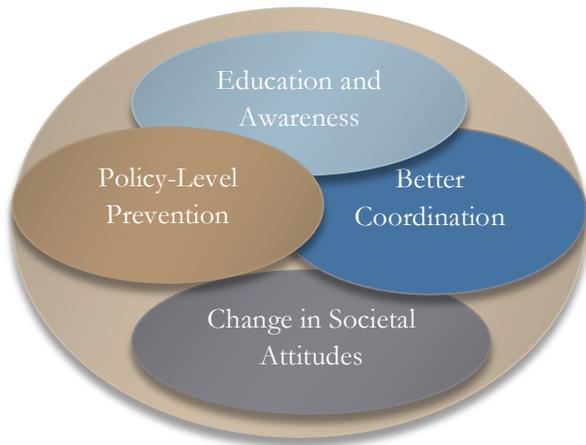
Concerns about the acceptance of certain trafficking-related practices were also present in the area of labor trafficking:

*But, my experience is that those law enforcement don't realize that at all. They think it's, especially in Hawai'i, where most of our ancestors were plantation workers. They're like, "Hey if our grandparents did it, why not?" ... So yeah. Um, law enforcement is not what they're cracked up to be.*

*And employers here are like, "Oh, yeah, I can take a person's passport and hold it to make sure that they do their job" or "I can discriminate against this person because they need this job in order to maintain this visa and they're not going to say anything to anybody because they're scared." So that- we see that happening a little bit more here with some of the big agri-businesses.*

Hawai'i is a relatively small community and often landowners and agricultural businesses can have prominent and powerful positions. One participant listed several large local agribusinesses and hotels that were rumored to have committed varying degrees of labor abuse towards their immigrant and migrant employees. Even if authorities are not directly connected to these local businesses, there seems to be some suspicion that employers may have influence over them. While not mentioned by every participant, this concern that people in authority are not adequately addressing issues of human trafficking in Hawai'i was mentioned by at least one participant on each island.

### Results III: Prevention



All 13 participants discussed ideas related to their views of the best ways to prevent human trafficking in the islands. The most commonly cited strategy ( $n = 11$ ) for prevention was to increase education and awareness efforts. Policy-related prevention strategies were also mentioned with some frequency ( $n = 9$ ). Other ideas for prevention included improving coordination among stakeholders seeking to address human trafficking ( $n = 6$ ) and changing cultural or societal attitudes regarding trafficking-related issues ( $n = 5$ ).

#### Education and Awareness

When discussing education and awareness, 7 participants referred to the need to improve awareness in the community in general, 6 discussed the need for strategies to educate or create awareness among potential victim groups (such as immigrant workers or children), 5 discussed the need to create awareness among potential perpetrator groups (such as johns and employers), and 4 stressed the need for improved awareness among authorities or other stakeholders. When discussing the need to create awareness in the general, several participants reasoned that creating awareness in the public would help to better find and stop potential trafficking cases. For example, one participant stated:

*There's no broader outreach to the general public, which would probably be a good idea because if everybody knew what it was and knew what the signs of it were and knew how to spot it, that would increase the number of people looking for it.*

It is important to note, however, that a good number of participants emphasized that awareness among the public had increased in recent years as a result of advocacy efforts. It is possible that those on neighbor islands have experienced less of an increase in community awareness than the participants on O'ahu. Of the 6 participants who discussed the need for more community awareness, 4 were from neighbor islands (2 each from Hawai'i and Maui). Thus, more than half of the neighbor island participants mentioned this need for more community awareness (4/7), whereas, only 2/6 of the O'ahu participants discussed community awareness as central to prevention efforts.

Another prevention strategy that was discussed was the targeting of education or information to potential victim groups, such as children or immigrants. Three participants discussed the idea of targeting potential victim groups either through public service announcements or the dissemination of information via community groups. The purpose of these outreach suggestions was to reach vulnerable immigrant groups, such as Micronesians, in order to create awareness about their rights and the availability of help. Two participants mentioned the need for empowerment or education programs targeted toward children, especially young girls. These participants reasoned that educating children about the dangers

of the sex industry or empowering them to have better self-esteem would make them less vulnerable to later sexual exploitation. A final participant mentioned the need for visible information in public spaces that could inform (non-specific) victims of how to reach out for help.

Other participants thought that potential perpetrator groups would be a better target for education and awareness efforts. Three participants mentioned the need for creating awareness among employers so that they understand exactly what practices are considered labor trafficking and what the consequences are for engaging in those kinds of employment practices.

*So, one is the appropriate awareness, appropriate response, to prevent it from happening to start with, so that means like, even from a labor area where you might just be stepping across the line thinking, "Hey, you know what? These people don't have jobs. I go- I brought 'em over. Um, they cannot do just do anything they want!" And so then you somehow think that this is like a contract.*

*How do you prevent that? Yeah, so what I think, just my, I don't know, other ideal, would be to really publish those, the punishment. You know, I think you gotta target the employers. To me, it's the employers that realize if you do this, this is the recourse. This is what's gonna happen.*

Two additional participants mentioned the prevention strategy of targeting education to "johns" or customers of prostitution. One mentioned the use of John Schools as an education strategy and the other mentioned the need to make visitors to the islands aware of the fact that sex tourism will not be tolerated.

Some participants also discussed the idea that increasing education and awareness among authorities and important stakeholders would improve prevention efforts ( $n = 4$ ). Increasing awareness among service providers and potential "first responders" is thought to increase the likelihood that those who have the highest chances of interacting with potential victims will be able to spot signs of human trafficking and act to help the victims. For example:

*If we could create an environment where a person who's being trafficked could just walk up to any cop or fireman and say, "I need help," that would be the best thing. And that's how it should be, but it's not like that now.*

## **Policy-Level Prevention**

Another frequently mentioned prevention strategy was to improve policies related to human trafficking and/or to improve the *implementation* of existing policies ( $n = 9$ ). The recommendations for improving policies and their implementation varied considerably. Many of the policy-level suggestions were particular to the specific area of experience of each participant. Because of this there was little overlap or consensus with these suggestions. For the purpose of this report, only the most frequently mentioned suggestion related to policy is discussed: improve attempts to prosecute offenders ( $n = 5$ ). Several participants indicated that successful prosecutions of both labor and sex trafficking cases could be an effective deterrent to potential offenders. The state of Hawai'i had two high-profile labor trafficking cases in recent years that were dropped. A few participants made reference to this and suggested that some improvements could be made to how the federal and state laws could be better implemented to prosecute offenders. Others suggested that the state needed stronger penalties against pimps

and Johns. Their emphasis on policies related to the prosecution of potential perpetrators indicates that several participants saw these prosecutions as a potential deterrent for trafficking.

### **Better Coordination among Stakeholders**

At least of 6 of the participants discussed the idea that better coordination among stakeholders would be helpful or necessary to preventing human trafficking in the islands. Three of these 6 participants were from neighbor islands and suggested that a team approach to issues of human trafficking would help with prevention on their islands. Better coordination may be more of a concern for the neighbor islands because they have had less participation in and access to the state coalition. Two O'ahu participants discussed the idea that better coordinating efforts from individuals and groups in the community who have an interest in helping anti-trafficking efforts could contribute to prevention efforts. An additional O'ahu participant mentioned the need for strategic planning among stakeholders:

*Prevention. Um, well we had the speaker that came to the last coalition meeting. And he talked about trying to strategize... And he was asking the coalition to actually come together to develop a strategy that we would like to do together. Now we're not at that point yet... but he was saying that you gotta strategize and pick your points of where you want to intervene, 'cause you don't have the resources, I mean enough resources, to just go scatter your intervention. And he said in order to do that you have to have very good data in order to understand what's going on so you can figure out where you want to put your resources. And we don't have good data. So that's the first step.*

### **Cultural and Societal Attitudes Need to Change**

When asked about preventing human trafficking, 5 participants mentioned the need for large-scale social change. Four of the five participants mentioned the need for changed attitudes either towards women or towards prostitution. For example:

*And so we really need to start the process of also educating our society and community to the damage that these customers are doing to individuals by participating in this. You know, it's said that prostitution is a victimless crime, um. I know women whose lives have been ruined just by being in prostitution for a couple of days. I know women's lives who have been ruined and they've been in it for 30 or 40 years. Um, it is absolutely not a victimless crime. It's horrible. It's deadly.*

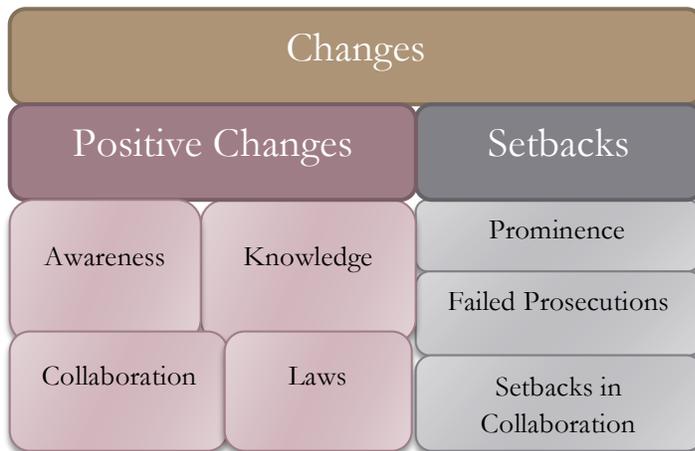
One participant mentioned the need to change attitudes about our food industry:

*With the labor side- and this is my theory, and this is my own, in my opinion head- and I needed to think long and hard about this- we live, we have a certain lifestyle. We pay certain amount of our income to get certain things, our fruits and vegetables, etcetera. Now, a lot of Americans and new comers will not do ag-work. Americans they just won't do certain types of work. So we have foreign workers come in to do it, and it's a long tradition with our country... And if you're gonna bring 'em in to work, are you gonna pay 'em the proper wage? And the thing is, if paying the proper wage, your carrots and your potatoes and whatever else you're gonna grow are not gonna be the same price you see at the markets. It will be different. They'll be higher. So are you willing to pay that? Are we as a society willing to pay that price so we can pay these people a prevailing wage? And whether or not farmers are willing to do so, because this has been, not been a one shot thing. It's been going on for decades, I think.*

## Results IV: Changes

In addition to talking with participants about their ideal strategies for helping victims and preventing human trafficking and the challenges that prevent them from addressing the issue as fully as they might like, this study also explored changes in their work over the last several years. A few participants had only just begun to look into issues of human trafficking and others had been working on trafficking issues for many years. Because of this, responses about how human trafficking issues in Hawai'i have changed over the years varied depending on experience. Participants were specifically asked about both positive changes that have made their work easier and potential setbacks that have made their work more challenging.

In general, most participants reported more positive change than setbacks, indicating a cumulative increase in local ability or willingness to address the issue. A total of 12 participants discussed positive developments in recent years and 10 discussed some setbacks. The major themes of each will be discussed below.



### Positive Changes

**Awareness.** Perhaps the most frequently discussed change in recent years was an increase in community and stakeholder awareness about human trafficking ( $n = 9$ ). Awareness was a strong theme throughout the interviews. Participants discussed the importance of creating stakeholder and community awareness in both helping victims and preventing human trafficking. While many participants

saw lack of awareness or faulty understandings of human trafficking among stakeholders or the public as challenges to addressing human trafficking, they also seem to acknowledge that awareness has improved in recent years. Participants discussed improved awareness in the public, including among key community organizations, such as churches, and among stakeholders, such as social service providers, law enforcement officials, and legislators.

**Collaboration.** Improved collaboration between service providers, advocates, and authorities was also mentioned frequently in reference to positive changes in addressing human trafficking. At least 9 participants saw this improved collaboration as a positive change. Several O'ahu participants discussed improved collaborative relationships with the State Prosecutor's Office and with members of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD).

*I got to build a relationship with a few law enforcement [officers] who had been trained on the issue and were excited about, "Hey, maybe let's see if we do have some victims here." They heard that I was willing to help out so we basically teamed up together.*

Many credited the Hawai'i Coalition Against Human Trafficking with helping to improve collaboration among service providers and between service providers and authorities, especially

law enforcement officers and prosecutors. Often in discussions of the coalition and how it has helped improve collaboration and communication between stakeholders, participants mentioned concerns over its continued existence in the face of losing funding (more on this below). It is important to note, however, that the effectiveness of the coalition was not universally recognized. Some O'ahu participants mentioned concerns about its effectiveness and some neighbor island participants did not seem to interact with or benefit from the work of the coalition as it is centered on O'ahu and has had limited reach with regards to the neighbor islands.

Several Maui and O'ahu participants also discussed more grassroots forms of collaboration either in lieu of or in addition to the efforts of the coalition. These participants discussed a growth in more informal partnerships over the years, including partnerships with specific individuals interested in addressing human trafficking, partnerships with church organizations, and informal partnerships with leaders or advocates in the community. These kinds of informal partnerships were not mentioned by any of the Hawai'i Island participants.

Finally, a few participants discussed a new form of formal collaboration supported by a comprehensive services grant. This funding was provided to facilitate collaboration between several service providers to ensure that victims of both sex and labor trafficking receive comprehensive legal, mental health, and case management services. Participants seemed to have hope that this grant would encourage greater collaboration efforts.

**Laws.** At least 6 participants discussed legislative changes that have made their work in addressing human trafficking either easier or better. Those whose work focused on helping immigrant populations discussed the benefits of both the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000) and the Violence against Women Act (1994) in helping to provide protection and routes to stable immigration statuses for immigrant victims of crime. Others discussed recent state legislative advances, which include laws that stiffen penalties for customers of prostitution and that outlaw labor trafficking practices at the state level. For example, one participant stated that:

*...Especially with the law that we passed this session, the Act 53, this year, which took away the John's abilities to expunge their records, based on good behavior after 6 months. That was...a very popular way for them to get away...not being held accountable. They don't have that ability anymore. And that's, in my point of view, it's very revolutionary for our justice to do that. So we're expecting to see a lot more criminal trials against Johns going to court.*

In general, it seemed that participants had seen advances in public policy that have helped their efforts to address human trafficking. However, often when it comes to public policy, implementation is key. As one participant noted:

*They [laws] are working. The policy is working. It's just, the problem is that, um, they work when they work. But the problem is enforcement, both on the state and federal side.*

**Knowledge and Experience.** At least 5 participants also discussed improvements in their own experience and knowledge about human trafficking and the various social service, immigration, legislative, and justice systems as important positive changes. It seems that as service providers encounter issues and learn from them, they become better at addressing

human trafficking over time. In the words of one provider, “*We’ve become more sophisticated as we’ve done more work. That’s just, it’s a natural learning curve.*”

## **Setbacks**

It is important to note, that in general participants discussed positive changes much more often than setbacks. A few participants even seemed to have difficulty thinking of any events or factors that have made their work more difficult in recent years. Interestingly, two of the most frequently mentioned setbacks were related to two of the positive changes: awareness and collaboration.

**The Prominence of the Issue as a Setback.** At least 5 participants identified the recent prominence of human trafficking as a challenge or a setback. In the words of one participant this category of setbacks represents, “*your success overcoming you.*” For example, one participant discussed a concern that the new national prominence of immigration issues was causing a backlash of anti-immigrant sentiment that made advocating for immigrant rights more difficult. Similarly, another participant discussed how progress related to “*the woman’s movement*” had created a backlash from the “*old boys club*” in which men in authority were making it more difficult to address issues related to women.

Several participants discussed concerns that the prominence of human trafficking issues has also caused problems related to greater influx of helpers and potential victims into the human trafficking helping system. An influx of helpers was seen as a setback if these helpers were drawn more by the notoriety of the issue than by a genuine understanding of the commitment involved in help victims. An influx of potential victims was seen as an issue if these potential victims were seen as reaching for inappropriate victim status. For example, one participant discussed a rise in defense attorneys attempting to use avenues of immigration relief designated for victims of crime to help their clients who were involved in criminal activity. This development was seen as clogging up an already slow immigration system with inappropriate requests.

**Setbacks in Collaboration.** At least 5 participants discussed setbacks related to collaboration. These were largely concerned with either high turnover on the coalition or with uncertainty about the future ability of the coalition to meet. It seems that the group was making a transition into being an unfunded body and some had concerns that the collaborative relationships they had developed might be lost or weakened. According to one participant:

*We’ve worked with them. I think a certain amount of sophistication has been built between parties. But, unfortunately...that will change as ties are broken.*

**Failed Prosecutions.** It is worth noting that at least 3 participants were concerned that the prominent, but ultimately failed, cases related to labor trafficking between 2010–2012 (Aloun Farms and Global Horizons cases) represented a significant setback in anti-human trafficking efforts. Two participants seemed to feel that the failure of the cases might encourage unscrupulous employers to think their inhumane practices were legal. A third participant discussed an observation that prosecutors, after the public missteps of those cases, seemed more reluctant to consider going forward with potential new human trafficking cases.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In assessing the progress that has been made with efforts to address human trafficking in Hawai'i, it is clear that state service providers and advocates have come a long way in creating state-specific policy and infrastructure, in creating more public awareness about trafficking as a local issue, and in understanding how to best navigate victim service systems. Two of the biggest areas of progress that were identified by participants were also two of the strongest themes throughout the interviews: awareness and collaboration. Both were discussed as important features to helping victims and preventing human trafficking. However, despite the fairly strong consensus that progress has been made in addressing human trafficking in the islands, participant comments about the challenges they continue to face were by far the most numerous and detailed of all the categories. This suggests that there is still progress to be made and problems to overcome in attempting to both help victims and prevent future trafficking. Many of the challenges to fully addressing human trafficking in the islands seemed to center on a need for more informed awareness among various groups and better collaboration within and across islands. The following recommendations are focused on ways to improve collaboration and awareness. They suggest a few broad areas on which advocates and service providers could focus their limited resources and strategically address some of the barriers that are preventing trafficking efforts from being as effective as they could be.

**1. Clarify Awareness:** While many participants seemed to agree that awareness about human trafficking in the islands had increased, there also seems to be some agreement that this awareness often lacks clarity. Because human trafficking is a complicated set of overlapping phenomena, it may be particularly difficult to increase informed awareness in the community. While many community members may have heard the term “human trafficking,” there continues to be some confusion about what that looks like locally. Furthermore, potential victim groups can vary significantly in their country of origin, sex, age, and type of trafficking. This can add understandable confusion to education and awareness efforts. Thus, renewed efforts to create awareness should center on targeting community groups, employers, the public, and other stakeholders to disseminate clear descriptions of the different types of trafficking and the various groups that could be vulnerable to trafficking-related exploitation. There may also be a greater need for awareness and education in neighbor island communities compared to O'ahu and concerted attempts to target these communities may prove particularly effective.

**2. Continue to Work towards Collaboration:** Much progress has been made in developing collaborative relationships across domains so that human trafficking can be addressed using a team approach. Many have found that this collaboration is essential to their work. However, two things were clear from the participant interviews 1) collaboration needs to be purposefully maintained in the face of turnover and potential tension related to differing priorities and perspectives and 2) neighbor island service providers would benefit from increased communication with O'ahu service providers, as well as increased collaboration among prosecutors, law enforcement, and service providers within their communities. There seems to be less momentum, resources, and coordination on Maui and the Big Island. Several of the service providers on those islands expressed a desire to better address human trafficking in their communities but were limited by an underdeveloped system of collaboration and a felt lack of institutional support for their efforts. Future statewide collaborative efforts should focus

on supporting neighbor island advocates who wish to better develop systematic approaches to addressing trafficking on those islands.

**3. Focus on Long-Term Needs:** Because of the diverse needs involved, helping victims of human trafficking often requires coordinating with a great many systems and individuals and can be time and resource-intensive. In addition to focusing collaborative efforts on issues of trafficking on neighbor islands, advocates might want to begin to expand collaborative networks to better include community members and organizations. As grant funding is often limited and difficult to come by, a greater reliance on community resources might be necessary to adequately help victims of human trafficking. Services targeted at the long-term adjustment of both sex and labor trafficking victims seem especially limited. Perhaps community groups, such as churches, social service organizations, and ethnic community organizations, could be enlisted to better target supportive services to the long-term needs of trafficking victims.

**4. Set Trafficking in Context:** A final issue that was highlighted in this report was that there may still be issues related to a failure or reluctance in some parts of the community to recognize the potential for human trafficking abuses. It can be difficult to advocate for and enact policy when much of the general public and those in power do not perceive a problem. When human trafficking is seen by the general public as rare instances of extreme abuse, it may be difficult for them to recognize the less extreme forms of abuse that are the products of exploitative contexts that are conducive to human trafficking. One way to address this problem would be to strategically attempt to expand how the public views the problem and thus generate more support for addressing human trafficking on all islands.

Several of the participants in this study stressed the need for numerical data to highlight the existence of human trafficking and to justify funding. Identifying, targeting, and quantifying a range of abuses that particular *vulnerable populations* face could help advocates establish convincing need for intervention or change without being limited by discussing only those who have already presented as a human trafficking victims. The vulnerable groups that could be targeted for this kind of exploration could include specific immigrant populations, runaway or juvenile justice involved teens, and women in the sex industry.

For example, one group in Minnesota identified Native American girls and women as a particularly vulnerable population with regards to sex trafficking. In a community/researcher partnership, Pierce (2009) describes how abuse among this vulnerable group was identified by asking women presenting at the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center to complete a set of screening questions related to trafficking and exploitation (see the full report linked to in Works Cited for this screening tool). In screening women who were part of a vulnerable group, but who were presenting to social services for other reasons, researchers and advocates were able to document the fact that exploitation experiences were fairly common in this group and had been underreported and under-recognized.

Similarly, Zhang (2012) examined the prevalence of labor trafficking and other labor abuses among a vulnerable population of migrant workers in the San Diego area. Their imperially validated labor trafficking screening tool is available in the full report linked to in the Works Cited section. Both of these studies targeted broad general populations of vulnerable groups to document the presence of a range of abuses, including but not limited to trafficking practices, experienced by these groups. This kind of documentation could be replicated in Hawai'i by

using these or similar screening tools to gather information from immigrant groups or vulnerable youth or women presenting at legal and social service agencies. Providing numerical data related to the exploitation these groups experience (trafficking and otherwise) could be a powerful tool in garnering more support for addressing trafficking. This research would also make it difficult to continue deny the presence of trafficking in the islands.

Of course, there are many barriers to addressing these issues, including limited funding for trafficking-specific personnel and services and logistical issues related to coordinating across islands, among others. It is important to acknowledge the significant difficulties faced in addressing these recommendations. They are in no way meant to minimize the great work that has already been accomplished or the rather large hurdles that would need to be overcome to enact them. Rather, the above recommendations represent broad suggestions for continued efforts to address human trafficking in the islands, with full acknowledgement of the effort and hard work that has already shaped trafficking services and advocacy.

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