

Human Trafficking in Peru: Stakeholder Perceptions of How to Combat Human Trafficking and Help Support Its Survivors

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Despite slavery being illegal in every country in the world, estimates suggest that today, there are more people trafficked for the purposes of slavery than ever before in history (Free the Slaves, 2015). The act of slavery has not changed since its inception, but the institution itself has seen dramatic changes with modernity, proving itself able not only to survive, but to thrive within the often hidden informal markets of a globalized society rife with increasing levels of poverty and vulnerability. No longer hindered by the regulation and public criticism of legality, this new form of the sale, transfer, and receipt of human beings, known today as human trafficking or trafficking in persons (TIP), entraps people through infinitely varied forms of force, fraud, and/or coercion. Due to its clandestine nature, human trafficking has proven itself to be incredibly difficult to identify, research, and combat, and shows signs of gaining momentum. According to the United Nations (UN), TIP generates 32-36 billion dollars in profit annually, third only to drug and arms trafficking (UN, 2014), and that market is rapidly growing. Indeed, the relatively low risk and cost of TIP, when compared to drug and arms trafficking (Haynes, 2004) would suggest this illicit industry will continue to see rapid growth for the foreseeable future.

Peru, a country, which is no stranger to trafficking and slavery, has had a long and varied history with TIP. When the Spanish first arrived in Northern Peru under the command of Francisco Pizarro in 1528 they exploited the native population by breaking up families and transporting individuals for the purposes of forced labor, rape, and domestic servitude (Stern, 2004). By the 1580s the Spanish had largely abandoned indigenous enslavement in favor of importing African slaves, whom came with less restrictions by the Spanish government on their use (Bowser, 1974). Slavery was officially abolished in Peru in 1854 but the practice has continued to survive through the indiscriminate trafficking of vulnerable populations regardless of race, age, or gender - especially within industries often hidden from public view, such as mining, logging, drug production, and war-making (CHS, 2010).

There is no doubt that Peru's human trafficking and slavery problem continues today. The U.S. State Department's (DOS) Trafficking in Persons Report, which began tracking worldwide statistics in 2005, has found Peru to be a destination, origin, and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking (DOS, 2014). Every year, regional and national news highlight growing trends in labor and sex trafficking all over the country (El Comercio, 2015). The rise of the guerilla military insurgency known as the Shining Path in the 1980s, for example, saw an introduction of the forced recruitment and use of child soldiers, a practice that continues today (UNICEF, 2012). Local human rights advocates report that the situation is exacerbated by a near-complete lack of resources, services, and legal protections for increasingly vulnerable populations (CHS, 2013). Anecdotal evidence suggests regional variations of trafficking in Peru.

In the mountain Quechua-speaking regions, such as Cusco, it is not uncommon for modern traffickers to trick parents into parting with children by taking advantage of the historical but now defunct "padrino system", whereby wealthy land owners or distant wealthy relatives would offer to shelter, feed, and educate a child of a poverty-stricken family in exchange for that child's domestic labor (DOS, 2014). In the Amazonian city of Iquitos, in the Department of Loreto, posters and signs in Spanish demand "no child sex", demonstrating to tourists the extent of the problem and their desire to eradicate the problem.

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In other jungle regions, often far removed from State control, such as Madre de Dios, there are reports and evidence of children forced to work in gold mines and children forced to work in brothels to cater to the miners (Zevallos, interview, June 11, 2014). Peru's capital, Lima, is exemplary of an industrialized modern city along the Pan-American highway and yet still struggles with forced begging, prostitution, and drug trafficking. With a population of approximately 30.1 million and a poverty rate at 30% (more than 55% in rural areas) (CIA, 2015) it is not surprising that human trafficking is thriving throughout the country.

In its 2014 Report, the Walk Free Foundation's (WFF) Global Slavery Index estimates approximately 66,300 people to currently be living in slavery in Peru, ranking it 4th in South America for the prevalence of modern slavery (WFF, 2015).

Review of Literature

It is widely recognized that there is a paucity of empirically rigorous data concerning human trafficking. Difficulties of conducting research on human trafficking are many, not the least of which include limited availability of resources and the difficulties involved with interviewing victims (Bennan, 2005). Human trafficking is a clandestine crime and few victims and survivors come forward for fear of retaliation, shame, or lack of understanding of what has happened to them (DOS, 2014). The result is a dearth of research studies on human trafficking in Peru. Most studies that have been published rely on statistical estimates and anecdotal evidence.

Despite these challenges, Peru presents a unique opportunity for obtaining rare and reliable data on the patterns of human trafficking and slavery. Because Peru, apart from some isolated areas, is not a conflict zone, the relatively reasonable mobility and safety is a boon to effective fieldwork. Peru is also primed for change as public awareness of the multiple forms of trafficking in the three geographically distinct regions of the country: coast, mountain, and jungle, receive increased public interest and awareness. The national government has begun mobilizing state and local resources, nearly doubling the Ministry of Interior's budget for prevention activities from approximately \$142,000 in 2013 to approximately \$355,400 for 2014 (DOS, 2014). With the subsequent creation of the 2011-2016 National Plan of Action Against The Trafficking of Persons and increased nonprofit outreach, it is more important than ever to conduct empirical research in Peru and provide the tangible data necessary to combat human trafficking and help support its survivors recover from trauma. What statistics the government does provide on human trafficking are generally agreed upon by the anti-trafficking community in Peru to be unreliable. In its 2014, Trafficking in Persons Report, the U.S. State Department noted the "government data on victim identification and law enforcement efforts was unreliable, making it difficult to assess these efforts" (DOS, 2014, 311).

The Peruvian nonprofit Capital Humano y Social Alternativo (CHS) has published over 33 regional reports covering a wide variety of topics, from documenting law enforcement trends and analyzing state initiatives. The most unique and possibly impactful of these studies are on the perceptions of human trafficking by Peruvians and a map of domestic trafficking routes based on cases reported by law enforcement (CHS RETA, 2012). The founder and Executive Director of CHS, Ricardo Valdéz-Cavassa stated that he is aware of hundreds more cases that were not formally reported to law enforcement (2014). Human trafficking is a lot more expansive than the numbers would suggest but unless law enforcement, service providers, and citizens themselves are all working cooperatively, the data will continue to fail to reflect the reality and seriousness of the problem (Valdéz-Cavassa, interview, 2014).

Another Peruvian nonprofit, El Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (PROMSEX), has published a number of reports designed to increase public awareness of the trafficking of women and children throughout the country. One recent study (2014) supported by PROMSEX highlighted the health outcomes of adolescent victims who had been trafficked to the illegal gold mining operations in the Department of Madre de Dios (Mujica). This study was the first of its kind and emphasized the dire need for more investigations into the growing labor and sex trafficking operations within isolated, often illegal, mining communities throughout Peru (Mujica, 2014). A current empirical research study of human trafficking in Peru found that approximately 80% of victims of human trafficking were female and 80% were children or youth (Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro & Ehrlich, 2016). Additionally, approximately 4 out of 10 were often trafficked for the purpose of labor and 8 out of 10 were trafficked for the purpose of sex (Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro & Ehrlich, 2016).

Those who were trafficked for the purpose of labor in Peru often ended up working in domestic work/nanny, mining, peddler of goods, restaurant worker, beggar, agriculture, drug mule, market worker or factory worker (Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro & Ehrlich, 2016).

Survivors who were exploited for labor trafficking usually worked 7-12 month with some over five years (Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro & Ehrlich, 2016). Those that were trafficked for sex work often ended up as street prostitutes, brothel prostitutes, involved in sex tourism or pornography (Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro & Ehrlich, 2016). Survivors who were exploited for sex trafficking usually worked one to two years with some over five years (Laser-Maira, Huey, Castro & Ehrlich, 2016). Thus the basic demographics of survivors begin to be illuminated in Peru, The question that this research centers on is how do knowledgeable experts in Peru believe that Peru can combat human trafficking and help support its survivors' recovery from trauma.

Methodology

Sample

The population that was studied is the stakeholders that work with victims of human trafficking in Peru. These individuals have a great deal of knowledge of the experiences of trafficked individuals, but most have not personally experienced being trafficked, thus reducing the risk of participation in the study. The services provided by these organizations were: mental health (30%), law enforcement (36.7), community advocacy and outreach (56.7%), shelter (23.3%), education or vocational education (33.3%), investigations/evaluations (33.3%), referrals (30%), food assistance (26.7%), employment services (10%), and legal services (43.3%). The duration of service to victims varied from one day to over seven years per victim.

The thirty organizations surveyed worked in eight locations: Cusco, Madre de Dios, Lima, Iquitos, Tumbes, Puno, Trujillo and Apurimac. Some organizations worked in many areas of Peru, others in only one area. The organizations had 0 to 400 paid workers, and 0 to 20 volunteer workers.

Data Collection Procedures

The organizations that work with human trafficking victims were contacted via email and/or telephone to discuss the research project. Most were very eager to participate in the research. The human trafficking organizations were then visited by bilingual researchers. First informed consent was obtained in Spanish, and then the interviews were completed in Spanish. Often the interviews generated a lot of discussion and further questions and ideas. The bilingual researchers visited four different Departments of Peru known to have significant human trafficking issues: Lima, Cusco, Madre de Dios, and Loreto.

Instrumentation

What would you do to end human trafficking in Peru?

We asked stakeholders at each organization: If you were the President of Peru and had money to support it, what would you do to end human trafficking in Peru? This article focuses on their responses.

Results

The response to this question generated five overarching themes: educate Peruvians, increase social programs for Peruvians, improve law enforcement in Peru, improve the judicial system in Peru, and hold the Peruvian government accountable.

Table 1. Educate Peruvians

Respondents	Suggestion
8	Educate people about trafficking
7	Make sure everyone is educated for free and can read, begin in elementary school all the way through
6	Parent Education, Improve Parenting Practices, Educate families that children are more than just work, spend more time with them, show parents how to show love to children more than providing food for them
6	Give vocational education opportunities to women and girls
1	Educate people that there is a difference between immigration and trafficking
1	Educate Peruvians to speak up against human rights abuses

Table 2. Increase Social Programs for Peruvians

Respondents	Suggestion
8	Help victims over the long run, increase victims services
7	Reduce poverty of the poor
4	Better collaboration between police, legal, child protection, and social workers together
3	Give opportunity to youth, keep them off the street
2	Drug addiction is a symptom and not an outcome, treat it as such, increase social programs for substance abuse
1	Improve health care

Table 3. Improve Law Enforcement in Peru

Respondents	Suggestion
7	Police are very dirty, clean up the corruption.
4	Better enforcement at borders and airports- need border police to know what to look for

Table 4. Improve the Judicial System in Peru

Respondents	Suggestion
7	Prosecute international trafficking
4	Bring more cases to court
4	Review the laws on human trafficking, make them more understandable
1	Hotels need to be prosecuted for offering sexual services

Table 5. Hold the Peruvian Government Accountable

Respondents	Suggestion
5	Evaluate the ministries that are involved in human trafficking to make sure they are doing their part
5	Enforce the national plan on human trafficking
4	Politics are very dirty, clean up the corruption

Discussion

Five overarching themes: educate Peruvians, increase social programs for Peruvians, improve law enforcement in Peru, improve the judicial system in Peru, and hold the Peruvian government accountable became clear through the conversations.

Educate Peruvians

The first recommendation includes focusing on making education more affordable and available for all Peruvians and improving upon the relatively high truancy rates. Additionally, nearly half of indigenous Peruvians are not educated in their native languages (Borgen, 2016), thus making education less accessible for many. Educating females, in particular, can help decrease vulnerability, as it has long since been understood in developmental circles as the best way to move a country out of poverty since females will continue to educate their children (UNFPA, 2005). It also would be worth investigating incentive based programs for parents whose children stay in school and graduate.

Based on the existing research and the results of this study, prevention efforts should focus on education and capacity building of poor, unemployed, less educated, and marginalized individuals. Primarily this should be two-fold: 1. Educating families of the dangers of work offers that seem to good to be true are not real offers and 2.

Educating parents and youth of the benefits of staying in school and remaining in their communities. Children and youth need to be educated that if offers of work are too good to be true they are not valid offers. Parents, children, and youth need to be educated about the importance of identification documents and be regularly advised to not allow anyone to take their documents from them. Additionally, it is important that organizations work with and support parents of trafficked children and youth rather than vilify and dehumanize them as monsters who do not love their children. Collaboration with parents is very important.

Increase Social Programs for Peruvians

In Peru there are some societal changes that if put in place could have long lasting effects for all Peruvians. The first is to focus on poverty reduction and jobs creation. Human trafficking is symptomatic of the general lack of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the global economy, in developing economies in particular. Slow and jobless growth, a shift to informal modes of production and increasing reliance on part-time and temporary workers are all trends that have contributed to trafficking-vulnerable populations.

Additionally, there was a need heard that more formal and informal networks need to be created between those working to end human trafficking. Particularly, collaboration between police, legal, child protection, and social workers should be formalized. Similarly, greater knowledge of each other's activities helps to construct a more dense patchwork of programs and referral networks and greater knowledge of the overarching structure.

Areas where exploitation of victims are highest often coincides with where indigenous peoples live in greater numbers (Cusco, mountain region, Iquitos, jungle region). Thus organizations need to customize their prevention efforts to both be culturally sensitive to indigenous populations and to have prevention and intervention programs given in indigenous languages. One organization visited, Yanapanakusan, in Cusco, transmitted radio broadcasts about trafficking prevention in Quechua. This was a particularly great medium of transmitting information since they were able to give information to people in their native language that often did not have access to formal education or television programming.

Finally, due to their length of exploitation, most victims will take years to heal under the care of a mental health specialist with a trauma focus. Supporting victims holistically, including their physical, emotional, spiritual, legal, educational and vocational needs will take a well-coordinated team working together over the long run with the necessary resources in place. Anecdotal evidence was clear that cases can take as long as 6-7 years before a victim testifies in court. Thus, it is incredibly important that survivors are provided ongoing services in the interim, to rebuild their lives and avoid recidivism into exploitation.

Improve law enforcement in Peru

Throughout Peru, we heard stories of the police taking bribes from traffickers or turning a blind eye to trafficking. Many stakeholders voiced their concern that many within the police departments were so corrupt that to really impact human trafficking the current police force should be replaced with a newly educated police force. Police and investigators commonly conflate prostitution and sex trafficking, leading to unreliable data. Thus, it is important that law enforcement be trained on how to identify and appropriately work with victims of human trafficking. Additionally, police need to be better trained in how to enforce trafficking laws at borders and airports. Similarly, the police need to be better trained to know what to look for and how to intercede if they suspect human trafficking. It was also suggested that law enforcement improve communication and sharing of information between organizations to increase the success of eradicating human trafficking in Peru.

Improve the judicial system in Peru

Current national law (Article 153 of Peruvian Law 28950 of the Penal Code) defines human trafficking and criminalizes it. However, it is very infrequently used to prosecute traffickers and both our anecdotal evidence and the U.S. State Department have noted that the Government of Peru has made uneven efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking offenses. The government's own ombudsman's office reported that judges often failed to sentence traffickers for aggravated trafficking in cases involving child victims, and official complicity is a concern (IIP, 2014).

We often heard that human traffickers were charged under lesser crimes, which were easier to prosecute and carry less harsh punishments (e.g. pimping). This indicates that lawyers and judges need significant training and education in order to prosecute more cases to the full extent of the law.

Hold the Peruvian government accountable

According to the Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report for Peru, the Peruvian government provided inadequate services to trafficking victims and failed to dedicate funding for specialized care (2014). Our research concurs with the DOS' findings and there are many recommendations that can be made from the research (DOS, 2014). First, there needs to be a concerted effort to support parents to advocate for their children and youth to stay in their own communities and continue to attend school. Additionally, families, especially poor families, need to be educated about human trafficking and red flags of when to be concerned about the possibility of trafficking.

Limitations

The scope of this research was relatively small, with 30 organizations interviewed, and it is reasonable to assume some voices were lost. However, we were able to speak with people who work with victims from all of the geographic regions of Peru and were able to visit the four areas most associated with human trafficking in Peru: Loreto, Madre de Dios, Cusco, and Lima.

Future Research

We would like to continue researching human trafficking in Peru by studying the efficacy of current and future prevention, intervention and treatment programs in Peru.

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