

King County and Washington State as a Destination
for International Trafficking:
Assessing the Local Needs
and Framing Survivor Centered Responses

Sutapa Basu, PhD
Norma Timbang

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, or sale of persons for labor. Labor is forced and maintained through violence, threats and other forms of coercion. It is perpetuated through exploitation of vulnerable populations and exhibits slavery or prison-like conditions. While it is estimated that trafficking impacts mostly poor women and children, it involves some 4 million victims each year globally (U.S. Department of State, 2007). An estimated 14,500 to 17,500 persons are trafficked into the United States each year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). Unfortunately, little is known or documented about the extent and impact of this crime in our local region. A coordinated response is needed to facilitate liberation or release from trafficked situations and re-entry into communities post-liberation as well as to prevent re-victimization. The original purpose of this descriptive research project was to: 1) gather background information on human trafficking in King and Pierce County and 2) identify gaps in the counties' systems of response to trafficking. Data collection was primarily done through open-ended interviews primarily with individuals attached to the Washington State Task Force Against Human Trafficking. While collecting data, information surfaced which indicates that there was very little data available regarding human trafficking specific to Pierce County. Although the current response system focuses on State-wide human trafficking situations, most of the resources and response system actors are centralized in Western Washington, primarily in King County. The data suggests that the coordinated response system is useful, but needs more resources to increase opportunities for effective collaboration. Lack of funding was overwhelming mentioned by interviewees as a barrier to responding to human trafficking. Additionally, the lack of discussion regarding root causes, framing of human trafficking, and macro prevention strategies were noted by several interviewees.

INTRODUCTION

International human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, transportation, or sale of persons for labor. Labor is forced and maintained through violence, threats and coercion. It is perpetuated through exploitation of vulnerable populations and exhibits slavery or prison-like conditions. While it is estimated that trafficking impacts mostly poor women and children, it involves some 4 million victims each year globally (U.S. Department of State, 2007). An estimated 14,500 to 17,500 persons are trafficked into the United States each year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2004). Unfortunately, there is very little documented information about the extent and impact of this crime locally and more information is needed on how those working on trafficking issues from various disciplines (legal, social work, policy, etc.) can effectively deliver a coordinated response. This response is needed to facilitate re-entry into communities once trafficking survivors¹ have been liberated or released from the trafficking situation as well as to prevent re-victimization.

Between May 2006 and January 2008, Sutapa Basu, PhD, Assistant Affiliate Professor of Women's Studies and Executive Director of the University of Washington Women's Center, conducted a needs assessment of human trafficking services for internationally trafficked women and girls.² The original purpose of this descriptive research project was to: 1) gather background information on international human trafficking of primarily women and girls in King and Pierce County and 2) identify gaps in the counties' systems of response to international human trafficking. The combined counties' large ports, international air traffic, and the close proximity to the Canadian border make it an ideal entry point, an opening to Washington State as

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the term "trafficked person" will be used to describe persons who remain in a trafficked situation. The terms "trafficking survivor" or "survivor" will be used to describe trafficked persons who have been liberated. This use of terminology was used primarily by human service providers in the interviews.

² Unfortunately, the scope of this project was limited to a focus on international trafficking rather than trafficking of U.S. citizens or permanent residents within the U.S. borders.

a destination for traffickers and their victims. However, during data collection, information surfaced which indicates that there was very little data available regarding human trafficking specific to Pierce County and most of the data available from the interviewees was with regard to King County or other parts of Washington State. Although the current response system focuses on State-wide human trafficking situations, most of the resources and response system actors are centralized in King County. Because of the limited scope of this project, we were unable to delegate resources to conduct deeper research which might provide additional Pierce county specific data. It is also important to note that the convenience sample accessed for data collection was comprised of members of the Washington State Task Force Against the Trafficking of Persons, the majority of whom have substantial experience in the King County area. Many of the Washington State Task Force Against the Trafficking of Persons membership overlap with members of the response system, and most are based in King County or Olympia (policy makers and public service agency representatives). Given these limitations, the data from this report is focused on the response to human trafficking in King County and other parts of Washington State.

Most of the activities of the current immediate response system are primarily coordinated through the Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network (WARN), a collaborative administered through International Rescue Committee in Seattle (IRC), and includes two primary partner organizations, Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center (APIWFSC) and Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA), and also a network of partners which includes additional direct service providers as well as law enforcement and criminal justice agencies. The information from this study documents this networks' current experiences with human trafficking response as well as the experiences of public service agency members and policy

makers attached to the Washington State Human Task Force Against Human Trafficking and their efforts to further develop a coordinated response system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Current “Framing” of Human Trafficking

“Trafficking victims can be men, women, or children, and they can be exploited for labor, sex, or both. Labor trafficking includes forced exploitation in small businesses as well as large-scale industries dominated by multinational corporations. Examples of such industries include textiles, timber, agriculture, tourism, and rubber. Labor trafficking victims include women who wed or find partners through international matchmaking organizations. Sometimes these women experience violence and threats which force them to provide domestic labor such as childcare, cleaning and cooking. Sex trafficking is forced exploitation in all sectors of the sex industry, including prostitution, stripping, exotic dancing, and pornography. It is important to note these situations are intended only to offer an idea of how some common trafficking operations work, and are not all inclusive. Trafficking situations vary widely, and each is unique.”
(Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, 2008, pp. 3)

The general public’s awareness regarding human trafficking does not reflect a broad representation of the kinds of labor for which people can be trafficked (The University of Washington Task Force on Trafficking, 2006). As evidenced by the excerpt above, the Washington State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (the State Task Force) has advocated for a broad description of human trafficking. This is an important way of framing the issue in that much of the public knowledge regarding human trafficking focuses primarily on sex trafficking, i.e., when the general public hears the term, “human trafficking”, they tend to interpret this as trafficking for the purposes of sex (University of Washington Task Force on Human Trafficking, 2006). This becomes a barrier in that the awareness of other forms of trafficking has been diluted by the sensationalism of sex trafficking by movies and television exposés (Rebugio, 2007). The State Task Force also considers the use of the International Marriage Brokerages (IMBs, online and printed catalogs that offer matchmaking services), in

particular, those that focus on U.S. men sponsoring women from overseas to marry in the U.S., as a way to entice potential victims into forced labor and/or sexual exploitation. This framing of IMBs as possible venues for trafficking acknowledges that women who have come to the U.S. are sought after because of their “submissive” stereotype and are vulnerable to victimization (Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, 2008). Chew (2005) suggests that persons trafficked for the purposes of sex work and sexual exploitation frame their experiences as “work” related, rather than as victimization. Some activists believe that framing all forms of trafficking as labor can help to reduce the conflation of sex trafficking with human trafficking and raise awareness about all forms of trafficking to keep the public open to a broad range of laborers as vulnerable to traffickers (Rebugio, 2008; Chew, 2005).

Women’s Agency and Cultural Relevance

“...under conditions or systems of domination such as patriarchy, racism, and imperialism, women express forms of resistance, agency, subjectivity, and self-determination....the continued reliance on ‘victim’ in anti-trafficking work ignores this trend, privileging external forces in the conceptualization of the trafficked person, and denying women agency or subjectivity in the process....sustains an image of women as pure, unblemished, and innocent prior to the trafficking act....” (Kempadoo, 2005, pp. xxiii).

The notion of women’s agency has been diluted in the context of various campaigns for raising awareness regarding the experiences of trafficked persons and survivors of trafficking. Overwhelmingly, the mass media and social marketing perspectives and images of trafficked persons reflect women, primarily women of color, void of agency and resistance. The impact this has on service development has been to mobilize “rescue” without a deep understanding of the true nature of culturally relevant service provision for trafficked persons (University of Washington Trafficking Task Force, 2006). Consequently, service providers and other responders have expressed their support of survivors in patronizing and condescending tones towards trafficked persons (Timbang & Villareal, 2007). Developing collaborative response

systems requires substantial training in culturally relevant approaches to trafficked persons and survivors of trafficking, especially considering the diverse language and cultural barriers that might cause misunderstandings or attempts at providing support (Logan, Walker, Hunt, 2009; OCVA, 2004; Caliber, 2007).

Identifying Trafficked Persons

One very complex challenge is the resistance of trafficked persons or survivors of trafficking to see themselves as victims. One reason for this is that some trafficked persons are sometimes initially smuggled into the U.S. borders with their consent. This means that an individual might pay a smuggler to transport them clandestinely, without legal documentation, into U.S. borders. Sadly, “smugglers” take advantage of this situation, creating a situation of extortion, and thereby, initiating forced labor by threatening to expose the smuggled person to the authorities. Often, the forced labor is associated with a requirement to pay a cash debt which might then allow the individual to be set free. At this point, given the situation would now be considered indentured servitude, this would be identified as a trafficking situation in the U.S. Unfortunately, the traffickers are not likely to release the trafficked person, but instead, the traffickers systematically continue to raise the amount of debt owed, frequently using threats of physical harm and psychological and emotional coercion toward the trafficked person to keep them in the forced labor situation. (Ditmore, 2005; Timbang & Villareal, 2007).

Another reason trafficked persons might not associate themselves with victimization by traffickers is that some do enter work consensually (frequently as a result of deceptive recruitment practices), believing that they will get paid a living wage and be treated fairly. Unfortunately, these situations can also become forced labor or a trafficked situation when the living wage never appears the laborer’s working rights are violated, and the laborer is abused.

Additionally, local law enforcement agencies lack the training or skills needed to identify trafficked persons, often assuming trafficked persons are criminals and arresting them because they were not able to identify them as victimized by traffickers (Caliber, 2007).

Survivor Needs

The needs of survivors of trafficking vary, but the literature generally provides common themes regarding post-liberation. The most immediate needs are culturally relevant advocacy, interpretation, food, housing, and protection from the traffickers (Caliber, 2007). Some survivors will request assistance for repatriation to home countries (Caliber, 2007). Typically, survivors will also need an attorney or immigration counsel to access legal processes for continued presence, certification which makes them eligible to receive public assistance from Office of Refugee Resettlement, and visa petitions. Frequently, survivors will access the processes for T-Visas or U-Visas, which allow for self-sponsorship to become permanent residents and eventually citizens in the U.S. Unfortunately, there are limited resources for these particular processes as there is a dearth of attorneys who will provide pro bono services and very few attorneys who are familiar with these legal processes. Moreover, services for survivors have been limited by funding and lack of experienced service providers (Caliber, 2003; Caliber, 2007; OCVA, 2008; Timbang & Villareal, 2007).

METHODS

The Data

This paper utilizes secondary qualitative data from open ended interviews conducted by the University of Washington Women's Center. The original purpose of this descriptive research project was to explore: 1) background information on international human trafficking of primarily women and girls in King and Pierce County and 2) gaps in the counties' systems of

response to international human trafficking. Interestingly, in review of the data, there was a lack of information that was county specific as most of the experiences of the interviewees were in King County or other parts of Washington State. Additionally, most of the interviewees spoke generally about their experiences as a state-wide response system, although a great deal of the resources and response system members are located in King County.

Interview subjects

As previously stated, the interview subjects were individuals who participated in the Washington State Taskforce and work or have expertise on trafficking issues in King and/or Pierce County. These individuals are publicly listed as contributors to the State Task Force reports and work on human trafficking in one of the following groups: health and human services, law enforcement, criminal justice, research, and policy making (Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, 2004). They participate as representatives of their agencies. It is important to note that there were limitations in the data collected as there were some gaps in regional representation, southwest and central Washington. Also, the researchers were not able to talk directly with trafficking survivors as per the advice of the State Task Force and members of the response system. The researchers complied with this advice because there are a limited number of identified trafficking survivors in the State and those who have been identified need their anonymity and privacy and time to help facilitate healing from trauma.

For the purposes of this research, the response system refers to direct responders to trafficked persons such as community-based human and health service providers, immigration attorneys, prosecuting attorneys, law enforcement officials (e.g., local and State police forces, and the FBI, etc.), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and public service agencies such as Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Department of Labor (DOL). The

members of the response system, most notably, Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network, work to provide a coordinated network of law enforcement responses and timely, culturally relevant human and health services for trafficked persons.

The Interviews and Human Subjects

The open-ended interview questions were designed to gain an understanding of the trafficking response system where gaps in the response system exist. These qualitative in-depth interviews allowed the interview subject to offer their knowledge of trafficked persons and thoughts on how the system is functioning and where improvements can be made (see Appendix). In order to ensure that these questions effectively collected the desired information, they have been informed by “The Caliber Needs Assessment for Service Providers and Trafficking Victims.” This publication is a guide to studying trafficking response services and outlines research techniques (Caliber, 2003).

Human subjects review was completed previous to data collection and consents were requested from each interviewee (see Appendix). An incentive of \$200 was provided to the agency with whom each interviewee was associated. Seventeen (17) interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately one hour, 13 of which were audio-taped. Unfortunately, consent forms were not obtained from 2 of the 17 interviewees and, consequently, these 2 were not included in data analysis.

The Analysis

Analysis included identification of themes in each interview, comparing and contrasting interviews with each other, searching for emerging categories of themes, while focusing on issues specific to responses to human trafficking, the needs of survivors of trafficking, and gaps in the response system. The process of analysis was iterative, listening to the audio-tapes,

reviewing the transcripts from each interview multiple times, coding and re-coding themes, and identifying quotes from interviewees that might illustrate specific themes.

RESULTS

The analysis of the data revealed diverse themes regarding the current human trafficking response system and the needs of survivors of trafficking in our region. The interviewees each brought very unique perspectives which helped to provide a brief snapshot of the state of trafficking response as well as identified various areas for further research. As previously mentioned, one of the limitations of the research was the lack of a broad range of regional perspectives, including the interviewees' lack of familiarity with the response system specifically in Pierce County. However, the interviews were useful in providing potential strategies for enhancing the current human trafficking response system in King County and Washington State.

“I would say that nothing has happened in Pierce County. Pierce County, ten years ago, decided they didn't have vice there, so they got rid of their vice unit. They don't have, in their opinion, any human trafficking...they don't even know what it is....”

The Trafficking Situations

The interviewees described a number of diverse situations of trafficking in which trafficked persons were victimized. However, it's important to note that these descriptions are only representative of what surfaced in the interviews, whereas we know from other research that trafficked persons endure a broad range of victimizing situations. Several interviewees described situations where traffickers were family members, or people the survivors would not have suspected to be harmed by them because they knew the family and had offered to “help” them in some way. Interviewees also indicated that laborers did not know their rights to fair wages and protections for laborers, such as with migrant agricultural workers. Girls might have been offered

assistance by the traffickers to attend school in the U.S., leaving their families in their home country to believe that they would have good academic opportunities. Two interviewees described two different situations of women who believed they would come to the U.S. to marry someone they loved and arrived only to eventually find that their expectations were far from reality. Additionally, one interviewee indicated there are likely trafficked migrant farm workers exploited for their labor in rural areas.

“So after a few months, he went back, did the paperwork, processed it and sent her and the kids here to the United States, and he promised that he’s gonna marry her, but he never did. What happened is, he basically sexually assaulted her and put her to work, and the kids (to work) until they’re like 16....”

“She was promised to be married to another Vietnamese (American citizen), and so he went back there to see her, vacationed there and then... he actually married her here (in the U.S.) but it’s the mother-in-law who abused her, put her to work in a nail salon seven days a week and took money from her and threatened her that she has to pay \$50,000 because that’s how much it cost her bringing her here. So she worked in a nail salon, and then, when she was off, she would take care or baby-sit her nieces or nephew.”

“Basically, we found that the majority of victims are people that come over on student or tourist visas and just never see the visa.”

“....the devastating part is that there’s trafficking going on in rural areas where nobody can see it. I mean, you can hope that people driving by or a neighbor but there’s some stuff that is out there and nobody can see it...” (refers to trafficking for purposes of agricultural labor)

When asked about the numbers of trafficked persons located since 2000 (the inception of the federal anti-trafficking legislation), respondents were not clear as to where this information was most likely to be gathered. One law enforcement official estimated about 60 to 70 were identified through 2006, and also added that there were known trafficked persons, yet to be accessed, numbering about 35-40. Another estimate of 57 was provided as the number of trafficked persons who have actually been liberated from traffickers. Due to the limited scope of this

project, the research team was not able to conduct further investigation regarding quantification of the impact of trafficking.

The Impact of Human Trafficking on Survivors

Addressing the needs of survivors of trafficking requires extensive sensitivity to a variety of impacts that human trafficking has on individuals. Certainly, they have endured devastating impacts associated with physical injuries, various medical needs, post-traumatic stress, and other mental health issues. Interviewees shared many experiences of working with survivors for whom getting through each day became an overwhelming challenge:

“Some have suffered from PTSD. They can’t sleep or just feel nauseated all the time. They constantly want to see the doctor cause they said ‘back home I’ve never been sick like this’”

“Depression is very common and that’s compounded by adjusting to a new culture and being involved with a very foreign legal system to what they might know. So the adjustment factors I think are huge and compounded of course, for those who are over 18 by questions of shelter and means to support themselves, so there’s a huge amount of stress.”

“Some of them are depressed. They have PTSD. I think loneliness, or blaming. Some of them feel, especially the South Asian that we had....(in her culture)....Once you are raped, it looks like everything is gone.”

“I think for the Russian women, she has 2 kids. One of the kids is disabled. It’s so difficult because they have some more medical needs on top of everything else. Not just psychological and emotional, but you know, illnesses.”

“I did have one juvenile client whose trafficker had refused to get her dental care. And she needed immediate dental assistance for tooth decay and cavities. And we were able to tap into some resources to get her help with that.”

“I represented one girl.... when she had been placed in foster care. She just came out of a situation where she had been raped and beaten by the traffickers and they dumped her (I guess that was a good thing), they dumped her at a hospital, so she had gotten the care then. By the time I saw her, she’d recovered from her physical injuries.”

The majority of interviewees discussed the difficulties in reaching out to trafficked persons due to their lack of trust in people, instilled by constant threats of harm and, for some physical and psychological torture. This negatively impacts the network of responders’ abilities to build

trusting relationships and becomes a barrier to being able to engage in a supportive way with the survivor. One service provider shared that some survivors are reluctant to work with service providers because survivors believed they were connected with law enforcement.

“I think a big challenge is getting the victims to actually trust us because we are working with law enforcement for their application (to remain in the U.S.). And so, you know they are very weary of that.... they don’t know what’s going on or they don’t know what’s going to happen so they are really afraid to work with us because of fear something might happen to them, whether they get deported or fear that their trafficker might find them..... Sometimes they see us as law enforcement. So that just takes time.”

Physical harm and health issues of survivors include experiences of sexual assault, pregnancy due to rape, and various forms of physical abuse. One service provider shared her experiences supporting survivors who had been raped –

“There’s no bruises or anything, but I think it’s more psychological and emotional... You know, being raped and you don’t know where you are. You are in a foreign country and you don’t speak English...it’s just the whole gamut.... It’s so difficult.”

“....one was sexually assaulted. It is difficult for her to show her emotions to the others. So what we do is just be with her and try to provide her a place where she can cry....Also, we referred her to a therapist....”

Additionally, interviewees identified that a number of trafficked persons would protect the traffickers’ for fear that their family members would be harmed. Interviewees indicated that extreme caution was needed to respond to the kind of fear that traffickers instilled amongst their captives, especially regarding their families.

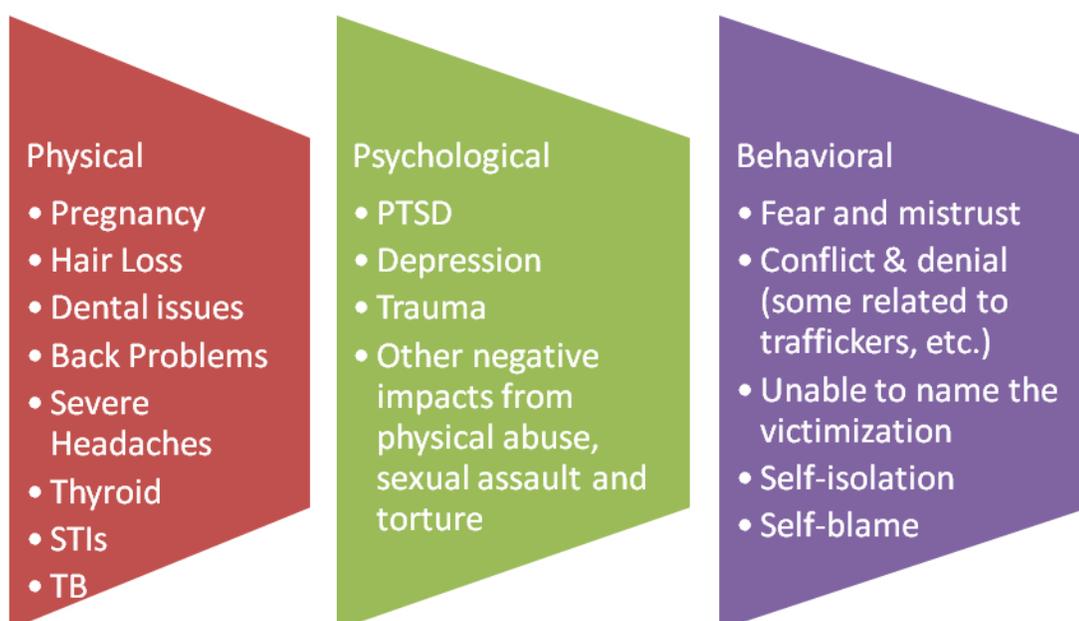
“Whether it’s because the women and the daughters are kept somewhere else and are being dealt with in another way, or they’re afraid for their small children... who have been threatened, especially. One camp in particular, four adults came with us and the rest were families, from grandparents to little babies....they were too afraid to leave. I think there is an especially strong hold on people when their family is threatened....” (refers to migrant workers)

“A couple of the survivors that I’ve talked to, they told me their children are back home and the traffickers knew where their children were. So why would you go back home? The traffickers

know where your family is and your children, and why endanger all of that when the traffickers have transnational connections already.”

Figure 1, below, illustrates how the impacts of physical and psychological victimizations can manifest into extensive barriers to seeking help and/or building trusting relationships with members of the response system.

Figure 1: Impacts on Survivors Post-Liberation from Traffickers



These impacts sometimes cause survivors of trafficking to isolate themselves after liberation, fearing stigma in communities. Some are confused or “conflicted” because traffickers were people they knew or survivors themselves were blamed for their own situation. Some have been in the trafficked situation for so long, or at such a young age, that they do not know how to survive without the traffickers. Another challenge is the difficulty in naming trafficking which is related to lack of awareness regarding commonly understood definitions of trafficking. This prevents trafficked persons from seeing themselves as victims in need of services. With these

complexities facing survivors upon liberation, various support systems are needed to assist survivors in re-entry into communities.

“So the stigma of having been trafficked not only for sex work but for other reasons like, being a nanny or being in a domestic situation, where there is violence in the home, those kinds of things are not easily talked about, especially if the trauma hasn’t been responded to. So making relationships as a member of the community has been challenging.”

“How could you do this? So and so was trying to help you get a job, we were just come to the United States, have a better life, etc, etc.” (a paraphrase by a service provider – something that was expressed to a trafficked youth from a family member)

“Also a lot of internal conflicts (for youth) in terms of, some of them were related to the traffickers or knew the traffickers and just kind of when does it become someone helping you get a job and when does it turn into trafficking? There is ambivalence on their part, particularly in the beginning, in terms of naming themselves even as a victim of trafficking. Confusion on their part as to how they end up in the circumstances they did.”

“Once they are on their own, they need a lot of support, especially if they have been trafficked so long that they really don’t have an understanding of how to live...”

The impacts in the interview data above and in Figure 1 are representative only of some of the issues that surfaced in the interviews, research literature from other studies indicate that there are much more extensive impacts and diverse ways in which survivors present upon liberation (Logan, et al, 2009; Caliber, 2003; Caliber, 2007; OCVA, 2004, 2005, 2007). Yet, the data from this research will contribute to our critical thinking regarding ways to enhance the current response system.

The Needs of Survivors of Trafficking

The interviewees identified a number of immediate needs for survivors of trafficking, but overall, the need for funding for additional services and resources and for continued coordination of the response system was listed as the primary need. In addition to funding the primary needs are listed here, prioritized by highest number of respondents mentioning the need:

- medical and dental services
- trained language interpretation
- safe shelter/housing for both adults and minors and food
- mental health services, particularly responses to trauma, torture, and depression
- culturally relevant advocacy/direct service
- support in understanding U.S. culture and response to trafficking
- trained pro bono attorneys (immigration and criminal defense)
- emotional support from liberation to re-entry into community of choice or repatriation
- trained foster families for unaccompanied minors
- phone cards
- services for survivors during “pre-certification” period³
- strategic response to liberation of large numbers of survivors at once
- civil legal action to access back pay/restitution from traffickers
- transportation (could be bus tickets with instruction on how to use the bus system)
- tuition assistance for survivors interested in college or vocational/technical pursuits.

All of the items on this list are consistent with and can likely be supplemented by other researched needs documented in the literature (Logan, et al, 2009; Caliber, 2003; Caliber 2007).

It is also important for there to be an understanding that all of these needs are “interconnected” and in most situations, having one need met without the other would be a disservice.

“...because trafficking has a really complex intersection with different issues, because it intersects with immigration policies, domestic violence, sexual assault, access to education and that just makes it a little more complicated. Trafficking touches on all of those things and so, for example, if you are working with a woman who is trying to get into housing and say she went through all the things – she had to get certification and she was eligible for housing benefits, if there is not a job out there to provide her a livable wage to afford housing, then that will definitely impact her ability and the organization that is working to get her into safer housing. Same thing with health care... so I think all these issues are really interconnected.”

The Response System

According to interviewees, the response system is generally well-coordinated amongst law enforcement (local and federal), community-based service providers, criminal justice, and Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), with most of the services central to Western Washington, in particular, King County. Two pertinent comments emerged amongst many:

³ This refers to a process for certification of the survivor by the Office of Refugee Resettlement as eligible to receive DSHS benefits. According to DSHS, certification can take between 6 weeks and 6 months.

“But it’s nice having that asset there (coordinated response) that, especially for law enforcement. If we do come across a victim, we have somebody there who can actually take care of that victim.... that frees us up to actually do our investigation and not have to be worried about taking care of the victim....they are very time-consuming, quite often they are quite demanding, with the things that they really do need. So by having the NGOs in place, it’s really great to have them there available for the victim....”

“So we have that trust buildup here in the NW that you will not find throughout the rest of the nation. I have been all over the nation here and quite often there’s turf battles, there’s jurisdiction.”

However, interviewees commented that public service agencies, in particular, did not have the capacity or training to serve survivors of trafficking, despite protocols having been developed (Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, 2005). One interviewee recalls a “frustrating” situation:

“When we go to the DSHS, a lot of the staff have no information or they don’t know what to do....we have one certified..... I called DSHS and they didn’t even know what human trafficking was.”

Another found challenges in working with ICE and locating services for both minors and adult women:

“I haven’t seen the Immigration and Custom Enforcement people tap into any kind of victim services, so... it doesn’t seem to be their forte. But depending on who you’re working with, there are different ways to go at it and we know who the local free clinics are we kind of have relationships with some of the providers, so we’ll call and grovel if that’s what it comes down to.”

Additionally, some comments from interviewees indicate the need for training of service providers in how to serve survivors in culturally relevant ways and to not blame the victim:

“....And when I talk about cultural competency, personally, I don’t mean training someone how to access an interpreter but having people on staff that reflect the community of women and girls and men that are being served. And even if someone in Eastern Washington is being served, having a white social worker who is fluent in Spanish, I am not talking about that. You know, have a Latino or Latina person provide direct services to that survivor, someone who culturally and linguistically reflects the background of the survivor.”

“Thinking about it, being in a third world country where they are impoverished and they don’t have a lot of options. They have no other option. To come into this situation is not their fault. You also think there are those stereotypes of ‘well, they wanted to do it or they were willing to do that’ I don’t know how to make people realize that they have no options. There needs to be a lot of training with that—that piece. It’s not just cultural competency or cross-cultural skill

building. It needs to be more of a global awareness of why it exists in the first place. I feel like there needs to be more education on that when we're doing our presentations. And so, we need a lot of assistance with education, globalization, poverty, economics."

Comments from several of the interviewees noted the lack of discussion amongst responders regarding root causes of human trafficking and ways of framing the phenomena of human trafficking which might contribute to an enhanced response system which also takes into account macro perspectives. Here are a few of those comments:

"We haven't really looked at how policy is driven by the war on terrorism and some of the practices that are out there by law enforcement may drive victims further underground in terms of seeking help and services because of fear in communities and accessing help."

"Washington State actually can have a role in trade practices with other countries in thinking about how you discourage conditions that allow people to be exploited the way that they are. Whether it be in our agricultural industry and working with other countries that we import and export things through, I just think there's more that can be proactively done to look at conditions that may foster trafficking."

"I feel like there are policies that really need to change and they are politically challenging that have to do with the bigger issue that are in dispute in our public discourse about immigration, people who enter the country 'illegally' – it's about when there's not enough resources for anybody."

"....refocus the discussion on how race, class and gender impact trafficking and really, to shift it from just sex trafficking and look at how trafficking intersects with different social justice issues and using a critical analysis to look at why it happens to poor people, predominantly women and girls of color from developing countries..."

Discussion

This study is by no means an exhaustive description of the data collected in the interviews, but merely highlights and themes that surfaced as the most salient. Overwhelmingly, "funding" was the highest need reflected in the themes – funding for services as well as to enhance outreach and partnerships toward a coordinated response system. There were several who identified with the challenges of lack of language interpretation, identifying trafficked persons or trafficked persons understanding that they have been trafficked, lack of immediate

safe housing and trained medical and mental health providers. Most of the interviewees indicated that they thought the response system worked sufficiently, given the few resources available. However, some challenges remain with public service agencies and ICE, which seemed to suggest more training was needed on protocols relevant to these agencies responding to trafficked persons or survivors of trafficking.

One theme that seemed to cross several interviews was concern regarding lack of discussion amongst response system members regarding root causes of human trafficking, framing of the issue, and macro prevention efforts. An interpretation impact of the current framing based on interview data and literature is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, below.

Figure 2: Challenges regarding “Framing” of Trafficked Persons by Potential Responders

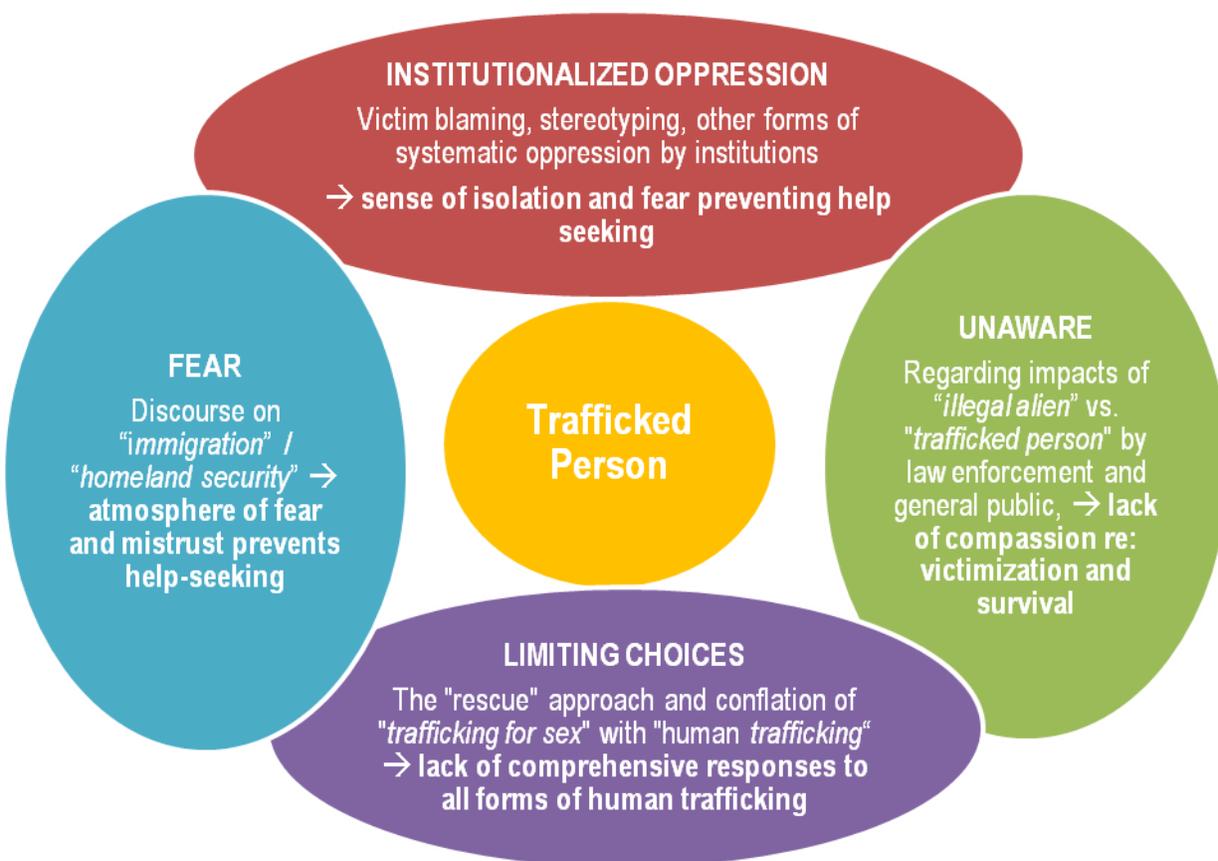
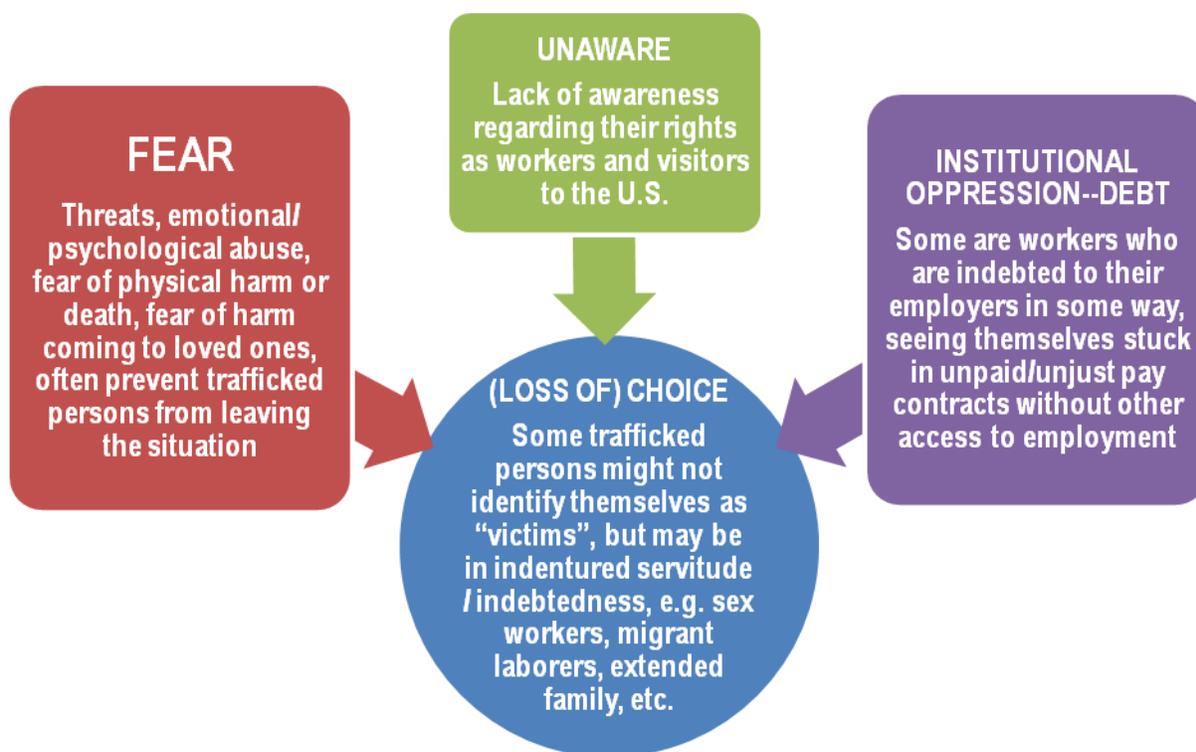


Figure 2 represents a critique of the current challenges associated with the discourse on “illegal” persons in the U.S. and the lack of awareness regarding the broad range of types of trafficking. Figure 2 attempts to contextualize this framing within experiences captured by the data from the literature review and the interviews. Figure 2 also attempts to invoke concepts of “oppression” (disempowerment) and “rescue” which magnify issues of oppression by neglecting women’s agency and creating a situation of limiting choices (Kempadoo, 2005; Timbang & Villareal, 2007). As suggested by interview data (see p. 20) and the literature search (Rebugio, 2008; Chew, 2005), the discourse reflecting anti-immigrant sentiments and lack of discourse on issues related to human trafficking not related to sex work can negatively impact efforts towards a comprehensive response to human trafficking.

Figure 3: The Impact of Inadequate Framing on the Survivor of Human Trafficking



Creating these Figures (2 & 3) illustrate the similarities between Figure 3's 4 themes and the 4 themes in Figure 2: Oppression, Unawareness, Limited/Loss of Choice, and Fear. However, Figure 2 represents perspectives external to the trafficked person, e.g., assumptions and judgments of the general public and potential responders. Figure 3 represents perspectives that might be internal to trafficked persons, based on interview and literature search data (Sanghera, 2005; Logan, et al, 2009).

Both Figure 2 and 3, the external and internal perspectives, combined can create substantial barriers to help-seeking by trafficked persons. These domains, Oppression, Unawareness, Limited/Loss of Choice, and Fear, compound efforts to respond to human trafficking on micro, mezzo, and macro levels, through politically and socially reinforced messages.

In terms of considerations for theory and practice, it seems plausible that re-framing the issue of trafficking in ways that are inclusive of empowering messages of the underpinning values of agency, self-determination, and human rights, would help to create culturally responsive and humane responses to human trafficking (Rebugio, 2007). Limiting or eliminating choices of trafficked persons through stigmatizing perspectives, stereotyping discourse, and policy exacerbates an already victimizing situation for trafficked persons. If we are to practice in ways that would facilitate positive and affirming contextualization of the trafficked persons experience, we must consider ways to truly center our response to trafficked persons on their experiences. Moreover, we must consider the potential benefits of suppressing discourse and policy which might undermine this centering and advocate a human rights-based approach to survivors (Chew, 2005; Logan, et al, 2009; Rebugio, 2007; Sanghera, 2005; Timbang & Villareal, 2007).

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