An Issue of "Otherness": Beliefs that Human Trafficking Cannot Affect One's In-Group Present Obstacle to Combatting Human Trafficking

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Key Findings:

- In a study in Nepal, we find that individuals see trafficking as an important issue in Nepal broadly, but not as a particularly important issue in their own communities and their own lives. We call this an "otherness" issue.

- If human trafficking is viewed as someone else's problem, which does not affect members of one's own community, people may be less vigilant about mitigating human trafficking risks.

- This perception that human trafficking is not a local issue is not simple to remedy. Exposure to awareness campaigns about the risks of human trafficking can effectively increase people's sense that it is an important national problem while not altering perception about its local importance.

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A recent Gallup poll estimates that as many as 35.8 million adults and children have been subjected to modern slavery (Diego-Rosell and Larsen 2014).[1] Despite the scope of the human trafficking problem, there is little understanding of how vulnerable individuals perceive the import of the issue of human trafficking, and whether it is an issue that is relevant to them. We partially address this gap by analyzing original survey data on knowledge and concern for trafficking among local leaders and household members in Nepal, a country with the second highest prevalence rate for human trafficking in the world (Diego-Rosell and Larsen 2014). This *Global Insights* report aims to understand these perceptions in order to improve anti-trafficking policies and programming.

The data used in this assessment come from two surveys conducted in 2015. The surveys took place in 10 out of Nepal's 75 districts. Eight districts are in the Central Development Region and two districts are in the Mid-Western Region of Nepal. These ten districts have some of the greatest reported incidence of human trafficking in the country, and were selected such that the study sample is representative of these two regions of Nepal rather than the country overall.[2] The Human Trafficking Vulnerability Household Project (HTVP) survey asked 5,000 community member respondents about their knowledge and perceptions of trafficking before and immediately after exposure to a human trafficking awareness campaign.[3] The Community Ward Leader (CWL) survey was conducted in tandem to assess levels of community leaders' knowledge and concern about human trafficking in the HTVP community sites.

The results documented in this report point to a need to develop strategies to make human trafficking a more pressing issue for populations that may be at risk for it. Namely, individuals may be vulnerable to trafficking if they do not see it as an issue in their own communities, despite identifying it as a big problem in Nepal. Human trafficking has an "otherness" problem: it is viewed as something that happens to people who do not resemble them. Additionally, local leaders appear to perceive of trafficking as even less relevant and less prevalent than their own constituents do. Given that each of the communities studied in the surveys has documented cases of human trafficking, when some local leaders

and members say that human trafficking does not occur locally, they are misreporting the reality of trafficking, which may lead to an under appreciation of steps that can help mitigate it.

Concern for Human Trafficking: Limited at the Community-Level and Significant at the State-Level

This report first examines the difference between how individuals perceive the scope of the human trafficking problem locally and nationally. Respondents answered the following two questions:[4]

How big of a problem is human trafficking in this ward?[5]

How big of a problem is human trafficking in Nepal?

Figure 1 illustrates the perceptions individuals have about trafficking in their ward, while Figure 2 shows their perception of the problem nationally. We characterize the difference in the distributions as the "otherness" problem, where people recognize that this is an issue for others but not necessarily for themselves.

Only one percent of individuals noted human trafficking as an "extremely big" problem locally, while 53.5% viewed human trafficking to be an "extremely big" problem nationally. Despite nearly 100% of study participants noting that human trafficking is a problem nationally, 72.6% of study participants noted that human trafficking is not a notable problem locally.

Why is it that individuals seem to be concerned with trafficking at the more abstract national level, but not at the more immediate local or individual level? One explanation could be that individuals are ill-informed about human trafficking and, as such, unable to identify the risks that make an individual vulnerable to it. The following section seeks to provide a first test of this explanation by looking at the effectiveness of awareness campaigns on closing the national-local concern gap.
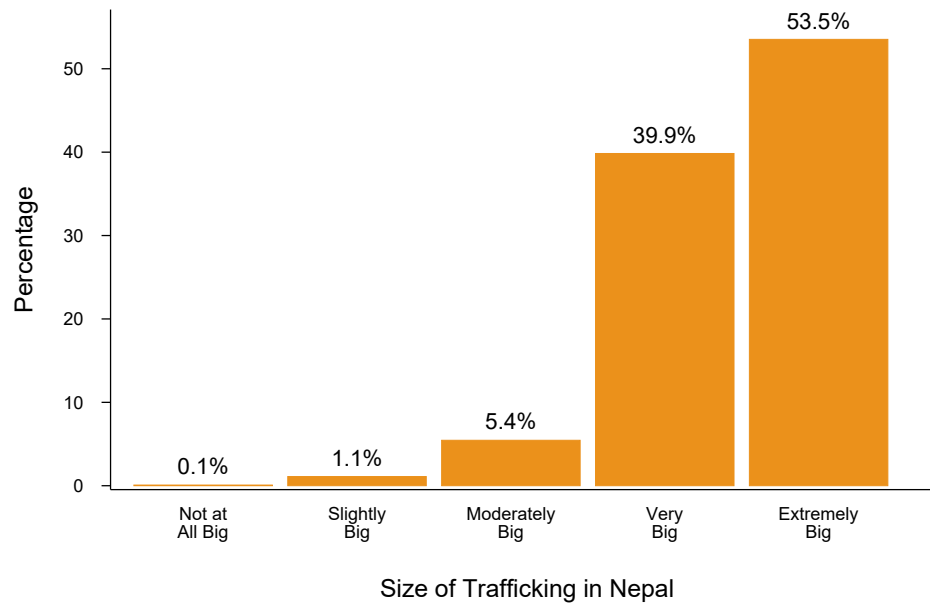
Source: Nepal Human Trafficking Vulnerability Study, Wave I (2014)

Figure 1: Perception of Size of Trafficking in Nepal
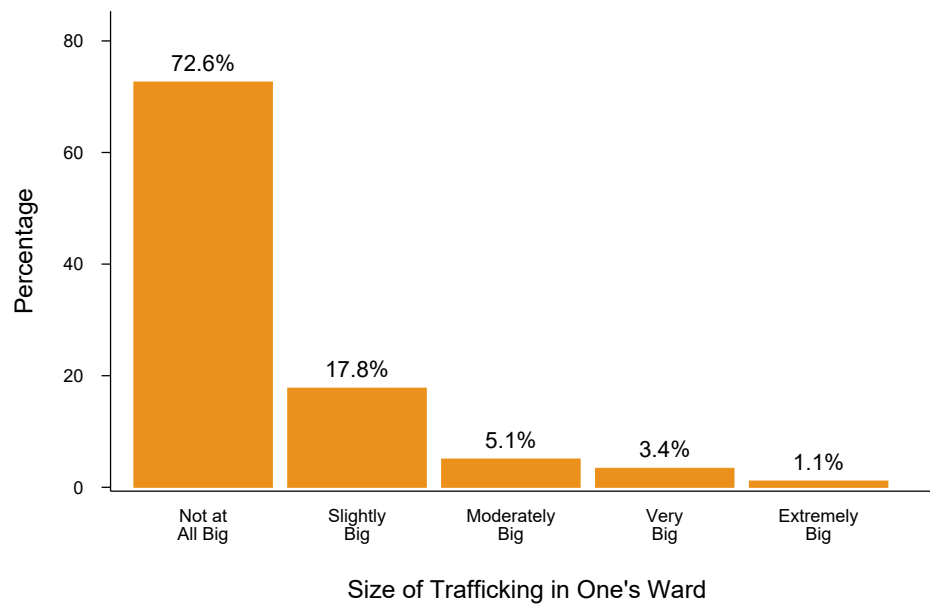
Source: Nepal Human Trafficking Vulnerability Study, Wave I (2014)

Figure 2: Perception of Size of Trafficking in One's Ward

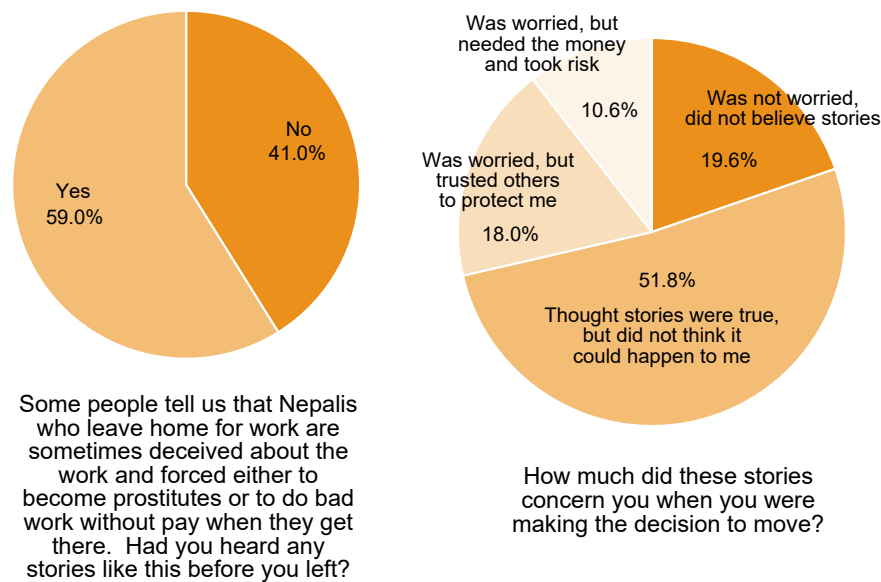# Awareness Campaigns Do Not Close the "Otherness" Gap

The "otherness" problem persists even when people have some awareness of what human trafficking is. Consider our questions on trafficking risk and migration. Respondents answered questions about whether they had heard stories about Nepali individuals who were deceived when migrating for work, and made vulnerable to cross-border human trafficking. As shown in Figure 3, a large subset of individuals (41%) had in fact heard about deceived migrants. However, the majority of respondents who report having heard these stories were generally not dissuaded from migrating despite the risk. Over half of the sample (51.8%) explicitly mention that they did not believe those types of stories could happen to them. An additional 19.6% of respondents stated that they simply did not believe the stories, and were not worried about the potential risk of human trafficking associated with migrating for work.

We see similar findings when we examine the results of an experiment that included an awareness campaign. A central part of the HTVP survey included exposing individuals to a set of awareness campaigns designed to improve their knowledge of human trafficking. Respondents assigned to receive an awareness campaign experienced that information through a poster, a graphic novel, a radio program, or an audio-visual program.[6] Posters delivered information in an upfront, fact-based manner.

Graphic novels gave a detailed narrative of real-life trafficking situations. The radio campaign converted the stories from the graphic novel into audio dramas, and the audio-visual program combined the graphics and audio to create a cinematic quality video.

In addition to receiving the information through different mediums, respondents also received this information with either a danger-based or empowerment-based narrative framework.[7]

The effects of these campaigns and messages on individuals' perceptions

Some people tell us that Nepalis who leave home for work are sometimes deceived about the work and forced either to become prostitutes or to do bad work without pay when they get there. Had you heard any stories like this before you left?

How much did these stories concern you when you were making the decision to move?

Source: Nepal Human Trafficking Vulnerability Study, Wave I (2014)

Figure 3: Concern for Risk of Trafficking due to Migration

of the scope of human trafficking are displayed in Figures 4 and 5 with point estimates.[8] The error bars capture the 95% confidence intervals.[9] If the horizontal confidence interval does not intersect the red line at zero, the effect is considered statistically meaningful with 95% confidence.

Figure 4 suggests that awareness campaigns successfully increase people's perceptions that human trafficking is a problem in Nepal, but have no such effect on perceptions that human trafficking is a problem in their own communities. Being exposed to any of the awareness campaigns leads to an approximate 3-percentage point increase in how an individual evaluates the size of the problem in Nepal. Interestingly, the "empowerment" campaign is 1.2 percentage points more effective than the "danger" campaign at heightening levels of concern.[10]

Figure 4 additionally illustrates that the awareness campaigns do not affect an individual's perception that members of their community can be trafficked. An explicit note that the content of the awareness campaigns
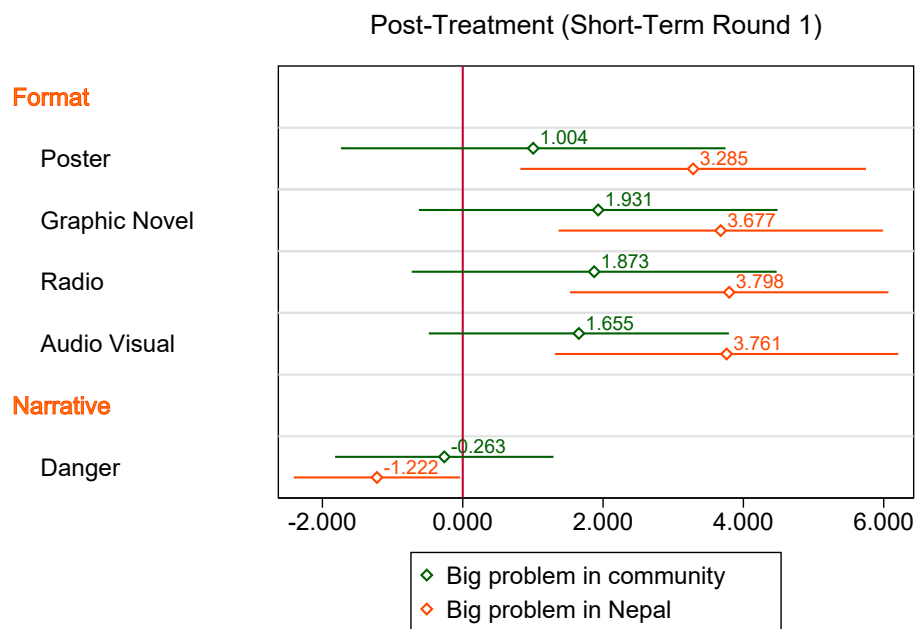
Post-Treatment (Short-Term Round 1)

Figure 4: Effects of Awareness Campaigns on Perceptions of Scope of Trafficking

was based upon stories that took place in their village had no impact on perceptions of the scope of trafficking and risk locally.[11] There is no difference in treatment effects between those who received a generic awareness campaign and those who received one underscoring the local relevance of human trafficking. The concern gap between the scope of trafficking at the local and national level persists despite exposure to stories of migration deception (Figure 3) and awareness campaigns on the risks and prevalence of trafficking (Figures 4 and 5).

How Trafficking Knowledge Differs Between Local Leaders and Members

As mentioned earlier, this report also examines local leaders' opinions and knowledge about human trafficking in their communities. In the
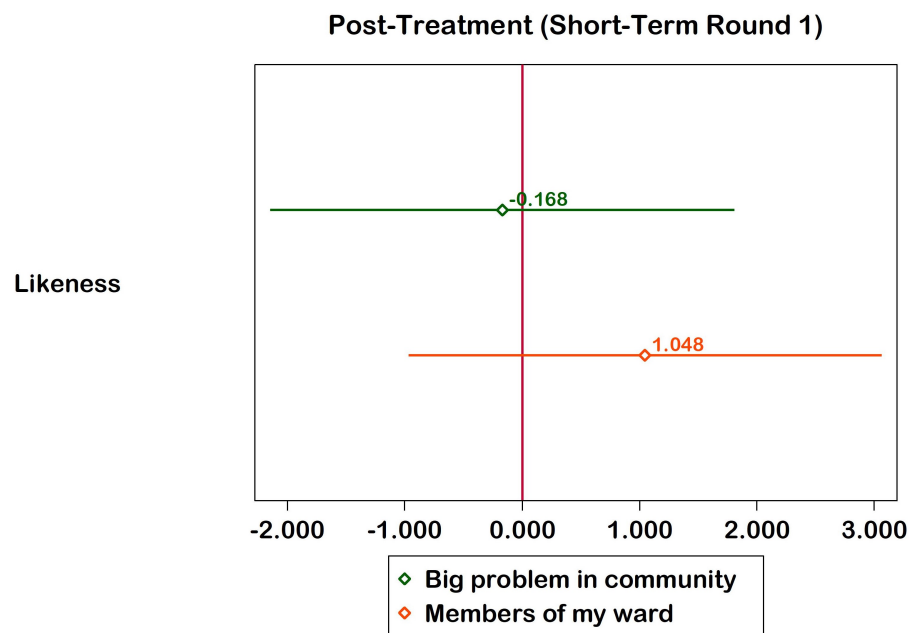
Post-Treatment (Short-Term Round 1)

Figure 5: Effects of Awareness Campaigns on Perceptions of Scope of Trafficking and Assessing Human Trafficking Risk

CWL survey, ward leaders answered the following question:

Do you know of any individuals from this ward who have been victims of human trafficking?

Of the 160 ward leaders who were surveyed, only 13% reported that they were aware of human trafficking occurring locally.

Conversely, in the same 160 wards investigated, there are 80 wards (50%) where only community members report incidents of trafficking.[12] These communities are identified in Figure 6 in blue. The localities (4%) where only leaders confirmed trafficking victims are marked in yellow. And 8.75% of the wards in the sample have both local leaders and members reporting some level of incidence of trafficking (denoted in red in Figure 6).

As noted earlier, respondents in the HTVP survey are unlikely to see trafficking as a problem that is relevant to their community and themselves; the CWL survey indicates community leaders are even more unlikely to see human trafficking as relevant to their community. The fact that most community leaders do not think human trafficking occurs locally is concerning. According to police reports, there are confirmed cases of trafficking in each of these districts, so the fact that leaders generally do not think that there are human trafficking cases locally is notable. If leaders do not think human trafficking is an issue, steps to address the problem will likely not be taken.

There are a few possible explanations for why community leaders are less likely than their constituents to report community-level trafficking (illustrated by the map in Figure 6). First, it may be the case that leaders are only aware of human trafficking cases if they are reported, and community members largely did not report cases of human trafficking to any local authority. Second, community leaders may come from a more privileged social class resulting in less exposure to people who have directly experienced trafficking.

Third, leaders may be less willing to publicly report trafficking in their own communities because they benefit politically from maintaining the perception that their communities are safe. Fourth, there could be situations where community leaders are themselves involved in or profiting from allowing recruiting agents, or people directly tied to trafficking networks, into their communities to recruit migrant workers. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to discern which of these explanations is the most plausible and evidenced. Regardless, anti-trafficking efforts will need to address the low levels of concern at the local level in order to generate the political and social capacity, and motivation to combat the problem.
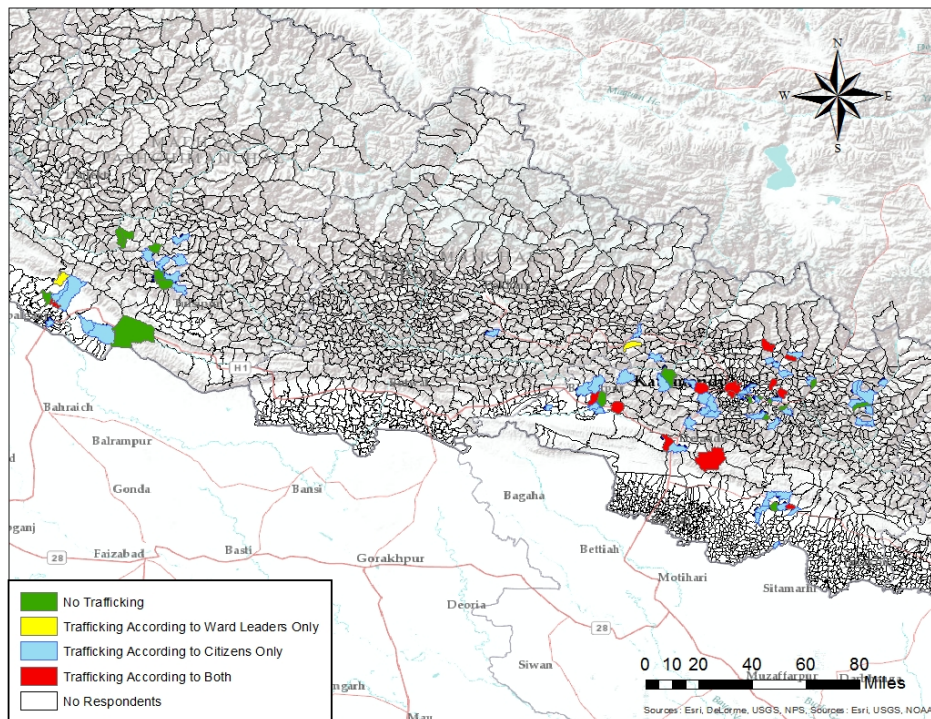
Figure 6: Geographic Distribution of Trafficking Occurances, as Reported by Community Leaders and Members

Conclusion

This *Global Insights* report uses data from the 2015 Human Trafficking Vulnerability Project survey and Community Ward Leader survey to analyze perceptions of Nepali community members and leaders of the scope of human trafficking.

Ordinary individuals perceive human trafficking to be a significant problem in Nepal, but see trafficking as a minor problem at best when considering their own locality. Moreover, individuals report that members of their community are not at risk and do not think that they could be preyed upon if they choose to migrate for work. This national-local concern gap and an "otherness" belief that human trafficking affects others and not people in their in-group may put individuals at higher risk for trafficking because it encourages individuals to falsely believe that their community is safe. This misperception may cause complacency; individuals may be less vigilant when making high-risk decisions. Further, the effects of the awareness campaigns illustrate that exposing individuals to more information about human trafficking, even information that is specifically targeted at their community, does not meaningfully increase one's belief that human trafficking can occur locally and affect people that resemble them.

Local leaders are even less likely to recognize an occurrence of human trafficking than their constituents. It is unclear whether this is due to a lack of knowledge, inexperience, or underlying personal or political motivations. Whatever the reason though, many individuals in a community could continue to be at risk of being trafficked if their leaders do not work to combat the issue. These results reveal a substantial concern gap between both the public's perceptions of trafficking at the national and local-levels, and between the public's and leadership's knowledge. In a region with such high prevalence of human trafficking, why is it that such a large portion of the population and an even larger percentage of local leaders do not identify trafficking as a problem in their own communities? This question goes beyond the scope of this report. However, it is

clear that more work needs to be done in terms of raising constituents' and leaders' concern of the existence of trafficking close to home.

In Nepal, human trafficking is a national problem with local dynamics. The concern gap and corresponding misperception that individuals are not at risk for human trafficking must be closed.

Notes

1. Prior issues in the *Insights* Series can be found at: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights.php. The data on which they are based can be found at http://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/survey-data.php. The content of this study is based upon a report that can be found here: https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Publications/DFG-Vanderbilt-Publication.

2. This is based on data from the 2010/2011 Nepal National Living Standards Survey, which contains questions about migration and trafficking, and the 2003-2013 database of the Women's Cell of the Nepal Police Department that documents the quantity of trafficking incidents at the district-level. Human trafficking has been reported in each of the study districts according to the Women's Cell of Nepal's Police Department. Nepal's police reports document which districts are human trafficking hot spots based on the number of reported cases of trafficking on a seven-point scale, where 0 denotes no human trafficking incidence and 6 represents high levels of incidence. The mean value for the districts included in this survey is 4.2.

3. For a detailed description of the HTVP survey, please see Archer, Boittin, and Mo (2016).

4. The answer responses for both questions are as follows: (1) Extremely big (2) Very big (3) Moderately big (4) Slightly big (5) Not at all big

5. A ward is a local administrative unit, which is like a township. Typically, nine wards make up a village development committee (VDC), which is roughly equivalent to a county.

6. For a detailed description of the various awareness campaigns that were employed, please see Archer, Boittin, and Mo (2016).

7. A "danger signs" narrative uses negative frames to underscore the terrifying realities

of being trafficked (Apanovitch, McCarthy, and Salovey 2003; Bandura 2000; Ruiter, Abraham, and Kok 2001; Witte and Allen 2000). In recounting the story of an individual who is trafficked, the narrative emphasizes the tell-tale signs that they are entering into a harmful and dangerous situation. An "empowerment" narrative uses positive frames to emphasize the individual agency of victims and potential victims of human trafficking (Apanovitch, McCarthy, and Salovey 2003; Bandura 2000; Ruiter, Abraham, and Kok 2001; Witte and Allen 2000). Such a narrative actually builds on the "danger signs" narrative, in that it presents fear appeal situations, followed up with examples of self-efficacy as victims extricate themselves from the situation.

8. In Figure 4, we display the effect of various types of awareness campaign on two different measures of perceptions of the scope of human trafficking. Under the "Format" section, we consider the effects of four different formats that can be employed to transmit an awareness campaign–poster, graphic novel, radio, and audio-visual. When a given format's estimated effect falls to the right (left) of the zero line, this indicates that the effect is positive (negative) relative to receiving no information campaign at all. Under the "Narrative" section, we show the effect of employing a negative "Danger" appeal as opposed to a positive "Empowerment" appeal. When the estimated effect falls to the right (left) of the line, the danger narrative has a positive (negative) effect relative to the empowerment narrative on the outcome variable of interest. In Figure 5, we show the effect of awareness campaigns that emphasize the local relevance of human trafficking relative to those that do not. When the estimated effect falls to the right (left) of the line, the campaign that emphasizes the local importance of human trafficking has a positive (negative) effect relative to campaigns that do not have such an emphasis.

The horizontal line accompanying each estimate is the 95% confidence interval, while the diamond in the center of a confidence interval depicts the estimated effect. There is a 95% chance that the confidence interval contains the true effect size. When the horizontal line depicting the confidence interval does not overlap with the vertical line, the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable is statistically meaningful at a significance level of 0.05. In other words, there is only a 5% likelihood of seeing the effect that we see when the true effect is zero.

The different colors in the horizontal lines represent different outcome measures (and hence, different regression models). The legend at the bottom of each graph identifies these outcome variables. Variables listed on the Y-axis are the independent or predictor variables of the regression models estimated.

9. For more information on the statistical tools used to conduct this analysis please see Archer, Boittin, and Mo (2016).

10. A percentage point is the unit for the arithmetic difference of two percentages. For

example, moving up from 10% to 20% is a 10 percentage point increase, but is an actual 100 percent increase in what is being measured.

11. The exact language of the "likeness" note is as follows: *'These stories are based on true stories of people from your [name of village].'*

12. While the local leaders' reporting of trafficking incidence is drawn from the CWL survey, the individuals' reporting of trafficking is drawn from the HTVP survey. Individuals were asked: "Do you think that you have any friends and/or family who have ever been trafficked?" Since this is asking about specific people tied to the respondent, the community member question is more stringent than the one posed to community leaders.

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