



# FRAMEWORK

tools to combat labor trafficking

## Outreach to Restaurant Workers

During Framework's **Outreach to Restaurant Service Workers** event on March 30, 2021, Hediania Utarti (Community Advocate and Coordinator for Volunteer Program at the Asian Women's Shelter of San Francisco) shared her insights on conducting direct and indirect outreach to individuals experiencing or at risk for labor trafficking in the restaurant industry.

Start by getting to know your community and who is currently interacting with restaurant workers. That will impact who you partner with and how you partner with them, the materials you create, and the access points you use to connect with workers.



There are a variety of indicators that can be used to determine if a restaurant worker is experiencing labor trafficking or exploitation, including long work hours, unfair wage practices, or an exhaustive work environment. It may be challenging to differentiate between the two, but you can create outreach plans that can help workers experiencing either.

### MATERIALS

Outreach to restaurant workers can come in a variety of forms, but there are some general points that can be applied to all materials you create.

- Information should be short and concise, and available in several languages to fit your community's needs.
- If using printed materials, it is best to have information printed on a small card rather than a larger brochure.
- Include contact information, including a phone number where someone will be available to answer or return any calls.
- Consider using various forms of outreach, such as social media and billboards, to maximize the likelihood of reaching your target audience.

## ACCESS POINTS

There are many different people that restaurant workers come in contact with during their shifts that you could partner with for outreach. This includes other restaurant workers, industry workers (delivery drivers, suppliers, inspectors), and the surrounding community (customers, neighbors, fellow business owners). If these access points are present in your community, work with those who already interact with restaurant workers in some capacity and consider how your organization can collaborate.

- Offer training on how to recognize exploitative situations
- Collaborate with industry workers' businesses to provide those workers with skills and knowledge on how they can help
- Consider how and in what forms information should be shared

## PARTNERSHIP

Partner with those present in restaurants, as well as outside organizations. Within your community, you can collaborate with those who might also be interacting with restaurant workers. Utilize their knowledge of the community to help shape your outreach efforts.

### Partnerships to consider

- Community based groups
- Religious groups
- Medical care providers
- Legal services
- Domestic violence and social service agencies
- Government agencies

### Remember...



*Building trust with communities you are hoping to reach can be a slow process. It may take years for someone experiencing trafficking to reach out to you and your organization. It is important to not let this deter you from continuing your outreach efforts.*

## PANELIST Q&A

**Do you have any alternatives to written materials for folks who cannot read English or their native language?**

One option could be to form partnerships with those in your community who speak different languages and could act as “language advocates.” These individuals may have connections in the community and may be considered more trustworthy by the workers you are trying to reach. This could include religious leaders or someone who is active within a specific community. They may be able to invite workers they know to small group gatherings where your organizations could provide simple informational sessions on workers’ rights.

**Are you considered about your organization's number getting into the wrong hands if it is used on palm cards or other materials?**

On our palm cards and other outreach materials, we have listed our attorney’s phone number, rather than the number for our office. If an abuser or trafficker calls the number, they usually disappear once they realize that it is the number for legal services.

**How do I go about doing direct outreach without appearing as a “white privilege savior?”**

This is something to keep in mind; not only white privilege, but education level or socioeconomic status can be perceived as a factor for why someone wants to help those who are “unprivileged.” It is best to work closely with an organization or group that is already focused on addressing this population. By forming connections with those that are familiar with the community, you will have an easier access point for performing outreach. The person you have a connection with can also speak to the community on your behalf or pass along information, so that they might be more receptive when you are speaking with them. Often, we find ourselves working behind our connections, rather than leading the conversations ourselves.

**What if partner organizations don’t focus on labor trafficking?**

We cannot force anyone to focus on what we find important, but we can do our best to provide them with information so that they can be aware. Some people may be reluctant to accept that labor trafficking is occurring in their area, and you can approach the topic in a way that does not put any blame on them. You can give them your contact information and let them know that if they hear of anything, they can reach out to you and your organization. Also, don’t be discouraged by this, and continue to work on your outreach efforts.

**If someone is not necessarily forced to work but they still receive low pay, can they report that?**

It is always good to just to check. Labor exploitation and labor trafficking can be a slippery slope. You can provide the individual with social services that they may need and refer them to a legal service provider who can determine what the situation is. You can also reach out to organizations that are doing this type of work in your community for a consultation or to gain insight from their experiences.

**If I do not speak a certain language, should I still hand out materials in that language?**

It depends on your relationship with the community. If you have language advocates that you work with in your community, you can disseminate materials in other languages and pass along the contact information for an advocate who speaks that language (with their consent). You can play the role of a messenger, rather than the person who is responsible for handling every aspect of outreach. Sharing the information itself is already so helpful, so if you do not have access to language advocates, it may be worth sharing what you can to be as accessible as possible.

**How have you adjusted your outreach to restaurant workers during COVID?**

This is a tricky one. In general, we have to do our outreach on Zoom or another online platform. We mostly reached out to other workers from other organizations. We kept our presentation shorter, usually 30 minutes, and spent more time discussing cases or situations they faced. The best thing that we did, I believe, was reaching out to Homeless Outreach Team and their network. These groups visited many homeless encampments, some provided food, some provided mobile shower. We do not have new clients from this particular population, but we were able to create a safety planning or referral processes and networking to support possible exploitative situation. Since we have been doing outreach through our language advocates groups to their respective communities for many years, we had quite a bit of calls from community.

**Can you give more examples of area or group influencers? One example you gave was religious leaders.**

I'm going to share with you what I have done or observed. I do not want to generalize, because each community and each time period might be different depending on the socio-political climate as well. I worked with the Indonesian communities (there are different groups) for the last 10 years. It took me 10 years, I think, because many Indonesians immigrated to the U.S. due to an oppressive government, so it took them a good while to trust someone.

In any case, yes, religious leaders or (Christian-based) preachers were helpful to me. Community VIPs were good too—these are usually women who open their homes for celebration for holidays; in each celebration, they would have 60-100 people come to hang out and eat. These women also have

a 'cultural' group, meaning they would have an event where they dress up and show off their traditional dresses/costumes. I was invited to speak for 10 minutes to one of these groups about my organization. The great thing is, many of them contacted me afterwards and either asked for help or offered to help.

My co-worker is a very active community organizer in a Thai temple. She started out with attending events and helping out for a couple of years and then stated to educate the monks about domestic violence. Slowly, some women came to her and sought help. She also recruited quite a handful of volunteers. Now, she and other volunteers created a non-profit called Thai Community Unity and are helping my Anti-Trafficking team to do prevention education in the temple as well as in smaller groups of friends of the volunteers. She got to meet with other community leaders from Laotian and Cambodian communities who have their own small centers. She and I then visited them and brought donations and talked labor trafficking. We were not able to do a similar thing with Vietnamese communities, possibly because it is a much larger group. But one of my co-workers worked with a radio and TV personality in her former job, so she got a spot in her friend's Vietnamese radio and got a spot for the two of us on Vietnamese TV last year.

In sum, we need to work slowly with each community. It was harder to approach smaller communities in the last 4 years due to anti-immigrant trends – survivors were afraid to seek help. In the meantime, we continued working with our friends who are savvy in social media to send out (really simple but carefully written) messages online. I want to say that the Jewish Women International has been very supportive to us.

## RESOURCES

- [TEDxGeorgiaTech: Monica Khant](#) – Consider this TEDx Talk as you create outreach materials. During the first five minutes of this video, Monica Khant discusses how she was oblivious to labor trafficking in the restaurant she worked in as a young adult due to her immigrant heritage and background.
- [Trafficking is Also Happening in Our Favorite Restaurant's Kitchens](#) – This blog post from Polaris explores vulnerabilities that workers on H-2B visas may face in the restaurant industry and ways to reach this population.
- In the News...
  - [Texas Alcohol Beverage Commission taps alcohol distributors to help fight human trafficking at bars, restaurants, liquor stores](#) – This news article from 2018 details how the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission worked to educate delivery drivers on recognizing indicators that trafficking may be taking place in the bars, restaurants, and liquor stores that they deliver to.
  - [Reporting Undercover: Labor Trafficking and the Underground Chinese Restaurant Network](#) – In this investigative piece from Amelia Pang, a journalist who posed as a Chinese immigrant looking for work as a busgirl, Pang details her journey from contacting an employment agency to traveling to the job site to the working conditions in the restaurant.



To learn more about Framework or to request training, technical assistance, or individualized support on labor trafficking, visit us at [FrameworkTA.org](https://FrameworkTA.org).

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