

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents research on migrant domestic workers' (MDW) vulnerability to forced labor in Hong Kong, and examines whether awareness campaigns can be used to shift attitudes and behaviors around forced labor. It presents data from a randomized control trial (RCT) that measures the impact of awareness campaigns on knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding forced labor and human trafficking among two populations in Hong Kong: the general public (GP), and MDWs from Indonesia, The Philippines, and Nepal working in Hong Kong. Specifically, the study examines whether awareness campaigns can be employed to induce shifts in KAP to reduce forced labor and the exploitation of MDWs. It also explores whether there are differences in the efficacy of awareness campaigns based on whether the information is delivered in the form of a narrative via a video, or in the form of poster that succinctly lists key facts. The report also makes cross-national comparisons to Nepal using data from a previous study on vulnerability to human trafficking and forced labor that the researchers conducted in 2015.

The Hong Kong economy depends on the labor of MDWs from other parts of Asia. As of 2019, there were over 385,000 registered MDWs from a variety of Asian countries, including Indonesia, the Philippines, and Nepal, constituting roughly 10% of the labor force in Hong Kong.¹ By some accounts, approximately 15% of the area's households hire an MDW, and this rate has been increasing over time.² MDWs indirectly contribute \$2.6 billion USD annually to Hong Kong's economy by providing domestic help and elderly care.³ Analysis of Hong Kong census data suggests that MDW labor enables a significantly higher rate of women's labor force participation.⁴ Despite their importance within Hong Kong and the existence of legislation designed to protect the rights of MDWs, including mandating formal employment through contracts, MDWs in Hong Kong face exploitative conditions. By testing the effectiveness of awareness-raising, this study sheds light on MDWs working conditions and explores ways to improve them.

General Population and Migrant Domestic Worker Baseline Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices

In the analysis, we evaluate KAP baseline levels for the GP and MDW samples by assessing KAP among those not exposed to the treatment. In the presentation of the results among GP respondents, we differentiate between respondents who employ MDWs and those who do not. We make this differentiation given the assumption that employers of MDWs may have significantly different KAP regarding MDWs due to the greater experience and knowledge they have with MDW employment. Employers' attitudes are of particular significance, as their actions most directly affect the well-being of MDWs. Yet, it is also important to evaluate the KAP of non-employers, as they can provide vital assistance in reporting cases of MDW abuse if they observe them occurring in their communities and could employ MDWs in the future.

As expected, the study finds that employers are more knowledgeable than non-employers regarding the rights and working conditions of MDWs. In terms of attitudes, on average, employers and non-employers

¹Trading Economics. 2019.. "Hong Kong Employed Persons." Retrieved from <https://tradingeconomics.com/hong-kong/employed-persons>; Enrich HK. (2019). "The Value of Care." Retrieved from https://enrichhk.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Final_The-Value-of-Care_Full-Report.pdf.

²Enrich HK. 2019. "The Value of Care." Retrieved from https://enrichhk.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/Final_The-Value-of-Care_Full-Report.pdf.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

do not perceive exploitation of MDWs in Hong Kong as a large problem. This low assessment of the magnitude of the problem, despite our study showing that more than 1 in 3 MDWs in our study noting that they have experienced unfree recruitment, working conditions that are exploitative, and/or severe restrictions to leave their employer suggests an important role for awareness-raising to inform the public of the scope of the problem of labor exploitation. In contrast, both employers and non-employers express relatively high levels of sympathy for MDWs who experience labor exploitation, as well as a low tolerance for abusive behaviors towards MDWs. Importantly, however, employers are more likely to identify certain abusive behaviors as acceptable than non-employers. In particular, employers are significantly more likely to rank monitoring an MDWs cell phone use and waking up an MDW in the middle of the night to care for children as more acceptable than non-employers.

On average, MDWs have relatively high levels of knowledge about working conditions and legal requirements regarding MDWs' work. Filipina MDWs have, on average, higher levels of knowledge on a greater number of issues facing MDWs than their Indonesian counterparts. This may result from differences in training and orientation that occur in their respective home countries or from differences in education levels, which are significantly higher among Filipinas. As compared to the GP, MDWs are more likely to view labor exploitation and human trafficking as prevalent in Hong Kong. MDWs express a greater need for the government to prioritize issues surrounding MDW employment. MDWs also report higher levels of willingness to take action against labor abuse than GP respondents, both by calling the police and by talking to their family and friends. Interestingly, MDWs have a higher tolerance than GP respondents for the mistreatment of MDWs, with tolerance rising with more years of experience working as MDW. This tolerance may suggest that witnessing and/or experiencing repeated forms of abuse leads workers to view abuse from employers as concomitant with their profession.

Effects of the Awareness Campaign Treatments

Overall, the awareness campaigns have positive effects on knowledge regarding forced labor and MDW rights and working conditions; however, they have limited effects on people's attitudes and practices. The results tend to be stronger among the GP than MDWs. The study finds that the video campaign generally has greater effects on most relevant outcomes than the poster.

Focusing specifically on the GP, we find that the awareness campaigns generally have the hypothesized effects on KAP. The video campaign tends to be more impactful than the fact-based poster campaign. The impact also tends to affect individuals who are more immediately affected — in this case, employers. The most substantial effects are on variables related to knowledge, rather than on attitudes and practices. The video campaigns also have a considerable impact on increasing respondents' perception of the scope of exploitation of MDWs and forced labor in Hong Kong. The poster campaign only had an effect on increasing the perception of the scope of exploitation of MDWs.

As compared to the GP, the awareness campaigns are, in general, less effective in bringing about changes among MDWs. As noted above, the campaigns have a strong effect on GP knowledge levels, with the video campaign significantly increasing GP knowledge levels on five indicators: rest hours, minimum wage, agency fees, holding passport, and the size of MDW population in Hong Kong. The video does not,

however, lead to significant increases on any knowledge indicators among MDWs. We also find limited effects on attitudinal outcomes. We observe large and statistically significant increases in MDWs perception of the scope of exploitation, labor abuse, and human trafficking in Hong Kong. However, for other outcome measures relating to attitudes, including the acceptability of abusive behaviors and sympathy for MDWs who experience abuse, we find that the campaigns are mostly ineffective in bringing about changes among MDWs.

Cross-National Comparison of Awareness Campaigns Between Hong Kong and Nepal

In 2015, the research team conducted a similar study measuring the efficacy of anti-trafficking campaigns on the general population in Nepal.⁵ A comparison of results from these two studies finds that the Nepali GP had higher levels of knowledge surrounding forced labor and human trafficking at baseline than the Hong Kong general population. In Nepal, respondents were exposed to an anti-trafficking campaign, while the Hong Kong campaign featured issues relating to MDW rights. When comparing the effects of the respective campaigns, both effectively increase the perceptions amongst the general population of the scope of the problem the campaign addressed. Similarly, the campaigns in both Nepal and Hong Kong had a positive impact on GP knowledge levels, and less of an effect on attitudes and behavior. The studies taken together show the promise of employing awareness campaigns to raise knowledge around the particularities of what forced labor is, and the scope of the problem within their communities.

⁵ For results of this study see: Archer, Dan, Margaret Boittin, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo. (2016). "Reducing Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: An Experimental Intervention Using Anti-Trafficking Campaigns to Change Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices in Nepal." Research and Innovation Grants Working Paper Series, USAID. Retrieved from: <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/DFG-Vanderbilt-Publication>.