Human Trafficking in the Agricultural Industry: Prevalence and Risk Factors

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Farmworkers in the US

- Where do they work? Fields, packing sheds & nurseries
- How many are in the US? 2-3 Million
- How many are women? Approximately 27%
- Which states do they work in around the US?
What are some of the common problems that farmworkers confront?

- Wage theft, dangerous working conditions, pesticides exposure
  - Women also experience high rates of gender discrimination
  - Children are the youngest child workers in the US, in addition to child actors.
Power dynamics

- How does the US labor system work for most farmworkers in the US?
- Types of agricultural labor: migratory, seasonal & guest worker
Manuel is a tomato worker. He was recruited from Mexico and taken to work on a farm in Florida. He does not know where he is in the US. He is dependent on the crew leader that paid the recruiter in Mexico to hire him for his housing, his transportation and his interpretation.

Manuel does not know any of the other workers and he speaks very little English. In addition to his crew leader, there is a bus driver that takes him to the store once a week and who is responsible for taking him to and from work.
The bus driver started to charge him 50 dollars a week for gas. The crew leader told him that the recruiter in Mexico is charging him a higher finders fee than they had negotiated so Manual is required to pay him $50 per pay check to help pay off the recruiter. The crew leader also informed him that he was going to be charged $25 for the sheets, pots, pans and “furniture” that they set up in his “house” and $150 per week for his rent to live in the camp. The crew leader will deduct all of the costs from his pay.

On weeks that his pay cannot cover his fees, the crew leader agrees to give him $25 to buy food, but he is keeping a running tab which Manuel is responsible for paying off by the end of the summer. His weekly pay is an average of $200 per week.
Who holds the power over Manuel?
What is human trafficking?

- Human trafficking occurs when an individual uses fraud, force or coercion to obtain labor or commercial sex act, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

- Instances of labor trafficking include cases of debt bondage where people are forced to pay off a debt before they are free to leave a place or job of their own volition; forced labor in which an individual is made to work against his/her free will. It also includes forced child labor.

- Sex trafficking includes forcing an individual to engage in commercial sex trade or it can engage instances of sexual slavery.
Prevalence of human trafficking

- The Polaris Project estimates that more than 20 million people worldwide are victims of human trafficking.
- Sex trafficking impacts men and women around the globe, not to mention the more than one million children every year.
- Labor trafficking impacts workers in many industries, including agriculture.
Labor trafficking in agriculture

- Labor trafficking often impacts individuals who come to the US on temporary worker visas.
- One study published in 2016 and commissioned by the National Institute of Justice found that of the 122 closed labor trafficking cases that the researchers examined, the majority involved individuals who came to the US on H-2A visas to work in agriculture.
- The other industries that also had high rates were hospitality and construction, which impacted individuals who came to the US on temporary H-2B visas.
Women who are victims of domestic servitude tended to arrive in the US on business, diplomatic or tourist visas.

Undocumented individuals who suffered labor trafficking were most often employed in agriculture and domestic work.

Signs of human trafficking?

- Document confiscation
- Is the individual able to move freely?
- Is the individual being threatened or coerced?
- Forcing someone to do more than one job or a different job than they had been promised before accepting the job
Signs of human trafficking?

- Charging fees or deducting fees from pay/ With holding pay
- Controlling money, communication, access to information or documents
- Physical, sexual or psychological harm or threats of harm to the person, a loved one, or another worker in exchange for work or for failing to do work
Promising practices for conducting outreach

- Build a network in the communities to help disseminate information.
- Think about places where individuals might be free to go to leave materials.
- Consider partners who might have access to camps or dwellings where workers might live (i.e., health clinic workers).
- Familiarize yourself with where workers shop and spend time (i.e., soccer field, laundromat, etc.).
Promising practices for conducting outreach

- Learn more about the local law enforcement and what, if anything, they are doing to address trafficking.
- Consider the kinds of materials you create and the language that you use in the materials.
- Be honest about your business hours and whether services are accessible.
Resources

- National Trafficking Hotline, https://humantraffickinghotline.org/
  Call: 1-888-373-7888 (TTY: 711) or Text 233733
Contact information

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