Anti-Human Trafficking NGOs and the United States

# Global makeup of NGOs

In the summer of 2014, the Sanford School of Public Policy surveyed 1,100 NGOs working in the fight against human trafficking. Of these, 506 unique organizations completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 45.59%.

However, the global reach of these organizations is wider than the organizations surveyed. Because some respondents answered the survey for more than one country in which they worked, the final survey data contains 588 responses covering 133 countries (see Figure X). A little more than half of the NGOs surveyed (253, or 56%) reported working in only one country, with 28% working in two to four countries, and 16% working in five or more. This suggests an opportunity may exist to expand mid-range NGOs to fill in gaps at a regional level, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in Mainland Southeast Asia.

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# Influence of the United States over human trafficking policy

In general, most NGOs reported (65%, or 343 of 531 responses) that the US has been very active in their countries over the past 10–15 years. Indeed, only 7%, or 39 responses reported that the United States has not been active in fighting human trafficking (see Figure X). While 28% of respondents reported having no information on the United States’ role in trafficking, this is not indicative of US inactivity—only that these NGOs are not aware of significant actions or assistance from the United States.

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The survey data reveals that the NGO community perceives the United States as an active supporter in the fight against human trafficking due to its provision of material assistance, aid funding, training, direct governmental advocacy and legislative consolation and collaborations, and the annual State Department TIP report on human trafficking conditions and governmental efforts to address such issues around the world.

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NGOs believe that the United States has helped raise awareness of human trafficking issues at the domestic and local, state, and national governmental levels. About half of the respondents cited the United States as active in increasing government attention to human trafficking or raising awareness of human trafficking in that country, or both (see Table X). In regards to support, NGOs reported a broad range of logistical, fiscal, and professional US activities in their countries including providing resources and funding, convening conferences and workshops, and training government officials. Nearly 40% of respondents stated that their organization had received some US funding. Roughly the same percentage knew of trafficking-related conferences or workshops convened by the US in their country, while nearly 28% were aware that the US had trained government officials.

Many NGO respondents were aware of US efforts to promote policy changes in their countries of anti-trafficking legislation in work-countries around the world. Nearly 31% reported that the United States had asking for legislation in their country, while 21%, or 113 of 530 respondents claimed the United States had contributed to a government action plan for addressing national issues in human trafficking. NGOs also reported that the United States participates in all stages of policy formation including the direct lobbying of embassy staff with government officials, supporting proposals in legislatures, providing technical assistance to legislative technical groups, support in passing legislative acts, and the continued monitoring and provision of recommendations for the strengthening of existing legislation. Finally, the US government provides comprehensive, inter-sectional assistance in its efforts to influence and promote anti-trafficking legislation within work countries. The organizations that often assisted with these initiatives include the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training (OPDAT), and the International Criminal Investigative Assistance Program (ICITAP), under the US Department of Justice.

# Interaction between NGOs, US embassies, and government officials

Many NGOs work and collaborate with the US embassy or government: 65% of 530 respondents claimed some form of interaction with the US. Approximately half of the organizations had had direct contact with US officials, and nearly 21% claimed to have had some form of direct cooperation (see Figure X). Another 19%, or 101 respondents cited receiving direct funding from the US government.

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The general enthusiasm about the efforts of the United States is quite large as 60%, or 309 of 520 respondents consider the US an important actor in the countries they work in, with approximately 27%, or 139 respondents, naming the US as the “most important actor,” and approximately 35% citing the US as a “somewhat important actor” (Figure X). In contrast, only 13%, or 68 respondents cite the US as not being an important actor—the smallest group in this category.

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Furthermore, the respondents who replied that the United States had been active in their countries reported that US influence on human trafficking policy in their countries has generally been positive. Nearly 68% of organizations—or 213 of 314 respondents who claimed that the US had been influential—considered this influence positive (see Figure X). Additionally, some 20% of organizations, or 63 respondents found US influence on human trafficking policy to be mixed. Remarkably few organizations found US influence to have a negative effect on policy, with only two respondents claiming that US efforts had been negative.

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