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# Structures and Practices of Cross-Sector Engagement in Counter-Human Trafficking Coalitions in the Global South

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## Abstract

Human trafficking is a violation of human rights that takes many forms. Working with other organizations within and across sectors to counter these is increasingly perceived as necessary, but collaboration can be risky for the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) involved. Extant research on NGO collaboration has left the practices of collaboration understudied-- and most overlook the Global South. This paper helps redress the dearth of research on counter-human trafficking coalitions in the Global South through a cross-regional comparative analysis of three nationally-scoped counter-trafficking coalitions (CTCs) operating in sub-Sahara Africa, Asia-Pacific Islands, and Southeast Asia. All three CTCs began in the civil society sector and are comprised primarily of NGOs. The primary research questions addressed in this paper are: With which hopes and fears, despite which challenges, and through what structures and practices do NGO-led counter-trafficking coalitions in Global South countries engage with governmental and private sector entities? Findings indicate similarities in the vulnerabilities of NGO-led CTCs in Global South countries, and the challenges they face in cross-sector interactions, but variations in the strategies they employ in those interactions. Each CTC engages the public and private sectors in their country in multiple ways: through membership in the CTC, partnerships with the CTC, and/or a range of engagement practices. Finally, NGO-led CTCs in the Global South engage in the kinds of cross-sector and local-global dynamics that are a key focus in critical cosmopolitan theorizing.

## Keywords

Cross-sector interaction; NGOs; coalitions; human trafficking; collaboration

## Introduction

The crime of human trafficking is defined by the United Nations 'as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation' (U.N. General Assembly, 2000). National laws defining human trafficking vary from country to country, so although the United Nations' definition has been critiqued as problematic (c.f. Vijeyarasa, 2015), the protocol in which it was published has been ratified by 189 countries to date and therefore it serves as a basis for international discussions of human trafficking (U.N. General Assembly, 2003). To paraphrase the United Nations' definition, human trafficking can be generally understood as a violation of human rights and an abuse that manifests in many forms, including forced labor in any industry including sex work, the commercial sexual exploitation of children, bonded labor or debt bondage, and domestic servitude. Although difficult to determine definitively, experts on the prevalence of human trafficking claim there are currently around 40 million victims of human trafficking globally and that victims include men, women, adults, and children (International Labour Organization et al. 2017).

Since 2000, there has been a marked increase in actions by governments, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) around the world intended to prevent these abuses from occurring and to serve those who have been harmed (Foot et al. 2015). The International Labour Organization, founded in 1919 and organized as a UN agency in 1946 (International Labour Organization 2019), leads multisector efforts against all forms of labor exploitation including those associated with human trafficking, by engaging governments, employers, and workers across industries and in all regions of the world. Working in partnership with other organizations within and across sectors against human trafficking is widely perceived to be necessary whenever possible, albeit challenging (Cockayne 2015). Therefore it is unsurprising that in Heiss and Kelley's survey of nearly 500 anti-trafficking NGOs worldwide, 'every respondent reported collaborating, partnering, or interacting with other NGOs or civil society organizations, international organizations, foreign embassies, and the national governments of the countries in which they work' (2017, p. 238). Moreover, a developmental analysis of self-reported anti-trafficking efforts by approximately 150 organizations from multiple sectors worldwide found that the percentage of organizations claiming to be engaged in building counter-trafficking coalitions increased from 74% in 2008 to 81% in 2011 (Foot et al. 2015, Supplemental Material p. 4).

## Literature review and research questions

Clearly, not all interactions nor relationships between organizations are collaborative. We use the term 'collaborative process' to refer to any set of actions that comprise an effort to create, engage in, lead, or sustain collaboration. To define collaboration within and across sectors, we employ Keyton et al.'s articulation of interorganizational collaboration as:

> The set of communicative processes in which individuals representing multiple organizations or stakeholders engage when working interdependently to address problems outside the spheres of individuals or organizations working in isolation. The outcomes of these processes have the potential to benefit or harm the parties to the collaboration, as well as others. (2008, p. 381)

Keyton et al. recognize that collaborations are loosely coupled and nested systems that change and evolve over time, through interactions as well as in response to circumstances and opportunities. Moreover, their definition identifies individuals who function as organizational representatives as those through whom interorganizational collaboration takes place, and it acknowledges that collaboration does not necessarily have beneficial outcomes for participants or anyone else. It makes clear that interorganizational collaboration is risky, which is especially salient for NGOs attempting to collaborate with government agencies or businesses, as discussed below.

Multiple models for structuring and enacting multisector collaboration have been studied in many issue arenas (e.g. Ashman and Luca Sugawara 2013). A systematic review of 354 journal articles on NGO collaboration (including same-sector and cross-sector collaboration) found that much more of the extant literature focused on the preconditions that led to collaborative activity and/or outcomes of collaboration than on how NGOs collaborate, and therefore called for 'greater attention to how partnerships are built and strengthened' beyond structures in future research (Gazley and Guo 2015).

Within the growing body of research that has been conducted on how NGOs engage in partnership-building with businesses and government agencies (respectively), two studies are particularly relevant. Le Ber and Branzei (2010) analyzed the relational processes that support social innovation between businesses and nonprofits/NGOs, and developed a useful model which explains how 'deliberate role (re)calibrations help the partners sustain the momentum for success and overcome temporary failure or crossover from failure to success' (p. 140). Asad and Kay (2014) examined relations between NGOs and government agencies in multiple countries in the realm of medical humanitarian development. Noting that states are complex, heterogeneous, and fragmented entities, they found that NGOs are more likely to succeed in their work when they adjust how they interact with different types of states through processes of interest harmonization and negotiation. More specifically, Asad and Kay found that forming alliances or networks with cooperative government officials and state agencies at the local level as well as with other NGOs affords NGOs several types of leverage in their negotiation with state actors. Findings from studies such as these provided a helpful foundation for our research. However, we found no extant literature on the cross-sector partnership-engagement practices of NGOs in relation to both governmental and private sector entities in countering human trafficking.

In view of the gaps noted above, the overarching research questions motivating this paper are: With which hopes and fears, despite which challenges, and through what structures and practices do NGO-led counter-trafficking coalitions in Global South countries engage with governmental and private sector entities? Our findings contribute to redressing the gap

in literature on how NGOs collaborate, and break new ground toward understanding the cross-sector partnership-engagement practices of CTCs in the Global South.

In pursuing answers to these questions, we begin by acknowledging that our Global North backgrounds shape our ideas and color our perceptions – of governments, businesses, and nongovernmental/nonprofit organizations, of cross-sector collaboration, and of counter-trafficking efforts – despite our best efforts to be reflexive about our situatedness. We recognize that in many parts of the world, and often in Global South countries, NGOs operate in highly volatile, 'fragile' political and economic environments (Ashman 2015, Liebler and Ferri 2004). Therefore, conceptual frameworks developed in and/or about national and regional contexts with relatively stable political institutions, infrastructure systems, and business communities cannot be assumed to be relevant for analyses of NGO-led coalitions addressing human rights issues, such as human trafficking, in Global South countries.

Gazley and Guo's (2015) review of extant literature on NGO collaboration found that the philanthropic and public sectors advocate strongly for more nonprofit collaboration, despite growing evidence that interorganizational partnering, especially cross-sector, can be risky for nonprofit/nongovernmental organizations (Gazley and Brudney 2007, Le Ber and Branzei 2010, Liebler and Ferri 2004). For example, a comparative analysis of NGO networks in one Global South country found that constructive interactions between the networks and government entities were nearly impossible due several factors, including the frequent turnover in the leadership of government offices, the perception of government officials that NGOs are 'enemies to government', the lack of access for NGOs to relevant policy information, and the unwillingness of government officials to share such information with them (Alidu and Asare 2014, p. 1149).

In designing and conducting this research, we were mindful that over the last two decades, more than 160 of the 195 countries rated on the CIVICUS Monitor (i.e. the 193 member states of the United Nations plus Kosovo and Palestine) have enacted laws that narrowed, obstructed, repressed, or closed outright the 'civic space' in which NGOs can operate (CIVICUS Monitor 2017, p. 2). In addition to legal restrictions on NGOs, an increasing number of governments have been creating 'logistical barriers to democracy and rights programs' (Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014). Fluctuations in the levels and forms of influence and outright control that governments exert over NGOs can dramatically affect their autonomy and ability to execute their organizational aims and operations, and their ability to build and sustain coalitions (c.f. Butcher 2015, Ye and Onyx 2015). Rapid shifts in the political, economic, and/or legal landscapes in Global South countries create significant challenges for NGOs, as do swings in the funding available to them. Therefore, we do not assume that cross-sector engagement, much less collaboration, is always possible or inherently good for NGOs.

Findings from Heiss and Kelley's (2017) large-scale survey of counter-trafficking NGOs around the world give further reason for caution. Counter-trafficking NGOs operating in 66 countries reported feeling either somewhat or very restricted by government in those countries (Heiss and Kelley 2017). The types of restrictions and hindrances reported by those

counter-trafficking included burdensome legal requirements, general government antagonism, government apathy toward NGO programs, and corruption or inefficiency in the police and government bureaucracy. Heiss and Kelley summarized the stark effects of the restrictions experienced by multiple NGO respondents in their study: 'The burden of complying with uncertain regulations can hamper [counter-trafficking] NGOs and can detract from their work, limiting their ability to protect victims and prosecute offenders' (2017, p. 240). However, Asad and Kay's (2014) finding that inter-NGO alliances/networks can help NGOs resist restrictive states' attempts to hinder their work points to the necessity of better understanding the strategies NGO alliances employ to engage collaboratively with governments. This study advances such understanding.

## Counter-trafficking coalitions

Limoncelli observed that the counter-trafficking activities of intergovernmental organizations and governments 'tend to capture the attention of those in the anti-trafficking field' and that 'the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have played a major role in anti-trafficking efforts' are 'less often acknowledged' (2016, p. 316-317). Such under-acknowledgement of NGOs role in anti-trafficking efforts may contribute to the marginalization of NGOs in multi-sector interactions regarding national responses to human trafficking. This study aims to help redress that by probing the cross-sector collaboration efforts of counter-trafficking NGOs, and challenges they face therein.

Although it was beyond the scope of this study to conduct a global mapping of counter-trafficking coalitions (CTCs) or government-initiated task forces, it is widely known that these exist in many countries. In some countries, government agencies have initiated multisector task forces in which some private sector actors and NGOs are invited to participate. For instance, in the US, the Enhanced Collaborative Model task force grants awarded jointly by the federal Bureau of Justice Affairs and the Office for Victims of Crime to municipal or intrastate regional 'multidisciplinary' task forces with 'core teams' of enforcement agencies and NGO providers of victim services have catalyzed cross-sector collaboration (Foot 2016). In some US cities government-funded or other types of task forces expand beyond those core team actors to include mobilization and advocacy NGOs, municipal, county, and state government agencies, individual businesses, and industry associations (Foot 2016). However, in many countries, efforts to coordinate counter-trafficking actions are primarily taking place through alliances or coalitions initiated and constituted mainly by NGOs. Membership in multi-NGO coalitions and multisector coalitions is actively encouraged across the aid industry, including in the counter-human trafficking realm (Davy 2013a). Within Southeast Asia, counter-trafficking collaborations among NGOs, while nascent, are becoming increasingly common (Davy 2013b).

Counter-trafficking activists from within the private, academic, and civil society sectors have founded several counter-trafficking initiatives focused on influencing and enrolling businesses-- often by creating nonprofit umbrella organizations. Examples of these include the Coalition of Immokalee Workers founded in 1993 (Coalition of Immokalee Workers 2018), GoodWeave International, founded in 1994 as RugMark (Anonymous 2014,

Goodweave 2019), Truckers Against Trafficking, founded in 2009 (Truckers Against Trafficking 2019), Shift founded in 2011 (Shift 2019), and Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking and the Global Business Coalition Against Trafficking, both founded in 2012 (Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking 2019, ManPowerGroup 2012). Each of these organizations is doing ground-breaking and exemplary work to prevent and end human trafficking in and by businesses, but only the latter two have corporations as members per se. Since human trafficking occurs within businesses and their supply chains, direct participation in-- and collaborative leadership by-- businesses are essential to the success of counter-trafficking efforts both within the private sector and between the private sector and other sectors (Foot 2016, Lagon 2015).

We have each conducted academic and/or practitioner fieldwork in multiple Global South countries over the last decade. In the course of that fieldwork, we collectively had conversed with hundreds of leaders of counter-trafficking NGOs prior to commencing this study in 2016. From them we heard multiple critiques that some government-initiated task forces are primarily composed of participants from government agencies, light on NGO representation, and missing representation from the private sector. Moreover, we learned that government-initiated task forces are sometimes critiqued privately by some co-national NGO leaders as ineffective window-dressing strategies to help maintain or improve a country's 'tier status' in the US Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons Report, which attempts to assess the counter-trafficking actions of every nation. In view of this contextual knowledge, it is unsurprising that only 53% of counter-trafficking NGOs reported having ever discussed issues pertaining to human trafficking directly with the government of the country in which they operate (Heiss and Kelley 2017, p. 238). Heiss and Kelley's survey findings indicate that in most countries, relatively few NGOs engaged in counter-trafficking work have direct, regular, and substantive interactions with government agencies regarding counter-trafficking efforts.

NGO leaders involved in counter-human trafficking efforts around the world with whom we have conversed over the last decade have consistently articulated strong desire for governments and businesses to partner with them in preventing and ending human trafficking. They expressed hopes that collaborative engagement with government agencies and businesses would result in greater awareness of the crime and the plights of victims, greater stability, legitimacy, and safety for their NGOs, increased funding for counter-trafficking efforts, and enhanced effectiveness. Such hopes are consistent with findings from other studies regarding the value of cross-sector partnerships (Koschmann et al. 2012, Shumate et al. 2018). However, extant scholarship on NGO networks addressing other issues in some Global South countries indicates that these hopes are fraught with fears that engaging with – and particularly accepting funding from – businesses or government agencies risks the independence, credibility, and/or moral position of NGOs (Alidu and Asare 2014, Ashman 2015). The combination of such hopes and fears creates dilemmas for NGO leaders.

There has been a dearth of knowledge about CTCs, but a spate of recent research is beginning to redress that gap (Jones and Lutze 2016, Foot 2016, Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking 2013, Lagon 2015). However, most of the peer-reviewed counter-

trafficking coalition research we found was conducted in the United States. Outside the US there have been some evaluation reports of collaborative counter-trafficking efforts commissioned and disseminated by governmental or nongovernmental organizations, but nearly all of those have focused on European networks. Aside from three studies of counter-trafficking efforts in Cambodia and the Mekong region (Brammer and Smith-Brake 2013, Davy 2013b, Davy 2013a), we have found no published research specifically on CTCs in the Global South.

This paper contributes toward that knowledge gap through a multimethod, comparative, cross-regional analysis of three national-level CTCs operating in nations in sub-Sahara Africa, Asia-Pacific Islands, and Southeast Asia (coalition and country names are withheld for the safety of those affiliated with them). All three CTCs were initiated by NGOs, and their respective memberships comprise primarily NGOs; each CTC sought ways to interact with businesses and government entities within their country. In what follows, we explore why and how.

**Methods**

*Data collection*

The comparative case research design we employed enables us to answer the research questions motivating this paper through examination of both similarities and differences in the cross-sector engagement practices of robust CTCs in different Global South countries. Systematic comparative analysis of two or more cases affords nuanced examination of multiple facets of a complex sociopolitical phenomenon such as cross-sector engagement (Ragin 1987, Ragin 1994). In crafting this study and identifying the criteria by which CTCs would be purposively selected as cases, we adhered to well-established guidelines for comparative case analyses (Ragin 1987, Ragin 1994, Yin 2003).

We leveraged knowledge we acquired through fieldwork in Global South countries conducted prior to launching this study in 2016, through which we learned that NGO-led coalitions functioning for at least three years typically have established patterns of communication and organizing practices among member organizations, practices of engagement (or non-engagement) with businesses and government agencies, and a track record of activities. Coalitions that make it to five years are considered old as most coalitions fail within the first two years. Through prior fieldwork we also learned that coalitions led by a single individual were more likely to dissolve; sharing and/or rotating leadership between at least two people was foundational to coalition survival and sustainability.

Since comparative analyses are best designed by purposely selecting cases that share some key characteristics or facets, and vary in other facets pertinent to the overarching research question(s) of the study (Ragin 1987, Ragin 1994), we ensured that the cases we analyzed would share certain attributes but differ in others as well as in their national (i.e. political and cultural) contexts. We decided to focus on relatively robust CTCs because they had demonstrated sustainability and were more likely to have established a track record of

cross-sector engagement. We therefore established the following criteria by which to select CTCs for this study:

1) Operational for at least three years in a Global South country;

2) Involved at least two people leading the coalition (one of whom may be the founder);

3) Included a minimum of five member organizations;

4) Goals and activities with a national scope.

No directory exists of counter-trafficking coalitions across Global South countries. Moreover, relationships are important as a foundation for trust in the kind of research we conducted. Therefore we leveraged our professional networks to identify five CTCs that met the criteria listed above and operated in different Global South countries (and regions), three of which agreed to participate in this study. One operates in a sub-Sahara African country, one in Asia Pacific, and the other in a Southeast Asian nation. We provide a brief history and description of these three focal CTCs below in the findings section.

After the leaders of three CTCs agreed to participate in this research and to invite the leaders of their member organizations to participate as well, we proceeded to collect multiple types of data about each CTC that would provide a substantial and comparable evidence base for understanding whether, why, and how the CTCs engage with government agencies and businesses. These data included: a) comprehensive collection of coalition documents including charters, bylaws, membership agreements, statements of mission, vision, and goals, strategic plans, and progress reports; b) responses from at least one leader of each CTC to a questionnaire with 54 (multiple-choice and short-answer) questions about the structure, governance, and membership of the coalition; and c) hour-long, semi-structured interviews conducted via Skype with all of the coalition leaders from each CTC, (each coalition had two or three leaders recognized by its member organizations), which were audio-recorded and transcribed. In total, we interviewed seven coalition leaders across the three coalitions, probing the development and history of leadership in each coalition, how coalition processes and initiatives had developed over time, and how the coalition interacts with government agencies and businesses. Each interview was recorded and transcribed.

*Methods of analysis*

To analyze our data we read through and across the organizational documents, questionnaire responses, and interview transcripts from each coalition, multiple times. We coded the interview transcripts and responses to open-ended prompts from the questionnaire systematically and thematically using the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. We distilled information about the history, structure, governance, membership, interactions with government agencies and businesses, and other activities of each coalition, in written summaries using a structured template we developed for that phase of analysis. In this way, we creating 'word tables that display data from the individual cases according to some uniform framework' (Yin 2003, p. 134). We then proceeded to make systematic comparisons of the three coalitions across those categories to identify commonalities and variances, as is

standard in comparative case analyses (Miles et al. 2014, Ragin 1987). Although our analyses generated many insights, in this paper we focus on the similarities and differences between the three CTCs in regards to the range of their interactions with businesses and government agencies-- and in particular, any instances of cross-sector collaborative processes or collaboration structures.

## Findings

We present findings regarding CTCs cross-sector interactions by first providing a brief sketch of each CTC, to which we assigned the pseudonyms of Covenant Alliance, Community Nexus, and Sector Bridge. As a further step toward protecting the identity of the CTCs and their leaders, we refrain from attributing quotations from any coalition leader to his/her respective CTC, even though they have been pseudonymized. Next, we summarize the common challenges concerning cross-sector interactions reported by coalition leaders. We then compare the varied forms of cross-sector engagement evidenced in the data of each CTC.

*Covenant Alliance* had been operating in an Asia Pacific nation for three years at the time of this analysis. It had 35 member organizations, almost all of which were religious institutions and faith-inspired NGOs. It was led by a small executive committee together with a medium-sized secretariat, and it employed one person to coordinate communication within and between the executive committee, the secretariat, and member organizations. A leader of Covenant Alliance characterized it as a formal partnership based on a shared memorandum of understanding and/or other protocols, and reported that it participated in two other counter-trafficking partnerships involving non-member entities, one of which is government-led. Covenant Alliance was funded in equal portions by three religious institutions and an international faith-based NGO. Covenant Alliance leaders identified political instability as the primary challenge to their efforts to interact with government agencies. The only type of businesses with which it had initiated interaction were media companies – for the sake of publicizing counter-trafficking efforts.

*Community Nexus* was the oldest CTC in this study, having operated in a Southeast Asian nation for over ten years. Its leaders characterized it as a formal partnership based on a shared memorandum of understanding and/or other protocols, and, at the time of this study, it had several paid leaders and staff, and 47 member organizations. These were faith-based NGOs, plus a few small businesses engaged in social enterprise, economic development, and/or job creation. Community Nexus differentiated clearly between member and external partner organizations, and had the most explicit and stringent membership requirements. To qualify for membership, an NGO must be faith-based, be legally registered with government, work on counter-trafficking issues, and have implemented, or be in the process of implementing, a child protection policy. In addition to member organizations, Community Nexus had developed partnerships with a sizeable set of non-member NGOs, and had cross-sector partnerships with a wide array of entities, including the local offices of international NGOs, a national helpline for victims managed jointly by several organizations, academic researchers from several countries, intergovernmental organizations, and government

agencies at the national, province and local levels. This CTC had the most diverse funding base: it had received grants and donations from many sources over the course of its operational life, including intergovernmental organizations, businesses, private foundations, churches, and individual donors. It did not charge dues from its member organizations, but it did charge registration fees from member organizations for some events. The multiple challenges that Community Nexus leaders faced in their efforts to interact with government agencies included high levels of corruption and a faltering democracy combined with government opposition to NGOs and the decline of civil society. Challenges in interactions between this CTC and businesses were those due to political volatility, most of the businesses operating in the country were small and unstable. Moreover, labor laws were weak, and poorly enforced.

*Sector Bridge* was five years old at the time of this study, operating in a sub-Sahara African nation with volunteer leaders and no paid staff. Like the other CTCs in this study, the founding of Sector Bridge was initiated by NGOs, and the majority of its members are NGOs including migrant worker assistance, women's welfare, community development, faith-based, and philanthropic organizations. Unlike the other CTCs, Sector Bridge intended from the beginning that its membership would be multisector, including businesses, government agencies, media organizations, and researchers; its membership included a few representatives from each of those. It also invited individual members as well as organizational members. At the time of this study, Sector Bridge's membership consisted of 49 organizations and five individuals. The leaders of Sector Bridge characterized it as a network of organizations and individuals working together toward a shared vision. Sector Bridge was participating in more than nine other counter-trafficking partnerships with non-member entities, some of which were government-mandated. Sector Bridge did not collect any dues from its members, but had received funding from a variety of sources, including a business, philanthropic organizations, religious organizations, and individual donors. Sector Bridge leaders worked hard to cultivate and maintain relationships with government agencies both by engaging actively on province- and national-level task forces, and by encouraging coalition members to view government positively. As one leader said:

> The government people have their perspective on civil society and then of course civil society has their perspective on the police and on the government departments. I try, when I have people [from the coalition] that are negative about the government, I try and make it positive and try and look at the positive side that we're trying to include them and make them aware of what we're doing. (Interview)

Sector Bridge leaders participated in multiple government-initiated counter-trafficking task forces and perceived the coalition as having a generally positive relationship with the national government and several state/province-level government agencies. It also had developed collaborative relationships with several businesses at the time of this study.

Although the members of all three CTCs were mainly NGOs, there were considerable differences between the types of NGOs affiliated with each CTC. A common way for NGOs to identify themselves and others is by their focal issue, i.e. an NGO whose activities focus

primarily on refugee resettlement will likely identify itself – and be referred to by other NGOs – as a refugee resettlement organization. Many philanthropic organizations (e.g. foundations) and faith-based nonprofits are also active in these issue arenas. We found that even if such organizations have a single-issue focus, they sometimes identify themselves primarily as philanthropic or faith-based organizations, and at other times as an issue-type organization. However, churches, church denominations, and other kinds of large religious associations or institutions refer to themselves primarily by one of those terms, and they are often active in more than one issue arena. To better grasp the multiple types of NGOs comprising the membership of each CTC, we asked CTC leaders which of eight issue-focus types of NGOs and four other NGOs types (i.e. faith-based nonprofits, churches/ denominations, philanthropic organizations, and other coalition/network umbrella organizations) were among the members of their CTC. We then asked the CTC leaders which of these types of NGOs were among their external partners. Findings are presented below.

Table 1: Types of NGOs among CTC Members and External Partners

| NGO Types | Covenant Alliance | Community Nexus | Sector Bridge |
|---|---|---|---|
| Migrant worker assistance | M & P | P | M & P |
| Sex workers | | | P |
| Human rights | | P | P |
| Child welfare | M | P | P |
| Women's welfare | M | P | M & P |
| Community development | M | P | M & P |
| *Church, denomination, or other religious association* | M | M | |
| *Faith-based nonprofit (other than church, denomination, or religious association)* | M | M | M & P |
| *Philanthropic/Foundation* | | | M |
| *Coalition/Network* | M | P | |

M = Member organization type; P = External partner organization type

In Table 2, we present the sum of the number of types of NGOs that are members in each CTC, plus a summary of the types of businesses (small, medium, or large), and the levels of government (local, state, national, or intergovernmental) comprising the membership of each CTC.

Table 2: All Types of Member Organizations

| CTC | # of Types of NGO Members | Types of Business Members | Types of Government Members |
|---|---|---|---|
| Covenant Alliance | 7 types, all faith-based | Small business (i.e. religious media) | None |
| Community Nexus | 2 types, all faith-based | Small business | None |
| Sector Bridge | 5 types | Small & Medium businesses | Intergov/Natl/State |

The range of types of organizations external to the membership with whom each CTC partners is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: All Types of External Partner Organizations

| CTC | # of Types of NGO Partners | Types of Business Partners | Types of Government Partners |
|---|---|---|---|
| Covenant Alliance | 1 type | Medium business (i.e. areligious media) | Natl |
| Community Nexus | 7 types | Small business | Intergov/Natl/State/Local |
| Sector Bridge | 6 types | *None* | Intergov/Natl/State |

A close comparison of the hopes, fears, and cross-sector engagement actions of the three CTCs' leaders revealed that they all hoped for and sought to cultivate positive, constructive relations with government agencies and businesses—and they all struggled in doing so. 'What makes it really challenging is that every sector has its preconceptions about other sectors,' as one leader said.

Relations between Community Nexus and a few small businesses were well-developed at the time of this study, and Sector Bridge and Covenant Alliance each had a couple business members and/or external partners. But many of their overtures toward businesses have been rebuffed. One of the CTC leaders articulated well the perception they all expressed, that businesses are leery to acknowledge human trafficking much less engage in counter-trafficking efforts:

> [Business] people are a little bit wary of-- and of course whatever you take on board is gonna impact your business in some way or another, so I think you know people are still a little bit unsure of-- maybe how to tackle coming on board the counter-trafficking movement through business or through corporate (Interview).

In interactions with government entities, the three CTC's employed differing strategies, and had varying experiences, but outcomes were clearly a product of political ideology and government (in)stability as well as CTC actions. Covenant Alliance, although the youngest CTC in this study, was founded by the religious institutions with many decades of generally

positive relations with the national government, and so was readily recognized by it and included in government-initiated task force meetings. Both Sector Bridge and Community Nexus leaders had regular, substantive interactions with multiple levels of government agencies in their respective countries, and articulated both the need, and opportunities, to educate government officials more fully about human trafficking.

The leaders of all three CTCs described their efforts to not only comply with national laws regarding NGOs and participate in whatever government-led counter-trafficking efforts they were invited into, but also to proactively foster mutual respect and positive regard with government officials. One CTC leader explained that some leaders of member organizations have the view that 'oh well the [national] government is all corrupt, so why would you partner with government? Why would you do any more with government than what you have to do, which is your legal obligation?' She went on to explain her perspective on the necessity of engaging with the national government despite the difficulties:

> What we've seen though, is that as a coalition actually we have a responsibility to kind of model this forward, because everybody [i.e. leaders of member NGOs] is super nervous about, yeah, interacting with the government, and so if we don't model it forward, then they're basically never gonna interact with the government. So we have to show that we can do it, and it is a valuable response to what it is that we're doing in the big picture of things, even though it's not easy. Actually, we have a responsibility to interact with the government. (Interview)

The leaders of that CTC enacted their sense of responsibility to interacting with the government by consistently inviting government officials to CTC-organized events and trainings, and by participating in government-initiated committees on trafficking whenever they were asked to do so. The following comment by one CTC leader articulated well the sentiment expressed by all of the CTC leaders regarding their approach to government agencies:

> We've found that it's very very [sic] much about relationship building and taking that time to build up those trust relationships, we've found that it's really vital when it comes to working on counter-trafficking. But we've very open to yeah, to partnering with government and we really yeah acknowledge that we can't do this without them and vice versa you know civil society and government need to be working in tandem if we're gonna have good impact against trafficking. (Interview)

Knowledge of government procedures matters in cross-sector collaborative efforts, and may well be foundational to trust-building. A CTC leader acknowledged that a lack of understanding on the part of member NGOs about governmental protocols and procedures hindered constructive interactions, saying 'I think often there's a disconnect between civil society's expectations and what government is realistically able to do in terms of being bound by protocol and policies and that kind of thing.' (Interview) This provides evidence that increasing the knowledge of NGO leaders regarding governance is part of capacity-building for cross-sector collaboration.

Conversely, the haphazard and/or selective communication practices of government officials also hindered constructive cross-sector interactions. A CTC leader summed up a common frustration this way:

> We've found that government's communication tends to be very last minute as well as very selective, so they don't necessarily reach out to maybe all the key role players that they should be or that they need to be reaching out to. Yeah, I'm trying to think of how to say this without painting my government in a bad light cause that's really not what I'm trying to do here. (Interview)

The perception expressed by this CTC leader was echoed by others in our study, and is consistent with Alidu and Asare's (2014) findings about the hindrances to collaboration between government and NGOs resulting from government's selectivity in releasing information to NGOs, or withholding it entirely.

In summary, the findings of our analysis evidence that each NGO-led CTC faced challenges in its interactions with government agencies and businesses. The three CTCs varied in their cross-sector interaction aims, the membership and partnership structures they have developed in relation to civil society, public, and private sector entities, and in their cross-sector engagement practices. Correspondingly, the engagement strategies employed by the leadership of each CTC in relation to government agencies and businesses varied, but shared a consistent commitment to long-term, substantive interaction.

## Discussion

In reflecting on the findings from this study, it is evident that some of the strategies that NGOs have been found to employ in relation to private sector entities (Le Ber and Branzei 2010) and state actors (Asad and Kay 2014) in regard to other issues are evident among the CTCs in this study (Le Ber and Branzei 2010). We also noticed three noteworthy absences. First, none of the CTC leaders in any country mentioned (in)action by government agencies or business as factors in the founding of the CTCs, or the development of their CTC's structure, processes, and aims. This absence of conscious thought regarding government and businesses in the founding of the CTCs seems significant and surprising, since leaders in each CTC articulated views that actions by both the public and private sector are necessary for traction (if not leadership) in efforts to counter human trafficking. Second, the CTC leaders gave no indication that they viewed the CTCs they lead as temporary organizations. None of the leaders from any of the three CTCs articulated any hope that the CTCs would be unnecessary someday, nor mentioned any kind of exit strategy wherein they (as individuals) would move on to other work. Third, none of the data about the three CTCs evidenced any activity, much less aim, of lobbying government agencies to enact changes.

Connecting these findings regarding nationally-scoped CTCs with scholarship on transnational dynamics is illuminating. Davy (2013b) argued that transnational advocacy networks in the Greater Mekong Subregion that work against child sex trafficking are 'promoting cosmopolitan values and the building of cosmopolitan systems in order to create and sustain an anti-trafficking movement' (p. 62). Davy's argument that transnational advocacy networks are 'cosmopolitan players' seems applicable to the CTCs in this study,

despite their nationally-bounded scopes, as they also 'create norms, promote cosmopolitan values, protect the vulnerable, encourage inter-agency collaboration, build human rights institutions and child protection systems, and act as buffers against contemporary globalisation and transnational crime' (Davy 2013b, p. 62). Understanding the phenomenon of community-based NGOs banding together to form nationally-scoped coalitions to counter trafficking in persons (both within and across national borders) is enhanced by viewing them as entities engaging as catalysts of 'bottom-up globalization' (de Sousa Santos 2006, p. 398), in the kinds of local-global dynamics that are a key focus in critical cosmopolitan theorizing (Delanty 2006).

## Conclusion

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the structures and practices through which NGO-led CTCs in Global South countries engage with public and private sector entities in counter-trafficking efforts. As we stated at the outset of this paper, we do not assume that cross-sector engagement, much less collaboration, is always possible or inherently good for NGOs. Moreover, we recognize that the collaborative processes and structures we examine, even our terms and concepts for them, are culturally shaped. But our findings are unambiguous regarding the intentions of the leaders of all three national CTCs in this study concerning relations with government agencies and businesses in their countries: They were adamant about the need for their coalitions, and NGOs in general, to initiate constructive, consistent and strategic engagement with the public and private sectors.

Each of the three Global South countries in which the CTCs we studied operate have unique, historically-formed orientations to violence and exploitation, to the skills that are necessary in their cultural context to develop and maintain cross-sector collaboration, and to the imaginable and actual costs and benefits of cross-sector interactions about the crime of human trafficking. However, our findings indicate similarities in the vulnerabilities of NGO-led CTCs in Global South countries, and the challenges they face in cross-sector interactions. This analysis also revealed differences between the aims for cross-sector interaction of the CTCs in this study, the membership and partnership structures they have developed in relation to public and private sector entities, and in their cross-sector engagement practices. The variations identified in this comparative analysis provide an excellent basis for future research at a larger scale, in which correspondences between differing aims, structures, and practices can be examined.

A global mapping of cross-sector coalitions, and examination of whether cross-sector collaborations to counter trafficking in Global South countries have effected demonstrable change in preventing, intervening in, and/or reducing human trafficking were beyond the scope of this study. Findings from this comparative analysis of three CTCs in different regions of the Global South reveal the variety of elements that are part of cross-sector collaborative processes in counter-trafficking efforts, but they cannot be generalized as representative of all Global South CTCs. Despite these limitations, these findings contribute to knowledge about an under-studied aspect of NGO collaborations, i.e. how partnerships involving a range of different types of members are built and strengthened (Gazley and Guo

2015), and break new ground in illuminating the cross-sector engagement practices of counter-trafficking coalitions in the Global South. Moreover, the absences of three plausible practices that were revealed via this indepth comparative analysis of three CTCs, discussed in the previous section, may have remained undetected in either a single case study or a larger-scale analysis focused on the presence of general patterns across many cases.

More research is needed to further explore similarities and differences in cross-sector collaboration to counter human trafficking on both sides of the equator, and across it. Another vein of studies should be conducted on whether, how, and to what extent NGOs and governments have differing aims in regard human trafficking, and how complicity in human trafficking on the part of private and/or public sector entities affects cross-sector collaboration with NGOs. Future research should also examine the trade-offs and outcomes of cross-sector collaboration against human trafficking in Global South countries. Recommended questions include: What are the actual costs as well as potential risks to NGOs, businesses, and government agencies? And what are the organizational outcomes that stem from engagement in cross-sector collaboration in Global South countries?

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