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SIMV07
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Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts in Hong Kong

The Role of Civil Society Actors as ‘Advocates for Change’



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Abstract

This study investigates how civil society actors contribute to anti-human trafficking efforts in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), China, hereinafter referred to as Hong Kong. Thereby, the direct and indirect roles of NGOs and migrant domestic workers community leaders in such efforts are identified. In addition, differences and similarities between the respective actors' roles are examined. Constructivist grounded theory is applied as the underlying methodological framework while the method of qualitative research interviewing and more specifically semi-structured interviews with Hong Kong-based NGOs as well as community leaders is employed. The grounded theory-inspired analysis is conducted in the light of empowerment and agency as 'sensitizing concepts'. It is argued that civil society actors and particularly community leaders are often the first point of contact for victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked. Thus, their invaluable role in victim identification, assistance and protection as part of overarching anti-human trafficking efforts is recognized. This is especially relevant in the context of Hong Kong as governmental support in such efforts is absent. Instead, civil society actors take precedence and become 'advocates for change'.

Keywords: Hong Kong, (anti-)human trafficking, female migrant domestic workers, civil society actors, agency, empowerment

Word Count: 19,948

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List of Abbreviations

FDW(s)	Foreign Domestic Worker(s)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KOBUMI	Komunitas Buruh Migran (Migrant Workers' Community)
MDW(s)	Migrant Domestic Worker(s)
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
NOPTI	National Organization of Professional Teachers Inc.
OFW(s)	Overseas Filipino Worker(s)
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SBMI	Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (Indonesian Migrant Workers Union)
STOP.	Stop Trafficking of People.
TIP	Trafficking in Person
TWC2	Transient Workers Count Too
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VoT	Victim of Trafficking
WOMED	World Medical Support Services

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Topic

A 23-year-old female Indonesian migrant domestic worker, tormented and abused by her Hong Kong employer for eight months, no days off, confined to her employer's apartment, severely beaten and exposed to death threats (Allmark and Wahyudi in Gomes, 2016, p. 30). This is the story of Erwiana Sulistyarningsih, a former domestic worker and, now, symbol of the exploitation of female migrant workers. Like her, many other women are suffering at the hands of employers, recruitment agents and moneylenders who perceive domestic workers as opportunities, exploitable for benefits. Even though Hong Kong protects legal domestic migrant workers with a standard employment contract, minimum wage laws and protection under the employment ordinance, many workers become victims of exploitation and trafficking (UN, 2004, p. 40). Due to the non-existence of specific anti-trafficking laws in Hong Kong and the presence of a 'culture of denial'¹, civil society actors take action and become actively involved.

1.2 Research Problem

In 2016², more than 24,000 detected victims of trafficking in persons were recorded in 97 countries (UNODC, 2018, p. 21) while women and girls comprised the majority, namely, 71 percent of the total amount (IOM, 2018, p. 308). However, global estimates of trafficking victims are limited and extremely challenging to collect due to the invisible and underreported nature of human trafficking (ibid.). Therefore, actual numbers of victims are predicted to be much higher than the

¹ During the interview process, the term 'culture of denial' was applied interchangeably, primarily by representatives of stakeholders that aspire to increase collaboration with the Hong Kong Government. It was argued that the government is in denial of the sheer existence of human trafficking in Hong Kong and, therefore, does not acknowledge the need for action (anti-human trafficking efforts).

² Latest available data.

number of identified victims (IOM, 2018, p. 308). Human trafficking is primarily associated with sexual exploitation, rather than other forms of exploitation, as this is the most detected form of trafficking globally (UNODC, 2018, p. 29). This is confirmed by the sheer percentages: 59 per cent of the detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, 34 per cent for forced labour and 7 per cent for other purposes (ibid.).

As human trafficking is an issue of global concern, global action is required in order to tackle the transnational organized crime. Internationally as well as nationally, organizations and specialized institutions, often in collaboration with local NGOs or government authorities, conduct research, organize prevention campaigns, offer training to various stakeholders, assist in legislation or national action plan development or provide direct protection and assistance to victims (Acronowitz, 2009, pp. 145-146). A vital role in combating all forms of human trafficking is ascribed to civil society in particular, while its role is especially critical in crisis situations (OSCE, 2018, p. 11). Civil society representatives are often the first point of contact for human trafficking victims and, thus, invaluable to an overall anti-trafficking response. Civil society's inclusion into such efforts is reflected in the clusters of the four P's (prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership) (ibid., p. 17).

It is interesting to investigate the roles of civil society actors in anti-human trafficking efforts to shed light on strengths, weaknesses and limitations of their interventions while acknowledging potential tensions between civil society actors but also civil society actors and respective governmental bodies. For the purpose of this thesis, the region of Southeast Asia and more specifically trafficking of migrant domestic workers to and from Hong Kong has been chosen as the focal point for the analysis of civil society actors' roles in anti-trafficking efforts. Due to the lack of governmental support in such efforts, it is especially relevant to examine how civil society actors take precedence and become 'advocates for change'.

1.3 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the research is to investigate how civil society actors can contribute to anti-human trafficking efforts in Hong Kong as well as to identify potential differences and similarities between NGOs' and community leaders' respective roles. As part thereof, strengths and weaknesses as well as limitations of civil society actors' overarching roles are discussed. It is important to examine how civil society actors can contribute to anti-trafficking efforts as civil society plays a vital role in the fight against human trafficking, particularly within the provision of direct support to the victims. This study is guided by the following research questions;

- What roles can be identified for civil society actors in anti-human trafficking efforts in Hong Kong?
- How can migrant domestic workers community leaders contribute to anti-human trafficking efforts?
- What are the differences and similarities between NGOs' and community leaders' roles in anti-human trafficking efforts?

All three research questions are answered in the light of empowerment and agency as 'sensitizing concepts'³. The second question is part of my hypothesis that community leaders are often the first point of contact and, thereby, acquire an essential role within initial victim identification and assistance. One can argue that community leaders acquire the role of a mediator and, hence, facilitate correspondence between migrant domestic workers and relevant stakeholders such as frontline organizations. The third question allows for a comparison between NGOs' and community leader's roles in anti-human trafficking efforts, acknowledging potential tensions.

³ Sensitizing concepts are defined in dialogue with the analysis of the empirical material (Waraanperä, 2018, p. 16) while they "offer ways of seeing, organizing and understanding experience [...] they provide starting points for building analysis" (Bowen in Waaranperä, 2018, p. 31).

1.4 Terminology

Prior to commencing, it is essential to determine which terminology is applied. Firstly, the concept of ‘civil society’ is elaborated upon while its overarching complexity and diversity are acknowledged. Secondly, it is defined what the term ‘civil society actors’ entails, especially with regard to civil society activism in the context of Hong Kong. Lastly, a short definition of the term ‘human trafficking’ is provided.

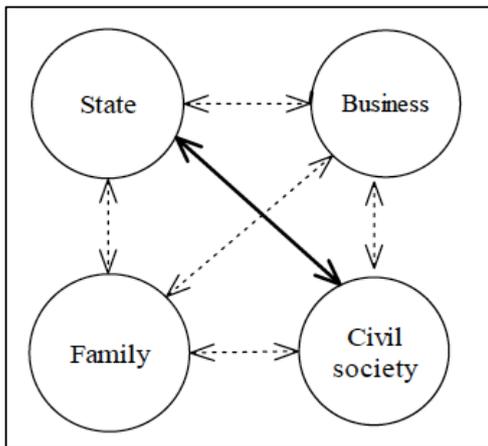
1.4.1 Civil Society

‘Civil society’ is a complex concept. Even though the term is widely used, a commonly-agreed definition is absent (Edwards, 2014). In Scholte’s (2002, p. 283) understanding of the concept of civil society, it is defined as “a political space where voluntary associations deliberately seek to shape the rules that govern one or the other aspect of social life”. Here, ‘rules’ refer to “specific policies, more general norms, and deeper social structures” (ibid.). In this thesis, it is argued that civil society actors in Hong Kong advocate for systemic change – the implementation of specific anti-trafficking laws. Civil society is believed to exist whenever and wherever voluntary associations aim to alter certain governing rules of society (ibid., p. 284). Such advocacy campaigns are differentiated between conformist, reformist and transformist strategies (ibid.). While conformist strategies “seek to uphold and reinforce existing norms”, reformist strategies, as a response to identified weaknesses, strive to implement change but continue to maintain underlying social structures (ibid.). Transformist strategies “aim for comprehensive change of the social order (whether in a progressive or a reactionary fashion)” (ibid.). In the context of Hong Kong, civil society actors tend to operate in the light of reformist and transformist strategies as they not solely monitor and assess the vulnerability of migrants but also report such findings to the government and, further, advocate for change.

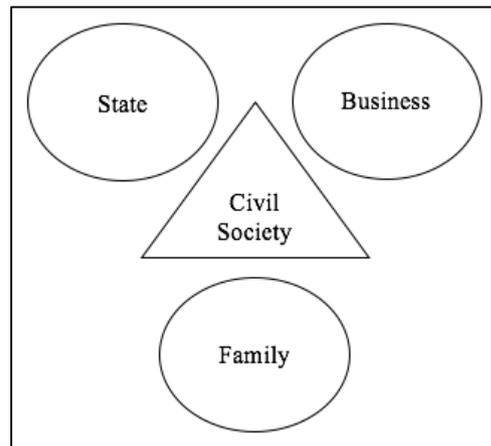
Edwards (2014, p. 74) describes civil society as “the land of difference, the place where we find meaning in our lives as people of different faiths, interests, perspectives and agendas”. Accordingly, despite their differences, civil society actors cooperate in order to accomplish common goals. Additionally, “civil society plays a role in both legitimizing government intervention and imposing its own informal settlements through voluntary codes of conduct and other self-organizing principles” (ibid.). This confirms the aforementioned argument about advocacy campaigns and more specifically reformist as well as transformist strategies. Subsequently, civil society not solely legitimizes extant government intervention but also encourages further intervention and particularly change.

Paffenholz and Spurk (2006, p. 2) differentiate between civil society as a sector and civil society as an intermediate sphere. The former perceives civil society’s position in relation to other sectors of society, namely state, business and family (ibid.). Accordingly, civil society is considered as a sector on its own (ibid.). In the latter, civil society is not a sector per se but rather assumes the space between respective sectors (ibid.). Both approaches are illustrated as follows:

Civil Society as Sector



Civil Society as Intermediate Sphere



In this thesis, it is argued that civil society actors in Hong Kong assume the role of a mediator and, thus, navigate between private and public sectors. Therefore, civil society is perceived as an intermediate sphere, independent from the state, business

and family, yet, in close collaboration with the state and the political sphere (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006, p. 3). This is especially evident in advocacy-related efforts, as described above, but also awareness-raising and capacity-building. Even though civil society interacts with respective sectors, “it does not replace these sectors and its political actors, but rather aims to improve their effectiveness and responsiveness” (ibid.).

1.4.2 Civil Society Actors

According to Edwards (2014, p. 20), civil society comprises “NGOs of different kinds, labour unions, political parties, churches and other religious groups, professional and business associations, community and self-help groups, social movements and the independent media”. Such actors “may be involved in complex [...] relationships with other types of actors, and this may blur the distinctions between civil society actors, states and private market actors” (Armstrong and Gilson, 2011, p. 10). Here, the term ‘civil society actors’ is applied interchangeably to describe Hong Kong-based NGOs, frontline and social services organizations but also migrant domestic workers community leaders and migrant-led organizations they are affiliated with. At this point, it is valuable to highlight that community leaders are migrant domestic workers who have either self-identified themselves as leaders or who have been identified as such by their respective community. Another term ascribed to community leaders is ambassadors. Community leaders distinguish themselves through expertise, reputation, respect and trustworthiness. For the purpose of this thesis, community leaders from the Philippines and Indonesia have been interviewed while the roles of NGOs and community leaders are of interest, rather than local citizens or other civil society actors.

1.4.3 Human Trafficking

The term ‘human trafficking’ is applied as an umbrella term due to the fact that human trafficking can be very broad and less visible than predicted. There are much

more subtle forms of trafficking while several indicators and dimensions exist. For the purpose of this thesis, the following definition of human trafficking is applied; according to Article 3(a) of the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,

““Trafficking in Persons” shall mean 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. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (UN Protocol, Article 3 (a)).

1.5 Thesis Outline

The following section, the literature review, examines the previous literature regarding the roles of civil society actors in anti-trafficking efforts by means of regional but also Hong Kong-based civil society activism. Thereafter, a description of the research design, methodology, data collection method, ethical considerations but also limitations follows. Next, Hong Kong as a destination country for migrant domestic workers and, thus, migratory patterns are examined while the current context and emerging trends in terms of supply and demand are discussed. This background information provides the context for the subsequent analysis and discussion of the empirical data in which empowerment and agency are incorporated as sensitizing concepts. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes the thesis and provides suggestions for further research.

2 Literature Review

While extensive research about sex trafficking exists, a gap in research about human trafficking and other forms of exploitation of foreign domestic workers is prevalent. Global estimates of victims of trafficking are limited and extremely challenging to collect due to the invisible and underreported nature of human trafficking (IOM, 2018, p. 308). Instead, it is easier to measure and monitor victim identification and assistance. To exemplify, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has collected such data, over a period of 10 years (ibid.) (see Appendix 1). The graph shows various sectors of exploitation such as fishing, mining and construction while domestic work is not included within these global figures. This research fills this lacuna by focusing on the sector of domestic work and more specifically female migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Hong Kong. Thereby, light is shed on the informality of the sector but also the lack of support for this particular category of migrants. The stance that civil society actors take precedence, if governments fail to provide for migrant workers, is recognized and, further, examined throughout the existing literature. The focus of this literature review is twofold: regional and local. Regional refers to the wider region of Southeast Asia while local comprises Hong Kong.

Concerning civil society activism in support of migrant workers in Southeast Asia, Piper (2006), Lyons (2007), Yeoh and Annadhurai (2008), Pangsapa (2009) as well as Rousseau (2018) focus on the situation of migrant workers in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia but also the role of civil society in comparison to that of the state. Piper (2006), by means of interviews with senior representatives of relevant NGOs involved in migrant worker issues, explores differences and similarities across such organizations in Malaysia and Singapore. The extent to which NGOs engage with migrant worker issues and what form this engagement takes differs vastly between the two countries of comparison (Piper, 2006, p. 361). While Singapore has clear and consistent migration policies, “the Malaysian government is prone to ad hoc changes and given to arrests and deportations” (ibid., p. 361). In both countries, migrant workers face employment-

related, welfare, occupational health and safety issues (Piper, 2006, p. 362). These issues arise as a consequence of “inconsistent or non-existent migration policies, employers’ illegal practices and contract violations” (ibid., p. 364).

In order to improve the situation of migrant workers, the state, NGOs and/or workers themselves can advocate for change. The latter in particular is affected by state form and individuals’ agency. In Singapore, a low level of labour activism is evident as legal constraints are imposed on civil society actors (Piper, 2006, p. 365). This confirms the notion that authoritarian regimes shape the landscape of migrant labour activism (Piper, 2006). Consequently, the role and contributions of civil society actors are influenced by the political space allocated to them. If governments of destination countries impose legal and political barriers to self-organizing, “it is sometimes highly precarious for migrants to set up their own organizations” (ibid., p. 370). The fact that “Singapore and Malaysia are characterized by strict immigration policies, rigid labour contract systems, low degrees of state tolerance for civil activism and few entitlements for unskilled migrants” poses additional obstacles to migrant worker activism (ibid., p. 373). Nevertheless, such activism has the potential to not solely generate collective action but also a collective goal – to fight for workers’ dignity and rights (ibid.).

While Piper (2006) focuses on the overarching category of migrant workers in Singapore and Malaysia, Lyons (2007) centers her article around foreign domestic workers in Singapore. Similar to Piper’s account, Lyons (2007, p. 106) argues that sending and receiving states’ responses to issues related to labour exploitation of MDWs have been slow. In the absence of governmental support, NGOs step in “to campaign for the women’s right to better working conditions” (ibid.). The lack of migrant worker organizations in Singapore “can be explained by the presence of a strong, authoritarian state and a relatively weak NGO sector” (ibid., p. 108). Due to legal constraints imposed by the respective government, the majority of NGOs adopt a cautious approach in their roles and contributions (ibid.). One such example is the NGO Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) with the aim “to discuss the issue of attitudes toward and treatment of domestic workers in Singapore” (ibid., p. 113).

TWC2 focusses on MDWs and, further, issues that arise in the workplace, rather than factors that drive emigration (Lyons, 2007). The government's concern that NGOs may be "hijacked" by outsiders is reflected in their decision to restrict foreign membership (ibid., p. 114). It has become evident that Southeast Asian countries favor temporary migration in order to account for deficits in the local work force. Accordingly, MDWs are promoted as a solution to Singapore's fertility crisis (ibid., p. 116). However, temporary migration not solely restricts migrants' access to benefits and rights but also to the acquisition of citizenship and, further, ability to become advocates for change. The author concludes that the character and landscape of migrant labour activism is shaped by authoritarian regimes as well as citizenship and nationality (ibid., p. 118).

Similar to Lyons (2007), Yeoh and Annadhurai (2008, p. 551) explore civil society actors' roles in the provision of a 'transformative' space for MDWs in Singapore. Their study is guided by empirical data in the form of a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews (ibid.). Thereby, direct roles of service- and advocacy-oriented groups in the creation of spaces with transformative potential are identified and compared (ibid.). These groups continue to predominate the civil society landscape in Singapore (ibid., p. 556). In accordance with the aforementioned articles, the role of the state in ascertaining autonomy to civil society actors is acknowledged (ibid.). Specifically, service-oriented groups provide MDWs with opportunities "to forge new social relations with fellow workers and hence ameliorate the sense of isolation that many of these women face when they first arrive in Singapore" (ibid., p. 557). Thus, empowering spaces are facilitated by means of participation in such activities (ibid., p. 564).

While service-oriented groups interact primarily with communities of MDWs, advocacy-oriented groups collaborate closely with governmental bodies. Accordingly, "independent viewpoints and assessments that potentially compete with the given policy values and programs of government and its agencies" are embodied (Yeoh and Annadhurai, 2008, p. 560). The authors confirm the notion that civil society actors have the potential to advocate for change as they not solely support MDWs in crisis situations but also pressure the state for policy changes

(Yeoh and Annadhurai, 2008, p. 562). Especially the need for systemic change generates tensions in the relationship between civil society actors and the state (ibid., p. 567). Subsequently, in order to protect the rights of MDWs, the mindset of the people, local citizens who hire MDWs, needs to be changed (ibid.). This proves to be difficult as the authoritarian regime of Singapore imposes legal constraints on civil society actors and, thereby, hinders their roles in and contributions to the fight for MDWs' rights and dignified treatment.

Pangsapa (2009) and Rousseau (2018) focus on migrant workers in Thailand and more specifically garment and domestic workers as well as fishermen. Even though Rousseau (2018) does not focus on female migrant workers nor the domestic work sector, relevant parallels can be drawn from civil society activism and its role in the empowerment of migrant workers. In her article, Pangsapa (2009, p. 124) considers the situation of garment and domestic workers in Thailand and examines how civil society actors assist and protect migrant workers. She emphasizes the inherent potential of NGOs to improve the situation of migrant workers in Thailand (ibid.). Thereby, the following question arises; should advocacy groups act in lieu of the state rather than alongside the state, considering their "civic duty as enforcer and monitor of migrant workers' problems" (ibid.)? This further problematizes the aforementioned arguments about the role of the state in such assistance and protection efforts and its overarching control over civil society actors.

Similar to Singapore and Malaysia, Thailand favors temporary, rather than permanent migration of migrant workers. Accordingly, citizenship status is not granted while highly restrictive policies are imposed on migrant workers (Pangsapa, 2009, p. 125). It is argued that the government prioritizes "immigration policies that channel migrants into the workforce", instead of issues faced by migrant workers (ibid.). Especially the domestic work sector is characterized by informality, confinement and isolation which poses an obstacle to civil society intervention (ibid., p. 132). Due to the absence of citizenship, certain benefits and rights, migrant workers' ability to self-organize is limited. Therefore, civil society actors take precedence and represent "the voice of migrants and do national

advocacy on their behalf” (Pangsapa, 2009, p. 139). This way, civil society facilitates correspondence between migrant workers and the state. While civil society’s vital role as enforcers and monitors is acknowledged, their ability to assist and protect workers is often limited – if respective organizations are not officially recognized in Thailand (ibid., p. 140).

Contrary to Piper (2006), Lyons (2007), Yeoh and Annadthurai (2008) as well as Pangsapa (2009), Rousseau (2018) focusses on recovery and reintegration of trafficking victims. In the light of post-trafficking service provision, the author examines “unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) and volunteer social networks, which recognize victim empowerment not just as a means towards better law enforcement, but as an end in itself” (Rousseau, 2008, p. 88). For the purpose of the study, challenges trafficked Thai fishermen face after their rescue from Indonesia are examined (ibid., p. 89). The author criticizes that “Thailand’s post-trafficking aftercare system undermines trafficked fishermen’s reintegration prospects” as victims are not compensated for losses and damages (ibid.). Instead, civil society, by means of a victim-centred approach, is in a better position to develop innovative integration models (ibid.). Such models empower victims from the bottom-up (ibid.). Particularly economic empowerment is vital to reintegration as it fosters autonomy and reduces pressure to seek employment upon return as well as the risk of re-trafficking (ibid., p. 91).

The author points out that Thailand’s approach to human trafficking is that of criminal justice (Rousseau, 2008, p. 94). Consequently, the prosecution of perpetrators and the control of the crime, instead of the support of victims’ rights are favored (ibid.). Contrary to the state, civil society actors’ priority is not prosecution but provision of “grassroots interventions that empower” and facilitate long-term reintegration (ibid.). Thus, civil society applies a victim-centred approach while the state focusses on the overarching crime rather than individual suffering. Besides financial empowerment, social empowerment is central to recovery and reintegration processes. Accordingly, the transition “from passive victims to partners in their own reintegration” facilitates processes of empowerment (ibid., p. 95). This highlights the potential of self-help and, further, collective

action. Through social empowerment via bottom-up or grassroots interventions, returned fishermen's visibility to the public is increased while they are provided with a voice to speak up for themselves (Rousseau, 2008, p. 95). This way, knowledge transcends from individual to collective – enhancing recovery and reintegration processes by means of self-help (ibid.).

After reviewing the existing literature about civil society activism in support of migrant workers in the wider region of Southeast Asia, the following paragraphs focus on Hong Kong. In their articles, Sim (2003), Briones (2008), Sim (2009) and Lim (2016) address the situation of Filipina and Indonesian MDWs in Hong Kong and the potential of civil society activism and more specifically domestic workers organizing. Compared to other Southeast Asian countries, the civil society landscape in Hong Kong is characterized by 'freedom of association' and 'freedom to form political organizations' (Piper, 2006, p. 370). In order to identify NGOs that deal with migrant worker-related issues in Hong Kong, Sim (2003, p. 480) employs a typology depicted by David Korten (1990). The author argues that NGO activism emerged as a result of "structural inequality in power between foreign domestic workers, their employers and Hong Kong society" (ibid., p. 483). Considering the fact that "NGOs remain the primary focus of welfare provision in Hong Kong", they assume "a role that neither government nor business are suited for" (ibid., p. 484).

Subsequently, civil society actors are at the forefront of social change, to some extent, ascertaining control over the government, rather than vice versa (Sim, 2003, p. 487). Korten (1990) differentiates between four generations of strategies, corresponding to the NGOs that adopted them (ibid., p. 488). For an analysis of such strategies deployed by NGOs in Hong Kong, the author focuses on numerous NGOs that deal with migrant worker-related issues (ibid., p. 490). To exemplify, none of the NGOs engage in "Korten's third-generation strategies of working with local communities of sending states" (ibid., p. 493). This can be explained by NGOs' perception of such strategies as part of sending instead of receiving states' mandates (ibid.). Nonetheless, NGO intervention in Hong Kong encourages migrants "to lead and represent themselves, reinforcing arguments of workers as

agents rather than as victims of change” (Sim, 2003, p. 501). This confirms the aforementioned argument about self-help and collective action as empowerment generates advocates for change.

Drawing on first-hand experiences of Filipina domestic workers in Paris and Hong Kong, Briones (2008, p. 49) applies Nussbaum’s ‘Capabilities Approach’ to question the efficacy of the current anti-trafficking discourse. In this approach, concepts of victimization, agency and rights are examined (ibid.). In order to emphasize overseas Filipino workers’ (OFWs) agency, a counter-approach that fights for their rights, not as victims but as workers, is produced (ibid.). This way, OFWs are perceived “as women with voice and agency, rather than as passive victims” while their rights are “heard and respected, rather than repressed, by the receiving state” (ibid., p. 51). For the purpose of the study, Paris and Hong Kong were chosen as research sites: the former as a site for undocumented migrant work and the latter for documented (ibid., p. 53). To apprehend the issues that arise through constraints to OFWs’ agency, the sample in each city was divided in the following manner: one-third of the participants had experienced enslavement, another third oppression and/or abuse and the last third satisfactory working and living conditions (ibid.).

By means of Nussbaum’s ‘Capabilities Approach’, Briones (2008, p. 63) linked issues of human rights with OFWs’ agency. Subsequently, OFWs’ capability to ensure ongoing access to both work and rights was focused upon, instead of the lack of choices, rights and agency (ibid., p. 65). This not solely emphasizes self-help and -organizing but also the altruistic nature of domestic work. Correspondingly, OFWs’ often remain in exploitative situations due to debt bondage and/or financial obligations to their families (Briones, 2008). Further, OFWs’ standard of living can be perceived as precarious and “dependent not only on their maintained presence in the host locale, but also on their capability to function or practice their agency within it” (ibid., p. 65). The author concludes that OFWs’ “agency requires capability to successfully mediate victimization; agency in itself is insufficient” (ibid.).

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Hong Kong by means of interviews as well as participant-observation research with Indonesian female MDWs and their respective leaders, Sim (2009) examines how these women organize resistance to state-led practices in labour export. Thereby, the role of the state and the private sector in controlling and monitoring temporary labour migration is studied (Sim, 2009, p. 47). For Indonesia as a sending country, the inclusion of the private sector and more specifically private recruitment agencies “is a cost-effective and practical aspect of extending the governments’ capacities in managing and rationalizing processes” to facilitate temporary labour migration and, thus, generate national development (ibid., p. 49). Yet, policies that are supposed to protect MDWs such as the requirement “to emigrate through a system of recruiters and agents” harm them as agency-imposed debt bondage increases individuals’ vulnerabilities (ibid., p. 50). Despite marginality, MDWs develop social resources in organizing and resisting such state-led restrictions on their autonomy (ibid., p. 51).

These strong social networks affirm the potential of self-help and, further, collective action. In Hong Kong, the public space provides a forum for collective resistance that, due to state-led restrictions, was inaccessible to Indonesian female MDWs prior to emigration (Sim, 2009, p. 62). Drawing on first-hand experiences, the author points out that these women feel that laws in Hong Kong provide better protection mechanisms for them, compared to those of their own government (ibid., p. 61). Further, “the state is perceived as the source of obstacles to their well-being and as privileging private sector interests above migrant workers’ interests” (ibid., p. 71). As a result of restrictive policies that fail to protect them, Indonesian migrants question the value of citizenship “that subjects them to multiple obligations, but seemingly without attendant citizenship rights” (ibid.).

In her article, Lim (2016) extends Sim’s (2003) analysis with its focus on transnational organization of both local and migrant domestic workers’ unions in Hong Kong. Such activism sheds light on points of connection and distance among categories of domestic workers “as they are simultaneously privileged and marginalized along the hierarchies of class, ethnicity and nationality” (Lim, 2016, p. 71). Drawing on feminist and social movement scholarship, identity

constructions are apprehended as “fundamental to grievance interpretation in all forms of collective action” (Lim, 2016, pp. 72-73). The author argues that domestic workers are compelled to organize themselves due to “the feeling of isolation in their jobs, as well as the quest for affirmation and solidarity” (ibid., p. 79). These social movements are recognized and legitimized by global institutions which allows for “claims on the basis of international conventions and to redefine notions of nationality, citizenship and membership” (ibid., p. 80). Correspondingly, MDWs are no longer perceived as non-citizens without rights but rather as “an object of law and a site for rights regardless of whether a citizen or alien, a man or woman” (ibid.).

To summarize, civil society activism is vital to the overarching recognition of MDWs’ rights and dignified treatment, especially if states fail to do so. The articles problematize the relationship between states and civil society actors while especially respective roles and contributions become central. Civil society was described as “enforcer and monitor of migrant workers’ problems” (Pangsapa, 2009, p. 124), yet, influenced by the political space allocated to them. Hence, the state not solely controls and monitors temporary labour migration but also civil society actors. In other words, the state imposes obstacles to activism by means of restrictions on autonomy and agency. In contrast to other Southeast Asian countries, Hong Kong fares as an exceptional and particularly well documented example for self-organizing and, further, the potential of collective action (Piper, 2006, p. 370).

Lastly, it is essential to consider the gaps in the literature and emphasize how this research contributes to the field. Besides Sim (2009), the extant research does not address the contributions of community leaders to anti-human trafficking efforts and migrant worker activism. Therefore, it is valuable to shed light on the overarching roles of community leaders in anti-trafficking efforts in Hong Kong. Additionally, as the majority of the articles focus on the regional context of Southeast Asia and the general category of migrant workers, rather than the local context of Hong Kong, this research provides an in-depth analysis of one particular phenomenon – human trafficking of female MDWs. Subsequently, instead of the sending state, the receiving state is focused upon. This allows for an examination

of MDWs situation in the actual workplace and, further, how civil society actors can identify, assist and protect victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked, rather than the factors that generated emigration. Nonetheless, various parallels can be drawn from the extant research. Especially the research of Yeoh and Annadhurai (2008) about the roles of civil society actors is valuable to this study as similarities can be identified in the respective empirical data.

3 Method

For the purpose of this investigation, a qualitative research method is applied which is elaborated upon in the subsequent sections of research design, methodology, data collection methods, sampling method, interview process and framework, coding in grounded theory, ethical considerations, reliability and validity and lastly limitations.

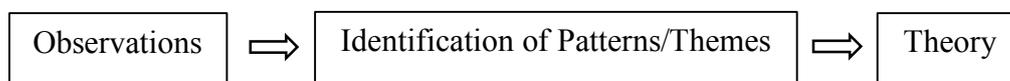
3.1 Research Design

In this study, it is examined how civil society actors can contribute to anti-human trafficking efforts in Hong Kong. Thereby, direct as well as indirect roles are identified. Moreover, differences and similarities between the respective participant groups of NGOs and community leaders are discussed, with regard to their roles in anti-trafficking efforts. The research is carried out by employing a qualitative research design, more specifically, semi-structured interviews. The focal point of the investigation is Hong Kong and, further, human trafficking and other forms of exploitation of migrant domestic workers. In order to apprehend how victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked can be identified and assisted by civil society actors, the method of qualitative research interviewing is applied as the main research method. This allows for an in-depth understanding of civil society actors' roles in anti-trafficking efforts. Due to the fact that the research is focused on a single country as well as a single dimension of trafficking, it is possible to attain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The empirical data is analyzed through a grounded theory-inspired analysis while theory is derived from empirical data, as explained below.

3.2 Methodology

Due to the fact that empirical data has been collected prior to the establishment of a theoretical framework, an 'inductive strategy' is applied. Thereby, "instead of

starting from theories and testing them, “sensitizing concepts” are required for approaching social contexts to be studied” while these concepts are influenced by previous theoretical knowledge (Flick, 2006, p. 12). Subsequently, the development of theories is derived from empirical studies (ibid.). In the context of educational research, inductive strategy is defined as a ““bottom-up” approach to knowing in which the researcher uses particular observations to build an abstraction or to describe a picture of the phenomenon that is being studied” (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle, 2006, p. 5). This approach can be illustrated as follows:



Certain patterns or themes are identified within empirical data while a generalization from the analysis of those themes is developed (ibid.). Due to the inductive nature of this research, grounded theory is applied as the overarching research methodology. More specifically, constructivist grounded theory which “places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Grounded theory methods “consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (ibid., p. 2). Subsequently, theories are constructed through methodical gathering and analysis of data.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

For the purpose of this study, data was not solely collected through primary but also secondary sources. Primary sources include qualitative interviews while secondary sources comprise literature, articles and statistical sources. In the following paragraphs, an overview of both methods is provided while especially the method of interviewing is reflected upon.

3.3.1 Primary Sources

Primary data was collected in form of semi-structured interviews with representatives of stakeholders involved in initial victim identification and assistance as part of anti-human trafficking efforts. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with female migrant domestic workers community leaders who encounter victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked were conducted. By means of qualitative interviews with such diverse groups of participants, research reliability and validity were increased (see 3.8 Reliability and Validity). It was especially relevant to include community leaders as they not solely provided insight into their roles per se but also those of MDWs. Thereby, personal as well as collective stories and experiences were shared. In order to accomplish the objective of this research, to investigate how civil society actors can contribute to anti-trafficking efforts in Hong Kong, qualitative research interviewing was the most suitable method as it allowed for in-depth descriptions and unique understandings of civil society actors' roles.

Instead of focus group discussions, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. This way, individual, rather than collective accounts of events became the focal point. Through open-ended questions, such as how and why, participants were provided with the opportunity to describe their accounts and experiences in their own words, irrespective of any group dynamics or other external influences. According to Kvale (1996, p. 124), the semi-structured interview “has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions” while “there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects”. To exemplify, participants' perceptions towards the vulnerability of MDWs (see 3.5 Interview Process and Framework) might differ to a great extent which, thus, exerts influence on interview questions and overarching research implications as well as outcomes.

Reflecting upon qualitative data collection and semi-structured interviews in particular, participants can provide historical information while the researcher controls the line of questioning (Creswell, 2014, p. 191). Semi-structured

interviews are distinguished by flexibility of the overarching interview process but also adaptability of the actual interview questions (Bryman, 2016, p. 468). This interview format gives interviewees time to tell their stories (ibid.). Subsequently, the interviewees were not solely provided with the time they require to open-up and trust but also a voice – a platform to share, discuss but also criticize, within a safe environment.

Besides these advantages, certain limitations of interviews can be observed: information is provided in a designated place rather than the natural field setting, the researcher's presence can potentially bias responses and not all interviewees are equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell, 2014, p. 191). The latter was especially true for community leaders as they not solely shared their personal but also fellow MDWs' experiences related to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. As they provided various examples of trafficking cases that they had handled, their answers were rather lengthy while certain questions became irrelevant. Hence, compared to NGOs, community leaders were more articulate, yet, required higher levels of guidance when their narratives were longer and more personal than initially anticipated. Overall, the method of qualitative research interviewing, particularly data collection, transcription, analysis and interpretation, is time-consuming as subjective long answers need to be processed and filtered often, according to relevance. Nonetheless, the method lends itself to depth and detail, precisely in accordance with the aforementioned research objective. Accordingly, qualitative research and more specifically semi-structured interviews provide participants with something quantitative research cannot: the ability to use their own language and to describe their experiences in detail, with stories and examples (Leavy, 2017, p. 19).

3.3.2 Secondary Sources

Data was also collected through secondary sources such as literature, articles and statistical sources. Data on the overarching topic of human trafficking and global estimates of its prevalence were obtained through annual publications of various

(inter-)governmental organizations, such as UNODC's 'Global Report on Trafficking in Persons'. In the context of Hong Kong, statistical sources were accessed by means of the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department.

3.4 Sampling Method

As recruitment routinely happens on an ad-hoc and chance basis, the initially anticipated sample size can, in praxis, vary to a great extent (Rapley in Seale et al., 2004, p. 17). According to Edwards and Holland (2013, p. 65), "qualitative interviewers should continue sampling and identifying cases until their interviewees are not telling them anything that they have not heard before". Practical issues such as accessibility and availability of the interviewees as well as time constraints determined the sample size while the latter in particular affected the response rate. As the overarching target group were civil society actors, time posed the biggest obstacle. Especially NGOs either declined to be interviewed, due to limited time or availability of staff members, or accepted to be interviewed, on condition that the interview time would be restricted to a certain number of minutes. Due to these restrictions, the recruitment process of interviewees was rather difficult and time-consuming. Nonetheless, the network and relationships I developed with Hong Kong-based civil society actors, through my internship at IOM but also the connections and support of my supervisor and colleagues, were invaluable to the recruitment and data collection process (see 3.7 Ethical Considerations).

In order to determine the sample size, three sampling methods, namely purposive, homogeneous and snowball were applied. In purposive sampling, sample units are selected according to particular features or characteristics (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 113). Thereby, detailed exploration and understanding of central themes and questions is enabled (Bryman in Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 113). For the purpose of this study, sample units were selected based on the following criteria: level of expertise, influence, availability and willingness to participate. This sample consists of persons that possess key inside information about civil society actors in

Hong Kong as well as expert knowledge about anti-trafficking efforts but also victim identification and assistance. Due to the aforementioned determinants, a total of 14 interviewees has been identified (see Appendix 2). The proportionally small number of community leaders can be explained by availability and time constraints. At a later stage (see 5.1 Results and Findings), civil society actors are differentiated according to direct and indirect roles. These distinctions are not in accordance with the initial selection criteria. Instead, they represent the characteristics of the majority of civil society actors in Hong Kong: direct contributions to anti-human trafficking efforts.

Additionally, by means of homogeneous sampling, “a detailed picture of a particular phenomenon in the sample due to similarity of cases or people” is provided (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 114). To contextualize, sample units have been chosen as they share a common goal – to identify and assist victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked. Besides purposive and homogeneous sampling, the majority of interviewees was recruited through snowball sampling. Accordingly, it refers to a process in which each participant engenders the selection of another participant (Leavy, 2017, p. 149). Thereby, a small group of people relevant to the research questions is sampled while these sampled participants propose other participants who possess equally relevant experiences or characteristics (Bryman, 2016, p. 415). After each interview, the respective participants were asked whether they could recommend other people who might be interested in being interviewed. This was especially significant if participants were well connected with members in the larger group.

3.5 Interview Process and Framework

Prior to commencing with the actual interviews, certain practicalities involved in conducting qualitative interviews needed to be considered. First and foremost, interview guides for the respective participant groups as well as consent forms were drafted. During the overarching data collection process, the interview guides continued to be slightly changed prior and post interviews as certain questions

needed to be edited, according to my personal evaluation but also the interviewees' response 'quality'. To exemplify, the question related to the vulnerability of MDWs (see Appendices 3 and 4) was either reformulated or disregarded entirely, depending on the development of the interview. If interviewees initially rejected the term victim and vulnerability, the question was not posed. Rapley (in Seale et al., 2004, p. 18) argues that the questions always shift in relation to various influences, particularly to the specific person. Subsequently, the interview process for stakeholders differed from that for community leaders as the latter required a higher degree of adaptability and sensitivity.

Over a period of three months, from October to December 2018, 14 semi-structured interviews with representatives of eight NGOs and one church as well as five community leaders were conducted in Hong Kong. The primary interview language was English while certain interviews required the presence of a translator. This role was ascribed to IOM staff members who speak Bahasa and Tagalog as the interviewed community leaders are of Indonesian and Filipino decent. The majority of the interviews took place in office locations, more specifically, meeting rooms, in order to provide calm and quiet environments without any disturbances. The community leaders requested to be interviewed outside, in various different parks across Hong Kong, as this is where they gather on Sundays, their only day off during the week. 13 interviews were face-to-face while only one interview was conducted via telephone due to the interviewee's time constraints. Each interview took on average one hour.

All interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder while extensive notes were taken. This allows the interviewer to "concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview" (Kvale, 1996, p. 160). Hence, a decontextualized version of the interview is provided (ibid.). However, an audio record fails to include the visual aspects of the situation: the setting, facial and bodily expressions of the participants (ibid., pp. 160-161). For the purpose of this thesis, visual aspects were not considered in the analysis. Instead, participants' verbal narratives and linguistic aspects are of value. Lastly, each interview was transcribed. This transition "from an oral to a written mode structures the interview conversations in

a form amenable for closer analysis” (Kvale, 1996, p. 168). By means of structuring the material into texts, an overview is facilitated that, in itself, is a beginning analysis (ibid., pp. 168-169).

In the light of the analysis of interviews, Seale (1998) identifies two major traditions: interview data as a resource and interview data as a topic (Rapley in Seale et al., 2004, p. 17). For the purpose of this research, empirical data is examined from an ‘interview-data-as-resource’ approach in which “the interview data collected is seen as (more or less) reflecting the interviewees’ reality outside the interview” (ibid.). This is evident in the fact that both groups of participants shared first-hand experiences that they encounter within their daily work.

3.6 Coding in Grounded Theory

In order to apprehend how a grounded theory-inspired analysis is facilitated, it is essential to consider the process of coding. It shapes an analytical frame from which the analysis is built by means of theoretical integration (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). In Charmaz’ approach, coding can be understood as a progression through the following series of stages: initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding (Bryman, 2016, p. 573). In an initial review of transcripts and/or field notes, through comparing data, participants’ accounts and experiences are identified while analytical and theoretical possibilities are explored (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47). Subsequently, initial coding facilitates the transition to later decisions about defining core conceptual categories (ibid.). As part of initial coding, *in vivo* codes “preserve participants’ meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself” (ibid., p. 55). Thereby, language becomes central while participants’ speech and meanings are considered (ibid.). After initial coding, focused coding is the second major phase in coding. In this phase, “codes are more directed, selective, and conceptual than word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-by-incident coding” (ibid., p. 57). Hence, empirical data is examined by means of the most significant and/or frequent codes that have been identified through initial coding (ibid.).

Table 1 Example of Initial Coding

<p>Differences between nationalities: Indonesian women more vulnerable compared to other nationalities</p> <p>Implications for their well-being?</p> <p>Lack of empowerment: repeatedly disempowered, difficult to empower these women – roles of civil society actors?</p> <p>Inability to speak up – how to provide these women with a voice?</p> <p>Cultural differences affect individuals' ability to speak up – lack of agency</p>	<p>[...] working with all nationalities is important but with Indonesian women it's often the empowerment, they've almost been disempowered because at trainings and other venues, they've been told to be obedient so even the idea of speaking up about something that's wrong is actually very hard so even with our speak-up workshops we look at confidence and communication, in a way, it's always undoing all of that, it's still doing it in a cultural appropriative way but it's still like so engrained in them [...]</p>
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Table 2 Example of Focused Coding

<p>Existing laws and regulations harm rather than protect</p> <p>Complexity of the juridical system fuels victims' vulnerability</p> <p>Absence of Anti-Trafficking Law</p> <p>No prosecution, recognition of victims discourages victims to come forward</p>	<p>[...] if you want to pursue all the aspects of trafficking, all the elements of the crime, you would have to go through different courts, you already have to undergo multiple, multiple statements in court and out of court and under police and at the Immigration office and at the Labour Tribunal [...] there is a crime which consists of many different crimes, how can we think that dealing with it in one avenue is not better than dealing with it in five different avenues [...] it's justifiable that they discourage each other to go through the justice system [...]</p>
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Finally, focused codes are shaped by theoretical codes. These codes not solely conceptualize possible relationships between categories but also facilitate a transition from analytic story in a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63).

Table 3 Example of Theoretical Coding

Lack of Agency/Autonomy Link to Sen's (1985) understanding of agency	[...] they don't have any voice, they're scared of being terminated, they have to support their families [...] the agencies
Civil society actors' victim-centred approach	always ask for a lot of money, they come here and then, they just tolerate what the
Processes of empowerment	employers have to do, even though, we are screaming [...] you have to voice out,
Link to Kabeer's (1999) feminist understanding of empowerment	voice out to the employer, even in a nice way, but if you don't [...]

It has become evident that all three stages are interdependent while they respectively function as prerequisites. For the purpose of this study, all three stages have been conducted. Theoretical coding in particular was of great value as it generated the link to relevant sensitizing concepts. In the course of initial, focused and theoretical coding, mind-maps were developed in order to visualize respective codes (see Appendices 5 and 6).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Prior to the actual interview process, it is vital to inform participants about the overarching research objective as well as risks and benefits that potentially arise from participation (Kvale, 1996, p. 112). Considering the sensitivity of the research topic, consent forms built an important 'gateway' to interviewees' trust. Accordingly, informed consent entails obtaining voluntary participation of the interviewee, including the right to withdraw from the interview entirely, at any given point (ibid.). Silverman (2014, p. 148) adds that interviewees need to be

protected from harm while confidentiality as well as mutual trust between interviewer and interviewees should be ensured. Yet, certain limitations of the informed consent model exist; in the course of the study, the interview questions and the focus of the project itself change according to the circumstances (Silverman, 2014, p. 155). Therefore, one interview may be very different from another while follow-up questions arise in accordance with interviewees' responses (ibid.). This is especially true for semi-structured interviews as initial questions solely guide the researcher, it is, however, the interviewee's comments that are decisive for interview development and outcomes.

As the interviewer defines the situation and frames the topic and course of the interview, "interview research involves asymmetries of power" (Kvale in Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 78). The question arises whether or not one can clearly distinguish between the knowing and approving expert and the vulnerable knowledge seeker (Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 78). Particularly during the interviews with community leaders, these distinctions became rather indistinct as they not solely perceived me as an expert but also knowledge seeker. Accordingly, mutual education was facilitated. It is argued that the implications of an interviewer's 'positionality' and, thereby, social status and identity in relation to an interviewee may shape an interview (ibid., p. 79). This has become evident in the interview process and outcomes as both were influenced by the interviewees' perceptions of me, the researcher. While certain participants categorized me as an IOM intern and solely that, others perceived me as an individual researcher, irrespective of the internship placement. Such categorizations often did not allow for in-depth or follow-up questions as certain levels of expertise were assumed. Yet, the position as an intern at IOM provided me with the opportunity to recruit certain interviewees who I would have never been able to contact without the support of IOM or the 'prestige' of being an intern there.

During interviews, the role and significance of the researcher as a person becomes increasingly central as "the interviewer him-or herself is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge" (Kvale in Edwards and Holland, 2013, p. 68). This confirms the aforementioned inherent power imbalances between interviewer

and interviewee. Kvale (1996, p. 117) argues that two attributes can be ascribed to researchers: “the sensitivity to identify an ethical issue and the responsibility to feel committed to acting appropriately in regard to such issues”. Thereby, researcher’s integrity, honesty, fairness, knowledge, and experience are decisive factors (ibid.). Further, it is impossible for researchers to adopt a neutral role in the field and in their participant network (Flick, 2006, p. 55). Instead, certain roles and positions are ascribed to researchers, sometimes vicariously and/or unwillingly (ibid.). This is reflected in the abovementioned categorizations. Once imposed, it is rather difficult to be perceived irrespective of such categorizations. Subsequently, besides interviewees’ articulation in the actual interview process, interviewees’ perceptions and attitudes of the interviewer are equally decisive for interview development and outcomes.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure the quality and wider potential of this research, it is vital to consider reliability and validity. The former is concerned with the consistency and replicability of research findings while the most important quality criterion is validity (Bryman, 2016, p. 41). Accordingly, validity is concerned with the question of “whether you are observing, identifying or measuring what you say you are” (ibid., p. 383) and, further, ‘correctness’ or ‘precision’ of a research reading (Ritchie, et. al., 2014, p. 356). As aforementioned, research reliability and validity were increased by means of qualitative interviews with such diverse groups of participants. Subsequently, interviews with both NGOs and community leaders allowed for various different levels of analysis while potential tensions between the participant groups were acknowledged. Lastly, the interplay between primary and secondary sources not solely enhanced data collection methods but also reliability and validity.

3.9 Limitations

In this study, certain limitations can be observed. Due to the fact that the interviewees' native language was not English, language barriers arose. These were reduced by translators, yet, the risk of misinterpretations persisted. Additionally, the fact that qualitative interviews were solely conducted with NGOs and community leaders engenders a potential bias as both groups are involved in anti-human trafficking efforts and often collaborate. Hence, interviewees' accounts and experiences could have corresponded and, further, affected interview development and outcomes. In order to decrease the risk of such bias but also enhance research outcomes, interviews could have been conducted with (inter-)governmental organizations, particularly representatives of the Hong Kong Government. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the government's denial of its existence, this will, however, continue to be an ideal and unfeasible.

4 Background

4.1 Migratory Patterns in Southeast Asia

In order to apprehend why Hong Kong has become a desirable destination for MDWs, it is essential to examine migratory patterns in Southeast Asia. According to Castles, de Haas and Miller (2014, p. 153), rapid economic growth and declining fertility have increased East and South-East Asian labour demand since the mid-1980s while in other Asian countries, emigration has been encouraged by economic stagnation, high fertility and lack of employment. As a result of such supply and demand patterns, the so-called ‘3D jobs’ (dirty, dangerous and difficult) that nationals can increasingly afford to reject are ascribed to migrant workers (ibid., p. 154).

4.1.1 Feminization of Labour Migration

Prior to the late 1970s, there was little female labour migration in Asia (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 154). Thereafter, the demand for female domestic workers increased, first in the Middle East and, from the 1990s, within Asia (ibid.). This demand originates from the overarching ‘care deficit’ in the global North (Runyan and Peterson, 2014, p. 203). Accordingly, “the need to have dual-income earners to sustain families, the rise in aging populations, and declines in publicly supported social safety nets” generate the ever-increasing demand for cheap foreign labour as child and/or elderly care is often unavailable and/or unaffordable (ibid.). Yet, the informality of the domestic work sector lends itself to vulnerabilities; as non-citizens with restricted rights and benefits, MDWs are “vulnerable to employer intimidation and abuse occurring in spaces that are understood to be separate from the public gaze and state regulation” (ibid., p. 209).

Most migrant women are concentrated in ‘typically female’ sectors such as domestic work, entertainment, restaurant, etc. that are characterized by “poor pay, conditions and status, and are associated with patriarchal stereotypes of female

docility, obedience and willingness to give personal service” (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 154). Accordingly, these women “represent a readymade labour supply which is, at once, the most vulnerable, the most flexible and, at least in the beginning, the least demanding work force” (ibid., p. 257). In the light of feminization of labour migration, a shift in the primary roles of female migrant workers from “wife and mother, dependent on a male breadwinner” (Phizacklea in Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 61) to “more reliable remittance-senders than men” can be observed (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 257). Thus, traditional gender roles and gendered divisions of labour are challenged, as the role of the breadwinner becomes increasingly ascribed to women, rather than men. However, migrant women continue to be disadvantaged by gender-specific factors as well as stereotypes of specific ethnic and racial groups (ibid., p. 258). Especially due to the former, employers often do not perceive migrant women as primary breadwinners, “but rather temporary workers who will leave to get married” (ibid.).

4.1.2 Temporary Migration

Instead of permanent settlement, both Asian governments and migrant workers favor temporary migration. This can be explained by governments’ need to fill labour gaps and migrant workers’ need to seek employment abroad in order to secure and sustain their livelihood. Thereby, a situation of mutual benefit is created. Nonetheless, migrants’ rights are restricted as migration is strictly monitored and controlled by respective governments (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 156). Subsequently, labour migration is perceived “as a temporary necessity, which should not lead to permanent settlement or to changes in the culture and identity of destination countries” (ibid.).

4.2 Hong Kong – Country of Destination

In the context of East Asia and more specifically Hong Kong, serious contradictions emerge as a result of “rapid economic growth, fertility decline, ageing and growing undocumented migration” (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014, p. 157). From the 1950s onwards, a transformation “from a labor-intensive industrial economy to a post-industrial economy based on trade, services and investment” has been facilitated (ibid.). After reunification with China in 1997, the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong was established – with its own laws and institutions (ibid.). Initially, restrictive immigration policies were imposed that denied low-skilled migrants (ibid.). Eventually, these were loosened, enabling family reunification and labour migration (ibid.).

Since the 1990s, the total number of domestic workers has increased by 60 per cent (Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2016, p. 20). Today, there are 53 million domestic workers while 41 per cent are found in Asia (ibid.). To contextualize, “Hong Kong has one of the highest densities of MDWs in the world” (ibid.). In 2017, there were 364,037 female MDWs in Hong Kong, 196,619 from the Philippines, 159,355 from Indonesia, 2,435 from Thailand and 5,628 from other countries of origin (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, 2018). To put this into perspective, a total of 5,614 male MDWs was identified (ibid.). In order for the economy to function, the availability of affordable domestic work needs to be ensured, “particularly in the absence of sufficient government provision of care services for children and the elderly” (Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2016, p. 20). Subsequently, MDWs contribute to the overarching functioning of the local economy as parents are enabled to participate in the labour market (ibid., p. 21).

Compared to other Southeast Asian countries, Hong Kong has a formal temporary labour migration scheme and, therefore, fares as one of the best places in the region to work as a MDW (Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2016, p. 21). Thus, in order to protect the employment rights and benefits of MDWs, certain statutory regulations exist: minimum 24-hour rest period per week, a monthly minimum allowable wage as well as food allowance (ibid.). Nonetheless, such laws and

policies with the purpose to assist and protect MDWs often harm them instead (e.g. the ‘live-in’ and ‘two-week’ rule⁴). Previous research has raised concerns about exploitation and abuse in Hong Kong’s domestic work sector (Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2016, p. 23). In response to such concerns, the government continues to deny the existence of the overarching issue as “there is no evidence [that the territory is] a destination, transit and source territory for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour” (ibid., p. 27).

The foundation of Hong Kong’s society is domestic work while the entire structure is based on female migrant domestic workers. Without these women, the entire structure would collapse; a vast majority of people would be forced to quit their jobs in order to provide child and/or elderly care for their family members as Hong Kong lacks public support. One can argue that serious consequences would arise, not solely for the Hong Kong society but also countries of origin as the flow of remittances would be interrupted. While family members rely on remittances, Hong Kong society relies on cheap overseas workers as they cannot afford child or elderly care. The aforementioned argument that the overarching functioning of local economy and society is facilitated and maintained through foreign labour is confirmed.

⁴ The ‘live-in’ requirement “dictates that MDWs must work and reside in the employer’s residence in Hong Kong” (Justice Centre Hong Kong, 2016, p. 23). The ‘two-week’ rule “dictates that MDWs are required to leave Hong Kong upon completion of their contract or within 14 days from the date of termination of their contract, whichever is earlier” (ibid.).

5 Grounded Theory-Inspired Analysis

First and foremost, the results and findings from the semi-structured interviews are outlined. An overview of the civil society actors and their respective overarching roles is provided. Thereafter, central themes are analyzed in the light of empowerment and agency as sensitizing concepts. Lastly, differences and similarities between NGOs' and community leaders' roles in anti-human trafficking efforts are discussed by means of strengths and weaknesses as well as limitations of their work.

Prior to commencing, it is essential to consider the concept of victim. For the purpose of this thesis, the term itself is applied with the intention to empower rather than disempower vulnerable migrants. During the interviews, the connotations of the term were discussed. While certain participants refused to use the term victim as they argued that it disempowers and, thus, denies individuals' agency, others used the term in order to recognize the crime of human trafficking and 'survivors' thereof. It was further claimed that through such recognition, victims can receive the assistance and protection they require. In the forthcoming analysis of central themes, parallels are drawn to Gilson's (2016) feminist understanding of the concept of victim.

5.1 Results and Findings

The following table depicts the civil society actors that have participated in the research, the types of actors or affiliations as well as whether these actors assume direct or indirect roles in anti-human trafficking efforts. It is essential to clarify that the respondents from NGOs represent the missions, goals and objectives of their respective organizations, rather than their personal accounts. Contrary, the community leaders, even though they are affiliated with international organizations, local NGOs or labour unions, represent their personal accounts from positions of individual activists. Their respective affiliations are listed in the table in order to illustrate their voluntary engagement. Out of 14 participants, solely three actors are

indirectly involved in anti-trafficking efforts while the vast majority of actors provide direct protection and assistance to victims. These numbers are reflective of the overarching civil society actors that are involved in anti-trafficking efforts in Hong Kong (see 3.4 Sampling Method). While the majority of civil society actors conduct preliminary screenings of victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked, solely IOM⁵ facilitates official victim identification interviews.

Table 4 Civil Society Actors: Types and Roles

Participant	Type of Actor/Affiliation	Direct vs. Indirect Role
Justice Without Borders	NGO	Direct
Justice Centre	NGO	Direct
Liberty Asia	NGO	Indirect
Community Leader	Affiliated with SBMI ⁶	Direct
Community Leader	Affiliated with KOBUMI ⁷	Direct
Harmony Baptist Church	Church	Direct
HER Fund	NGO	Indirect
Community Leader	Affiliated with WOMED ⁸	Direct
Community Leader	Affiliated with NOPTI ⁹	Direct
Community Leader	Founder of ‘OFW ¹⁰ in Hong Kong’ Facebook Group	Direct
Stop Trafficking of People. (STOP.)	NGO	Direct
Enrich	NGO	Direct
PILnet	NGO	Indirect
Christian Action	NGO	Direct

⁵ IOM Hong Kong SAR, China is the only (inter-governmental) organization in Hong Kong that conducts official victim identification interviews. Once people are officially identified as victims of trafficking (VoTs), they receive monthly allowances from IOM’s victim assistance fund. Alternatively, they are provided with reintegration or resettlement opportunities.

⁶ SBMI stands for Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (Indonesian Migrant Workers Union).

⁷ KOBUMI stands for Komunitas Buruh Migran (Migrant Workers’ Community).

⁸ WOMED refers to World Medical Support Services.

⁹ NOPTI refers to National Organization of Professional Teachers, HK Chapter.

¹⁰ OFW refers to Overseas Filipino Worker.

5.1.1 Direct Roles of Civil Society Actors

Firstly, it is essential to define what ‘direct’ entails in this context; direct are all actions that are targeted at victims of trafficking and persons at risk while applying a victim-centred approach. Hence, actors that assume a direct role in anti-trafficking efforts collaborate closely with the victim, especially in crisis situations through the provision of shelter, counselling or legal assistance. Direct roles can be categorized in accordance with the aforementioned four P’s (prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership). These dimensions are not always linear or clearly differentiable but rather interdependent. While some actors focus on either one (or two), certain actors assume a direct role within all dimensions:

“We see ourselves as journeying with the client, through their road to recovery and justice” (STOP.).

Similarly, community leaders’ roles are diverse and often multi-dimensional: community outreach, awareness-raising, counselling, empowerment, organization of activities and demonstrations as well as administrative, legal, financial and social assistance. Within but also often besides their duties as community leaders, the interviewed women volunteer for international organizations, support local NGOs as ambassadors or are actively involved in labour unions. The table below illustrates the overarching direct roles of civil society actors in anti-trafficking efforts. The aforementioned argument about interdependency is confirmed as particularly the dimensions of prevention and protection correspond to one another. Especially community leaders are involved in both prevention and protection efforts.

Table 5 Direct Roles of Civil Society Actors

Prevention	Protection	Prosecution	Partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy, Research and Advocacy - Community Outreach - Awareness-Raising - Empowerment - Demonstrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Outreach - Awareness-Raising - Empowerment - Demonstrations - Counselling - Shelter - Identification - Victim Identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal/Psychosocial Assistance - (Cross-Border) Civil Claims of Migrant Domestic Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Civil Society Task Force - Referral

5.1.2 Indirect Roles of Civil Society Actors

Contrary to the direct roles, actors that assume indirect roles in anti-trafficking efforts are not in direct contact with victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked and are, hence, not involved in initial nor official victim identification. Instead, such actors collaborate with other NGOs and governments by means of for instance policy, legislation and advisory work. Subsequently, assistance is provided in areas that frontline actors are unable to shed light on. One such example is Liberty Asia’s effort to “follow the money” that trafficking generates and to, thereby, focus on the root causes of the crime:

“NGOs focus a lot on victims, they don’t really focus on the financial footprint of the crime which means the victim often bears a disproportionate burden in terms of the legal case”.

Another important component of civil society actors’ indirect roles in anti-trafficking efforts is advocacy. This is especially evident in appeals to the Hong

Kong Government to develop specific anti-trafficking laws, as illustrated by Liberty Asia:

“When you look at the Modern Slavery Bill, it’s a law enforcement tool, it’s all about prosecution and enforcement action but it’s entirely silent on victims’ rights. We drafted a set of victim protection measures that should be included in the Bill in order for it to be a comprehensive document”.

The table below demonstrates the indirect roles, assumed by solely three out of 14 civil society actors, in anti-human trafficking efforts in Hong Kong. During the interviews, the needs of anti-trafficking NGOs, especially related to funding and resources, were acknowledged. Accordingly, it was argued that through the support of frontline NGOs, civil society actors that assume indirect roles not solely provide assistance to such NGOs but also indirectly to their respective target group – vulnerable migrants and particularly victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked. This notion is especially evident in the provision of pro-bono lawyers. As explained by PILnet, NGOs that focus on anti-human trafficking efforts have rather different needs, compared to other NGOs, especially the need to have a network of pro-bono lawyers that are familiar with specific human-trafficking-related issues and, thus, the importance of victim sensitivity.

Table 6 Indirect Roles of Civil Society Actors

Liberty Asia	HER Fund	PILnet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Advocacy - Database of Human Trafficking - Training - Policy, Legislation, Advisory Work for Governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Through Grants - Building Capacity of Women’s Leaders and the Organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Education Workshops - Clearing House (to Match NGOs with Pro-Bono lawyers)

5.2 Central Themes

After this brief overview of civil society actors' direct and indirect roles in anti-human trafficking efforts, central themes that have been identified in the empirical data are analyzed. These themes correlate to areas or tasks that civil society actors have addressed in the light of anti-human trafficking efforts. Within the analysis, parallels are drawn to and from empowerment and agency as sensitizing concepts.

5.2.1 Vulnerability

Prior to commencing, it is valuable to consider Gilson's (2016) feminist understanding of the concept of victim. The concept itself provokes concern as "it is believed to connote powerlessness, weakness, and susceptibility to exploitation" (Marcus in Gilson, 2016, p. 79). It is further argued that solely "being perceived or labeled as a victim may "exacerbate exploitation" because one is viewed as especially susceptible" (Alcoff in Gilson, 2016, p. 79). Many people do not identify with the label 'victim' as it is often interpreted as stable and fixed and, thus, "incompatible with ideal forms of identity and agency with which many do identify" (Phillips in Gilson, 2016, p. 80). As a result, the dominant concept of victim does not align with people's actual experiences but rather generates discrepancies: static vs. variable, dichotomous vs. diverse and unambiguous vs. ambiguous (Gilson, 2016, p. 80).

These dominant concepts and standards, besides reinforcing the expectation that all individuals experience victimization in an equal manner, reproduce "a notion of girlhood and womanhood that we (as a culture) would like to preserve: the helpless female – slight, airy, voiceless – who needs receiving or rescuing" (Lamb in Gilson, 2016, pp. 80-81). Accordingly, the concept "construes victimization and vulnerability as wholly incompatible with agency" (Gilson, 2016, p. 81). This illustrates potential tensions between vulnerability and agency as it is argued that individuals' agency and, further, empowerment cannot be facilitated from positions of victimization and vulnerability. In the concept of victim,

vulnerability is apprehended as ambiguous: “experienced as a mixture of passivity and activity, strength and weakness, assertion and receptivity, agency and absence of control” (Gilson, 2016, p. 91).

In the interviews, community leaders differentiated between personal and work-related problems that caused or fueled individuals’ vulnerability. Accordingly, personal problems include loans and debt (bondage), family problems, depression, stress as well as lack of time for themselves while work-related problems are related to deception, lack of food, rest, sleep and privacy, isolation but also physical or mental abuse. NGOs on the other hand identified additional vulnerability factors: informality of the domestic work sector, ‘live-in’ and ‘two-week’ rule, gender, immigration status, cultural and language barriers. One of the interviewed community leaders described the informality of the sector and isolation as follows:

“If we’re inside the house of the employer, we struggle by ourselves, if the employer is hitting or maybe they don’t give food. So, if we cannot speak, we’ll die inside the employer’s house”.

This portrayed inability to speak up and, thus, lack of control over their own wellbeing can be examined in the context of Sen’s (1985) understanding of agency. Respectively, agency is defined as “what the person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important” (ibid., p. 203). Further, agency is understood as intrinsically valued, “acting freely and being able to choose are, in this way, directly conducive to well-being” (Sen in Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007, p. 384). Yet, one can argue that MDWs who are deprived of the opportunity to speak up are not free or able to choose. Therefore, as aforementioned, empowerment needs to be facilitated through “the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). This way, MDWs are provided with a voice to not solely stand up to their employers but to also find the courage to seek help and share their experiences.

In Gilson's (2016, p. 83) understanding of the concept of victim, "autonomy and agency are conventionally understood as a perfect capacity for rational decision making and the ability to exercise complete control over one's body and actions". The author acknowledges the idealistic nature of this definition as it "either renders those victimized responsible for their own victimization or constitutes the basis for denying victimization altogether" (ibid.). Hence, victim blaming rests on the assumption that individuals are "invulnerable, autonomous, rational, and in control" (ibid.). Certain issues arise in this notion of agency as individuals are expected to possess inherent agency and act upon it. Consequently, individuals are blamed as they allow themselves to be victimized and to not act upon their inherent agency. This is especially problematic in the context of vulnerable migrants as they often do not possess inherent agency due to cultural, economic or socio-political factors that might affect their sense of autonomy and control.

Many MDWs who find themselves in vulnerable situations, as described above, exacerbate processes of victimization. This is especially evident within individuals' reluctance or perceived inability to leave exploitative situations due to debt bondage:

"The vulnerability arises where there is abuse in the household in the first five or six months and the domestic worker wants to leave. The reality for her is that she can't because she's paying off her debt, she can't afford to pay for a new job and that rapidly becomes a situation of forced labour where an individual would have never consented to be in this position" (Liberty Asia).

As the participants clarified, culture lends itself to vulnerability. It was argued that even though the largest populations of MDWs, namely Filipinos and Indonesians, are more established in Hong Kong due to more networks, stronger unions and fewer language problems, compared to 'newcomers', cultural barriers continue to prevent them from emancipation:

“With Indonesian women it’s often the empowerment, they’ve almost been disempowered because at trainings and other venues, they’ve been told to be obedient so even the idea of speaking up about something that’s wrong is actually very hard” (Enrich).

Another aspect that fuels victimization and, hence, the lack of control over their own wellbeing is a deep-rooted fear of the police. It was claimed that MDWs reduce themselves to solely the ‘helper’ who does not possess any credibility in front of the employer or police. Therefore, in the absence of MDWs’ agency, processes of empowerment are required. As explained by Liberty Asia, if a domestic worker experiences difficulties, it is very unlikely that they will report it to the police. Hence, the support of NGOs is needed while they have a vital role to play – to encourage these women to come forward and speak up about the problems they face. The fact that vulnerable migrants do not identify themselves as a victim, even though they have been victimized, prevents them from receiving the support they require (Lamb in Gilson, 2016, p. 79). This relates to the overarching resistance to the concept of victim which can be a “psychological defense mechanism or a social defense against the likely treatment victims receive” (Alcoff in Gilson, 2016, pp. 79-80). Subsequently, the refusal to identify as a victim and not to report any issues might derive from the fear of disbelief of friends and family or the fear of mistreatment or shame-inducing interrogation by police and prosecutors (Gilson, 2016, p. 80). Lastly, such refusal can be explained by the overarching connotations that are ascribed to the label of victim: passivity, weakness, exploitability (ibid.).

5.2.2 Victim-Centred Approach

In the heart of the victim-centred approach is victim welfare while identification, assistance and protection of victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked are central. Additionally, participants shed light on vulnerability of the victim, sensitivity of the overarching issue and prevention from further harm. With regard to protection, it was argued that:

“We need to sort of unload the umbrella of victim protection, we need to really think about how victims are helped to recover, given security during this process and are prevented from re-trafficking” (STOP.).

This quotation confirms that individuals’ wellbeing is the focal point of the victim-centred approach whereas the risk of re-trafficking is addressed. Accordingly, preventative efforts are required in order to decrease individuals’ potential for re-trafficking. At this point, it is essential to stress that the majority of the participants of this research solely focus their efforts on the geographical area of Hong Kong, rather than countries of origin. Therefore, their capacity to monitor the wellbeing of returned trafficking victims and, further, support sending countries’ repatriation and reintegration mechanisms is limited. Apart from these restrictions, civil society actors in Hong Kong contribute vastly to identification, assistance and protection efforts while they recognize the power of individuals’ agency and, further, potential to influence others. One such example is interpersonal contact, as illustrated by Harmony Baptist Church,

“You can have all the big numbers you want, unless you hug somebody, touch somebody and see people’s eyes when they’re sad, the reason why they had to leave their families, you’re not going to care”.

In order to achieve victim welfare, individuals’ voice and, hence, visibility are a prerequisite. Community leaders emphasized that MDWs often do not have any voice as “they are weak, afraid to ask for their rights and scared of being terminated” while they appeal to them to voice out, especially to the employer. Moreover, it was argued that the voices of these women impact people’s perception towards them, their needs and concerns. Therefore, it is vital to create braveness and self-confidence amongst the women. The need to provide MDWs with a voice and, thus, create visibility around the overarching issue of trafficking was acknowledged. In the light of the recognition of individuals’ agency and autonomy,

it was argued that if MDWs speak up, they facilitate change and, hence, benefit from such change.

These arguments can be related to Sen's (1985) understanding of agency with regard to freedom. Accordingly, "a person's freedom may well be assessed in terms of the power to achieve chosen results: whether the person is free to achieve one outcome or another; whether his or her choices will be respected and the corresponding things will happen" (ibid., p. 208). To contextualize, MDWs are encouraged to speak up, even if their employers will not hear them. Thereby, they might not achieve the desired outcomes but they begin to free themselves from oppression. This is illustrated in the following definition of agency as a kind of process freedom; "the procedure of free decision by the person himself (no matter how successful the person is in getting what he would like to achieve) is an important requirement of freedom" (Sen in Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007, p. 384). Thus, an agent is understood as "someone who acts and brings about change" (ibid.).

In this account of agency, the actual process and the act of 'freeing' become more important than the results. As aforementioned, MDWs have been provided with a voice which can be understood as a precondition to anticipated results and benefits. One can argue that the newly-acquired ability to speak up and, thus, exercise control over their own wellbeing empowers them to a greater extent than the prospect of change in their respective situations. Nonetheless, "agency will be socially beneficial, that agents advance goals people value and have reason to value" (Sen in Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007, p. 384). Lastly, it is "essential to see the public not merely as 'the patient' whose well-being commands attention, but also as 'the agent' whose actions can transform society" (Drèze and Sen in Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007, p. 384). To exemplify, through the process and act of 'freeing', not solely individual but also collective agency is enhanced as such feelings of emancipation are passed on to the wider MDW community, especially by community leaders.

At this point, it is beneficial to shed light on the concept of collective agency. Accordingly, it refers to a self-empowering and dynamic process that allows people "to challenge unequal power relations, but also to induce sustainable

social change at the grassroots level” (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 52). It is argued that through the exercise of collective agency, individual and communal wellbeing are enhanced (ibid., 53). Furthermore, the concept of human agency “goes beyond individual freedoms and well-being concerns to the pursuit of broader communal goals” (ibid., 54). Thereby, an altruistic way of thinking can be observed as collective rather than individual freedom and wellbeing are desired. Moreover, individuals are perceived “as agents who have diverse valued goals and commitments on behalf of themselves and of their society” (Alkire in Ibrahim, 2014, p. 55). To contextualize, through self-empowerment, as explained below, MDWs’ not solely pursue individual goals and commitments but also those of their fellow MDWs.

In order to apprehend the power of the individual, it is valuable to consider Pigg’s (2002) understanding of empowerment. The author argues that three interdependent dimensions of empowerment are evident: self-empowerment, mutual as well as social empowerment (Pigg, 2002, p. 108). Hence, to introduce community change by means of collective action, community leaders rely on the interplay between all three dimensions (ibid.). The author claims that particularly community leadership development programs provide the most appropriate settings in which to reflect upon the aforementioned empowerment processes and outcomes (ibid.). For the purpose of this section, solely the first dimension, self-empowerment through individual action is considered. Here, the importance of the personal efficacy factor, “personal power”, is highlighted (Kizilos in Pigg, 2002, p. 112). The author clarifies that “such efficacy is valuable to organizations, when empowered workers identify the challenges facing the organization as personal and attempt to contribute meaningfully to meeting them, thus revitalizing the organization and maintaining its competitive edge” (ibid.). Subsequently, “the empowerment of individuals is rooted in the psychology of power, the effects of “feelings” and perception of powerlessness” (ibid.).

5.2.3 Cooperation

One central theme within the interviews was the theme of cooperation; its importance has been stressed by all participants, especially the cooperation between civil society actors:

“We all collaborate very much to try and make sure that we are sharing and also that we are reaching as many domestic workers, we do recognize that each of us individually can’t reach every single domestic worker” (Enrich).

In the quotation, collective action is emphasized while civil society actors are portrayed as more effective if they collaborate. This way, increasing numbers of domestic workers are reached and anti-trafficking efforts are maximized. Collective action can be linked to the concept of agency. Kabeer (1999, p. 438) defines it as “the ability to define one’s goals and act upon them” while it comprises of “the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or ‘the power within’”. Agency can also include both individual as well as collective reflection and action (ibid.). One can argue that the common purpose to assist and protect victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked drives civil society actors’ agency and, thereby, collective action.

Another aspect of cooperation is the ability to complement each other and, thus, enhance anti-human trafficking efforts:

“When it comes to cooperation, it’s essential because every organization, most of the time can something that the other one doesn’t and so if you really are able to complement each other, the effort might become way more powerful and meaningful” (PILnet).

Accordingly, the power of cooperation and the notion that civil society actors are more effective and stronger if they collaborate are stressed. This is especially reflected in the establishment of the ‘Civil Society Anti-Human Trafficking Task

Force'¹¹ in 2016, with the overarching mission to advance anti-trafficking efforts in Hong Kong. Participants argued that the power of cooperation and the power of working together and having 28 signatories, rather than solely few or even none, is often underestimated. It was further argued that the Task Force provided civil society actors with a unique opportunity to appeal to the government, in the light of their common goal – to protect vulnerable migrants but also generate systemic change. Such advocacy-related roles of civil society actors are depicted in the following quotation:

“There was a feeling that we could work together to strengthen the calls for change to the government, a network, or collaboration of civil society groups” (Justice Centre).

Besides victim welfare, civil society actors desire systemic change, for instance the need for specific anti-trafficking laws and, thus, recognition of victims. Thereby, actors focus not solely on individual but also collective wellbeing in order to protect future generations of migrants. The power of cooperation is central to advocacy efforts and appeals to the government:

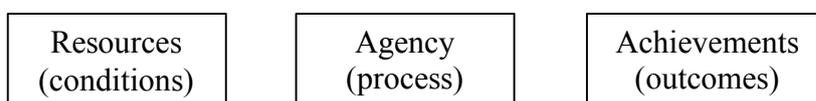
“It’s so important that we have more voices together, to make our messages more powerful. One NGO saying one thing has so much less power than a congregation coming together to persuade the government on the issue” (STOP.).

Here, the importance of collective voices is highlighted. It is argued that solely as a group, calls for change can be heard. As a group, they are able to exert greater levels of influence over the government and its decisions. Moreover, their position as frontline actors and the knowledge they possess is advantageous within appeals. This can be linked to Khwaja’s (2005) notion of empowerment; influence and

¹¹ Its 28 members are from intergovernmental organizations and community-based organizations.

information “allow people to express their preferences and have an effective impact on particular decisions” (Khwaja in Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007, p. 385). In addition, social mobilization is apprehended as a central component of empowerment (ibid.). Accordingly, people are provided with a voice that allows them to demand change (ibid.).

Within cooperation between civil society actors, the importance of cooperation with community leaders cannot be denied. As described by one of the interviewed community leaders, collaboration and support from NGOs is essential as they cannot stand alone but rather depend on such organizations. This stance underlines the limitations of migrant domestic workers’ efforts and, hence, the need for support. Subsequently, NGOs equip community leaders with the required knowledge and, thereby, enhance their capacity to perform. This can be linked to Kabeer’s (1999) feminist understanding of empowerment. Accordingly, “empowerment refers to the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (ibid., p. 437). She argues that three inter-related dimensions constitute choice (ibid.):



One can argue that through the empowerment of community leaders, the wider migrant domestic worker community is empowered as community leaders share their acquired knowledge. As portrayed by one of the community leaders, a strong support network and mutual empowerment is vital:

“Helping migrant workers to organize will decrease the vulnerability of migrant workers because abusing one migrant may be easy but abusing one migrant worker that is with an organization or union – the employer will be in trouble”.

Overall, it has been identified that all participants raised the need for stronger collaboration between civil society actors and governmental bodies. It was argued that they desire a chance to collaborate – a chance to not solely share their views but also actual findings from the field. By means of empirical data from frontline efforts and research, they can demonstrate how anti-trafficking efforts can be improved to accommodate the needs of the victims and prioritize victim welfare, rather than prosecution of the crime. It is essential to point out that extant efforts to prosecute human trafficking in Hong Kong were criticized as the focal point was on the prosecution of offenders instead of the recognition of the crime of human trafficking and victims thereof, justice as well as reconciliation (see 5.2.6 Absence of Anti-Human Trafficking Laws). Besides these discrepancies between civil society actors' and governmental bodies' anti-trafficking efforts, the participants acknowledged that whilst an extensive amount of collaboration between respective civil society actors exists, collaboration between civil society actors and governmental bodies is rather limited.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to collaborate against human trafficking as the government continues to deny its existence and, further, insists that trafficking is not an issue within Hong Kong. It is believed that particularly migrant domestic workers, by means of government imposed employment ordinances, are protected in a sufficient manner and that no issues related to labour exploitation are evident. As a result of the government's lack of recognition, issues related to the efficiency of civil society actors' anti-human trafficking efforts and the ability to facilitate change arise:

“The government doesn't currently recognize that it is a serious issue whereas NGOs do, they know from the work they do and from the cases they see. I think it's always been the case that NGOs step in to supplement where they see the gaps in current systems” (STOP.).

Especially with regard to prosecution, this lack of recognition becomes challenging. Due to the absence of specific anti-human trafficking laws, it is difficult to

prosecute the crime of trafficking. It has become evident that civil society actors have reached a point where they cannot go any further without governmental support.

5.2.4 Community Leaders

The theme of community leaders is rather unique as it is not solely related to but also informed by community leaders. Overall, the participants described community leaders as an integral asset to victim identification and assistance who distinguish themselves through empathy and trust as well as their role as a mediator. It became evident that community leaders were perceived as the first point of contact for the community. This can be explained by MDWs distrust in the system, fear of the police and lack of agency. Therefore, MDWs seek initial help from community leaders, rather than NGOs or governmental bodies. Empathy and trust in the community play a central role within MDWs' willingness to come forward and, hence, open up but also community leaders' ability to provide assistance:

“The community is in the best place to identify and assist because they are the ones who are the first point of contact, they are the ones who know the potential victim, who are able to spot some minor changes in their behavior” (STOP.).

Moreover, a strong sense of community, especially among Indonesians and Filipinos, was observed. Especially the community leaders argued that a support system exists in which mutual care is vital. Accordingly, it is their common goal to protect each other and to care for each other. They described themselves as one distinct community – when one member of that community suffers, everyone else suffers as well. They further described that they are the voices of the community as they represent them and shed light on their needs and concerns. Thereby, they build the bridge between MDWs and NGOs or governmental bodies. For both entities, community leaders are a source of support and information. On the one hand, they

support victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked through initial identification and assistance. On the other hand, they facilitate the information flow between the community and NGOs or governmental bodies. These aspects are evident within community leaders' ascribed role as a mediator and, thus, link to the wider community of MDWs, as illustrated by Enrich:

“In every aspect, we always try and incorporate their views, their opinions, what they see, because they are the ears and eyes for us, in many, many ways and they really help us not only to speak, to find out what's happening, they are key in helping us to identify women that they see could be a concern of areas or in other forms of distress as well”.

This quote emphasizes the invaluable role of community leaders as an extension of NGOs' frontline efforts. Particularly initial victim identification and, thus, referral mechanisms are at the heart of community leaders' direct interaction with victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked. The question arises how community leaders can be equipped with the required knowledge and resources to identify, assist but also refer women to the respective sources of support.

In order to answer the posed question, it is relevant to consider Perkins' and Zimmerman's (1995) understanding of empowerment. Accordingly, empowerment “is more than the traditional psychological constructs with which it is sometimes compared or confused (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, competency, locus of control)” (ibid., p. 570). Empowerment can also be apprehended as “an intentional ongoing process centred in the local community [...] through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources” (Cornell Empowerment Group in Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570). To contextualize, MDWs possess limited access to and control over resources as they are temporary migrants, non-citizens, with limited rights. In order to tackle these limitations, empowerment, education, awareness-raising as well as capacity-building are central (see 5.2.5 Awareness-Raising and Capacity-Building). In Hong Kong, NGOs educate community leaders by means of financial literacy, initial

victim identification and assistance as well as paralegal training workshops. This confirms the aforementioned argument that the empowerment of community leaders generates empowerment of the wider community of MDWs.

Nonetheless, certain tensions arise if community leaders are reduced to the role of a mediator, rather than an independent ‘agent of change’. Consequently, their agency and, thus, ability to organize is decreased. Therefore, in order to acknowledge their position as a frontline actor, NGOs promote increased inclusion of community leaders in decision-making processes:

“More could be done to engage them in advocacy efforts because if you look at all these public fora, conferences, etc., you will always find that the people who represent the vulnerable are NGOs, rather than community leaders. They should have a share in the discussion over how policy should change because they themselves are subjected to those policies, they should help shape it” (Liberty Asia).

The question remains how MDWs can organize themselves as temporary migrants, non-citizens, with limited rights. According to Rother (2017, p. 958), MDWs “express agency and reformulate their gender roles in connection with their identification as a social class at the transnational scale”. Subsequently, the importance of collective action is confirmed while MDWs’ affiliation with the respective social class enhances not solely their ability to raise mutual needs and concerns but also to be heard. Lastly, it is argued that agency can be achieved through class as performance (ibid., p. 965).

5.2.5 Awareness-Raising and Capacity-Building

Besides direct assistance in crisis situations, awareness-raising and capacity-building were described as the most important roles of civil society actors in anti-human trafficking efforts in Hong Kong, especially related to prevention and protection. In order to facilitate awareness-raising and capacity-building,

empowerment and agency are central. It was argued that such processes can be achieved through legal and financial literacy, community outreach as well as the education of local citizens. Regarding legal literacy, the participants pointed out that MDWs should already be informed about Hong Kong specific laws and regulations but also potential risks prior to departure. This confirms the aforementioned importance of transnational cooperation and shared responsibility to protect. One can argue that MDWs might be less vulnerable towards trafficking and other forms of exploitation if they were informed beforehand, especially about how and where to seek help. Some of the participants perceived law as a tool to empower and protect people in need. Subsequently, it is more difficult to exploit people who are educated about their rights. The participants recognized that access to legal aid and assistance at an early stage is important. As summarized by one community leader, education is vital to individuals' ability to protect:

“I want to educate my fellow domestic workers, I want to educate them about their rights, how to protect themselves. They should know how to protect themselves”.

Concerning financial literacy, certain civil society actors promote economic empowerment of MDWs in Hong Kong by means of financial education while the capability to say no was emphasized:

“Learning how to say no to family members, learning how to say no to friends, to loan companies but also to employers” (Enrich).

Yet, it was argued that it is not solely important to say no to people but also to culture. Thereby, culture can no longer dictate individuals' actions. To exemplify, if MDWs refuse to be guided by financial pressure, they are less likely to continue to work in exploitative circumstances and, hence, decrease vulnerabilities. Additionally, the capability to say no is applicable to various other areas such as

sexual harassment. Once again, the importance of empowering women to speak up and, thus, exercise control over their own wellbeing is highlighted.

In order to facilitate empowerment, civil society actors use an essential tool, namely, community outreach. Awareness about the existence of human trafficking is raised while knowledge about laws, regulations and rights is shared. Due to the fact that community leaders acquire the role of a frontline actor, they are particularly involved in community outreach. To apprehend how empowerment can be facilitated through such initiatives, it is valuable to consider the second dimension of Pigg's (2002) understanding of empowerment: mutual empowerment. The second "face" of empowerment, empowerment in organizations, derives from organizational or interpersonal relations while the term "enabling" is ascribed to empowerment (ibid., p. 112). To exemplify, the role of leaders is not community domination or diminishment but rather to facilitate and strengthen development (Gardner in Pigg, 2002, p. 113). In other words, through "strengthening others", power is used in an altruistic manner, in service of others (Kouzes and Posner in Pigg, 2002, p. 113). In the context of community outreach, mutual support enables and strengthens individuals' ability to speak up and, thus, exercise control over their own wellbeing.

Lastly, awareness-raising and capacity-building can be achieved through the education of local citizens. Overall, the participants observed an increasing demand to raise awareness about the overarching issue of human trafficking but also its prevalence in Hong Kong. This is especially relevant for employers as they need to be aware of their rights as an employer and obligations to MDWs but also MDWs' rights and obligations to employers. In order to facilitate systemic change through advocacy, such as the development of specific anti-trafficking laws, civil society actors rely on the support of the local people. Therefore, it is vital to educate local citizens and increase their awareness and knowledge about human trafficking and its effects on the victims. As illustrated by Harmony Baptist Church, local citizens are key to anti-human trafficking efforts,

“This is their city, they’re the ones that are the policymakers, they’re the ones that hire people, they’re the ones that need to know and be really knowledgeable about their agencies. They’re the voice that will be the biggest game changer in this whole situation”.

Accordingly, civil society actors can solely initiate change but it is the responsibility of the local citizens to facilitate and maintain it. In other words, the capacity of civil society actors is restricted, especially that of international actors such as community leaders, as they possess limited authority. Consequently, non-citizens, compared to citizens, are perceived as less influential. In order to enhance anti-human trafficking efforts and civil society actors’ impact on change, collective action that is inclusive of local citizens, is required.

5.2.6 Absence of Anti-Human Trafficking Laws

As no specific anti-human trafficking laws exist in Hong Kong, it is difficult or rather impossible to prosecute the crime of trafficking. Consequently, the aforementioned argument is confirmed; civil society actors have reached a point where they cannot go any further without governmental support. In the interviews, civil society actors’ desperate call for help was depicted as anti-human trafficking efforts seem hopeless without the prospect of prosecution. Therefore, civil society actors appeal to the government in order to develop specific anti-trafficking laws targeted at the protection and recognition of victims but also the rightful prosecution of offenders. If such laws would exist, the crime of trafficking could be tackled as a whole. Instead, victims have to pursue various different avenues in order to cover the same crime. The fact that they are required to share their story multiple times creates a burden to the victim. Accordingly, it is energy and time consuming as well as psychologically heavy for them to go through numerous interviews. Besides decreasing the burden to the victim, the existence of specific laws would encourage people to come forward:

“A law would be essential and perhaps push people to feel more confident and come out and see that it’s the right step to do, that it’s rewarding and worth it, especially mentally” (PILnet).

Moreover, the participants identified that there is a need for a comprehensive definition of human trafficking in order to create clarity around the issue but also how to tackle it. This would be especially beneficial to justice and recovery as part of civil society actors’ anti-human trafficking efforts:

“It’s discouraging that, you know, these crimes of human trafficking aren’t called what they are, they are called breaches of employment ordinance but it’s not attributing the seriousness of what it is, the crime of human trafficking” (STOP.).

Through a comprehensive definition of human trafficking and, further, a legal framework to prosecute the crime, victims would be recognized as such and, thus, receive protection and benefits. Yet, the participants argued that there continues to be a lack of urgency and prioritization of the overarching issue. It was further argued that if it does not affect the Hong Kong residents per se, it does not pose an issue worth pursuing and persecuting. Hereby, the aforementioned argument about the importance of awareness-raising and the inclusion of local citizens in anti-trafficking efforts is confirmed.

Collective action that is inclusive of local citizens is especially vital to advocacy efforts such as civil society actors’ appeal to the government to develop specific anti-trafficking laws. It was argued that such systemic change can solely be facilitated through an increase in the cooperation between civil society actors and local citizens. In order to apprehend how the facilitation of systemic change and, thus, the development of specific anti-trafficking laws can potentially be generated from collective action, it is valuable to consider the human development and capability approach. Accordingly, it places people at the centre of development discourse and perceives them as the means and ends of development (Ibrahim,

2014, p. 2). The importance of people's freedoms and agency is highlighted while "capabilities are the choices and opportunities available to individuals to lead the lives they have reason to value" (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 3).

Sen (2005, p. 10) perceives functionings and capabilities as the core concepts of the capability approach. Respectively, functioning refers to "an achievement of a person, i.e. what he or she manages to do or be" while "capability is a derived notion and reflects the various functionings he or she can potentially achieve, and involves the person's freedom to choose between different ways of living" (ibid.). Both accounts confirm Pigg's (2002) overarching argument that community change can be facilitated through collective action. At this point, it is essential to consider Pigg's third and final dimension of empowerment, social empowerment; in the "face" of empowerment and social action, empowerment acquires a "non-personal dimension" (Rappaport; Fawcett et al. in Pigg, 2002, p. 114). Thus, the needs of certain disadvantaged social groups are central, rather than those of individuals (Pigg, 2002, p. 114). Here, empowerment is perceived as "a process of removing structural barriers in political, social, and economic systems" in order for disadvantaged populations to acquire greater control over their own lives (Friedmann in Pigg, 2002, p. 114). To contextualize, through an interplay of self-empowerment, mutual as well as social empowerment, civil society actors and local citizens can advocate for the need of specific laws to protect MDWs in Hong Kong.

To summarize, the themes of vulnerability, victim-centered approach, cooperation, community leaders, awareness-raising and capacity-building as well as absence of specific anti-trafficking laws have been analyzed in the light of empowerment and agency as sensitizing concepts. Especially the concept of agency according to Sen (1985) and Kabeer (1999) but also Rother (2017) was central to the interpretation of the empirical data. Individual and collective agency were apprehended as prerequisite for change.

5.3 Discussion

After this in-depth analysis of the roles of civil society actors in anti-human trafficking efforts, in consideration of empowerment and agency as sensitizing concepts, differences and similarities between NGOs' and community leaders' roles in anti-trafficking efforts are discussed by means of strengths and weaknesses as well as limitations of their work. In general, it has become evident that an invaluable role in anti-trafficking efforts can be ascribed to civil society actors, especially in the four P's (prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership). Civil society actors distinguish themselves through their unique position: as they work on the ground, they can shed light on MDW's experiences, suffering, issues, needs and concerns. This is achieved through the power of cooperation and their overarching role as a mediator. The aforementioned argument about civil society as an intermediate sphere is confirmed as civil society actors in Hong Kong navigate between private and public sectors. Particularly community leaders distinguish themselves through their role as a mediator and, thereby, link to the community. Accordingly, they maintain direct and personal contact with the community while they extend NGO's frontline efforts by means of for instance community outreach. Community leaders also possess more experience and greater levels of empathy and trust as they themselves might have been victims of trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

Another strength of civil society actors' roles in anti-trafficking efforts is their ability to supplement the gaps in current systems. Subsequently, states' activities in addressing crimes by means of victim assistance and protection as well as monitoring are complemented (OSCE, 2018, p. 13). Civil society as an intermediate sphere collaborates closely with the state and the political sphere, improves their effectiveness and responsiveness but does not replace these sectors (Paffenholz's and Spurk's, 2006, p. 3). This is evident in civil society actors' direct roles, especially in crisis situations through the provision of shelter, counselling or legal assistance. Furthermore, civil society actors can complement governmental efforts through research and advocacy. One such example are appeals to the Hong

Kong government to develop specific anti-trafficking laws. Thereby, civil society actors become advocates for change. This confirms the aforementioned argument that civil society actors employ reformist and transformist strategies to implement change while upholding underlying social structures. They do not replace the state as a sector but rather monitor, assess and report findings, from the ground and, therein, frontline efforts, and translate them back to the government. Consequently, a bottom-up approach to anti-trafficking efforts is facilitated as the need for systemic change originates from the grassroots level, rather than vice versa.

Both NGOs and community leaders apply a victim-centred approach within their anti-trafficking efforts while they, despite their inherent differences, share a common goal: to assist and protect vulnerable migrants. As identified by Marlin (2016, p. 233), NGO's involvement in anti-trafficking efforts is advantageous as they, compared to states, have more experience in anti-trafficking activity. The author argues that NGOs often operate at the local level at which they address root causes of the crime of trafficking, such as gender inequality and poverty within various communities while they are aware of their specific and complex environments (*ibid.*). In the context of Hong Kong, this embeddedness in local communities is facilitated through community outreach and by means of community leaders. It has become evident that NGOs and community leaders complement each other; while NGOs possess professional expertise in anti-trafficking activity, community leaders distinguish themselves through personal expertise, reputation, respect and trustworthiness. Thus, NGOs and community leaders benefit from each other's (in)capabilities.

Besides the aforementioned strengths, certain weaknesses of civil society actors' anti-human trafficking efforts can be observed. One major obstacle to their work in Hong Kong is the absence of specific anti-trafficking laws. Hence, prosecution of the crime of trafficking is difficult or rather impossible and civil society actors' work is disrupted or even discontinued, prior to prosecution. This can also be explained by civil society actors' position in the destination country as they are often solely considered as external actors with little authority to intervene. This is especially true for international NGOs and MDWs while the latter possess

limited access to and control over resources as they are temporary migrants, non-citizens, with limited rights. Nonetheless, civil society actors are generally not driven by the imperative to prosecute but rather “to provide grassroots interventions that empower survivors and facilitate their long-term reintegration” (Rousseau, 2018, p. 94). As the protection of victims is at the heart of their anti-trafficking efforts, “they are best positioned to develop innovative bottom-up models that empower trafficked persons” (ibid., p. 96). Still, it is important to recognize that processes of empowerment as well as victims’ access to justice and recovery are affected by the absence of specific anti-trafficking laws and, thus, the lack of prosecution.

Reflecting upon the victim-centred approach, one can argue that its focus on victim welfare and, thereby, assistance and protection as well as justice and recovery, fails to consider root causes of the crime of trafficking. This can be explained by NGOs’ lack of financial and human resources but also time constraints while their mandates often do not allow for cross-border efforts. This is exacerbated for MDWs as they are entitled to solely one day off per week and are, therefore, limited within their ability to support and intervene. To exemplify, NGOs in Hong Kong deal primarily with people who are still within the jurisdiction, rather than outside of it, such as sending countries. This is, however, problematic as human trafficking is not restricted to Hong Kong, especially not the root causes, instead, it is a global cross-border matter that should be addressed accordingly. Once again, the need for enhanced cooperation, including local citizens but also governments of sending countries is acknowledged.

During the interviews, it was argued that cooperation between NGOs needs to also be strengthened as they do not collaborate and communicate well with each other, especially in terms of mutual awareness of each organization’s focus. Hence, the occasion of replicating work but also doing things in conflict is increased. As described by Rousseau (2018, p. 93), “civil society organizations involved in anti-trafficking can be fractious and disorganized, with conflicting styles and priorities that can impede effective collaboration with the government”. This lack of cooperation with governmental bodies can be explained by civil society actors’

reluctance to engage in dialogue as they perceive them to be part of the problem and not the solution (Pangsapa, 2009, p. 143). Vice versa, the government might be equally reluctant to communicate as civil society actors are perceived in terms of limited authority. To exemplify, if a UN body, compared to NGOs, facilitates official victim identification interviews, it is more likely to have weight.

To summarize, it has become evident that certain advantages and disadvantages to civil society actors' anti-human trafficking efforts exist. Accordingly, central similarities between NGO's and community leaders' roles in anti-human trafficking efforts are the common goal to assist and protect victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked as well as the recognition of the need for advocacy and, thereby, systemic change. Central differences include the level of expertise, empathy and trust, availability of resources and time, community contact as well as support from governmental bodies.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, within this research, the direct and indirect roles of civil society actors in anti-human trafficking efforts in Hong Kong were identified. Thereby, migrant domestic workers community leaders' contributions to such efforts were acknowledged. The initially posed hypothesis that community leaders are often the first point of contact and, hence, facilitate correspondence between MDWs and NGOs was confirmed. Accordingly, they are the voices of the community as they not solely represent but also shed light on their needs and concerns. Despite inherent differences between NGOs and community leaders, it was valuable to examine direct and indirect roles of both actors as they not solely complement each other's but also governmental efforts. If NGOs had been the sole focal point of this thesis, an important aspect would have been absent – MDWs' personal as well as collective stories and experiences. Instead, the interplay between NGOs' and community leaders' accounts provided the basis for an in-depth analysis of their respective roles and overarching potential to advocate for change.

By means of the grounded theory-inspired analysis, central themes that have been derived from the empirical data in form of semi-structured interviews were examined and discussed in the light of empowerment and agency as sensitizing concepts. Additionally, Gilson's (2016) feminist understanding of the concept of victim was elaborated upon. Accordingly, as the concept is negatively connoted, not many people identify with it. It was argued that individual's agency and, further, empowerment cannot be facilitated from positions of victimization and vulnerability. The participants differentiated between personal and work-related problems that caused or fueled MDWs' vulnerability such as the overarching informality of the domestic work sector and, hence, isolation. In the context of Sen's (1985) understanding of agency, MDWs' inability to speak up and, thus, lack of control over their own wellbeing were examined. MDWs who are deprived of the opportunity to speak up are not free or able to choose. Therefore, as illustrated by Kabeer (1999), empowerment processes are required in order to expand people's ability to make strategic life choices. Yet, vulnerable migrants often do not possess

inherent agency due to cultural, economic or socio-political factors which affects their sense of autonomy and control and, further, prevents them from emancipation.

Subsequently, civil society actors take precedence and provide MDWs with something that they themselves or governmental bodies have been unable to provide – a voice to not solely stand up to their employers but to also find the courage to seek help and share their experiences. Especially community leaders' roles are central within such processes of empowerment as they themselves might have experienced similar situations of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation and are, therefore, more relatable than representatives of NGOs. It was argued that if MDWs speak up, they facilitate change and, hence, benefit from such change. Consequently, they are empowered by the newly-acquired ability to speak up and, thus, exercise control over their own wellbeing. Through MDWs' self-empowerment, the wider MDWs' community but also Hong Kong society as a whole can be empowered. This confirms Pigg's (2002) overarching argument that community change can be facilitated through collective action. In his understanding of empowerment, three interdependent dimensions are evident; self-, mutual as well as social while collective rather than individual freedom and wellbeing are desired.

Similarly, civil society, as an intermediate sphere, is centred around shared interests, purposes, values and the demands of the social whole. Accordingly, freedom and wellbeing of the overarching society and more specifically vulnerable migrants are vital. Civil society actors in Hong Kong, through an interplay of self-, mutual as well as social empowerment, can advocate for systemic change – the development of specific anti-human trafficking laws. Thereby, they acquire the role of an 'agent' whose actions have the potential to transform society. NGOs' and community leaders' common goal to identify, assist and protect victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked drives their agency and, thereby, collective action. Nevertheless, particularly community leaders possess limited access to and control over resources as they are temporary migrants, non-citizens, with limited rights. This restricted capacity and limited authority to facilitate and maintain change requires collective action that is inclusive of local citizens. In Rother's (2017) understanding of the concept of agency, collective action is central.

Here, by means of MDWs' affiliation with the respective social class, their ability to raise mutual needs and concerns is enhanced.

Besides the need for increased collaboration between civil society actors and local citizens, stronger cooperation between the former and governmental bodies is vital. However, as the government continues to deny the existence of human trafficking in Hong Kong and, further, fails to recognize victims thereof, issues related to the efficiency of civil society actors' anti-human trafficking efforts and the ability to facilitate change arise. As cooperation has been limited, the call for action and support on behalf of civil society actors cannot be ignored. It remains to be seen how the Hong Kong Government but also governments of sending countries respond – whether or not they will support or oppose such efforts.

Nonetheless, compared to other Southeast Asian countries, Hong Kong is often described as the “lesser evil” among MDWs' communities and, therefore, a more desirable country of destination. Over the past decades, various improvements have been initiated by the government:

- Availability of support networks
- Increase in salary and food allowance
- Establishment of minimum wage
- Establishment of a dedicated helpline for domestic workers
- New code of employment practice
- Inclusion of domestic workers in labour law
- Ability to switch visas or employers where there is evidence of abuse
- Assistance and protection of victims of physical and/or sexual abuse

The latest development was the implementation of the new ‘Action Plan to Tackle Trafficking in Persons and to Enhance Protection of Foreign Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong’ (The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2018) which is entirely domestic worker focused. Subsequently, the Hong Kong Government slowly but surely adjusts to the fact that issues of exploitation in the domestic work sector exist. The question remains whether or not the existence of

human trafficking will be recognized. Civil society actors' anti-human trafficking efforts have invigorated calls for change – now they just need to be heard and taken serious by the government.

6.1 Suggestions for Further Research

In this thesis, it has become evident that a possibility for future research is the risk of re-trafficking and, further, justice and reconciliation of (recognized) victims of human trafficking. As this research solely focusses on the role of civil society actors in initial victim identification, assistance and protection as part of anti-human trafficking efforts, limited to the context of Hong Kong, the following questions remain; upon return to their countries of origin, to what extent, if any, are victims reintegrated and how can the risk of re-trafficking be decreased? Subsequently, this may allow for an investigation of the long-term effects of human trafficking in a regional and/or global context. As part of this proposed investigation, particularly the respective roles of civil society actors in anti-human trafficking efforts in sending countries are of great interest.

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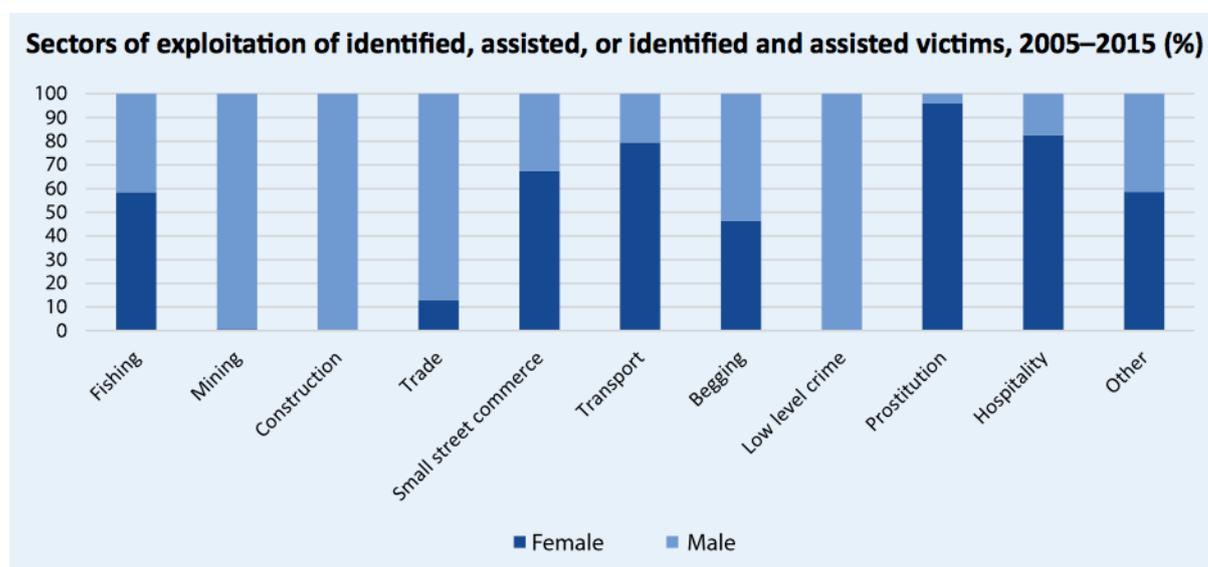
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Appendices

Appendix 1: IOM’s Data Disaggregated by Sectors of Exploitation



Appendix 2: List of Interviewees

1.	Justice Without Borders
2.	Justice Centre
3.	Liberty Asia
4.	Community Leader
5.	Community Leader
6.	Harmony Baptist Church
7.	Her Fund
8.	Community Leader
9.	Community Leader
10.	Community Leader
11.	STOP.
12.	Enrich
13.	PILnet
14.	Christian Action

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Stakeholders

Interview Guide

Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts in Hong Kong

The Role of Civil Society Actors as ‘Advocates for Change’

Semi-Structured Interview

Informants: Representatives of stakeholders involved in initial victim identification and assistance for trafficked persons as part of anti-trafficking efforts

Introductory Questions

- Name
- Occupational status
- Area of expertise

Stakeholder’s Mission

- How would you describe (respective stakeholder’s) mission, its goals and objectives?

Identification of Victims and Persons at Risk

- How does your organization attempt to identify and assist victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked?
- What do you think are some of the indicators for human trafficking?
- Why do you think are domestic workers vulnerable towards human trafficking and other forms of exploitation?

Cooperation between Stakeholders

- In your opinion, how important is cooperation between various different stakeholders for victim identification and assistance?
- As community leaders are often important contact persons for migrant domestic workers and, thereby, acquire the role of a mediator, does cooperation between community leaders and social services organizations as well as NGOs exist?
- To what extent, if any, can migrant domestic workers community leaders contribute to victim identification and assistance?

Protection and Assistance to Victims and Persons at Risk

- Besides social services organizations and NGOs, do other relevant stakeholders provide protection and assistance to victims and persons at risk?
- To what extent, if any, does the Hong Kong Government assist victims or persons at risk?
- As Hong Kong, does not have specific anti-trafficking laws, to what extent, if any, does the absence of these laws impact (respective stakeholder's) victim identification and assistance efforts?
- What are some of the measures that could decrease human trafficking?

Appendix 4: Interview Guide for Community Leaders

Interview Guide

Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts in Hong Kong

The Role of Civil Society Actors as ‘Advocates for Change’

Semi-Structured Interview

Informants: Female migrant domestic workers community leaders who encounter victims of trafficking and persons at risk of being trafficked

Introductory Questions

- Name
- Country of origin
- Length of stay in Hong Kong
- Length of community leader position

Community Leader’s Role

- How would you describe your role as a community leader?
- To what extent, if any, can migrant domestic workers community leaders contribute to initial victim identification and assistance?

Identification of Victims and Persons at Risk

- In your opinion, what are the main issues migrant domestic workers face?
- Why are migrant domestic workers vulnerable towards exploitation and trafficking?

- How would you identify a victim of trafficking?

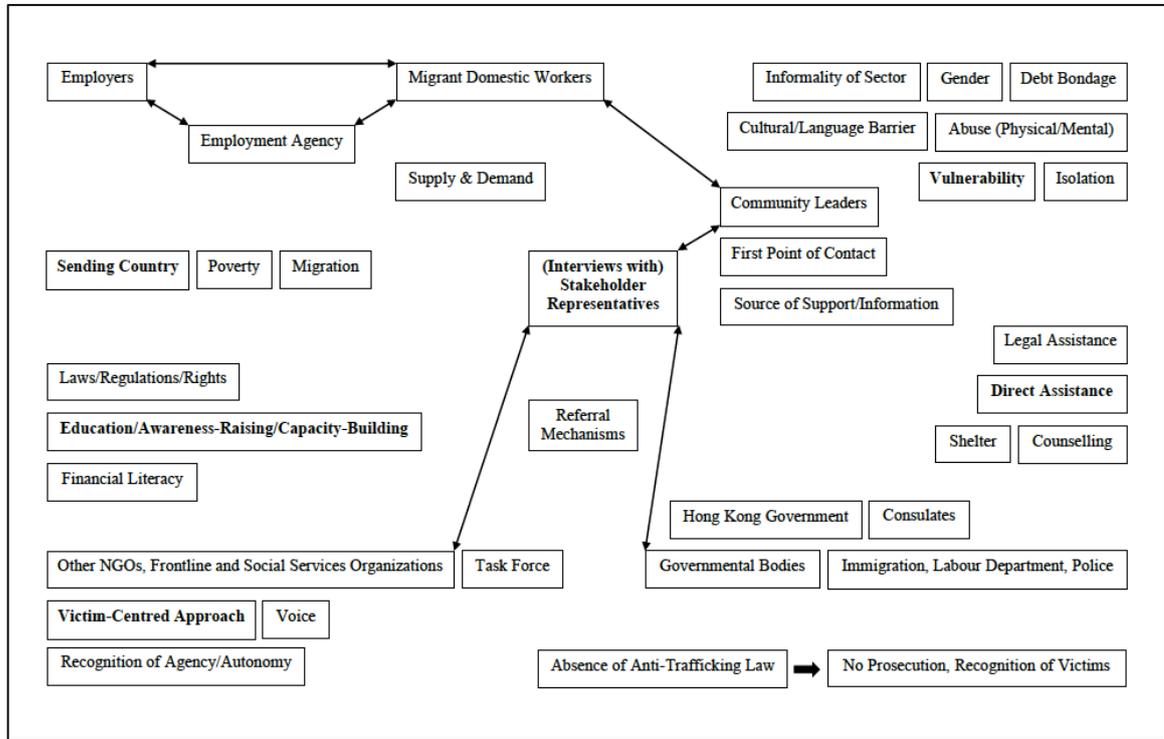
Cooperation between Community Leaders and Relevant Stakeholders

- As you are often the first point of contact for the migrant domestic workers and, thereby, acquire the role of a mediator, do you cooperate with social services organizations as well as NGOs?
- In your opinion, how important is cooperation between these organizations and community leaders for victim identification and assistance?

Protection and Assistance to Victims and Persons at Risk

- Besides community leaders, social services organizations and NGOs, who else does provide protection and assistance to victims and persons at risk?
- What are, in your view, some measures that could decrease human trafficking?

Appendix 5: Codes Identified in Interviews with Stakeholders



Appendix 6: Codes Identified in Interviews with Community Leaders

