**MYTH 1**
Collecting data on human rights is the same process as collecting environmental sustainability data

**TRUTH**
Understanding people is different than understanding products

**Q**
How is collecting information on people different from collecting data on seafood products?

**A**
Most seafood companies are accustomed to collecting data on environmental sustainability. However, when working on social responsibility, it is important to be aware that collecting data about people is different than collecting data on products.

Tracing people and tracing products are different matters, requiring different tools and different expertise.

Unlike environmental data, there's no one single point that can identify whether forced labor is occurring. In fact, the ILO (International Labour Organization) actually has 11 indicators of forced labor. It is noteworthy that some of these, for example "retention of identity documents," are more straightforward to objectively verify or observe than others, such as "deception" or "abuse of vulnerability," which inherently rely on worker testimony to verify.

Additionally, social or human welfare information may not travel with the product like some environmental data points do, and needs to be collected through processes that involve workers in data collection.

The sources of data that provide an accurate picture of working conditions are often conflicting, in a way that requires a trusting relationship with workers to verify and validate, as well as expertise in understanding national laws, and ability to read and speak the languages of employers and workers.

For example, forced overtime in seafood factories is often not discovered by auditors.
who typically focus on document review and information from factory management, because some misleading or fraudulent information contained in production documents and pay-slips can conceal the realities of the hours that workers are forced to work. Even those social audits that integrate worker interviews as a methodology face the challenging task of workers often being coached on how to respond to auditors, a reality clearly described by workers in many countries, and validated by the fact that many cases of forced labor in tier-1 exporting factories are found in sites that had been recently audited. If workers' line supervisors are coercing and coaching workers' responses to auditors, then workers likely wouldn't have much faith in that same workplace's human resource department or grievance mechanism would assist them. Thus, oftentimes, an independent connection to workers, one that can also provide assistance and safeguards to workers, is often needed for workers to confide truths to, and for this information to be analyzed against relevant national laws and codes of conduct to help businesses understand the real nature of their risk, and possible remediation needs.

To openly share information about labor recruitment and management conditions, workers require communication channels with employers and outside parties that are confidential, trustworthy, accessible, and result in remediation of grievances.

**What is important to consider when collecting information to understand working conditions and risk for exploitation?**

It is helpful to consider how far along a company is in its social responsibility journey and how much risk it is willing and able to respond to.

- A company can directly engage workers through worker voice-driven due diligence and remediation safely and ethically if the company has established both a commitment to, and mechanisms for, driving remediation if exploitation is found in its supply chains.

- If a company is in the early stages of the journey, without mechanisms or commitment for driving remediation if exploitation is found in its supply chains, the company should be aware that collecting information directly from workers may actually place workers at further risk. Instead, focus on the comprehensiveness and quality of information collected through due diligence efforts to minimize the potential of collecting false positives or exposing workers to risks of reprisal. At the same time, work to establish mechanisms for safe, effective remediation if signs of risk are detected so ethical supply chain management becomes possible.

The ways in which companies can collect information to assess labor conditions and risk for human rights violations vary between traditional due diligence vs. worker voice-driven due diligence and remediation:

For practical guidance and tools to raise the bar on ethical standards and practices within anti-trafficking and responsible sourcing in the digital age, please reference Issara Institute's *Ethics and Human Rights in Anti-Human Trafficking*.  

risesseafood.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional due diligence</th>
<th>Worker voice-driven due diligence and remediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labor recruitment: terms, conditions, and contracts.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Request the company's policy on labor recruitment - whether they are committed to employer-pays, just national law, or something else.</td>
<td>• Develop or plug into a worker voice-driven labor recruitment program operating across source and destination countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Request the company's service agreements with all recruiters and employment agencies, checking to see that (a) they exist and (b) they detail all services, fees, and who pays what.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask different people within the HR department how the company selects its labor recruiters, and how they conduct due diligence to prevent first-mile debt bondage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document retention</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Request the company's policy on human trafficking or modern-day slavery, which should include sections on document retention</td>
<td>• See whether workers raise issues of document retention through worker voice mechanisms and/or more targeted data collection with safeguards and links to remediation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Separately ask different HR staff where employee documents are kept, for what purposes, and how long.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wages, working hours, and payment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Separately ask different HR staff and production staff to describe how wages and OT are calculated - whether a straightforward hourly wage, or one connected to target setting or incentive schemes that can become coercive or lead to forced overwork or piece work.</td>
<td>• See whether workers raise issues of wages and deduction through worker voice mechanisms and/or more targeted data collection with safeguards and links to remediation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Check whether accounts of payment schemes match, and whether they are in compliance with contracts and national and bilateral laws.</td>
<td>• Review payslips and contract of workers and compare with their testimonies to understand whether documents reflect reality and are in compliance with all relevant laws and codes of conduct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review payslips to see what deductions are being made, and cross-check with national and bilateral laws to understand allowable deductions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits allowed by law</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spot-check whether the understanding of different HR staff regarding benefits allowed by law. For example, in some countries, workers are allowed paid sick leave with a medical certificate only required for three or more consecutive days of absence; however, workers can be given unpaid leave instead if they do not produce a note.</td>
<td>• See whether workers raise issues relating to their benefits through worker voice mechanisms and/or more targeted data collection with safeguards and links to remediation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Traditional due diligence | Worker voice-driven due diligence and remediation
---|---
Threats of violence and intimidation | • This cannot be adequately assessed without safe, voluntary worker feedback regarding the realities of how they are treated.
| • See whether workers raise issues relating to threats of violence and intimidation through worker voice mechanisms and/or more targeted data collection with safeguards and links to remediation.
Abusive working conditions | • This cannot be adequately assessed without safe, voluntary worker feedback.
| • See whether workers raise issues relating to abusive working conditions through worker voice mechanisms and/or more targeted data collection with safeguards and links to remediation.
Safe, functioning, accessible grievance mechanisms for workers | • This cannot be adequately assessed without safe, voluntary worker feedback regarding the realities of how HR staff respond to them and treat them.
| • See whether workers raise issues relating to grievance mechanisms through worker voice mechanisms and/or more targeted data collection with safeguards and links to remediation.

**Q**

Can data collected for environmental purposes also be used for social responsibility?

**A**

Yes, however it is important to avoid incorrect assumptions about labor conditions based on environmental data, since the data itself doesn't actually understand or validate the experience of workers.

Some data collected for environmental purposes can also be useful for social assessments, such as country of origin and Flag state of vessel which can indicate risk of illegal activity and hot-spot geographical risks. Some data points, while environmental in nature, can provide information relevant to human/labor rights risks.

For those data elements that are relevant for both environmental and social sustainability, there are cost and efficiency savings to leveraging that data.

For practical guidance and tools to raise the bar on ethical standards and practices within anti-trafficking and responsible sourcing in the digital age, please reference Issara Institute's [Ethics and Human Rights in Anti-Human Trafficking](https://rise.seafood.org).

[riseseafood.org](https://rise.seafood.org)