USING PEERS IN HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Human Rights Watch set a precedent for itself in its December 2013 report, *In Harm's Way*, by employing members of hard-to-reach target populations as peer interviewers. Human Rights Watch already uses many of the components of peer research, but does not specifically refer to the methodology. Peer research methodology makes investigations with hard-to-reach populations more explicit and systematized. Combining a literature review and 20 expert interviews, this report looks at limitations of some commonly used sampling method to access hard-to-reach populations. Additionally, this report uses six case studies of hard-to-reach populations to illustrate advantages and challenges of including peers in different stages of research, and proposes best practices in recruitment, training, support, and analysis.

This report concludes that incorporating members of a target group as peer researchers can enhance human rights investigations, but it is a method that is not appropriate in all settings. It requires extensive time commitment in training and relationship building between Human Rights Watch and peer researchers. Despite these constraints, peer researchers, if properly used, bring assets to the table that can benefit the research, the peer researchers, the target population, and Human Rights Watch's mission to defend the rights of people worldwide.

BACKGROUND

In December 2013, Human Rights Watch published *In Harm's Way: State Response to Sex Workers, Drug Users, and HIV in New Orleans*[1], a report detailing abusive practices by the New Orleans Police Department in their approach to these population groups. With this report, Human Rights Watch set a precedent for itself by employing members of hard-to-reach target populations as **peer interviewers**.

A variety of human rights and other researchers have long used members of hard-to-reach groups to help recruit interview subjects, or to conduct interviews, but peer research takes the method a step further by recruiting and training members of the target group to be active participants in the research. Engaging peer members of a target group to aid in research or conduct research themselves is increasingly popular in the social sciences and public health, especially with hard-to-reach populations. While this method can improve the research and bring benefits to the peer researchers involved, like all methods it has potential pitfalls that researchers need to consider.

Our report relies on a combination of literature searches and 20 expert interviews. The evidence bases we targeted include Elsevier, JSTOR, Wiley Online Library, Refworld and the University of Minnesota Library. Our team met biweekly to discuss findings and apply them to Human Rights Watch's mission. Our findings highlight

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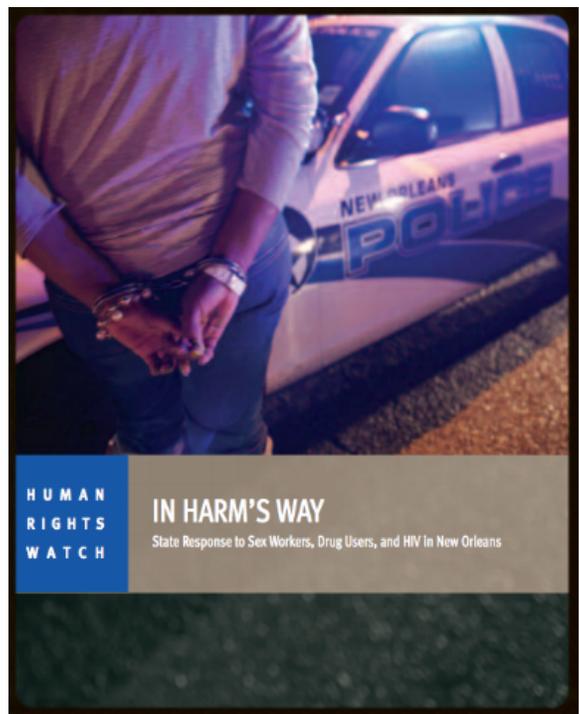
[1] McLemore, Megan. *In Harm's Way*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2013. Print. Available on the web <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/12/11/harms-way>

how to determine when to work with peer researchers and how to define the roles of peer researchers, and addresses some limitations of working with peer researchers.

Drawing on best practices and lessons learned from several disciplines, we explore the use of peer research by Human Rights Watch and other organizations, and offer suggestions for how this method might best be used. We employ case studies to demonstrate the benefits and challenges of working with peer researchers. These cases are based on work by NGOs and academics focusing on sex workers, drug users, HIV positive individuals, urban refugees, landmine survivors, trafficked laborers and military veterans. If utilized in appropriate projects, peer researchers can greatly contribute to and enhance the quality of research by offering unique insight and improved access to hard-to-reach populations.

CONNECTING WITH HARD-TO-REACH POPULATIONS

We define hard-to-reach groups as populations that are difficult for researchers to identify, or who are unwilling to readily disclose their identities or membership in a particular group. Hard-to-reach populations are not a homogenous group and can include even more hidden, marginalized, or vulnerable subgroups. These populations may have low or high numbers, and can be either geographically concentrated or dispersed. Shared group characteristics are not often easy to detect and are rarely recorded.[2]

Human Rights Watch researchers use several methods to investigate human rights violations against hard-to-reach populations, including a variety of **sampling techniques.** Generally, researchers start with a handful of contacts, each of which connects to other interview subjects in a **chain referral or "snowball" method;** researchers select initial respondents from the target population, and they then refer others from within their personal or professional networks. Traditionally, lead researchers conduct all the interviews and thus control the interview process.

Human Rights Watch also accesses and recruits respondents through **location-based** (or venue-based) sampling. Here, researchers identify and map venues where the target population congregates; selects some of those venues for interviews; and recruits respondents at these venues with random, or purposive, sampling methods.[3] For example, in Human Rights Watch's report, *Tobacco's Hidden Children: Hazardous Child Labor in the United States Tobacco Farming*, researchers located interviewees at multiple locations, including "homes, worksites, schools, restaurants and other public spaces […] and at religious institutions."[4]

Limitations and Biases of Sampling Methods

Location-based and chain referral sampling both rely on members of the target population to recruit peers, but also have limitations. These begin with the researcher's recruitment method, continue with respondent selection, and can also arise during interviews.

Two issues are particularly relevant: representivity and validity. We define **representivity** as a sample that includes a diverse set of respondents who vary by key characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and personal experiences, and **validity** as the trustworthiness and credibility of information obtained.

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[2] Marpsata, Maryse and Nicolas Razafindratsima. "Survey methods for hard-to-reach populations: introduction to the special issue." *Methodological Innovations Online* (2010): 3-16.
[3] Research Methodology, Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org/node/75141#3
[4] "Methodology." *Tobacco's Hidden Children.* Human Rights Watch, 14 May 2014. Web. 26 Apr. 2015. www.hrw.org/node/125315/section/4

Representivity

One key challenge in chain referrals is avoiding over or under representation. This occurs when researchers select either too many, or too few, respondents from particular subgroups, potentially skewing the information gathered.

Overrepresentation occurs when the respondent pool is too homogeneous, and often occurs when referrals identify respondents with physical, social or economic characteristics similar to their own.[5] Underrepresentation, logically, is the inverse; researchers neglect respondents from important subgroups. Respondent referrals from local NGOs—sometimes known as key informants[6] or gatekeepers[7]—are particularly challenging, since NGOs may not have access to all relevant subpopulations. Location-based sampling may also lead to over and under representation when researchers focus on a limited number or type of venue since some subgroups may not attend certain venues.[8]

Validity

Another notable challenge is the validity of responses, which can be affected by the interviewer. Respondents may alter their responses to fit perceived researcher interests and needs, or to provide socially desirable responses.[9] In some cases, unequal power dynamics may cause respondents to feel pressured to participate.[10]

Balanced Chain Referrals

To overcome these limitations, sociologist Douglas Heckathorn developed a more balanced chain referral system relying on peer researchers and recruitment quotas.[11]

In standard chain referrals, respondents refer any number of next-round interviewees; as a result, those with larger social and professional networks will produce more referrals, potentially creating an unbalanced respondent pool. Balanced chain referral (known academically as respondent driven-sampling) helps avoid this by limiting the number of referrals any respondent may provide. Researchers begin by selecting a diverse group of peer recruiters, provide each with incentives, and specify the number of referrals per person. If researchers carefully select their initial recruiters to maximize heterogeneity, this method will broaden the sample's reach.

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[5] Heckathorn, Douglas D. "Comment: snowball versus respondent-driven sampling." *Sociological methodology* 41.1 (2011): 355-366.

[6] Heckathorn, Douglas D. "Respondent-Driven Sampling: A New Approach To The Study Of Hidden Populations." *Social problems* 44.2 (1997): 174-199. Web. <http://www.utdallas.edu/~emrah.cem/references/RespondentDrivenSamplingAnewApproachToStudyHiddenPopulations.pdf>.

[7] O'Reilly, Karen. "Key Informants and Gatekeepers." *Key Concepts in Ethnography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2009. 132-38. *SAGE knowledge*. Web. 27 Apr. 2015.

[8] Muhib, F. B. et al. "A Venue-Based Method for Sampling Hard-to-Reach Populations." *Public Health Reports* 116.Suppl 1 (2001): 216–222. Web. 15 March 2015. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1913675/>.

[9] Grimm, Pamela. "Social Desirability Bias." *Wiley International Encyclopedia of Marketing*. 15 Dec. 2010. Web. 11 April. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444316568.wiem02057/abstract;jsessionid=C3A42655FDD45D75E478CD9D6DA0DD58.f03t03?deniedAccessCustomisedMessage=&userIsAuthenticated=false>.

[10] Mirabeau, Laurent, Muriel Mignerat, and Camille Grange. "The Utility of Using Social Media Networks for Data Collection in Survey Research." (2013).

[11] Ibid.

Figure 1: Comparison of the impact on recruitment of chain referral sampling and balanced chain referral sampling methods.
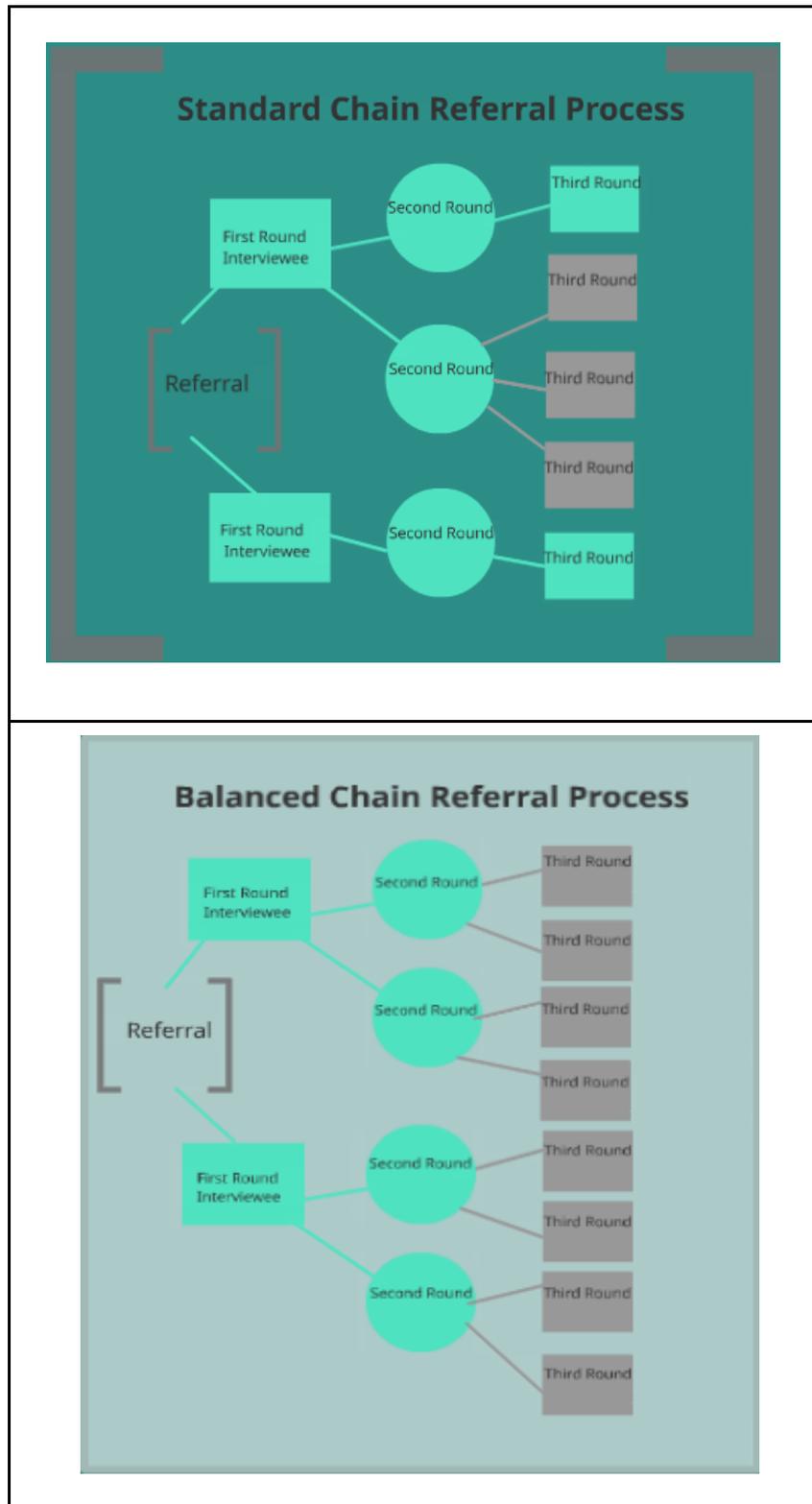
PEER RESEARCHERS - TOWARDS A MORE PARTICIPATORY RELATIONSHIP

Peer researchers are members of the target population who go beyond simply providing referrals or interviewing respondents, to work in fuller collaboration with lead researchers. **Peer interviewers** conduct surveys or interviews for projects developed by others (see Case Study I *In Harm's Way*); **peer researchers**, in contrast, take a more all-encompassing role with greater participation in project design, implementation, analysis and advocacy. Peer research helps bolster capacity for future activism and advocacy in the target population. Peer researchers offer better access and insight, while also providing collaborators with the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence as leaders, mobilizers, and capacity-builders within their own communities.[12]

Properly trained peer researchers offer networks and insight that external researchers can achieve only after months—if not years—of relationship building. Peers know and understand the target population, speak their language, and may be able to gain respondent trust more rapidly. They can also advise on appropriate interview questions, warn of potential challenges, and operate more inconspicuously than outsiders. If properly chosen and trained, they can enhance the conceptualization of the research; draw out qualitatively better responses, and provide insights that enhance the analysis of a research survey.

There are also practical and ethical challenges of engaging peer researchers. They can compromise the credibility of the investigation if they are seen to be unprofessional; pose problems of safety and control, and introduce new sources of bias related to gender, power, or class. Peer researchers are not appropriate for all projects, and must always be carefully recruited, trained, supported, supervised, and led.

Lead researchers must also ensure that the peer feels empowered, not exploited. To avoid negative feelings, lead researchers should value collaborators, involve them as much as possible in project preparation, implementation, and analysis, and offer support, training, and follow up.

As Human Rights Watch already knows, safety is a key issue during the research phase but what can be unique about peer researchers is that they can be placed at greater risk when the lead researcher departs.

Recruiting Peer Researchers

The lead researcher must consider the characteristics of hard-to-reach populations, and match peer researchers with interview subjects to the extent possible. This may include use of different peer researchers from different subgroups.[13] Interpreters or in-country researchers do not necessarily qualify as peer researchers, as they may not be a member of the target population, and may not participate fully in research design and analysis.

Peer researchers can be located through NGOs, community leaders, or other gatekeepers that already serve as key Human Rights Watch contacts. Human Rights Watch researcher Megan McLemore, for example, recruited thirteen peer interviewers through six separate NGOs based in New Orleans.[14] In some instances, it may be possible to find peer researchers that have already undergone some training, as seen in Case Study II.

Lead researchers can also recruit peer researchers through venues or **nodes of access** such as shopping malls, money transfer stations, workplaces, social service agencies, public health centers, and neighborhoods. A less traditional access point might involve people along a product supply chain, as seen in Case Study VI; here, researchers recruited truckers and distributors, who had frequent contact with migrant workers.

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[12] Laws, Sophie. *Research for Development: A Practical Guide.* Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2003.

[13] Interview with Wayne Weibel, Professor Emeritus of Epidemiology, University of Illinois at Chicago, March 10, 2015.

[14] Interview with Megan McLemore, Senior Researcher, Health and Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, April 20, 2015.

In all cases, lead researchers should obtain informed consent from the peer researchers they recruit, fully discussing expectations, processes and risks.

Defining Roles and Expectations

Lead researchers should carefully explain project goals, including how many interviews the peer researcher is expected to conduct, and to what extent they will be involved in analyzing evidence and making recommendations. Similarly, peer researchers must understand and be comfortable with their role as liaison with the target population. Lead researchers should ask peer researchers to map out their personal and professional networks, so as to determine each person's connections with specific subgroups.

Compensation

Compensation is standard in public health research, but less frequent in human rights research. Human Rights Watch researcher McLemore decided, in collaboration with her NGO partners, to pay each peer interviewer $100, and likened these payments to those Human Rights Watch pays to "fixers" in foreign countries.[15] Compensation of some sort is often an ethical imperative, as peer researchers are being asked to provide their time, service, and knowledge. Non-monetary rewards are possible, including letters of recommendation[16] and gift cards. Lead researchers should discuss possible forms of compensation with gatekeepers and the peer researchers themselves.

Training peer researchers

Ensuring that peer researchers are properly trained is key to collecting high quality evidence. Training also offers the lead researcher an opportunity to vet peers and gauge their unique competencies and skills.

The lead researcher must choose a method appropriate for the capacities of the peers; some evidence collection methods will remain more appropriate than others. Surveys and highly structured interviews, for example, require less training than complex, open-ended discussions.

Training is rarely a one-shot deal; instead, it is most effectively done in cycles or stages. Lead researchers begin by introducing peer collaborators to interviews, surveys, or observations, and by discussing relevant ethical considerations.[17] Peer researchers must learn not to impose their own experiences or opinions, and should learn how to record the information properly.

Identifying competencies is also crucial. For example, illiterate peer researchers cannot transcribe, but they can help understand the interview material.[18] Flexibility is important as it may become apparent that peers need additional practice and training.[19]

Practice sessions

Practice sessions give peer researchers experience and confidence, and highlight potential hurdles. Peer researchers should practice interviews on one another and others, honing their understanding of the questions and the underlying research goals. Two or three training sessions may be sufficient for peers with some community

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[15] Interview with Megan McLemore, Senior Researcher, Health and Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, April 20, 2015.

[16] Interview with Leah Moses, President and CEO, the Improve Group, March 30, 2015.

[17] *Peer-led qualitative research*. 2014. 25 April 2015. <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-it/techniquesapproaches/peer-led-qualitative-research>.

[18] Interview with Neela Ghoshal, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program, Human Rights Watch, April 24, 2015.

[19] For guidelines of peer research training please see: "Peer Research Training." *Sheffield Hallam University,* Hallam Centre for Community Justice. n.d. Web. 20 April 2015. <http://www.shu.ac.uk/_assets/pdf/hccj-PeerResearch.pdf>.

work experience; novices may need more. These sessions will also help lead researchers understand how peers comprehend the questions and record responses.[20]

Technology

Using voice or video recorders is useful, but depends on peer researchers' comfort and willingness to learn. The final analysis will depend on the quality of notes and transcriptions, so peer researchers must understand the need for extensive note taking and backups.[21] If the lead researcher expects peers to type up notes, transcribe interviews, or code information, they should receive careful training, and have those expectations clarified.

Safety

Lead researchers should develop safety protocols before the research begins.[22] The protocol should include an emergency phone number, along with the names and details of people to contact in case of emergency. Peer researchers should be advised about the implications of disclosing their own circumstances to respondents, and should discuss possible physical, mental and emotional risks at length.[23] It is also important to take a long-term view of safety of peer researchers and potential risks to their safety after lead researchers have completed their projects and left.

Providing support

On-going support helps address challenges and reduces errors.[24] Some support methods include:

Buddy system

A buddy system involves pairing peer researchers to be in the field together. Former drug users, for example, may be at risk of relapse; having a buddy in the field reduces this risk, while also supporting the research process.[25]

Regular meetings

Regular meetings build structure, trust, and accuracy, and save time in the long run. Debriefing sessions can be individual or in groups, and can be held every few days, or after a set number of interviews. These sessions will help peer researchers feel included, build trust, and reduce the temptation to falsify evidence. They also provide opportunities for lead researchers to ensure the evidence collected is sufficiently valid and representative.

Recruiting Respondents

After training is complete, lead and peer researchers can work together to identify potential nodes of access for recruiting respondents. As with the initial selection of peer researchers, access to the target population is commonly facilitated through NGOs and other trusted sources. Peer researchers, however, can also use their own

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[20] Interview with John Mazzeo, Director, Masters of Public Health Program, DePaul University, March 19, 2015.

[21] Peer Led Qualitative Research. 2014. 11 April 2015. <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-it/techniquesapproaches/peer-led-qualitative-research>.

[22] Interview with Sarah Parkinson, Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota. March 31, 2015.

[23] "Peer Research Methodology." n.d. *Sheffield Hallam University*. 10 April 2015. <http://www.shu.ac.uk/_assets/pdf/hccj-ResearchMethodology.pdf>.

[24] Elliott, Eva, Alison J. Watson and Ursula Harries. "Harnessing expertise: involving peer interviewers in qualitative research with hard-to-reach populations." *Health Expectations* (2001): 172-178.

[25] Interview with Laura Bloomberg, Associate Dean, Humphrey School, March 16, 2015.

networks. Peer researchers may have easier access to venues frequented by the target population, including social media sites[26] alternative music concerts,[27] train stations, or low-cost retail outlets.[28]

Analysis

Coding and Identifying Themes

Lead researchers can involve peer researchers during evidence analysis. The peer researcher's proximity to the target population will help lead researchers identify crucial themes, and provide explanations for contradictions and gaps.

Mapping Relationships

In addition to mapping out personal relationships prior to the investigation, this post-research mapping exercise asks peer researchers to map out their actual interviews, helping lead researchers learn if they succeeded in avoiding over and underrepresentation. This mapping exercise can provide geographic context, helping lead researchers view the physical dispersal of their respondents and, potentially, of the abuse itself.

Developing Recommendations

Peer researchers can help provide richer and more useful recommendations, and may also build credibility among the target community. Former Human Rights Watch researcher Smita Narula, for example, author of *Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables,"* included members of the Dalit community in her research and in drawing up her recommendations. In retrospect, Narula said, "the real time process and ownership [on the part of the Dalits] was incredible."[29] The meetings she convened with Dalits eventually led to the creation of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights. Today, Human Rights Watch continues to benefit from the relationships Narula established sixteen years ago.

SUGGESTIONS

"Nothing about us, without us, is for us" is an oft-heard refrain from hard-to-reach populations;[30] peer research is one way of addressing this demand. Human Rights Watch LGBT researcher Neela Ghoshal believes there is space for expanded use of this method within the organization.[31]

Human Rights Watch researchers already use components of peer research methodology, and we suggest making use of the method explicit and systematized. Peer research is by nature participatory, and is best done in collaboration with organizations or members of the hard-to-reach population at the center of an investigation. The peer research method can provide better access to the population, while offering Human Rights Watch opportunities to build deeper relationships important to both research and advocacy. Peer researchers remain in the local community after completing the project; having gained new contacts, skills, confidence, and insights that can provide lasting value to themselves, their communities, and Human Rights Watch. By using multiple venues and gatekeepers to recruit peer researchers, Human Rights Watch can better diversify its pool of respondents.

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[26] Savitz, Eric . "5 things you should know about Chinese social media." *Forbes*. 25 October 2012. Web. 23 April 2015. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/ciocentral/2012/10/25/5-things-you-need-to-know-about-chinese-social-media/>.

[27] Interview with Majda Puača, LGBT and Immigration Activist, April 1, 2015.

[28] Pai, Hsiao-Hung. "Factory of the World: Scenes from Guangdong." Places Journal. October 2012, <https://placesjournal.org/article/factory-of-the-world-scenes-from-guangdong/>.

[29] Interview with Smita Narula, Human Rights Activist, Fellow at Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute, Hunter College, April 23, 2015.

[30] Interview with Neela Ghoshal, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program, Human Rights Watch, April 24, 2015.

[31] Interview with Neela Ghoshal, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program, Human Rights Watch, April 24, 2015.

Training peer researchers is crucial but time consuming. The investment will not be appropriate in all cases, especially when the physical risks are high, time is very short, and absolute Human Rights Watch control over the research process is vital.

Human Rights Watch should consider peer researchers as one of many possible types of collaborators. Like consultants, interpreters, fixers, and technical experts, peer researchers can be a valuable addition to the Human Rights Watch team, in the right circumstances. As is true when engaging any outside partner, however, Human Rights Watch must handle the relationship with care; think through the pros and cons; and carefully negotiate roles and expectations in a mutually satisfactory manner.

Done well, peer researchers can become informed and motivated members of the community willing and able to advocate for Human Rights Watch's findings, and become agents of change in the communities whose rights Human Rights Watch seeks to defend.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study I: Sex Workers, Drug Users, and HIV in Louisiana

Original Study: In Harm's Way[32]

Summary: From February to September 2013, HRW's Megan McLemore worked with peer interviewers (not peer researchers – see above for the difference) to collect evidence from 160 respondents in New Orleans about state policies towards sex workers, drug users, and people with HIV. She chose this method to improve access to the target population, which is difficult to identify. HRW determined that the New Orleans police routinely harass, arrest, and demand sexual favors from suspected sex workers located in public places, or those found carrying condoms.

McLemore employed 13 peer interviewers recommended by NGO partners for their previous outreach work. HRW conducted an individual training session with each peer interviewer, and discussed informed consent, confidentiality, and other ethical issues. The interviewers administered a survey with 50 quantitative and qualitative questions, in both English and Spanish, vetted by the Louisiana Public Health Institute. Researchers contacted respondents through venue-based sampling, and by distributing flyers in NGO offices, syringe exchange sites, and other social services. Human Rights Watch paid each peer interviewer $100 for their effort, and gave each respondent a gift card worth $40. These amounts were determined through discussions with local NGO partners. McLemore reports that the training of peer interviewers was time consuming, and that she benefited from the help of an unpaid graduate student to handle the logistics of training, management, and gift card allotment.

McLemore recommends that future surveys be shorter and better targeted. Some respondents reported not being HIV-positive, but still responded to survey questions for HIV-positive populations. This suggests respondents may have been confused as to which portion of the survey to complete. As a result, HRW discarded some 30% of the evidence collected.

Lessons for Human Rights Watch: Peer interviewers can boost representivity. According to McLemore, "Many [respondents] lived on the outskirts of the city and I think … the number one benefit was ….reaching numbers ….[and] geographic areas that I never would have reached, or thought to reach."[33] The study also demonstrates that compensation for peer interviewers and respondents may be expected and appropriate. McLemore found that the unpaid graduate student's help was invaluable. She recommends that future surveys be shorter, easier to use, and pre-tested. She suggests that peer interviewers be given more opportunities to practice the surveys prior to beginning the study.

Comparison Case Study: Peer interviewers might have been especially useful when researching the HRW report, *License to Harm*,[34] which focuses on abuses against LGBT persons in Russia. HRW researchers interviewed 124 LGBT persons, including 46 activists, 30 of whom had been detained or harassed. The report was heavily criticized by the Russian government, and a larger and more diverse sample might have strengthened the

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[32] McLemore, Megan. *In Harm's Way*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2013. Print. Web. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/12/11/harms-way>.

[33] Interview with Megan McLemore, Senior Researcher, Health and Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, April 20, 2015.

[34] Cooper, Tanya. "License to Harm." *Human Rights Watch.* 15 Dec 2015. Web. 13 Feb 2015.

report's credibility.[35] HRW may have accessed a larger and more diverse sample with peer researchers, using a quantitative survey developed from qualitative interviews.

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[35] Chronicle, Battle. "Russia: Government against Rights Groups." *Human Rights Watch.* 20 April 2015. Web. 25 April 2015.

Case Study II: Urban Refugees in Uganda and Ecuador

Original Study: Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions[36]

Summary: In 2013, the Humanitarian Innovation Project at Oxford's Refugee Studies Center used peer researchers to study refugee economies in Uganda, home to multiple and diverse refugee populations. The goal was to test assumptions that refugees are dependent on humanitarian assistance and are a burden to host states. The project was privately funded and coordinated with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[37] Findings suggested that refugees were important economic actors and could contribute to local economies if given more rights.

The project recruited over 40 refugees as peer researchers, surveyors and assistants, screening for candidates with academic backgrounds, broad personal or professional networks, and demonstrated community commitment. Lead researchers interviewed refugees recruited by the Ugandan office of the Humanitarian Innovation Project, selecting a core team of 18 peer researchers overseen by three Ugandan staff. Together, these researchers surveyed 1,593 refugees in two rural settlements and in Kampala.

UNHCR documentation helped researchers reach the desired number of respondents in camps, but could not help in Kampala, where the population was hidden and dispersed. To address this problem, researchers used respondent-driven sampling, which enabled "researchers to combine the efficiency of purposive snowball sampling […] with a mathematical model that introduces the rigor of randomness." [38]

A similar study of Colombian refugees in Quito, Ecuador by the UNHCR and the Institute of Quito began with venue-based sampling. Researchers began by selecting two neighborhoods in the North and South of Quito. Soon, however, researchers realized they were not reaching sufficient respondents, due to refugee dispersal and mistrust. The lead researchers then recruited refugees already conducting outreach work among their peers, including neighborhood representatives and business owners, and proceeded to use referral methods.[39] Eventually, the project interviewed 1,856 respondents.

Lessons for Human Rights Watch: These cases demonstrate that when hard-to-reach populations are embedded within the broader population, peer researchers can be especially effective. In both instances, in Ecuador and Uganda, researchers began using peer researchers after failing to recruit sufficient numbers through traditional methods. In these cases, refugees were more willing to disclose their identities and discuss their conditions with peers facing similar circumstances.

Comparison Case Study: Human Rights Watch's 2013 report, *You Are All Terrorists*: Kenyan Police Abuse of Refugees in Nairobi,[40] [41] relied on help from NGOs and others to locate and interview 101 refugees and

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[36] Bettas, Alexander, Louise Bloom, Josiah Kaplan and Naohiko Omata. "Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions." Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford Department of International Development. 2015. <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/refugeeeconomies>.

[37] ibid

[38] ibid

[39] In Spanish. Moscoso, Raul and Nancy Burneo. "Más allá de las fronteras: La población colombiana en su proceso de integración urbana en la ciudad de Quito." Instituto de la Ciudad de Quito and UNHCR. November 2014. <http://www.acnur.org/t3/fileadmin/scripts/doc.php?file=t3/fileadmin/Documentos/Publicaciones/2014/9847>.

[40] Simpson, Gerry. "You Are All Terrorists: Kenyan Police Abuse of Refugees in Nairobi." *Human Rights Watch*. 29 May 2013. Web. 20 March 2015. <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/05/29/you-are-all-terrorists>.

asylum seekers who had experienced police abuse in Nairobi. All respondents were located in the Eastleigh suburb. Through these 101 interviews, HRW was able to document roughly 1,000 individual instances of abuse.

While this information was significant, the sample was comparatively small and geographically concentrated. Aided by peer interviewers and balanced chain referrals, HRW could have accessed more respondents in other parts of Nairobi, broadening the study's scope and gaining more insight into the nature and scope of abuses. Again, the research could have begun with a smaller number of qualitative interviews by Human Rights Watch staff, followed by a larger quantitative survey conducted by peer interviewers.

Case Study III: Sex Workers and Violence in Kenya

Original Study: *Sex Workers in Kenya, Numbers of Clients and Associated Risks: An Exploratory Survey*[42]

Summary: The International Community for Relief of Starvation and Suffering International (ICROSS) is a non-profit headquartered in New York, focusing on health promotion in East Africa. The organization conducted a study of 475 female sex workers in Kenya from 2000 to 2002 to identify where they met clients; the average number of clients per worker; and associated health and violence risks. The study involved respondents aged 15 and over, from four rural and three urban areas. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. The researchers learned that 88% of respondents worked in fixed locations such as bars, hotels, and brothels; 35% reported experiencing rape; a further 17% reported physical assault; and 86% reported unwanted abortions.

For another study, ICROSS trained sex workers from pre-existing self-help groups to act as peer interviewers. From this group of trained peer researchers, ICROSS short-listed candidates with strong interviewing skills and familiarity with sex worker venues. These researchers helped draft questions and response categories, translated surveys into local languages, and conducted interviews. The peers explained the survey's purpose to potential respondents, arranged suitable times, and conducted most interviews in respondents' homes.

ICROSS back-translated the survey into English, and repeated 50 of the 475 interviews with a second interviewer. It found no major data discrepancies. Two interviewers were arrested and imprisoned for the duration of the study, although they eventually faced no charges.

Lessons for Human Rights Watch: Involving peer researchers in designing surveys helped tailor the questions, based on insider knowledge. Peer researcher involvement in translation ensured accurate framing. The partnership helped ICROSS establish trust with respondents, but the arrests demonstrate the need for safety protocols. ICROSS's back-translation and second round of interviews ensured high data quality, but did require more effort.

Comparison Case Study: Human Rights Watch's report, *Sex Workers at Risk: Condoms as Evidence of Prostitution in Four US Cities,*[43] describes the abuse of sex workers by local police. As Human Rights Watch notes, some respondents chose not to self identify as sex workers, or had additional, overlapping roles such as outreach workers. As a result, HRW was unable to determine how many sex workers it had actually interviewed. Had HRW involved sex workers as peer researchers from the beginning, it might have overcome this challenge.

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[42] Elmore-Meegan, Michael, Ronán M. Conroy and C Bernard Agala. "Sex Workers in Kenya, Numbers of Clients and Associated Risks: An Exploratory Survey." Reproductive Health Matters (2004): 50-57.

[43] McLemore, Megan. *Sex Workers at Risk: Condoms as Evidence of Prostitution in Four US Cities*. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2012.

Case Study IV: Landmine Survivors and Quality of Life in Cambodia

Original Study: I Am Happy I Am Alive[44]

Summary: Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provides social and legal services to people affected by war and human rights violations, and JRS Cambodia is the umbrella organization for the Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines. From May 2012 to May 2013, it engaged landmine survivors as peer researchers while studying the quality of life of landmine survivors.

JRS worked with its existing network of partner NGOs to form the Survivor Network Team, consisting of 44 landmine survivors and people with disabilities. JRS trained these to be both interviewers and researchers, using an initial three-day training workshop, followed by regular meetings. With the help of the World Health Organization, JRS designed a research project based on unstructured interviews and structured surveys.

Village leaders acted as gatekeepers to landmine survivors; in return, researchers gave both leaders and survivors mine awareness materials in Khmer. After interviewing the persons referred by village leaders, peer researchers used additional chain referrals to access other respondents, broadening their sample's representivity. In total, the team conducted 3,448 interviews in 393 villages.

Jesuit Refugee Service compensated peer researchers for their transportation, food and basic living expenses with roughly $5 per day, an amount shaped by local cost of living and by discussions with local NGOs and the peer researchers themselves.[45]

Lessons for Human Rights Watch: JRS's ability to collaborate with other organizations was a key factor in this research's success, as was its collaboration with the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), a government organization.[46] As a result, community leaders welcomed and helped the researchers. However, this kind of government support is not likely to be available to most Human Rights Watch investigations.

Importantly, JRS moved beyond the first round of respondents referred by gatekeepers, using peers to access a second round of respondents. The peer researchers helped JRS dig deeper into the community, but did so inconspicuously, without attracting unwanted attention.

Although the study did not strive for statistical precision, its sample size and variety was sufficiently large to support broad conclusions. This sample was only possible with peer researchers.

Comparison HRW Case Study: Human Rights Watch's report *As If We Weren't Human*[47] investigated abuses against disabled women in northern Uganda. The report was based on 64 interviews conducted over two ten-day trips by two HRW staff, and one consultant. HRW located the respondents through local NGOs and disabled persons' unions. Although HRW had hoped to speak with a broader sample, limited time and respondent availability made this difficult. A handful of peer researchers might have helped HRW access

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[44] "I Am Happy I Am Alive" Jesuit Refugee Service and Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines. 2013.
<http://www.jrscambodia.org/publication/SNPReport_English.pdf>.

[45] Interview with Denise Coghlan, Jesuit Refugee Service, Cambodia Country Director. March 21, 2015.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Barriga, Shantha Rau. "As If We Weren't Human." Human Rights Watch. 26 August 2010. Web. 12 April 2015. <
http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/08/24/if-we-weren-t-human>.

additional subgroups with a wider range of disabilities, experiences, and geographic locations. As was true for the JRS project in Cambodia, these Ugandan peer researchers could have become advocates for change within their own communities.

Case Study V: Veterans and Violence in Israel/Palestine

Original Study: [Israeli Military Violence Against Palestinian Civilians in the Second Intifada](#) [48]

Summary: Israeli-American social scientist Devorah Manekin (formerly of Hebrew University, now at Arizona State University) interviewed Israeli veterans to study "opportunistic violence" - violence not organized or ordered by superiors - against Palestinians. Given that there is no publicly available sampling frame of Israeli veterans, these former combatants constituted a hard-to-reach population.

Manekin began with an exploratory online survey of men who had conducted their military service in Israeli combat units from 1999-2006. She asked about their behavior, and that of their colleagues, during the Second Intifada (2000-2005). Based on those responses, she constructed a quantitative survey distributed among the relevant veteran population. Statistical precision was not possible; instead, Manekin hoped to include at least a handful of respondents from each relevant military unit.

Manekin began by initiating chain referrals from several different access nodes, including family and friends. Then, she used virtual venue-based sampling through military Facebook groups. She enlisted Facebook group administrators as peer recruiters, asking them to circulate her survey to group members.

Manekin's final sample included 118 respondents, 42% of whom she had recruited via Facebook. Her sample consisted of members of nearly all regular Israeli ground units involved in the Second Intifada, including all five relevant infantry brigades.

Lessons for Human Rights Watch: Manekin's research suggests it may be possible to increase the quality, number, and diversity of respondents by combining standard chain referrals with digital venue sampling. Had Manekin relied only on Israeli NGOs for her chain referrals, her respondent pool would have been skewed. Manekin used peer recruiters, in the form of Facebook page administrators, but did the interviews herself. She cautions that in this case, her outsider status helped persuade respondents to fully explain their experiences, as they assumed that she knew little about their world.

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[48] Manekin, Devorah. "Violence Against Civilians in the Second Intifada: The Moderating Effect of Armed Group Structure on Opportunistic Violence." *Comparative Political Studies*. Vol. 46, No. 10, 2013: 1273–1300.

Case Study VI: Forced Labor in the Indonesian Fishing Industry

Original Study: [Are Slaves Catching the Fish you Buy?](#)[49]

Summary: In March 2015, the Associated Press published a year-long investigation into labor trafficking in the Indonesian fishing industry. Reporters interviewed over 40 current and former trafficked laborers in Benjina, Indonesia, the final destination for many of the region's trafficked laborers.

The AP reporter did not state directly how she recruited her respondents. She did, however, conduct an extensive supply chain analysis, tracking trucks and boats with the help of satellite imagery.

Interviewing current laborers was risky due to monitoring by guards and boat captains. She also interviewed seafood distributors and human trafficking brokers, and used GPS satellite imagery to determine the physical location of trafficked laborers.

The AP did not employ peer researchers, but doing so could have broadened the research's scope and precision. Given the isolated and sensitive nature of Benjina Island, peer researchers might be able to gather information from laborers who seldom reach the mainland.

Lessons for Human Rights Watch: Like the AP journalists, HRW could analyze supply chains to identify nodes of access, such as truck drivers boat captains, and brokers. Satellite imagery helped the AP identify patterns and access points, including boat arrival and unloading times and locations.

Comparison Case Study: Accessing laborers in repressive work environments is a consistent challenge for HRW. In *Migrant Workers' Rights on Saadiyat Island in the United Arab Emirates,*[50] HRW staff and a consultant interviewed 113 migrant workers employed by seven contractors. The researchers were unable to interview workers on Saadiyat Island, however, as the site was restricted. Instead, HRW interviewed former workers, including both those living in the UAE and those deported to Pakistan or Bangladesh. HRW acknowledged that this sample size was small, but explained this as a result of UAE's highly repressive environment.

In this case, peer interviewers might have enhanced HRW's ability to inconspicuously access workers on Saadiyat Island. A handful of peer interviewers living on the island might have gathered testimonies without drawing attention. In addition, peer researchers, helped by satellite imagery, could have helped HRW identify potential informants along the supply chain, such as drivers transporting construction materials to the Island. Peer researcher safety, in this instance, would have been a key concern.

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[49] Mcdowell, Robin, Margie Mason and Martha Mendoza. *AP Investigation: Are slaves catching the fish you buy?* 25 March 2015. Web. 01 April 2015. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/b9e0fc7155014ba78e07f1a022d90389/ap-investigation-are-slaves-catching-fish-you-buy>.
[50] "Migrant Workers' Rights on Saadiyat Island in the United Arab Emirates," *Human Rights Watch.* 10 February 2015. Web. 15 March 2015. <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uae0215_ForUploadR.pdf>.

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Interview with Sarah Parkinson, Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota. March 31, 2015.

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APPENDIX II: EXPERT INTERVIEWS

1. Interview with Laura Bloomberg, Associate Dean, Humphrey School, March 16, 2015.

2. Interview with Tun Channareth, Lead Peer Researcher, Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines, March 21, 2015.

3. Interview with Denise Coghlan, Director, Jesuit Refugee Service, Cambodia, March 21, 2015.

4. Interview with Ronan Conroy, Associate Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health Medicine Royal College of Surgeons, April 2, 2015.

5. Interview with Eva Elliott, Lecturer, Cardiff University, March 31, 2015.

6. Interview with Neela Ghoshal, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program, Human Rights Watch, April 24, 2015.

7. Interview with Maria Hanratty, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota, March 29, 2015.

8. Interview with Amanda Klasing, Researcher, Women's Division, Human Rights Watch, April 30, 2015.

9. Interview with Devorah Manekin, Assistant Professor, School of Politics and Global Studies, Arizona State University, March 12, 2015.

10. Interview with John Mazzeo, Director, Masters of Public Health Program, DePaul University, March 19, 2015.

11. Interview with Megan McLemore, Senior Researcher, Health and Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, April 20, 2015 and May 4, 2015.

12. Interview with Martha Mendoza, Associated Press National Writer, April 9th, 2015.

13. Interview with Raul Moscoso, Sociologist, Instituto de la Ciudad de Quito, March 12, 2015.

14. Interview with Leah Moses, President and CEO, the Improve Group, March 30, 2015.

15. Interview with Smita Narula, Human Rights Activist, Fellow at Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute, Hunter College, April 23, 2015.

16. Interview with Sarah Parkinson, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota, March 31, 2015.

17. Interview with Majda Puača, LGBT and Immigration Activist, April 1, 2015.

18. Interview with Phil Robertson, Deputy Director, Asia Division, Human Rights Watch, May 7, 2015.

19. Interview with Howard Rosing, Executive Director, Steans Center of Community Based Service Learning and Community Service Studies, DePaul University, March 30, 2015.

20. Interview with Wayne Weibel, Professor Emeritus of Epidemiology, University of Illinois at Chicago, March 10, 2015.