



International
Labour
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GLOBAL BUSINESS
NETWORK ON
FORCED LABOUR

► Eradicating forced labour

What works in practice



Executive summary

How can forced labour be eradicated globally? What approaches are the most effective at gaining ground towards this goal, and can they be replicated across country contexts? There are many ideas about what could work in theory, but there still is little data, despite decades of recognizing forced labour as a global problem, on what has actually worked in practice. Much of the knowledge about what works is held by a range of stakeholders addressing these issues on the ground.

This study finds that the global eradication of forced labour requires a whole-of-society approach. A wide range of actors have a role to play, including Governments, enterprises, labour recruiters, employer and business membership organizations, worker organizations, migrant community-based organizations, international organizations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, technical experts, multi-stakeholder platforms and initiatives, faith-based organizations and media outlets. While collaboration across these stakeholder groups is critical, this study focuses on key approaches at the Government level and the company level as a first step.

► What contextual factors impact initiatives?

The context within which Governments and companies operate affects efforts to eradicate forced labour in several ways. First, structural contextual factors, such as widespread poverty and lack of livelihood options, act as key root causes of forced labour. Further, proximate contextual factors such as ineffective legislation and weak enforcement of labour laws act as barriers which prevent initiatives from being effective and scaleable.

The business community is diverse, made up of multinational enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises with varying levels of capacity and resources dedicated to due diligence practices. The study has identified a range of initiatives which enterprises of different sizes and capacities can apply in the following ways:

- Within its own operations.
- Within its supply chains through due diligence on its suppliers. For example, a manufacturing company's supply chain would include any suppliers of services (including recruitment services) or raw materials.

The following contextual factors (root causes and barriers) are the most significant and affect many countries where forced labour is prevalent. It is important to note that a wide range of other contextual factors play a role in different country settings, and factors have complex interlinkages and interdependencies.

Top contextual factors affecting governments and companies attempting to eradicate forced labour	
1	Inadequate and poorly enforced national labour laws.
2	Inadequate and poorly enforced policy frameworks.
3	Poor knowledge and awareness amongst governments about forced labour and how to address it.
4	Poor coordination between government bodies at national level and between migrant worker origin and destination countries at international level.
5	Low awareness of rights and access to education among communities that face vulnerability.
6	Widespread poverty, lack of livelihood options and structural inequality and discrimination.
7	High levels of informality and low regulation of the labour market.
8	Workers' lack of access to grievance mechanisms, remedy and representation.

It is critical for Governments, companies and other stakeholders to work together to address the root causes of forced labour and barriers to progress to achieve real progress at scale.

However, not all initiatives – especially those at the company level – target the root causes of forced labour. The majority of the examples of effective initiatives noted in this report aim to eradicate forced labour from the operations and/or supply chains of a particular enterprise and, even more specifically, to eradicate specific indicators of forced labour. There is clear evidence of progress made at the company level – even in countries facing the contextual challenges noted above. Thus actions to eradicate forced labour can be effective despite adverse contextual factors, yet sustained scaleable change requires a boarder approach.

► What are the most promising initiatives globally?

The study has identified ways that Governments and companies have gain ground towards the eradication of forced labour, according to the 11 Indicators of Forced Labour provided by the ILO. These indicators represent the most common signs or “red flags” of forced labour. The presence of one or more indicators can indicate that a worker has been subjected to this violation of human rights. As defined in the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) forced labour is all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.

While the primary focus is on interventions at company and labour recruiter level, examples at the government level are also included. Section 3 of this report provides further examples and evidence.

Effective actions to address the 11 forced labour indicators

1. Abuse of vulnerability

- ▶ Review recruitment, employment and worker management practices to identify potential abuse of vulnerability and implement solutions. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Provide awareness-raising training to workers both during recruitment and employment to ensure they are aware of their rights and how to seek assistance in case rights are violated. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Establish individual and collective grievance mechanisms which are available to workers during recruitment and employment, as well as social dialogue at the workplace. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Provide life skills training to workers (e.g. on financial management, negotiation skills). *(Governments, companies)*

2. Deception

- ▶ Increase transparency during the recruitment process including through transparent job advertisement processes, in-person attendance at key points during the recruitment journey, engaging civil society partners in recruitment process monitoring and improved communication of offer letters. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Increase workers' awareness of their rights and how to seek support both pre- and post-arrival through mandatory orientation programmes. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Prevent contract substitution by increasing transparency of recruitment and employment processes, including through use of technology solutions. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*

3. Restriction of movement

- ▶ Review recruitment, employment and worker management practices to identify and remove any potential restrictions on workers' freedom of movement. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*

4. Isolation

- ▶ Set up effective grievance mechanisms and provide access to worker representatives or workers' organizations (with relevant language skills) to reduce isolation. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Set up social dialogue initiatives between workers and management to identify structured mechanisms which will enable workers to leave the premises on a regular basis, free of company chaperones. *(Companies)*
- ▶ Engage with government and business partners to improve infrastructure access (e.g. access to the Internet, roads). *(Governments, companies)*
- ▶ Integrate businesses within existing communities, where possible. *(Governments, companies)*

Effective actions to address the 11 forced labour indicators

5. Physical and sexual violence

- ▶ Introduce specific company policies on violence and harassment and socialize these with all employees. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Identify gender risks through gender-specific impact assessments. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Use disaggregated data to inform initiatives and targets that aim at reviewing and removing unequal power dynamics in recruitment and employment processes and throughout the supply chain. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Establish independent investigative organizations or gender committees responsible for identifying and resolving gender-related concerns. *(Companies)*
- ▶ Prevent and address physical and sexual violence through capacity-building programmes. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- ▶ Provide awareness raising and sensitization activities on physical and sexual violence to all workers and staff. *(Governments, companies)*
- ▶ Empower women's associations, including through financial support, to reach affected workers in the informal sector. *(Governments)*

6. Intimidation and threats

- ▶ Train and/or brief workers to recognize intimidation and build an environment in which they feel confident to report it. Where intimidation practices are identified, take disciplinary action against perpetrators and ensure workers are protected from further harm. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*

7. Retention of identity documents

- ▶ Require all companies to ensure workers hold their own identity documents, and provide them with safe storage which they can access at any time; Enshrine this requirement in national laws which prohibit and penalize retention of identity documents and require provision of safe storage to workers. *(Governments)*
- ▶ Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for employers and labour recruiters on why passport retention is prohibited and how they can provide appropriate safe and accessible storage. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters and other stakeholders including employer and business membership organizations)*

Effective actions to address the 11 forced labour indicators

8. Withholding of wages

- Implement digital wage payment systems and/or mobile applications to accurately register working records and payments. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- Use alternative mechanisms for digital payments where workers do not have personal bank accounts. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*
- Ensure copies of payslips are provided to workers, with full information on hours worked, wages and rates paid and any deductions. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- Identify root causes of any withholding of wages. This could involve analysing own company practices and cashflow, or engaging with suppliers, employment agencies or labour recruiters to do so. Internally, or in collaboration with partners, identify and implement sustainable solutions. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- Provide destination country government support to pay withheld wages in an expedited manner via a resourced government-facilitated insurance fund. *(Governments)*
- Ring-fence end-of-service benefits over the course of the worker's service in a separate account that the employer or labour recruiter cannot use and that is easily accessible when the worker departs. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*

9. Debt bondage

- Adopt a fair recruitment and zero recruitment fee policy which is aligned to the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and includes clear guidelines for implementation. *(Companies, suppliers, labour recruiters)*
- Establish service-level agreements with suppliers, labour recruiters and any sub-agents which clearly communicate that the costs of recruitment are covered by the company and that workers should not pay recruitment fees or related costs. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*
- Provide access to a third-party helpline to all candidates during their recruitment journey and ensure that they know to report any recruitment fee payment requests to the helpline. *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- Interview workers on arrival and post-arrival (within 3–6 months) in a safe and confidential environment, to provide them the opportunity to disclose details around any recruitment fees and costs paid and/or any intimidation faced. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*
- Reimburse recruitment fees and costs to all affected workers. *(Companies, labour recruiters)*

10. Abusive working and living conditions

- Improve accommodation facilities so that standards are in line with national legislation or international standards (see [ILO Workers' Housing Standards](#)). *(Governments, companies, labour recruiters)*
- Carry out training to enhance effective and respectful communication between workers and supervisors, including around workplace safety risks. *(Companies)*

11. Excessive working hours

- Reduce excessive working hours, based on consultations with workers and management, through process improvements, production incentives and human resource management, including a workers' committee. *(Companies)*
- Analyse and revise working hours systems to deal with embedded high overtime culture. *(Companies)*

► Success factors

Given the wide range of initiative types and actors involved, it is important to recognize that specific success factors will depend on the case and context. However, the study identified a range of overarching success factors across initiatives and contexts at the government level, at the company level and across all levels.

Success factors: Government level	
1	Strengthen enforcement of law and policy frameworks through effective domestic resource mobilization supports governments to independently finance core interventions targeting forced labour.
2	Give public recognition of issues related to forced labour at the highest level of government, and build political will to drive a comprehensive and ambitious reform agenda.
3	Strengthen policy frameworks by adopting and enforcing policies to promote fair recruitment including through regulation of labour intermediaries.
4	Increase awareness and knowledge of forced labour and how to prevent it at all levels of implementation, including all levels of government, the labour inspectorate, journalists and populations facing vulnerability via awareness-raising activities.
5	Strengthen enforcement of laws with a focus on enhancing the labour inspectorate's capacity through partnership with technical experts and other means.
6	Strengthen law and regulatory enforcement by building a trusted and credible inspection system via joint labour inspections between key actors: government, employer and business membership organizations and workers' organizations.
7	Identify and remove imbalanced power structures which incentivize corruption and forced labour conditions, for example quota systems which encourage excessive working hours for low pay.

Success factors: Company level	
1	Strengthen governance and commitment to address forced labour at senior management level to support company-wide implementation and staff motivation.
2	Increase awareness and knowledge of forced labour among staff with procurement, recruitment and employment responsibilities via capacity-building activities to ensure required actions are understood and effectively implemented.
3	Increase knowledge of how to prevent and remediate forced labour risks, especially for companies where understanding of issues is low through access to ongoing technical guidance.
4	Establish presence on the ground in countries/districts of operation – rely on locally based colleagues that can engage with suppliers and labour recruiters in person (both culturally and linguistically) to increase understanding of requirements and how to implement them.
5	Enhance coordination with other companies that work with common suppliers and/or labour recruiters to encourage improvements.
6	Increase knowledge and awareness about how to prevent and address forced labour via support from employer and business membership organizations to their members. This is particularly important in ensuring that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) receive needed information and technical support.
7	Increase coordination between a larger range of actors taking unified actions through participation in multi-stakeholder initiatives focused on forced labour.
8	Use technology to increase transparency of operations and mechanization to increase efficiency and task division.
9	Publish remediation efforts to support industry transparency and to increase the likelihood that other companies will remediate using similar methods.

Success factors: Across all levels	
1	Allocate funding for activities designed to identify, prevent and remediate forced labour. Given resource constraints at SME level, creative mobilization of resources, including through collaborative efforts can help.
2	Take a holistic approach. At all levels, programme design was identified as more effective at creating sustainable and systemic change when focused on addressing root causes, using a combination of identification, prevention, remediation and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
3	Reduce workers' vulnerability to deception and increase access to support through supporting their knowledge and awareness of their rights and by increasing the availability of grievance mechanisms.
4	Provide access to effective grievance mechanisms and social dialogue processes to enable workers to better seek assistance and participate in remediation processes, which in turn results in more sustainable outcomes overall.
5	Target collaboration and coordination between all relevant stakeholders, including government actors, buyers, suppliers, labour recruiters, social partners and the broader business community to increase the effectiveness of interventions.
6	Engage with technical experts on the design and implementation of investigation, prevention and remediation interventions, especially where companies and Governments do not have relevant capacity or resources.
7	Ensure continued and focused attention and targeted engagement on the topic of forced labour from a variety of stakeholders (including the media)- creating necessary stimulus for action.
8	Foster open, honest and constructive dialogue between stakeholders to support the building of trust which is essential for effective collaboration in the long-term. Pilots and non-hierarchical engagement approaches support this process.
9	Conduct geographical reach. Coverage of various regions and regional countries in programme design supports the long-term goal of achieving impact at scale.
10	Strengthen civil society engagement at the grassroots level to maintain pressure, accountability and local ownership of issues, ultimately supporting the sustainability of changes.



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