



# ► Frequently Asked Questions about the Global Business Network on Forced Labour (ILO GBNFL)

## ► What is forced labour?

Forced labour is any type of work that is performed involuntarily and under the threat of a penalty.<sup>1</sup>

It refers to situations in which persons are forced to work through the use of violence or intimidation, or by more subtle means such as retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities.

No worker should be indebted or coerced to work. They should work freely, aware of the terms and conditions of their work in advance and paid regularly as agreed. [Learn more](#)

In 2021 there were an estimated 27.6 million people in forced labour globally, working in both the public and private sectors. Of these, 11.8 million were women and girls, and 3.3 million were children.<sup>2</sup>

Forced labour is defined by the ILO [Forced Labour Convention No. 29](#) of 1930 and its accompanying [2014 Protocol. The ILO's Abolition of Forced Labour Convention No. 105](#), adopted in 1957, also deals with state-imposed forms of forced labour. These Conventions and Protocol are international legal instruments that set out basic principles and rights at work.

### What is the ILO?

The [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) is the only tripartite United Nations (UN) specialised agency that brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers from 187 [Member States](#) to jointly shape policies and programmes. The ILO is responsible for drawing up and overseeing [international labour standards](#) and assisting Member States to ratify and implement these standards.

## ► Why forced labour matters to businesses?

Forced labour generates over US\$236 billion globally in illicit profits annually. The practice creates unfair competition between businesses. It also deprives governments of taxes and draws public resources into prevention, protection, and enforcement measures that could be put towards other needs.

Forced labour is illegal in countries that have ratified the relevant ILO Conventions related to forced labour and may be punished as a crime as a result. Furthermore, national laws and regulations governing employer – worker

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<sup>1</sup> **Work that is involuntary** refers to when a worker takes a job NOT under his or her own will or because of false promises made by the employer (lack of free and informed consent). **Threat of any penalty** refers to a wide range of penalties used to compel someone to work.

<sup>2</sup> Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage report (2022) Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---ipец/documents/publication/wcms\\_854733.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipец/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf)

relations, including forced labour, in many countries will help determine its illegality, the penalties for engaging in the practice, and available enforcement mechanisms.

With growing awareness in the global market and the introduction of new legislation to prevent forced labour in supply chains,<sup>3</sup> increased attention and commitment is being paid by businesses and employers to their role in eradicating forced labour. In more and more countries, trade regulations prohibit the import of goods that have been produced, at any point, by forced labour. A violation of these laws can result in confiscation of imported goods by public authorities or disruptions to trade and company production schedules.

Freedom from forced labour is a fundamental human right, as recognized by the [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#), the [UN Human Rights Declaration](#) and its [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). It is therefore our collective responsibility to fully prevent and eradicate it.

Although companies have a moral obligation to eradicate forced labour, they can also accrue various additional benefits from fighting forced labour, including:

- Avoiding lawsuits, criminal prosecution or economic sanctions
- Avoiding a public scandal
- Gaining better reputation with suppliers and clients
- Gaining a better brand image
- Obtaining access to new markets or/and export markets
- Obtaining fair trade and other certifications
- Gaining a loyal customer base
- Attracting and retaining qualified talent
- Gaining better access to credit and interested investors

### ► What is the Global Business Network on Forced Labour (ILO GBNFL)?

Coordinated by the ILO, the [Global Business Network on Forced Labour](#) (ILO GBNFL) was established in 2018. Its main objective is to bring together businesses of all sizes and Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs) across different sectors and from around the world to fight against forced labour to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 8.7.<sup>4</sup> The ILO GBNFL operates as a non-profit entity funded by donor contributions, annual membership fees, and in-kind support.

The ILO GBNFL is a business-led collaborative platform dedicated exclusively to addressing forced labour. It serves as a space for businesses to **connect** across sectors and geographies, breaking silos to eradicate forced labour. It **convenes** with government bodies and other stakeholders to develop sustainable solutions to tackle the root causes of forced labour. The network fosters **innovation** by encouraging businesses to identify gaps, develop new approaches, and scale effective solutions. It also **supports** businesses by providing essential data, information, and resources to empower them in their efforts to combat forced labour effectively.

The ILO GBNFL aims to maximize best practices and minimize duplication of actions and solutions across private sector initiatives to ensure coherent approaches in a cost-effective manner.

Through the ILO GBNFL, companies can be part of a collective effort to end forced labour in supply chains. The ILO GBNFL is a partner of [Alliance 8.7](#), a multi-stakeholder platform that includes governments, international and regional organizations, workers' organizations, employers' and business membership organizations, and

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of these types of legislation can be found in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Mexico, Norway, United Kingdom, and the United States, among others.

<sup>4</sup> The international community has committed to eradicating forced labour by 2030 (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8.7).

civil society organizations. This platform allows partners to share information, promising practices, and lessons learned, collaborate, and demonstrate progress towards achieving SDG Target 8.7, which includes the eradication of forced labour by 2030. The ILO GBNFL facilitates private sector contributions towards this goal, serving as a vehicle to ensure businesses play a crucial role in these efforts.

### ► How is the ILO GBNFL structured?

The ILO serves as the **Secretariat** of the ILO GBNFL and manages its day-to-day activities. The Secretariat is responsible for maintaining all the ILO GBNFL's documents, scheduling meetings, preparing and distributing agendas and announcements, and handling other duties such as communication and coordination with the ILO on matters related to the ILO GBNFL.

The ILO GBNFL also has a **Steering Committee** which is its oversight body and provides advice and guidance to the Secretariat. It is composed of a subset of members (companies, EBMOs and business networks) who represent the interests of the entire membership, helping guide the future direction of the ILO GBNFL. It endorses and monitors the progress of the ILO GBNFL's annual work plans and makes the final decisions on membership and partnership applications. Steering Committee members are advocates of the ILO GBNFL and represent it externally. They make the business case for an end to forced labour and actively recruit new members and partners.

The Steering Committee has a **Chair**, who is elected by the Steering Committee for one year at a time.

### ► What kind of services does the ILO GBNFL provide?

The ILO GBNFL offers its members a range of tailored resources and services designed to combat forced labour effectively. These include:

- Awareness raising activities to educate and mobilize members.
- Technical training customized to industry sectors and specific regions.
- Access to up-to-date data and research.
- Tools, guides, and publications.
- Practical guidance on how to improve company policies and practices.
- Opportunities to participate in global, regional, and national meetings, both face-to-face and online.
- Convene interested stakeholders, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who often lack such opportunities, to connect to global initiatives where they can explore and share mutual challenges and scalable solutions.
- Foster policy dialogue and help shape national frameworks to create lasting change.
- Work with companies across sectors to develop innovative collaboration models.

### ► How can I join the ILO GBNFL?

You may join the ILO GBNFL as a member. ILO GBNFL members are businesses of all sizes and sectors, as well as employer and business membership organizations including industry trade groups and sectoral associations. Members must support the ILO GBNFL to further its objectives and actively engage with the network. ILO GBNFL members work to engage enterprises, including small and medium enterprises, develop practical resources and tools, and devise local solutions that help shape national frameworks to create lasting change.

### ► What are the benefits of becoming a member of the ILO GBNFL?

There are numerous benefits associated with being a member of the ILO GBNFL.

The ILO GBNFL can help interested companies and business and employer organisations identify and eradicate forced labour. By becoming a member, you will:

- Have access to the ILO, all its resources and its lobbying power with governments, workers, and employers around the world.
- Have access to a network of partners to work with on preventing forced labour.
- Receive training and tools to tackle forced labour in your operations.
- Stay informed on evolving due diligence legislation and related trade bans.
- Receive official recognition for your efforts to eradicate forced labour.
- Be seen as a global leader and gain visibility through ILO, ILO GBNFL and UN communications.
- Draw on the expertise and experience of leading companies, industry initiatives, and the ILO.
- Get help navigating the complex landscape of actors, mechanisms, and resources that tackle forced labour across different sectors and geographies.
- Partner with the ILO in delivering solutions at country level and participate in policy dialogue.

### ► What are my commitments if I become a member of the ILO GBNFL?

By joining the ILO GBNFL, members must commit to:

- **Eradicate** forced labour in all its forms in their organizations, supply chains, member organizations, sectors and beyond, by taking concrete steps.
- **Advocate** for a comprehensive and coordinated response to forced labour, including in dealings with government bodies.
- **Uphold** the principles of inclusivity and collaboration when working with other stakeholders to end forced labour.

### ► How do members contribute to the ILO GBNFL?

There are many ways members can contribute to the ILO GBNFL, including:

- Participating in network events and activities.
- Identifying individual and collective needs and helping to set the direction of the network.
- Joining the Steering Committee.
- Leading or participating in expert working groups to identify and address specific issues through actionable solutions.
- Sharing good practices, lessons learned, tools and resources, for instance by participating in a webinar or a country-level technical workshop.
- Mobilizing their own networks to maximize the reach and positive impact of the ILO GBNFL.

### ► How much does the membership to the ILO GBNFL cost?

The table below indicates the membership fee structure for the different types of members.

	Large companies	SMEs	Business networks
Category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ &gt;250 employees or revenue &gt;US\$25 million</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 10–250 employees or revenue &lt;US\$25 million</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs)</li> <li>▪ Industry trade groups</li> <li>▪ Sectoral associations</li> </ul>
Fee	US\$10,000	In-kind support	In-kind support <sup>5</sup>

Membership fees may be periodically reviewed by the ILO GBNFL.

### ► Who are the members of the ILO GBNFL?

The ILO GBNFL currently has 21 members:

#### Enterprises:

- Apple Incorporated
- The Coca-Cola Company
- Mars, Incorporated

#### Employer and business membership organizations:

- Confederation of Industrial Chambers of the United Mexican States (CONCAMIN)
- Employers Confederation of Thailand (ECOT)
- Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP)
- Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE)
- International Organisation of Employers (IOE)
- La Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Cote d’Ivoire (CGECI)
- Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF)
- Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI)
- United States Council for International Business (USCIB)

#### Business networks:

- amfori
- ASEAN CSR Network (ACN)
- Brazil Association of Textile Retail (ABVTEX)
- Consumer Goods Forum (CGF)
- Global Business Coalition Against Human Trafficking (GBCAT)
- Initiative for Compliance and Sustainability (ICS)
- Ipieca

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<sup>5</sup> The nature of in-kind support is decided on a case-by-case basis but can include hosting events, disseminating communications materials or providing resources and tools. In-kind support is discussed and settled during the membership/partnership application phase.

- Pharmaceutical Supply Chain Initiative (PSCI)
- Transnational Alliance for Combatting Illicit Trade (TRACIT)

### ► How can I become a member of the ILO GBNFL?

**Step 1:** Get in touch with the ILO GBNFL Secretariat for your membership query by completing this [form](#) or writing directly to [fl-businessnetwork@ilo.org](mailto:fl-businessnetwork@ilo.org). The Secretariat will respond to you explaining the procedure and send you a template of letter of interest to become a member of the ILO GBNFL.

**Step 2:** Submit a letter of interest to the ILO GBNFL.

**Step 3:** The ILO GBNFL' Steering Committee will assess your application, and the Secretariat will get back to you.

**Step 4A:** Companies and SMEs accepted for membership:

- Must sign a public private partnership agreement with the ILO.
- Large companies<sup>6</sup> must pay an annual membership fee of US\$10,000 to the ILO GBNFL; SMEs are not required to pay a membership fee but can provide voluntary in-kind support and a commitment to further the ILO GBNFL's objectives.
- Must agree to share information and contribute to network activities, as appropriate.

**Step 4B:** Business Networks accepted for membership:

- Must sign a letter of commitment to become members of the ILO GBNFL.
- Must agree to share information and contribute to the ILO GBNFL's activities, as appropriate.
- Can provide in-kind support to the ILO GBNFL.

### ► How can I contact the ILO GBNFL?

For more information, and to join us, please contact us at [fl-businessnetwork@ilo.org](mailto:fl-businessnetwork@ilo.org) or send us a message [here](#).

### ► How can I get information from the ILO GBNFL?

Sign up for our Newsletter and to receive relevant information from the Network [here](#) or join our [LinkedIn](#)

### ► What are some of the ILO GBNFL's key tools and resources that I can use?

Data, publications, tools, and podcasts related to forced labour can be accessed in the ILO GBNFL's extensive [online library](#).

The table below presents a sample of ILO GBNFL's key publications.

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<sup>6</sup> >250 employees or revenue >US\$25 million.

Online library - Key ILO GBNFL resources		
Date published	Tool	Description
2022	<a href="#">ILO GBNFL factsheet: The latest global facts and figures on forced labour at your fingertips - available in English, French and Spanish</a>	A two-page summary of key figures and insights from the ILO's 2021 Global Estimates on Modern Slavery.
2022	<a href="#">ILO Forced Labour Observatory</a>	A platform that provides comprehensive global and country information on forced labour.
2022	<a href="#">Eradicating forced labour: What works in practice report</a> and online <a href="#">toolbox</a> - available in English, French and Spanish	A summary of actions that have been identified as gaining ground on the eradication of forced labour by contributing towards identification, prevention, and remediation.
2022/2023	<a href="#">Due diligence toolkit on fair recruitment - available in English, French, and Spanish</a>	Helps businesses, especially SMEs, to set out a due diligence process when hiring foreign workers.

► **What are examples the ILO GBNFL’s country-level work?**

**Vietnam**

Many Vietnamese migrant workers incur high recruitment fees and related costs when migrating for work. This puts them at risk of debt bondage, which is a form of forced labour.

To improve the situation, ILO GBNFL supported the Vietnamese business community to present key decision-makers with credible solutions to forced labour. As a result, the government of Vietnam revised a Law on Contract-Based Vietnamese Overseas Workers ([Law 72](#)), regulating the recruitment of Vietnamese migrant workers. The updated and improved law (Law 69) came into force on 1 January 2022. [Learn more](#)

The ILO GBNFL published three [policy briefs](#) on forced labour and fair recruitment in Viet Nam. These set out the current challenges and the actions the Government needed to take, at that point in time, in partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders to prevent forced labour and promote fair recruitment.

**Malaysia**

Malaysia is a major destination country for migrant workers, who are at higher risk of being in forced labour.

Since 2020, the ILO GBNFL has invested significant resources in training Malaysian businesses on how to identify and eradicate forced labour. In 2022, the ILO GBNFL, in collaboration with a wider ILO project trained rubber glove and palm oil producers on how to identify forced labour at several workshops hosted by the Malaysian Rubber Glove Manufacturers Association (MARGMA) as well as the ILO. The ILO GBNFL has worked closely with the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) to support their activities with members and government. In addition, the ILO GBNFL published, in 2024, the [Due Diligence Toolkit for Fair Recruitment](#) adapted to the Malaysian context to help local businesses, especially SMEs, set out a due diligence process when hiring workers from abroad.

To showcase the impressive progress of the Malaysian rubber industry on its journey to end forced labour, the ILO GBNFL published the podcast [Malaysia's rubber industry takes on forced labour](#).

### **Mexico**

The ILO GBNFL produced a special edition [podcast on forced labour and child labour in Mexico](#). The podcast takes an in-depth look at the causes of forced labour and child labour specific to Mexico, what is being done to tackle these abuses, what more needs to be done, and how. It also considers successful actions by employers' organizations, sectoral associations, small, medium-sized, and micro-enterprises, and the government (including local government).

The ILO GBNFL also undertook research to better understand the challenges in Mexico. As a result of this research three policy briefs were published in 2022.

- [A summary for companies on forced labour in Mexico](#)
- [A summary for companies on fair recruitment in Mexico](#)
- [Measures and recommendations for companies and EBMOs to try and fight forced labour in Mexico](#)

In 2023 the ILO GBNFL together with CONCAMIN, Mexico's largest industrial employer organization, co-hosted an [information session](#) and training workshop in Mexico City aimed at raising awareness and building the capacity of employers to identify and prevent forced labour. The training had attendees from different industries across the country (primarily energy, manufacturing, consumer goods, food and tourism, agriculture, and services). Moreover, other members of the ILO GBNFL joined the training to share their knowledge and go-to resources. As a follow-up to the training, an awareness-raising tool on forced labour and fair recruitment for businesses is being developed, tailored specifically for the Mexican context.

**To join us, and for  
further information**

[fl-businessnetwork@ilo.org](mailto:fl-businessnetwork@ilo.org) or visit [flbusiness.network](https://flbusiness.network)