

**Workshop to report on Findings of MLSS-ILO Research on
Forced Labour and Trafficking in Zambia
Welcoming Remarks by Gerry Finnegan, ILO Representative for Malawi,
Mozambique & Zambia
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I wish to welcome you all to the ILO Lusaka Office and to this important workshop at which you will hear the findings from the joint Ministry of Labour and Social Security and ILO research on Forced Labour and Trafficking in Zambia.

First of all, a few words about the ILO and its work in Zambia. The ILO is a specialized agency of the United Nations system, dealing with employment and labour matters. As part of the UN system and its system-wide efforts at “Delivering as One UN” in Zambia, the ILO works very closely with other UN agencies around issues that impact on employment and labour, including close collaboration with UNICEF, IOM among others.

Today we are here to discuss the findings of a research project undertaken by MLSS and ILO to investigate whether or not forced labour and trafficking exist in Zambia today – and if so, in what forms?

This Workshop represents the culmination of some 10 months of work by a great team of people, coordinated by our colleague Carron Fox. I would like to thank most sincerely all the people concerned for their hard efforts, the results of which we will see presented and discussed later today. This team involved: the MLSS; the team of very able national consultants and research assistants; the ILO social partners, being the employers’ and workers’ organizations; my ILO colleagues both here in Zambia as well as in Geneva, particularly Ms Caroline O’Reilly; and all of the other stakeholders involved.

I wish to publicly express my appreciation for the strong collaboration that exists between the Zambian Government in the form of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) and ILO in Zambia. It is very clear how committed the GoZ is to pursuing our shared objective: being the promotion of decent work for all working women and men, as encapsulated in the Zambia Decent Work Country Programme, launched by the Vice President on 4 December 2007.

The joint research endeavours of the MLSS and ILO fit very well with the Zambia DWCP, as they give appropriate and significant emphasis to the qualitative aspects of job creation.

This shared Decent Work objective of GoZ and ILO is about work in which the rights of the workers are respected and protected; and where they have the opportunity to develop their own potential and to contribute fully to national development and society in general. Where they exist, Forced Labour and Trafficking are the very antithesis of decent work and are major obstacles to poverty reduction and national development, as well as being significant barriers to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This challenging research project was embarked upon at the request of the Permanent Secretary MLSS, Mr Ngosa Chisupa, who expressed his concerns about exploitative labour practices, and even the possibility of forced labour, particularly in the mining sector. These concerns were also linked to the activities of labour brokers and contractors operating in the mining sector, who were effectively cheating workers out of their pay and their benefits.

In the first stage of the investigative research, the MLSS and ILO jointly commissioned a study on private recruitment agencies, in an effort to understand their operations and their constraints. The aim was to provide information and guidance to the Ministry on how best to regulate the sector in the future, in the interests primarily of the workers who were being placed in employment by these agencies, but also importantly, in the interests of the “regular” law abiding agencies which provide a valuable service in bringing together the supply of and demand for labour around specific employment vacancies.

The nation, as well as the workers who are the “victims”, stand to benefit nothing from the activities of the minority of unscrupulous and dishonest brokers, agents or employers. Indeed they give the legitimate employment agencies a bad name.

In order to investigate further, the MLSS and ILO subsequently proceeded to undertake an analysis of labour-related complaints that had been lodged both in MLSS offices in Lusaka and several provinces, as well as at the Human Rights Commission (HRC) HQ in Lusaka.

In this second and final stage of the investigative research, the MLSS and ILO commissioned a team of consultants to undertake rapid, informal field research into forced labour, trafficking and labour migration patterns, both internally within Zambia and across its borders to other countries. The methods and findings will be presented today, and are documented fully in the draft report before you.

The MLSS and ILO wanted to get beyond the sensational newspaper headlines and vague anecdotal evidence, and come up with hard factual information and specific cases that paint a picture of the extent and shape of the problems as they exist in Zambia.

In that context, I would like to share with you some of the human stories that came to light in the research process. These show that the practices of trafficking and forced labour unfortunately do exist in Zambia. I should mention that this is only to be expected – as there are few, if any, countries in the world which are totally immune from these problems.

My first example is of “Beatrice”, an 18 year-old young woman, who was taken by an intermediary from her home in Chipata to work as a maid in Lusaka. The intermediary had agreed to find a maid for his client – a doctor’s blind brother. Beatrice worked for this brother for a year, and during that time she was regularly beaten, often denied food and not paid for her work. Other maids working in the flats near to where Beatrice lived were able to contact the social welfare department, who rescued Beatrice and helped her to return home.

In the second example, two boys aged 17 and 14 years were brought from Kaputa (Northern Province) to Ndola in 2003. A farmer travelled to get them to work on his farm. After one year of working on this farm, the boys weren't paid anything apart from getting the food that he gave them. When they tried to get their pay, the farmer would say "The food I give you is enough – you never used to get this food where I got you from". To earn money, the younger boy stole 4 goats to sell and was arrested by the police; the older boy was left on his own on the farm for 3–4 months and was finally referred to the local labour office by a concerned citizen. The younger boy's release was also assisted by the labour office, and the two boys were returned home.

These are just a few of the examples that were unearthed as part of this research.

In due course, I look forward to receiving the outcomes of the workshop as they are likely to inform follow-up actions by both MLSS and ILO, along with other key actors. Your feedback could be on the actual findings of the study.

- Do you agree with our findings?
- Did MLSS and ILO fail to pick up any of the serious issues of Forced Labour, Trafficking and severe exploitation - issues that any of you have encountered first hand or heard spoken about?

Those who supervised the research and who have scrutinised the findings have some thoughts of their own about the issues – indeed, even coming up with insights in ways that they did not expect. But my colleagues will keep those views secret for now and keep you in suspense a little longer.

What is most important today is to get feedback from all of you, based on your own experiences and understanding of these issues in the Zambia context.

Finally, we hope that having presented the research findings during this morning that, after a good lunch, you will be eager and able to reflect together in small groups, and identify and contribute ideas and suggestions on the next steps and "way forward" to combat the problems that this important research has highlighted.

I thank you all for your attention and I wish you good luck in your deliberations.