

Key elements of the ILO standards on forced labour

The ILO has adopted four instruments on forced labour: two conventions and a protocol, which are legally binding and open to ratification, and a recommendation which provides practical guidance. The main provisions of the three binding instruments are listed below.

Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

Article 1

1. Each Member of the International Labour Organisation which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms within the shortest possible period.

Article 2

1. For the purposes of this Convention the term forced or compulsory labour shall mean 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.
2. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this Convention, the term forced or compulsory labour shall not include--
 - a. any work or service exacted in virtue of compulsory military service laws for work of a purely military character;
 - b. any work or service which forms part of the normal civic obligations of the citizens of a fully self-governing country;
 - c. any work or service exacted from any person as a consequence of a conviction in a court of law, provided that the said work or service is carried out under the supervision and control of a public authority and that the said person is not hired to or placed at the disposal of private individuals, companies or associations;
 - d. any work or service exacted in cases of emergency, that is to say, in the event of war or of a calamity or threatened calamity, such as fire, flood, famine, earthquake, violent epidemic or epizootic diseases, invasion by animal, insect or vegetable pests, and in general any circumstance that would endanger the existence or the well-being of the whole or part of the population;
 - e. minor communal services of a kind which, being performed by the members of the community in the direct interest of the said community, can therefore be considered as normal civic obligations incumbent upon the members of the community, provided that the members of the community or their direct representatives shall have the right to be consulted in regard to the need for such services.

Article 25

The illegal exaction of forced or compulsory labour shall be punishable as a penal offence, and it shall be an obligation on any Member ratifying this Convention to ensure that the penalties imposed by law are really adequate and are strictly enforced.

Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)

Article 1

Each Member of the International Labour Organisation which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labour--

- a. as a means of political coercion or education or as a punishment for holding or expressing political views or views ideologically opposed to the established political, social or economic system;
- b. as a method of mobilising and using labour for purposes of economic development;
- c. as a means of labour discipline;
- d. as a punishment for having participated in strikes;
- e. as a means of racial, social, national or religious discrimination.

Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930

Article 1

1. In giving effect to its obligations under the Convention to suppress forced or compulsory labour, each Member shall take effective measures to prevent and eliminate its use, to provide to victims protection and access to appropriate and effective remedies, such as compensation, and to sanction the perpetrators of forced or compulsory labour.
2. Each Member shall develop a national policy and plan of action for the effective and sustained suppression of forced or compulsory labour in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, which shall involve systematic action by the competent authorities and, as appropriate, in coordination with employers' and workers' organizations, as well as with other groups concerned.
3. The definition of forced or compulsory labour contained in the Convention is reaffirmed, and therefore the measures referred to in this Protocol shall include specific action against trafficking in persons for the purposes of forced or compulsory labour.

Article 2

The measures to be taken for the prevention of forced or compulsory labour shall include:

- a. educating and informing people, especially those considered to be particularly vulnerable, in order to prevent their becoming victims of forced or compulsory labour;
- b. educating and informing employers, in order to prevent their becoming involved in forced or compulsory labour practices;
- c. undertaking efforts to ensure that:
 - i. the coverage and enforcement of legislation relevant to the prevention of forced or compulsory labour, including labour law as appropriate, apply to all workers and all sectors of the economy; and
 - ii. labour inspection services and other services responsible for the implementation of this legislation are strengthened;
- d. protecting persons, particularly migrant workers, from possible abusive and fraudulent practices during the recruitment and placement process;
- e. supporting due diligence by both the public and private sectors to prevent and respond to risks of forced or compulsory labour; and
- f. addressing the root causes and factors that heighten the risks of forced or compulsory labour.

Article 3

Each Member shall take effective measures for the identification, release, protection, recovery and rehabilitation of all victims of forced or compulsory labour, as well as the provision of other forms of assistance and support.

Article 4

1. Each Member shall ensure that all victims of forced or compulsory labour, irrespective of their presence or legal status in the national territory, have access to appropriate and effective remedies, such as compensation.
2. Each Member shall, in accordance with the basic principles of its legal system, take the necessary measures to ensure that competent authorities are entitled not to prosecute or impose penalties on victims of forced or compulsory labour for their involvement in unlawful activities which they have been compelled to commit as a direct consequence of being subjected to forced or compulsory labour.

Article 5

Members shall cooperate with each other to ensure the prevention and elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour.

Article 6

The measures taken to apply the provisions of this Protocol and of the Convention shall be determined by national laws or regulations or by the competent authority, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned.