International Labour Organization



Forced labour: A synthesis report

Advances in quantifying forced labour across the world and sectors

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Table of contents

Acronyms and abbreviations vii

Executive summary ix

1. Introduction 1

2. Survey characteristics 3

2.1. Types of survey and coverage 6

2.2. Sampling strategy 6

2.3. Pilot and cognitive testing 12

2.4. Ethical considerations 13

3. Questionnaire design: Measurement of forced labour and related concepts 15

3.1. Forced labour definitions 16

3.1.1. Measurement: Instant/retrospective, and reference period 17

3.1.2. Bonded labour 18

3.2. Involuntary work 19

3.2.1. Overtime work 20

3.3. Coercion: Threat or menace of any penalty 20

3.4. Measurement of forced labour 21

3.4.1. Duration in forced labour 24

3.4.2. Employment status 24

3.5. Forced labour of children 25

4. Limitations 27

5. Summary of findings 29

Appendix: List of surveys on forced labour covered in this report 31

References 33

Tables

Table 1. Characteristics of selected surveys 3

Table 2. Selected surveys' sampling strategies 8

Table 3. Selected surveys' indicators of forced labour 22

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ACS	adaptive cluster sampling
CI	cognitive interviewing
EA	enumeration area
EB	enumeration block
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization/Office
NLFS	national labour force survey
NSO	National Statistical Office
PPS	probability proportional to size
PSU	primary sampling unit
RDD	random digit dial
SRSM	systematic random sampling (method)
SSU	secondary sampling unit
USDOL	United States Department of Labor

Executive summary

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has demonstrated a resolute commitment to combat forced labour of adults and children through the development of conventions and protocols, as well as the establishment of guidelines for measuring its prevalence and trends. Precise guidelines for the measurement of forced labour are especially crucial to accurately identify instances of forced labour and to devise policies to tackle it. Some of the early initiatives in this regard include the publication of *Hard to see, harder to count* in 2012 (ILO 2012), and the formation of a Working Group decided by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2013. After accumulating a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field, the 20th ICLS in 2018 endorsed the "Guidelines concerning the measurement of forced labour" (ILO 2018a and 2018b).[1] These guidelines provide a clear statistical definition of forced labour and recommendations to quantify it, from designing questionnaires to implementing surveys on the ground. Since then, several forced labour surveys have been implemented with the assistance of the ILO and, building on the challenges and lessons learnt, a revised version of *Harder to see, harder to count* was published in 2024 (see ILO 2012).

The process to improve and refine research methodologies, including sampling strategy and questionnaire development, among others, is ongoing. In order to synthesize and provide a descriptive account of recent efforts, this report analyses selected surveys and assesses the experience and lessons learned through piloting forced labour questionnaires and sampling tools. The aim is to improve cross-country and cross-sectoral comparable forced labour indicators. The report draws heavily on the 20th ICLS guidelines, but it is important to bear in mind that the surveys chosen to measure forced labour may vary in their objectives depending on the specific needs and challenges of each country. Therefore, even if multiple surveys have the same goal, they may place differing emphasis on various factors such as migration, forced labour of children, and so on. Furthermore, the guidelines represent a significant shift in how forced labour is measured, which has resulted in changes in the research tools used in pre- and post-guidelines surveys.

It is important to note that many surveys were ongoing at the time of writing this report, and the implementation of such surveys was still in the early phases. As such, this document should be regarded as a work-in-progress that can be supplemented and extended as new information comes to light. Much of the information provided in this report is descriptive, and further institutional knowledge from teams involved in the country surveys could supplement this document to provide a more comprehensive account.

The surveys reviewed for this synthesis report were typically implemented in cooperation with the National Statistical Offices and other governmental institutions. The 15 surveys covered countries from four continents. Most surveys were national or sectoral, and some additionally targeted distinct subgroups (migrants, children, or, in more rare cases, military conscripts or prisoners). Although most of the surveys followed probability sampling, only a few of them adhered to the 20th ICLS guidelines in their entirety, especially with regard to the sampling methodologies recommended for capturing elusive populations. Thus, one critical finding is that there is scope for improvement in designing sampling methodologies to avoid under- or misrepresentation of the targeted population in the collected data.

1 The guidelines are published both separately (ILO 2018a) and as an Annex to the Report of the Conference (ILO 2018b, 120-127).

A third of the selected surveys specifically conducted cognitive testing, and implementing partners undertook some form of pre-testing on most surveys. However, progress could be made in the pre-test procedure transparency and reporting. Moreover, only five of the 15 surveys reported the ethical considerations undertaken when implementing the survey. In terms of questionnaire design, there is still some scope for improvement in standardization across surveys wherever survey objectives are in line. Thirteen of the 15 selected surveys stated in the report or other documentation that they follow the ILO definition of forced labour. All but two of the surveys included in this study contain sections that inquire about forms of debt bondage. Twelve follow the ILO guidelines for involuntariness, and nine contain some questions on overtime.

Overall, this report acknowledges the strengths and weaknesses of the existing surveys and questionnaires on forced labour and identifies several areas where improvements could be made across stages of design, implementation and reporting. The recommendations made in the report can facilitate better data collection efforts in the future, which can more effectively identify the prevalence of individuals in forced labour and the trends in forced labour. In turn, this can contribute towards developing more effective policies and interventions aimed at addressing this global issue.

1. Introduction

The legal definition of forced labour is based on ILO Conventions. The first ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines forced or compulsory labour as: "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily" (Art. 2(1)). The second ILO Convention on forced labour, the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), draws on the first but sets stricter principles regarding exemptions from forced labour. Both these Conventions have been almost universally ratified, making the ratifying countries legally obliged to respect their provisions and regularly report on them to the supervisory bodies of ILO standards. More recently, in 2014, as part of a new initiative to reinvigorate the global fight against forced labour, governments, employers and workers at the ILO International Labour Conference (ILC) voted with an overwhelming majority to adopt the Protocol of 2014 and the Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation, 2014 (No. 203) which add on to Convention No. 29. These documents complement existing international instruments by providing specific guidance on effective measures to be taken regarding the prevention of forced labour, the protection of victims and their access to remedies.

Concerning the statistics of forced labour, the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2013 adopted Resolution II that recommended setting up a working group to share best practices on forced labour surveys and encourage implementation of forced labour surveys across the globe (ILO 2013). The subsequent 20th ICLS in 2018 then defined the key guidelines concerning the measurement of forced labour. According to the 20th ICLS, the main goal of forced labour statistics is to inform countries about the steps required to prevent and end the use of forced labour (ILO 2018a and 2018b).[2] They are also meant to protect those subjected to forced labour and to give them access to appropriate and effective remedies such as compensation, and to penalise those who abuse workers. The guidelines presented by the 20th ICLS assist countries in the measurement of forced labour according to their particular needs and objectives while maintaining comparability worldwide. More specifically, they call for countries to develop a data collection system designed to accomplish several objectives, such as:

- measuring the prevalence and the trend of forced labour, providing details on its types and extent, particularly among women, children and migrant workers;
- making the collected quantitative and qualitative data available, especially any information on elements of deception and coercion exercised in recruitment, during work, and as a deterrent to leaving the job or the employer;
- concentrating these efforts on economic sectors or population groups known to be at risk of forced labour.

Additionally, the ILO has undertaken several initiatives to measure forced labour. Particularly noteworthy in this context is the "Measurement, awareness-raising, and policy engagement (MAP16) project to accelerate action against child labour and forced labour". As its title suggests, one key outcome is improving the measurement and understanding of forced labour. Thus, within this framework, efforts were directed towards developing guidelines concerning the measurement of forced labour, as well as improved questionnaires and sample

2 The guidelines are published both separately (ILO 2018a) and as an Annex to the Report of the Conference (ILO 2018b, 120-127). Any page numbers cited henceforth in this report refer to the separate publication (ILO 2018a).

instruments. Assistance was also provided for national and sectoral surveys on forced labour according to newly developed measurement standards, and national statistical offices (NSOs) were supported to increase the sustainability of forced labour data collection by integrating forced labour into their regular data collection processes (for example, in their regular labour force surveys). In the years since the 19th and 20th ICLS, the ILO has expended significant time and resources on developing and testing survey methodologies for use at the national and sectoral levels.

These efforts have produced several datasets which provide more accurate national and sectoral estimates of adults and children in forced labour and a more profound understanding of the nature and causes of these abuses. National surveys are typically carried out based on the 20th ICLS guidelines, and provide representative estimates of forced labour for the country and any potential subgroup targeted by the survey (such as return migrants).

Despite the increasing number of these national surveys, there is still a need for guidance and improvement in data collection practices regarding cross-country and cross-sectoral comparable forced labour indicators. Consequently, this report aims to analyse selected surveys and assess the experience and lessons learnt through the piloting of forced labour questionnaires and sampling tools. After reviewing the surveys' documentation, the collected information was classified into specific cells in a detailed matrix accompanying this report. Special attention was paid to the questionnaires. They were scanned and assessed against the ILO's definitions, guidelines and question templates on forced labour. Finally, the systemic analysis was brought together in a synthesis report as an informative reflection point for future data collection efforts and informed the development of the revised version of the handbook *Harder to see, harder to count* (ILO 2024, see ILO 2012) The complete list of the 15 surveys covered is provided in the Appendix.

The structure of this report is as follows. The next section focuses on key characteristics of the surveys covered, such as the type of survey, their coverage and the sampling design as well as the testing of ethical considerations. Section 3 delves deeper into several key concepts related to forced labour and how they have been measured in the survey questionnaires. Section 4 summarizes the limitations of the report and those of the selected surveys. The final section discusses the key findings.

2. Survey characteristics

This section provides an overview of the characteristics of the 15 selected surveys. The complete list with more details can be found in the Appendix. The selection criteria were: recording data related to forced labour and the timing of the survey (being conducted in the past four years or currently in the implementation process).[3] These surveys were typically implemented in cooperation with the National Statistical Offices and other governmental institutions, in many countries on four different continents. They differ substantially in various aspects, from the target group to the type of the survey. These and other survey characteristics are analysed in more detail in the following subsections, while table 1 summarizes the key characteristics.

Table 1. Characteristics of selected surveys

Country	Survey name	Date	Project and partners	Type of survey	Coverage	Target group	Survey objective
Argentina	Prevalence Survey Garment Sector	2022	EvA (Evidence to Action) Project NORC (The non-partisan and objective research organization NORC at the University of Chicago)	Sectoral – garment Establishment survey	Workers in Argentina's garment sector	Local and migrant workers aged 14+ in the readymade garment sector of Argentina	Privately imposed Forced labour
Laos	Lao Labour Force Survey 3 & Child Labour Survey 2	2022	-	National Household Survey	National	Children aged 5-17 for child labour Return migrants aged 14+ for forced labour.	Privately imposed Forced labour
Malaysia	Employment Survey in Oil Palm Plantations	2018	Technical Committee, composed of representatives from DOSM, MPI, the Ministry of Human Resources (MOHR), the Malaysia Palm Oil Board (MPOB), other related government and industry agencies	Sectoral - palm oil Household Survey	Sectoral - workers aged 5+ of the palm oil sector	All workers aged 5+ employed or engaged in labour activities in all 13 oil palm plantations	Privately imposed Forced labour

3 Except for Uzbekistan, for which also the survey conducted in 2014–15 was included.

Country	Survey name	Date	Project and partners	Type of survey	Coverage	Target group	Survey objective
Mongolia	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey	2022	National Statistics of Mongolia	National Household Survey	Population of Mongolia	15+ aged residents of Mongolia	Privately imposed Forced labour
Mongolia	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey, Compulsory Working Conditions in Military Conscription	2022	National Statistics of Mongolia	National Household Survey	Military conscripts of Mongolia	Men in military conscription aged 18-28	State-imposed Forced labour
Mongolia	Prison Labour	2022	National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia	National	Population of inmates in prisons where it is possible to work	Inmates	State-imposed Forced labour
Nepal	Labour Survey in Brick Kilns Industry	2019	Commissioned by the ILO, as part of a USDOL-funded ILO project, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Government of Nepal	Sectoral - brick kilns Establishment / Household Survey	Brick kiln sector and its workers representing all 7 provinces of Nepal	Workers and children in brick kiln sector	Privately imposed Forced labour
Nepal	Research on Forced Labour and Child Labour in the Agriculture Sector in Siraha and Saptari	2021	New ERA, a research organization based in Kathmandu	Sectoral – agriculture Household Survey	Workers and children in agricultural sectors in two districts (Siraha and Saptari) of one province in Nepal	Workers and children in agricultural sectors	Privately imposed Forced labour
Niger	Enquête Nationale sur le Travail Forcé au Niger	2021	Institut National de la Statistique	National Household Survey	Population of Niger	Population 5+	Privately imposed Forced labour
Nigeria	Child and Forced Labour Survey	2022	National Bureau of Statistics and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in Nigeria	National Household Survey	Population of Nigeria	Population with past work experience in Nigeria or abroad	Privately imposed Forced labour

Country	Survey name	Date	Project and partners	Type of survey	Coverage	Target group	Survey objective
Peru	Encuesta sobre Condiciones de Trabajo – Cusco	2021	Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI)	Regional – Cusco Household Survey	Population 14+ in Region of Cusco	Persons 14 years of age or older who reside in the urban and rural areas of the Cusco region that are at risk of or in forced labour conditions	Privately imposed Forced labour
Uganda	National Labour Force Survey	2021	Uganda Bureau of Statistics	National Household Survey	National excluding the population in institutions and other special areas	Household-based population	Privately imposed Forced labour
Uzbekistan	Recruitment Practices and Seasonal Employment in Agriculture in Uzbekistan	2014-15	Arustan Joldasov and Ekspert Fikri, LLC, Center for Social and Marketing research	Sectoral – cotton Household Survey	Households with members working in cotton sector1	Civilian population aged 18 to 50 years old who work in cotton	Privately imposed Forced labour/ monitoring purposes
Uzbekistan	Child labour and forced labour during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan	2020-21	ILO & World Bank. The quantitative part of the monitoring was conducted by a local consultancy firm recruited via tender	Sectoral – cotton Household Survey	Qualitative survey: 18+ age citizens who worked in the cotton harvest. Quantitative survey: All working-age citizens of Uzbekistan (18-50 years old)2	Civilian population aged 18+ population (or up to 50 in quantitative survey) involved in cotton picking	Privately imposed Forced labour/ monitoring purposes
Viet Nam	Electronics Supply Chain Survey	2022	The General Statistics Office of Viet Nam (GSO)	Sectoral – electronics Establishment Survey	Strictly electronics sector from the Statistical Business Register Worker and Establishment survey	People working in the electronics sector	Privately imposed Forced labour

Notes: [1] Certain groups were excluded: people doing their military service (0.2% of the adult population); people imprisoned before trial and conviction (0.3% of the adult population); and people working abroad as of 2 April 2014 (approximately 3 million or 14% of the adult population). This means that this survey covered around 85.5% of the population.
[2] In both cases the universe of mobile phone numbers was used as a sampling frame. This excludes those without a mobile phone.

2.1. Types of survey and coverage

The overwhelmingly majority of the surveys were household-based surveys, except for Argentina and Viet Nam (establishment surveys), and the scope was national, regional or sectoral. Seven out of the fifteen were national surveys, covering Laos, Mongolia, Niger, Nigeria and Uganda. In addition, there was one regional survey from Peru, and six surveys targeting a specific sector of a given country. These sector-country pairs were: garments in Argentina, palm oil in Malaysia, agriculture in Nepal, brick kilns in Nepal, cotton in Uzbekistan and finally, electronics in Viet Nam.

While most surveys targeted the adult population, some targeted distinct subgroups. For instance, among the three national surveys of Mongolia, two concerned state-imposed forced labour, one focusing solely on military conscripts (men aged 18 to 28), and another targeting the prisoner population. In the sectoral surveys, the target group was workers of the given sector. A typical target group that appeared in multiple surveys was children; 12 out of the 15 surveys either had special modules on forced labour of children or had forced labour modules administered to anyone aged five and above. In two cases, notably the garment sector survey of Argentina and the regional survey of Peru, only children aged 14 to 17 were covered. Another subgroup of special interest that showed up occasionally was migrant workers, as in the case of the garment sector survey of Argentina and of the national surveys of Laos (return migrants).

2.2. Sampling strategy

Forced labour is a rare statistical phenomenon that is hard to capture with traditional survey methodologies. Standard household survey sampling designs might not be cost-efficient, as they would identify only a low number of cases in the sample. Furthermore, workers in forced labour find themselves in highly precarious and generally illegal situations, making it hard for them to speak up. As such, it is challenging to collect reliable information on this population. Consequently, producing forced labour estimates is complex, and the adequate sampling strategy is not as straightforward as for other, more conventional population groups. For this reason, this subsection is devoted to sampling strategies and how this population's specifics should be considered in the sample methodology design.

The 20th ICLS guidelines provide a solid reference for any forced labour data collection effort. They prescribe the data collection to be conducted face-to-face and away from the place where the individual is in the forced labour condition (for instance, at one's residence instead of the workplace). It is also preferred to have individuals respond for themselves (self-response) instead of responding for other household members (proxy-response). Furthermore, the guidelines emphasize the specific care that needs to be taken regarding the sampling strategy to capture the rare occurrences of forced labour. The surveys ought to have a large sample size to produce representative forced labour estimates within acceptable margins of error. To be able to derive household-based survey estimates about forced labour prevalence, a sample size of thousands of households could be necessary. Similarly, for a detailed description of forced labour conditions, hundreds of workers in forced labour have to be identified and interviewed by the survey.

The 20th ICLS highlights various methodologies that could be useful for the sample design to capture forced labour prevalence estimates, depending on the needs of the NSOs. These methodologies can be applied in the multi-stage sample designs of typical household surveys.

Some examples use oversampling in the initial stages,[4] or specifically target households of interest in the last sampling stage.[5] Additionally, it is advised that any available information from official establishment registers should be used in cases where forced labour is known to be concentrated in a given economic sector or occupational category. Another approach of non-probabilistic sampling to identify workers in forced labour is network sampling. The 20th ICLS explains that network sampling starts with a set of pre-identified respondents in forced labour, known as "seeds", who then refer the interviewer to further respondents in similar situations.

Another reference for sampling strategies is the manual by Vijay Verma (2008), titled *Sampling for household-based surveys of child labour*. While it was primarily intended to guide the sampling of child labour surveys to capture the elusive population of children in child labour, it can also be used for the sampling of surveys to measure individuals in forced labour. In that book, elusive population is defined as populations for which by virtue of their characteristics, or of the lack of suitable sampling frames or difficulties in obtaining the required information, adequate samples cannot be defined, drawn or implemented using the normal procedures of general population sampling (Verma 2008). Some other examples of elusive populations are homeless persons, or individuals who do not wish to be located, contacted, or interviewed for various reasons, among others. Rare, mobile and reclusive populations can all be categorized as elusive populations. Thus, the following information from the manual may also prove helpful in drafting sampling strategies for forced labour estimates.

Since there is no exhaustive list of who belongs to this population group, sampling for elusive units from a general population sampling frame can be challenging. For example, the sample size needed to estimate the size of the elusive population for proportions less than 1 per cent with a decent level of accuracy can be rather large. Moreover, the estimate's accuracy level rapidly declines when analysing the characteristics of the elusive population (by gender, age, and so on) in more depth. There are, nonetheless, several approaches that can be used to sample these populations efficiently. They are all based on directing sample selection to areas of the sampling frame where the elusive population is concentrated, while maintaining the requirement that each sampling unit has a known, non-zero likelihood of selection.

Table 2 summarizes the sampling strategy used for the selected surveys of this report. The review of corresponding documentation revealed that all surveys used probability sampling in their sample design. Moreover, it was also most common to have stratified sampling in two stages, with primary and secondary sampling units following national or sectoral-level sampling frames. In the national surveys, the primary sampling units were geographic units such as the village, district, municipality, and so on, and the secondary units were households. The primary units were typically selected with probability proportional to size, while the secondary units were selected using simple random sampling without replacement. The sectoral surveys followed a similar logic, but the primary sampling units were typically the establishments, and the secondary units were the workers' households.

Two surveys that added another layer to the sampling method outlined above were the national labour force survey in Uganda, applying a multiple-stage cluster sampling design, and the cotton sector survey in Uzbekistan, which used a random systematic stratified sample (RDD) of mobile phone users in the country.

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4 Oversampling can be done by allocating more sample areas in certain strata with known high concentration of forced labour based on external information. Another way to do this is assigning the sum of the probabilities of selection of the components to merged primary sampling units of high concentration of forced labour. A similar technique is using the forced labour concentration rank of the primary sampling units in the measure of size when doing sample selection of the area units with probabilities proportional to size.

5 Target sampling of households consists of an initial step of screening door-to-door for households of interest before choosing them as part of the sample. Adaptive cluster sampling can be used in certain cases to reduce costs of screening. In adaptive cluster sampling, once one household passes the screening filters, additional households in the same unit are also included in the sample.

Table 2 shows that the more complex sampling methods recommended by the 20th ICLS were adopted in three of the 15 selected surveys. For instance, Argentina's garment sector used a hybrid adaptive spatial and network sampling design methodology. The hybrid approach entails two waves of data collection. The first wave collected data about the general population, and the second wave focused on the base populations of interest. Screening questions identified respondents with low probability of forced labour exploitation for whom the forced labour module was not applied.

▶ **Table 2. Selected surveys' sampling strategies**

Country	Survey name	Date	Type of sampling	Sample size
Argentina	Prevalence Survey Garment Sector	2022	Hybrid methodology made of adaptive spatial and network sampling design. Hybrid approach entails two waves of data collection. The first wave was to collect data about the general population, and the second wave about the base populations of interest. Screening questions identify respondents with low probability of forced labour exploitation for whom the forced labour module will not be applied. Advantages of hybrid methodology: 1) Obtaining estimators that correspond to four different classes of strategies, namely those based on a conventional spatial sampling design, an adaptive spatial sampling design, a network sampling design, and a combination of any of these designs. 2) Allowing for the test and comparison of the utility of combinations of these strategies.	1,188 respondents for factory/ workshop workers 705 respondents among home-based workers
Laos	Lao Labor Force Survey 3 & Child Labor Survey 2	2022	Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling – two-stage sample selection. Sampling domains are all the 18 provinces. Sample selection is designed in two stages, the primary sampling units (PSU) are the villages, and the secondary sampling units (SSU) are the households. PSUs are selected with probability proportional to size (PPS) with an aggregate of three auxiliary variables (accounting for each of the target segments of the labour force) combined into a single index as the size measure. SSUs will be selected using simple random sampling with oversampling of households that have members in the age group 5-17 to increase the likelihood of possibly observing cases of child labour and forced labour.	14,232 households
Malaysia	Employment Survey in Oil Palm Plantations	2018	Stratified multi-stage sampling design with adaptive cluster sampling (ACS). The survey was conducted using a household sample survey approach where data are collected at the place of residence of oil palm workers and cover both non-institutional and institutional households. The plantations were selected using a probability proportionate to size (PPS) method from the MPOB's sample frame of oil palm plantations. The selected plantations are then overlaid onto a map of enumeration blocks (EBs). The selected EBs are either linked to the plantations (linked EBs) or paired to one of the linked EBs (paired EBs). Finally, using ACS, living quarters are selected in the chosen EBs, where household members are screened and interviewed.	20,142 palm oil workers in Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak

Country	Survey name	Date	Type of sampling	Sample size
Mongolia	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey	2022	Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling – two-stage sample selection. The primary sampling units (PSU) are Bags (for the Aimags) or Khoroo (for Ulaanbaatar) and are selected with PPS (number of households as the size measure). Households are the SSUs and are selected using simple random sampling without replacement. The 2015 Population and Housing Census of Mongolia is used as the sampling frame with population, number of households and population over 15 years old at the bag/khoroo level as the auxiliary information.	15,680 households
	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey - Compulsory Working Conditions in Military Conscription	2022	Same as main survey (see above). Sampling design to capture men of compulsory military conscription.	15,680 households
	Prison Labour	2022	Simple random sampling method to interview at least 50+1 per cent of the prison population of seven prisons where it is possible to work.	556 individuals
Nepal	Labour Survey in Brick Kilns Industry	2019	Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling with a two-stage stratified cluster sampling approach. 1. In the first stage, the required number of brick kilns (primary sampling units) were sampled using systematic random sampling, PPS sampling method. The number of brick kilns, treated as a cluster, were proportionally sampled according to the number of brick kilns in the strata. Fourteen household units would be sampled from each brick kiln, requiring 300 brick kilns to be selected in the country. Since there were only two brick kilns in province 6, both the kilns were included in the sample to preserve the anonymity of the collected information. This yielded 301 brick kilns and 4,214 units/households to be sampled. 2. In the second stage, enumerators were asked to list workers with the help of the entrepreneur or manager of the brick kiln. Using this frame, the enumerators selected 14 employees/families using systematic random sampling (SRSM). For each selected household, the information was collected from all the members staying in the same household/jhyauli.	301 brick kilns and 4,214 units/ households
	Research on Forced Labour and Child Labour in the Agriculture Sector in Siraha and Saptari	2021	Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling – two-stage sample selection. First selection of wards, then segmented if ward is too large, then random segments/clusters picked. The enumeration area (EA) will be either the cluster or the segmentation of the clusters. Second, filter and list all households within clusters that are working in agriculture and randomly pick households.	1,200 households

Country	Survey name	Date	Type of sampling	Sample size
Niger	Enquête Nationale sur le Travail Forcé au Niger	2021	Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling - two-stage sample selection. 1. Selection of PSUs with PPS (given the absence of information necessary for the construction of concentration strata). 2. Update of information on the selected PSUs to take into account population movements since the time the framework was established (moving and moving in, new household formations). 3. Selection of households, by over-sampling households that responded positively to the pre-screening question. The other households (having answered negatively to the pre-selection question) also have a non-zero probability of being selected. Care should be taken to establish a maximum number of households to over-sample.	6,872 households
Nigeria	Child and Forced Labour Survey	2022	Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling, stratified and two-stage. In the first stage of sampling 30 sample enumeration areas (EAs) are selected as part of a master sample in each of the 36 states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). At the second stage of sampling, 15 households are selected in each of the sample EAs after freshly listing all households currently residing in the sample enumeration areas. Within each state or FCT, strata, the PSUs are selected with PPS in the master sample, and the sample households will be selected by systematic sampling with equal probabilities within each sample PSU.	16,650 households
Peru	Encuesta sobre Condiciones de Trabajo – Cusco	2021	Probabilistic, stratified and two-stage. Prior to the selection, the population has been divided into strata, in order to improve its representativeness. In the first stage, the conglomerates are selected, in the second stage, the dwellings are selected. 1. In the first sampling stage, systematic selection is used with probability proportional to the size of the population in poverty. 2. In the second stage, dwellings are selected within each selected conglomerate systematically from a housing directory. In each conglomerate, 10 private dwellings are selected.	1,780 dwellings
Uganda	National Labour Force Survey	2021	Multiple-stage cluster sampling design. In the first stage, enumeration areas (EAs) were selected; in the second stage, ten households were selected in each EA. The EAs were drawn from a sampling frame based on the 2014 National Population and Housing Census. Given the objective of the survey, the country is divided into 25 sub-regions (strata) for estimates for the cities at sub-regional level. A total of 1,100 EAs were targeted during the NLFS 2021. This would translate into 11,000 households, a sample big enough to generate estimates with the desired level of disaggregation.	8,123 households

Country	Survey name	Date	Type of sampling	Sample size
Uzbekistan	Recruitment Practices and Seasonal Employment in Agriculture in	2014-2015	Probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling. The sample was stratified by region. Within each region, the sample was further stratified by five urbanization levels, creating 50 strata in total. The sample was distributed across the 50 strata in proportion to the number of individuals aged 18 to 50 years old, which was determined using data from the State Committee on Statistics. The framework for selecting primary sampling units (PSUs) was the list of 15,054 mahallas (urban and rural neighbourhood committees). PSUs for each stratum were selected according to PPS sampling. In total, 125 PSUs were selected across all strata.	First and second survey: 3,500 households. All adults aged 18-50 years old were interviewed (10,350 people).
	Child labour and forced labour during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan	2020–21	Quantitative sample: probabilistic sampling. The sampling design was based on a random systematic stratified sampling of mobile telephone numbers, which enabled an equal probability of selecting each mobile phone number. The sampling frame was mobile phone numbers in Uzbekistan (N = 60,580,000 cell phone numbers). This method of selection was by random digit dial (RDD). Added gender and region distribution as a target stratum in the sampling.	Quantitative survey: 8,000 respondents Qualitative survey: 987 interviews
Viet Nam	Electronics Supply Chain Survey	2022	Multiple-stage sample design Based on the GSO's Establishment Census (1995, 2002, 2007 and March 2021). The aim of the multi-stage direct sampling approach is to sample establishments in each of the tiers of the supply chain and then sample workers within each establishment. In the first stage, a stratified random sample of establishments from all tiers in the electronics industry supply chain is to be selected. From the selected establishments, a sub-sample of workers would be sampled for the workers' questionnaire randomly. The workers' sample size for each establishment is based on the number of employees working in the establishment. Stratification is made up of industry classification by geographic region by employment size group variables. It is acknowledged that operations exist in the informal sector that will not be covered by traditional establishment frames, and decent work deficits are more likely within this sector. Information in stage 1 of the survey questionnaire will identify establishments in the supply chain regardless of whether they are on the establishment frame.	87 employees in the pilot survey

Another example of a more sophisticated sampling approach is the palm oil sectoral survey in Malaysia. This survey used a complex sampling methodology containing a stratified multi-stage design with adaptive cluster sampling (ACS). Moreover, the sample included both non-institutional and institutional households. First, the plantations were selected using a PPS method from the national sample frame of oil palm plantations. Second, the chosen plantations were overlaid onto the enumeration blocks (EBs) map. Third, the selected EBs were either linked to the plantations (linked EBs) or paired to one of the linked EBs (paired EBs). Finally, living quarters were selected in the chosen EBs using ACS, and the respective household members were screened and interviewed.

An innovative new sampling method was used by the pilot of the Viet Nam supply chain survey. The method included the sampling of firms in the electronics industry, and then extending the selection to their suppliers and their distributors to extend the focus to the entire supply chain. In the second step, workers within the identified companies throughout the entire supply chain were sampled randomly and administered the questionnaire.

Other surveys used more conventional sampling strategies, but they tried to augment them with some elements mentioned by the 20th ICLS. For instance, the last sample selection stage of Niger's forced labour national survey oversamples households which passed pre-screening questions in earlier stages. Similarly, Peru's regional survey uses a similar oversampling approach to account for the atypical nature of the forced labour population.

While there are novelties in the sampling strategies of recent forced labour surveys, there is scope for improvement in designing the sampling methodologies. So far, only a few surveys have been incorporating most elements of advanced sampling techniques to capture elusive populations such as those in forced labour, as recommended by the 20th ICLS. Failure to capture the targeted population can seriously undermine the prevalence rates and make it impossible to analyse the characteristics of people in forced labour.

2.3. Pilot and cognitive testing

Pre-testing the draft questionnaire is a standard procedure in any survey design and implementation process. This step is critical when dealing with surveys of particular populations, such as the elusive population of people in forced labour. Pre-testing offers insights into operational and fieldwork challenges and any issues with filters and skip patterns that can affect the inclusion of the targeted population. Moreover, survey mistakes may often be attributed to ambiguous questions, participant misinterpretations of the questions' contents, and issues with memory recall. However, these can go unreported if survey questions are not tested for understanding, memory and sensitiveness with the intended audience before being used in the field.

Given the sensitive and context-specific nature of forced labour situations, pre-tests must, thus, pay particular attention to the wording of questions about means of coercion and involuntariness. More advanced methods, such as cognitive Interviewing (CI) tests, have been proposed to test the wording of questions in forced labour survey questionnaires. Using theoretical psychology frameworks, CI tests assess sources of probable response errors by analysing the cognitive processes survey respondents use to understand and respond to questions. The ILO has also promoted these cognitive testing methodologies as part of its methodological report series (ILO 2018c).

A third of the selected surveys specifically conducted cognitive testing (the national surveys of Mongolia, the sectoral survey in Argentina, and the regional survey in Peru). Nevertheless, the results and lessons learnt from these cognitive tests were only sometimes readily available, and the survey reports only briefly addressed these procedures. However, the conducted pre-tests helped validate the instruments used for data collection by identifying areas for corrections, adaptations and clarifications, wherever necessary.

Another five surveys piloted or pre-tested the survey instruments without cognitive testing. Pre-testing is undertaken prior to the main data collection phase, and is aimed at ensuring that the survey questions are clear, easily understood, and well-constructed for the respondents. For the surveys concerned, this typically involved recruiting and training a team of experienced field workers, who administered the survey to a sample group and provided feedback on the flow and ease of the questionnaire. The feedback was then used to refine the survey questions

and optimize them for the main data collection phase, resulting in a more effective and efficient data collection process. These surveys were: the sector survey of palm oil in Malaysia, agriculture in Nepal and electronics in Viet Nam, the prison labour survey in Mongolia, and Uganda's national survey. Even though no cognitive interviewing took place, the pilot testing helped confirm the translations and the forced labour terms and adjust sample sizes wherever applicable.

Overall, implementing partners undertook some form of pre-testing on most surveys; thus, recent projects and the resulting estimates will likely benefit from a reduction in biases and other fieldwork challenges. However, progress could be made in the pre-test procedure transparency and reporting. It would be helpful for future data collection efforts to have more detailed information on challenges encountered and lessons learned to avoid common mistakes. Moreover, despite the ILO's efforts, cognitive testing of questionnaires has yet to gain substantial popularity among NSOs, as only a third of the surveys had conducted such tests. Further promotion and support for this procedure would be beneficial in improving forced labour instruments.

2.4. Ethical considerations

Because forced labour is illegal virtually everywhere, conducting a study on this subject might put respondents, interviewers and supervisors at a particular risk. The offenders, who might be recruiters or employers, are generally aware of their actions' unlawfulness and may aggressively oppose and prevent any interaction between the employees and the outside world. Thus, the 20th ICLS guidelines pay special attention to ethical considerations and to the role of interviewers, guidelines that should be respected by countries when organizing forced labour surveys (ILO 2018a, 10). They assert that all implementers must take all possible measures to avoid any negative consequences on survey participants, such as ensuring their confidentiality and anonymity. It is therefore essential to adequately train interviewers, particularly on the specifics of forced labour. For instance, interviewers should be trained to interview participants in a safe location away from the workplace and avoid using exact words such as forced labour and trafficking, among others. Moreover, interviewers are expected to be well-versed in the national legislation related to forced labour or trafficking, in case participants may seek help. While some countries have mandatory reporting laws concerning interviewers who encounter forced labour or trafficking victims, in other countries statistical offices might instruct interviewers not to report these cases in order to preserve the autonomy of the statistical office in a turbulent political situation.

While the safety and comfort of survey participants are paramount, it is also crucial to ensure that interviewers are not overworked and that they are safe from potential threats or dangers. Thus, the 20th ICLS guidelines also advise that interviewers should be trained to speak up in these situations and that they should be allowed to quit their tasks without penalty, should the situation deteriorate. Finally, anonymity must also be guaranteed during the data processing, storage, cleaning and analysis stages.

Other common and useful ethical standards that must be followed in survey implementation include: demanding the respondent's informed permission, showing respect for the respondent, respect for cultural norms related to gender and privacy, and making clear to respondents that they have a right to refuse the interview or to answer any questions included in it (ILO 2012).

In addition to these customary ethical standards, there are further observations pertinent to surveys of workers who are exploited or subject to coercion. For instance, adults and children have a right to information about the research goals and potential outcomes.

However, interviewers can accomplish that without explicitly mentioning «forced labour» or «trafficking», as the 20th ICLS guidelines suggest. Instead, they may use the following phrase: «We are now going to speak about why you work here, how you happen to be working for this individual.» Finally, interviewers must also obtain the parents' consent when interviewing children, especially if forced labour occurs in a family setting.

Only five of the 15 surveys reported the ethical considerations undertaken when implementing the survey. These were the national surveys of Mongolia and Nigeria and the sectoral surveys of agriculture in Nepal and cotton in Uzbekistan. The reports from Mongolia's national surveys emphasized that the ethical procedures followed the ILO survey guidelines. Nigeria's national survey documentation specified that the ILO's FUNDAMENTALS team would train interviewers and trainers on the ethical protocol.

Reports from the other ten surveys included parts on obtaining consent from participants and ensuring data privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Particular reference was also made to the fieldwork conforming to national measures of COVID-19. In addition to these standard ethical considerations, in Uzbekistan special efforts were made to recruit interviewers who had been in forced labour.

Despite the significance of adhering to strict ethical rules, 10 out of the 15 surveys did not have any documentation on this matter. While that does not mean that the implementing partners did not follow any ethical protocols, the lack of reporting and transparency makes it difficult to know how to draw any conclusions on lessons learnt in the field.

3. Questionnaire design: Measurement of forced labour and related concepts

This section focuses on the questionnaires of the selected surveys and how they capture forced labour and related indicators. The ILO has been attempting to measure forced labour since the early 2000s. Some of the initiatives include the first publication of *Hard to see, harder to count* (a manual about force labour surveys) in 2012, and the formation of a working group by the 19th ICLS in 2013. After an accumulation of knowledge and experience in the topic, the 20th ICLS in 2018 endorsed the "Guidelines concerning the measurement of forced labour", which provide a clear statistical definition of forced labour.

Thanks to further efforts following the 2018 ICLS, the questionnaire for forced labour surveys conducted by the ILO and its partners has witnessed several improvements since the first edition of *Hard to see, harder to count*, reported in a new edition published in 2024. These improvements aim to reduce subjectivity in the questions and minimize respondents' fatigue. New instruments on forced labour are also undergoing extensive cognitive testing to minimize risks of type I and type II errors in identifying forced labour victims.

Recently, the ILO conducted a critical review of five questionnaires to assess how well they address the issues of forced labour and whether any changes are necessary to identify all respondents who have experienced forced labour.[6] It finds that the most accurate method for determining individuals subjected to forced labour is the multiple filter question approach. However, given that a long list of filter questions may lead to respondent and interviewer fatigue, the review also recommends the usage of five broad filter questions instead, with detailed probing only if the respondent passes the filter questions. These five broad questions group certain contexts and frame them in ways that are comprehensible to individuals with less education.[7]

Moreover, according to the 20th ICLS guidelines, when designing the questionnaire one should pay special attention to question wording and sequencing, answer categories and the possibility of open questions for verbatim statements (ILO 2018a, 10). For instance, the forced labour status can be derived based on several indirect and carefully worded questions instead of direct questions, using sensitive or unfamiliar terminology. Moreover, options such as «refusal» or «don't know» should always be available among answer categories. These answers may also reveal insightful information on this sensitive topic while simultaneously

6 Two models prepared by the ILO for general use and three specific country questionnaires from Mongolia, Nigeria and Uganda (ILO, unpublished).

7 These five filter questions ask specifically about:
- working in a job that you had to take against your will;
- having a job that you could not quit because you had not been paid, or someone threatened to use violence against you or your family;
- having a job where you were forced to work more hours than you had agreed, or you had to do different tasks than you had agreed;
- having a job where you could not leave the premises even after the working day was finished;
- having a job that you had to work because you owed someone money.

ensuring that the respondent is comfortable. Finally, allowing for open questions in the questionnaire can further improve the accuracy and interpretation of the information from the close-ended questions.

The newest iteration of the forced labour questionnaire, currently under development, has been constructed based on all the insights from the critical review and the experience from previous forced labour surveys (most of them included in the review in this report) and it is currently being tested. This newest version includes 11 filter questions including follow-up questions in order to capture the layers of involuntariness people in different types of job could face. For the identification of forced labour, penalty questions are included later in the questionnaire. This procedure also follows an interviewing best practice to ask the most sensitive questions at the end, due to the fact that it can bring about an abrupt end to the interview.

However, ensuring the balance between having a parsimonious instrument and providing differentiation between forced labour and other decent work violations is still a challenging task. More recent instruments have decreased the risk of false negatives but may overestimate forced labour prevalence rates among the most educated in less risky occupations due to the oversensitivity of respondents to some of the questions proposed. Incorporating best practices on where to place certain questions eliciting the respondent to provide truthful answers on such a sensitive topic is also essential.

While designing forced labour questionnaires to ensure comparability across countries and sectors is an important goal, outlined also by the 20th ICLS guidelines, adaptation of the list of questions to a national (and potentially sectoral) context is also essential. This could for instance involve the addition or leaving out of some specific questions about involuntariness and coercion.

The 20th ICLS guidelines also provide further details on measuring forced labour and related concepts for statistical purposes. The following subsections explain this guidance and then outline the findings of the synthesis analysis.

3.1. Forced labour definitions

According to the Convention No. 29, forced or compulsory labour is: “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily” (Art. 2(1)). Work, in this case, includes any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or own use (ILO 2018a, 2). The reference period can be as short as last week or as long as a lifetime.

The concept “offered … voluntarily” refers to a worker’s free and informed consent to take a job and the freedom to leave at any time. The latter is violated in cases when an employer or recruiter makes false promises so that a worker takes a job they would not otherwise have accepted. More details are provided in section 3.2. Finally, the threat and menace of any penalty refer to a wide range of coercion methods used to compel someone to work. Each of them is addressed in detail in section 3.3.

According to the ICLS 2018 guidelines, an individual can be statistically considered in forced labour if both work conditions – involuntariness, and coercion by being under threat or menace of a penalty – are met for a given reference period. The coercion applied to the worker by an employer or a third party can take place at different points of the working relationship, from recruitment to the prevention of someone from leaving the job.

Forced labour situations occur in almost every country and every sphere of the economy. Forced labour may be privately imposed or state-imposed, depending on the nature of the work and the penalty. Privately imposed forced labour is divided into two categories: forced labour exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation.

Not all state-imposed work is state-imposed forced labour. Convention No. 29 highlights certain exceptions, where States are allowed to ask their citizens to work, such as work required by compulsory military service, normal civic obligations, work because of conviction in a court of law, and work in cases of emergency.

Thirteen of the 15 selected surveys stated in their report or other documentation that they follow the ILO definition of forced labour. They included questions on involuntary situations on the job and coercion by penalty or menace of penalty. The regional survey of Peru follows the ILO *Harder to see, harder to count* guidelines very closely and outlines a complex path to compute forced labour. It includes three criteria, where the first refers to the recruitment process and entry to work; the second is about degrading working and living conditions; and the third looks at the impossibility of leaving the employer (ILO 2012, 26).

Two surveys in the list target subgroups of the population who are part of the exceptions to the state-imposed forced labour definition of Convention 29. These are the forced labour surveys among military conscripts and prison labour in Mongolia. It should be noted that certain surveys were still ongoing at the time the present report was written.

3.1.1. Measurement: Instant/retrospective, and reference period

It is essential to explicitly state the reference period of the statistics when publishing national data on forced labour. Additionally, the report has to specify whether the figures pertain to the total number of people who are engaged in it at any given moment (stock), or the number of persons who experienced a spell of forced labour at any time during a reference period (flow). While all selected surveys had questions to construct the forced labour indicator, the framing differs somewhat from survey to survey.

The questions can be framed regarding the current situation or in retrospect, which might affect the comparability of the constructed indicators across countries, sectors and timeframes. The reference period of these questions differs. It may be short such as last week, last month or last season, or long such as the past year, the past two years, the past five years, or a lifetime. A short reference period may be appropriate where the concern is the measurement of forced labour among a particular category of workers as suggested by the 20th ICLS in 2018. In contrast, a long reference period may be appropriate where the concern is the measurement of forced labour among a general population. The reason for this is that a short reference period can provide a more focused and detailed view of the working conditions and experiences of a specific group of workers, allowing for a more accurate measurement of forced labour in that particular category. On the other hand, a long reference period can capture a wider range of labour practices and experiences across the general population, providing a more comprehensive understanding of forced labour prevalence at the national or global level. This is especially true given that forced labour is a rare phenomenon, and capturing as many occurrences as possible is essential for further disaggregation of the forced labour figures by sex, age, or other individual or household characteristics.

Five of the 15 surveys, mostly sectoral surveys, have questions that focus on the risks of forced labour in the current job (sectoral surveys of garments in Argentina, brick kilns and agriculture in Nepal, palm oil in Malaysia, and the prison labour survey in Mongolia). The rest of the surveys have retrospective questions instead. Involuntariness and penalty questions have been asked about the past year (four surveys), the past three years (four surveys) or five years (two surveys), or an undefined period (one survey).

3.1.2. Bonded labour

This subsection focuses specifically on bonded labour. Under unlawful practices of debt bondage, labourers and their families are forced to work for an employer to pay off their incurred or inherited debts. According to the 20th ICLS guidelines, bonded labour is a form of forced labour in which the job or activity is associated with:

i. advance payments, loans, or excessive fees from recruiters and/or employers to the worker or a person's family members;

ii. a financial penalty, meaning that the terms of repayment are unspecified at the outset and/or in contravention of laws and regulations regarding the amount of interest or other repayment conditions, or the job or activity is under-remunerated (in relation to legal regulations or the labour market); and

iii. some form of coercion until a worker or family member has repaid the loan or payment advance. (ILO 2018a, 4)

All but two of the surveys included in this study contain sections that inquire about any forms of debt bondage. The exceptions are the military conscripts and prison labour surveys in Mongolia, as debt bondage is not applicable when respondents are either inmates or military conscripts made to work by state authorities (not recruiters or employers). The rest of the surveys vary in the degree of probing on debt bondage.

The baseline is having questions on whether the respondents incurred a debt to get the job, and debt-related options in the answers for involuntary and penalty questions, which the present report will return to in the following subsections. Surveys with more extensive debt bondage sections contain additional debt-related questions on the debtor's identity, debt repayment terms, respondents' awareness and understanding of debt terms, and how it is being repaid.

In Niger's national survey, debt-related questions were not administered to children, while in Nigeria, they are part of involuntary and penalty questions. In the electronics survey of Viet Nam, debt-related questions are also included in the establishment questionnaire. They look at whether workers owe the establishment or a third party (such as a recruitment agent) any debt and whether these workers can freely leave their job. Peru's regional survey even contains a detailed debt bondage module on workers who cannot leave their employer.

The analysis revealed that the debt bondage element is indirectly included in the indicators as part of the forced labour filter in addition to the involuntary and penalty questions; yet there is no overarching, pre-defined bonded labour indicator based on these surveys' counting rules. Since debt bondage is a significant dimension of forced labour, more should be done in developing and including standard questions on this matter. However, given that all surveys measure some form of debt bondage, relatively comparable indicators could also be built at this stage.

3.2. Involuntary work

According to the 20th ICLS guidelines, involuntary work refers to "any work taking place without the free and informed consent of the worker"(ILO 2018a, 2). Workers may find themselves in involuntary situations through deception or lack of information. These situations include: unfree recruitment at birth or through transaction such as slavery or bonded labour; situations in which the worker must perform a job of a different nature from that specified during recruitment without his or her consent; abusive requirements for overtime or on-call work that were not previously agreed with the employer; work in hazardous conditions to which the worker has not consented, with or without compensation; the lack of protective equipment; work with very low or no wages; in degrading living conditions imposed by the employer; work for another employer than agreed; work for longer period of time than agreed; work with no or limited freedom to terminate work contract (ILO 2018a, 2).

Twelve of the 15 surveys covered follow the ILO guidelines in broad terms. They typically contain one overarching question on involuntariness, with several sub-questions about all or almost all elements of the situations mentioned in the 20th ICLS guidelines (see the previous paragraph). The exceptions are two sectoral surveys (the garment survey in Argentina and the cotton survey in Uzbekistan) and two specific subpopulation surveys (military conscripts and prison labour surveys in Mongolia). In the case of the garment sector survey in Argentina, there is a question on involuntary work used as a screening or filtering question, but it is not repeated thereafter. In the cotton sector survey in Uzbekistan, due to the different nature of the survey individuals are asked only whether they were forced to work or not; the question does not probe into the various involuntary situations detailed in the 20th ICLS guidelines.

The two surveys of Mongolia are somewhat particular. They deal with a context where involuntariness is harder to capture – certain freedoms of both military conscripts and inmates are restricted, and they may even be obliged to take up specific tasks depending on national legislation. Mandatory prison labour is allowed within Convention No. 29. However, if prisoners are asked to work by private companies, they should be able to refuse without any menace of penalty. Additionally, the working conditions offered by the employer must be proximate to those offered to other workers in the labour market. Prisoners must receive similar wages to other workers, daily working hours must conform to labour laws, health and safety measures must be in place in accordance with legislation, and any standard safeguards available to other workers must be present. The public authorities must additionally supervise workers. One way to capture this phenomenon is to have questions on whether these workers have signed consent forms or contracts that mention wages and conditions of work; whether the pay and working conditions are similar to those of free workers; whether they are included in social security schemes; and whether they can leave the job at any time, among others. However, in practice, it is hard to capture truthful answers in a prison survey, given that much of free will is removed in such conditions.

The prison labour survey of Mongolia had only one question about consent to work. The question was not followed by detailed probing as suggested in the ILO questionnaire template. Moreover, it did not address working hours, health and safety measures and supervision, which could help assess its forced labour aspect. However, there were questions on payments and deductions for respondents' work which can be informative if compared with the prevailing labour market conditions outside the prisons.

Compulsory military service is one of the exceptions to the definition of forced labour in Convention (No. 29. However, this exception applies only to "any work or service exacted in virtue of compulsory military service laws for work of a purely military character". Other exceptions, in this case, would be when conscripts are required to work in cases of emergency (such as natural disasters), or when they are asked to contribute to building roads and bridges

as a part of their military training if they are in the engineering or similar units, or when they are provided with general education and vocational training, provided these present the characteristics of training schemes. Given these clearly defined exceptions, probing questions could be designed to determine whether the conscript is in forced labour.

While there is no ILO template to date, the questions in the military conscript survey of Mongolia could serve as a helpful starting point for future surveys of this nature. It must be mentioned that the questionnaire does not explicitly ask about involuntariness, as military service is compulsory in Mongolia. However, it contains several questions identifying the nature and conditions of military and non-military work that military conscripts were asked to engage in. This information is then used in building the forced labour indicator in line with national legislation.

3.2.1. Overtime work

According to 20th ICLS guidelines, among examples of involuntary work can also be found abusive overtime or on-call work requirements that were not previously agreed upon with the employer. The threshold for considering overtime work is the maximum number of working hours per national law. Except for the prison labour survey of Mongolia, all the surveys referred to «involuntary overtime work» in the answer categories of involuntariness questions. Moreover, nine out of the 15 selected surveys contain some questions on overtime work. These are the sectoral surveys of electronics in Viet Nam, palm oil in Malaysia, cotton in Uzbekistan, garments in Argentina, brick kilns in Nepal, national surveys of Nigeria and Niger, the regional survey of Peru, and military conscripts in Mongolia.

The most common question was the number of hours and days worked. The respondents' answers would then allow a determination of whether they are doing overtime work based on nationally specific thresholds. Only in a few surveys were the respondents asked a separate question on whether overtime work was done voluntarily. These were the sectoral surveys of cotton in Uzbekistan, palm oil in Malaysia, electronics in Viet Nam and the national survey of Niger. In certain surveys, such as garments in Argentina, the maximum hours were explicitly stated in the question of whether the respondents worked overtime. The latter survey also had more detailed questions on the payment of overtime work and how it compares to other payments. Other surveys where respondents were asked about overtime compensation were the sectoral survey of brick kilns in Nepal, palm oil in Malaysia and electronics in Viet Nam.

3.3. Coercion: Threat or menace of any penalty

According to the 20th ICLS guidelines, forced or compulsory labour covers work or service which is exacted "under the menace of any penalty" (ILO 2018a, 2). Threats and menace of any penalty can coerce workers to work against their own will. Even verbal threats of coercion or witnessing other workers being coerced could be considered a threat or menace of penalty. Some examples of coercion provided by the 20th ICLS guidelines might include threats or violence against workers or workers' families and relatives, or close associates; restrictions on workers' movement; debt bondage or manipulation of debt; withholding of wages or other promised benefits; withholding of valuable documents (such as identity documents or residence permits); and abuse of workers' vulnerability through the denial of rights or privileges, threats of dismissal or deportation.

In practical terms, surveys should have multiple questions on whether the worker faced any of the threats above when faced with an involuntary situation. The penalty indicator would then take value one if the respondent answered affirmatively to any of these questions: experiences

of physical or sexual violence, threats of physical or sexual violence; restriction of freedom; debt bondage, retention of wages; retention of documents; abuse of vulnerability when refused or thought of refusing to do a task.

The survey analysis reveals that twelve out of the 15 surveys closely follow the 20th ICLS guidelines and include answer categories for all elements of coercion listed above. These surveys are the sectoral surveys of brick kilns and agriculture in Nepal, garments in Argentina, palm oil in Malaysia, electronics in Viet Nam, the national surveys of Laos, Mongolia, Niger, Nigeria and Uganda as well as the regional survey of Peru.

The three surveys whose questions deviate from the guidelines outlined above are Uzbekistan's cotton survey as well as Mongolia's prison and military conscript surveys. The cotton survey inquires about three coercion examples, namely "being held back by force/threats", "taking away documents, such as a passport", and "pay off any debt". Thus, it leaves out workers who may have been exposed to coercion through retention of wages or threats of dismissal, among others.

In the case of the state-imposed forced labour surveys in Mongolia, the framing of the questions differs to a certain extent. For instance, there is a question on why the respondent could not refuse work in the prison labour survey, but the coercion answer options are adapted to the local context of a prison. The same finding applies to the military conscript survey in Mongolia. While these surveys' coercion examples may not be exhaustive or applicable to all prison and military conscript situations, they can serve as a solid starting point to design ILO template questions capturing the state-imposed forced labour in such cases.

3.4. Measurement of forced labour

The previous subsections on involuntariness and coercion showed that almost all selected surveys could construct a forced labour indicator following the 20th ICLS guidelines. In other words, there are questions for nearly all dimensions of involuntariness and penalty. An individual would then be categorized as being in forced labour if they answered affirmatively to at least one of the questions on involuntariness and at least one of the questions on coercion. Therefore, except for surveys dealing with state-imposed forced labour, the rest of the forced labour indicators may be comparable and reliable across countries and sectors. Nonetheless, to fully assess their comparability, several measurement aspects must also be considered, such as the reference period, or the status at work of the person at risk of forced labour. As forced labour can occur regardless of the form of work, it is important to measure it among all categories of workers to identify and address vulnerabilities in all precarious employment arrangements.

The following subsections look at each of them in detail, while table 3 summarizes each survey's measurements individually. It is worth noting that the measurement characteristics of forced labour indicators, such as the ones considered here, are contingent upon several factors, including the extent to which forced labour questions were integrated as an additional module to an existing labour force survey, or whether a standalone survey was conducted exclusively to collect data on forced labour.

▶ Table 3. Selected surveys' indicators of forced labour

Country	Survey name	Forced labour beyond employer–employee relationships	Duration of forced labour
Argentina	Prevalence Survey Garment Sector	No. The questionnaire covers only workers. There is no question on employment status at garment sector factory/company.	No. No question on length of employment.
Laos	Lao Labour Force Survey 3 & Child Labour Survey 2	No. While there is a question on status in main employment, answers can only be linked if migrants experienced forced labour in their first job.	Yes. There are questions on when the respondent started and finished the job. Duration can be calculated from the responses.
Malaysia	Employment Survey in Oil Palm Plantations	No. The questionnaire covers only workers. There is no question on employment status.	Yes, to some extent. Questions on when respondent started the job where they faced the forced labour condition. Duration could be calculated from survey date. Reference period: short reference period, such as during the last week, was used in the survey.
Mongolia	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey	Yes. There is a detailed question on the employment status in the job where they faced the forced labour situation. Question options provided: Employers in corporations, Employers in household market enterprises, Owner-operators of corporations without employees, Own-account workers in household market enterprises without employees, Permanent employees, Fixed term employees, Short term and casual employees, Paid trainees, apprentices and interns, Contributing family workers, Dependent contractors	Yes. There is a question which asks specifically about total duration in forced labour situations. There are questions on start and end time for job, which allows duration to be calculated.
	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey - FLB Compulsory Working Conditions in Military Conscription	Not applicable	Yes. Asked on duration on non-military work which can be classified as forced labour if it fulfils further criteria.
	Prison Labour	Not applicable	No. No question on length of work.
Nepal	Labour Survey in Brick Kilns Industry	No. The questionnaire covers only employees of the establishment.	No. There are questions on how long the worker has been working in the establishment, but there are no questions specifically on the duration of the forced labour conditions.
	Research on Forced Labour and Child Labour in the Agriculture Sector in Siraha and Saptari	No. The questionnaire covers only employees. There is no question on employment status.	Yes. There are questions on when the respondent started the job, and how long they were working in that job. Reference period past 12 months.

Country	Survey name	Forced labour beyond employer–employee relationships	Duration of forced labour
Niger	Enquête Nationale sur le Travail Forcé au Niger	No. There are questions on employment status in the main work module, but they cannot always be linked to the position where the respondent was in forced labour.	Yes, to some extent for those aged 18+. Questions on when respondent started the job where they were in forced labour. Duration could be calculated from survey date. Reference period 12 months. No for children in forced labour.
Nigeria	Child and Forced Labour Survey	No for those aged 18+. There is no question on the employment status of those aged 18+ who were in forced labour. Yes, for children in forced labour, there is a question about status of work.	Yes, for those aged 18+. There are questions about the total duration in a job with forced labour situation as well as about the time when they started and left the job. No for children in forced labour. No question on duration of forced labour situation.
Peru	Encuesta sobre Condiciones de Trabajo – Cusco	Yes. There is a question on the status in the job with forced labour conditions, but not as detailed.	Yes. There are questions on start and finish of job with forced labour conditions. Duration can be calculated. Reference period: 5 years.
Uganda	National Labour Force Survey	No. Question on status in employment for respondent's current first and second job. Thus, information available only for those who faced forced labour situation in the current activities.	Yes. There are questions on when they started and finished the job where they were in forced labour. Duration can be calculated from answers.
Uzbekistan	Child labour and forced labour during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan	No. Only employees included.	No. There are questions for duration of working in cotton harvest in general, but no specific questions on duration in forced labour conditions.
	Recruitment Practices and Seasonal Employment in Agriculture in Uzbekistan	No. Only employees included.	No. There are questions for duration of working in cotton harvest in general, but no specific questions on duration in forced labour conditions.
Viet Nam	Electronics Supply Chain Survey	Yes, for worker survey. There is a question on employment status in work which includes several options in addition to employee. Not applicable for establishment survey.	Yes, to some extent for worker survey. Questions on when respondent started the job, and how long they have been working there. Duration could be calculated. Not applicable for establishment survey.

3.4.1. Duration in forced labour

According to the 20th ICLS guidelines, duration in forced labour is defined as «the total number of days or months a person was in forced labour during the specified reference period» (ILO 2018a, 3). The days or months can refer to one or multiple spells of forced labour in the survey's reference period. These spells can also begin and continue beyond the survey's reference period. The information obtained from questions about duration is, thus, essential to harmonize national statistics derived from surveys with different reference periods. More importantly, the indicator measuring duration in forced labour is highly relevant as it offers insights into the degree of exposure to forced labour. It is, thus, a vital variable to classify forced labour, in addition to other variables such as sex, age, branch of economic activity, and so on.

Eleven of the 15 selected surveys have some questions on the duration of the work. In some instances, the questions refer specifically to the duration of the forced labour spell. However, they often ask when workers started and finished the job if the situation did not happen in the current job. The start and finish date would then allow the days or months in the job with the forced labour situation to be constructed. In certain sectoral surveys, such as brick kilns in Nepal and cotton in Uzbekistan, there are questions on how long the worker has been working for the establishment or harvesting season. These questions do not necessarily, however, specify the duration of the forced labour situation. Duration queries are absent for the garment survey in Argentina, the prison labour survey in Mongolia and the children's forced labour module in the national surveys of Niger and Nigeria.

While the forced labour indicator can be constructed for all surveys, duration in forced labour is not readily available and comparable for all. In addition, the inability to construct a reliable duration measure also hurts the comparability of the forced labour indicator, given that surveys have different reference periods.

3.4.2. Employment status

The worker's employment status is not explicitly referenced in the Convention No. 29. Thus, «all work or service» can be forced labour regardless of the relationship. For instance, an own-account worker can be in forced labour even if they are in an informal employment relationship. Moreover, employers and recruiters may press employees to declare themselves «self-employed» to mask the true nature of their working connection. This status enables employers and recruiters not to pay social benefits and minimum salaries, or not to adhere to rules about working hours or annual leave privileges while simultaneously exerting other pressures on the de-facto worker.

Thus, based on the Convention, the measurement of forced labour would be applicable to all workers regardless of their status in employment. Interviewers should hence ask questions to all categories of workers. This list includes employers, independent workers without employees, dependent contractors, employees, family helpers, unpaid trainee workers, organization-based volunteers, and other unpaid workers, as defined in the Resolution concerning statistics on work relationships adopted by the 20th ICLS (ILO 2018b, 45). Yet, in guidelines and surveys, forced labour is typically conceptualized as an employer-employee relationship.

Only three out of the 15 surveys have questions on the employment status of the worker in the job where they faced forced labour conditions. These are the national survey in Mongolia, the regional survey in Peru and the electronics sector survey in Viet Nam. The two specific surveys of Mongolia focusing on prisoners and military conscripts do not address this question as it is not applicable in that context. Another two sectoral surveys, garments in Argentina and brick kilns in Nepal, were conducted with the selected establishments' workers; in both cases the

focus of the survey is mostly on employees, although without the surveys specifically asking about the nature of the relationship between the workers and the establishments, this cannot be verified.

The rest of the surveys either do not contain a question on employment status, or it is impossible to link the said question to the forced labour situation faced by the respondent. The forced labour module, with its specific questions on involuntariness and coercion, is certainly not restricted to be asked to individuals with employer–employee relationships. Thus, while the broad definition of the ICLS is reflected in this aspect of the survey, the status at work of the individual in forced labour is often not captured.

3.5. Forced labour of children

Convention No. 29 covers forced labour of both adults and children. Additionally, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) further classified forced labour as one of the worst forms of child labour, specifically: «all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict» (Art. 3(a).

According to the 20th ICLS guidelines, the translation of the operational definition of forced labour of children in statistical terms is any work performed by a child during a specified reference period falling under one of the following categories:

i. Work performed for a third party, under threat or menace of any penalty applied by a third party (other than the child's parents) either on the child directly or the child's parents;

ii. Work performed with or for the child's parents, under threat or menace of any penalty applied by a third party (other than the child's parents) either on the child directly or the child's parents;

iii. Work performed with or for the child's parents where one or both parents are themselves in a situation of forced labour; or

iv. Work performed in any of the worst forms of child labour (slavery, child pornography or prostitution, engagement in illicit activities). (ILO 2018a, 3)

As seen from the ICLS guidelines, the statistical definition of forced labour of children substantially differs from that of adults. The concept of a minor taking up work voluntarily is complex, as parental consent is legally required in most countries. Similarly, the penalty element may be applied to the parent in lieu of or in addition to the child. However, there must be a distinction between child labour taken not under coercion and that under coercion, which makes up the worst forms of child labour. Once coercion on the child or on the parents if the child is identified, any economic activity the child undertakes should be classified as forced labour of children.

None of the selected surveys specifically targeted forced labour of children, although in some instances, questions to assess forced labour of children were included.

As the identification of the forced labour of children indicator requires different questions to be constructed than those included in the surveys for adults, forced labour of children is often only partially possible to measure with surveys focusing on forced labour of adults – even more so, given that point (iv) from the ICLS guidelines cannot be measured with traditional labour

force survey methodology. From points (i), (ii) and (iii), the 15 surveys reviewed often capture only some, but not all, cases of forced labour of children.

Of the 15 surveys, some administered the detailed forced labour module that follows the guidelines (to identify forced labour of adults) to both adults and children: these are the sectoral surveys of palm oil in Malaysia, agriculture in Nepal and the national survey of Nigeria. The sectoral surveys in Malaysia and Nepal are forced labour surveys that asked the same questions to children, while the Nigeria national survey was a child labour survey with a specific module on forced labour of adults, and specific questions on the forced labour of children.

The second set of surveys has some of the questions asked to children or parents, which enables building a crude child forced labour indicator. However, more detailed questions are needed to cover the several dimensions listed above. For example, in Niger's national survey, not all forced labour questions are asked of those aged five and above. In this case, the questionnaire typically skipped questions on debt bondage and recruitment for this age group, thus making it impossible to cover all child forced labour dimensions.

The third set of surveys allows the identification of child forced labour only indirectly, through parents' exploitation. For instance, in the Nepal brick kilns sector survey, there are particular questions about family members, specifically children, who work with the respondents in forced labour. Though this survey does not contain a child-specific forced labour module, it has a particular section on children's working conditions, which looks into hours and days worked, health problems due to working in brick kilns, and other issues. These questions would allow identification of cases of child forced labour according to the third ICLS criterion (point (iii)), that of any child performing work with their parents when the latter are considered in forced labour. However, this indicator would leave out the other ICLS categories of children in forced labour.

Finally, a partial construction of forced labour of children indicators is possible when the forced labour module is administered to individuals below the age of 18. For instance, while there is no specific child labour module, the regional survey of Peru and the national surveys of Laos, Mongolia and Uganda, as well as the garment sector survey in Argentina, have forced labour modules asked to children aged 14–17 or 15–17 years old (depending on the survey).

Children's forced labour questions are missing from four of the selected surveys. Two of these, the prison labour and the military conscripts surveys of Mongolia, are specific subpopulations that exclude children by definition, so that child labour questions would not be applicable in those instances. The cotton sector survey of Uzbekistan contains a question on whether respondents have seen children harvesting cotton. However, this information would not allow a child forced labour indicator to be built. Similarly, the electronic sector survey of Viet Nam queries establishments on whether children are employed and how many, if the answer is "yes". In this case, these questions are also insufficient to compute estimates of child forced labour.

The analysis revealed that most selected surveys allow the building of at least some crude measure of children's forced labour prevalence rate. Nevertheless, there is still scope for progress in questionnaire design to ensure that there are questions that tackle all dimensions of child labour and pay particular attention to differences between adult and child forced labour dimensions, as per the 20th ICLS guidelines.

4. Limitations

This section outlines the limitations reported in the documentation of the surveys, and then broadens the perspective to summarize some challenges and limitations in drawing conclusions about forced labour measurement based on these 15 surveys.

The limitations reported by each selected survey can also offer a deeper understanding of their conceptualization and implementation challenges. This information can then inform the design of future surveys and, in doing so, help to avoid past mistakes. In addition, by selecting the most recent surveys to show the recent developments, the other limitation was that only some countries had completed the implementation of the survey projects. There was, thus, a trade-off between having the most recent information on forced labour measurement efforts on the ground and having the entire implementation documentation at hand for a complete thorough analysis. As a result, final reports and their respective limitations are unavailable for most surveys. However, a few surveys have produced their final reports but do not include anything specific on the limitations and challenges encountered. These are the national survey of Uganda and the sectoral survey of brick kilns in Nepal.

The two reports that had a part devoted to limitations were the sectoral surveys of palm oil in Malaysia and cotton in Uzbekistan. Some problematic concepts were salary and production for respondents who were contributing family workers, as they found them non-applicable. Another noted issue and essential for future surveys is using a longer reference period, for instance, 12 months, instead of the instantaneous past week used. A longer extended period is advised in cases where seasonal work and independent smallholdings are involved. The short reference period was also considered a limitation in the cotton sector survey in Uzbekistan.

The objective of this report was to analyse current developments in measuring forced labour across countries and sectors. The forced labour phenomenon is found on all continents, in practically all countries and economies (ILO 2005). On the other hand, while the efforts to improve the measurement of forced labour and to extend the focus of forced labour surveys have been ongoing, the information we have about forced labour is still based on only a small group of surveys, 15 of which have been covered in this report. As such, one should interpret the findings presented in this report with this limitation in mind. This is also a call to expand efforts to implement surveys on forced labour where there are informational gaps. In addition to information on the prevalence of forced labour, further studies on the implementation and design of these surveys could be beneficial to improve the statistical concepts and have more precise estimates that accurately reflect the situation on the ground.

While there have been significant efforts to measure forced labour following the 20th ICLS guidelines, this process has faced many challenges. Forced labour is a very sensitive topic and a rare statistical phenomenon. The development of a sampling methodology that is sufficiently innovative to capture forced labour without the need for a large sample size (often unfeasible due to budgetary and organizational reasons) is ongoing, with significant innovations taking place in recent surveys (as described in section 2.2, for instance in Argentina or Viet Nam). The sampling strategy of ten out of the 15 surveys did not contain advanced methodologies to account for the rare population of individuals in forced labour, such as oversampling in the initial stages or targeting households of interest in the last sampling stage.

Capturing forced labour in a quantitative questionnaire embedded in a forced labour survey, or in some cases as a stand-alone forced labour survey, has also proved difficult. The sensitive nature of the topic, the partial coverage of the sample for the purpose of forced labour

measurement and other difficulties about the understanding and translation of complex concepts such as coercion and involuntariness have hindered the collection of reliable data.

Furthermore, documentation on ethical considerations adopted by the surveys was also severely limited; 11 out of the 15 surveys did not have any documentation on this matter. Lastly, there is scope for progress in implementing the guidelines of the 20th ICLS on the forced labour of children: the questionnaires could be better developed to capture all categories of child forced labour and pay particular attention to differences between its adult and child dimensions.

5. Summary of findings

The objective of this report was to analyse the most recent forced labour surveys and outline the advances made in measuring forced labour across countries and sectors. The study systematically analysed the surveys' characteristics and how well the questionnaires capture forced labour concepts vis-à-vis the guidelines from the 20th ICLS. The 15 surveys included in this report were selected based on having a forced labour module having been conducted in the past four years or currently in the implementation process. They covered, in total, ten countries spanning four continents.

There are some promising developments in sampling methodology to capture the forced labour population. The sectoral surveys of garments in Argentina, the palm oil sectoral survey in Malaysia or the electronics survey in Viet Nam provided very innovative strategies that followed closely the suggestions of the 20th ICLS. Albeit less complex than the aforementioned surveys, the national survey of forced labour in Niger and the regional one of Peru also has used some of the guidance from the 20th ICLS. However, there is room for progress in designing the sampling methodology overall. The prevalent sampling technique for the rest of the surveys was probabilistic two-stage stratified sampling, with the first-stage sampling units selected through PPS. Failure to capture elusive populations has severe implications for the forced labour prevalence rates and inhibits further analysis of the causes and effects of forced labour.

Testing the questionnaire has become standard practice in recent survey implementation, but cognitive interview tests remain uncommon. While implementing partners conducted field tests on most surveys, they could provide more information and better documentation to inform future similar projects. Cognitive interview tests should also be encouraged in upcoming projects to refine further the questions on forced labour concepts, especially given the sensitivity and context-specific challenges of the topic. Ethical protocols, if adopted, were not generally reported in the survey documentation. While this does not mean that no ethical protocol was followed, the informational gap in this regard exposes difficulties in ensuring proper ethical implementation of these and future forced labour projects, given their highly sensitive content.

The analysis of the questionnaires reveals that recent surveys have made a large effort in designing questions on involuntariness and penalty to capture adult forced labour indicators; most questionnaires followed overall ILO guidelines and templates. However, there is scope for refinement and extension of forced labour modules for specific subgroups such as children and populations under state-imposed forced labour. Another issue the review brought forth is the disparity in the reference periods and availability of forced labour duration. It is crucial to make headway in synchronizing reference periods for surveys of similar subgroups and ensuring the measurement of duration in forced labour. Only by doing this can comparable and reliable forced labour indicators be obtained.

Finally, there is immense overall progress in the knowledge collected on forced labour, both in terms of practical implementation guidelines and actual country and sector estimates. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of forced labour continues to be rampant worldwide. Consequently, international organizations, research institutes and, especially, national statistical offices must accelerate their efforts in data collection on this matter in order to design informed policies which effectively tackle the causes and effects of forced labour.

Appendix: List of surveys on forced labour covered in this report

Country	Survey name	Date
Argentina	Prevalence Survey Garment Sector	2022
Laos	Lao Labour Force Survey 3 & Child Labour Survey 2	2022
Malaysia	Employment Survey in Oil Palm Plantations	2018
Mongolia	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey	2022
	Mongolia National Forced Labour Survey – FLB Compulsory Working Conditions in Military Conscription	2022
	Prison Labour	2022
Nepal	Labour Survey in Brick Kilns Industry	2019
	Research on Forced Labour and Child Labour in the Agriculture Sector in Siraha and Saptari	2021
Niger	Enquête Nationale sur le Travail Forcé au Niger	2021
Nigeria	Child and Forced Labour Survey	2022
Peru	Encuesta sobre Condiciones de Trabajo – Cusco	2021
Uganda	National Labour Force Survey	2021
Uzbekistan	Recruitment Practices and Seasonal Employment in Agriculture in Uzbekistan	2014–15
	Child labour and forced labour during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan	2020–21
Viet Nam	Electronics Supply Chain Survey	2022

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