



ILO Data Initiative on child labour and forced labour



International
Labour
Organization

Standardising the measurement of forced labour

Case for standardisation

Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls on governments to:

“Take immediate and effective action to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

While the monitoring framework of the SDGs is still subject to discussion, consensus has emerged that monitoring actions will mainly take place at the national level, with complementary actions being taken at the regional and global levels. The SDGs monitoring framework will need to take into account the complexity of the goals and targets while serving as a practical tool for measuring progress and advising policy formulation.

A specific and highly technical challenge related to Target 8.7 concerns how to measure progress towards achieving the eradication of forced labour.

This challenge was already recognized in October 2013 when the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted a resolution calling on the International Labour Organization to:

“set up a working group with the aim of sharing best practices on forced labour surveys in order to encourage further such surveys in more countries. The working group should engage ILO constituents and other experts in discussing and developing international guidelines to harmonize concepts, elaborate statistical definitions, standard lists of criteria and survey tools on forced labour, and to inform the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians on the progress made.”

The next ICLS will take place in 2018.



Technical Working Group

The ILO set up a Technical Working Group involving a number of different UN agencies and statistical experts to develop draft guidelines and recommendations for the required indicators for the standardised measurement of forced labour.

A preparatory meeting, held in Geneva in April 2015, launched the work of the Technical Working Group. It focused on taking stock of all existing initiatives and methodologies used to measure forced labour, and discussed the challenges faced and ways forward regarding the development of international standards for the measurement of forced labour. Recommendations from this Preparatory Meeting included; a proposal to study the cost and benefits of developing short and quick surveys for measuring prevalence while keeping longer in-depth surveys when measuring the nature and characteristics of forced labour in a given context; and a proposal to have the technical working group address each of the specific forms of forced labour. The Technical Working Group will have discussed the following 8 topics over the 16 month period from September 2015 through December 2016.

- Indicators of forced labour (involuntariness and penalties)
- Minimum sample size for prevalence surveys
- Forced labour of children
- Traditional forms of slavery/vestiges of slavery
- Bonded labour
- Discriminant analysis
- Trafficking for forced labour
- Forced commercial sexual exploitation of adults and children

The outcome of these technical meetings, including the draft measurement framework and recommendations for sampling for surveys on forced labour, will serve as a basis for drafting the final documents for the next ICLS in 2018 and for the design and implementation of pilot surveys worldwide.

Definitions of concepts

For data to be robust and comparable, they need to be based on a common understanding of what is to be measured. As the concepts of forced labour, human trafficking and slavery are closely related, the ILO data initiative has been designed as a multi-stakeholder process involving all relevant organisations to agree on definitions for statistical purposes.

FORCED LABOUR

Forced labour is defined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 29, one of the most ratified ILO Conventions, as work that is performed involuntarily and under coercion. It can take place in any industry, including in the informal economy. Many victims, in particular women and girls, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, but forced labour is also prevalent in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, domestic work, construction, manufacturing and mining. It includes men, women and children in situations of debt bondage, working under slavery-like conditions or being trafficked.

The 2014 Forced Labour Protocol recognizes “that the context and forms of forced or compulsory labour have changed and trafficking in persons for the purposes of forced or compulsory labour, which may involve sexual exploitation, is the subject of growing international concern and requires urgent action for its effective elimination” (Preamble), further stating that “the definition of forced or compulsory labour contained in the Convention is reaffirmed, and therefore the measures referred to in this Protocol shall include specific action against trafficking in persons for the purposes of forced or compulsory labour.” (Art. 1.3).

TRAFFICKING

Trafficking can take place both across and/or within national borders. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (“Palermo Protocol”), adopted in 2000, defines human trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” The Protocol further specifies that “exploitation” shall include at a minimum “forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery” as well the removal of organs (Art. 3.1).

SLAVERY

Slavery was first defined in the UN 1926 Slavery Convention (Art. 1) as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.” In 1956, the United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery built upon the 1926 definition of slavery to include debt bondage, serfdom, the selling of women by relatives for marriage, and the situation of parents or guardians delivering a child to another person with the view to the exploitation of his labour.

Upcoming milestones

ALLIANCE 8.7 KNOWLEDGE SHARING, COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE PLATFORM

The ILO's work on the measurement of forced labour will serve as a significant contribution to the Alliance 8.7 Knowledge Sharing, Communication and Dialogue Platform. The platform seeks to create a one-stop-shop for all entities already working or wishing to take actions to eradicate child labour and forced labour and achieve Target 8.7. With a focus on the users of the Platform, it will not only collate datasets, but also provide summaries of aggregated data and will create a network of program designers and others who will be proactively engaged in a dialogue to drive a community of informed practitioners committed to applying lessons learned.

GLOBAL ESTIMATES ON CHILD LABOUR AND FORCED LABOUR

The next global estimates on forced labour and child labour to be published in 2017 will indicate the number of children, women and men affected by these human rights abuses and serve as the baseline for achieving Target 8.7.

GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON CHILD LABOUR AND FORCED LABOUR

To align with SDG Target 8.7, governments have welcomed the Government of Argentina's proposal to broaden the scope of the next Global Conference on child labour to include forced labour. The Conference, to be hosted by the Argentinian Government, will take place by the end of 2017 in Buenos Aires.

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