



Tool No. 10: Ownership and political commitment

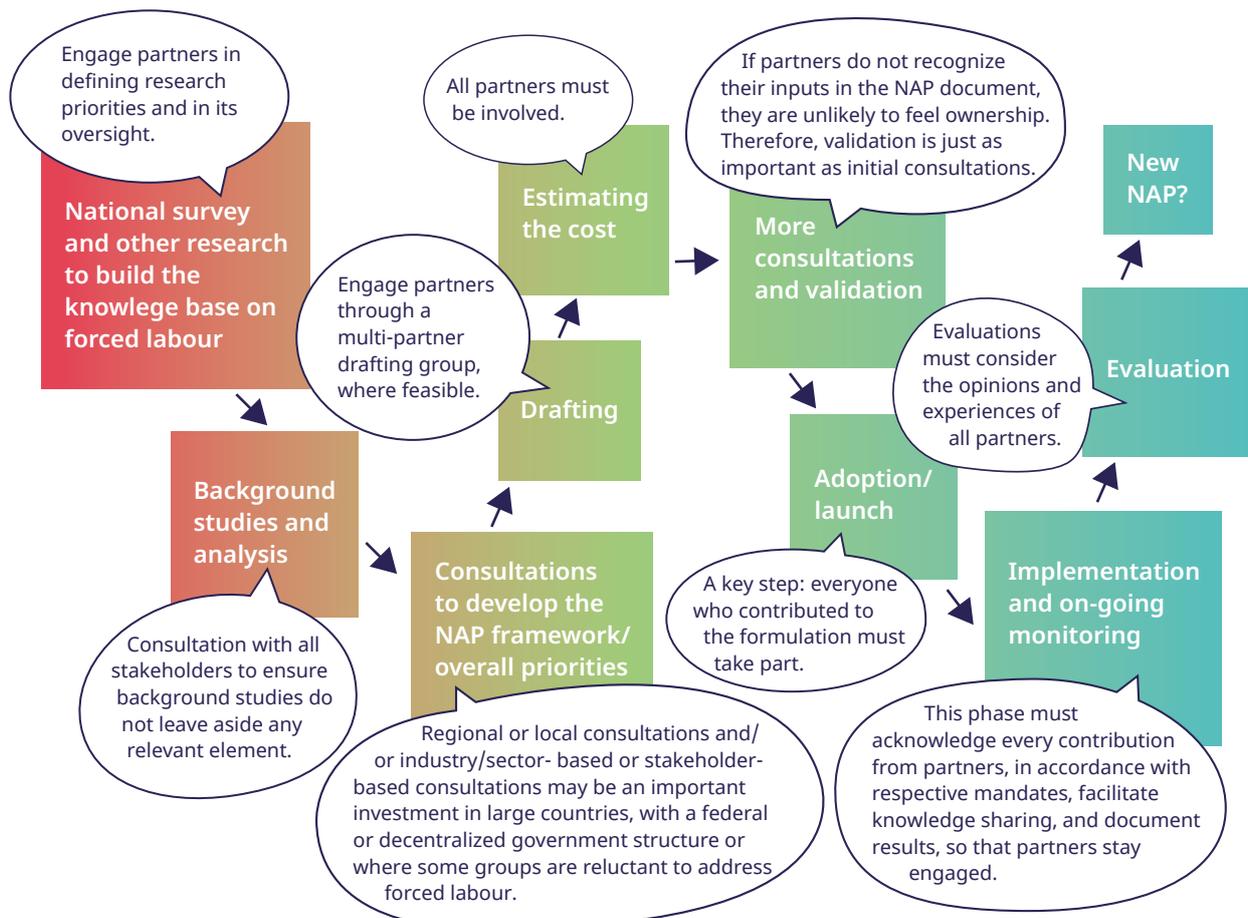


This note is intended to stimulate thinking about what ownership means and how it can lay the foundations for an effective NAP.¹

“Ownership” is generally agreed to be of vital importance to the NAP – without real national ownership, a NAP is unlikely to be implemented to any significant degree and unlikely to bring about meaningful change. If there is real ownership of the NAP, it means that partners acknowledge that the eradication of forced labour is “their business” and will prioritise this in their respective agendas. This applies to government, social partners and other civil society partners. As the government and the Parliament are the ones driving change in many aspects, for example, by adopting and enforcing laws and policies on forced labour, political commitment is also essential.

Below, you will find concrete suggestions of what can be done at each stage of the NAP formulation process to create ownership of the NAP and what partners may do to stimulate political commitment. It should be borne in mind that a truly inclusive consultation and formulation process is the most important step towards national ownership of the NAP. Inclusive processes tend to be lengthier, but skipping partners or steps in the consultation process may be costly in terms of ownership and (non) implementation in the long run. Hence, striving to make the NAP formulation process as inclusive as possible should be the aim of lead agencies at all times.

Ownership considerations at the different NAP formulation stages



1- See also ILO: *Tool kit for development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) on Child Labour* (Geneva, 2017). Available at: www.ilo.org/jpec/Informationresources/WCMS_568877/lang--en/index.htm.

Generating political commitment

Political commitment from policy makers will help keep the eradication of forced labour high on the political agenda. This may however be difficult in an environment where multiple priorities compete. Arguments that could convince policy makers to commit to the eradication of forced labour, in words as well as in deeds and in the allocation of resources, include:

- ▶ Forced labour is a severe violation of human rights. It should therefore be eliminated as a matter of priority, in line with the ILO instruments on Forced Labour, in particular the Forced Labour Protocol of 2014, which calls for the implementation of a NAP on forced labour; and with Target 8.7 of the SDGs, which call for its eradication by 2030.
- ▶ The persistence of forced labour in the country is likely to lead to substantial reputational damage. This may scare away foreign investors and trading partners who do not wish to be associated with forced labour.
- ▶ Moreover, forced labour generates a loss of resources for the country (unpaid taxes and social contributions) and generates costs in terms of assistance to victims and prosecution. For these reasons, it is important to dedicate resources to prevent forced labour and address root causes as well.
- ▶ Eradicating forced labour is thus both a moral obligation and an important investment in the country.

Delivering this message is easier if it is supported by national evidence. If no proof of forced labour can be put forward, it is easier to disregard the problem – even in the face of large numbers of victims of forced labour globally or indications that forced labour may exist in the country. The collection of quantitative and qualitative data is therefore instrumental. Once such evidence is collected, it needs to be shared with policy makers. This may happen through multiple vehicles, such as:

- ▶ media reports, which also raise general awareness and increase public pressure on policy makers to address the problem;²
- ▶ specific information sessions for parliamentary committees/parliamentarians, government officials;³
- ▶ making use of international days and events (e.g. the International Day for Abolition of Slavery on 2 December, the World Day against Trafficking on 30 July 30, or the World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June) to raise awareness and increase public pressure, and to engage policy makers;
- ▶ inviting policy makers and all other relevant stakeholders to participate actively in the NAP consultations;
- ▶ bringing forced labour issues to the attention of the ILO supervisory mechanism – especially in cases where the government is reluctant to commit to its eradication.

Fostering political commitment to the eradication of forced labour may be both a question of dialogue and information on one side and exerting political pressure on the other. It should be kept in mind that employers' and workers' organizations have a crucial role to play, for example, through bringing up issues of forced labour in tripartite labour councils nationally and through reporting to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations,⁴ when needed.

2- See ILO: *Reporting on forced labour and fair recruitment: An ILO toolkit for journalists*, online resource (Geneva, 2019). Available at: <https://readymag.com/ITC/IO/1292461/>.

3- See ILO, IPU: *Eliminating Forced Labour, Handbook for Parliamentarians N°30* (Geneva, 2019). Available at: www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_723507/lang--en/index.htm.

4- For more information, please visit the CEACR webpage: www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/committee-of-experts-on-the-application-of-conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm.