



# ILO Data Initiative on Modern Slavery



International  
Labour  
Organization

## Better data for better policies

### Background and justification

The ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, is a new, legally-binding instrument that requires States to take measures regarding prevention, protection and remedy in giving effect to the Convention's obligation to suppress forced labour. The Recommendation No. 203, supplementing the Protocol, calls on member States to collect reliable statistics on forced labour, including trafficking for the purpose of forced labour.

The 19th ICLS (International Conference of Labour Statisticians) in 2013, adopted a Resolution, recommending: "that the Office 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."

In promoting this agenda of work, the ILO data initiative will also support measurement of relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular target 8.7 which seeks to eliminate all forms of forced labour and the worst forms of child labour.

Based on those decisions, the ILO has initiated a multi-stakeholders process to harmonize data collection worldwide and generate better prevalence data.

**Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch**  
**Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour**



## The objectives

- **To measure trends:** are forced labour and related practices increasing or decreasing? At what rate? Where? What forms are more resistant to world's efforts?
- **To understand root causes:** what policies should be developed to stop forced labour and related practices in a practical and viable way?
- **To identify people at risk:** what preventive measures should be implemented to protect the most vulnerable people? For which target groups?
- **To target exploiters and traffickers:** who are those who benefit from forced labour? How do they recruit victims and exploit them? What should be done to stop their iniquitous practices?
- **To support businesses:** how should efforts be designed to mitigate the risk of forced labour in their supply chains?
- **To share good practices:** what lessons can be shared between countries and replicated?
- **To measure impact:** what works best to crush forced labour?

## The ILO targets under this initiative are (2015-2020)

- By 2018, to submit recommendations on the measurement of forced labour to the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. A first meeting of a working group for the implementation of the 19th ICLS resolution took place in April 2015. The initial discussions on concepts and definitions, data sources and measurement issues and the setting-up of working groups paves the way towards the harmonization of concepts and statistical definitions, and the development of survey tools on forced labour. Follow-up discussions will be held at central and regional levels in order to further develop guidelines for statistical surveys on forced labour.
- By 2017, to publish new global estimates of forced labour and present them at the recurrent discussion on Fundamentals Principles and Rights at Work to be held at the 106th Session of the International Labour Conference. By 2020, at least 20 statistical surveys will be completed in all regions in collaboration with ILO constituents.
- By 2016, to have a Global Slavery Observatory fully operational. In response to the needs expressed by various actors from governments, civil society, workers, the business community, and donors, the ILO has designed a Global Slavery Observatory as a key instrument to manage and share knowledge on forced labour, in partnership with other organisations that collect similar data. Beyond providing quantitative and factual information, the Global Database is meant to be a *dynamic tool for following country specific policy changes*. By tracking national anti-forced labour/trafficking policies over time, the database will reflect the diversity of methods applied and facilitate the analysis of trends and good practices.

## Harmonizing definitions

If data are to be robust and comparable, then they need to be based on a common understanding of what it is we want to measure.

- 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, suffering slavery-like conditions or who have been 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 can take place both across 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 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.
- 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. In this context, the chapeau of “modern slavery” is used to cover all those practices.

## ILO's data collection efforts on Modern Slavery

- For the last 10 years, the ILO has piloted survey methodologies to estimate the prevalence of forced labour in targeted areas or within targeted population. In countries where probabilistic sampling was not used, quantitative surveys were implemented using a non-probabilistic sample, still providing relevant results for the target population. These surveys were implemented in Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, China, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ivory Coast, Moldova, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Zambia. The results of these surveys can be used by policy makers to design evidence-based policies on prevention of forced labour. The sectors covered include for example, fishing, domestic work, and agriculture.
- The experience gained in these pilot surveys was used as a basis for the guidelines for quantitative surveys on forced labour published in 2012. "Hard to see, harder to count: survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children." The guidelines aim to provide comprehensive information and tools to enable national statistical offices and research institutes to undertake national surveys on forced labour of adults and/or children.
- In 2012, the ILO published a new global estimate of forced labour. Using a new and improved statistical methodology, the ILO estimated that 20.9 million people are victims of forced labour globally, trapped in jobs into which they were coerced or deceived and which they cannot leave.
- In parallel, the measurement framework in general and the list of indicators of forced labour in particular have been used for qualitative research, as a grid to assess the risks of forced labour in specific situations. For example, the recruitment sector is studied with this framework to highlight the risks of forced labour at various stages of the recruitment process. In 2013, the risks of trafficking for forced labour among migrant workers in the Middle-East have been studied using the same indicators, leading to the publication of the report "Tricked and Trapped: Human Trafficking in the Middle East."
- The report "Profits and Poverty: the economics of forced labour" published in May 2014 highlights that forced labour – which in the private economy generates US\$ 150 billion in illegal profits per year, about three times more than previously estimated – has roots in poverty and vulnerability, low levels of education and literacy, migration and other factors. The evidence demonstrates the urgent need for stronger measures of prevention and protection, as well as for enhanced law enforcement, as the basic responses to forced labour. At the same time, the report offers new knowledge of the determinants of forced labour. This can help governments and partners to develop policies and programmes not only to stop forced labour where it exists, but to prevent it before it occurs.

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