

# THE HUMAN COST OF ILLICIT TRADE:

## A 10-Point Primer to Step Up the Fight Against Forced Labor, Child Labor and Human Trafficking



*This 10-Point Primer delineates actions that can be taken now to step up the fight against forced labor, child labor and human trafficking in the illicit economy.*

Despite good efforts by governments and the private sector, progress on stopping forced labor has been painfully slow.

Amongst the worst crimes associated with illicit trade is the demand it creates for forced and child labor to carry out the tasks of making counterfeits, sewing fake logos on luxury apparel, or harvesting illegal fish. Women, children and men of all ages and race are forced to labor in illicit sectors, where they are abused by organized criminals pursuing clandestine profits. A recent [TRACIT report](#) found that ending these human rights abuses will only be possible by eradicating illicit trade and the demand for forced labor associated with it.

In these dark corners of the economy, illicit trade thrives in the presence of regulatory gaps, poor law enforcement, weak state institutions and where informal economic markets have been left unattended. Moreover, the poly-criminal nature of illicit traders reveals a tendency to practice more than one illegal activity, where counterfeiting, smuggling, money laundering and forced labor are often undertaken in tandem.

## WHAT CAN BUSINESSES DO?

There is much business is doing to honor their human rights and labor rights commitments – as an aspect of corporate policy or together with other companies in business associations. Additional actions businesses can take are to:

# 1

### JOIN THE ILO GLOBAL BUSINESS NETWORK ON FORCED LABOUR

The ILO GBNFL brings the ILO together with businesses of all sizes and sectors from around the globe to eradicate forced labor. The network breaks silos by linking up business actors from across sectors and geographies to eradicate forced labor; supports businesses to engage with other relevant stakeholders, including government bodies, to find sustainable solutions to the structural drivers of forced labor; creates spaces where members identify gaps, develop new ways of tackling forced labor, and devise methods to scale up solutions; and supports businesses by sharing data, information, and resources needed to take steps to tackle forced labor.

# 2

### CONDUCT AN INVENTORY OF THE COMPANY'S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS AND INITIATIVES<sup>1</sup>

so as to ensure that they adequately address forced labor occurring in illicit supply chains. Engage, share practices and lessons learned, and collaborate.

- Investigate and report on the incidence of illicit trade in your supply chain. In doing so, businesses are invited to participate in TRACIT's effort to collect and process data on labor abuses along illicit supply chains. TRACIT has launched an 11-questions survey for use in the field by vendors or brand representatives participating in surveillance, investigations and raids of illicit operations to record observations of forced labor and associated criminal activity.

# WHAT CAN CONSUMERS DO?

Consumers also have an important role in stopping the demand for forced labor by knowing what to look for, reporting what they see, and stopping demand for illicit goods produced by forced and child labor. Consumers can take action further action:

## 3

### KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Identifying forced labor, child labor and human trafficking resources include:

- The US Department of State's information on how to identify and assist a trafficking victim available [here](#).
- The International Labour Organization's booklet introducing the ILO Indicators of Forced Labour available [here](#).
- Information on the EU's work to combat human trafficking available [here](#).

## 4

### IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, REPORT WHAT YOU SEE

- Call the national human trafficking hotline.
  - In the US, contact the 24-hour National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888
  - In the EU, contact details for the national hotlines are available [here](#).
- You can also **report an emergency to law enforcement** by calling the national emergency number in the jurisdiction you are in.

## 5

### DON'T BUY FAKES

Forced labor is a pervasive problem in both the manufacturing and sales of counterfeited and pirated goods. Avoiding purchases of these goods is a tangible step consumers can take to deter demand for labor abuse. Use resources such as [this](#) and remember the 4 Ps:

#### PLACE

Are you buying from a trusted source, either online or at a physical store?

#### PRICE

If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is.

#### PACKAGING

Does the packaging look "off," e.g., blurry graphics and printing, imbalanced colors, labels not on straight, misspellings?

#### PRODUCT

Does the product or labeling have a quality look? Does it look comparable to what you've purchased before?

## 6

### KNOW WHAT YOU ARE BUYING

Beyond ensuring that you don't buy counterfeited and pirated goods, make informed purchasing decisions by using tools such as [ResponsibleSourcingTool.org](#) or the Department of Labor's List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor.

# WHAT CAN GOVERNMENTS DO?

Governments have a role to stop criminality in all its forms, and this naturally includes forced labor in illicit trade.

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## UNDERSTAND HOW FORCED LABOR OCCURS

To stop the problem, governments must better understand how forced labor occurs in the illicit supply chain. This starts with devoting more resources to data collection initiatives, and supporting those already undertaken by the private sector. Where are the hot spots? How are the crimes being committed? Who are the actors? Where are the key intervention points for law enforcement efforts?

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## STEP UP THE INVESTIGATION OF FORCED LABOR IN THE ILLICIT SUPPLY CHAIN

Governments need to step up their investigation of forced labor in the illicit supply chain, from the point of manufacture to the point of sale. They need to utilize the full spectrum of investigative techniques available to disrupt the activities of organized criminal groups. Given the close link between forced labor and illicit operations, governments should consider assigning labor inspectors to raids aimed at disrupting illicit operations in order to effectively identify and address forced labor cases and assist victims to escape their situations of exploitation. The work on the investigative side needs to be matched at the prosecutorial and penal side.

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## INCREASE AWARENESS

Governments need to increase awareness raising and training for law enforcement officials to improve their ability to identify forced labor, child labor and human trafficking incidences and for prosecutors and judges to ensure adequate enforcement of the identified crimes.

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## CONNECT THE DOTS: FORCED LABOR IS A CRIME THAT OCCURS WITH OTHER CRIMES, NOT IN A VACUUM

Therefore, during investigations, all crimes must be flagged – not just those that may be easily pursued for prosecution. If forced labor cases are correctly categorized as such in crime statistics, the knowledge base on the modus operandi of criminals engaging in these human rights abuses will improve significantly. If governments are able to strengthen their ability to detect, disrupt, and dismantle illicit operations, they will reduce the associated demand for forced labor.