



## Ending Forced Labor

*“No one should be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”*  
- **Article 4, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948**

### Statement of the Problem

According to the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) most recent estimate, 21 million people around the world are victims of **forced labor**. Forced labor is sometimes referred to as **modern day slavery**. Forced labor is formally defined as, “a practice similar [to] slavery, in which force, fraud, or **coercion** are used to push an individual to perform labor that they cannot discontinue without penalty or threat of penalty.”<sup>1</sup> Simply put, forced labor is when somebody is made to work against his or her own will with the threat of some form of punishment.

The ILO also adds that the topic of forced labor encompasses traditional practices of slavery and slave-like practices, various forms of **debt bondage**, as well as new forms of forced labor that have emerged in recent decades, such as **human trafficking**.<sup>2</sup> In numerous countries around the world, domestic workers, including children, are trapped in situations of forced labor, and in many cases they are prevented from leaving an employer through threats or even violence.

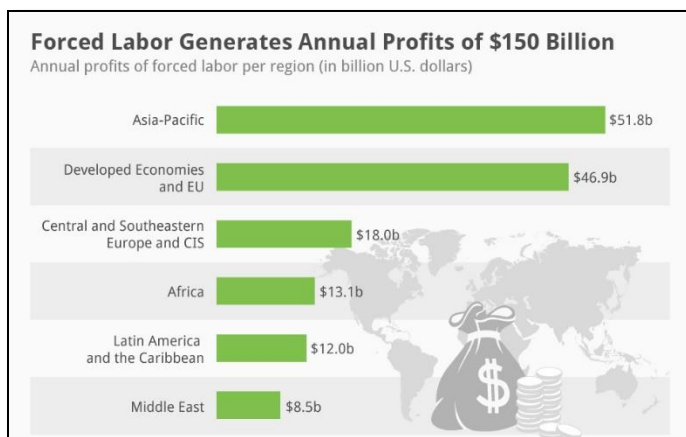
Forced labor is a modern issue that is currently being perpetrated by various groups and organizations in a diverse variety of countries and places. Money and financial gain is the top motivating factor for perpetrators as the issue generates annual profits of \$150 billion USD. Forced labor is disproportionately concentrated in the **Asia and Pacific region** with 11 million people (more than half of the forced laborers in the world) impacted. In this region, millions of men, women, and children are tied to their work through a vicious cycle of debts they owe.



Global number of forced laborers by region. (Photo: [International Labor Organization](#))

<sup>1</sup> PeaMUN X. 2018. *International Labor Organization, Forced Labor Briefing Paper*.

<sup>2</sup> ILO. 2012. *General Survey on the fundamental Conventions concerning rights at work in light of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*.



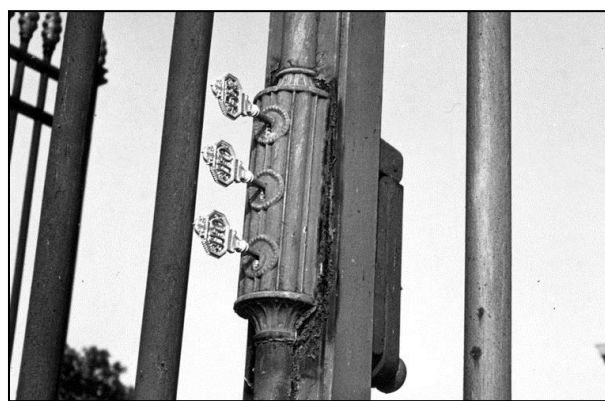
Forced labor generates \$150 billion (USD) per year. (Photo: [Statista](#))

forced laborers are exploited in the **private economy**, of which many of the world's top economies benefit greatly either as consumers or suppliers of products made with forced labor **supply chains**. Developed countries are often used as countries of transit for forced labor as the ILO reports that 44% of all victims have migrated internally or across borders.<sup>3</sup> Finally, there is also forced labor imposed by some countries for the purposes of economic development or as a punishment for expressing political views.

Despite the calls for increased commitments in various international treaties, global conferences, and other related declarations, recent trends show that it is very difficult for many countries in the world to fully eliminate forced labor. Forced labor is a violation of **human rights** with its root causes grounded in global poverty, **migration**, corruption, and a seemingly endless demand for cheap labor. In addition, the promotion of forced labor is a criminal offence, punishable by law. Delegates are encouraged to take all of this into consideration so that clear, achievable solutions and standards can be set for both domestic and international law.

### History of the Problem: Building International Standards

Forced labor has been used all throughout history, but the work of building international standards against forced labor began with the creation of the **International Labor Organization (ILO)**. The ILO was founded in 1919 at a time when the world was struggling to rebuild and recover from World War I (WWI). The organization's mission is to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, and enhance social protection in work-related issues. Its mission also includes abolishing child labor by creating standards and protocols based on the age



The gates of the ILO feature three keys, symbolic of the organization's three constituents - governments, employers and workers who must work together to create change. (Photo: [ILO](#))

<sup>3</sup> International Labor Organization. 2016. *ILO Standards on Forced Labor: The New Protocol and Recommendation at a Glance*.

of the child and safety of the workplace. The ILO is undoubtedly the most important organization when it comes to eliminating forced labor. Today, the ILO includes 187 **member states** and, in 2019, the ILO will be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary by highlighting its achievements and reaffirming its position as the primary global organization for human rights in the workplace. To date, there are eight main **international treaties** and recommendations that paved the way for countries to take meaningful action. For the purpose of understanding the topic at a glance, we will highlight a few of them, but delegates are encouraged to research and see which ones their assigned country has signed on to (and which ones they haven't).



Marchers in 1998 during the Global March against Child Labor (Photo: BBC News)

In 1998, a grassroots movement called the Global March against Child Labor brought together **NGOs**, trade unions, teachers, and children in 140 different countries to demand a global end to child labor. They marched through Africa, Asia, North and Latin America, and Europe, and collectively covered nearly 50,000 miles. Their final destination was the International Labor Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. This march was significant because at that time the ILO was discussing a possible new Convention called the **Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention**. The march was so successful that it contributed to helping it become the fastest ratified Convention in the history of ILO.

The **Forced Labor Convention** was passed in 1930. However, the use of forced labor in **World War II** (WWII) raised awareness with regard to the political and economic aspects of labor systems, seeing that they were being carried out by various governments on a large scale. Following the atrocities of WWII, the **Abolition of Forced Labor Convention** was adopted by the ILO. The Convention primarily concerns forced labor imposed by state authorities. Hoping to put something in place that would eliminate the possibility of forced labor happening the same way it did in WWII, it prohibits the use of forced labor specifically for the following reasons: 1) as punishment for the expression of political views; 2) for the purposes of economic development; 3) as a means of labor discipline; 4) as a punishment for participation in strikes; and 5) as a means of racial, religious or any other type of discrimination.

Today, contemporary forced labor is more or less driven by the same historical motives, but is now being carried out in a much more secretive manner. It is noted that approximately 75% of all forced labor occurs in the **private sector**. In 2016, the ILO entered into force a new, legally-binding **Protocol and Recommendation on Forced Labor** with the hope that it would bring the original standards against forced labor that were found in the 1930 Convention into the modern era. The new protocol aims to strengthen global efforts toward combatting forced labor, trafficking, and slavery-like practices with a specific focus on preventing forced labor, protecting victims and providing them with access to remedies, and emphasizing the link between forced labor and human trafficking. Governments worldwide currently have the opportunity to ratify the Protocol and integrate new, modern measures at the national and regional levels to combat this crime.

## Possible Solutions

Although the **prohibition** of forced labor is written into international law through various international treaties and other related declarations, the reality is that each country continues to have its own labor standards. **Legislation** in some countries defines forced labor too narrowly, such as requiring a **prosecutor** to prove that a captor has both forced the victim to work and earned money from doing so. Even worse, other countries only recognize certain aspects of forced labor as a crime and leave out other types of forced labor. A great starting point for thinking about solutions involves looking at regional projects that have achieved some level of success. In addition, delegates could consider improving any existing methods of combatting this important issue.

The Forced Labor Action in the Asian Region (FLARE) is an example of an existing regional project that assists women, men and children in forced labor throughout different parts of the economy. Created in 2014, the project serves to combat forced labor in East and Southeast Asia. FLARE addresses both forced labor in the private sector and **state-imposed** forced labor within the broader framework of promoting fundamental principles and rights at work. Its strategy is built on the concept that certain components of a strong labor market, like workplace organizations (i.e. unions) and employers who enforce regulations and inspections, are a **prerequisite** for upholding rights at the workplace and preventing the occurrence of violations that may lead to forced labor.<sup>4</sup> Currently the FLARE project only exists in Asia, but similar projects like FLARE could be expanded to more regions and possibly to all United Nations member states.



Six steps to combat Forced Labor and Modern Day Slavery. (Chart: [End Slavery Now](#))

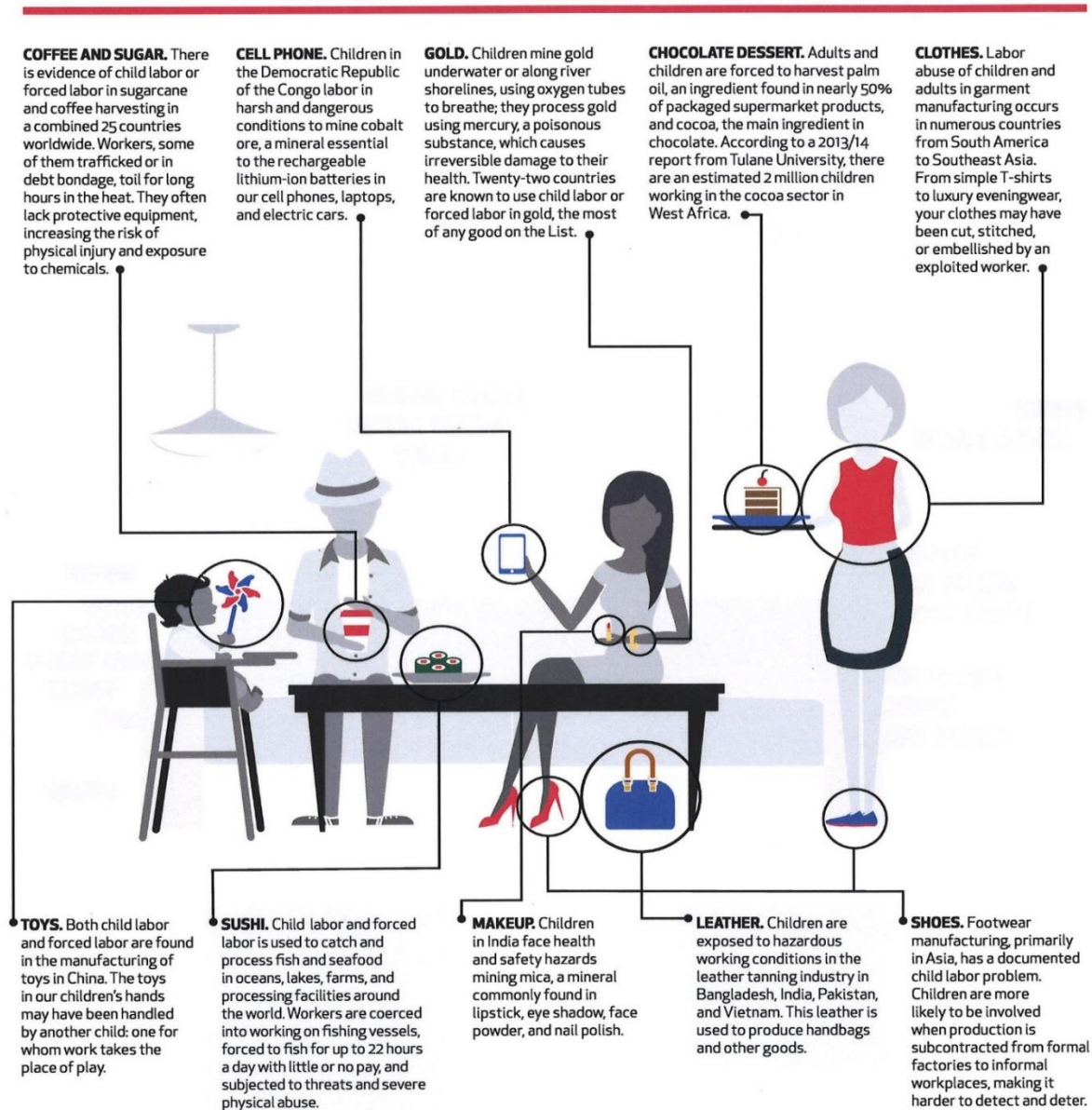
According to a recent report, the number of people falling victim to modern slavery in developed countries is much higher than previous figures reported. In order to effectively combat forced labor, developed countries need to do much more than they are currently doing. It is reported that in the United States, 403,000 (1 in 800 Americans) people live in modern slavery. This figure is seven-times higher than previously recorded estimates. In fact, twelve **G20 countries** have not been successful at creating laws or policies to stop businesses from sourcing

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization. 2015. *Forced Labor Action in the Asian Region*.

goods made from forced labor.<sup>5</sup> Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all introduced or are taking steps to introduce laws that would tackle modern slavery. A great example is the *List of Goods Created by Child or Forced Labor*, created by the US government in partnership with a handful of non-profit organizations. Guides like this, along with increasing awareness and educating the public about the impact of forced labor can make it easier for consumers to make **ethical consumer choices**.<sup>6</sup>

## Think About It

Do you know how your favorite goods are made? You may be surprised to learn that items you use every day may be produced by child or forced labor.



**Source:** Based on research by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs.

<sup>5</sup> Global Slavery Index. 2018. *Findings (Governments, Businesses and Consumers)*.

<sup>6</sup> Global Slavery Index. 2018. *Developed Nations Far More Exposed to Slavery Than Previously Thought*.

## Conclusion

Delegates assigned to the *Ending Forced Labor* committee will be tasked with addressing the issue of forced labor and its effects around the globe. In order to come up with creative solutions for this topic, delegates must research past examples and think of solutions that consider modern circumstances. Solving this difficult issue means countries would need to collaborate with governments, non-governmental and international organizations, and – perhaps most importantly - the private sector to overcome these challenges. Although it would be difficult to eradicate forced labor completely, it is critical that **member states** act quickly and cooperatively to address the issues surrounding forced labor. In this committee, delegates will come together to discuss this issue and debate the responsibilities that individual countries have with respect to this global concern.

## Questions to Consider

---

- 1) Is your assigned country a member of the International Labor Organization? How does your assigned country's legislation define forced labor and what sectors or industries benefit the most from it?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- 2) How can minorities be guaranteed better protection against being exploited? What should be done to protect additional vulnerable demographics of people (i.e. children, women and girls, youth, immigrants, etc.) from entering into forced labor?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- 3) What should be done about forced labor in more developed countries, where the issue is harder to trace?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- 4) Does your assigned country have any multinational companies that benefit from Forced Labor? If so, what is an example and how has forced labor played a role? What can be done to improve factory/sweatshop regulations?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5) Can the responsibility of ending forced labor in your assigned country be solely trusted into the hands of the government? Should other organizations or countries get involved? If yes, which ones and how?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

6) How should governments collaborate to end forced labor that happens across multiple borders?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

7) What resources are available to victims of forced labor in or outside of your assigned country? What, in your opinion, could be done to help provide additional resources for victims?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

8) How can data and information sharing amongst member states play a role in ending forced labor?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

9) Has your assigned country struggled with poverty, corruption, or migration? If so, how do these issues relate to the topic of ending forced labor for your assigned country or region?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

10) Considering the short and long term impacts, how can ending forced labor enhance the overall lives of children, women, migrants, those in poverty and communities as a whole?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

11) Are there any international organizations or regional alliances (with neighboring countries) from which you could seek support in order to achieve your assigned country's goals?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Quick Facts

---

- At least 11 million people in Asia and the Pacific are victims of forced labor (more than half of the forced laborers in the world).  
*Source: International Labor Organization*
- Forced labor generates 150 billion dollars (USD) in illicit profits annually.  
*Source: International Labor Organization*
- Forced labor can happen in any industry, but is often found in the textile industry, agriculture, fishing, domestic work, construction, manufacturing, and mining.  
*Source: International Labor Organization*
- Between 2003 and 2017, 35,000 Brazilian workers were released from slave labor. 71% of these workers could not read or write and had four or less years of schooling.  
*Source: Global Slavery Index*
- Global unemployment would be reduced by 200 million if the 160 million children working as child laborers were sent to school instead.  
*Source: UNICEF*

## Helpful Resources (additional resources available on Council website)

---

- [What is Modern Slavery? \(Freedom United YouTube Video\)](#)  
*This helpful video explains what modern slavery is and how forced labor is an important component.*
- [Global Slavery Index & Resource \(Interactive Infographic\)](#)  
*This helpful resource provides offers resources on modern day slavery, including a few essays on the topic. The infographic offers country breakdowns of forced labor prevalence, vulnerability, government response, and import risk. Click the "Data" tab for country breakdowns and data maps.*
- [Modern Slavery \(Council on Foreign Relations Interactive Info guide\)](#)  
*An interactive info guide that serves as an exploration into modern slavery and its root causes.*
- [List of ILO Conventions](#)  
*Visit this link about the ILO's history with regards to rights and labor standards and scroll down (2/3rds of the way) to quickly see which ILO conventions and protocols your assigned country has (or hasn't) signed on to as of January 2019.*
- [Change your role in forced and child labor \(TEDx Nashville\)](#)  
*A TEDX talk that helps viewers better understand forced and child labor and the role that they personally play.*
- [Sweat & Toil \(free mobile App from the iTunes or Google Play store\)](#)  
*Produced by the US Department of Labor, this app empowers users with knowledge about child and forced labor around the world. You can easily sort data by region, country, assessment level, good, and type of exploitation.*

## Glossary of Terms

Term	Description
<b>Abolition of Forced Labor Convention</b>	One convention held by the International Labour Organization to set stricter laws in place against the use of forced labor and violations of workers' individual rights.
<b>Asia and Pacific region</b>	Region including most of South and East Asia; stretches roughly from Iran to Papua New Guinea and from Mongolia to Indonesia.
<b>coercion</b>	The act of forcing someone to do something using power or threats.
<b>debt bondage</b>	Situation in which a person gives themselves to slavery as security for a loan or in order to pay off debt.
<b>developed countries/regions</b>	Countries that have a high level of industrial activity and where people tend to have higher incomes. Developed countries are also commonly referred to as industrialized countries.
<b>developing countries/regions</b>	Relatively poor, usually agricultural, countries that are seeking to become more advanced economically and socially; Geographical regions for developing countries are as follows: Africa, East Asia, South Asia, Western Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.
<b>forced labor</b>	The use of power and threats against people made to work against their own will.
<b>G20</b>	The world's 20 largest economies (19 countries and the European Union). They meet regularly to discuss global financial and economic affairs.
<b>human rights</b>	The rights and freedoms that we are all entitled to including (but not limited to) the right to go to school and to work. Every person has every human right because we are all born equal and should be treated with equal dignity and respect.
<b>international treaty</b>	A legally-binding written agreement between two or more countries that has been formally approved and signed by their leaders. International organizations such as the UN often lead the work on international treaties.
<b>member state/States</b>	The term used for a country that is a member of an international organization, such as the United Nations.
<b>migration</b>	The movement of people from one place to another. It can be assisted or independent, within national borders or international by any means and with any purpose. Migration is very much determined by economic and trade as well as by political relations.
<b>modern day slavery</b>	Any form of using people for labor or services, like forced labor or forced marriage.
<b>multilateral</b>	Agreed upon or participated in by three or more parties, especially the governments of different countries.
<b>non-governmental organizations (NGOs)</b>	Non-profit, citizen-based groups or international organizations that are independent of governments. NGOs are typically active in humanitarian, educational, healthcare, public policy, social, human rights, environmental, and other areas to make changes according to their objectives.
<b>private sector</b>	All for-profit businesses that are not directly controlled by the government.
<b>Protocol and Recommendation on Forced Labor</b>	Modern protocol established by the International Labour Organization that requires governments to take new measures to prevent forced labor and offer assistance to victims.

<b>state-imposed</b>	The act of government exploiting workers for economic gain.
<b>supply chain</b>	Process of making material goods that requires different laborers to perform different pieces of production. For example, fabric may be sewn in Indonesia and the graphic may be printed later in Bangladesh. This process saves time and money and allows more product to be made quickly.
<b>sweatshops</b>	A factory at which workers work long hours in very poor conditions with very low pay.
<b>trafficking/human trafficking</b>	The illegal movement of people, typically for the purposes of forced labor or for other reasons.
<b>UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC)</b>	An international treaty that spells out the basic <b>human rights</b> that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The CRC was adopted by the UN in 1989.
<b>Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)</b>	A famous document adopted by the UN in 1948 that established a common standard of rights that belong to all individuals and nations.
<b>World War II</b>	The second global war lasting from 1939-1945 during which many people were forced against their will to work in concentration camps.
<b>Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention</b>	Convention that set eliminating the worst forms of child labor as its top priority; helped show that poverty is a major cause of child labor and that education could be used to combat child labor.