



Background

In recent reports, the ILO made a minimum estimate of people working in forced labour conditions. At any given time, at least 12.3 million people are being exploited in different forms of forced labour ranging from the most traditional forms of slavery to more “modern” forms of compulsory labour often as a result of trafficking. It is a regretful showing of the adverse effects of uncontrolled globalisation. Today more than ever industrialised as well as developing countries are affected by this truly worldwide phenomenon strongly connected to the vulnerability of migrant workers abroad. About 20 per cent of all forced labour is an outcome of trafficking and although in the majority of cases, trafficking does not only result in sexual exploitation. 32 per cent of the victims are trafficked for economic exploitation. This shows the important employment dimension of trafficking and its impact on local labour markets, either in countries of origin or destination. The presence of victims of forced labour degenerates social standards such as job security, wages, and working conditions for all workers on a national labour market. In general, 64 per cent of all cases of forced labour is exacted by private agents for the purpose of economic exploitation in sectors such as agriculture and construction. Women, men and children, often irregular migrant workers, are being isolated, deprived from their identity documents and threatened with deportation following denunciation.

Trade unions originated to counter the imbalance in the worker-employer relation through worker solidarity. Organising the most vulnerable people on the labour market is at the core of the trade union movement and collective bargaining is still the most powerful instrument towards the improvement of workers’ conditions. Trade unions being the main instrument to denounce and act against abuse and exploitation of any worker have an essential role to play in the abolition of forced labour put forward by the Director General of the ILO. Trade unions should use their privileged access to workers and their families, their international structure and their expertise in the implementation and the monitoring of core labour standards to help abolish each and every form of forced labour by 2015.

Almost any country in the world is affected by the issues of forced labour and trafficking, either as a receiving, transition or sending country. A global trade union approach in consultation with ILO-ACTRAV and the GUF’s to address this worldwide phenomenon is urgent. Forced labour and trafficking appear in many different forms, regions and economic activities. Trade union action should therefore address specific characteristics of forced labour forms and is bound to vary according to the geographical region. The ITUC has an institutional structure with regional organisations; the international trade union strategy should use this instrument and should to be drafted along the same lines. However, considering its importance and the presence of a regional office of the ITUC in the region, the Middle East and Northern Africa is being addressed as an additional area of attention.



The international trade union movement benefits at the same time from the presence of the newly installed Council of Global Unions, an international trade union structure involving most international industry federations. It will also be useful to detect how the international trade union strategy against forced labour and trafficking could exploit this advantage of being able to focus action on specific issues in the most affected economic sectors. Throughout the entire meeting there should be comments and views from representatives of the construction, textile and transport industry as well as the agricultural sector, meaning **BWI, IUF, ITGLWF** (forced labour) and **ITF** (trafficking). The eradication of forced labour will contribute to reaching the Millennium Development Goals and promote organising as a useful tool to reduce vulnerability to end up working in forced labour conditions.

Preliminary research has shown that most trade union organisations already have policies, strategies and action plans related to child labour, migrant workers, domestic workers and/or trafficking for sexual exploitation. Nevertheless it seems unclear how all these issues show one or more elements of forced labour. An introduction to understanding the different terms and issues concerned and emphasising their linkages to points of trade union focus in the past will be essential to indicate that forced labour has been a persistent area of trade union work and clarify how it could form a consistent pillar of different policies and strategies of trade unions in the future. An insight on the different cases of smuggling, abuse of domestic workers, slavery, servitude, bonded labour, forced labour exacted by the military, forms of forced prison labour should enable participants to do so.

Objectives

After the event all participants should have a clear view on all aspects of different forms of forced labour and trafficking, their adverse effects on the labour market and the role of the trade union movement in fighting the phenomenon. Participants should know what the main means of action of trade unions are in the fight against forced labour and trafficking on a (sectoral) local, national, regional and international and level. The outcome should be a clear and comprehensive trade union strategy against forced labour and trafficking for the coming two years as well as the draft of two pilot implementation projects.

Participants' Profile

The inter-regional conference will be discussing an international trade union strategy in the fight against forced labour and trafficking. Therefore participants should be eminent and influential leaders of the trade union movement with long term experience and a background in defending human and trade union rights and core labour standards. Trade unionists with direct experience with work on the issues of forced labour and trafficking would be particularly encouraged to attend. Experts from the ILO Special Action Programme against Forced Labour,



ILO-ACTRAV and the international trade union movement will be guiding the discussions.

The trade union leaders attending should be willing to follow-up the further development and implementation of the ITUC strategy against forced labour and trafficking and/or to designate a person in his/her organisation to do so. In other words, participants should be able to commit their organisation politically. With respect to their capacities and their needs they should be able to follow-up the meeting with a medium to long term strategy to integrate the fight against forced labour and trafficking in the policy and action plan of their own organisation.

Participants should have a reasonable command of English. Their organisation should have replied on the questionnaire (Circular 24) sent out by the ITUC.

GUF's

Trade unionists at the meeting representing global union federations should give the input from the industries with the most important forced labour and trafficking problems Especially the organisations in the construction, agriculture and textile industry: **BWI, IUF** and **ITGLWF**, their experience will undoubtedly be valuable to the other participants. From a different angle and although the transport sector is not the industry with the highest number of victims, **ITF's** members are often abused during the trafficking process and incriminated after. They offer a useful network in the detection of victims.

ITUC

Asia and pacific, Americas, Africa, Europe, Middle East

As the ITUC has an institutional structure with regional organisations, the international trade union strategy would have to be designed along the same lines. The regional organisations should express their regional points of view completing the international strategy of the ITUC. Special emphasis should be put on regional forced labour issues and needs and capabilities of local trade union organisations to address them. Considering its importance and the presence of a regional office of the ITUC in the region, the Middle East and Northern Africa is being addressed as an additional area of concern.

In numbers of victims Asia with its 9,490,000 accounts for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the people working in forced labour. Forced labour and trafficking in Asia is concurrently far more complex than in other regions and will therefore need the special attention of the international trade union movement. This is the main reasons why the seminar will be in Asia itself. It facilitates the attendance of more participants from the region.

For obvious reasons of consistent ignoring by the military regime of international pressure on improving the situation in Burma and



considering the trade union focus on this country for the violation of human and trade union rights it would be highly desirable to have an expert trade unionist to discuss the situation in **Burma** in relation to the use of forced labour by the military regime and trafficking from Burma.

Contents

The **first day** will introduce the concepts of forced labour and trafficking and how ILO approaches these issues as it is the highest institution in terms of international labour regulations. Its Conventions and their implementation and monitoring mechanisms will be discussed as well as how they offer an opportunity for trade unions to act on an international level and to pressure governments to improve policies on forced labour. In the afternoon session global trends in forced labour and trafficking will be discussed and the represented GUF's will present their global experience from an industry perspective.

The **second day** will start with the presentation of the ITUC draft strategy which will be the object of discussion which will be followed by a round table local experiences and good practices from national trade union organisations from different regions. Special attention will be given to Burma.

The afternoon begins with a presentation of the regional representatives of their regional perspectives on the international strategy emphasising regional priority issues which should lead towards regional trade union policies and strategies to be included in the global strategy.

The **last day** should consolidate discussions from the meeting. Discussions will be held on how the different priorities could be transposed in specific actions and projects focusing on: organising, campaigning, cross country-networking, advocacy, monitoring, capacity building, direct victim support, etc. A realistic plan of action should be designed for the years 2008-2009 as well as the identification of two pilot implementation projects in priority areas.