



“©Gilles Sabrié/The New York Times/Redux Pictures. Uyghur women work in a garment factory. Hotan, Xinjiang, China. August 3, 2019.

## Bureau of International Labor Affairs

### Combating Forced Labor in Global Supply Chains

---

**OUR COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH** to combating forced labor combines supply chain research, strategic engagement with governments, companies, and civil society, and targeted programs that uplift worker voice and address the root causes of exploitation.

---

Globally, 27.6 million people are in forced labor. This includes 3.3 million children in conditions of forced or indentured child labor, including in the worst forms of child labor like recruitment into armed conflict and commercial sexual exploitation. Adults and children are subjected to forced labor by the state and businesses in many sectors. Forced labor also occurs in domestic work in private homes, where women and girls are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Victims often describe being forced to work long hours in unsafe working and living conditions, having pay and identity documents withheld, and being isolated. In many cases, workers are misled by unscrupulous recruiters who promise opportunity but deliver workers into the hands of traffickers or companies that put profits above human rights. Those already on the margins of society – migrants, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous groups, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth and adults – are most vulnerable to these abuses.

### EXPOSING FORCED LABOR IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS

Before products like solar panels or makeup make their way to U.S. consumers, countless workers toil along the supply chain to create raw materials and component parts that make these final products. Some of these workers are trapped in forced labor. With new supply chain tracing research and new tools to advance supply chain transparency, we are able to uncover these abuses along complex global supply chains. This data helps hold employers accountable and encourage governments to adopt evidence-based policies to protect workers.

Our [2022 List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor](#) not only identifies goods directly produced by child or forced labor, but also goods produced with inputs made with child or forced labor. If cotton is harvested by forced labor in one country, then shipped to another country to produce garments, we are now able to identify those garments as being tainted by labor exploitation through innovative tracing methods. The latest edition of our list identifies over 150 goods in more than 75 countries, and 10 downstream goods produced with inputs that use child labor or forced labor. We also maintain a list of foreign goods made with forced or indentured child labor to support

Executive Order 13126, which prohibits the Federal acquisition of products produced with these exploitative practices. As of September 28, 2022, the [EO List](#) comprises 34 products from 26 countries.

Our easy-to-use [Sweat & Toil app](#) puts all our reports in the palm of your hand. [Comply Chain](#) provides companies practical, step-by-step guidance on how to develop or enhance robust social compliance systems in their global supply chains, with an emphasis on worker voice. And our [Better Trade Tool](#) integrates ILAB's existing *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* with international trade data for analysis, supply chain mapping, and identification of risks and priorities in strategic planning to combat child and forced labor.

## ADDRESSING EXPLOITATION THROUGH GLOBAL PROJECTS

ILAB is a global leader in designing and funding innovative technical assistance projects to combat forced labor and child labor. Our projects address the root causes of exploitation, strengthen labor laws and enforcement, lift up worker voice, expand social protection and remediation, and provide direct livelihoods support.

We are funding projects to develop groundbreaking supply chain traceability tools and methods that will be made publicly available so others can join us in exposing and combating forced labor and advancing transparency and compliance. While supply chain tracing is often limited to first tier suppliers, our [Supply Chain Tracing and Engagement Methodologies \(STREAMS\)](#) and [Global Trace Protocol](#) projects are tracing the origins of raw materials and connecting them with end products in some of the world's most opaque supply chains including the cotton supply chain of Pakistan and cobalt supply chain of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Our [From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labor](#) project has helped advance the fight against forced labor by producing tools and guidance on forced labor and leading intensive capacity-building in seven countries and direct services for forced laborers in two countries. The project helped four nations develop national action plans on forced labor and community-based prevention and rehabilitation programs. In Nepal and Niger, 1,115 bonded laborers received livelihoods support, 400 survivors and descendants of slavery were provided with vocational training, and 1,857 vulnerable children and adults obtained identity documents to reduce their risk of exploitation.

We also work to address forced labor in targeted sectors like fishing. Our Fostering Accountability in Recruitment for Fishery Workers project ([FAIR Fish](#)) worked with small and medium size seafood-processing companies in Thailand, as well as their recruitment agencies, to develop and implement a responsible recruitment model built on principles of social compliance. And our Safeguarding Against and Addressing Fishers' Exploitation at Sea project ([SAFE Seas](#)) has helped establish local fisher centers in Indonesia that helped victims of forced labor on fishing vessels and their families access information and remediation for labor rights violations.

And we're expanding knowledge on forced labor so governments, companies, civil society, and others can more effectively tackle abuse. Our [Research to Action](#) project has mapped existing research and gaps on child labor and forced labor, and is funding new research to support effective programming and decision making.

## COMBATING FORCED LABOR IN CHINA

In China's far western Xinjiang region, hundreds of thousands of Uyghurs, ethnic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other ethnic and mostly Muslim religious minorities are being arbitrarily detained and subjected to forced labor producing certain goods that enter the domestic and global supply chains. Uyghurs and other minorities are often sent to camps where they are subjected to constant surveillance and isolation and undergo political indoctrination.

The United States has taken many legislative, policy, and trade-related actions over the years to address these egregious abuses. Most recently, in June 2022, the [Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act](#) went into effect. The Act creates what is called a "rebuttable presumption" that all goods manufactured in Xinjiang are made with forced labor unless proven otherwise. ILAB plays a critical role in these efforts as a principal member of the Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force, the China Prison Labor Task Force, and numerous interagency working groups. Through our efforts to combat forced labor in China and around the world, we are working to ensure that labor exploitation has no place in our global supply chains and that actors who put profits over people are held accountable.