Tool No. 3:
Mainstreaming forced labour

Many factors will influence the decision to opt for a stand-alone NAP on forced labour or to mainstream forced labour into other policy areas. This tool provides some elements to guide your decision.

Forced labour is a complex issue with multiple root causes such as discrimination, poverty, weak social dialogue or weak law enforcement. Therefore strategies addressing forced labour should as far as possible be integrated and mainstreamed within other policy areas, such as child labour and child rights, decent work and fair recruitment, labour migration, social dialogue and freedom of association, equality and non-discrimination, social protection, poverty reduction, environment protection, and crisis management (see also Tool #6 on the SDGs and forced labour). Such initiatives may range from merely an exchange of information to joint activities or integrated programmes. The level of integration will depend on a number of factors including organizational cultures; conducive environments for working together; the relative maturity of programmes; the extent to which forced labour is considered relevant to many or a more particular issue relevant only to a handful of actors.

Policy integration often requires compromise and the degree to which forced labour can be subsumed under other headings will vary. In some countries, forced labour is barely recognized as an issue and it may be necessary to start by shining a spotlight on it in order to spark national debate, reflection and commitment. In other countries, the agenda is well established and it becomes more important to effectively address the issues, regardless of the label attached to the intervention. It is extremely important that the NAP on Forced Labour clearly identifies what already exists and includes measures to avoid unproductive overlaps while finding positive synergies.

The mapping of existing policies, programmes, and development frameworks such as national development plans, ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes or UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), can help to identify entry-points for integration and mainstreaming. This can be undertaken as part of the preparations for the NAP but it could also be an activity under the NAP where mapping of actors and potential integration areas is carried out in a given field; for example, mapping training providers in a province to integrate them into a victim support and referral system, or mapping safe migration advocates to pursue joint advocacy for improved policies.

What does mainstreaming mean?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines mainstreaming as: "a prevailing current or direction of activity or influence". The process of mainstreaming is essentially to infuse a subject into a more commonly prevailing agenda – for example, mainstreaming forced labour into national poverty eradication agendas and initiatives.

Another advantage of mainstreaming is to allow a sensitive topic to be tackled indirectly. In countries where forced labour is still a highly sensitive issue, it can be worth exploring other entry points, when it is not possible to tackle the issue upfront. For instance, it could be integrated in a NAP on child labour, as this topic may be less controversial. Conversely, a NAP on forced labour can also constitute an entry point for stakeholders to tackle other sensitive issues such as discrimination or freedom of association.

The following checklist provides a non-exhaustive list of questions that partners can ask to assess the most effective solution between adopting a stand-alone NAP or embedding forced labour into an already existing framework.

The existence of pre-existing frameworks	▶ Are there already substantial, well-established and effective frameworks in place to address related issues (e.g. trafficking in persons, child labour)? ▶ Are these frameworks open to integration of the forced labour agenda? For example, will it be possible for the oversight mechanism in place to easily and quickly adjust its mandate to cover forced labour? ▶ Do implementing partners see forced labour as an issue they should feel concerned about or do they think "it's not their business"? ▶ Do they have the right mandate?
The nature and extent of forced labour	▶ Is forced labour a very specific situation found in a very specific geographical area or industry? ▶ Or is forced labour a widespread problem, likely to occur across sectors, industries and locations and closely connected with other forms of exploitation?
The drivers behind forced labour	▶ Is forced labour driven by specific characteristics (e.g. discrimination) and linked to very specific groups (e.g. ethnic minorities) who suffer a number of infringements on their rights? ▶ Do implementing partners have experience and skills on how to address discrimination? ▶ Or is it a widespread practice in a country or an industry, underpinning certain economic structures and business models? ▶ Is it linked with poor governance and lack of law enforcement on a wide scale, is it a localized, traditional practice, or a combination of both?
Awareness and knowledge	▶ Is forced labour widely recognized as a problem that needs urgent attention by multiple agencies? ▶ Or is it a new (and sensitive) issue that needs to be put on the national agenda before substantial action can be expected?
Partner capacity	▶ Do implementing partners have the experience, skills and knowledge to address the problem?
Purpose of the NAP	▶ Is the NAP meant to mobilize partners and secure resources? ▶ To improve coordination between partners? To introduce new strategies to deal with complex issues?