



Tool No. 4: Developing the knowledge base on forced labour



Before developing a NAP with robust strategies to eradicate forced labour, it is imperative to understand the current situation in the country through quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Statistical data is needed to understand the magnitude of forced labour, the affected populations and sectors. In order to ensure that the collection and analysis of data is comprehensive and accurate, the International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted Guidelines concerning the measurement of forced labour so that all countries use the same definitions and indicators. Countries are increasingly integrating modules on forced labour (often in combination with a component on child labour) into their Labour Force Surveys or other regular household surveys. This approach is often cheaper and more sustainable than undertaking stand-alone surveys and allows data comparison, which can be useful to assess the impact of the NAP over time.

Supplementing statistical evidence with qualitative studies involving, for example in-depth interviews with victims and perpetrators, systematic collection of lessons from organizations who support victims, analysis of (anonymized) data from victim referrals and enforcement records, can add valuable insights that will make strategies aimed at tackling forced labour more relevant and effective. The qualitative study should aim at explaining the different types of forced labour existing in the country, the means of recruitment and coercion used, as well the specific vulnerabilities observed. The following questions are examples that can guide the research: Are there cultural biases or discrimination patterns that could shed light on the exploitation of one group by the other? Are victims more vulnerable due to their gender, age race or ethnicity? Are they particularly poor or vulnerable to income-shocks? Do they benefit from social protection? Who are the perpetrators and why do they resort to forced labour? Are they trying to cut costs in a low-profit industry? Are they perpetuating traditional practices? Who has agency – i.e. who can take action to change things?

When collecting evidence, one needs to bear in mind that the Forced Labour Protocol and Recommendation No. 203 call for specific attention to gender and age characteristics and both the UN Protocol and ILO Convention No. 182 bind States to provide additional protection for children.



Information technology and forced labour

The use of information technology to generate evidence in order to protect victims and vulnerable people and share lessons on combatting forced labour holds immense potential and is under rapid development. This may include different activities, such as using satellite imagery to detect forced labour in remote locations; monitoring and analysing media reports; using satellite and GPS data to identify perpetrators; reaching out to potential victims with information, as well as support groups through social media; and many more strategies.

The analysis of how information technology and the use of social media may fit into the NAP strategies is most likely a very worthwhile undertaking. Seeking advice from specialists in data management and information technology is to be encouraged. This also means that organizations working on data collection and analysis can be important partners in developing and implementing the NAP.

Therefore, the analysis of gender dynamics, as well as the circumstances surrounding children and their vulnerabilities will be necessary to develop strategies that are in line with the Forced Labour Protocol and Recommendation No. 203. It may even be useful to conduct a life-cycle analysis in relation to forced labour to find out if people are more vulnerable at certain stages of their life (e.g. when leaving school or starting a family).

To build a solid knowledge base, years of collecting evidence and lessons learned, analysing data and sharing information may be necessary. It is more common than not to develop a NAP from an incomplete knowledge base, in order to take immediate action as called for in the Forced Labour Protocol. Building and continuously updating the knowledge base is therefore an important part of the NAP's strategies, which will be part of consecutive NAPs. In many countries, one of the key priorities of a NAP is indeed to undertake research, collect evidence from relevant action, and analyse and share the information.