

Strengthening action to accelerate the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour in West and Northern Africa: Opportunities and Challenges

Discussion paper for the West and North African sub-regional consultation on the Alliance 8.7

1. Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, constitute an ambitious set of international goals aimed at “[ending] all forms of poverty, [fighting] inequalities and [tackling] climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.”¹ Child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery are, undoubtedly, some of the most egregious manifestations of poverty and inequality. As we will see below, despite significant progress in lowering poverty levels in recent decades, notably under the Millennium Development Goals, reducing the number of children in child labour, and promoting laws and policy measures tackling forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, large numbers of men, women and children remain trapped in situations of abuse and exploitation. Many more also live in situations that make them vulnerable to such forms of abuse. Effective action to end these practices requires multi-dimensional.

Goal 8 of the SDGs seeks to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.” Its 10 substantive targets cover, inter alia: the achievement of rapid per capita economic growth in Least Developed Countries (LDCs); enhanced productivity in labour-intensive sectors; significant reductions in the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training; and protection of labour rights and promotion of safe working environments for all workers.² Target 8.7 commits the international community to

Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.³

In addition to Goal 8, several of the other SDGs are relevant to the achievement of decent work for all and the elimination of the exploitative practices and abuses covered by Target 8.7. Examples include targets under poverty (Goal 1), hunger (2), health and well-being (3), education (4), gender equality (5), industry and infrastructure (9), reduced inequalities (10), and peace, justice and strong institutions (16). In view of the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of the 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDGs as a whole provide an integrated framework, at both national and international levels, for addressing child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery.

The SDGs envisage country-led implementation through the alignment of national policies and programmes with the global goals, using multi-stakeholder partnerships as a key implementation strategy (SDG Target 17.16). This approach fits well with the cross-sectoral nature of the problems underlying Target 8.7. Given their scale and complexity, the attainment of Target 8.7 requires concerted, focused and broad-based action, active participation and close collaboration by many actors: governments, employers' and workers' organizations, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, the media, and academia. In this regard, the ILO is working with other stakeholders to establish **Alliance 8.7, a Global Alliance to eradicate forced labour,**

¹ UN (2015). Available at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>.

² For a full list of the 17 goals and their targets, see (UN, 2015).

³ See UN (2015).

modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour. The objective is to bring all concerned parties together to join forces in achieving the target. In the process, the partnership will contribute to the attainment of other SDGs, notably those relating to poverty (Goal 1), education (4), gender equality (5), decent work (8), reduced inequalities (9), and peace and justice (16).

The present paper looks at the considerable opportunities and potential momentum offered by the 2030 Agenda for achieving effective, timely and long-lasting results in the fight against child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery in Africa, and the challenges that need to be overcome. The paper aims at informing discussions among ILO constituents and partners in Western and Northern Africa on the establishment, strategy and functioning of Alliance 8.7.

2. Forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking in Africa

1. Forced labour can take several different forms, including debt bondage, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. The ILO defines forced labour as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.”⁴ The framework for defining forced labour is provided by the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), and the recent ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention (P 29) and Recommendation 2014 (No. 203). The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, often referred to as the *Palermo Protocol*, defines trafficking in persons as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person” for sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery and similar practices, servitude and the removal of organs.⁵ Thus, from these definitions, forced labour is closely related to trafficking, as affirmed by the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), the obvious exception being trafficking for organ removal. Similarly, “almost all slavery practices, including

Box 1: ILO classification of forced labour:

- **Forced labour imposed by the state:** all forms of work exacted by public authorities, military or paramilitary, compulsory participation in public works and forced prison labour in contravention of ILO Conventions 29 and 105.
- **Forced labour imposed by private agents for sexual exploitation:** any commercial sexual activity, including pornography, exacted from the victim by fraud or force.
- **Forced labour imposed by private agents for labour exploitation:** includes bonded labour, forced domestic work, forced labour of migrants in many economic sectors and work imposed in the context of slavery or vestiges of slavery; forced illicit activities.

Source: ILO (2014b, p. 5)

⁴ Convention No. 29, Article 2.

⁵ Article 3. The text of the Convention and its Protocols is available here: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/treaties/CTOC/>. [August 2016]

trafficking in people and bonded labour, contain some element of forced labour.”⁶ Following the ILO definition, forced labour encompasses trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation as well as other contemporary forms of slavery. The present paper uses “forced labour” in this broader sense.

2. The ILO estimates the number of people who are victims of forced labour around the world at 20.9 million (ILO, 2012).⁷ Of these, 14.2 million (65 per cent) were victims of **labour exploitation by individuals and enterprises in the private economy**, in sectors such as agriculture, fishing, construction, manufacturing and domestic work; 4.5 million (22 per cent) were victims of **forced sexual exploitation**; and 2.2 million (10 per cent) in **state-imposed forced labour**, such as prison work under conditions contravening relevant ILO standards, and work imposed by state or rebel armed forces. Women and girls constituted 55 per cent of the victims, compared to 45 per cent men and boys. Over a quarter (26 per cent) were aged 17 years or lower (5.5 million children).⁸ Africa (including North and sub-Saharan Africa) had the second largest number of victims, 3.7 million (18 per cent of the total), after Asia and the Pacific (11.7 million). Box 1 provides details of the three categories used by the ILO in its global estimates of forced labour.

3. There is a lack of reliable statistical data on the incidence of the various forms of forced labour in Africa.⁹ According to a typology of forced labour occurring in Africa by Dottridge (2005), prevalent forms include: adults and children forced to work or earn money for others (in their home country, in another country in Africa, or in a country outside Africa); forced recruitment of adults and children into armed groups, as combatants or as civilian workers; adults and children forced to carry out public works or communal tasks by traditional chiefs or other political authorities, including forced labour in prisons for the personal benefit of individuals; and children forced to work, other than for their own parents, particularly as domestic servants or child soldiers or in prostitution. Other forms include adults and children forced to work by individuals with religious authority, services which the members of one social or ethnic group are required to provide to another, cases related to traditional slavery, and servile marriage or work involving coercion in the context of forced marriage.

The forced labour situation in Western and Northern Africa

4. With alternatives lacking, the *Trafficking in Persons Report* published annually by the US State Department is one of the most commonly used sources of information on the different forms of forced labour at the country level. Country information published in the 2016 Report indicates that, apart from Libya, all countries in Northern and Western Africa were important sources of trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation, while all but Guinea Bissau also constitute trafficking destinations (US, 2016). Apart from Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Mauritania, all were also significant transit points of human trafficking. Unless otherwise indicated, the information in the rest of this section is based on the Country Narratives section of the 2016 report (US, 2016, pp. 65 – 408).¹⁰

⁶ Anti-Slavery International, “Forced Labour,” from: http://www.antislavery.org/english/slavery_today/forced_labour/. [August 2016]

⁷ The estimates presented here from the ILO Global Report on forced labour apply to any point within the reference period of 2002 – 2011.

⁸ ILO (2012, p. 14).

⁹ For examples of estimates on trafficking relating to selected countries in West Africa, see Sawadogo (2012).

¹⁰ For more detailed information, the 2016 Report and those of previous years can be downloaded from <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/index.htm>. (August 2016)

5. In West Africa, the exploitation of women and girls and, to a much lesser extent, boys in domestic service is by far the most prevalent form of forced labour, occurring in all countries. Other sectors or activities with significant levels of forced labour include agriculture in all countries (often in the production of commercial crops such as cocoa, coffee, cotton, pineapple and rubber), fishing, herding, artisanal mining and quarrying. In urban areas, in addition to domestic servitude, the use of forced labour in street vending, restaurants and begging is prevalent in several countries. In a number of these countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal), children from Koranic schools are forced to beg on the street by religious instructors. Forced sexual exploitation, particularly of women and girls, is also prevalent in all countries across the region, involving both internal and transnational trafficking networks. In addition to these contemporary forms of exploitation, caste- or ethnicity-based slavery practices continue in Mauritania, Niger and northern Mali. In Ghana, there are cases where girls are subjected to ritual servitude for months or even years, to atone for sins of a family member. Some West Africans are trafficked into Europe and the Middle East for domestic work, forced prostitution or construction. These include large numbers of Nigerian women trafficked for sexual exploitation in Italy and elsewhere in Europe (IOM and Altai Consulting, 2015, pp. 92 – 93).

6. As in West Africa, domestic servitude and forced sexual exploitation occur in all countries of North Africa. Other sectors or activities where forced labour is used include agriculture (Egypt, Libya), forced begging (all countries with the exception of Libya), construction (Egypt, Libya, Morocco), artisanal industry and mechanic shops (Morocco), and stealing and drug trafficking (Tunisia). Forced labour victims include North Africans (nationals and others from the sub-region) as well as sub-Saharan Africans passing through en route to Europe or elsewhere who are forced to work. Some North Africans are also trafficked into Middle Eastern countries for domestic work or forced prostitution.

3. Extent of child labour in Africa

7. Child labour is work that is inappropriate for a child either because the child is too young, or because the nature of the work or the conditions under which it is performed makes it unsuitable, or because it forms part of the so-called “unconditional” Worst Forms of Child Labour.¹¹ The latter consists of slavery and similar practices, sexual exploitation, and the use of children in illicit activities, and forms part of forced labour as defined in the preceding section. See a summary of definitions in Box 2.

Box 2: Child labour targeted for elimination

1. Work by children below the official **minimum age for employment**, in general 15 years or the age of completion of compulsory schooling, if higher, but 18 years for work “likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young persons” , and 13 years for “light work” (Convention No. 138).
2. **Worst forms of child labour** (Convention No. 182):
 - forms of slavery or similar practices (e.g., trafficking, debt bondage and serfdom, forced labour, forced or compulsory recruitment for use in armed conflict)
 - Use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, pornography
 - Use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities (esp. production and All trafficking of drugs)
 - Work likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children, i.e., **hazardous work**, as defined in Recommendation No. 190.

¹¹ That is, Articles 3(a), 3(b) and 3(c) of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

8. The latest ILO global estimates indicate substantial progress in reducing child labour around the world since 2000, particularly between 2008 and 2012. The estimated number of working children aged 5 – 17 years decreased from 352 million in the year 2000 to 264 million in 2012, even as the population in this age group increased steadily (see Box 3). An estimated 168 million of these were child labourers in 2012, including 85 million in hazardous work, compared to 246 million and 170 million, respectively, in 2000. The declines were, however, not evenly spread around the world. The Asia and Pacific region saw the biggest declines, though it remains the region with the largest number of child labourers. Progress was much slower in sub-Saharan Africa, though unlike in previous periods, the latest regional estimates indicated declines in both the total number of child labourers and their relative size as a proportion of the population of the age group. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of child labourers aged 5- 17 years fell from 65 million (25.3 per cent of the age group) in 2008 to 59 million (21.4 per cent) in 2012. Over the same period, the number of children in hazardous work fell from 38.7 million (15.1 per cent of the age group) to 28.8 million (10.4 per cent); see Table A.2 in Annex A. Nevertheless, sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest incidence of child labour.

Box 3: **Children 5 – 17 years of age in employment, child labour and hazardous work, 2000-2012, Global**

Year	Total children	Children in employment*		Child labour		Hazardous work	
	(m)	(m)	%	(m)	%	(m)	%
2000	1,531	352	23.0	246 [?]	16.0	171 [?]	11.1
2004	1,566	323	20.6	222	14.2	128	8.2
2008	1,586	306	19.3	215	13.6	115	7.3
2012	1,586	264	16.7	168	10.6	85	5.4

Source: ILO (2013a, Table 9, p. 27).

*Children who worked during the reference period, though not necessarily in activities regarded as child labour. Child labourers are a subset of children in employment.

The child labour situation in Western and Northern Africa

9. According to a study undertaken by the Understanding Children’s Work programme (UCW), a joint research project of the ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank, West Africa has one of the highest proportions of children in child labour among the regions of the world (ILO, 2014a). Of the estimated 83 million children aged 5 – 14 years in 2012, nearly 25 million (24.5 per cent) were working, with about 21 million (24.5 per cent) in activities regarded as child labour, most of them in unpaid family work in agriculture (Ibid., Table A7, p. 58). Note that these figures do not include children aged 15-17 years, many of them in hazardous activities. Hence the number of child labourers in Western Africa is, in fact, higher than the 21 million cited here.

10. Separate estimates are not available for Northern Africa. For the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole, the most recent ILO estimates put the number of child labourers aged 5 – 17 years at 9.2 million (8.4 per cent of 110 million in the age group), with 5.2 million (4.7 per cent) in hazardous work – see Annex A, Table A.1. Information made available by national authorities or the social partners to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations indicates significantly large numbers of child labourers in most countries.¹² These figures include 300,000 working children under age 16 in Algeria;¹³ 1.59 million child labourers out of 17.1 million children aged 5 – 17 years in Egypt;¹⁴ about 22 per

¹² The Committee’s comments referenced in this paragraph are available from the ILO NORMLEX database at: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11000:0::NO>

¹³ Comments in relation to C. 138, 2014.

¹⁴ Comments in relation to C. 138, 2014, citing the 2010 National Child Labour Survey.

cent of children aged 5 – 14 years involved in child labour in Mauritania;¹⁵ and 86,000 child labourers aged 7 – 15 in Morocco.¹⁶ The Committee of Experts had little or no recent data for Libya and Tunisia. However, according to the 2011-2012 Tunisia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, three per cent of children aged 5 – 14 years were child labourers (Tunisia et al., 2013, p. 108). As in West Africa, most child labourers in North Africa are in agriculture, artisanal and other informal economy activities, and in domestic labour.

11. Reliable data on the incidence of worst forms of child labour *other than* hazardous work are limited. As noted earlier, these forms of child labour also constitute forced labour. As indicated in Section 2 and well-documented in US (2016, Country Narratives section, pp. 65-408), child trafficking and the sexual and labour exploitation of children are prevalent in all countries in Western and Northern Africa. In some countries in the two sub-regions, the use of children in armed conflict is also a significant problem. Following the ending of conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, children recruited into armed groups in those countries have been released. In contrast, violations are occurring in Libya, Mali and the four countries affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, namely, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and, especially, Nigeria. According to a recent United Nations General Assembly report,¹⁷ ongoing violations in these countries include the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, sexual violence against children, abductions, and the killing and maiming of children. Attacks have also taken place against schools and hospitals.

4. Causes and consequences of child labour and forced labour in Africa

12. Child labour and forced labour are complex phenomena with many underlying causes linked to poverty, inequalities and social exclusion. The determinants are largely the same and can usefully be grouped into supply and demand factors.

Supply Factors

13. Supply factors include many of the root causes that push individuals or families into situations where they are vulnerable to labour exploitation. As noted above, widespread poverty is a key element. It results from the predominance of subsistence farming and informal economic activities, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, unfavourable demographic¹⁸ and health dynamics that increase pressure on limited household resources, and the absence of social safety nets. Underlying several of these factors are high levels of illiteracy, poor access to social services, and inadequate economic infrastructure, particularly in rural and poor urban areas. Poor households are more likely to suffer from income shocks and/or get into debt, which increase their exposure to forced labour or to sending children to do hazardous work. Poor households, when

¹⁵ Comments relating to C. 138, 2015, citing the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, MICS 4, undertaken by the National Statistics Office. According to the 2015 comments relating to C. 182, a 2013 survey in Nouakchott found significant proportions of children, ranging from 3.57 % in the 3 – 5 years age group to 27.38 % in the 12 – 14 years age group and 9.25 % of those aged 15 years affected by begging, a Worst Form of Child Labour.

¹⁶ Comments to C. 182, 2015, citing the 2013 National Labour Survey of the Haut Commissariat au Plan. The Committee EACR noted that the quoted figure did not cover all working children.

¹⁷ UN (2016), available at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/836&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC. [August 2016]

¹⁸ Demographic factors include the persistence of high fertility and increased migration from rural areas to ill-equipped urban areas.

they become dependent on others in times of great need, easily fall prey to “manipulation, coercion, exploitation and deception, especially if a creditor is a recruiter or trafficker” (ILO, 2014b, p. 46).

14. Other key determinants usually linked to poverty include occupation and education. Forced labour is more common in work associated with low education and skill levels. Thus workers in agriculture, fishing, domestic work, manufacturing and other areas of the informal economy are more vulnerable. Similarly, educated parents are less likely to give away their children to traffickers, either knowingly or unknowingly, or to send them into other forms of child labour. In general, low levels of awareness about the nature of child labour, the risks and hazards faced by child labourers, and the consequences for children, families and society at large constitute another important supply factor. In many countries, this lack of awareness is linked to socio-cultural and religious factors, including gender inequality.

15. Gender is another key factor, in view of the predominance of women and girls among the victims of forced sexual exploitation and domestic labour. In contrast, men and boys are more predominant in other areas of labour exploitation. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the traditional practice of child fostering provides a door for traffickers to exploit children (Kagabo, 2014).

16. For children and young adults, limited access to quality education and vocational/skills training is another important push factor. Despite efforts targeting Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, including the implementation of free primary education schemes in many countries in the region, persistent weaknesses in the education sector (access, quality and the unmet needs of out-of-school children, with particularly poor conditions in rural and poor urban areas) means many children continue to lack meaningful alternatives to child labour.

17. In a number of countries across the continent, the impact of these education and poverty factors has been compounded by conflicts and natural disasters involving sometimes large population displacements, disruptions of livelihoods and schooling, high levels of insecurity, forced migration of children in ways that expose them to worst forms of child labour, and forced recruitment of children for use in war and associated activities.

18. Finally, migration is an important risk factor on the supply side. Migrants, particularly undocumented migrants, are especially vulnerable to situations of debt bondage – for instance when money is borrowed to pay recruitment and travel fees—or to other abusive situations.

Demand factors

19. In the present context, demand factors are those factors that encourage the use of (or diminish dissuasion of the use of) child labour or forced labour in the production of goods or services, including in illicit activities. A key factor among these is the widespread dependence on unskilled and low-skill labour in large segments of the economy, particularly in agriculture and the urban informal sectors. Related to this is the fact that the victims are easily exploited, hence their labour is cheap, if paid at all. Children are also easily coerced into carrying out activities that are inappropriate for their age or are dangerous, often under the guise of helping them to learn a trade. However, perhaps the most important demand factor by far relates to weaknesses in the legal framework for preventing these forms of labour exploitation, especially weak enforcement of the

applicable laws. Underlying the latter are capacity weaknesses in the concerned agencies, as well as lack of coordination between organizations charged with different aspects of the problem.

20. In many countries, in sectors where there are strong pressures for minimizing the cost of production, competition can exacerbate the risk that producers will engage in exploitative practices, including contemporary forms of slavery. Sectors at risk include those involving temporary or migrant labour and smallholder farming (Bhoola, 2015).

21. Not all these supply and demand factors apply to all countries on the continent. Differences depend on country characteristics such as income and education levels, degree of urbanization, and the level of political commitment in fighting child labour and forced labour.

Effects and consequences of child labour and forced labour

22. Forced labour and child labour represent gross abuses of the human rights of the victims. While the perpetrators earn profits that, in some cases, are quite huge, the losses incurred by the victims are usually quite big also. These may include immediate and long-term dangers to health, personal trauma, low or no wages, and the denial of universally-recognized rights regarding personal development and freedom from exploitation. For children, additional negative effects come into play. Child labour denies children the opportunity to receive the education and training needed to help them grow into adults able to exercise their rights and responsibilities fully as citizens, and to have equal access to decent work and a better future. This is so for children unable to attend school because of work, but even many of those enrolled in school have to work to an extent that negatively affects their school performance and, later on, their ability to compete on the labour market. As underscored by the findings of an ILO study covering 12 countries from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America, having worked as a child labourer is associated with lower earning capacity and reduced chances for securing decent work later in life (ILO, 2015a, p. 16).

23. Child labour and forced labour are not only caused by poverty. They also contribute to the perpetuation of poverty, trapping the victims in a vicious cycle in which the children used in child labour become a new link in the chain that produces the next generation of vulnerable and socially excluded households.

24. Forced labour is a huge underground business. According to ILO research, globally, the estimated profits from forced labour exceed USD 150 billion annually (ILO, 2014b, Table 2.1, p. 13). For Africa as a whole, the estimated annual illicit profits are more than USD 13 billion: \$ 8.9 billion from forced sexual exploitation, \$ 300 million from domestic work, and \$ 3.9 billion from non-domestic labour.¹⁹ As noted in ILO (2014b, p. 45), these huge illicit profits, bigger than the economies of many a small African country with a labour force of around 4 million, represent huge financial, emotional, psychological and life-threatening health losses for the victims, unfair competition to law-abiding businesses and employers, a risk to the brand image of companies and industries linked in the supply chain, and a loss to national treasuries in terms of foregone taxes and cost of remedial measures for victims. As noted by Busse and Braun (2002, p. 1), “in addition to severe

¹⁹ ILO (2014b, p. 13). See also Sawadogo (2012), p. 100, for an example of profit estimates for actors in the trafficking chain.

human suffering, the economic consequences of forced labour can be quite substantial in countries with a high extent of forced labour.”

25. It is evident from the foregoing that child labour and forced labour militate against human rights, inclusive economic growth and poverty eradication, and decent work for all. Decent work “involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.”²⁰ Child labour and forced labour constitute obstacles to the achievement of all of these universal aspirations.

5. Overview of national and regional responses

26. International and national actions against child labour and forced labour have accelerated over the last two decades. At the international level, instruments such as the *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*,²¹ adopted in 1998, have succeeded in mobilizing governments, workers and employers and their organizations, international inter-governmental agencies and civil society organizations to join in the fight against labour exploitation. The Declaration called on ILO member States to work towards the elimination of child labour and forced labour, along with respect for freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. Since the adoption of the Declaration, many countries have enacted and/or strengthened laws, policies and programmes against forced labour, human trafficking, slavery and child labour. This movement has seen acceleration in the ratification of the ILO Fundamental Conventions.²² All countries in Africa have now ratified Convention Nos. 29 and 105. As of August 2016, three of the seven countries that have ratified Protocol of 2014 to Convention No. 29 are African – Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Ratification of the child labour conventions is also nearly universal: only Liberia and Somalia have yet to ratify Convention No. 138, while Eritrea is the only country yet to ratify Convention No. 182. All African countries have also ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nearly all have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.²³ Most have also ratified the Slavery Convention, the Palermo Protocol on human trafficking and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW.

27. Alongside ratification of the relevant international conventions, African countries have strengthened their legislation in recent years, with many enacting child protection and anti-trafficking laws.²⁴ Most countries are broadly in line with international norms with regard to legislation (ILO, 2013b, p. 27). Most have also set

²⁰ ILO, “Decent Work”, from: <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>. [August 2016]

²¹ For information on the Declaration and its follow-up, go to: <http://www.ilo.org/declaration/lang-en/index.htm>.

²² That is, the Conventions on: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining (Nos. 87 and 98); the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour (Nos. 29 and 105 and Protocol of 2014 to Convention 29, P29); the effective abolition of child labour (Nos. 138 and 182); and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Nos. 100 and 111).

²³ Ratification Data. Available at: <http://www.acerwc.org/ratification-data/>. [August 2016]

²⁴ The *Human Trafficking Portal* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC, includes a Database on Legislation containing anti-trafficking laws from most of the countries of the world, including much of Africa. The database is available here: <https://www.unodc.org/cld/en/v3/htmls/index.html>. [August 2016]

up committees or agencies to oversee national anti-trafficking efforts, many with funding from the Africa – EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment, which supports capacity building for prevention of trafficking and forced labour, protection of victims and prosecution of perpetrators (Ibid., p. 29). Many countries have stepped up prosecution of trafficking cases.²⁵ In addition, many have formulated national action plans on child labour and human trafficking. However, the actual implementation of measures and enforcement of laws vary and are largely inadequate, as frequently noted in the comments of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations relating to Convention Nos. 29, 105, 138 and 182, or in the US Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Reports.

28. Concerted international action against child labour started a few years earlier than those on forced labour, with many countries in Africa setting up Child Labour Units and National Steering Committees with assistance from ILO/IPEC. The 2006 ILO Global Report on Child Labour included a *Global Action Plan* calling on ILO member States to put time-bound measures in place by 2008 with a view to eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. At their 11th African Regional Meeting (Addis Ababa, April 2007), the African constituents of the ILO adopted these targets by calling on all member States in the region to formulate national action plans with the aim of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2015, as part of the *Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007 – 2015*. In response, nearly all Northern and Western African countries have formulated national action plans. Nevertheless, in reality, despite the existence of a broad political consensus, child labour programmes tend to receive low attention within national development priorities and suffer from weaknesses and constraints that hinder progress towards the realization of the agreed goals. The latter include weak institutional and technical capacity in the Child Labour Units and National Steering Committees charged with programme implementation, and weak national ownership and commitment. Capacity weaknesses also exist in other key agencies charged with various aspects of child protection and child development, including labour inspectorates, social welfare departments, and education departments dealing with school dropout and alternative education, the police, and magistrates. As a result, few national programmes have reached the stage of sustained large-scale implementation.

29. At the regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has adopted several sub-regional policy documents and guidelines on trafficking and child labour, with sets of actions for enhancing how member countries address these problems. An ECOWAS *Regional Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour, Especially the Worst Forms* was adopted in December 2012. Meanwhile, an *ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons in West Africa, 2016-2020*, the fifth on human trafficking, is currently being drafted. Elsewhere on the continent, regional actions on child labour and human trafficking have been adopted by the Southern African Development Community. The AU’s African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child regularly meets twice a year to discuss child rights and child protection issues. The Committee reviews and comments on periodic reports submitted by States Parties to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child regarding the application of the Charter, which includes provisions on child labour. Many countries are, however, not up-to-date on their reporting.²⁶

²⁵ Prosecution outcomes from several African countries (mainly from Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, but also Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Swaziland, and Togo), are available from the UNODC’s Human Trafficking Case Law Database, through the *Human Trafficking Portal*.

²⁶ See table of Reporting Calendar. Available at: <http://www.acerwc.org/reporting-calendar/>. [August 2016]

30. The ILO and many others have played a major role in many of the country responses to child labour and forced labour on the continent. ILO projects through IPEC and SAP-FL have been instrumental in data collection and analysis, strengthening labour and criminal codes, formulation and implementation of national policies and action plans, implementation of advocacy and awareness-raising activities, and “direct action” interventions aimed at assisting victims of child labour and forced labour. The ILO’s work in these areas involves substantial contributions from employers’ and workers’ organizations at national, regional and international levels.

31. The European Union and the UN Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC) have recently commenced an initiative entitled “Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants,” a four-year programme (2015-2019) being implemented in partnership with IOM and UNICEF, with the aim of assisting selected countries to develop and implement comprehensive national responses against human trafficking and migrant smuggling focusing on prevention and protection approaches. Five of the 15 countries to be covered are from Africa, namely, Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Niger and South Africa.²⁷

32. Other inter-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, FAO, IOM and UNODC have provided technical and financial support for activities at country and regional levels. Many activities have been made possible through financial support from the Department of Labor of the United States, the European Union and several of its member governments, Switzerland, Norway, Brazil and other countries within the framework of South-South co-operation, as well as a number of private sector bodies such as the International Cocoa Initiative and the End Child Labour in Tobacco (ECLT) Foundation.

33. Many international and local non-governmental organizations have also played significant roles. Examples of the latter include Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and its national branches, Anti-Slavery International, International Justice Mission, and CARITAS. There is insufficient space here to name the many local civil society organizations across the continent whose work is crucial in awareness raising and advocacy, and in the provision of prevention, protection and rehabilitation services at national and sub-national levels.

6. Framework for accelerating action against child labour and forced labour

34. Despite recent achievements in the development and implementation of measures against child labour and forced labour, progress is slow compared to the magnitude of the problem. The ILO and its constituents in Africa had set themselves the target of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2015/2016. The continent still has some distance to go. The new target date of 2025 for all child labour provides an opportunity for redoubling efforts to ensure success. The global decline of about 28 percent in the number of child labourers between 2008 and 2012, while respectable if continued, would be insufficient to achieve the 2025 target. In Africa, where the decline over the four-year period was around 10 percent, a greater increase is needed in the pace of decline. Efforts need to be accelerated even further for forced labour. Given the high

²⁷ For further information, go to: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/glo-act/index.html>. [August 2016]

incidence of child labour and forced labour and the pervasive nature of the underlying causes, the multi-dimensional and integrated approaches followed in most national action plans remain relevant for the achievement of effective and lasting outcomes. There is a need to learn from and build on the experience of the last two decades, and to redouble efforts. Fortunately, the SDGs provide the needed framework and momentum. Stakeholders ought to seize the opportunity.

The SDGs as an integrated framework

35. As noted in Section 1, the SDGs constitute a set of interconnected and mutually reinforcing goals and targets providing an integrated framework for addressing the underlying causes and the consequences of child labour and forced labour and for devising the necessary policies and programmes for attaining Target 8.7. Of course, the comprehensive nature of the SDGs does not, in itself, ensure that the 2030 Agenda will be implemented in an integrated manner. Conscious efforts will need to be pursued by key actors to ensure integration and to include a wider group of actors to leverage resources for better outcomes. However, the in-built cross-sectoral linkages between the goals and the fostering of multi-stakeholder partnerships as a key means of implementation should contribute to making integration possible.

Linkages to ILO global and regional frameworks

36. The adoption of SDG Goal 8 and the existence of strong linkages between several of the other SDGs and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda ensure alignment between the 2030 Agenda and ILO priorities (ILO, 2015b, paras. 10 and 31). Policy integration within the ILO will contribute to and benefit from the pursuit of the integrated approach needed to achieve Target 8.7. A multi-stakeholder partnership on Target 8.7 will also respond to the priorities adopted by the African constituents of the ILO at the 13th African Regional Meeting (ILO, 2015c), which include ratification and implementation of the Fundamental Conventions and promotion of synergies on labour rights issues. The development of a new generation of Decent Work Country Programmes that are aligned to the 2030 Agenda, called for by the *Addis Ababa Declaration*, will offer additional opportunities for policy integration.

Linkages to the African Union's Agenda 2063 and other regional priorities

37. The African Union's Agenda 2063 has the achievement of prosperity through decent work as a key objective. Several priorities of the Agenda are relevant to Target 8.7. These include Aspiration 1 on inclusive growth and sustainable development; Aspiration 3 relating to good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law; and particularly Aspiration 6 on people-driven development and unleashing the potential of women and the youth. The aims of Aspiration 6 include leaving no child, man or woman behind or excluded, putting children first and ensuring the full implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, ending all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, and ensuring the full empowerment of women in all spheres of life. The work of a multi-stakeholder alliance on Target 8.7 will be in line with these AU priorities. It will also contribute to the implementation of the *African Union Plan of Action for the Promotion of Employment and Poverty Alleviation*, adopted by the AU Summit in January 2015, which calls for the coordination of efforts between international organizations, bilateral donors, the African Union, the Regional Economic Commissions and AU member States to support Africa's efforts towards achieving sustainable development, and policy coherence and partnership at local, national, continental

and international levels (Priority 2.8). The Plan of Action also calls for strategies to fight child labour and human trafficking (Priority 2.10).

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

38. Within the SDG framework, multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) are seen as vehicles for “[mobilizing] and [sharing] knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries” (SDG Target 17.16). A multi-stakeholder partnership can be defined as “an ongoing working relationship between organizations from different sectors, combining their resources and competencies and sharing risks towards achieving agreed shared objectives whilst each also achieving their own individual objectives.”²⁸ Examples include the Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). Hazlewood (2015) provides an overview of the differences in the models represented by these partnerships. An example of a new multi-stakeholder partnership under the SDGs is the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children (or SDG 16.2 Partnership), which was launched in 2016.²⁹

39. The potential benefits of multi-stakeholder partnerships include the promotion of integrated, comprehensive and scalable approaches to sustainable development, efficient and effective financing, and common platforms for advocacy and mobilization of civil society actors (see Box 4 for a summary). However, successful use of multi-stakeholder partnerships requires that a number of potential challenges and risks be overcome at both design and implementation stages. These include the need to avoid rigid and top-down approaches that can undermine ownership or distort funding and investment priorities at country and local levels, overly sectorial and project approaches that hinder large-scale systemic change, and underinvestment in the structures needed to manage work across multiple levels – global, regional, national and local (Hazlewood, 2015, pp. 4 – 5). Other challenges include how to avoid power imbalances in governance and operation of the partnership to ensure meaningful participation by all stakeholders, especially at the local level, ensuring transparency and accountability, particularly with regard to the role of the private sector in development, and the development of adequate monitoring, evaluation and knowledge-sharing systems (Ibid).

Box 4: Potential Benefits of Global MSPs

1. More integrated, comprehensive and scalable approaches to the subject by: facilitating cross-sector dialogue to create a common agenda for action and advocacy; combining and leveraging complementary roles and diverse capabilities of stakeholders and promoting inclusive participation; facilitating a shift to more programmatic approaches to planning, investment and implementation; and providing multi-level platforms or networks for achieving sustainable impact at scale.
2. More integrated, efficient and effective approaches to financing, including pooled and blended mechanisms, and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness by lowering transaction costs and reducing fragmentation and duplication.
3. Provision of platforms for global advocacy and mobilization of civil society around priority poverty eradication and sustainable development challenges.

Source: Hazlewood (2015). pp. 3 – 4.

²⁸ Freeman, C. and M. Wisheart. “Advancing the Debate: Cross-sector partnerships, business and the post-2015 development agenda.” World Vision International, 2015. Cited by P. Hazlewood (2015, p. 2).

²⁹ For more information, see SDG 16.2 Partnership, at <http://www.end-violence.org/>. [August 2016]

Potential stakeholders

40. Stakeholders in the fight against child labour and forced labour in Africa include governments at all levels, employers' and workers' organizations at national, regional and international levels, UN agencies, the African Union, the regional economic communities such as ECOWAS, development partners, civil society organizations – both local and international –, faith based groups, academic institutions, and the media. As discussed below, the private sector also has considerable interest in addressing labour exploitation in several sectors of the African economy.

41. The fact that most incidents of child labour and forced labour occur in the informal economy (both rural and urban) and in illicit activities does not protect any business from the possibility of such labour abuses in their supply chains. As global trade has increased and transport and communication networks have grown, supply chains have also developed into very complex networks. Well-known examples that have raised concerns worldwide include textiles and clothing, carpet weaving, fishing and agricultural produce such as cocoa, cotton, palm oil, sugar cane, tobacco, cut flowers, and fruits and vegetables (Bhoola, 2015). However, even the most modern of industries, high technology manufacturing, depends on minerals that could be produced as much by small-scale artisanal entities in unregulated or under-regulated jurisdictions as by large multi-national companies in well-regulated sectors. Therefore, they risk having child or forced labour in their supply chains, as a recent article by Dupere (2016) has underscored. As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, “Global enterprises with supply chains that are long and complex and involve complicated networks of subsidiaries, franchisees, suppliers, contractors and subcontractors are more likely to be faced with challenges related to contemporary forms of slavery. While the first tier of supply chains is less susceptible to the risk of contemporary forms of slavery, the lower levels have been shown to be at risk of products or raw materials being sourced from home-based or small workshops in the informal economy and made in situations of debt bondage, forced labour or the worst forms of child labour (Bhoola, 2015, para. 20).

42. As noted earlier, private sector involvement in addressing child labour and forced labour in areas such as cocoa, cotton and tobacco has been ongoing for several years.

7. Conclusions

43. Governments, the social partners and other stakeholders across Africa agree that child labour and forced labour are unacceptable: they have negative consequences for the victims, both individuals and families, and for economic growth and development, poverty eradication, global supply chains, and risks to the brand images of companies whose supply chains may be affected. They also constitute obstacles to the achievement of decent work for all. Effective action against these forms of exploitation require addressing underlying factors, including poverty, inequality, ignorance, impunity, weak law enforcement, policy failures and other governance deficits. Despite significant progress in recent decades, these forms of exploitation are occurring at a level that demands a robust international response. SDG Target 8.7 is an appropriate and welcome response to finish the job, started many decades ago, of eliminating these intolerable practices.

44. The achievement of Target 8.7 requires action on a complex set of causal factors and situations, for which an integrated approach involving a broad range of participants is indispensable. It also requires a considerable acceleration in the pace in which child labour and forced labour problems have been addressed in the last two decades. Fortunately, given the existence of broad international agreement on the ambitious set of 17 Goals and 169 Targets, the SDGs can offer both the integrated framework and the momentum needed for rapid progress. The alignment between the SDGs, the African priorities embodied in *Agenda 2063* and the *Employment Promotion and Poverty Alleviation Plan of Action* of the African Union, and the ILO's regional priorities within the *Decent Work Agenda* enhances the feasibility of policy integration for this purpose. However, the complexity of the SDG framework will probably make its implementation complicated and difficult. For Alliance 8.7, as for many of the partnerships that would be established around other goals and targets, success will depend on the quality of stakeholder engagement and mobilization and the willingness of the partners to think and work in the new ways required for efficient and effective integration. We conclude this paper by outlining a few points for reflection towards the establishment of the alliance.

Design and functioning of Alliance 8.7

45. Africa has the high incidence of child labour and forced labour, weak institutional and technical capacities for addressing them, and serious resource constraints, including the capacity to fund interventions. To bring about the large-scale transformations needed for the achievement of Target 8.7, it is important to design the partnership in a way that ensures that African realities and the concerns of African stakeholders at different levels – local, national, sub-regional and regional – are adequately accommodated with regard to actions implemented in Africa. This requires a structure capable of aligning with country priorities, building ownership, commitment and accountability at each level, and ensuring that each level participates in decision-making on strategies, planning and implementation at that level.³⁰

46. In addition, efforts will be needed to assist countries in identifying and breaking down barriers to policy integration and broad-based participation. Also, given that the SDGs constitute a set of inter-connected goals and strategies, the Alliance 8.7 partners will need to consider how to work effectively and efficiently within the larger framework at national and sub-regional levels, contributing to the achievement of other targets while leveraging results under other targets to meet Target 8.7. The large numbers of Goals, Targets and, potentially, multi-sectoral partnerships means country and local actors can be easily swamped by “internal consumption” activities such as meetings and reporting, if ways are not found to achieve efficient and effective integration, especially at the country level.

Priority actions for addressing child labour and forced labour

47. The design of integrated strategies and actions for achieving Target 8.7 must be informed by adequate and reliable data. To be relevant and effective, actions must be based on solid local knowledge about child labour and forced labour and their determinants, effects and consequences, about operational issues, and about local stakeholders. To put it another way, actions implemented as part of the global partnership and the implementation modalities adopted must be locally relevant.

³⁰ See Hazlewood (2015) for a discussion of key design principles for building effective and accountable multi-stakeholder partnerships.

48. As argued earlier, to ensure lasting outcomes, it is important to address the underlying supply and demand factors. A major advantage of the multi-stakeholder approach and the comprehensive nature of the SDGs is the possibility of tackling all relevant causes within an integrated approach. However, this does not mean focusing mainly on key issues such as poverty, education and migration. Forced labour and the worst forms of child labour are crimes that ought to be treated as such, with urgency. In addition to the root causes of the problem, there is a need to tackle the issues of ineffective laws and, especially, weak law enforcement, including structural, training, supervision and other organizational weaknesses within the relevant agencies, operating procedures, treatment of victims, and working arrangements between government institutions and other stakeholders such as the social partners and non-governmental organizations. There is also an urgent need for scaling up prevention, protection and rehabilitation measures and ensuring that they are functioning.

49. Each of the different partners in Alliance 8.7 will bring a rich set of competencies, knowledge and tools, stakeholder networks and other resources to the partnership. These will need to be mapped, assessed and shared. Furthermore, although many of the causes and consequences of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour are similar, each of these problems also requires specific strategies and tailored responses. In pursuing the necessary integrated approach, the Alliance will need to take these specific needs into account.

Roles of ILO, constituents and other stakeholders

50. Roles need to be defined carefully to fit the interests and specializations of stakeholders. For instance, the social partners must be assisted in building their capabilities to analyze forced labour and child labour issues from their vantage perspectives and mandates and to contribute accordingly. They should also be supported to participate fully in the development of national SDG strategies with a multi-stakeholder approach. Properly defining the roles and responsibilities of partners at different levels is a crucial step in the establishment of the Alliance, in order to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in programme implementation.

Annex A: Available statistics

Table A.1: Children in employment, child labour and hazardous work by sex, age group and region, 2012

Sex, age group and region		Total Children	Children in employment		Child labour		Hazardous work	
		('000)	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)	%
World (5-17 years)		1,585,566	264,427	16.7	167,956	10.6	85,344	5.4
Sex	Boys	819,877	148,327	18.1	99,766	12.2	55,048	6.7
	Girls	765,690	116,100	15.2	68,190	8.9	30,296	4.0
Age group	5-11 years	858,925	73,072	8.5	73,072	8.5	18,499	2.2
	12-14 years	362,146	70,994	19.6	47,381	13.1	19,342	5.3
	5-14 years	1,221,071	144,066	11.8	120,453	9.9	37,841	3.1
	15-17 years	364,495	120,362	33.0	47,503	13.0	47,503	13.0
Region	Asia & the Pacific	835,334	129,358	15.5	77,723	9.3	33,860	4.1
	Latin America & the Caribbean	142,693	17,843	12.5	12,505	8.8	9,638	6.8
	Sub Saharan Africa	275,397	83,570	30.3	59,031	21.4	28,767	10.4
	MENA	110,411	13,307	12.1	9,244	8.4	5,224	4.7

Source: ILO (2013a), Table 8, p. 15.

Table A.2: Regional trends of children in employment, child labour and hazardous work, 5-17 years old, 2000-2012

Region		Child population	Children in employment		Child labour		Hazardous work	
		('000)	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)	%
Asia & the Pacific	2008	853,895	174,460	20.4	113,607	13.3	48,164	5.6
	2012	835,334	129,358	15.5	77,723	9.3	33,860	4.1
Latin America & the Caribbean	2008	141,043	18,851	13.4	14,125	10.0	9,436	6.7
	2012	142,693	17,843	12.5	12,505	8.8	9,638	6.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	2008	257,108	84,229	32.8	65,064	25.3	38,736	15.1
	2012	275,397	83,570	30.3	59,031	21.4	28,767	10.4

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