According to the latest global estimate, in 2016 over 25 million individuals were victims of forced labour including forced labour in the private economy, forced sexual exploitation and state-imposed forced labour (ILO, Walk Free and IOM). The research behind the estimates was conducted as a contribution to a global effort to eradicate forced labour, human trafficking, child labour and modern slavery by 2030.

Progress made so far
193 UN member states have committed to this effort as well as part of the global agenda to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

Since the release of the global estimates, much effort has been put forth by stakeholders to accelerate action toward ending forced labour, and human trafficking for forced labour. However, it is clear that not enough is being done to move the needle on reducing global prevalence and preventing vulnerable individuals from falling into this trap¹. It is also more essential than ever to understand how to scale these efforts and resources in order to make progress toward our goal, in line with ILO Recommendation 203.

Way forward
To assist political actors committed to stepping up levels of engagement in the fight against forced labour, in a targeted, evidence-driven way, the following questions must be addressed:

1. How much does it cost to end forced labour?
2. How do costs differ between countries and for various types of interventions?
3. Where can policy actors direct resources, domestically and internationally, in order to make the biggest impact on eradication?

The ILO, in a research project supported by United Way Worldwide, is trying to answer these questions aiming to produce regional and global costing estimates on the cost to eradicate forced labour. Estimates will be tailored to cost interventions to tackle specific forms of forced labour within multiple industries and regional contexts.

¹ COVID-19 may further complicate this goal by subjecting many more to the conditions of vulnerability known to be associated with risk of labour exploitation.
Partnerships

To ensure that the project draws from a diversity of perspectives, a core tripartite body composed of partners from governments, social partners, CSOs and UN agencies, and key members of the Alliance 8.7 global partnership network, will serve as Coordinating Committee for the project. A Technical Expert Group will also be developed as part of the project and will inform the Coordinating Committee on the modeling and research process.

The project will also draw upon the efforts of the Alliance 8.7 global partnership to end child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and modern slavery. The project will focus specifically on the Pathfinder Country process, to produce estimates of the cost to eliminate forced labour in five countries representing different regions and roadmaps to accelerate action toward eradication. Pathfinder Country status is given to those that have committed to prioritising Target 8.7 issues, have held strategic planning workshops with a broad range of national and international stakeholders and have established next steps.

Project Design

The REFLECT project is part of a broader ILO research agenda aimed at understanding the economics of forced labour, its elimination costs and economic opportunities for countries eliminating such practice.

The project will run along two tracks: the first with a focus on building an economic model of eradication cost of forced labour and the second will focus on in-country data gathering and field research. Each joint track will iteratively inform the process and shape of the other as the model will guide the data collection strategy and insights gained from the country level in-depth case studies will also feedback into improving the accuracy and applicability of the model.

Once cost estimates are produced for five representative Pathfinder countries, findings will inform the regional and global figures to be matched with the forthcoming 2021 Global Estimates on forced labour.

Project research outputs are designed to inform and direct increased, targeted donor investments based on context-specific strategies to deal with both incidence and vulnerability to labour exploitation. Findings will be communicated in the form of five national roadmaps of action based on Pathfinder country field research and a major global report on the cost to eliminate forced labour. Beyond producing reports, findings will be strategically communicated through online dissemination and through stakeholder networks.

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Working with the Alliance 8.7

Alliance 8.7 is an inclusive global partnership committed to achieving Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Alliance supports countries and organizations in their efforts by:

- Accelerating collaborative action
- Driving innovation and scaling up solutions
- Providing a platform to share information

Partners collaborating through 4 thematic Action Groups

Pathfinder Countries have committed to supporting each other to accelerate action at home

Visit www.alliance87.org

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