

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) AND THE FIGHT AGAINST FORCED LABOUR

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ABSTRACT

In 2007, Jens Lerche published an article that surveyed The International Labour Organization's approach to forced labour, 17 years have passed since then, what has the ILO accomplished and what has changed? Starting from Lerche's findings, this paper will attempt to compare and analyze the state of forced labour in 2021/2022 through the lens of the ILO and their current work to combat it, such as the development of the The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (IPEC+) Global Flagship Programme and the CLEAR Cotton Project. The paper will also look towards how these developments align with the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, as Target 8.7 states that it seeks to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms and to observe the progress made along the years since 2005 to present day. As a research method, the paper uses content analysis by comparing articles, surveys and reports from prior years with current ones, as well as exploring reports made by the ILO on projects they've implemented or are planning to implement in their mission to fight against forced labour and child labour.

Keywords: The International Labour Organization, forced labour, child labour, United Nations, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

As a specialized agency of the United Nations, The International Labour Organization (ILO) has made a commitment to "attempting to spearhead a 'global alliance against forced labour'"¹. This has been surveyed in 2007 through an article written by Jens Lerche to assess the ILO approach to forced labour, recent theoretical debates regarding forced labour and recent empirical work on bonded labour in India, and which points to the need to develop specific analyses of the processes underlying both free and unfree labour relations in the then present context, and their relation to neo-liberal globalization as well as country-specific conditions². This paper aims to use this article as a starting point in order

to see the progress the ILO has made since its publishing.

The ILO is a unique agency by design having a tripartite set-up, functioning since 1919 and bringing together the governments, employers and workers of 187 Member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes that promote decent work for all women and men³. The ILO defines forced labour as "situations in which persons are coerced to work through the use of violence or intimidation, or by more subtle means such as accumulated debt, retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities"⁴. It

¹ Lerche, J. (2007). A global alliance against forced labour? Unfree labour, neo-liberal globalization and the International Labour Organization. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 7 (4), 425-452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0366.2007.00152.x> (Visited 11.01.2024).

² *Ibidem*.

³ International Labour Organization (ILO). *About the ILO*. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm>. (Visited 11.01.2024).

⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2014). *The meanings of Forced Labour*. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/news/WCMS_237569/lang--en/index.htm#:~:text=Forced%20labour%20refers%20to%20situations,of%20denunciation%20to%20immigration%20authorities. (Visited 11.01.2024).

is also mentioned that despite forced labour, contemporary forms of slavery, debt bondage and human trafficking being closely related terms but not identical in a legal sense, most forms of slavery or human trafficking are covered by ILO under the definition of forced labour⁵.

In 2015, the UN published its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which Goal 8 is to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”⁶ and more specifically Goal 8.7 aims 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”⁷. Therefore, this paper will look at some of ILO’s accomplishments, as a UN agency, to determine how they align with these goals and how likely they are to actually be fulfilled within the timeframe given.

I. FINDINGS AND ASSUMPTIONS BY LERCHE

In the article written by Lerche, The 2005 report realized by the ILO calculates that a minimum of 12.3 million people in the world work as forced labour, this being the first official estimate of the magnitude of forced labour world-wide. It is stated that the main region for forced labour by quite a large margin is Asia and the Pacific, with more than three-quarters of all forced labourers, having also the highest incidence of forced labour. The Latin America and Caribbean regions, however, regarding rate of incidence, are not far behind. Meanwhile, the incidence in the Industrialized countries is only a tenth of that in Asia⁸.

The findings indicated by the ILO, regarding the different forms of forced labour as defined by them, show that private economic exploitation is by far the most common, covering nearly two-thirds of all kinds of forced labour. This includes bonded labour, forced domestic work, or forced labour in agriculture and remote rural areas, among others. Forced labour imposed by the state is next, followed by forced labour for commercial sexual exploitation. Clear regional patterns can be

observed as well, in the Industrialized countries forced labour for commercial sexual exploitation constitutes representing the main kind of the forced labour, whereas elsewhere private economic exploitation dominates, with the exception of the Transition countries. In the Middle East and the Transition countries, the majority of the forced labourers have been trafficked, contrary to Asia and the Pacific region, where trafficked labour occupies a much smaller percentage of forced labour (15%). It is also important to note that at least 43% of trafficked forced labourers are in ‘commercial sexual exploitation’⁹.

The ILO also makes a distinction regarding trafficking and forced labour, trafficking and forced labour aren’t always interchangeable and using them as such can take away the focus from the incidence of forced labour among non-trafficked migrants¹⁰.

Lerche claims that the analysis of forced labour done by the ILO in 2005 is restricted, as it does not critique capitalism and yet it does state that it places today’s forced labour in the context of the global economy, therefore presenting it in relation to the specific characteristics of capitalism at the time. In the 2005 Report¹¹ only three pages out of 87 are devoted to ‘forced labour and the global economy’¹².

To be able to compete on cheap and stable production at the end of the global chains there exist commodity chain links between global retailers, suppliers and labour contractors that lead to employment of forced labour. Through this, employers in transition countries enable forced labour through deregulation of labour markets, downsizing of labour inspections and increased supply of migrant labourers. Lerche states that these issues are treated as stand-alone points by the ILO, being de-linked from a general analysis of globalization and capitalism. De-linking is an issue as it became a part of the ILO strategy at the time in order to isolate the worst cases, so that these incidents can be dealt with without challenging the overall system that created the conditions for their occurrence in the first place. Therefore, the ILO only dealt with what is seen as ‘exploitation’, namely forced labour, child labour, etc., while standard ‘free’ labour relations remained not seen as exploitative¹³.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/291/89/PDF/N1529189.pdf?OpenElement>. (Visited 11.01.2024).

⁷ United Nations. (2015). *Op. cit.*

⁸ Lerche, J. *Op. cit.*

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), (2005a). *A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour*. International Labour Conference 93rd Session 2005. Report I (B). Geneva: ILO.

¹² Lerche, J. *Op. cit.*

¹³ Lerche, J. *Op. cit.*

Lerche brings up the case of bonded labour in India in relation to theoretical issues and regarding issues relating to the historical development of forced labour and capitalism. India because it was acknowledged at the time that it had the highest number of unfree labourers of any country in the world, and the theoretical debate regarding unfree labour often draws on evidence from India¹⁴.

Since the 1950s, there has been a move away from traditional debt bondage in India, with new types of bondage that are consistent with the capitalist economy having emerged. During colonial times, India saw landowners employing one or more male bonded labourers and their wives on a permanent basis to undertake core agricultural tasks and household chores. The bonded labourers were predominantly from the lowest ranking castes and tribes, as was the case with most other agricultural labourers at the time. The labourers tended to be bonded for a large number of years, sometimes even for a lifetime; hereditary debt relations were common as well. From the 1950s onwards, however, the occurrence of classical bonded labour declined significantly¹⁵.

Lerche then refers to Jan Breman for the study of bonded labour and related issues in India, Breman having undertaken fieldwork-based research in West India for more than 40 years. Breman charted the development away from classical bonded labour relations^{16,17}, arguing that during colonial times bonded labour already erased the traces of patron–client relations, which used to include certain small benefits for the labourers. As such, the Indian case according to Lerche provides pointers towards an analysis of the specific relationship between neo-liberal globalization and unfree labour in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, among others¹⁸.

In his conclusion, Lerche states that the ILO forced labour report presents clear difficulties that are inherent in their ‘decent work’ approach, stemming from the analysis of neo-liberal globalization. He adds that the analysis of forced labour cannot be separated from the analysis of the processes generating the development of all labour relations, suggesting a more general analytical approach¹⁹.

II. CASE STUDY

For the case study, we are going to look at the reports released by the ILO in the years 2012 and 2021/2022 to see what overall progress can or cannot be seen as compared to the 2005 Report analyzed by Lerche. Then, we will also look at some current programmes the ILO has implemented that are ongoing to further assess where they stand in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals that concern forced labour.

The 2012 Report is using a new and improved statistical methodology which leads the ILO to estimate that at the time 20.9 million people were victims of forced labour globally, trapped, coerced or deceived into jobs which they cannot leave. The ILO considers that human trafficking can also be regarded as forced labour, this estimate including the full realm of human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation, often called “modern day slavery”. The figure means that in 2012 around three out of every 1,000 persons worldwide were in forced labour at any given point²⁰.

In terms of the distribution of the different forms of forced labour, of the total number of 20.9 million, 18.7 million or 90% are exploited in the private economy, by individuals or enterprises, and out of these, 4.5 million (22%) are victims of forced sexual exploitation. 14.2 million (68%) are victims of forced labour exploitation in economic activities, such as agriculture, domestic work, construction, etc. Meanwhile, the remaining 2.2 million (10%) are in state-imposed forms of forced labour, such as prisons, or work imposed by the state military or by rebel armed forces²¹.

When it comes to the regional distribution, the Asia-Pacific region (AP) accounts for by far the largest number of forced labourers standing at 11.7 million or 56% of the global total. In second we find Africa at 3.7 million (18%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean with 1.8 million victims (9%). The Developed Economies and European Union account for 1.5 million (7%) forced labourers, whilst countries of Central, Southeast and Eastern Europe (non EU) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CSEE) have 1.6 million (7%). There are an estimated 600,000 (3%) victims in the Middle East (ME)²².

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Lerche, J. *Op. cit.*

¹⁶ Breman, J., 1974. *Patronage and Exploitation. Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat, India*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

¹⁷ Breman, J., 2007. *Labour Bondage in West India. From Past to Present*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹⁸ Lerche, J. *Op. cit.*

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2012). ILO 2012 Global estimate of forced labour Executive summary. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_181953.pdf (Visited 12.01.2024)

²¹ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2012). *Op. cit.*

²² *Ibidem*.

And while the 2012 estimates cannot be compared to those from 2005 for the purpose of detecting trends over time as to see whether forced labour has increased or decreased over the period concerned, that doesn't mean no progress has been made. The ILO has improved its methods of estimation, becoming more reliable, being based on a more sophisticated methodology and numerous better data sources. This contributes to the fact that the 2012 estimate is much higher than ILO's first estimate in 2005. There is a lack of data when it comes to state-imposed forced labour relative to the other forms. Accordingly, in 2012, ILO estimated that state-imposed forced labour represented a lower proportion of the total, at around 10%²³.

Since 2012, the ILO method relies on the collection of "reported cases" of forced labour, for this particular report over the 10 year period 2002-2011, from all countries in the world. "Reported cases" refer to specific instances of forced labour, indicating where and when the activity took place and how many people were involved. Cases can be found in various secondary sources of information, ranging from official statistics, NGO reports to newspaper articles, among others. There is also the margin of error to be taken into consideration, for the global estimate of 20.9 million it amounts to 7% (1.4 million), as such meaning that the actual number lies between 19.5 million and 22.3 million. Another step that can be taken as progress, as compared to 2005, the margin of error has decreased from 20% to 7%. Even so, the ILO acknowledges its limitations at that point in time²⁴.

Moving on to the 2021 Global Estimates, we see that the number has yet again increased, now amounting to 27.6 million people in situations of forced labour on any given day, 3.5 people for every thousand people in the world. More than 3.3 million of all those in forced labour are children. The ILO states that this indicates a growth in forced labour, reporting a 2.7 million increase in the number of people in forced labour between 2016 and 2021, which should be alarming considering the fast approaching deadline of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development²⁵.

When it comes to the regional spread of forced labour, it is still an issue that affects

people on a global scale, no part of the world being spared from the presence of forced labour. Asia and the Pacific is still host to the largest number of people in forced labour, 15.1 million, which is more than half of the global total and more than three times that of the region with the next highest number, Europe and Central Asia. This checks out with the previous reports, also being the case that these numbers are influenced by the size of the population in each region, and the regional rankings change considerably depending on the measurement we rely on. For example, when expressed as a proportion of the population, forced labour records the highest number in the Arab States, at 5.3 per thousand people, compared to 4.4 per thousand in Europe and Central Asia, 3.5 per thousand in both the Americas and Asia and the Pacific regions, and 2.9 per thousand in Africa²⁶.

The 2021 Global Estimates make a distinction between forced labour imposed by private agents and state-imposed forced labour, coming to the conclusion that most forced labour occurs in the private economy. The report also states that the overall rise in forced labour between 2016 and 2021 was the result of a rise in the number of people in privately-imposed forced labour. The ILO estimated that the number in forced labour exploitation went up by 1.3 million and the number in forced commercial sexual exploitation rose by an even larger number, 1.5 million over the 2016 to 2021 period²⁷.

It's also important to mention that people in forced labour are more likely to be in industries such as manufacturing, construction, than workers in the overall labour force, and as such they are less likely to be in the services and agriculture sectors compared to workers in the overall labour force. It's stated that migrant workers who are not protected by law or are unable to exercise their rights also face a higher risk of forced labour than other workers, as the 2021 Global Estimates indicate that 15% of all adults in forced labour exploitation are migrants. In addition, migrant workers are often employed in sectors which may not be covered by the labour code²⁸.

Coming back to one of the points discussed by Lerche in 2007, we see that debt bondage is still an issue as one-fifth of people in forced labour exploitation are in such situations. Debt bondage is most prominent in mining (43%), agriculture (31%) and construction (27%). Marginalized

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2012). *Op. cit.*

²⁵ International Labour Organization (ILO), Walk Free, and International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2022). 2021 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipecc/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf (Visited 13.01.2024).

²⁶ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2022). *Op. cit.*

²⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2022). *Op. cit.*

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

communities, ethnic and religious minorities, and indigenous peoples are the groups at a higher risk²⁹. Children are also often victims of debt bondage, a lot of times it can be linked to traditional practices, such as the wahaya practice in Niger which involves domestic work and sexual exploitation, and the Haliya and Kamaiya practices in Nepal involving agricultural bonded labour³⁰.

The 2021 Report indicates a total of 6.3 million people, out of which 1.7 million are children, are in situations of forced commercial sexual exploitation on any given day. When it comes to this kind of forced labour, gender plays a critical role as nearly four out of every five people trapped in forced commercial exploitation are girls or women³¹.

The forced labour of children constitutes one component of child labour, which the international community, through Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, has committed to ending by 2025, however in 2021 there still is estimated that a total of 3.3 million children are in situations of forced labour on any given day, accounting for about 12% of all people in forced labour. An estimated 3.9 million people were in state-imposed forced labour at any point in time in 2021, 8% of those being children³². These numbers could also only be the tip of the iceberg, indicating the urgency for more severe measures to be taken at a global level if the UN wishes to attain its goals by 2025, at most 2030.

As we have seen, forced labour and child labour remain issues that need to be solved. The ILO has and is running programmes that are supposed to help achieve the goals set by the UN. Two such projects are The CLEAR Cotton project and the IPEC+ Global Flagship Programme.

Firstly, The CLEAR Cotton project with the tagline "Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach"³³ is co-funded by the European Union (EU) under the Development Cooperation Instrument and implemented by the ILO in collaboration with the Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO). The project was implemented over a period of four years, starting in March 2018 and ending in February 2022, and had four countries as its target: Burkina Faso, Mali, Pakistan and Peru. The project supported the four countries in contributing to sustainable cotton, textile and garment value chains that is free of child labour and forced labour by taking measures such as strengthening policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to combat child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment sector, and, supporting local governments, public services providers, and other relevant stakeholders to take effective action to stop child labour and forced labour in target cotton growing districts and communities and garment/textiles factories³⁴.

The CLEAR Cotton project has had these following significant results, among others; in Peru, "analysis of child labour and its worst forms in the cotton value chain and identification of strategies for its prevention and elimination, to identify the scale of the child labour in cotton productions and identify stakeholders' needs"³⁵, "a virtual course on child labour and social dialogue was developed and implemented, targeting enforcement officers and direct respondents"³⁶, "2 awareness-raising campaigns were developed and implemented, focusing on child labour in agriculture and the textile sector"³⁷; in Pakistan, "42 Decent Work Cotton Resources Centres (DWCRCs) were established by BLCC close to the cotton communities to serve as education and information centers"³⁸, "1,600+ children were withdrawn or prevented from entering child labour through accelerated schooling programmes in DWCRCs to eventually reintegrate mainstream schools"³⁹, "200+ youth and women benefited from vocational training to access decent work opportunities in the cotton,

³⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2018). *Op. cit.*

³⁵ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *Child labour in Peru*. Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach. Results from the CLEAR Cotton project. Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_888814.pdf (Visited 14.01.2024).

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *Child labour in Peru*. *Op. cit.*

³⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *Child labour and forced labour in Pakistan*. Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach Results from the CLEAR Cotton project. Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_888809.pdf (Visited 14.01.2024).

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2018). CLEAR COTTON. ELIMINATING CHILD LABOUR AND FORCED LABOUR IN THE COTTON, TEXTILE AND GARMENT VALUE CHAINS: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH. Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS) International Labour Office. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_650173.pdf (Visited 13.01.2024).

textile and garment value chain"⁴⁰; in Mali, "1,422 children (721 girls and 701 boys) aged 8 to 12 are withdrawn from child labour and re-enrolled in the mainstream schools thanks to the 57 SSA/P centres opened"⁴¹, "300 children aged 13-17 are removed from child labour and reintegrated through vocational training and apprenticeships in their chosen trades"⁴²; in Burkina Faso, "Establishment of 30 community bodies and 5 child protection networks in the Hauts-Bassins and SouthWest regions"⁴³, "978 children aged 9-13 years were withdrawn from child labour and returned to the formal system through the SSA/P centres"⁴⁴, "705 children aged 14-17 were withdrawn from child labour and reintegrated via vocational training and apprenticeships in ten trades and in entrepreneurship"⁴⁵.

Secondly, The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (IPEC+) Global Flagship Programme brings together two leading ILO technical cooperation programmes, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and the Special Action Programme to combat Forced Labour (SAP/FL) in order to establish a major new force in the fight against child labour, forced labour and human trafficking. Therefore, The objective of the IPEC+ Global Flagship Programme, in line with Target 8.7 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, is to provide ILO leadership in global efforts to eradicate all forms of child labour by 2025 and all forms of contemporary slavery and human trafficking by 2030. In order to do so it recognizes that forced labour and child labour share root causes of poor governance, discrimination and social exclusion, family and community poverty and lack of access to decent work and to the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining.

⁴⁰ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *Child labour and forced labour in Pakistan*. Op. cit.

⁴¹ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *Child labour and forced labour in Mali*. Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach Results from the CLEAR Cotton project. Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_888751.pdf (Visited 14.01.2024).

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2023). *Child labour and forced labour in Burkina Faso*. Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach Results from the CLEAR Cotton project. Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_888736.pdf (Visited 14.01.2024).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

Currently, IPEC+ is working in 80 countries with governments, social partners and a variety of actors to promote its cause and contribute to the achievement of the goals set by the UN⁴⁶.

Through these projects, among others, the ILO has helped around 115 countries to combat child labour by enacting and implementing hundreds of laws, action plans and policies. In addition, employers' and workers' organizations and enterprises have also had a key role integrating child labour in their policies, actions and business practices and by contributing to the implementation of action plans suggested by the ILO. This leading to the 16-year period starting in 2000 to see a net reduction of 94 million children in child labour⁴⁷.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has seen progress since Lerche's article came out, having developed new methods of research and better data collection means, and contributing to the implementation of several programmes meant to help in the fight against forced labour. Analyzing the data over the years, there are many assumptions and conclusions to be drawn from it, though one thing remains clear: the fight is nowhere near over. The number of forced labourers and child labourers is concerning to this day and seems to only grow, which, granted, could be also explained by more availability for data collection, either way, the numbers are not going down. By 2025, the UN aims to have completely eradicated child labour and forced labour by 2030. These goals are looking to have maybe been too ambitious as it's currently 2024 and child labour is nowhere close to being eradicated, remaining an issue that needs to remain somewhere at the top of the priorities of the UN and the ILO. The ILO has many projects that are underway and is continuously developing new methods of research to better assess the problems at hand and in order to come up with effective solutions that are timely and sustainable.

Therefore, the main takeaway is that there is much more work to be done in order to achieve the goals set forth by the UN in their 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the missions

⁴⁶ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2022). *IPEC+ Global Flagship Programme*. Towards a world free from child labour and forced labour. Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_633435.pdf (Visited 14.01.2024).

⁴⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO). (2022). *IPEC+ Global Flagship Programme*. Op. cit.

and programmes put in place by the ILO having promising results but being not close to enough to achieve the full eradication of forced labour and child labour, the numbers remaining staggering and worrying at this moment in time. Progress is being made in terms of more projects and investments in this area of development, though it may be at a slower rate than what is to be desired in alignment with the goals put forward. The effort in order to achieve them will need to be at a global level, with every country committing fully to the cause, implementing stronger policies and agendas that protect workers and prevent them from easily being taken advantage of, deceived or coerced into forced labour of any kind. Implementing safety and awareness measures that have in mind vulnerable people such as migrants, minorities (ethnic, religious, racial, etc.) and children, among others, to make sure that they are also protected from exploitation. Resource availability and a higher level of education is also important in the battle against forced labour, serving as a prevention method and being useful in making people more aware of the dangers of such practices and how to avoid them. There are many factors that go into why eradicating forced labour is proving to be so difficult, from climate change to migration to poverty, the work that needs to be done being intersectional in this way, all these issues coming together to prevent the progress of society in the desired direction.

With everything said, the ILO, the UN and other organizations concerned with ending forced labour in all of its forms, will need to pour in a stellar amount of effort into this fight if they wish to actually meet the goals stated in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as the clock is ticking and the numbers seem to only be on the rise.

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