



FACT SHEET FOR BUSINESS: Forced Labour in Fisheries

Understanding forced labour in the fisheries sector

Fishing and the fish trade are amongst the earliest globalised industries, embedded in culture and tradition, and their practice constitutes a highly profitable sector significantly contributing to food security, employment and wealth development worldwide.

Despite the many good initiatives deployed in the sector, it remains very vulnerable and is subject to a high incidence of forced labour and human trafficking, particularly on board fishing vessels. Although the issues in the sector are complex and multi-faceted, the main problems arise from the lack of a binding legal framework for effective maritime security and cooperation - both internal and trans-boundary; and the ready supply of vulnerable workers - many of them migrant labourers who end up being easily exploited.

Current safety and labour standards in the sector include: [ILO's Work in Fishing Convention \(No. 188\)](#), the [International Maritime Organization \(IMO\)'s Torremolinos Protocol](#) and the [IMO's Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel \(STCW-F\)](#). According to the ILO¹, with the exception of the (STCW-F), to March 2013 none of the binding legal instruments were in force.

Why is forced labour in fisheries an issue for business?

Forced labour violates international human rights norms and laws, often defies international labour standards and regularly involves corruption (particularly in the fisheries sector). Business should undertake due diligence to eliminate the risk of forced labour and human trafficking in their operations, including in fishing and through their supply chain, and ensure their business operations are conducted in a responsible manner.

How can business engage?

- Raise awareness of the informal recruitment industry to promote responsible recruitment practices and work towards the establishment of legally-regulated agencies to mitigate the risk of labour exploitation.
- Lobby governments to improve laws and regulations, take part in community activities and contribute to awareness-raising campaigns.
- Consider strengthening your policy commitment to forced labour and human trafficking in your code of conduct by integrating provisions addressed to vulnerable workers/locations in your business operations and supply chain.
- Seek advice from national and international business and employers' organisations, participate in peer activities and forums in the sector, form partnerships and support anti-trafficking projects.
- Train internally to be able to understand, identify and prevent cases of human trafficking in business operations and in relationships with suppliers.
- Take part in multistakeholder initiatives such as [the Marine Stewardship Council](#) to develop and implement sustainable fishing, auditing and verification practices in partnership.

¹ Please see ILO Report [Caught at sea. Forced labour and trafficking in fisheries, 2013](#)

What is the IOE position on the matter?

The IOE is committed to providing clear guidance to members with regard to the different forms forced labour may take in the modern global economy, the ways it can be identified and the remedial action that can be taken by business.

Forced labour is no longer considered a legal issue only for States; it also concerns the private sector and presents **significant risk for employers** - not only for small enterprises on the margins of the formal economy in developing countries, but also for multinational enterprises with complex supply chains and outsourcing operations.

How is the IOE engaging?

The IOE provides guidance, together with examples of good business practice and advice on remediation, via:

- A Handbook for Employers and Business in collaboration with the ILO (currently being updated): *Combating Forced Labour. A Handbook for Employers and Business*, 2008, www.ioe-emp.org. and in particular its sector specific booklet *Addressing risks of forced labour in Fisheries* (2014).
- An IOE Position Paper on Forced Labour for Member Federations: *Forced Labour. Why it is an issue for Employers*, 2010, www.ioe-emp.org
- The IOE participation in the Expert ILO Tripartite consultations on forced labour and human trafficking in the fisheries sector to develop joint strategies for the effective prevention and abolition of forced labour and human trafficking in the sector. Please see conclusions in Annex IV of ILO Report *Caught at sea. Forced labour and trafficking in fisheries*, 2013.

At the global level, the IOE supports the adoption of the Work in Fishing Convention (No. 188) and its Recommendation (No. 199) and is of the view that because of the difficulties some countries may experience in the ratification of C188, some key elements of this convention (provisions concerning crew list, a copy of which remains ashore, medical certificate and signed work agreement) could be treated in isolation from the Convention and translated into national legislation as practical tools against forced labour in the fishing sector. The IOE equally supports the ILO Conventions on forced labour (Nos. 29 & 105) and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow up, which includes the abolition of forced labour in its four core labour standards and is addressed to all ILO member States, including flag and port States, to respect and realise even when they have not ratified the relevant Conventions.

The IOE is committed to a human rights approach and engages with relevant global actors such as the [ILO Global Alliance against Forced Labour](#), [UN GIFT](#), and the [OSCE Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons](#) to build partnerships, develop strategies and participate in global policy framework discussions to advance the international business agenda against human trafficking.

For more information and answers to your questions

Please visit the [Forced Labour](#) section of our website www.ioe-emp.org. If you do not find what you are looking for, please contact IOE Adviser on forced labour [Amelia Espejo](#) or IOE Adviser [Jean Dejardin](#) on sectors.