



# ► Promising practices for fair recruitment

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## Uzbekistan - Feedback mechanism on forced labour and other labour rights violations

### Key points

- The Feedback Mechanism (FBM) provides the citizens of Uzbekistan with an anonymous channel for addressing complaints and queries related to forced labour and other labour rights violations during the cotton harvest and beyond
- It has improved law enforcement and protection for victims of labour rights violations
- In the 2015 cotton harvest, 14% of all pickers were forcefully recruited; by 2020, this indicator had decreased to 4%
- The FBM on forced labour and labour rights in cotton production was extended to other sectors in 2017, including construction, infrastructure works, and the agricultural sector

### Focus

**FRI pillar:** Improving laws, policies and enforcement

**Sector:** Cotton

**Country:** Uzbekistan

**Responsible organizations:** Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) and Federation of Trade Unions (FTUU).

Collaborating partners: ILO, World Bank

## Description of the practice

Almost two million people are recruited every year by authorities and heads of institutions/organizations to pick cotton for the annual cotton harvest in Uzbekistan, making it the world's largest recruitment effort. The feedback mechanism (FBM) enabled the government and social partners to accelerate the fight against child and forced labour during the cotton production cycle.

The FBM on forced labour and other labour rights violations was put in place by the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) and Federation of Trade Unions (FTUU) in 2016.

The FBM has had different channels, such as telephone hotlines, a chatbot deployed via the messenger application Telegram, and email. Once the complaint or query is received, it is passed on to the labour inspectors and/or lawyers of the FTUU who immediately investigate the case.

The ILO has provided support to the FBM since its inception, through delivering trainings on forced labour that improved the capacities of trade union lawyers and labour inspectors to identify and investigate cases.



Cotton picker in Uzbekistan. © J.Astrup

In addition, for several years in a row, the ILO has supported awareness raising campaigns to publicise the FBM channels and promote its efficiency in preventing labour rights violations and enabling redress in cases of abuses.

The ILO has also ensured an annual assessment of the functioning of the FBM and offered its recommendations for improvement. This support has been provided amid a comprehensive process of reforms, initiated by the Government and social partners, for the elimination and prevention of forced labour.

## Proof of impact/progress

- More than 13,500 people have been protected from forced labour and other labour rights violations;
- 520 public officials and heads of entities have been sanctioned for applying forced labour and other labour rights abuses during the annual cotton harvests;
- Awareness raising materials about the FBM produced and disseminated: more than 500,000 posters, flyers, leaflets, brochures, banners, video spots, telegram bots, etc.;
- 730 lawyers and labour inspectors were trained on how to identify and respond to cases of forced labour identified through the FBM.

## Other promising features

### Participation and representation

According to the 2020 third party monitoring report, sixty-five percent (65%) of pickers are women, and the vast majority are from rural areas.

### Rights-based

The FBM has offered the first ever channel for people to complain or submit queries on child labour, forced labour and other labour rights related abuses in the cotton production. With the increased use of the FBM, the law enforcement improved: more people were protected and offenders sanctioned.

### Sustainability

Although initiated with ILO and World Bank support, the FBM continues to function to this day. The MELR and FTUU regularly allocate funds for its maintenance and development. It is viewed as an important channel for receiving direct feedback from citizens on measures and reforms and is informing the state policies on labour issues and human and labour rights.

### Innovative

This FBM was the first ever channel in Uzbekistan where forced pickers could complain about their situation. In the beginning, people had little trust in the FBM and in the institutions promoting it (the MELR and FTUU). However, this started to change when the FBM started to yield results.

### Replicability

In addition to the FBM being extended to other sectors, all government structures and the President Office in Uzbekistan have adopted FBMs, inspired from the FBM on forced labour and labour rights.



Stakeholder consultation on the feedback mechanism on forced labour and other labour rights violations. © J.Astrup

## Resources

The report, [2020 third-party monitoring of child labour and forced labour during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan](#), is based on more than 9,000 unaccompanied and unannounced interviews with a representative sample of the country's 1.8 million cotton pickers.

### Five years of the Fair Recruitment Initiative

- This promising practice is part of a series, and results from a stocktaking exercise undertaken five years after the launch of the Fair Recruitment Initiative (FRI).
- The FRI aims to ensure that recruitment practices nationally and across borders are grounded in labour standards, developed through social dialogue, ensure gender equality. Specifically, they:
  1. Are transparent and effectively regulated, monitored, and enforced;
  2. Protect all workers' rights, including fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW), and prevent human trafficking and forced labour; and
  3. Efficiently inform and respond to employment policies and labour market needs, including for recovery and resilience.

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