



DECENT WORK INDICATORS: Towards better Statistics on Forced Labour and Human Trafficking

Statistics are the ideas and techniques that can be used to convert numbers into useful information. Statistics on forced labour and human trafficking are essential for at least two reasons. First, they provide more objective information. Humans cannot, with their own eyes and ears, perceive more than a small, unrandom sample of any human state of affairs. Secondly, and even more importantly, good statistics are needed to formulate good policies and monitor progress towards the objective of decent work for all.

The ILO Global Estimate

In 2005, the ILO estimated for the first time in its history that at least 12.3 million people are in forced labour around the world, and that 2.4 million are victims of human trafficking. The estimate, published in the report called *A Global Alliance against Forced Labour*¹, indicated that a majority of 80 percent of contemporary forced labour is in the private economy, while the remaining 20 percent is imposed by State authorities. Forced commercial sexual exploitation affects 1.4 million people - mostly girls and women.

Asia has most victims of forced labour (9.5 million), followed by Latin America (1.3 million), Sub-Saharan Africa (660'000), the group of industrial countries (360'000), Middle East and North Africa (260'000) and the group of transition countries (210'000).

Because robust country-figures were not available, the estimate was constructed with a second-best

methodology involving a double sampling of reported cases. Technical ILO publications have described in details:

- The statistical methodology and the data sources used to compute the ILO global estimate²;
- How the methodology compares with the approach used by the U.S. Government to estimate that every year 600'000 to 800'000 people are trafficked across borders³;
- How the global estimate was used to calculate that forced labour and services generate 44 billion USD in illicit global annual profits⁴.

The ILO methodology and its assumption were also examined at length in a report by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO)⁵, which called for better data and statistics on human trafficking.

From Global to National Estimates

The ILO global estimate has been largely quoted in the media and has helped to raise global awareness. The global figures have also been used to draw attention to the urgency of developing more reliable statistics at the national level, providing guidance to policy-makers as well as benchmarks for measuring progress over time.

In light of this priority, the ILO special action programme to combat forced labour (SAP-FL) has now embarked on country-level work. Activities in a limited number of countries have started after an initial expert meeting in Geneva in December 2006 to review and assess possible methodologies (see the summary report of this meeting⁶). These activities are currently implemented with the financial support of the UK (DFID) and Netherlands.

Technical Challenges

Estimating forced labour and human trafficking in a given area or country is difficult under the best of circumstances. The methodological challenges have been identified and discussed in at least three ILO working papers⁷. They include two major problems:

- How best to obtain a representative sample that can be used for extrapolation
- How best to obtain accurate information from the people who are sampled

As shown in ILO working papers, there are many lessons that can be drawn from the experience with estimating other similarly "hard-to-reach" populations. Ultimately, however, the choice of methodology must reflect local circumstances. Specificity can only be achieved with detailed information on the sites in which the data collection takes place and on how much (or how little) is already known about the problem.

Working in Partnerships

Although there is no single statistical methodology to estimate all the different forms of forced labour and human trafficking in any single country - or even to estimate similar forms of forced labour in different countries - the ILO and its partners follow a similar process for generating national estimates in all pilot countries.

This process has several steps:

Step 1: Work with national stakeholders to map the types of forced labour and human trafficking which exist in different regions of the country and identify as clearly as possible the problems to be estimated.

Step 2: Design a list of indicators of forced labour and human trafficking customized to the local situation and consistent with ILO Convention No.29 and 105 as well as with other international and national legislation.

Step 3: Review existing national data and agree jointly with stakeholders on a methodology so as to ensure broad national ownership and future acceptance of the results.

Step 4: Implement the identified methodology in partnership with governments, social partners, national statistical offices or other appropriate institutions.

This process emphasizes national ownership and seeks to promote sustainability, so that in the future national estimates can be replicated by national stakeholders without ILO involvement. At the country level, SAP-FL always seeks to work jointly with other ILO units, such as the ILO Bureau of Statistics, the International Migration programme (MIGRANT) or the statistical programme of the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC/SIMPOC).

Experience to Date

Country-level work has been initiated in a small number of countries. The present section provides an overview of what has been done in these countries and what results are expected. These current pilot activities must be seen as "work in progress", designed to test promising methodological avenues. Experience so far shows that producing national estimates is not only a technical challenge, but also a political process. The desire to obtain rapid results should not override considerations of national ownership.

Africa

Niger

In Niger, SAP-FL is working with national stakeholders and with the national statistical office (INS) to estimate the magnitude of forced labour and discrimination against workers of slave-descent. Many of these people work long hours as domestics or agricultural workers in exchange for food and a place to stay. They are not hidden from the public eye and work in accessible places.

In November 2006, the national commission against forced labour and discrimination officially requested the assistance of the national statistical office (INS), and on January 24-25, 2007, members of the commission and the INS jointly identified the problem to be estimated. Following this meeting, it was agreed that forced labour could be estimated through a national household survey.

Since then, the INS and the ILO have met in April 2007 to plan the survey, which could be done jointly with the next child labour survey in Niger. For the survey to be representative and allow for extrapolation at national level, it needs to include at least 4'000 randomly chosen households. To obtain more robust estimates, regions with higher suspected incidence of forced labour will be over-sampled.

It is expected that the survey will be implemented by the INS, with ILO support, in September 2007 and that Niger's first ever national estimate of the incidence of forced labour will be available in November 2007. If successful, the methodology could also later be replicated on demand in other countries such as Mauritania where similar problems exist.

Zambia

Whereas forced labour against people of slave-descent continues to attract attention in a limited number of countries, very little is known about the existence of coercion, debt bondage, wage retentions and the role of intermediaries in other African countries' labour markets.

To find out more about such practices, SAP-FL and Zambia's Central Statistical Office (CSO) are now working together to include a module with a limited number of questions on forced labour into the country's next labour force survey (LFS). These questions have been discussed and finalised between March and July 2007.

The labour force survey will cover 8'000 households, sampled randomly. It is expected that the survey will be implemented by the CSO in September 2007, with first results available in October/November 2007.

Europe

Moldova

In Moldova, labour migration is considered one of the main socio-economic problems. The country is also well known as a place of origin for the international trafficking of people into sexual and labour exploitation. According to an ILO research paper, returned migrants have reported forced labour abroad in construction, agriculture, catering, domestic work, personal care work and other activities. Many had their identity documents confiscated.

In March 2007, a roundtable on data gathering and statistics was held with representatives of the Government, the international community and national civil society. Further to this meeting, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) proposed to incorporate the subject of forced labour and trafficking into its household survey on Labour Migration, which will be attached to the broader Labour Force Survey. A technical meeting was held between the NBS and the ILO in July 2007 on the design of the survey's questionnaire.

It is expected that the survey will be tested in October 2007 on 750 households who had reported at least one migrant worker during the previous rounds of the Labour Force Survey. It is then expected that the survey, which has a sample of about 12'000 households, will be implemented in April 2008. Final results will be available in October 2008.

Other countries

Consultations are still ongoing in a number of possible pilot countries in Latin America and Asia, including Brazil, Bolivia, Thailand and Pakistan. SAP-FL welcomes also requests from other countries.

A Global Database

In addition to country-level technical cooperation, the ILO (SAP-FL) continues to maintain a global database related to:

- Country-level information, such as ratified ILO Conventions and other international instruments, national action plans, routes of trafficking, and reported forms of forced labour.
- Trends in media reporting about different forms of forced labour and human trafficking, in different geographical regions.

Georgia

Georgia is another transition country whose citizens are exposed to international trafficking abroad. People from Georgia are trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation in Russia, Turkey, Greece and other European countries. Georgia's National Plan of Action against trafficking calls for better quantitative surveys.

In June 2007, a national workshop on data collection for trafficking in human beings was held in Tbilisi, with the participation of all national stakeholders. This workshop was jointly organised by the ILO and the OSCE in the framework of the EC/TACIS project which covers also Armenia and Azerbaijan.

On the margins of this workshop a technical meeting was held with the Department of Statistics (DS) of the Ministry of Economic Development, which agreed to study the feasibility of including questions on forced labour and trafficking into a labour migration module attached to the next labour Force Survey.

It is expected that the ILO and the DS will jointly develop and test the questionnaire in September/October 2007, and that the survey could be implemented in January 2008. Results would be available mid-2008.

Other Related Activities

- The ILO (SAP-FL) participates in the European Commission (EC) sub-group of experts on the policy needs for data on trafficking in human beings.
- The ILO (SAP-FL) collaborates with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on developing new methods to measure and track human trafficking. This work is part of the UN.GIFT Research Initiative.

Contacts

For further information on country-level estimates of forced labour and human trafficking or on the ILO global database please write to:

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1. http://www.ilo.org/sapfl/Informationresources/ILOPublications/lang--en/docName--WCMS_081882/index.htm
2. Belser, de Cock, Mehran, "ILO Minimum Estimate of Forced Labour in the World", ILO, Geneva, 2005
3. Kutnick, Belser, and Danailova-Trainor, "Methodologies for global and national estimation of human trafficking victims: current and future approaches", DECLARATION Working Paper 29, ILO, 2005
4. Belser, "Forced Labour and Human Trafficking: Estimating the Profits", DECLARATION Working Paper 42, ILO, 2005
5. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06825.pdf>
6. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_081981.pdf
7. In addition to footnote 4, see also De Cock, "Directions for national and international data collection on forced labour", DECLARATION Working paper no 30, ILO, 2007. , as well as Berk, "Some Thoughts on Estimating the Size of Hidden Populations: the Special Case of Forced Labor", ILO, forthcoming.