Regional brief for Europe and Central Asia

2017 GLOBAL ESTIMATES OF MODERN SLAVERY AND CHILD LABOUR

Introduction

In 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 17 interrelated goals and 169 associated targets to guide global development. SDG Target 8.7 calls on governments 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.

The 2016 Global Estimates of Child Labour[1] and 2016 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery[2] chart how far we must still travel to honour these commitments. This brief summarises key results from the global estimates for the Europe and Central Asia region. It also addresses main regional policy priorities on the road to the 2025 date for ending child labour and the 2030 date for eradicating modern slavery.

Child labour: main facts and challenges

Table 1

Key statistics: child labour

Number (000s) and percentage of children in child labour and hazardous work, by age range, Europe and Central Asia region, 2016

		Children in child labour		Children in hazardous work	
		Number (000s)	%	Number (000s)	%
World		151 622	9.6	72 525	4.6
Europe and Central Asia, total		5 534	4.1	5 349	4.0
Europe and Central Asia, age	5-11	19 84	2.7	1 931	2.6
	12-14	1 652	5.5	1 520	5.0
	15-17	1 898	6.2	1 898	6.2

The global estimates indicate that 4.1 per cent of all children in the Europe and Central Asia region are involved in child labour, the second lowest rate in the world (Fig. 1). Almost all of these children are in hazardous work, the second highest prevalence rate in the world in hazardous work, only following Africa's. In absolute terms, 5.5 million Europe and Central Asia children are in child labour and 5.3 million are in hazardous work.

Figure 1

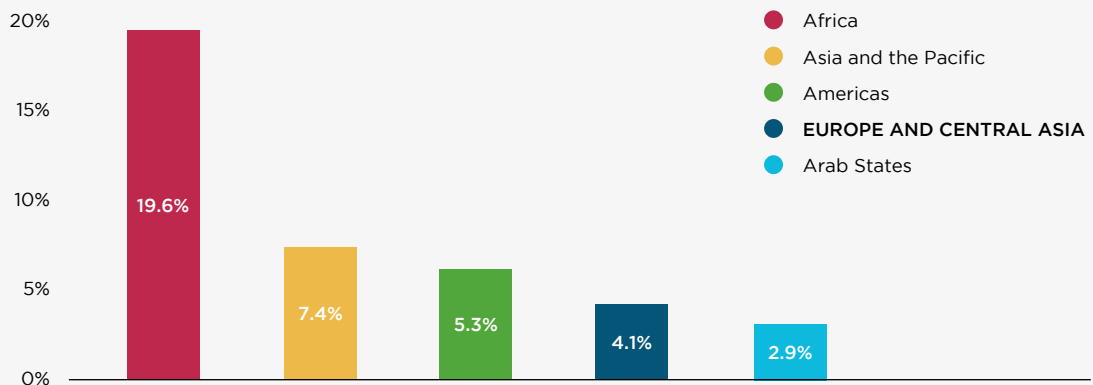**Percentage of children in child labour, 5-17 years age group, by region, 2016**
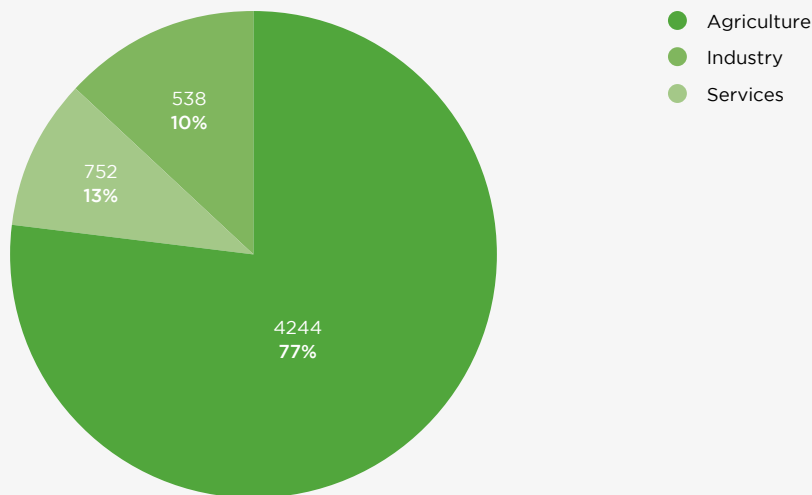

Legend:
- Africa
- Asia and the Pacific
- Americas
- **EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**
- Arab States

Values: Africa 19.6%, Asia and the Pacific 7.4%, Americas 5.3%, Europe and Central Asia 4.1%, Arab States 2.9%

Figure 2

Percentage distribution and number (000s) of children in child labour, by branch of economic activity, Europe and Central Asia, 2016

Legend:
- Agriculture
- Industry
- Services

Values: 4244 77% (Agriculture), 752 13% (Industry), 538 10% (Services)

The estimates also show:

Agriculture predominates. Agriculture accounts for 77 per cent of all child labour and for 4.2 million children in absolute terms. Child labour in agriculture relates primarily to subsistence and commercial farming and livestock herding; most is unpaid and takes place within the family unit. Of the remaining children in child labour, 752 thousand (14 per cent) are found in the services sector and 538 thousand (10 per cent) are found in industry.

Young children form the largest group of those in child labour. The age breakdown of children in child labour indicate that 36 per cent of all those in child labour are in the 5–11 years age bracket, 30 per cent are aged 12–14 years and 34 per cent fall into the 15–17 years age range. This age profile of child labour in Europe and Central Asia is "older" than elsewhere. Worldwide, for example, 5-11 year-olds constitute 48 per cent

of all those in child labour. Hazardous work is more prevalent in the 15-17 age group (6.2 per cent of children in relevant age). This is the age group with higher participation in industry among children in child labour (27.5 per cent).

Figure 3

Percentage distribution and number (000s) of children in child labour, by age group, Europe and Central Asia, 2016

Legend:
- 5-11
- 12-14
- 15-17

1984 36%
1898 34%
1652 30%
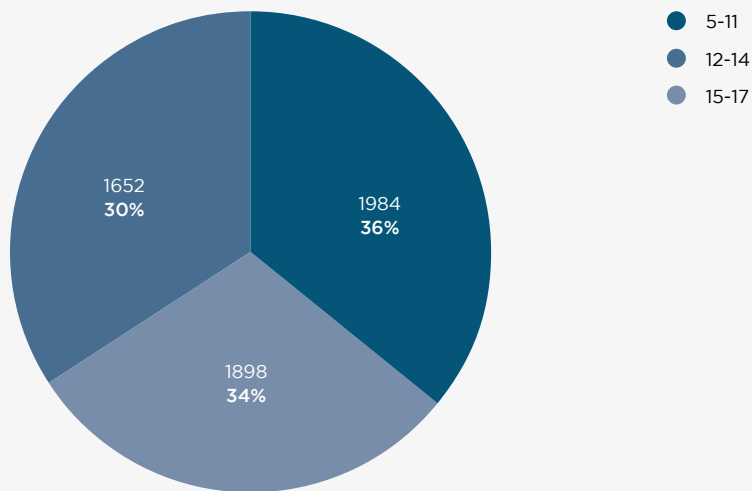
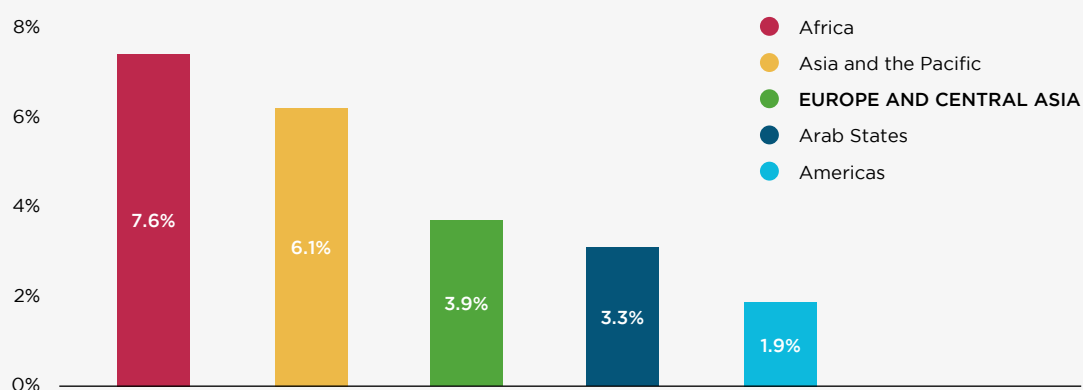# Modern slavery: main facts and challenges

Table 2

Key statistics: modern slavery

Number (000s) and prevalence (per 1,000) of persons in modern slavery, by age, sex and category, Europe and Central Asia region, 2016

			(a) **Forced labour**	(b) **Forced marriage**	(a&b) **MODERN SLAVERY**	
World		No. (000s) Prev. (‰)	24 851 3.4	15 442 2.1	40 293 5.4	
Europe and Central Asia, total		No. (000s) Prev. (‰)	3 250 3.6	340 0.4	3 590 3.9	
Europe and Central Asia, age	Children	No. (000s) Prev. (‰)	608 3.1	4 0.0	612 3.2	
	Adults	No. (000s) Prev. (‰)	2 647 3.7	345 0.5	2 992 4.2	
Europe and Central Asia, sex	Male	No. (000s) Prev. (‰)	1 175 2.7	0 0.0	1 175 2.7	
	Female	No. (000s) Prev. (‰)	2 078 4.4	349 0.7	2 427 5.2	

Figure 4

Prevalence of modern slavery, by region, 2016

- Africa
- Asia and the Pacific
- **EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**
- Arab States
- Americas

Africa: 7.6%
Asia and the Pacific: 6.1%
Europe and Central Asia: 3.9%
Arab States: 3.3%
Americas: 1.9%

The global estimates for 2016 indicate that there were a total of about 3.6 million victims of modern slavery[3] in Europe and Central Asia on any given day in 2016. This

translates into a prevalence of 3.9 per 1,000 persons, highest of any region in the world (Figure 4). And, due to limitations of the methodology and data,[4] these figures are considered to be underestimates.

Figure 5

Percentage share and number (000s) in forced labour and forced marriage, Europe and Central Asia, 2016
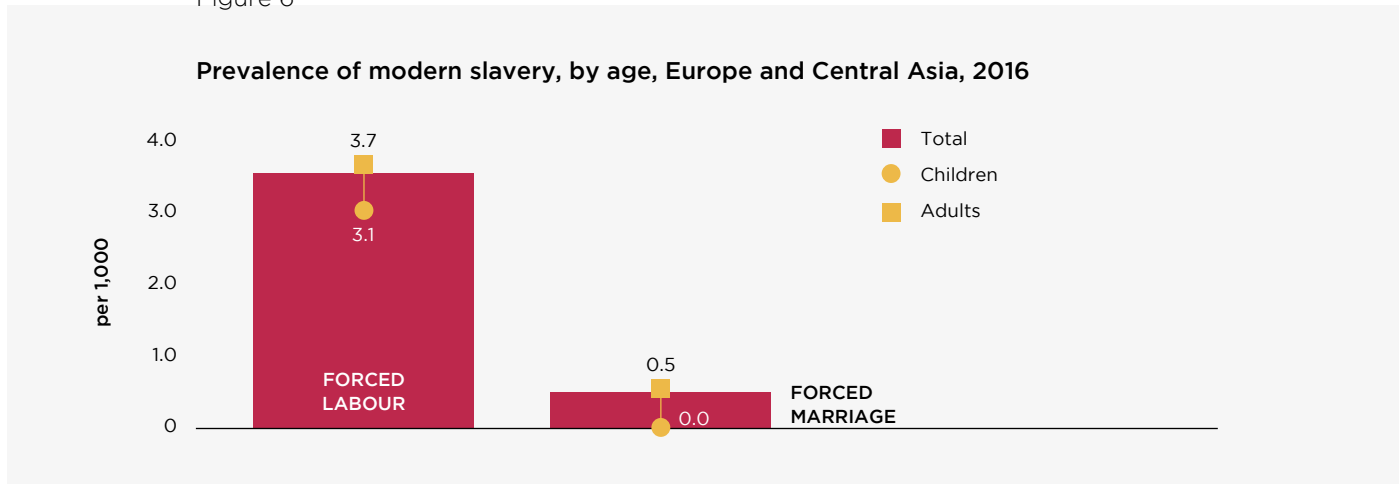

- Forced labour
- Forced marriage

340
9%

3 250
91%
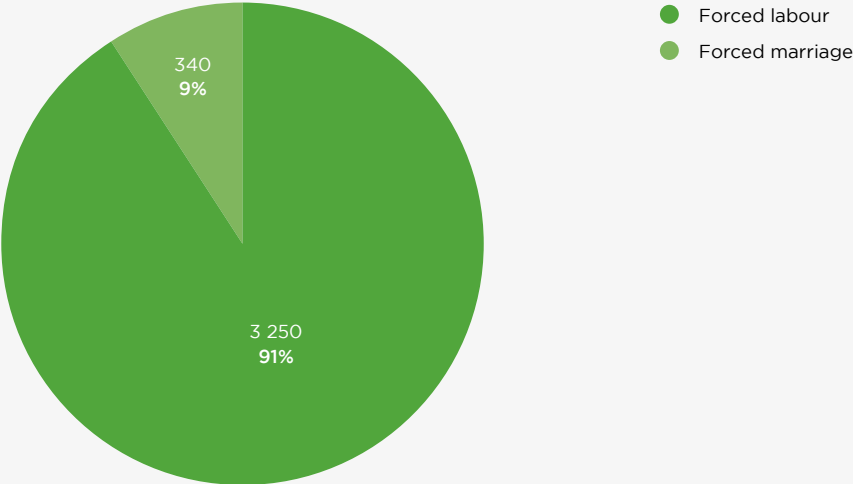
The estimates also show:

The largest share of those in modern slavery were victims of forced labour. About 91 per cent of the total were victims of forced labour[5] and 9 per cent were victims of forced marriage (Figure 5). The prevalence of forced marriage was the lowest of all the world's regions. Forced labour, in turn, for the purposes of the estimates covered three areas: forced labour imposed by private actors; forced sexual exploitation; and State-imposed forced labour.

Many forced labour victims were in situations of debt bondage. Debt bondage is defined for the estimates as being forced to work to repay a debt and not being able to leave, or being forced to work and not being able to leave because of a debt. About one-third (36 per cent) of all victims of forced labour imposed by private actors in the Europe and Central Asia region were in debt bondage. The share was substantially higher among men (54 per cent) than women (21 per cent). The share was especially high among those forced to work in agriculture, domestic work, or manufacturing. It is likely that these figures reflect a mix of cases of both traditional forms of bonded labour and newer forms of debt bondage where recruitment fees and agency charges become the debt that binds.

Modern slavery affected children as well as adults. One of the most alarming findings of the modern slavery estimates was the extent to which this crime affected children. About 600 thousand of the victims in the Europe and Central Asia region were children below the age of 18 years. Children were especially likely to be victims of forced labour; a total of 600 thousand children were living in a situation of forced marriage in 2016, translating into a prevalence rate of 3.1 per 1,000 children (Fig. 6).

Figure 6

Prevalence of modern slavery, by age, Europe and Central Asia, 2016

The prevalence of modern slavery was much higher for females. There were 5.2 female victims per 1,000 compared to 2.7 male victims per 1,000. This overall gender gap was present both in the measurement of forced marriage and forced labour. There were also large gender-based differences in the means of coercion in forced labour; sexual violence, for example, was limited almost exclusively to female victims

Figure 7

Prevalence of modern slavery, by sex, Europe and Central Asia, 2016
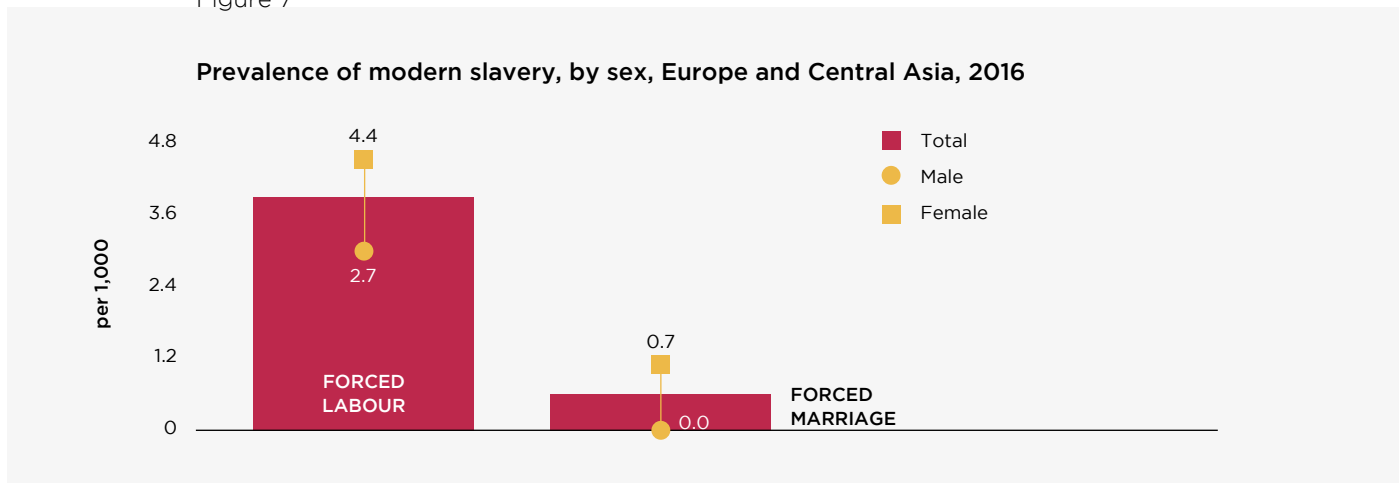
Policy priorities on the road to 2025 and 2030

Ending child labour and modern slavery will require a multi-faceted response that addresses the array of forces – economic, social, cultural and legal – that contribute to vulnerability and enable abuses. There can be no one-size-fits-all solutions; responses need to be adapted to the very diverse environments in which child labour and modern slavery still occurs. It is nonetheless possible to identify some overarching regional policy priorities emerging from the global estimates and a growing body of research and practical experience.

Expanding access to free, quality public education. Education helps break intergenerational cycles of poverty and provides a worthwhile alternative to child labour. Evidence also suggests that, alongside the development and enforcement of criminal laws, the promotion of the right to education helps to prevent forced marriage, particularly in the poorer countries of Central Asia. Despite significant progress in these countries, many obstacles remain to ensuring that all children are able to attend school at least until they reach the minimum age for work (which should be consistent with the end of compulsory education). There is an ongoing need for investment in what we know works in getting children out of work and into the classroom – and keeping them there. This includes a mix of measures, such as abolishing school fees and avoiding additional costs incurred for books, school uniforms and transport. It also includes providing cash transfers to poor families or universal non-means-tested benefits, linked, for example, to birth registration, to help offset the indirect cost of children's time in school. The quality concerns that affect many schools in the region must also be addressed to keep children in school and ensure successful educational outcomes.

Extending social protection systems, including floors. Vulnerabilities associated with poverty, sudden job loss, natural disasters, economic crisis and other shocks can force households to resort to child labour as a coping mechanism. These shocks can also play a central role in pushing people into modern slavery.[6] Social protection is critical to mitigating these vulnerabilities. This points to the continued need to build social protection systems, including floors, to help prevent vulnerable households from resorting to child labour and vulnerable people from being caught up in modern slavery. Cash transfer schemes, public employment programmes, health protection, maternity protection, disability benefits, unemployment protection and income security in old age are all relevant in this regard, within a well-designed social security system. These schemes can also play an important role in facilitating the recovery of victims of modern slavery and preventing their re-victimization.

Ensuring fair and effective migration governance. There is a great deal on intra-regional migration; from the poorer Central Asian economies to Russia and from Eastern Europe to the developed countries of the west. The unique vulnerabilities faced by migrants should be addressed through broader reforms to migration governance designed to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks and social costs of migration. The benefits of migration, particularly through the receipt of remittances, can lead to better education for children and a move away from child labour. Ensuring security *en route* is critical as this a time of maximum vulnerability. The compliance of host governments

with international conventions governing the rights of migrants generally, and child migrants in particular, is necessary for protecting migrants at their destination.

Protecting vulnerable populations in situations of conflict and disaster. A number of countries in the region are affected by conflict and disaster. These fragile situations – characterized by income shocks, a breakdown in formal and family social support networks, displacement and disruptions in basic services provision – create an elevated risk of child labour and modern slavery. Indeed, the global estimates indicate that child labour is significantly higher in countries affected by armed conflict than global averages. There are also numerous cases of modern slavery used as a tactic of warfare; armed groups, for example, employing sexual violence and forced marriage as a means to subjugate a population. Prevention and protection measures addressing child labour and modern slavery should be systematically included during all phases of humanitarian action. Tools are needed to rapidly assess risks of child labour and modern slavery in order to guide responses.

Addressing debt bondage. The global estimates reveal a very high prevalence of debt bondage as a means of coercion in the region, particularly as it applies to migrant workers from –though not exclusively- Central Asia, many of whom find themselves in some form of debt bondage. This finding makes clear that prevention and protection policies must also tackle the roots of debt bondage and bonded labour systems. Forms of debt bondage, often related to shortcomings in migration governance, are also gaining in importance. These include cases of debt bondage arising from excessive fees charged by unregulated manpower, recruitment and brokering agencies. These more recent forms of debt bondage need to be addressed as part of broader reforms aimed at ensuring fair and effective migration governance, as discussed above.

Strengthening legislation and enforcement. The establishment of a legal architecture consistent with international legal standards relating to modern slavery and child labour remains a key priority. This includes legislation dealing with forced labour imposed by the state, which the global estimates show still occurs in the region. It is also essential that relevant legislation, including labour laws, apply to all workers, including those in the informal economy, where most forced labour and child labour occurs and where 60-80 per cent of the Central Asian region's workforce is found. But laws alone are insufficient if not accompanied by adequate enforcement. Despite the enactment of criminal laws on forced labour, slavery and human trafficking in many countries of the region, statistics indicate the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions is very small relative to the scale of the overall problem. This means that criminal law enforcement needs to be intensified, particularly in response to cases of very severe abuse. It is equally important to strengthen the administration of labour justice, to apply both sanctions for the offenders and remedies for the victims. Systems of inspection also need to be strengthened, to enable effective victim identification in the sectors of the economy where modern slavery and child labour occur.

Building the evidence base. While the regional estimates for Europe and Central Asia are a major step forward, our information on modern slavery in the region is far from complete. Modern slavery affecting children, including forced recruitment by armed groups, commercial sexual exploitation and child marriage, is an especially important region-wide knowledge gap. There is also a need to more effectively capture specific sub-populations such as adult victims of forced sexual exploitation and victims in conflict contexts. The regional-level information provided by the global estimates needs to be augmented by further research and data collection efforts on all dimensions of modern slavery at the *country level* to generate the country-specific evidence necessary for informed national policy responses. In the areas of both child labour modern slavery, there is also an ongoing need for information about the impact of policies and interventions in order to guide policy choices.

End notes

1. *Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016*. International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, 2017.

2. *Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage*. International Labour Organization (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation, Geneva, 2017.

3. In the context of this report, modern slavery covers a set of specific legal concepts including forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, slavery and slavery like practices, and human trafficking. Although modern slavery is not defined in law, it is used an umbrella term that focuses attention on commonalities across these legal concepts. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power. In order to make this set of complex legal concepts measurable, the Global Estimates focus on two key forms of modern slavery: forced labour and forced marriage.

4. For a detailed discussion of this point, see *Methodology of the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage*, International Labour Organization (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation, Geneva, 2017.

5. Forced labour is defined by ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) as "all work or service that is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily." The global estimates of forced labour is based on three main categories of forced labour defined as follows: forced labour imposed by private agents for labour exploitation, including bonded labour, forced domestic work, and work imposed in the context of slavery or vestiges of slavery; forced sexual exploitation of adults, imposed by private agents for commercial sexual exploitation, and all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children; and State-imposed force labour, including work exacted by the public authorities, military or paramilitary, compulsory participation in public works, and forced prison labour.

6. The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) provides a key framework for ensuring social protection for all.

JOINING FORCES
GLOBALLY TO END
FORCED LABOUR,
MODERN SLAVERY,
HUMAN TRAFFICKING
AND CHILD LABOUR

8.7
ALLIANCE