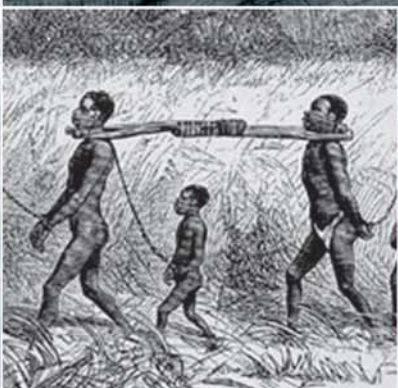
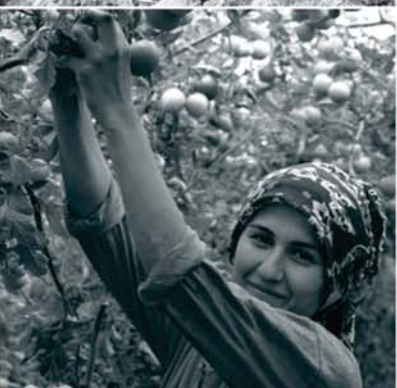




# Slave and forced labour in the twenty-first century

A TUC Fact File and activities pack for trade union tutors

FEBRUARY 2007





# Acknowledgements

## **The TUC would like to acknowledge:**

- The financial contribution provided by the Department for International Development towards the development of this Fact File.
- Irene Magrath, Trade Union Educator, who drew up the File.
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The international trade union movement's key aim is "decent work for all" – work in dignity, security and, above all, freedom. Forced labour, a term that encompasses all modern forms of slavery, is the total antithesis of decent work.

200 years after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, many believe slavery is consigned to the dustbin of history. But the reality is very different. The International Labour Organisation estimates that in 2007 some 12 million people – including some in Britain – remain victims of forced labour, trapped in traditional and modern forms of slavery including debt bondage, trafficking and exploitative prison labour. Most are women and children.

The Burmese military regime, the junta, uses forced labour as a pillar of its economy. Other states, including industrialised countries, systematically exploit forced prison labour. Trafficking in people is bigger business than narcotics, with millions of workers coerced or duped into work without rights and proper pay.

Slavery, forced labour and global poverty are trade union issues. Global economic and social injustice condemns two billion working people to live on less than \$2 a day. Those from the poorest, most excluded and unprotected communities are at greatest risk.

In Britain, forced labour is reported in many sectors and it is hard to forget how in 2004, Chinese cockle pickers in Morecambe Bay paid with their lives for a failure of British law and practice. Although the gangmaster legislation followed, there is still more to do. As well as improve the law, trade unions can contribute by strengthening our ranks in those sectors where it is present. In this way, today as historically, slaves and forced labourers can continue to be agents of their own liberation.

To mark the bicentenary, the TUC and trade unionists all over Britain will be holding conferences, seminars and other events to learn lessons from the past and present. This focus on slavery also offers an opportunity to reflect on its legacy and that of poverty and underdevelopment in all its forms.

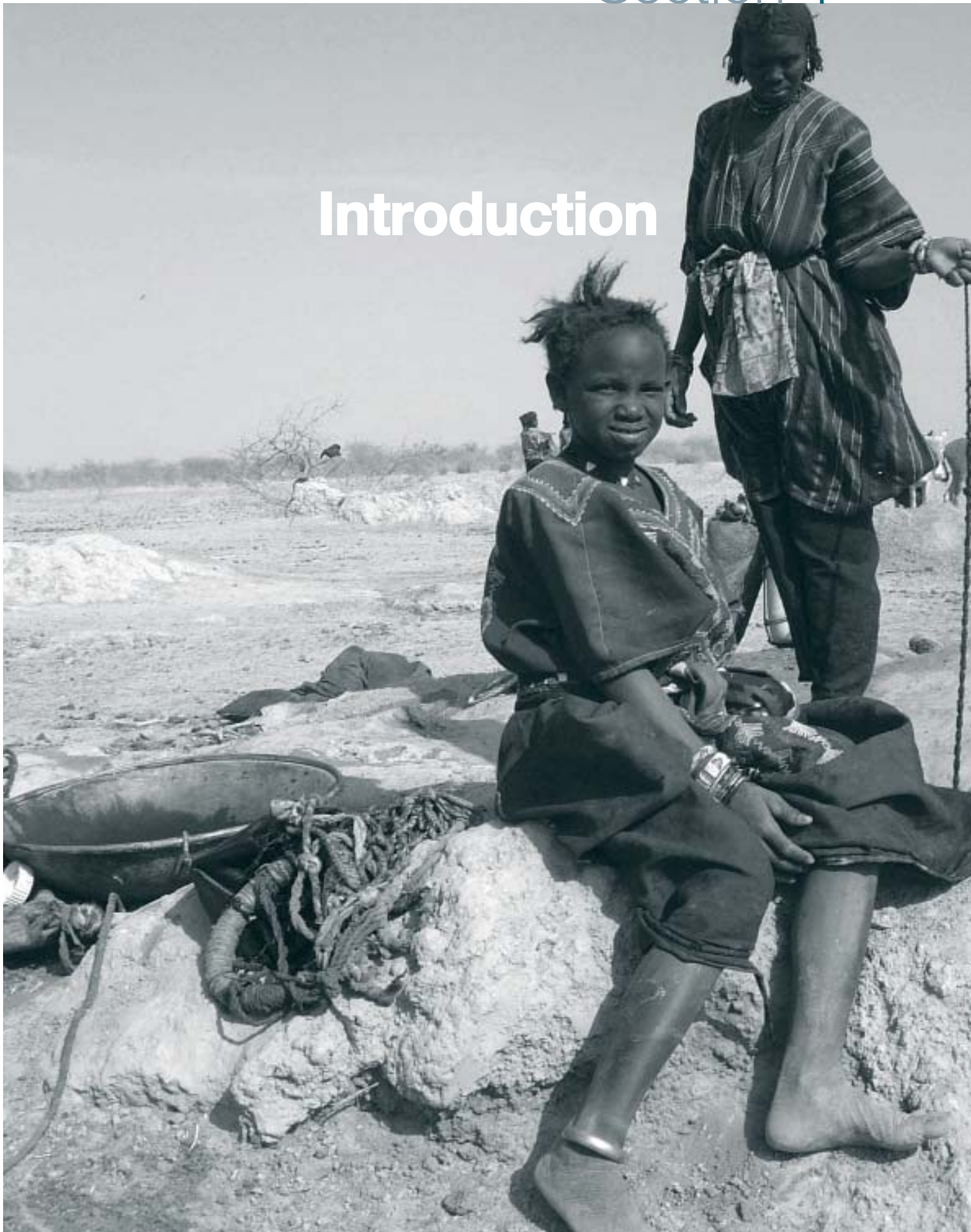
This fact file, the fifth Development Education resource produced by the TUC, is designed to complement earlier fact files on refugees and migrant workers, trade and trade unions and the updated international health and safety workbook, all freely available on the TUC website at [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk).

I hope you find this a useful resource that aids your learning about your part in our common cause: the campaign for global justice and decent work for all.

**Brendan Barber**  
General Secretary, TUC

*Opposite page:*  
Niger Slave girl at well. The anklet denotes her status as slave caste.  
Photo: Romana Cacchioli/  
Anti-Slavery International

# Introduction



## Who this Fact File is for and why

This is the fourth in a series of Fact Files designed to help trade union education tutors build awareness and activism among reps on issues related to international development. It is produced in response to tutors' feedback following earlier work on international development. Tutors reported that the effectiveness of teaching and learning on the topic could be enhanced by support in the form of:

- back-up materials on international development issues that could easily be incorporated into a range of existing courses
- short course material on international development that is related to the role of the workplace rep
- teaching material and tips on dispelling myths about migrant workers
- practical guidance and materials on dealing with racism and xenophobia.

The three Fact Files *Refugees and Migrant Workers*, *International Development and the Role of Trade Unions* and *Trade and Trade Unions*, and the revised and updated *Trade Unions and International Health and Safety workbook* have started that process of support. This Fact File may be used in conjunction with them.

## The TUC/DfID Strategic Grant Agreement

Following initial work on poverty reduction sponsored by the Department for International Development (DFID) in 2003, the TUC continued work on international development in the three year **Strategic Grant Agreement**. The success of this in promoting a better informed UK trade union movement, able to make a more effective strategic contribution to international development, means that the DFID has significantly increased its support for TUC work in this area in a new **Strategic Framework Partnership Arrangement**, which will run until 2009.

In doing so the DFID confirms the role of trade union reps as opinion formers in the workplace and the wider community, and recognises the positive contribution of trade unions to international development. This makes the partnership significant not only in facilitating the production of material such as this Fact File (which can act as an important awareness raising tool), but also in helping reps develop and act on their interest in global issues. The Fact File is produced with a view to wider use in the union movement – for example, by union international, education and other officers for use in the TUC's DFID sponsored International Development Learning Fund, as an aid to branch development and tutor training.

## What the Fact File contains

This Fact File contains a series of Fact Sheets that provide a context and an overview on the forms and shadow of slave labour in the twenty-first century and, importantly, what we can do about it. References and details of further information are provided to help readers pursue their interest and follow up new questions that arise as a result of discussion and work on the subject areas.

The file, *Slave and Forced Labour in the Twenty First Century – an issue for trade unions everywhere*, deals with the development of slavery and forced labour (including Atlantic slavery), the different forms that forced labour takes today and some of the actions that we can take to face up to forced labour. Related activities for use with reps are included.

The File is designed to:

- help trade union education tutors, and through them, union reps, to understand the interconnection between the lives of working people in the developed and developing world
- enable readers to make informed links between slave or forced labour and its effects
- enable tutors and union officers to feel confident in tackling related issues in the classroom or other learning forums
- build interest, understanding and activism among trade unionists
- provide help and information for union officers developing their own work in this area.

## Using the Fact File and its activities

Tutors and union officers should use this Fact File in whatever way best suits their circumstances, whether as an information base and quick reference guide, a source of easily copied fact sheets for reps, to complement other activities, discussions and courses, or as a short course in itself. Hopefully reps will welcome the opportunity to develop an informed opinion on issues affecting the rights and wellbeing of working people everywhere.

Reading through all the Fact Sheets will enable you to help reps understand and take action on international issues.

For those working on TUC programmes, the following page offers some suggestions as to how the activities may be used or integrated into other courses though clearly opportunities will arise at other points on courses for drawing on these Fact File materials.



# Section 1

<b>Union Reps 1</b>		
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Use of Fact File</b>
P1.12	Trade Unions in the Workplace	Draw on the Fact Sheets to emphasise the importance of trade unions in helping all workers to know their rights and the implications for forced labour. Setting the Record Straight could be used as follow-up.
P3.9	Taking Up Issues Through the Union	Use the Fact Sheets to raise the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery. Use the Workplace Activity and follow-on to identify an issue for taking through the union.
P3.11 P3.13	Wider Trade Union Issues	Suggest forced labour as a topical campaign. Reps could use the Fact Sheets for research. Follow up with the Workplace Report on agreements and a review of whether agreements discriminate against temporary/migrant workers, reinforcing dangers of forced labour situations.
P3.9	What is discrimination?	You can use the Fact Sheets to highlight the way in which discrimination against 'flexible' labour may make workers vulnerable to forced labour situations.

<b>Stepping Up</b>		
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Use of Fact File</b>
The TU Context p25 & p26	WA – Finding out about union links/campaigns	Suggest forced labour as a topical campaign.
	Union links/campaigns	Use the topic of forced labour and fact sheets as a focus for research and report.
Planning, Organising and Campaigning p8, P14	Building Participation	Draw on the Fact Sheets to raise the question of forced labour and the implications for participation (or lack of it). Pose the question of how the views of such marginalised workers may be identified and represented.
	Planning a Campaign	Forced labour may present a suitable campaigning issue. The Workplace Activity on auditing awareness could be used to identify precise focus.
Rights At Work p8	Researching Employment Rights	You could suggest a research focus and report on ILO standards concerning forced labour.

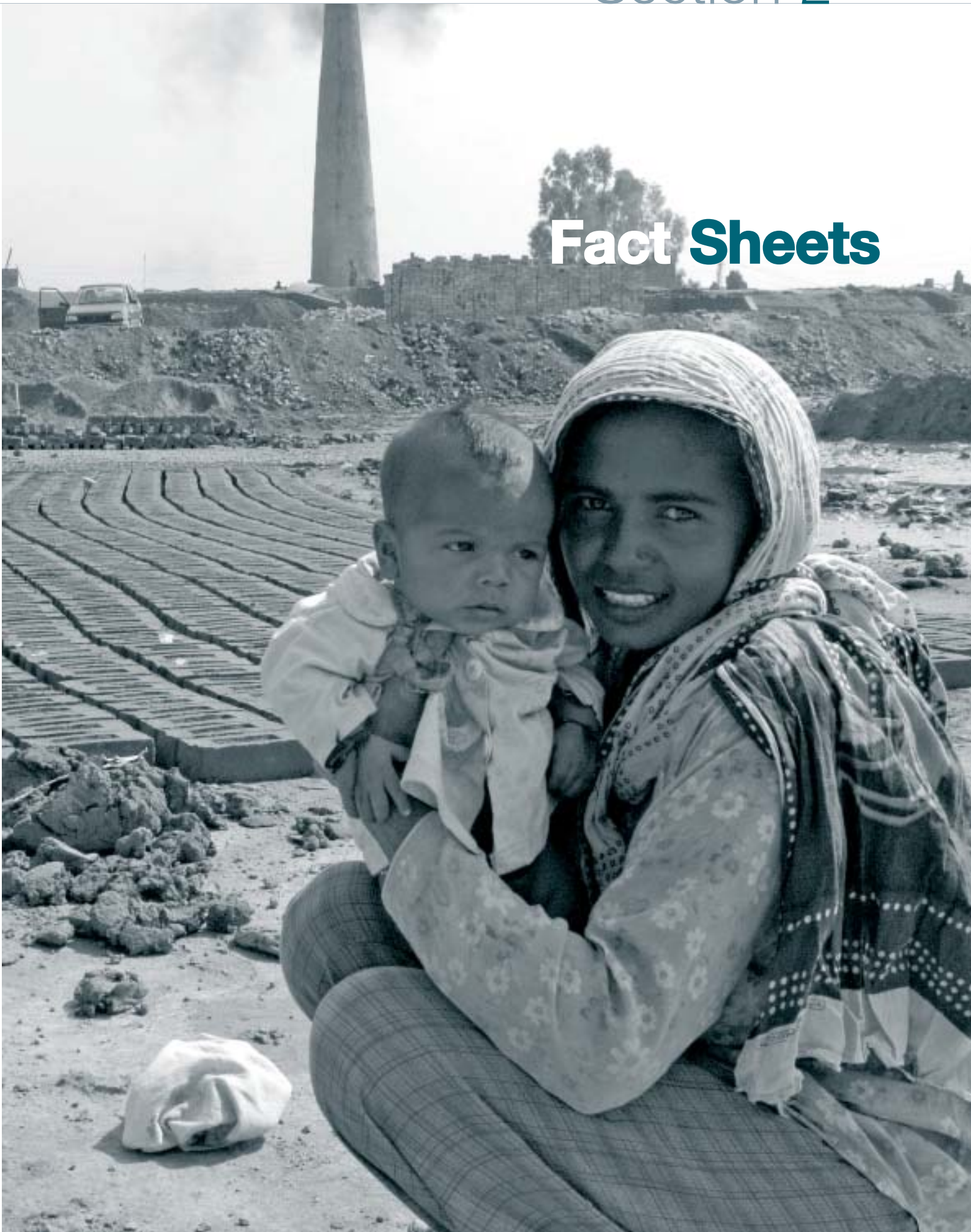
<b>Certificate in Employment Law</b>		
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Use of Fact File</b>
Sec BP29	The Role Of International Organisations	Use the Fact Sheets as additional research material and the issue of forced labour as a concrete example.
Sec Gp6	Planning Your Research Project	The legal position of forced labour is a suitable topic for research that can be backed up by the Fact Sheets.

<b>Certificate in Contemporary Trade Unionism</b>		
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Use of Fact File</b>
Sec BP29	Getting the Message Across	Suggest forced/trafficked labour as an appropriate topic, and use Fact Sheets (especially Setting the Record Straight activity) to develop appropriate responses.
Sec Fp6	Planning Your Research Project	Aspects of the forced labour situation and the role of trade unions may be suggested as a suitable research topic.

*Opposite page:*  
Hundreds of families with young children work and live in these brickyards near Islamabad, Pakistan – often under conditions of bonded labour. Photo: Crozet M., ILO 2005

## Section 2

# Fact Sheets





## Slave and forced labour in the twenty-first century: an issue for trade unions everywhere – context and overview

### Slave and forced labour

Slave labour is a phrase that conjures up an image of outdated, barbaric practices. We may still hear the phrase being used in everyday conversation to emphasise that work being demanded is unfair and an abuse of power. Beyond that the notion of slave labour is usually associated with centuries past, separated from us by years of economic and social progress.

Yet the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century by the countries most heavily involved in practising it by no means eliminated slave labour. Although the Atlantic slave trade and the volume of slaves was substantially reduced, the use of forced labour has continued until today as a means of getting something for practically nothing. It is practised by people who use their economic, social and/or political power to make others work for them, using threats or intimidation to maintain the relationship of subjugation. Then as now, forced labourers remain in that relationship through a mixture of fear, inability to break free, and absence of challenge to that situation from governments and/or the community at large.

### Slave and forced labour in the twenty-first century

Slave and forced labour today takes many forms – some covered by the cloak of ‘tradition’, others obscured by the apparent freedom of individuals who are locked into working relationships that are involuntary, degrading and maintained by threat. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that more than 12 million people are working in conditions of forced labour – in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, including the UK.

The vast majority of people working in forced conditions live in the developing world, but forced labour is also present in the rich, industrialised countries of North America and Europe. It may not be as immediately visible as we imagine the Atlantic slave trade was, but its existence and impact are still recognisable. Although some forced labour may exist in clandestine conditions, it is hard to conceive of 12 million slave or forced labourers not being visible to us in some way in our ‘globalised’ world.

*Above*  
Angolan forced labourers working in cocoa plantations on the islands of Sao Tome and Principe. Between 1876 and 1915 the Portuguese used a system of indentured labour to transport some 97,000 Angolans to work on cocoa plantations on the islands of Sao Tome and Principe.  
Photo: Anti-Slavery International



## Fact Sheets

2007 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the 1807 legislation that abolished trading slaves in the UK, a point many of us have come to see as the beginning of the end of slavery. But the persistence of slavery in the modern world shows that the end of slavery is still a long way off. Economic change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, slave rebellions and anti-slavery campaigners led to an examination of Atlantic slavery, exposing its deficiencies and the sheer inhumanity of it as a system. 2007 provides a new focal point for examining why slave or forced labour (accepted worldwide as an outdated, barbaric practise) continues to occupy at least 12 million people – some closer to home than we might like to think.

### An issue for trade unions everywhere

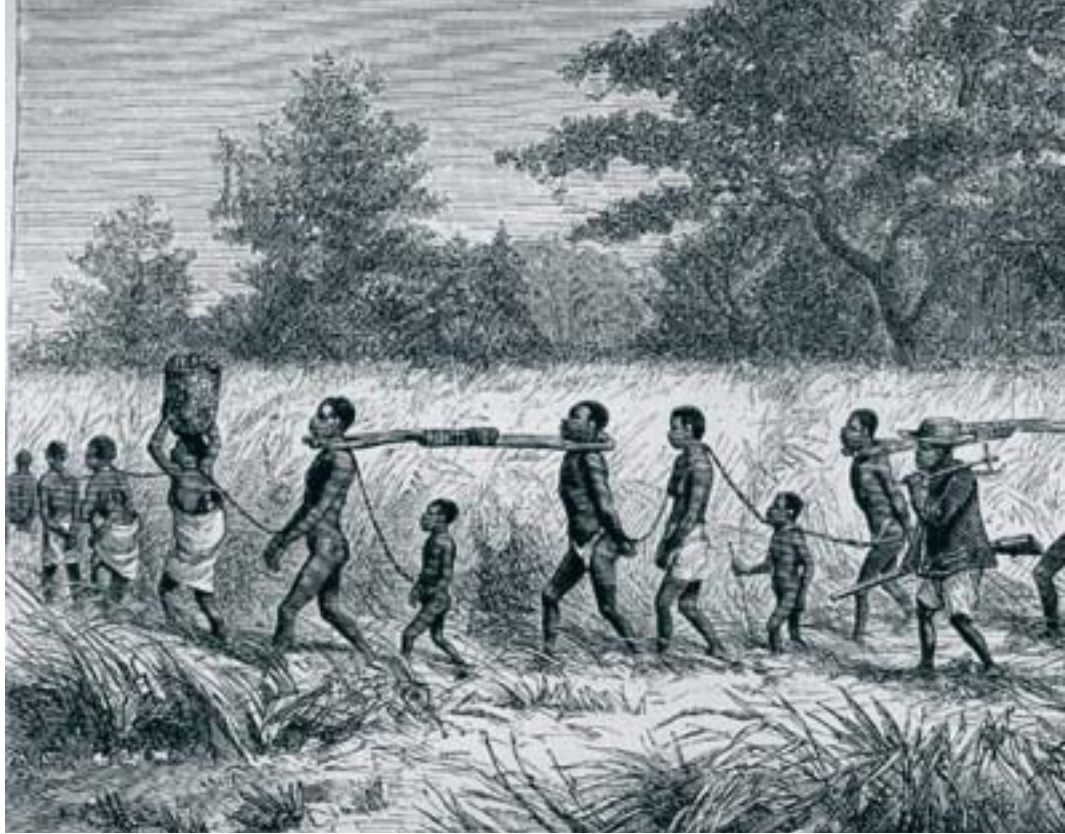
Looking at the problem of slave or forced labour as a global issue is key to our understanding of the general principles underlying it and the factors that allow its continued existence. Slave or forced labour is not, and never has been, a problem peculiar to one part of the world. It is an abuse of our rights as human beings – whether it is practised in remotes areas of the Amazon or East Anglia, or even nearer to home in the factories and services with which we are more familiar.

The reality is that slave or forced labour – so closely tied to poverty and the low wage/poor conditions spiral – affects us all. Trade unionists and abolitionists of all kinds have worked hard to reach the current international recognition that slave and forced labour is not acceptable in the modern world. In 1998 employers, governments and workers organisations that make up the ILO adopted the **Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**. This incorporates the principles of the ILO Core Conventions on forced and child labour. It says that certain rights – known as **fundamental rights at work** – are universal human rights which apply to all workers, no matter how rich or poor a country is. They are:

- freedom to form and join a union and bargain collectively
- freedom from forced or compulsory labour
- freedom from child labour
- freedom from discrimination at work.

These are so basic that everyone should know and feel confident in communicating and claiming them.





## Perspectives on slave and forced labour

### What is 'slave labour'?

Defining slave labour is not a simple task. On the one hand powerful images of the slavery that existed two or three centuries ago suggest an absolute and clear condition of the slave as a chattel<sup>1</sup>, a possession to be bought, sold, used or abused at will. On the other hand, reports of modern day forced labour, and its association with children weaving carpets to help pay off family debts, or domestic servants working long hours for little pay, suggest a freedom outside of work that latter day slaves would not have known. But slave labour has long existed in many different forms, and continues to do so in today's world – adapted, renamed, reinvented or simply conducted through age old traditions. In the twenty-first century the term most commonly used to describe slave labour is **forced labour**<sup>2</sup>. The ILO describes the common elements of forced labour as being work or service that is exacted under a penalty, and is undertaken involuntarily.

### What's in a name?

- Aristotle called slaves 'human instruments', signifying their use as tools
- Fifth-century Anglo-Saxons called their slaves 'Welshmen', after the people they captured
- The word 'slave' is adapted from Slav, originating from the time when the Germans supplied the slave markets of Europe with captured 'Slavs'.

see *New Internationalist*, No. 337, Aug 2001, [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org)

### How did it develop?

#### Slave labour and 'unfree' human beings

The practise of slavery can be traced back thousands of years to early civilizations. When rivalries between groups resulted in warfare the defeated were often considered part of the booty and taken as slaves. In the fifth century BC Athens had more slaves than free citizens. Slave labour was work carried out by 'unfree' human beings.

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary, p. 27

<sup>2</sup> See Glossary, p. 27

## Fact Sheets

But ‘unfree’ human beings were not always a symbol of victory in conflict. Forced labour was a key part of the feudal system in all its worldwide variations, with labour tied to a lord or religious hierarchy and dues exacted by direct labour or tribute. In the area of the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century, Hindu, Islamic and South East Asian legal codes detailed slavery resulting from capture in battle, in return for food, through purchase, through inheritance, being given away by parents, not paying a fine or tribute and failure to meet debts. In eighteenth century England families claiming poor relief could be obliged to give up their children for ‘apprenticeships’ with employers in industries as diverse as textiles and fishing. Caught escapees from Grimsby in Britain were chained at the neck and marched to Lincoln prison, where they served a sentence before being returned to their trawler-owning masters.

In short, slave labour took many different forms and was exacted in most sectors, including agriculture, building, workshops, or household service. ‘Slaves’ could be ‘apprentices’, labourers, secretaries, prostitutes, or gladiators. Egyptians, Romans, Chinese, Vikings and Europeans; Jews, Christians, Hindus and Muslims all took part – for individual, military, state or private productive purposes.

### ‘Dehumanised’ slave labour

From the 1500s onwards, the system of slave labour that Europeans developed was new in scale, in its operation, in some of the ideas used to justify it and, above all, in its impact. Britain was at the forefront of the Atlantic slave trade, as key practitioner and proponent, then later as an opponent.

The Atlantic slave trade emerged from the erosion of the feudal system in Europe. The growth of capitalist farmers and industrialists, with fewer people tied to the land, created a growing market for goods of all kinds (particularly in Britain) that could be purchased. The potential for profits this offered encouraged merchant adventurers to do whatever they could to meet the demand for products.

Initial enslavement of indigenous peoples by Portuguese and Spanish colonisers in the Americas proved inadequate to fuel the significant increases in production of raw materials available there. The relative isolation of American Indians made them prone to disease and sustained revolt. Instead, slaves were bought in Africa and sold for plantation production of sugar, cotton, coffee, rice, indigo and tobacco in the Americas and the Caribbean. These products in turn were transported for sale in Britain and other European countries, completing the triangle of what became known as the Atlantic slave trade.

### Black ‘gold’

The Ashanti people (their capital, Kumasi, is in modern Ghana) had a long tradition of domestic slavery. But gold was the main commodity for selling. With the arrival of Europeans slaves displaced gold as the main commodity for trade. See more at: [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/9chapter2.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/9chapter2.shtml)

By 1600, 900,000 African slaves had been landed, and by 1810 an estimated 6.3 million – equivalent to almost two thirds of the population of Britain. In addition, unknown numbers died during transportation in brutal and degrading conditions. These slaves were treated less as ‘unfree’ human beings and more as cheap commodities – to be thrown overboard when found to be ‘defective’. Supporters justified the commerce with ideas ranging from religious notions of ‘civilizing savages’, ‘saving heathen souls’, to claims of not-quite-humanness, and ‘scientific’ explanations of racial inferiority. The ‘trade’ was so profitable that slaves become known as ‘black gold’. Merchants from most European countries competed (and frequently battled) for the trade. Rapidly industrialising Britain became the most predominant.

Despite a range of examples of the fact that black people were no different in capacity to any other people, the attribution and assumption of ‘inferior’ characteristics lodged firmly in the mindset of white Europeans and Americans. These mindsets passed from generation to generation, expressed in the attitudes and everyday practises of racism.

### Who benefited?

The brief sketch above indicates that the practice of slave labour has long historical roots that stretch across a broad range of societies, religions, countries and cultures. The possession of slaves or command of forced labour expressed a relationship of power – military, political, religious, social or economic. In many cases it was a mixture. Where war resulted in enslavement, to be on the winning side was the best guarantor of benefit. In feudal states, the benefits of forced labour resided with the nobility and religious classes, which was a question of birth.

In the Atlantic slave trade, European and colonial merchants, shipping agents, businesses servicing ships in places such as Liverpool and Bristol, plantation owners, investors, company officials, corrupt state officials and military all stood to gain from the lucrative exchange.

### Britain and slaving – some direct and indirect benefits

Three hundred years of trading in African slaves allowed Britain to become a world economic power and financed the Industrial Revolution. In fact, many high street banks and businesses, including Lloyds insurance market, Imperial Tobacco, the Midland Bank (now HSBC) and more, grew out of slave labour and slave dealing.

A great deal of British heritage and culture was built on the back of slave labour. Many stately homes were the glittering rewards of *nouveau riche* plantation millionaires. In slave trade towns such as Hull, Liverpool and Bristol, mansions testify to the slave-based wealth of their owners. Regions like Cumbria, not usually associated with slave wealth, were also sources of investment for plantation owners and merchant families as they ploughed their money into land or great country homes such as Storrs Hall near Windermere. Art collecting and ostentatious philanthropy both became ways in which slave dealers and exploiters of slave labour could buy their way into the aristocracy.

See [www.channel4.com/history/microsites/U/untold/programs/slave/slavef.html](http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/U/untold/programs/slave/slavef.html)

## Fact Sheets

The trading of slaves was of most immediate benefit to those involved in their buying and selling, and the involvement in this of Africans themselves is widely acknowledged. As in many other countries in 1500, Africa had its own slavery practices. European colonists encouraged chiefs and established slave traders to vastly increase their supplies in return for trinkets, alcohol, money and guns. In so doing the exchange created a class of wealthy and powerful merchants motivated by profit. This undoubtedly benefited some Africans, but the enduring effect on internal relationships, taken together with the broader legacy of Atlantic slavery (see below) perhaps makes discussion of how Africans 'benefited' somewhat inappropriate.

### An act of social violence

When one tries to measure the effect of European slave trading on the African continent, it is very essential to realise that one is measuring the effect of social violence rather than trade in any normal sense of the word.

Walter Rodney (1989) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, p104

### Wasn't it abolished?

The answer to the question "Wasn't slavery abolished?" has to be a clear 'yes' and 'no'. In the eighteenth century the Danes, Swedes and Dutch stopped trading slaves, and it was declared illegal in England and Scotland. The American Civil War was ultimately a conflict about whether there should be a system of chattel or free labour, and resulted in the abolition of slavery in the southern states. Slave trading by UK citizens was made illegal in 1807 and the importation of slaves into the US outlawed. But that did not stop slavery.

The use of slaves was central to the production, trade and profitability of raw materials such as sugar, cotton and tobacco. This trade was fundamental to the European and especially British economies – in terms of the supply of primary products for industry, the demand generated for shipping and manufactured goods in the colonies and New World, and in terms of the profits available for reinvestment. Merchants and plantation owners did not readily give up the slave option. In a Britain ruled in favour of (and largely by) those who owned it, where 1 in 3 men (no women) had the vote, the practical political commitment to end slavery was weak, in spite of the law.

Slavery and slavery-like practices continued fairly extensively throughout the nineteenth, into the twentieth and even twenty first century. In the US, plantation owners sought to replace slavery with 'free' contracts. Some ex-slaves moved on, but for those with nowhere else to go, poverty meant 'free' acceptance of whatever treatment was imposed under threat of being evicted. In the West Indies the decline in supply of African slaves led to extensive use of 'coolie' Indian labour - combining the notion of 'free' contracts with slave-like conditions.

Elsewhere too, outside the Atlantic slave system, slave practices continued. Some cases, such as the tradition in poor families of Hong Kong and Singapore of selling their daughters as servants for the period of their youth was taken up by abolitionist campaigners. But in many cases, slave labour remained - cloaked by tradition and ignorance, or clearly alive and thriving in the 'grey' areas of imposed 'free' contracts, and the menace of penalties if labour was refused.



## The legacy

Slave labour and its dehumanisation, as carried out for more than three centuries under the Atlantic slave trade, bequeathed a series of attitudes, relationships and concrete realities that are sometimes difficult to disentangle from other parts of our history. Key aspects of this legacy are:

- Slavery helped establish unequal trading relationships – successively maintained by commercial and military aggression, direct colonial rule, and, more recently, debt and unjust trade practices<sup>3</sup>.
- The persistent loss of millions of healthy, productive people adversely affected economic and social stability. The payment of muskets, cheap gin and trinkets to merchants and tribal leaders did not make for compensatory development.
- The above, together with the ‘divide and rule’ tactics practised by European traders and direct colonial rule<sup>4</sup> exacerbated internal violence and led African elites to depend on European armaments and favour European culture.
- The displacement of large numbers of African and Indian peoples to the Americas and the West Indies in particular.
- The long shadow of racism, affected through a widespread – sometimes blatant, sometimes subtle, sometimes unwitting – assumption that black people are somehow inferior and not quite capable of organising their own development<sup>5</sup> or taking on jobs with responsibility.

The more general legacy of the Atlantic slave system is that it affects perceptions of slavery today. For many of us ‘slavery’ evokes the notion of a dehumanised chattel, when in reality slave or forced labour has always taken, and continues to take, many different forms.

Slavery is not legal in any country. The more of us that know this the better. More than twelve million people need help in defending their right not to be slave labour.

<sup>3</sup> See TUC Fact File *International Development and the Trade Union Role*, [www.tuc.org.uk/extras/interTU.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/interTU.pdf) and *Trade and Trade Unions* [www.tuc.org.uk/extras/tdfactfile.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/tdfactfile.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See *Trade and Trade Unions* for further information.

<sup>5</sup> For guidance on how to respond to such views see TUC Fact File *Refugees and Migrant Workers* [www.tuc.org.uk/extras/factfileref.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/factfileref.pdf)



## Slave or forced labour today

### Recognising slave or forced labour

Although many workers may experience poor conditions and scant remuneration, slave or forced labour differs in that people are made to work against their will by the use of threats or intimidation. How this may occur is detailed below.

### Identifying forced labour in practice

#### Lack of consent to (involuntary nature of) work (the “route into” forced labour)

- Birth/descent into “slave” or bonded status
- Physical abduction or kidnapping
- Sale of person into the ownership of another
- Physical confinement in the work location – in prison or in private detention
- Psychological compulsion, i.e. an order to work, backed up by a credible threat of a penalty for non-compliance
- Induced indebtedness (by falsification of accounts, inflated prices, reduced value of goods or services produced, excessive interest charges, etc)
- Deception or false promises about types and terms of work
- Withholding and non-payment of wages
- Retention of identity documents or other valuable personal possessions

from ILO (2005) *A global alliance against forced labour. Global Report. www.ilo.org*

#### Menace of a penalty (the means of keeping someone in forced labour)

##### *Actual presence or credible threat of:*

- Physical violence against worker or family or close associates
- Sexual violence
- (Threat of) supernatural retaliation
- Imprisonment or other physical confinement
- Financial penalties
- Denunciation to authorities (police, immigration, etc.) and deportation
- Dismissal from current employment
- Exclusion from future employment
- Exclusion from community and social life
- Removal of rights or privileges
- Deprivation of food, shelter or other necessities
- Shift to even worse working conditions
- Loss of social status

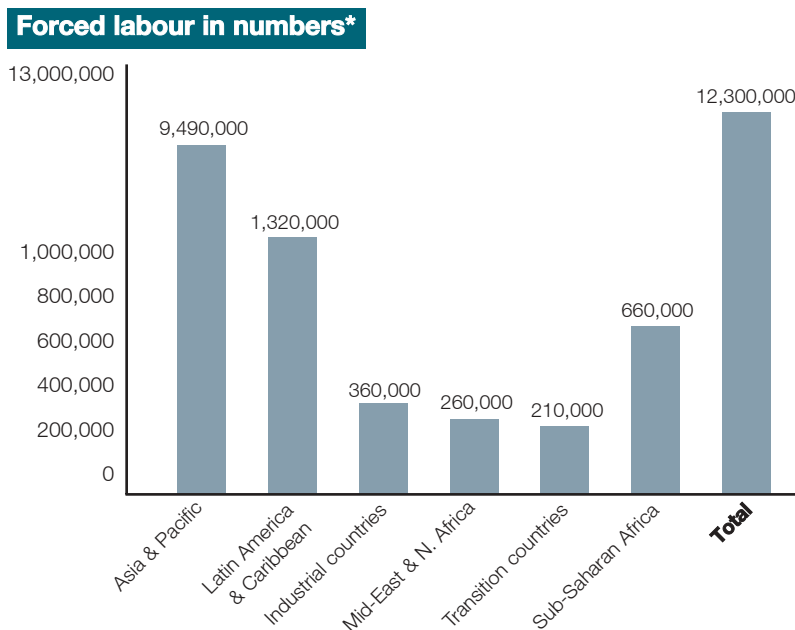
Above

Children in the village of Iskita, Tahoua region, have been dispatched to work in agriculture by the local religious leader (marabout) on a regular basis. Such cases suggest there is a need for some form of regulation to indicate what forms of income-generating activities are regarded as acceptable in each national context.  
Photo: Crozet M., Niger, ILO, 2003

This underlines the fact that in the modern world slave or forced labour may take many different forms. The more dominant forms tend not to be the chattel\* type of slave labour associated with ownership, but those such as bonded\* labour, trafficked\* migrant workers or women in early or forced marriage\*.

### Where slave or forced labour is practised

According to ILO estimates, slave or forced labour is most likely to be practised in the regions of Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, together with the transition and industrialised countries. In short – just about everywhere in the world. The more than 11 million forced labourers in Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean in part reflect the persistence of traditional forms of forced labour. But the incidence of such practices throughout the world also underlines the emergence of newer forms of forced labour linked to globalisation, migration and human trafficking.



\* Minimum estimate – this provides a lower limit of the total number of forced labour victims in the world. Source: ILO

### How slave or forced labour takes place

According to ILO research, the traditional 'chattel' form of slavery and state-sponsored forced labour is on the decline, while human trafficking and enforced labour by private agents is increasing. Although it is a severe violation of the individual's human rights and restriction of human freedom, slave or forced labour is often ill-defined in national legislation. Penalties are weak and often not enforced. Sometimes legislative discrimination between different kinds of workers makes it difficult for people to understand or activate their rights. It is worth noting that 56 per cent of those in forced labour are women and girls, and around 40-50 per cent of all forced labour is estimated to be children. Added to and aggravating the poverty factor, specific discriminatory patterns of exclusion, based on gender, ethnicity, religion and caste, are closely related to slave and forced labour issues.

\* See Glossary

## Fact sheets

### Private coercion

Coerced work in the private sector is widespread, and many of those trapped in forced labour find themselves in dirty, difficult and often dangerous jobs, in agriculture, construction, textiles, forced prostitution, and mining. They often end up working excessive hours, for low or no wages, without access to health care or social services.

[www.ilo.org/declaration](http://www.ilo.org/declaration)

### Chattel slavery

Chattel slavery involves using a person as if they were chattel or property – including sale and purchase, or inheritance of the status by the slave’s children. In most countries this is now looked upon with abhorrence, but anti-slavery organisations report its persistence. Sometimes, in countries such as Benin, Niger, Mali and Mauritania, the keeping of slaves in agricultural or remote areas is viewed as a traditional ‘right’ of one group or ethnicity over another.

### Mauritania – “I was born a slave”

“I don’t know how I became a slave”, a young Mauritanian told a BBC reporter, “I was just born one. My family were slaves.” In Mauritania slavery is a sensitive issue. The director of the government’s Human Rights Commission explains that no-one has been prosecuted for practising slavery as it no longer exists. But ex-slave, Boubakar Messaoud and other members of SOS Slaves have been imprisoned and harassed by the authorities for their anti-slavery campaigning.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4091579.stm>

### Child slavery

Of the 12.3 million forced labourers that the ILO has identified exist globally, 40-50 per cent are estimated to be children. Often the line of distinction between these and the millions of other children under 14 who work and are unable to protect themselves from horrific conditions or abuse, is a fine one. Some children are born into bondage, some abducted, and others are handed over to people who they believe will care for them in return for work. The choice for many poor families is between unremitting privation within the family or the hope of something better with others, perhaps in only slightly better circumstances than themselves.

### Trafficking children

According to Togo’s Ministry of Social Affairs 3,000 children were intercepted at the border in 2004 while being trafficked to Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon and Ghana. Each year tens of thousands of children as young as five years old are trafficked across West and Central Africa into a range of work, including as domestic workers, market sellers, in fishing, agriculture, begging and prostitution.

From *Reporter*, Oct 2005, [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)



## Bonded labour

Bonded labour or debt bonded labour is the most widely practised form of slave or forced labour. Extreme poverty often forces parents to offer themselves or their children as collateral against a loan. Although they are told they will only work until the debt is paid off, inflated interest rates or excessive charges for food or accommodation often make this impossible.

### Bonded labour and poverty

Poverty, and people prepared to exploit the desperation of others lies at the heart of bonded labour. Often without land or education, the need for cash just for daily survival forces people to sell their labour in exchange for a lump sum of money or a loan.

[www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)

## State forced labour

Around 20 per cent of forced labour is imposed by the State. This group includes people who are made to work for government labour mobilisation campaigns, through penal systems and by rebel or military groups. In some African countries both adults and children have been abducted or conscripted for use in armed conflict, though this is not necessarily the preserve of governments (rebel groups often do the same).

Some states make extensive use of prison labour for forced, exploitative production for private companies or for state purposes. In the Chinese Lao Gai jail alone in 2004 260,000 prisoners were sentenced to re-education through labour. In the US too the vast number of prisoners producing for private companies is considered forced labour under international conventions. Such forced labour falls into a difficult legal area, where prison labour may violate international law, but where states have not ratified the relevant convention, making it potentially legal under national law.

### The Burmese dictatorship and forced labour

In Burma, on any given day, several hundred thousand men, women, children and elderly people are forced to work against their will by the country's military rulers. Forced labour can include building army camps, roads, bridges, railroads, etc. Refusal to work may lead to being detained, tortured, raped or killed.

[www.icftu.org](http://www.icftu.org)

## Fact sheets

### Early or forced or marriage

In Ethiopia, and in parts of East, West and South Asia, marriage at the age of seven or eight is not uncommon. Exact figures of the number of early marriages are difficult to obtain as so many are unregistered and unofficial. Until recent years little attention has been given to early or forced marriage as a form of forced labour, despite the violation of human rights involved and its illegality in many of the countries where it is practised.

#### Force of 'tradition'

Many Bangladeshi girls are married soon after puberty, partly to free their parents from an economic burden and partly to protect the girls' sexual purity. Where a girl's family is very poor or she has lost her parents, she may be married as a third or fourth wife to a much older man, to fulfil the role of sexual and domestic servant.

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

### Trafficked labour

The ILO estimates that at any one time 2.5 million men, women and children are victims of trafficking. Trafficking occurs when people agree to take up work and are then tricked or forced into working against their will. A range of methods are used to prevent them leaving – freedom of movement can be restricted, passports or identity documents may be taken, they may be beaten or their families threatened, or they may be obliged to work to pay back a debt. Sometimes workers agree to take up work that is offered (which may be legal or illegal and in a different country), but may then be sold, tricked or coerced into working under conditions not agreed to.

Often associated with forced prostitution, trafficking encompasses most areas of economic activity, including, for example, rubber production in Brazil, textiles in Samoa, forced domestic service in Africa and construction, cleaning and fruit-picking in Britain. As the demand for 'flexible' labour and sub-contracting systems drive wages and conditions down new opportunities are provided for contractors, sub-contractors and the plain ruthless to take advantage of people desperate to find work.

#### Trafficking – a global practice

Three hundred Vietnamese and Chinese workers paid labour offices the equivalent of around £5,000 for what they thought would be "well paid work" in a textile factory on the island of Samoa, Neil Kearney of the textile, garment and leather workers' global union the ITGLWF reported. The reality turned out to be starvation wages, squalid conditions, threats, guards and razor wire to prevent escapes. In the UK, three nationals of South Asian countries who entered on legal permits to work for an employer in the manufacturing industry were threatened with violence when they refused to accept their working conditions. They were required to work 12 hour shifts from Monday to Friday and a nine hour shift at the weekend followed every day by cleaning the employer's private residence. Their employer refused to negotiate and threatened to deport them. When they eventually managed to escape from the employer he contacted the Immigration Service to inform them that they were in the UK without work permits.

See [www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org) and [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

**Why slave or forced labour continues**

In international law forced labour is proscribed as a violation of fundamental human rights. This is reiterated in a range of international and national laws concerning forced and trafficked labour, migrant and child labour. Yet the ability of workers not to become slave or forced labour is variously undermined by the vulnerability of poor people in the labour market, the impunity of those who use forced or slave labour and their continuing ability to benefit from it.

It has been estimated that trafficking alone generates around £17 billion in annual profits. In terms of the forced labour that goes hand in hand with early or forced marriage, the issue of 'benefit' is much more diffused – though no less a violation of human rights. In all cases, poverty helps maintain a steady supply of potential victims, aided and abetted by ignorance of rights and the lack of enforcement of them.



## Liberating slave or forced labour – what we can do

### Recognising the nature of the problem

Looking at the problem of slave or forced labour as a global issue is key to our understanding of the general principles underlying it and the factors that allow its continued existence. Slave or forced labour is not, and never has been, a problem peculiar to one part of the world. It is an abuse of our rights as human beings – whether it is practised in remote areas of the Amazon or East Anglia, or even nearer to home in the factories and services with which we are more familiar.

The fact that there are at least 12 million slave or forced labourers in the world (and 27 million or more according to some estimates) is not something that should overwhelm us. Twelve million people are not easily or necessarily hidden. Many are simply not seen. Their circumstances go unrecognised, their abuse is not sufficiently protested or not effectively acted upon. The situation for slave or forced labour is therefore, in short, neither inevitable nor hopeless.

### Face up to forced labour

“For the most part, the numbers of people trapped in forced labour situations are not so large as to make its eradication a distant dream.”

ILO, 2005 Global Report, p82

*Above*

In 2006, women from the Mauritanian national trade union centre, CGTM, recruited and organised 5,000 women in the informal economy. They now aim to consolidate this achievement with projects capable of improving the day-to-day lives of these women who are among Mauritania’s poorest and most exploited workers. Photo: ICFTU 2006



### Getting and sharing information

Most people in the UK today would be shocked to know just how many are in slave or forced labour situations. The food, clothing and other products produced by such labour finds its way into our factories, markets and shops – perhaps through the sub-sub-contracting in supply chains. Forced labour sometimes touches us even more directly through local cleaning, care or construction work. Today people working in forced labour rarely wear chains and they may not be easily recognised. They may be obscured by distance or ‘tradition’, unrecognisable under their temporary, ‘flexible’ or migrant labour tag, or tagged as ‘illegal workers’ and accorded little importance.

The reality is that slave or forced labour – so closely tied to poverty and the low wage/poor conditions spiral – affects us all. Trade unionists and abolitionists of all kinds have worked hard to reach the current international recognition that slave and forced labour is not acceptable in the modern world. In 1998 employers, governments and workers organisations that make up the International Labour Organisation adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This incorporates the principles of the ILO core Conventions on forced and child labour. It says that certain rights – known as fundamental rights at work – are universal human rights which apply to all workers, no matter how rich or poor a country is. They are:

- freedom to form and join a union and bargain collectively
- freedom from forced or compulsory labour
- freedom from child labour
- freedom from discrimination at work.

These rights are so basic everyone should know and feel confident in communicating and claiming them.

#### Mapping labour rights

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights has produced individual maps for each of the Core Labour Standards. They present a visual image of levels of support for them in individual countries. They are a good way to raise awareness.

[www.ictur.labournet.org/maps.htm](http://www.ictur.labournet.org/maps.htm)

### Taking positive action

The interests of trade unionists everywhere in joining together to improve lives and livelihoods makes the issue of slave and forced labour one of key concern. It presents a scenario where our most basic rights and values as workers are trampled on, and all that is left is involuntary labour under threat or intimidation. For the most part slave or forced labour takes place precisely in those sectors where workers are poorest and trade unions least strong, including agriculture, domestic work, catering, building, informal, ‘flexible’, temporary and contract work. But trade unions are strong at speaking out on behalf of working people, building links between them, in building pressure for changes in policy and in enforcing policy.

## Fact Sheets

The ILO action plan to combat forced labour focuses on five key elements:

- better understanding of the problem
- heightened global awareness
- stronger legal and policy frameworks
- stronger institutional structures, and
- special projects to help workers in forced labour situations

In Nepal, for example, the ILO has been working since late 2001 to achieve the sustainable release from bonded labour of an estimated 75,000 men, women and children. To date some 650 women and men have received skills training, while more than 6,000 children have been mainstreamed into formal school education. The significant rise in the number of forced labourers rescued in Brazil in 2002-2003 (at almost 5,000; up from 1,174 workers in 2001), for example, has been credited largely to an increase in inspections of agriculture estates where forced labour is suspected.

At an international level too, global unions, such as the builders' [www.bwint.org](http://www.bwint.org), are campaigning against forced child labour, and on getting migrant workers the same rights as nationals. These kinds of actions can only succeed on the basis of widespread awareness and support, which in turn can be generated and sustained by national and local campaigns.

### Know and act on your union affiliations

Many unions affiliate to or otherwise support organisations that focus on particular aspects of human and labour rights. Through affiliation to the TUC unions support the work of Global March, an organisation that campaigns to mobilise worldwide efforts to protect and promote the rights of all children, to end the worst forms of child labour and child servitude. Suggestions for action range from publicising their activities with friends by mailing their web page to contributing to their e-newsletter.

Further information can be found at [www.globalmarch.org](http://www.globalmarch.org)

Individual unions are also affiliated to at least one of the Global Unions ([www.global-unions.org](http://www.global-unions.org)) which link with unions in the same sector in different countries, as well as other activist organisations. Check out your links and involvement with rights campaigns and think through what you can do at workplace level to promote campaigns. You can also put resolutions to your own union to help spread international, national and local support and activity to end forced labour. Try to include something that members can act on – international campaigning depends on widespread support.

Trade unions internationally have worked through organisations such as the Burma Campaign to draw attention to its oppressive practices, which include forced labour practises. These have included some successful campaigns to get multinational corporations to withdraw investment from the country.

### The Burma Campaign

Burma's military regime presides over some of the worst cases of state forced labour. The country's democracy movement has called for targeted economic sanctions against the Burmese regime. Instead of stopping companies investing in the oil, gas and timber sectors in Burma, where the regime earns most of its money, British and European companies are banned from investing in a pineapple juice factory and a few other companies no-one had ever heard of. It's a joke. To highlight how ridiculous these measures are, the Burma Campaign is asking people to post pineapples to the Secretary of State. Fresh pineapples are best, but tinned or dried pineapples are just as good (and cheaper to post if you don't live in the UK).

[www.burmacampaign.org.uk/pineapple.html](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/pineapple.html)

Working with other community or specialised organisations is one of the many ways, as trade unionists, we can contribute to the campaign to face up to forced labour.

### Anti-Slavery International Online Action

In the campaign leading up to the 1807 abolition thousands of people signed petitions against slavery. You can sign Anti Slavery's 2007 Declaration through the campaign website, as well as:

- emailing your member of Parliament about the opportunities 2007 presents for commemorating the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its abolition and to make eradicating all forms of slavery a priority
- sending e-cards to your friends and family telling them about the campaign
- learning more about the issues, order resources and find out about events in your area  
[www.antislavery.org/2007](http://www.antislavery.org/2007)

### Collaborating with others

In London the TGWU has been collaborating over a number of years with Kalayaan, an organisation set up to help migrant domestic workers in the UK. The collaboration variously involved an awareness-raising campaign *That's My Passport* to alert workers to their right to hold their own documentation, provision of computer and literacy training to improve awareness of rights, representation at Employment Tribunals to combat the withholding of pay and drawing up a draft model employment contract to help workers avoid forced labour situations.

## Glossary

### **Chattel slavery**

Where a person is captured, born or sold into slavery, and ownership is often asserted. The slave's children are normally treated as property as well. Still practised in some North and West African and Arab countries, but increasingly few in number.

### **Forced labour**

All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of a penalty and which the person has not entered into of his or her own free will. According to the ILO around 20 per cent of forced labour is imposed by the state or armed forces. The rest is exacted by private agents who take advantage of vulnerable people.

### **Bonded labour or debt bondage**

This is the most common form of slavery in the modern world. A person pledges themselves (or their children) against a loan. Often the nature of work is not defined, nor does work reduce debt. Debt can be passed down, enslaving offspring. 'Ownership' of such forced labour is not asserted, but complete control of the slave is – through fear, threat, physical violence and intimidation.

### **Early and forced marriage**

This affects women and girls who are married without choice and are forced into lives of servitude often accompanied by physical violence. The cloak of marriage and 'tradition' has meant that until recently this form of forced labour has not received the attention that this violation of human rights merits.

### **Smuggled labour**

Labour smuggling involves people paying a fee to an agent who helps them to gain illegal entrance to a country. On arrival the person is either free to make their own work contacts or this may be arranged by the smuggler so that the costs of assistance is paid off. Because of the precarious legal situation, smuggled labour is vulnerable to being 'trafficked'.

### **Trafficked labour**

Trafficking differs from people smuggling in that people move in response to an offer of work. This may be in the same country or involved crossing borders. Their status as a worker is not necessarily illegal. At some stage – en route or on arrival – the offer of work, conditions, location or pay is changed. The person is then forced to labour against their will until the debt incurred in moving is paid off. The labour is forced by control of the person's situation by physical threats, intimidation, withholding of passports or documentation.



## Further information

**www.antislavery.org**

This is the successor organisation of the Anti-Slavery Society that was involved in the eighteenth century campaign for the abolition of slavery. The website has stacks of information on anti-slavery campaigning in the UK and worldwide. See especially *Reporter* magazine, Trafficking for Forced Labour UK Country Report, and the campaigns section of the website.

**[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/world/slavery/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/world/slavery/default.stm)**

**<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/world/05/slavery/html/1.stm>**

These links provide a wealth of easy-to-read information and video clips on the different aspects of slavery in the 21st century.

**www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/subIndex.php?sit\_id=1**

City of Bristol web page on links with the slave trade.

**www.ilo.org**

The International Labour Organisation is involved in a range of projects that tackle forced labour in more than 40 countries. It is committed to report on the progress of its action plan every four years. See: (2005) *A global alliance against forced labour*. Global Report at [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org) and (2005) *Rules of the Game. A brief introduction to international Labour Standards*.

**www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/slavery/**

Information on Merseyside Maritime Museum gallery on transatlantic slavery. There's good historical material here, although an actual visit to the museum would be better.

**www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/slavery/**

Bicentenary remembrance events

**New Internationalist – www.newint.org**

See especially No.337, Aug 2001, The burden of slavery. Getting old but still worth a read.

**www.tuc.org.uk**

(2006) *Tackling trafficking through workers' rights*

[www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-11911-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-11911-f0.cfm)

(2005) *Forced Labour and Migration to the UK*

[www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-9317-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-9317-f0.cfm)

**International Development Issues**

A trade union digest of organisations and resources on international development

(2005) *Trade and Trade Unions*. November.

(2005) *Refugees and Migrant Workers*.

(2005) *International Development and the Trade Union Role*.

*Right*  
Migrant agricultural workers  
picking tomatoes in family  
greenhouse near small  
town of Yesilkoy in Anatolia,  
Southern Turkey.  
Photo: Janine Wiedel  
Photolibrary / Alamy

## Section 3



**Workplace Activity**

## Workplace activity

## Forced labour awareness audit

## AIMS

This activity will help you:

- begin to find out levels of awareness about forced labour and its affects among members.

## TASKS

- Use the checklist below to carry out a brief audit with two or three members. Explain that you are gathering together a few anonymous responses to questions as a basis for further work on your course.

	Question	Self	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3
1	<b>Did you know 2007 marks 200 years since Britain abolished slavery?</b> Y/N				
2	<b>Do you think slave or forced labour exists today in a) Asia? Y/N b) Africa Y/N c) Europe Y/N d) Britain Y/N?</b>				
3	<b>How many people do you think work in slave or forced labour conditions today?</b> 1.2 million / 12 million / 120 million				
4	<b>Give two main reasons why you think slave/ forced labour still exists</b>				
5	<b>How (if at all) do you think the existence of slave/forced labour affects you?</b>				

- Now summarise your findings below, writing the number of people who answered Yes or No to the above questions in the relevant boxes.

Audit Summary	
1. Awareness of bicentenary	Yes _____ No _____
2. Awareness of forced labour today	a) Yes _____ No _____ b) Yes _____ No _____ c) Yes _____ No _____ d) Yes _____ No _____
3. Awareness of numbers involved	1.2m _____ 12m _____ 120m _____
4. Reasons given for existence:	
5. Ways in which members affected:	

**Tutor note**

Tutor note:

Workplace activity – forced labour awareness audit  
*and*

Activity – forced labour awareness audit: acting on  
the implications

**SETTING THE ACTIVITY UP**

You will need to set the Workplace Activity at least a week before running the follow-up Activity. You can do this by explaining the context of the bicentenary remembrance events in 2007.

Ask reps to use the activity with a range of members, not just the ones they know best. Explain that the audit should be used in a way that members do not feel threatened – the responses sought are just what members think at that particular time. They will help reps with their training. Emphasise the importance of carrying out the audit; the follow-up exercise will be more meaningful.

**TIMING**

Around ten minutes are needed to set up the Workplace Activity. The Activity itself would benefit from around 1.5-2 hours as there is lots to be discussed.

**TAKING FEEDBACK**

If you are pressed for time, you could help the group focus by collating information from the whole group.

Levels of awareness will vary, but it is doubtful that any audit would not benefit from follow-up. Check Fact Sheet 4 for ideas for appropriate actions – there are sufficient examples to suit all levels of interest, response capacity and commitment.

**OWN NOTES**



EQUAL PAY  
FOR  
EQUAL WORK



**Activities**

## Activity

# Forced labour awareness audit – Acting on the implications

## AIMS

This Activity will help you:

- build understanding of the nature and extent of forced labour today
- consider awareness levels and how to respond to them.

## TASKS

Working in small groups:

- 1** Briefly collate and discuss the results of the workplace audit.
- 2** Each group member read through ONE of the Fact Sheets provided by your tutor.
- 3** Looking back at the results of your workplace audit and drawing on this information together with your own experience, consider:
  - a) what conclusions you can draw about levels of awareness among members.
  - b) what you think would be an appropriate follow-up.
- 4** Note your key points on a flipchart and be prepared to share with the whole group.

## RESOURCES

Fact Sheets 2-4

*Left*  
Women from the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers – consisting of mainly domestic maids – campaign for equal pay in Hong Kong.  
Photo: Jess Hurd/  
reportdigital.co.uk

## Activity

## Setting the record straight

**SETTING THE ACTIVITY UP**

This activity can be used in different ways. For example, it could be used to follow up comments in earlier sessions on the difficulties of migrant workers. You could precede it by asking learners the week before to make a note of newspaper and TV references to the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery. Alternatively you could use Fact Sheet 1 to present background information by way of introduction, emphasising the key role of union reps as opinion formers in the workplace.

Explain that these comments are abstracted from the BBC website and its coverage of slavery and contemporary forced labour. They are the kind of statements that are commonly heard, confidently asserted – but rarely on the basis of real information or thought.

**TIMING**

You will need at least 45 minutes or an hour for reps to go over the appropriate Fact Sheets and to work through the issues raised. One and a half or two hours would give you more space to help reps work through the issues systematically.

**TAKING FEEDBACK**

Do not be surprised if some reps feel challenged (even sympathy) with any of the myths or assumptions lodged in the comments. Such statements are commonly asserted and for some people may seem ‘common sense’. Most of them are not – but people may feel personally challenged in confronting long or firmly held assumptions.

The fact sheets as indicated will help you in taking feedback:

**Distinctions between hard work and forced labour** – see Fact Sheet 2

**Actions that will help eliminate forced labour** – Fact Sheet 4

**Causes/‘human nature’ issue** – Fact Sheets 2 and 3

**Self-blame/consumption issue** – Fact Sheets 2, 3 and 4

Slavery and forced labour has a long history, but it will be important to flag up the ILO message that we shouldn’t allow it to overwhelm us, and there are positive things we can do.

**OWN NOTES**

**Activity**

## Setting the record straight

**AIMS**

This activity will help you:

- evaluate some commonly heard statements about slavery or forced labour
- work out ways of promoting better understanding of slavery or forced labour and/or how it can be eliminated.

**TASKS**

In twos or threes:

- 1** Read through one or two of the statements below about slavery.
- 2** Do you think they show a good understanding of slavery and forced labour? Why? Things to think about:
  - ‘red herrings’ or diversions
  - unsupported assumptions
  - implications or things being asked to believe.
- 3** How would you set the record straight? Consider:
  - how you might reinforce fair and well-informed messages
  - how you might challenge ignorance or misinformation
  - make positive suggestions for eliminating slavery or forced labour.

**RESOURCES**

Fact Sheets 2-4

### Slavery statements – true or false

1. Think about it... for the vast majority of people, all labour is enforced. How many of us would love to stop working but can't?
2. Slavery will not be eradicated by one large stroke but by hundreds of small strokes consistently applied.
3. Slavery will never end. There will always be those willing to take advantage of others. It's human nature.
4. Poverty and slavery will always exist, there's nothing to be done about it, unless you change everyone's mind about the desire to consume anything, and that's not going to happen
5. I say let the minority suffer so that the majority can live and prosper. It is the way of humanity – always was, always will be.
6. Do you really think a government barbaric enough to let this continue is really going to pay attention to someone from another country. I think not. What should be doing is trying to tackle child poverty in our own country. Only when we are perfect can we rightfully preach to others.
7. Stop buying £4 jeans that have been produced in Eastern sweat shops, it's nothing more than long-distance slavery!
8. The antidote to slavery is civil rights.. A chance to vote in a fair and square election and to see the results implemented is a chance to protect freedom and everything that comes with it...



**Activity**

## International development – Getting forced labour out and social justice in

**SETTING THE ACTIVITY UP**

This activity is best used to follow at least one earlier activity on issues of international development, or in a situation where you are confident that reps have a fairly good understanding of the topic. It will be particularly topical during 2007, the bicentenary of the abolition of slave trading in the UK.

It will work best when reps have carried out activities from previous Fact Files or you are in a position to set pre-session reading of the Fact Sheets. In setting up groups, you can split reading/review of the Fact Sheets up between the members so that they share information, otherwise the reading will probably be too much for one session.

Depending on group dynamics, it may be useful to split participants into groups according to union, so that recommendations facilitate planning/practical outcomes.

**TIMING**

Set reading where possible prior to the session. If preferred, or you are short of time, you could talk through some of the Fact Sheets. You would probably need up to half an hour for a brief reminder/review of the fact sheets, 45 mins-1 hour for discussion, and the same again for report backs and whole group discussion.

**TAKING FEEDBACK**

On question one relating to the issue of contribution to/alleviation of forced labour, you may need to be prepared to play devil's advocate, asking for example whether globalisation facilitated communication between people/helped them to begin to take a truly international approach to labour issues etc?

In terms of the other questions, for many the down-side of globalisation can seem pretty overwhelming and you may need to emphasise the importance of a trade union approach towards problems – i.e. it's not enough to identify them, we need to work on positive actions to do something about them, no matter how small they may seem; thus better to focus on the achievable.

Key learning points are that trade union action is (and should be recognised as) a necessary, contributory factor to socially just development and the local is important on these issues as on any other.

**OWN NOTES**

**Activity**

## International development – Getting forced labour out and social justice in

**AIMS**

This activity will help you:

- consider the situation of forced labour today in terms of global strategies
- take a positive, practical approach to the promotion of socially just development.

**TASKS**

In small groups, using the Fact Sheets and drawing on your own knowledge/experience, discuss and prepare a report answering the following:

- 1** To what extent does globalisation today contribute to or alleviate the situation of forced labour?
- 2** What are your THREE key recommendations for a more socially just international development?
- 3** Identify ONE proposal that your union could take up at national level to support one or more of your recommendations.
- 4** Identify TWO things your union can do at local level to support one or more of the recommendations.

**RESOURCES**

Fact Sheets 3 and 4

Fact Sheets 4 and 5 from International Development and the Trade

Union Role Fact File

Fact Sheet 1 from Refugees and Migrant Workers Fact File

# 1

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Congress House  
Great Russell Street  
London  
WC1B 3LS

tel 020 7636 4030

fax 020 7636 0632

[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

