The AP-Forced Labour Net is an ILO-sponsored online community of practice for individuals, organizations, and institutions interested in issues related to forced labour, human trafficking and slavery in the Asia Pacific region. From 1-12 September 2014, the AP-Forced Labour Net will host its second public online discussion forum, in collaboration with the ILO-IPEC Programme, on *Eradicating forced and child labour from the supply chains: How to institute real change?*

Instances of forced labour and child labour in various industries in Asia have attracted a lot of media attention recently, particularly due to linkages of these industries with global supply chains that often extend to well-known international brands and retailers. While many businesses, industry initiatives and organizations have years of experience in addressing forced and child labour, addressing this problem remains a challenge. Due to this, there is a growing consensus among different stakeholders including business, that codes of conduct and auditing are not enough to institute sustainable, real change in supply chains. More and more businesses, industry and employers’ organizations, trade unions, civil society organizations and governments are seeking new forms of engagement to address the problem. Partnerships between various actors are increasingly being formed in an attempt to address these multi-faceted challenges in a more unified and effective manner.

The AP-Forced Labour Net invites participants to share experiences on different approaches to address forced and child labour in supply chains and to discuss the way forward to tackle remaining challenges.

Key questions to be addressed in the discussion include:

- How to institute real change to eradicate forced and child labour in different industries in Asia? What kinds of interventions are needed at different levels of the supply chain? What works, and what doesn’t?
- Who needs to be part of collaborative initiatives to eradicate forced and child labour from the supply chains? How can businesses engage with their suppliers and other stakeholders to institute real change in their supply chains? What are the responsibilities of governments in addressing the problem? What role do industry and employers’ organizations, trade unions, international organizations or other stakeholders play in cleaning up the supply chains? What role are consumers playing or could consumers play in this debate?
- What are some examples of innovative collaborative approaches and other good practices in eradicating forced and child labour from the supply chains? Are there examples / lessons learned from addressing other social challenges that are commonly found in supply chains?

The objectives of the online discussion are to generate and share information with the AP-Forced Labour Net members and broader readership on innovative approaches and good practices in
addressing forced and child labour in supply chains, and to discuss remaining challenges. We invite sharing of experiences from different industries and different regions with the view to inform strengthened action against forced and child labour especially in East and South-East Asia.

Discussion participants will include:

- Industry and business social responsibility initiatives, business representatives and employers’ organizations in Asia and beyond.
- Consumer groups, civil society organizations and workers’ organizations.
- Development practitioners and academia working on issues related to forced labour and child labour in the supply chains.

The discussion is open to public, but posting a comment requires registration as AP-Forced Labour Net member. Participants are invited to post their comments either on their own behalf or on behalf of their organisations. The discussion is moderated by Ms Marja Paavilainen, Chief Technical Adviser of the Forced Labour Action in the Asian Region (FLARE project).

Quick facts about forced and child labour in Asia

According to the ILO’s most recent estimates, there are about 12 million victims of forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region, which constitutes 56 per cent of the global total (21 million). This means that at any given time at least three in every 1,000 workers in the Asia-Pacific region are in forced labour, trapped in jobs into which they were coerced or deceived and which they cannot leave. Vast majority of these workers are being exploited in the private economy. Moreover, there are an estimated 78 million child labourers aged between 5-17 years old in the Asia-Pacific region, out of which 34 million are in hazardous work. About a quarter of all child labourers globally works in paid employment, and 84 per cent of these children work in agriculture and service sectors.

In recent years, cases of forced and child labour have been reported in a number of industries in Asia, including fisheries and seafood processing, brick manufacturing, garment and textile, timber, gold, palm oil, sugar, rubber, rice and tobacco production. For example, a study published by the ILO in 2013 found that 17 per cent of the fishers employed on Thai boats fishing in national and international waters were in working in conditions of forced labour. 5.5 per cent of these fishers were minors younger than 18 years old. Common practices used to coerce workers documented in the region include physical violence, threats against family members, financial penalties, withholding of assets and documents, and threats of denunciation to the authority. In addition to forced and child labour in private sector establishments, entry of products manufactured using prison labour into global supply chains has been reported in some Asian countries.

Child labour and forced labour rates tend to be higher in sectors associated with high levels of informality, such as agriculture. Products from informal operations, such as family farms and primary processing units in the seafood industry, may enter the global supply chains through formal enterprises sourcing inputs and through middlemen purchasing from informal operations.

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1 ILO. *Global estimate of forced labour: Results and methodology* (Geneva, 2012).
Examples of ILO action against forced and child labour in vulnerable industries in East and South-East Asia

The ILO is implementing several programmes to support industry improvement and upgrading in vulnerable sectors. In Asia Pacific region these include among others:

- **ILO-IPEC Addressing Child Labour and Promoting Better Working Conditions in Thai Shrimp and Seafood Industry (IPEC programme).** The IPEC Programme aims to create a safer and more productive shrimp and seafood processing industry that is free of child labour and forced labour. Main interventions include strengthening existing labour protection systems to address child labour, forced labour and worker welfare, enhancing national labour inspection capacities, developing a Good Labour Practices (GLP) programme to improve working conditions and competitiveness, and developing a model enterprise concept and increasing formal registration of enterprises.

- **Tripartite Action to Protect the Rights of Migrant Workers within and from the Greater Mekong Subregion from Labour Exploitation (GMS TRIANGLE project).** One of the key components of the project is to protect migrant workers in the Thai fishing sector through improved labour rights for fishers, increasing regularization, developing an industry code of conduct and good labour practice guidelines, strengthening labour inspection, and improving occupational safety and health in the sector.

- **Better Work** is a flagship programme jointly implemented by the ILO and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to improve labour standards in textile and garment industry. In Asia, the Better Work programme operates in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam. The Better Work aims to improve working conditions and promote competitiveness in the garment industry by assessing workplace conditions and offering customized advisory and training services for factories.

The AP-Forced Labour Net is an ILO-sponsored online community of practice supported by the Forced Labour Action in the Asian region (FLARE project).

The FLARE project supports legal and policy reforms, capacity building and knowledge sharing on combating forced labour at sub-regional level in East and South-East Asia, and in its focus countries China, Viet Nam and Mongolia. Its knowledge sharing activities on the AP-Forced Labour Net platform include online discussions, e-learning, and sharing of resources, experiences and ideas among individuals, organizations, and institutions interested in issues related to forced labour, human trafficking and slavery in the Asia Pacific region.