Online course on preventing and addressing forced labour and trafficking in persons in East and South-East Asia - August/September 2015

FINAL REPORT
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The ideas, opinions and comments within the course are entirely the responsibility of its developers and do not necessarily represent or reflect Irish Aid policy.
Executive summary

From 3 August to 30 September 2015, the AP-Forced Labour Net hosted the first ILO open online course on “Preventing and addressing forced labour and trafficking in persons in East and South-East Asia”. The course was developed as an interactive platform where participants had access to learning materials and discussion forums, through which they were able to share experiences, connect with the course moderator, and post comments and questions.

The course attracted a very good level of interest, with a total of 205 participants from government agencies, international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, auditing companies and private enterprises, among others. The majority of registered participants were from the Asia-Pacific region, but the course has also attracted interest from participants in Europe, the Middle East, North and South America. The high participation rate was obtained in spite of the limited publicity on the course. Therefore, it is likely that with a more robust dissemination strategy future online courses could reach a much broader audience.

The course registered a completion rate of 17 per cent (above the average rate of completion for online courses and Massive Open Online Courses - MOOCs) and participants’ feedback indicated a 97 per cent satisfaction rate. The online course has also proven an effective channel for disseminating ILO policies, leveraging ILO resources and reaching out to audiences that would likely have limited access to ILO face-to-face trainings.

The overwhelming majority of respondents to the post-course survey (88 per cent) indicated they would be interested in future online courses of this type. The top three topics for specialized courses suggested by survey respondents included “preventing and addressing risks of forced labour in supply chains and company operations”; “prevention of forced labour” and “research and data collection on forced labour and trafficking in persons”.

The course has also impacted positively on the usage of the AP-Forced Labour Net platform as a whole. The number of users on the platform has more than tripled as a result of the online course implementation. Additionally, the quality of engagement in the platform has improved significantly, with more pages accessed per session, longer session durations (average) and a smaller share of visitors leaving the platform after visiting only one of its pages (lower bounce rate).

Despite the good level of engagement throughout the course’s 8 weeks, limitations associated with the technology used in discussion forums may have prevented a higher level of participation in discussions. However, these and other challenges faced by the team during the planning, development and implementation phases of the course have translated into lessons learned and improvements for future courses.
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The ILO Forced Labour Action in the Asian Region (FLARE project) is a sub-regional technical cooperation project under the ILO/Irish Partnership Programme. The project supports legal and policy reforms, capacity building and knowledge sharing on combating forced labour and trafficking in persons at the sub-regional level in East and South-East Asia, and in its focus countries China, Viet Nam and Mongolia.

In April 2014, FLARE launched the Asia-Pacific Forced Labour Network (hereafter AP-Forced Labour Net), an ILO-sponsored platform created to allow those interested in forced labour, trafficking in persons and slavery in Asia-Pacific to connect, share resources, exchange ideas, and learn about preventing and addressing forced labour. Among other features, the AP-Forced Labour Net offers online discussions, a library of resources, regular news updates and an interactive ‘Ask the Expert’ function.

From 3 August to 30 September 2015, the AP-Forced Labour Net hosted its first open online course. The course covered subjects related to prevention and protection from forced labour and trafficking in persons in East and South-East Asia.

1.2 Objectives of the initiative

The online course was developed with the objective of enhancing participants’ understanding of the most relevant aspects of forced labour, trafficking in persons, substandard working conditions and labour migration in East and South-East Asia. The course also aimed to raise awareness of the root causes and vulnerabilities that put people at risk of falling victims to labour exploitation, as well as the different responses available to effectively and sustainably prevent and address forced labour.

Additionally, the course intended to serve as a platform allowing participants to exchange ideas and experiences. The platform also presented an opportunity for the ILO to communicate its expertise in combating forced labour and promoting decent work to a broad audience, including groups that may not have had access to ILO in-person trainings and knowledge sharing activities on the topic.

Finally, the course allowed the ILO to trial different delivery methods, materials and tools, and to assess the viability, need and scope for future online courses on forced labour and related subjects.

2. Course development and design

2.1 Course structure

1 http://apfinet.ilo.org
The course was designed as an interactive platform where participants had access to learning materials and discussion forums, through which they were able to share experiences, connect with the course moderator, and post comments and questions.

The course consisted of three modules delivered through videos, presentations, reading materials and self-study lectures using the e-learning tool developed by the ILO Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL). Each module required approximately 3.5 hours of work. Most of the course’s curriculum built upon existing ILO resources, which were carefully selected according to the respective subjects covered in each of the modules. These were as follows:

**Module 1:** Introducing forced labour - international standards, definitions, global and regional statistics;

**Module 2:** Indicators of forced labour;

**Module 3:** Prevention, protection and access to remedies.

Assignments included multiple-choice quizzes provided in the e-learning tool modules, as well as the analysis of two case studies through short essay questions in Module 2 (indicators of forced labour).

Certificates of completion were provided to participants who completed the following requirements:

- Completing the three modules of the e-learning tool (this required a score of at least 75% in each module’s final assessment);
- Analysing the two case studies in module 2, and submitting the written responses via the link provided on the module’s page.

### 2.2 Course development and implementation timeline

The course ran over the course of 8 weeks (from 3 August to 30 September), and materials for each module were released every 2 weeks. Discussion forums remained open until the last day of the course and all course materials remained available for consultation until 31 October (one month after the end date).

A breakdown of the course development and implementation timeline is provided below:
2.3 Moderation and communication arrangements

An ILO moderator was available for the duration of the course. The moderator was responsible for initiating discussions in the forums, and for addressing comments and questions.

Communication with participants regarding the launching of modules, course requirements, technical issues and general reminders took place through periodic emails. Short reminders were also posted on the notice boards available on the course’s platform.

3. Course implementation and usage

3.1 Participants’ profile

The course attracted a very good level of interest, with a total of 205 participants from government agencies, international organisations (IOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia, auditing companies and private enterprises, among others. The high participation rate was obtained in spite of the relatively limited publicity on the course, which was disseminated mainly through one feature on the ILO website, as well as through the AP-Forced Labour Net newsletter. Therefore, it is likely that with a more robust dissemination strategy future online courses could reach a much broader audience.

The majority of registered participants were from the Asia-Pacific region, but the course has also attracted interest from participants in Europe, the Middle East, North and South
America. A more detailed breakdown of participants per country is provided in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2.** Online course participation per country

3.2 Course progression and completion

A total of **35 of the 205 participants (or 17 per cent)** completed all required assignments and have therefore received a certificate of completion. This indicates a higher completion rate than the average registered for online courses and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which usually ranges between 2 and 14 per cent.²

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However, while completion rates may be indicative of participants’ level of engagement, other factors should also be taken into account in assessing the level of interest for and success of an online course. For example, a large number of participants might register for an online course without intending to earn a certificate of completion. Instead, participants might wish to access only the materials that appear appropriate in light of their schedules and subjects of interest.

In terms of total page views per module throughout the 8 weeks of the course, the engagement of participants was higher in module 1, with the number of page views dropping consistently in modules 2 and 3 (see Figure 3 below).

**Figure 3.** Total page views per module (module “home page”)

As regards participants’ engagement in the discussion forums, user activity was also higher in module 1 and in the course’s introduction page. However, the level of participation in discussions remained relatively high across all three modules (see Figure 4 below).

**Figure 4.** Number of comments in discussion forums, per module

Despite the good level of engagement, several participants had difficulties uploading the “Disqus” discussion boxes due to limitations with internet connection and speed. It is
therefore likely that the level of engagement in discussions would have been higher if a different technology had been used.

As regards the substance of comments in discussion forums, a large number of participants were interested in gaining a better understanding of how to identify potential forced labour and trafficking situations, how to respond to the needs of victims, and how to support workers, employers and other relevant stakeholders with a view to preventing and addressing abuses.

In module 2, which addressed the topic of indicators of forced labour, participants discussed extensively the differences between poor working conditions and forced labour, and raised several points regarding the difficulties in determining whether certain abuses constitute labour law violations or the criminal practice of forced labour. Participants also provided valuable inputs about their practical experiences in light of their regional and national contexts.

3.3 Impact of online course on AP-Forced Labour Net usage

As indicated in Figure 5 below, the number of users of the Asia-Pacific Forced Labour Network has increased substantially as a result of the online course implementation. The quality of engagement in the platform has also improved significantly, with more pages accessed per session, longer session durations (average) and a lower bounce rate, meaning that a smaller share of visitors left the platform after visiting only one of its pages.

**Figure 5.** Quality of visits on AP-Forced Labour Net platform - impact of online course implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 April 2014 – 31 July 2015 (16 months)</th>
<th>1 August – 30 September 2015 (2 months)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sessions</td>
<td>9,735</td>
<td>3,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>6,450</td>
<td>1,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page views</td>
<td>24,190</td>
<td>14,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages/Session</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average session duration</td>
<td>02:45</td>
<td>06:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bounce rate</td>
<td>69.41%</td>
<td>45.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of new sessions</td>
<td>65.91%</td>
<td>41.73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The monthly breakdown provided in Figure 6 below highlights the sharp increase in the number of page views and sessions on the AP-Forced Labour Net platform during the months of the online course implementation (August/September 2015).
Figure 6. Monthly performance of AP-Forced Labour Net (April 2014 - September 2015)

During the months of August and September 2015, the online course accounted for nearly 80 per cent of the total page views on the AP-Forced Labour Net platform (see Figure 7 below).

Figure 7. Page views of AP-Forced Labour Net (1 August - 30 September 2015)

Compared to the other ILO Communities of Practice (CoPs) in the Asia-Pacific region (covering topics such as youth employment, migration and green jobs), the forced labour network had the highest number of sessions and the longest session duration (average) during the months of August and September 2015 (see Figure 8 below).
4. Post-course survey results

The main measure of success of the first ILO open online course on forced labour and trafficking in persons in East and South-East Asia was the feedback received from participants. A total of 45 participants responded to the post-course survey, which was sent to all participants at the end of the course. Overall, the course was well received, and the overwhelming majority of comments provided by survey respondents were positive, both in terms of curriculum and topics covered, implementation and delivery methods.

The organisational affiliation of survey respondents is listed below.

Figure 9. Post-course survey respondents - organisational affiliation

The following sections summarise the results of the post-course survey.

4.1 Overall course experience

As indicated in the figure below, 51 per cent of survey respondents (23 participants) rated their experience with the course as “excellent”, while 46 per cent (21 participants)
considered their experience to be “good”. None of the respondents rated the course as a “poor” or “very poor” experience.

**Figure 10.** Overall course experience - responses to the question: What overall rating would you give the course

The majority of respondents also indicated that the course corresponded to their expectations, that the course objectives were clear and that the course procedures and assignments supported the course objectives (see Figure 11 below).

**Figure 11.** Overall course experience - responses to the question: Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The course corresponded to my expectations.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course objectives were clear.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course procedures and assignments support course objectives.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to rate the course workload, the vast majority of respondents (86 per cent or 39 participants) considered the course requirements to be “appropriate”. The responses are listed in detail in Figure 12 below.

**Figure 12.** Overall course experience - responses to the question: Please rate the amount of work requested for completion of course requirements
4.2 Learning materials and subjects covered

As regards the different types of learning materials used in the course, respondents identified the three modules of the e-learning tool and the case studies provided in module 2 as the most useful materials (see Figure 13 below).

Figure 13. Learning materials - responses to the question: What type of learning materials did you find most useful (multiple answers possible)

With regard to the subjects covered in the course, the two topics considered as most useful were: “indicators of forced labour as a tool for law enforcement and victim support” (86 per cent, or 39 of 45 respondents), and “definitions and international legal framework” (57 per cent of respondents or 26 participants). As indicated in Figure 14 below, respondents rated both “domestic workers, a group at risk” and “global and regional forced labour situation” as the third most useful topics.

Figure 14. Subjects covered - responses to the question: Which 3 topics have you found the most useful (multiple answers possible)

4.3 Moderation and platform usage

Respondents’ feedback was very positive both in terms of course moderation and as regards platform usability. As indicated in Figures 15 and 16 below, 95 per cent of respondents (43
respondents) rated the moderation and facilitation of the course as “excellent” or “good”. The only comment provided by one of the respondents as regards the course moderation referred to the possibility of providing “audio” options as an alternative to reading materials. With regard to the usability of the course’s platform 91 per cent (or 41 respondents) rated the platform and learning area as “excellent” or “good”.

**Figure 15.** Course moderation - responses to the question: How would you rate the moderation and facilitation of the course

![Graph showing responses to moderate facilitation](image)

The majority of respondents (37 per cent, or 17 respondents) indicated that they did not encounter any technical difficulties in accessing learning materials or discussion forums. However, 5 respondents (or 11 per cent) indicated they were unable to upload the discussion boxes, 5 indicated they were unable to post a comment in the discussion forums and 2 (4.4 per cent) indicated they were unable to download the reading materials.

**Figure 16.** Platform usability - responses to the question: How would you rate the learning area/platform in terms of usability

![Graph showing responses to platform usability](image)

The overwhelming majority of respondents (88 per cent, or 40 of 45 respondents) indicated they would be interested in another course of this type, and

4.4 Future courses

The post-course survey also inquired participants about their interest in future courses on forced labour and related topics. The overwhelming majority of respondents (88 per cent, or 40 of 45 respondents) indicated they would be interested in another course of this type, and
93 per cent (42 respondents) affirmed they would “definitely” or “probably” recommend the present course to other people.

As regards the topics that could potentially be addressed in future courses on forced labour and related subjects, respondents expressed particular interest for the issue of “preventing and addressing risks of forced labour in supply chains and company operations”; “prevention of forced labour” and “research and data collection on forced labour and trafficking in persons”. One of the respondents also mentioned the need to discuss the rights of sex workers from a labour rights and human rights perspective (see Figure 17 below).

Figure 17. Future courses - responses to the question: If the ILO was to host courses on forced labour with a specific thematic focus, what topics would you like to have covered (multiple answers possible)

5. Conclusions and lessons learned

The first ILO open online course on forced labour and trafficking in persons in East and South-East Asia was successfully delivered on schedule to over 200 participants, with a completion rate of 17 per cent. Participants’ feedback indicated a 97 per cent satisfaction rate (see Figure 10), reassuring that the key objectives of the course were met, and highlighting the scope for the development of future courses addressing forced labour and related topics. In this regard, the online course has also proven an effective channel for disseminating ILO policies, leveraging ILO resources and reaching out to audiences that would likely have limited access to ILO face-to-face trainings.

The experience of planning, developing and running an open online course for the first time proved to be a collaborative, challenging and enriching exercise for all members of the team, and the results obtained exceeded expectations. Some obstacles were inevitably present throughout the project, but these have translated into lessons learned and will contribute to an improved experience in implementing similar initiatives in the future.

Below are some of the key lessons gathered during the planning, development and implementation phases of the course:
**Course planning and development**

- The planning, development and implementation phases of an online course are input and resource intensive, both in terms of working hours/days, and the costs associated with the development of contents.

- However, the resources required for the development of an online course can be considered to be front-loaded, especially if similar courses were to be implemented in the future. In this regard, leveraging on a broad range of existing ILO resources has proven an effective way of reducing expenditures, promoting existing tools and improving ILO knowledge sharing.

- In developing the course’s curriculum, the learning objectives of each module or session should be clearly established from an early stage. This can help identifying the most suitable methods for delivery of contents, assignment types, as well as guiding the moderation of online discussions.

- Different platforms/technologies should be considered, both in terms of delivery of contents, and with regard to discussion forums. In the case of the present course, a number of participants faced difficulties uploading the “Disqus” discussion boxes, which might have limited their ability to join discussions. Particular attention should therefore be given to potential technology constraints in light of participants’ geographic location and/or demographic profile.

- Attention should also be drawn to the need of uploading, reviewing and testing all course materials and assignments prior to their release.

- An outline of the post-course evaluation and feedback survey should be established already at the planning and development phases. While small adaptations will likely be necessary as the course evolves, the main points to be addressed should be defined based on the overall objectives of the course.

**Course delivery**

- Course organisers, moderators and facilitators should be responsive to participants’ requests and feedback, both in discussion forums and through other communication channels, such as emails. Throughout the course, participants have expressed appreciation for the responsiveness of the team and the fluid communication has encouraged them to raise issues or questions, and to share their experiences.

- Regular reminders and announcements about specific requirements or assignments (particularly by email) have proven an effective way of ensuring participants engagement and interest throughout the course.

- The allocation of resources for the delivery of an online course should take into consideration the main requirements as regards platform management and course moderation.
Annex - Module 1: page layout

Module 1: Introducing forced labour

Welcome to Module 1 of the online course. You can start your self-study by watching the module introduction video below.

Course guidelines

A. Global and regional forced labour situation

This section of Module 1 introduces the global and regional forced labour situation.

When studying the materials below, think about the forced labour and trafficking situation in your country. Have you come across cases of forced labour or trafficking in persons in your work? Or, have you heard about forced labour exploitation of workers in your country? Which economic sector or groups of workers are vulnerable to forced labour and trafficking in persons in your country? We look forward to hearing your experiences in the comment box below.

21 million trapped in modern slavery

What is forced labour? Who is affected by it? How can businesses and the associations in general take action? Nicole Armand, Head of the ILO’s Global Action Programme on Combat Forced Labour presents up to date facts and figures on forced labour and talks about the key role played by the ILO in the fight against this crimes against.

The illegal profits of forced labour

ILO Director General, Mr. Guy Ryder, talks about the economics of forced labour and highlight the need to support the work against abuses that promote vulnerability to forced labour.

Help desk

If you have any problems in viewing the materials or posting a comment, contact apforcedlabournet@ilo.org for help.

Notice board

The third and final Module of our online course is now open.

All three modules and discussion forums will be available until 30 September 2013. We hope you are enjoying the course.
B. What is forced labour and trafficking in persons?

This section introduces the international legal definitions of forced labour and trafficking in persons and the related international legal instruments, including the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, and the UNODC Trafficking Protocol.

Do you know which of these instruments your country has ratified? When studying the materials below, think about how legal obligations established in the international instruments have been implemented in your national legal and policy frameworks. We encourage all participants to post a question or comment on this in the course moderator via email here.

Forced labour definition and legal framework - E-learning tool: Module 1

After completing the Module, please save your certificate in pdf or jpeg file and submit it to the course moderator via email here.

Adoption of the Protocol 2014 of to the Forced Labour Convention

This presentation introduces the background and key elements of the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention and the document to the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labour. It reviews the international legal framework against forced labour and trafficking in persons.

Reading materials

Read "Freedom vs. forced labour... What can we learn from international labour..."

Reading materials
- Blog: "Exploitation vs. forced labour – What can we learn from international labour standards?"
- Forced and compulsory labour in international human rights law
- Online Discussion Report: What is forced labour, human trafficking and slavery? Do definitions matter, and why?

ILO forced labour instruments
- C190: Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- P182: Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930
- C105: Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- C195: Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation, 2014 (No. 200)

C. Discussion box

Dear participants, we hope the discussion forum will serve as a channel for a fruitful exchange of experiences and ideas. We look forward to receiving your comments, suggestions or questions related to the issues presented in this module.

25 Comments

3 Recommend

Join the discussion...

Dear course organizers and moderators,

Thanks a lot for this great initiative. Just completed the 1st Module and found it very well structured and comprehensive. Will definitely recommend it to my colleagues in Southeast Asia.