



10th Annual Freedom From Slavery Forum
**“Enabling Local Engagements and Global
Synergies for Addressing Modern Slavery in
Latin America”**

2022 Latin America Regional Forum Report
August 22-23, 2022

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Introduction

The Freedom from Slavery Forum was established in 2013 to gather anti-slavery leaders from around the world to create a collegial space to coalesce, create partnerships, discuss promising practices and develop a shared agenda for action. Participants have built relationships and prioritized actions in advocacy and collaboration with other sectors.

In 2021, the annual Global Forum was supplemented by a series of Regional Forums, divided into the following regions: Latin America, North America and Europe, Africa, Asia, MENA, and the Caribbean. Last year's series took place online and thereby provided opportunities to increase access, ensuring grassroots ideas and voices were amplified within the movement. The 2022/23 series are divided into three in-person Forums (North America and Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean) to increase collaboration between actors in the region and three online Forums (Latin America, Asia, and MENA). The series will be closed with the global convening in May 2023.

The theme for the series is “Enabling local engagement and global synergies to address modern slavery.” The respective agenda and expected outcomes are developed in consultation with survivors and other key local and regional partners. Therefore, the focus will vary slightly for each region, responding to the situation and needs of each region.

For the Latin America Forum, anti-slavery movement leaders virtually convened via Zoom for two days to discuss issues most pertinent to the region that was identified by some of the main stakeholders in the region. Thus, the first day focused on Climate Justice vs extractivist development models in Latin America. Five panels and one workshop gave an opportunity to gather important information and discuss problems, as well as possible solutions. The second day considered an intersectoral response to human mobility and forced labor during four panels and one final workshop.

General Objective

The general objective of the Regional Forums is to explore and define key strategies for local engagements, identify the best approaches to revitalize the movement and increase resilience and resistance, and determine the ways in which these engagements may inform the global synergies. The Forum serves as a collegial space to bring stakeholders together to unify in pushing forward the anti-modern slavery movement. The panels and workshops serve to discuss opportunities, challenges and practices to promote strategies and actions to eradicate forced labor in the region among stakeholders from different countries and sectors.

Specific Objectives

The Latin America Regional Forum this year, specifically served to promote collaborations at the regional, national, and local levels, and discuss reference practices and lessons learned in the fight against forced labor. Furthermore, the goal was to identify strategies, proposals, and recommendations to eradicate forced labor in the region.

Day One: Climate Justice vs Extractivist Development Models in Latin America

Introduction

Climate change is an increasingly urgent economic, social, and existential threat to all countries and their inhabitants. As we learn more about the magnitude of climate change, we know better the strong interdependence between our social systems and institutions with the environment.

Addressing climate change from the perspective of climate justice implies emphasizing that its impact does not affect people equally, that it has not been caused equally by countries and people, that is, some have a greater responsibility than others, and finally, that not everyone has the same capacity to adapt to climate change.

Therefore, climate justice allows us to make visible the existing power asymmetries, not only between countries but also between rich and poor within countries. It shows us that the current economic and political model is profoundly unfair. A model that is based on the unlimited exploitation of natural resources, through aggressive extractivism that achieves extraordinary profits that contrast with the precarious working conditions, and on many occasions subhuman conditions, to which the workers are subjected.

If the appropriate measures are not taken, climate change will increase the inequality that already exists, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and will have a greater impact on the most disadvantaged groups. Coordinated actions are required by all the actors involved, and above all, our justice systems are more agile and forceful in the face of significant and accelerated environmental deterioration and growing job insecurity.

Three working groups at the end of the day discussed actions and strategies, at the national and regional levels, to contribute to climate justice and the eradication of forced labor and the role therein of civil society, businesses, and governments, as well as international organizations and academia. The goals of these groups were to prioritize actions and strategies at the national and regional levels to contribute to climate justice and the eradication of forced labor and to identify the role of key actors to achieve the actions/strategies. This was to be tackled through brainstorming and open discussion on creative and innovative proposals at the national and regional levels, according to key actors.

Speaker Overview

- **Forum Advisory Committee Host:** Bukeni Waruzi | Free the Slaves | USA
- **Moderator:** Carolina Rudnick | LIBERA Foundation | Chile
- **Speakers:**
 - Christopher O'Connell | Dublin City University | Ireland
 - Noortje Denkers | ILO | Costa Rica
 - Quinn Kepes | Verité | Mexico
 - Alberto Arenas | Consultant, Free the Slaves | Peru
 - Helena de Souza Rocha | Brazil and Southern Corn Program | Brazil
 - Santiago Inchausti | Federal Judge | Argentina

Summary of Day One

The first day of the Latin American Regional Forum focused on climate justice and extractivist development models. The presentations focused on making visible how climate change, combined with an unjust economic model that exploits natural resources without any limits, is worsening the pre-existing socio-economic vulnerabilities of many groups, significantly increasing the risk of them falling victim to forced labor.

The day was divided into four presentations and ended with a workshop in which participants were asked to discuss priorities for actions and strategies at the national and regional level for different actors and stakeholders, based on what was presented in the panels during the day.

The first speaker focused on the interconnections between climate change, environmental destruction, and modern slavery. **Dr. Christopher O'Connell**, Research Fellow in the Faculty of Law and Government at Dublin City University and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Dublin, presented his latest research "From a Vicious to a Virtuous Cycle". This research is about how the effects of climate change are exacerbated by economic activities that cause environmental degradation, such as the extractivist industry. Furthermore, his research showcases how this combination of factors exacerbates the precarious socio-economic conditions of many groups, increasing their exclusion and marginalization.

In the second presentation, **Noortje Denkers**, a specialist in Labor Migration and currently studying for an MSc in Forced Migration and Refugees at the University of London, spoke about forced labor and labor migration with indigenous populations in Central America. She shared the objective of the main ILO conventions on forced labor and labor migration, which serve to ensure that migrant workers have the same rights as national workers.

The third presenter dealt with the risks of forced labor in the extraction of raw materials in Latin America, something that has been the subject of concern and analysis by CSOs, OOH 2 and academia. In this presentation, **Quinn Kepes**, Senior Program Director in the Raw Materials Programs Department at Verité in Mexico, explained the indicators that allow for the identification of forced labor in practice.

Alberto Arenas Cornejo, lawyer and independent consultant for private and public entities, as well as United Nations agencies at the national and international levels, presented the first findings and results of the participatory diagnosis that Free the Slaves is carrying out in the Peruvian Amazon region on the link between extractivism, climate change and forced labor in four native communities.

Finally, the last presentation focused on answering the question "Is justice fair?", especially with regard to the prosecution and punishment of forced labor in the supply chains of companies. We had the opportunity to learn about some cases of forced labor brought before the courts, such as the case of Fazenda Verde in Brazil, presented by the lawyer and professor **Helena de Souza**, who is also Co-Director of the Program for Brazil and the Southern Cone of the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL).

The first day's discussions were closed with some sentences on emblematic cases in Argentina which were presented by **Judge Santiago Inchausti**, a federal judge since 2009, currently in charge of the Federal Court No. 3 of Mar del Plata.

Afterwards, the day ended with a meeting space for the participants organized in working groups to analyze the key role of the different actors in addressing climate justice, as well as the prosecution and punishment of forced labor in Latin America.

Problems Identified

Increased Vulnerability for People of Color and Indigenous People

Presenters identified that there was a link between the race and ethnicity of victims and the prevalence of labor trafficking. There happens to be a direct link between the economic situation of persons and their vulnerability as well as susceptibility to being exploited by more powerful persons. Unfortunately, owing to systemic oppressions over the years, especially black people and indigenous people often find themselves being poor, thus making them the more likely targets of human trafficking, considering a certain desperation to improve their livelihood that traffickers prey on. According to Helena Rocha, a member of the panel, of almost 2000 people rescued from slave labor in Brazil in 2021, about 80% declared themselves to be black and 3% said they were indigenous. This goes to show the link between race and trafficking.

Negligible Consequences for Perpetrators

Another problem identified is that perpetrators of labor trafficking and exploitation, even when apprehended, are not made to face consequences dire enough to deter others and even themselves from continuing to cause harm to vulnerable groups. In the discussion of human trafficking, labor trafficking is not given the same priority as sex trafficking, thus the gravity of punishments meted out to perpetrators is not deterring enough. Large corporations are sometimes required to pay very small amounts they can easily dole out.

Link Between Climate Change and Modern Slavery

Climate change increases the vulnerability of several groups to extreme forms of exploitation. Initially, the link between natural disasters, such as droughts, and the increased vulnerability of some populations were more readily identified. However, the gradual impact of climate change is much less obvious. For example, changing temperatures tend to become more and more extreme, affecting harvests. These circumstances increase the daily challenges of people in rural areas, who depend mainly on land and fishing for their livelihoods. This affects the gradually forced displacement of the population, especially the younger population, who left in search of work in the artisanal and/or illegal gold mines. The level of servitude and forced labor and sexual exploitation increases especially in these particularly affected areas.

Often the only option for the affected populations is to work in the extractive industry, precisely the industry that contributes to the destruction of the environment. Although they know the impact they have, they cannot denounce it due to their forced involvement in the environmental destruction to ensure their survival.

Destructive Effects of Extractivist Practices

There are other key factors besides climate change that exacerbate forced labor and human trafficking in the region. Water, land, and air pollution caused by the activities of extractive industries, oil companies, or large infrastructure projects all contribute to environmental deterioration. Furthermore, competition for resources that are increasingly scarce, such as water, raises the question of the future of mining which requires large amounts of water.

Furthermore, it is problematic that the extractivist logic sees the natural world and human beings as "disposable" (K. Bales), especially the asymmetrical power relations that identify people and resources as disposable to be exploited. This system is maintained by winners who are found at all scales, local, national, and international. Moreover, the methods of maintaining the system vary greatly between bilateral investment treaties and free trade

treaties, but also in national legal frameworks, showcasing the widespread adoption of the extractivist logic.

Forced Labor in the Extraction of Raw Materials in Latin America

There are several indicators that point to a large presence of forced labor in agriculture and mining, as well as illegal logging and fishing. A shortage of workers in many countries especially in the agricultural sector can now be seen in Latin America. The gap is filled with migrant workers which increases South-South migration. This implies an increase of intermediate contractors related to an increased risk of the affected people getting trapped in forced labor.

Furthermore, the illegal sector includes mining, logging, and fishing. These industries generate a lot of profit and therefore generate violence, corruption, and power for organized crime groups.

High Costs of Migration (for Indigenous People)

Regressive migration policies increase the costs of regular migration, which leads to an increase in irregular migration. Higher migration costs can lead to higher debts and a higher risk of forced labor. When workers are involved in illegal activities, the risks of forced labor increase even more.

There is also extortion by employers through reduced salaries or charges to workers, also with networks of informal moneylenders and hired assassins who lend with high-interest rates, and threats of extreme violence for non-payment. All this increases the vulnerability of the workers.

The number of work visas has increased which generates some risks since workers need a work contract to obtain the visa that will allow them to enter the country. This often requires hiring the services of a lawyer and other resources that generate indebtedness on the part of migrants.

Lack of Government Responses

CSOs criticize that government actions have not been sufficiently articulated to have an efficient impact on the increasing effects climate change has on vulnerable populations, which increasingly puts them at risk of forced labor. Furthermore, some policies subsidize the production of fossil fuels and the investment in large infrastructure projects. It is necessary to include a balance of rights in all these initiatives.

Relationship Between Forced Labor and Labor Migration in Indigenous Communities in Central America

There are several risks of labor migration and unregulated recruitment processes for workers which include fraud, deception, misinformation, passport retention, illegal deductions from wages, debt bondage, threats, and the precariousness of employment. All of these pose risks for migrant workers to get trapped in forced labor.

Many migratory flows concern people from indigenous communities, who leave their communities for various reasons and suffer double or triple the vulnerability to recruitment processes. Some Central American countries have a 50% indigenous population, who are not only affected by the recruitment processes but also upon their return to their communities. It is often viewed negatively to participate in these migratory flows.

Relationship Between Extractivism, Climate Change, and Modern Slavery

The study *“Between abandonment and exploitation: four case studies in Native Communities of the Peruvian Amazon”* (FTS, November 2022) found some common denominators between the four native communities researched in the Peruvian Amazon. All four presented a weak public response to solve the needs and problems of the communities and to ensure their development. Furthermore, the communities under study have a lower Human Development Index (HDI) compared to the rest of the country. This increases the vulnerability of both individuals and the collective.

Several informants maintained that they can no longer work the same as before because the climatic conditions do not allow them to work. For example, the high temperatures that they have to endure have caused them to limit the hours they work in the fields, so to supplement their income they look for other economic activities. They have to accept any type of activity offered to them by recruiters who often come to the communities to recruit them or hire them for activities, especially in the agricultural sector, in precarious working conditions, or in cases of exploitation. There is a high vulnerability of minors who in many cases have minimal and limited access to education, nor can they study in their native language, which conditions the development of children and young people.

Moreover, the advance of drug trafficking, the invasion of communal lands, and deforestation are also generating vulnerability in the communities. This does not only affect the individual and collective level, but these circumstances put hundreds of indigenous leaders at risk through the threat and assassination of indigenous leaders for defending their lands. There is an absolute lack of protection to protect these leaders. Many communities are tricked by companies into deforesting their own territory and the communities are then penalized through administrative sanctions, including in some cases criminal proceedings against some indigenous leaders.

Solutions Proposed

Balancing the System of Power

The extreme exploitation of both nature and people in Latin America is the result of an imbalance of power. In order to change this, it is necessary to understand how this type of relationship occurs, and how it can be balanced and confronted to advance the abolition of modern slavery. In order to confront the crime, it is necessary to confront the power relations. The implementation of legal frameworks is thereby not enough.

Economic inequality is one of the, if not the roots of the problem. In order to overcome this, supply chains must be reformed with due diligence and environmental legislation to reduce impunity and corporate power. Many regions in Latin America rely on systems of intergenerational slavery, whereby land reforms are a crucial step to change.

Interconnectedness of Environmental and Social Justice

To question the global structure that maintains a system based on the exploitation of human beings and nature, it is crucial to be part of the struggle for climate and environmental social justice and to support a just transition without losing the commitment to fundamental rights.

Furthermore, it is crucial to follow the narrative of the Palermo protocol which prohibits the prosecution of victims of trafficking for illegal activities they carried out as victims. Rather than seeing forced workers in extractivist practices as environmental criminals, they need to be regarded as victims.

Advancement in the Role of the State

The role of the state is ambiguous, as it should guarantee the rights of citizens, but sometimes it plays an active or indirect role to support a system of exploitation. To change these systems, it is necessary to analyze the respective states and establish mechanisms to support those who are not protected enough by existing laws to elevate them to the same level of legal protection. This relates to the problem of social discrimination, referring to the question of who is disposable, and who is not. Furthermore, the State needs to consider the environment in each decision taken.

Governments have an obligation to regularize workers and remove them from the context of labor informality. Furthermore, it is crucial that workers have effective access to make the corresponding claims and complaints. Considering the importance of Trade Unions, as highlighted throughout the Forum, States need to ensure the legal basis for the Unionization of workers, giving each worker access to the right to join a Union. States must also use their power to support Civil Society to demand commitment to the solution of the problem from businesses and Unions.

Moreover, the role of the State in the work of (large) companies was demanded. States should get more involved in inspecting the conditions under which (migrant) workers are employed, as well as demand periodical labor audits.

States must also work towards facilitating access to the Internet, since those populations that are in a greater state of vulnerability are prevented, in many cases, from exercising their claims and defenses because they do not have this fundamental instrument. Furthermore, additional tools should be developed to give vulnerable people access to claims. This could take on the form of free and universal legal and labor counseling. States must also be aware of the obligation to denounce slavery to large companies, which are, for the most part, those who are responsible for forced labor.

Relationship Between Forced Labor and Labor Migration in Indigenous Communities in Central America

The fundamental rights of migrant and non-migrant workers include the prevention of forced labor. In order to ensure these rights are upheld, it is crucial that the issue of labor migration remains on regional and national agendas.

The ILO has conventions on forced labor, and some are specific to migrant workers that try to regulate the way in which labor migration is organized, whose common objective is to ensure that migrant workers have the same rights as national workers. In this sense, states have an important role to play in guaranteeing the development of policies and programs to ensure that labor rights are applied to the migrant worker population.

A focus must be placed especially on indigenous peoples and the issue of non-discrimination and equal working conditions, considering their precarious situation within the governing system. The ILO has a Convention that invites indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making on migration measures and to consider their customs, beliefs, and opinions, which is one way towards positive change.

Role of Employment Agencies

It is vital to look at how private employment agencies operate, as they must provide adequate protection to prevent abuse of the migrant worker population.

Network Between Civil Society and Trade Unions

Several panelists and participants recommended increased collaboration between Civil Society and Trade Unions. Furthermore, it was recommended that Civil Society increase its efforts in conducting training and information campaigns for Trade Unions. The second idea of this nature was to form a network of NGOs and Trade Unions for the exchange of best practices and information sharing. Considering the difficulties of Trade Unions to reach

remote places in Latin America, it was recommended that NGOs fill the gaps and assist workers where Trade Unions do not yet exist.

Generally, it was claimed important to push Trade Unions towards taking ownership of the issue of human trafficking and labor exploitation. Civil Society can help by conducting training on the theme and working together to amplify the actions of a network.

It was also recommended that the voice and time given to children and adolescents be increased. A successful example was shared whereby there is a radio program in Mexico that allows children and adolescents to share their experiences and stories.

Additional to the suggestion to increase cooperation between Civil Society and Trade Unions, recommendations were given to (international) NGOs as well. Thus, INGOs should transfer information to local communities and work with local NGOs. This relationship and capacity building is crucial to properly utilize information. Moreover, support from international organizations and governments on global advocacy, capacity building, mobilizing resources, and enforcing the application of policies.

Lastly, NGOs and other international organizations should partner with governments to come out with migration policies to protect migrants and vulnerable people.

State Incentives for Large Corporations

In a bid to encourage investors to invest more in the country to boost the economy, governments should provide tax relief and other forms of incentive to large corporations. Although this may be seen as a step in the right direction, rather encourages and supports their unethical activities of labor exploitation. Sometimes, locals of the countries in which they work end up being exploited and paid very unfair wages and salaries.

Furthermore, it was emphasized that companies must be obligated to allow periodic labor inspections, with exhaustive controls and follow-ups to ensure that there are no workers in forced labor situations. Inspections should be intensified and emphasis should be placed on increasing the number of inspections in order to corroborate the state in which companies hire their workers. It was also mentioned during the workshops that companies establish social audits, especially in the textile industry which is where the greatest volume of forced labor is found.

It is also important that companies establish easily accessible complaint and grievance mechanisms for workers who are still with the company. Companies should establish detailed and specific mechanisms to address negotiation tables with their employers. These mechanisms must be clear and in favor of the worker, taking into account the existing power asymmetries between one and the other.

Increased Involvement of Academia

As an additional actor, academic institutions were given recommendations by speakers and participants as well. It was suggested that there should be a link between research and a systematic way of translating findings into national policies and changes at the community level. Furthermore, there should be more opportunities for university students to conduct research based on local needs. The current prevention measures for the transfer of information may not be enough. Academia has an important role to play as regards research and laws must be more stringent.

Day Two: Human Mobility and Forced Labor - An Intersectoral Response

Introduction

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that there are 24.9 million people in the world who are victims of forced labor. Of these 16 million are exploited in the private sector, such as domestic work, construction, or agriculture. And nearly 1 in 4 is exploited in a country other than their own.

Migration has been part of the human experience since its origins. However, in recent decades the number of migrants in the world has increased exponentially. Although migration is often an individual and voluntary decision, it is also true that it can increase the vulnerability of the migrant population to forced labor. Especially migrants in an irregular situation and those who belong to historically discriminated groups may run significant risks due to their precarious situation or structural discrimination. They often agree to work for lower wages and in difficult and dangerous conditions. They often have difficulty accessing health and social services and live in constant fear of being discovered, detained, interned, and expelled from the country. For this reason, they do not organize among themselves to claim their rights, nor do they ask for help from the relevant authorities to protect their labor rights. The irregular status of a migrant, as well as race, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation, are not reasons to deprive anyone of the protection of their human rights.

To face the challenges posed by forced labor in migratory contexts, it is essential to involve not only governments, responsible for implementing and guaranteeing compliance with both international and national regulations, but it is also necessary and urgent to encourage responsible behavior of companies and make visible the role stakeholders such as unions, responsible for ensuring the rights of workers. All actors involved have a responsibility to ensure that human rights violations at work are addressed.

The main topics of the second day concerned human mobility and changes in migration flow in the region, the sharing of data pertaining to the number of migrant workers, origin and destination countries within the region, as well as the sharing of experiences that showed positive results in the past. Furthermore, a focus was placed on the role of companies in countering labor exploitation, as well as their current involvement.

Like the first day, the second day ended with a workshop in which participants were split into three groups to discuss actions and strategies to be implemented on the national and

regional levels. The focus hereby lay on finding practices to eliminate the risk of human mobility in the face of forced labor.

Speaker Overview

- **Forum Advisory Committee Host:** Gemma Bardají Blasco | Free the Slaves | Spain
- **Moderator:** Fernando García Robles | Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; Rapporteurship on the Rights of Migrants, Organization of American States | USA
- **Speakers:**
 - Águeda Marin | IOM | Argentina
 - Ximena Rattoni | La Alameda | Argentina
 - Camilo Gallego | Caribe Afirmativo | Colombia
 - Dante Pesce | VINCULAR Center of the Catholic University of Valparaíso | Chile
 - Mary Prieto | Kombu Cha Chá | Chile
 - Sol Henchoz | Argentine Union of Rural Workers and Stevedores (UATRE) | Argentina
 - Carlos Eduardo Silva | National Confederation of Rural and Salaried Workers (CONTAR) | Brazil

Summary of Day Two

The second day of the Latin America Regional Forum focused on human mobility and forced labor whereby the focus was placed on exploring intersectoral responses. The day was divided into four presentations and ended with a workshop in which participants were asked to discuss priorities of actions and strategies on the national and regional level for different stakeholders and actors, based on the previous panels.

The first speaker, **Águeda Marin** is the Senior Regional Specialist in Assistance to Migrants of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Argentina. She focused on the connection between human mobility and forced labor, considering factors leading to migration, the effect of climate change on migration flows, and the link between migration, informal work, and human trafficking.

Ximena Rattoni from the Argentinian organization La Alameda and **Camilo Gallego** Psychosocial professional from the Human Mobility Area from Caribe Afirmativo based in Colombia shared the second presentation on which they explored the different practices their organizations had undertaken to battle human trafficking, especially labor exploitation.

Hereby, Ximena focused on the steps taken to counter big textile production companies and Camilo explored the exploitation of LGBTQI+ members in Colombia.

The third presentation, considered the role companies can and do play in the battle against forced labor. Here, **Dante Pesce**, Founder and Executive Director of the VINCULAR Center of the Catholic University of Valparaíso, Chile, explored the legal frameworks that guide businesses in their involvement. **María Prieto**, Founder and Director of Kombu Cha Chá, a company producing 100% fair Kombucha from Chile, shared the steps her company is taking to ensure that every person involved in the supply chain of her product is free from exploitation.

Lastly, the fourth presentation examined the role of trade unions against forced labor. **Sol Henchoz**, degree in Labor Relations with a specialty in union organizations. She is currently Head of Labor Inspections in rural areas of the Argentine Union of Rural Workers and Stevedores (UATRE) sharing the organization's role and practices undertaken by them to battle forced labor in Argentina. Finally, **Carlos Eduardo Silva**, lawyer and advisor to the National Confederation of Rural and Salaried Workers (CONTAR) from Brazil shared some problems and solutions the confederation had encountered.

Problems Identified

Climate Change, Migration and Forced Labor

Speakers explored the link between climate change, environmental migration, and labor exploitation whereby natural disasters accelerate migration flows by destroying people's livelihood. As a consequence, poverty, and vulnerability of those already most vulnerable increase with climate change, making these migrants more vulnerable to exploitation and forced labor. Considering the lack of job opportunities and decreasing livelihood, environmental migrants often have to accept whatever work is offered to them which makes them more vulnerable to being abused and exploited. What may start off as mutually agreed upon exploitative employment due to lack of other options often takes a turn for the worse when migrants are abused and their payment is withheld, as well as their identification documents are taken. Under control of their exploitation and with threats of violence, forced labor, and human trafficking are not seldomly an outcome.

Informal Economy and Forced Labor

According to the presenters, between 60-90% of migrant workers in Latin America are employed in the informal economy. Hereby the lower the general income in a country, the higher this percentage is. This creates a strong link between the informal economy, labor exploitation, and forced labor as unregulated economies impose a higher risk for workers to

be exploited. Migrant workers are often forced to work in the informal economy due to the lack of job opportunities and the dependence of their livelihoods on any sort of employment. As explained above, while this may often start off as mutually agreed-upon labor exploitation, it often ends in forced labor. Moreover, the concentration of forced labor in the agricultural sector was mentioned by several panelists during the Forum.

Lack of Focus on Forced Labor

Speakers stressed the importance to include forced labor and labor exploitation in the conversation surrounding human trafficking as it is often overlooked. The current focus of anti-human trafficking actors lies on sexual exploitation even though evidence suggests that up to 50% of identified victims in Latin America are victims of labor exploitation.

Furthermore, an emphasis on the increasing connectivity of human trafficking networks, as well as an increment in violence and cruelty in the treatment of the victims were placed. Moreover, throughout the pandemic a sharp increase in the use of digital platforms to recruit and exploit victims has been detected, making it more difficult to identify these abuses.

A second aspect in which labor exploitation has been neglected is funding. One speaker presented the example of Brazil where the budget specifically marked for actions to combat slave labor was reduced by 40% in 2020, making it the lowest in the last ten years. Additionally, thousands of jobs for labor inspectors have been remaining open, showcasing the oversight of the issue of labor exploitation.

Corruption and Links to Other Crimes

The link between human trafficking and drug trafficking, as well as armed conflicts in some parts of the region cannot be overseen. Organized criminal organizations have been so successful in recruiting and exploiting people due to their embeddedness in the political and societal systems of some of the countries. Thus, research has found politicians, police officers, and commissioners as part of the Argentinian mafia involved in human trafficking.

Lack of Awareness in Local Communities

Several panelists considered the lack of knowledge about labor exploitation in local communities as part of the problem.

LGBTQI+ and Forced Labor

While there is a limit to the data available on the position of LGBTQI+ members within forced labor, it could be clearly established that they are exceedingly vulnerable to sexual

and labor exploitation. Less access to education and work makes them more vulnerable to moving into criminal spaces to increase their livelihoods, which is where they run the risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. This can then be connected with the link between informal work and labor exploitation.

Furthermore, prejudices against LGBTQI+ people in Latin America are widespread and make them subject to different forms of violence including xenophobia, excessive overtime, threats, intimidation, restriction of movement, isolation, as well as physical and sexual violence. Furthermore, these prejudices, which are reinforced through the media, have a negative influence on access to work and education, fortifying people's vulnerability. Moreover, members of the LGBTQI+ community often lack support from their families in their countries of origin and do not have access to support networks in their countries of destination. This results in a lack of knowledge about the context of their destination and exposes them to exploitation.

A further issue is the (re)victimization of members of the community due to prejudices against them. Police officials and prosecutors commonly regard their sexuality as ignorance towards the signs of human trafficking, thus faulting the victims for being trafficked. Lastly, the deficiency of a comprehensive and differential policy for the reparation of damages to victims must be tackled.

Businesses and Forced Labor

While technically there are laws in place to bind businesses to certain rules and standards, too few are taking accountability for the practices within the supply chains of their products.

Solutions Proposed

The proposed solutions include both recommendations given by speakers and strategies discussed during the working sessions of Day two.

Formation of Unions and Campaigns

Several speakers stressed the importance of creating Workers' Unions to amplify the voices of (migrant) workers in the fight against labor exploitation. Best practices revolving around this step were shared several times. Unions can thus serve to dignify families in rural parts of the region and enhance the representation of workers in public entities. Especially migrant workers, who may have difficulties having their voices heard due to the unfamiliarity with their destination countries, can benefit from their membership in Unions. Furthermore, Unions can collaborate with other organizations in detecting crimes of human trafficking and assisting victims. It was shared during the panels that Unions can be helpful, particularly in

rural areas since it is often difficult to reach the workers living there, as well as they, are often employed within the agricultural sector that commonly suffers from exploitation. Hereby it is important to strengthen awareness of Unions as their actions are often viewed in a negative light which undermines their working capabilities.

A specific campaign that was mentioned in one of the panels was that of an Anti-Mafia Network. Due to the increasing precision in the organization of criminal networks, it was deemed crucial to find ways for civil society to organize themselves just as well to counter the mafia and their work.

Some concrete examples of the work of Labor Unions were given by one of the panelists who shared the main actions of a Brazilian Union. These are requests for public inspections of working conditions, dialogues with the state to general public policies and pass legislation, as well as the construction of collective bargaining agreements with companies. Furthermore, the union works closely with supermarkets and other large companies to increase commitments to respect human rights in their supply chains. Furthermore, the panelists pushed for the mandatory participation of trade unions in certification processes, as well as making it compulsory for unison and certified companies to enter into collective agreements and conventions.

It was also shared that the registration of workers in unions often scared their employing companies that their poor practices would be discovered and the vast majority of them rejected the voluntary exercise to have their practices across supply chains audited. This automatically made them suspicious of Workers' Unions and organizations within the movement.

Strengthening of Legal Frameworks for Private and Public Sector

To reach the goal of eliminating slavery, companies and the private sector, in general, are called upon to contribute to the necessary societal changes by adhering to the international standards, norms, and guiding principles relating to companies and human rights as laid down in international law. Several international frameworks of this sort exist already, including those of the International Labor Organization, and those laid down in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. These obligations have to be acknowledged by companies and steps to prevent vulnerabilities and abuses must be taken accordingly.

It was moreover stated that while the willingness within the sector, as well as the required instruments, are available, official declarations and guides for implementation are missing. These need to be created. As an example of a possibly successful declaration, the European Union's proposal for due diligence for European companies was presented.

Furthermore, states need to get more involved and live up to their responsibilities and duties. This can be achieved through the implementation of legislation laying out clear and well-defined mechanisms. It was also mentioned that judicial reforms and tax incentives in various countries should be introduced to increase the role of the state in fighting human trafficking, labor exploitation, and forced labor. Considering that international organizations often have limited roles in regional affairs, a focus should be placed on national laws to protect workers and ensure fair wages.

Embed Responsible Business Conduct into Policies and Management Systems

There are certain steps that were recommended to be taken to meet the due diligence required from companies to counter modern slavery. Thus, comprehensible business conduct should be incorporated into policies and management systems, as well as adverse impacts need to be identified in operations, supply chains, and business relations to then be ceased, prevented, or mitigated. The subsequent implementation and results are to be tracked. Furthermore, it is crucial to improve communication about how these impacts are addressed. In general, it was deemed necessary to introduce mechanisms to ensure traceability within supply chains.

One panelist shared the practices implemented by her SME to follow these steps and to ensure 100% fairness in all steps of the production of her product, from field to end user. She stated the importance of taking accountability for the production process. Furthermore, there has to be a close relationship between the companies and their producers who should be open to conversation and improvements. It was suggested to include codes of conduct in agreements with suppliers, as well as the possibility of visiting the sites without prior notice to ensure adherence to agreed-upon standards.

Social Controls Along Supply Chains

Related to the suggestion above, several panelists, as well as the results from the workshops, point to the necessity to involve various stakeholders in carrying out social controls along supply chains. This is essential to avoid the continuation of forced labor and human trafficking. The social controls are to be carried out by civil society and intersectoral roundtables.

Training

The importance of training different officials involved in the process that could act to prevent human trafficking was underlined during the Forum. It was thus deemed crucial to provide training to workers and inspectors in due diligence across supply chains.

Additionally, there is a need for training and dissemination of information on the labor situation for (migrant) workers to bridge the gap between their lack of knowledge and access and the existing rules and regulations in each country.

Moreover, this training is to be extended beyond institutional officials and should include those working directly with migrants as well. It is not uncommon for crime to occur on this level as well, so people need to be trained on how to prevent human trafficking, how to identify victims, and how to rescue them.

It was suggested that these actions are best taken by civil society and Unions. They should also engage in following up with cases to ensure compliance with the law.

Provision of Information in Native Languages

Considering that many exploited workers are migrant workers and do not necessarily speak the language of the destination countries in which they are exploited, it was deemed necessary to improve the provision of information in their native languages. This includes among others legal papers, information about their rights, and information about labor unions. Furthermore, the provision of information in the workers' native language advances the involvement of local people and communities, another point stressed by participants.

Cooperation with Businesses and other Stakeholders

Even though decades have been spent building the relationship between businesses and the anti-human trafficking movement, it remains crucial to invite companies to be a part of the solution, rather than just regarding them as part of the problem. This is institutionalized in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17. It is thus important for civil society to cooperate with businesses to reach the goal of eradicating modern slavery. Panelists stressed the need to cooperate with the textile industry as supply chains are becoming increasingly transparent and modern slavery can be detected and tackled.

Next to increasingly involving businesses in the solutions, it was highlighted that bridges between civil society and the states must be built in order to foster multisectoral collaboration.

Lastly, it was recommended that universities be linked with each other for the production of research and material on the issue of forced labor. As of now, the existing studies often lack recommendations, which were proposed to be included. Furthermore, the general quality of academic research on the matter has to be improved.

Seeking Alternative System

Next to the more concrete suggestions, it was also emphasized that there is a strong need to question the economic models that allow all these actions of exploitation and forced labor to take place. Civil society can act as the forerunner in identifying and discussing alternative economic models that offer the possibility for a dignified life for everyone.

Involving Consumers

Both presenters and the results from the workgroups emphasized the need to involve consumers, especially textile products, in the fight against labor exploitation and forced labor. Generating awareness for the supply chains of large companies can lead to changes in consumption behavior which leads to more pressure on these companies.

Main Outcomes of the Forum

The main outcomes of the Forum were established considering both how well expected outcomes were met, as well as based on the feedback received by participants.

It is increasingly evident that we must include more actors and achieve more effective collaborations at the regional, national, and local levels. The Latin America Regional Forum has been an excellent opportunity to address and discuss some of the pending challenges in the region against forced labor. Like climate justice, the migration crisis, the situation of certain groups such as indigenous peoples and the LGBTIQ+ community, the slow procedures of the justice system, and what should be the roles of companies and unions.

The discussions were promoted by regional and international experts based on a multi-stakeholder format, from different fields, from academia, United Nations Agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and unions. And we wanted to highlight the practical experiences of the speakers.

Below we present the results achieved:

- Preparation and presentation of the Joint Declaration of the Committee of the II Regional Forum of Latin America against forced and child labor, human trafficking, and other contemporary forms of slavery, with a series of recommendations for the region, it can be found next to this report.
- Identification of different strategies and proposals that emerged from the working groups on each day of the forum. They have been systematized and we hope they will be useful for the rest of the participants.
- Creation of a Working Group specialized in Forced Labor and other Contemporary Forms of Slavery in Latin America with the purpose of identifying, knowing, and disseminating experiences and positive reference practices against the crime of forced labor; develop capacities in this matter, especially aimed at civil society organizations and trade unions; promote social dialogue; unite synergies with other key actors in the region and promote political advocacy actions and awareness campaigns on forced labor and other contemporary forms of modern slavery. The group is made up of the members of the Regional Committee of the Forum.
- The Working Group is currently carrying out its action plan for the coming year. It will be ongoing.

Next Steps

Participants left the Forum with an increased understanding of forced labor in Latin America, including detailed information on key indicators to identify forced labor, root causes of forced labor, as well as concerns for the most vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples and members of the LGBTQI+ community. In addition, international frameworks were presented and ways to increase corporate involvement in the fight against human trafficking and labor exploitation were discussed.

Considering the connections and partnerships that were established through the Forum, we hope that participants will benefit from the corporations formed and further the anti-slavery movement.

This Forum was the first of the Regional Freedom from Slavery Forums 2022/23. The next Forum is the North America and Europe Regional Forum to be held in Toronto, Canada, October 25-27, 2022. More information can be found [here](#). It will be followed by the Africa Regional Forum in Kigali, Rwanda, in November, as well as the Middle East and North Africa and Asia Regional Forums, which will be held online in December and January, and the Caribbean Regional Forum in Trinidad and Tobago, before concluding with the Global Forum to be held in the Dominican Republic in May 2023. To follow each of the Regional Forums, check our website and follow us live at [@FFS_Forum](#).

Participation and Evaluation

Across the three days of Forum virtual events, 212 individuals from 28 countries registered. During the first day, 82 people joined, and 65 participants joined on the second day. The countries with the most (registered) participants included: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and the United States.

An evaluation form was sent to all participants to receive necessary feedback which can be implemented in future Forums, both for the Latin America Regional Forum, as well as for the upcoming Regional Forums.

The comments shared indicated that participants appreciated the opportunity to make new connections, to improve capacities for the development of activities, and the diversity of readings, analysis, and proposals from different regions in their local spheres as a response to the fight against human trafficking manifested in its different forms of modern slavery. Furthermore, it was welcomed that some presentations were based on experience, as well as learning about the issues members of the indigenous community experience.

Some recommendations were given around the issue of translation. Free the Slaves has since responded by upgrading their zoom account to include closed caption translation to ensure the accessibility of the Forum to participants of several languages. This also allows for the suggestion to arrange materials in a shared folder as any material can be up-and-downloaded directly to the zoom event page. Furthermore, it was recommended that the conversation should continue in the form of having short discussion rounds several times a year. This can be taken up by the established Working Group.

Speaker and Presenter Bios

Day One: Climate Justice vs Extractivist Development Models in Latin America

Welcome and Introduction



Bukeni Waruzi is the Executive Director of Free the Slaves. Previously, he formed the non-profit grassroots group AJEDI-KA/DRC Child Soldiers Project to confront widespread slavery and the use of child soldiers by militias and armed forces. In Kenya, Waruzi worked for the Porticus Foundation, overseeing projects on human rights, civic engagement, education, and climate change. For nearly a decade he was the director of programs for WITNESS in New York, a group that empowers victims around the world to collect evidence to bring the guilty to justice. Waruzi has spoken before high-level audiences, including the United Nations Security Council, the International Criminal Court, and the US Congressional Children's Caucus. She currently represents anti-slavery groups as a civil society member of the Global Coordination Group of Alliance 8.7, the global initiative to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, an end to child and forced labor worldwide.

Moderator



Caroline Rudnick. A lawyer from the Universidad de Concepción, a Master in Criminal Policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a Fulbright Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow from the American University, specializing in human trafficking, corruption, and international human rights law. A member of the Capra Course Network, she has completed postgraduate courses in constitutional law and fundamental rights at the Carlos III University of Madrid, moral philosophy studies at the University of Concepción, and philosophy of science studies at the IFICC. She worked as a lawyer in the Organized Crime Department of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security of Chile, from where she coordinated the Intersectoral Table on Trafficking in Persons and its 2013-2014 national action plan. During 2016-2018 she was in charge of International Affairs of the Financial Analysis Unit (UAF), from where she led the construction of the Second National Strategy against money laundering and the financing of terrorism 2018-2020. She served as head of international relations for the Chilean Ministry of Women and Gender Equity in 2022. She co-founded and chaired Fundación Libera, a non-profit organization against human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery. She has been a professor at various Chilean universities, a consultant for the Inter-American Commission of Women and Eurosocial+, and a researcher at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law.

Speakers



Dr. Chris O'Connell is a Research Fellow at Dublin City University School of Law and Government. His most recent research project was co-funded by the European Commission and the Irish Research Council and was developed in collaboration with Anti-Slavery International. The project focused on the relationship and responses to climate change, environmental degradation, and contemporary forms of slavery in Peru and Bolivia. He is the author of the groundbreaking report entitled "From a vicious to a virtuous circle". Chris has a Ph.D. in Political Science from Dublin City University.



Noortje Denkers is a specialist in Labor Migration. Dutch. Sociologist. Graduated from Cardiff University. Master's degree in Sociology from the London School of Economics and Political Science and is currently studying for a Master's degree in forced migration and refugees from the University of London. She served as an ILO child labor expert for Latin America and the Caribbean (2008-2021). She worked at the ILO headquarters in Geneva at PARDEV before joining the ILO Office in San José in 2008. Before joining the ILO, she worked as an independent consultant with NGOs, academic institutions, UN agencies, the World Bank, and USDOL in Latin America, Africa, and Europe. She assumed the current role in March 2021.



Quinn Sandor Kepes is the Senior Program Director in the Raw Materials Programs Department at Verité, where he has worked for more than 14 years providing companies, governments, investors, intergovernmental organizations, workers, and civil society with the knowledge and tools they need to eliminate human and labor rights abuses by global supply chains. He oversees Verité's programming and research on raw materials in the Americas. He is also co-author of reports for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Persons and Contemporary Forms of Slavery, and the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. Kepes has conducted and directed field investigations on human trafficking and other human rights and labor risks in illegal gold mining and agriculture (coffee, palm oil, sugar, cattle, corn products, peanuts, Brazil), shellfish (shrimp, tuna, illegal fishing) and the clothing sector. Quinn Kepes has investigated links between organized crime and human rights abuses for Verité and other organizations.



Alberto Arenas. Lawyer (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú), postgraduate studies on public policies and children's rights (Universidad Diego Portales - Chile), master's degree in management of social programs and projects at the (Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia), master's degree in management and administration (Polytechnic University of Madrid). I work as an independent consultant for private and public entities, and United Nations agencies at a national and international level. I have conducted various research on human trafficking and forced labor.



Helena de Souza Rocha is a professor and a lawyer. Codirector of the Program for Brasil and the Southern Cone of the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL). LLM in International Human Rights Law at the University of Essex and e MSc in Forensic Psychology at the Universidade Tuiuti de Paraná, where she coordinates the Human Rights Clinic. She is also vice-president of the Commission for the Defence of Human Rights of the Bar Association in the state of Paraná, Brazil.



Santiago Inchausti (Argentina, 1975) has been a federal judge since 2009. He is currently in charge of Federal Court No. 3 of Mar del Plata. As a judge, he has handled numerous cases of human trafficking and complex crimes (against humanity, drug trafficking, and money laundering). University professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Buenos Aires and at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Mar del Plata. He is the author of various publications and has been a speaker at conferences, seminars, and conferences on criminal law, national and international. He participated in the Summit of Judges on Trafficking in Persons in the Vatican in 2016. Recently, he has received special recognition for his performance in the fight against

Day Two: Human Mobility and Forced Labor - An Intersectoral Response

Welcome and Introduction



Gemma Bardají Blasco

Social and Cultural Anthropologist. Diploma in Culture of Peace. Master in Gender and Development. He currently works as Manager of Free the Slaves in Latin America and Europe. In the last 25 years, she has worked in different organizations, both NGOs, United Nations Agencies, and government institutions, always in favor of human rights and gender equality. He has worked in different countries such as Spain, Guatemala, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic. She has been a collaborator of the Network of Gender Experts of the United Nations Development Program in Latin America for four years. In recent years he has specialized in the subject of human trafficking, first from the academic field and in the last 3 years, he has been working directly with communities in vulnerable situations.



Fernando García-Robles is a specialist in human rights, a career diplomat, and a Coordinator for more than 15 years of the Program for the Prevention, Processing, and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons of the Organization of American States (OAS). In 2019 he joined the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), where he collaborated in the promotion of technical cooperation and public policies on human rights. He is currently part of the team of the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Migrants from where he contributes to the development and strengthening of the fight against human trafficking in the Americas with a human rights approach. Academically, he holds two master's degrees, one in the Development of Public Policy for Latin America from Johns Hopkins University and the other in International Studies for Peace from the University of Notre Dame in the United States of America. He has two diplomas, one in Conflict Resolution from the University of Uppsala in Sweden and the other in Studies for Development and Peace from the European University for Peace in Austria.

Speakers	
	<p>Águeda Marín, Senior Regional Specialist for Migrant Protection and Assistance at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Regional Office for South America. Ms. Marín has a Master's in International Development from Clark University, Massachusetts. For more than 20 years, from the IOM, he has implemented projects related to human trafficking and assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations, focusing on institutional strengthening, direct attention, and multilateral coordination throughout the continent.</p>
	<p>Ximena Rattoni is a social and trade union activist. He is part of the management and founding member of La Alameda, a social and political organization whose aim is to contribute to the construction of a fair, inclusive, and sustainable world. Among its branches, there is the NGO Fundación Alameda which fights against human trafficking and exploitation. She is also a union leader, currently Union Secretary of the Association of Hierarchical Personnel of the Natural Gas Industry, a sector where she has worked for twenty-seven years.</p>
	<p>Camilo Gallego Pulgarín is a sociologist from the University of Antioquia and an audiovisual communicator from the Jaime Isaza Cadavid Colombian Polytechnic, with studies on a gender perspective, diversities, and sexual dissidence from the University of Antioquia and the University of Chile. He currently works as a Psychosocial Professional in Caribe Afirmativo in the area of Human Mobility, for the full exercise of human rights of LGBT social sectors. He has been in the leadership of research exercises on human trafficking in Colombia with victims of the LGBT sectors and has participated in research with the Electoral Observation Mission, the National Center for Historical Memory, and the Institute of Regional Studies of the University of Colombia. Antioch; In addition, at this same University he was the founder and coordinator of the Gender and Power Research Seedbed between 2018 and 2020.</p>



Mr. Dante Pesce has a Master's Degree in Political Science from the Catholic University of Chile and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University. He is the Founder and Executive Director of the VINCULAR Center for Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development of the Catholic University of Valparaíso, Chile (2001-present), working in 14 Latin American countries in extension services, capacity building, and consulting related to sustainability and responsibility. business practices including business and human rights, sustainability reporting, corporate sustainability strategy. His work involves interactions and projects with public sector organizations, private companies, and business associations. Mr. Pesce is a Special Advisor on Public Policy to the United Nations Global Compact, a member of the Stakeholder Council of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and a member of the Strategic Advisory Group within ISO26000. At the national level, it is a member of the Chilean Council of Social Responsibility for Sustainable Development that established the first Chilean National Action Plan 2015-2018. In the late 1980s, he was active in the restoration of democracy in Chile and during the 1990s he was the leader of a grassroots NGO.



María Prieto is the Founder and Director of Kombuchacha, the only certified organic kombucha in Chile, and the largest in the national market. Kombuchacha is also distinguished by its three ambitious pillars that guide the company to be of social and environmental impact, from Araucanía. With two careers, several successful ventures in environmental issues, being an entrepreneur since her adolescence, and with 24 years of living in different countries of the world; María has a global vision of the South of Chile. María believes that many changes are possible from ventures and companies, by counting on consumers as allies, and she believes in the power of change for a happier future. This drives her to run her company with a look of hope, applying this energy in her advice to entrepreneurs and in the NGOs she has created in the South.



Sol Henchoz Degree in Labor Relations with a specialty in union organizations. She is currently Head of Labor Inspections in rural areas of the Argentine Union of Rural Workers and Stevedores (UATRE).



Carlos Eduardo Silva is a lawyer. He was an advisor to the Federation of Agricultural Workers in the State of Bahia, the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), and is currently an advisor to the National Confederation of Rural Workers and Salaried Workers (CONTAR). He represents CONTAG in the National Commission for the Eradication of Slave Labor (CONATRAE) and participated in the construction of the National Policy for Employed Rural Workers prepared by the Brazilian Government. For 15 years he has participated in the negotiations of collective labor contracts, especially in the agricultural export supply chains. He currently coordinates cooperation projects in defense of human rights in supply chains, developed in partnership with national and international civil society organizations.