



## Migration and Refugee Service

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## Human Trafficking in Supply Chains

### Helping to Eliminate Modern Slavery through Responsible Consumerism

#### Introduction

Human trafficking is a phenomenon that afflicts every corner of the globe enslaving women, men, and children into manual labor, sexual servitude, and debt bondage. In recent years, growing public awareness has led to a realization that human trafficking is not a removed criminal incidence occurring in remote communities but instead is hidden in plain sight, whether in the brothel, or in the fields, or the products that we purchase and consume. It is the last category—the existence of human trafficking in a company's supply chain—that is the newest frontier of the global effort to eliminate human trafficking.

#### What is a Supply Chain?

- A supply chain is a system of organizations, people, activities, information, and resources involved in moving a product or service from supplier to customer. Supply chain activities transform natural resources, raw materials, and components into a finished product that is delivered to the end customer.

#### What Is the Link to Human Trafficking?

- Human trafficking in supply chains is inextricably linked to global commerce. For example, approximately 90% (18.7 million) of the 20.9 million global forced laborers identified by the ILO<sup>1</sup> are exploited in the private economy, by individuals or enterprises.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, companies who are found to produce, source, and sell products that utilize human trafficking in their supply chains are facing international pressure to clean up their supply chains.<sup>3</sup> Reflecting this growing knowledge, more companies are becoming aware of the potential of modern day slavery in their global operations and supply chains. The principle that companies have a responsibility to respect human rights and address issues such as exploitative supply chains has gained unprecedented acceptance over the past decade and is rooted in moral law.

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<sup>1</sup> See INT'L LABOUR ORG., ILO GLOBAL ESTIMATE OF FORCED LABOUR: RESULTS AND METHODOLOGY 11 (2012), [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_182004.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_182004.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour, ILO, May 20, 2014, [http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/order-online/books/WCMS\\_243391/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/order-online/books/WCMS_243391/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. A. Dunn, Children and Chocolate: The Sweet Industry's Bitter Side, [www.ConfectioneryNews.com](http://www.ConfectioneryNews.com), January 30, 2014; DT Bishkek, Forced Labour in Uzbekistan: In the Land of Cotton, *Economist*, October 16, 2013

## Catholic Social Teaching on Human Trafficking and Responsible Consumerism

- The Catholic Church has long voiced opposition and concern relating to human trafficking, which was recently described by His Holiness Pope Francis as a “despicable activity and a disgrace to our societies.” USCCB has historically worked to combat human trafficking and continues with those efforts today. Catholic Social Teaching affirms the dignity of every human life, and therefore calls us to action to eradicate slavery in any form or manifestation.
- Recognizing the importance of ethically-minded business leader, the Vatican Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace’s, Reflection on the Vocation of Business Leader, calls upon business owners to “produce goods and services that meet genuine human needs while also taking responsibility for the social and environmental costs of production, supply and distribution chain.”
- The Catholic bishops of the United States have addressed the need for responsible consumerism in the pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*, which emphasizes three basic themes of doing no harm (avoiding evil), active corporate participation, and Promotion of the Common Good as guidance on ethical investing.<sup>4</sup>

## What Can You Do to Support Ethical Consumerism and Eliminate Human Trafficking from Supply Chains?

- **Become a Responsible Consumer** Visit [slaveryfootprint.com](http://slaveryfootprint.com) to find out how you may be unknowingly supporting slave labor. Learn what you can do about it by visiting [CRSFairtrade.org](http://CRSFairtrade.org)
- **Learn about active engagement** Check out [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](#) on Shareholder Advocacy 101: A Primer on Active Ownership
- **Call your Representative or Senator and ask for the introduction of supply chain transparency legislation**
- **Become familiar with papal [teaching](#) on slavery** and more versed on how Catholic social teaching applies to this phenomenon. A good place to start is with Pope Francis’ most recent World Day of Peace Message, which specifically focused on human trafficking (link: For more information and questions, please contact Ashley Feasley, Policy Advisor, at [afeasley@usccb.org](mailto:afeasley@usccb.org)).

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<sup>4</sup> Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines, USCCB, November 12, 2003, available at <http://www.usccb.org/about/financial-reporting/socially-responsible-investment-guidelines.cfm>