

Background to the reports

Forced labour occurs on a spectrum of exploitation. Where does decent work end and labour exploitation begin, and where does labour exploitation end and forced labour begin?

In long and complex supply chains, it can be difficult for members to have enough visibility of the issues, or enough influence with suppliers and recruiters, to address the problem. The Sedex [Forced Labour Indicator Reports](#) aim to draw members' attention to pragmatic operational indicators of forced labour within your supply chain. These indicators can - either independently or in various combinations - indicate the potential risk of forced labour through a worker's employment cycle.

How it works

The reports draw on non-compliances and observations raised during audits, along with Sedex Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) answers, to identify where operational indicators have been identified within your supply chain. The number of indicators identified at specific sites, and their strength (definite, strong or possible), are weighted to calculate a site's Forced Labour Risk Score.

Important considerations when reviewing the report and outputs

Users of the reports are encouraged to first review Sedex's [Guidance on Operational Practice & Indicators of Forced Labour](#), which expands on the [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)'s Operational indicators of trafficking in human beings](#), and forms the basis of the indicators within the reports.

Before using the information contained within the reports, users should also consider that:

- Audit indicators are aligned with the *issue title* selected by the audit company, rather than the *auditor's description* of the issue. Best practice is to always review the auditor's description and make further judgement regarding the severity of any issue raised or observation made
- The inclusion of operational indicators does not necessarily mean that forced labour exists at a given site, they are provided as an indication of an increased risk that bears further enquiry. Equally, the absence of indicators is not evidence that forced labour does not exist at a site
- Information extracted from the reports can be very sensitive and we recommend that they should be managed carefully on a need-to-know basis, communicated only across appropriate senior team members in members' businesses and ought not to be shared outside of your organisation
- The reports should be used in conjunction with the [SMETA sensitive issue guidance](#) and other resources. Customers are encouraged to use the report findings to help frame their discussions with suppliers around the appropriate management systems in place to help address issues of labour exploitation.

It makes sense therefore for a site's forced labour score not to be used in isolation, but rather as an additional reference tool to help support your responsible sourcing programme.

Addressing forced labour within your supply chain

Sedex encourages investigation, evidence gathering and root-cause analysis of labour exploitation, in order for stakeholders to develop their own long-term solutions to a serious issue that is notoriously difficult to resolve.

When engaging with suppliers, Sedex recommends basing conversations on sites implementing effective management systems to address this issue over time. The [Sedex Supplier Workbook](#) provides detailed elements for a robust system, which can allow suppliers to introduce various initiatives to address issues.

If forced labour is discovered

In certain instances, forced labour issues may be found. In these cases, as a guiding principle, any immediate or on-going actions, taken by facility management and/or members, should focus on what is best for any possible victim in question. The primary responsibility when dealing with a potential victim is to ensure their safety and welfare.

Due to the sensitivity in this area, *it is imperative that robust evidence is present in order to avoid any issues of defamation or legal action*. Therefore, Sedex recommends using some of the below practical toolkits on remediating forced labour from experienced organisations in the field of forced labour issues:

- [Verite](#)
- [Fairtrade](#)
- [Anti-slavery International](#)
- [US Department of Labor](#)

For further information on identifying forced labour issues, please get in touch with one of the following organisations:

- [Anti-Slavery International](#)
- [Verite](#)
- [Stronger Together](#)
- [Walk-free](#)
- [Unseen](#)

Please note: the indicators are not exhaustive and are not intended to be used as a substitute for legal advice; consequently, all liability for any claim or loss is excluded.