



AIM-Progress – supporting an initiative to tackle forced and child labor in US supply chains

AIM-Progress and its members have been concerned to see increasing cases of forced and child labor¹ reported in US supply chains in recent months.

Evidence from the US Department of Labor and the National Human Trafficking Hotline indicates that cases of forced labor² and child labor³ nationwide have increased significantly in the last five years. Cases of minors employed in violation of hazardous occupation laws and working outside of federally allowed hours have also increased⁴ across states and industries.

Research indicates that increased global poverty, volatility and migration, alongside shortages in the US labor market are contributing factors in these trends⁵.

AIM-Progress aims to positively impact people's lives and promote respect for human rights, while delivering value to our members and their supply chains. With these goals in mind, we are supporting the development of a US initiative to strengthen the capability of our members' co-manufacturers, co-packers, suppliers, labor providers and service providers to adhere to applicable labor laws, recruit labor responsibly and minimize risks of forced and child labor.

The initiative will aim to increase the identification of cases of forced and child labor, promote the provision of remediation for exploited workers and intends to help tackle root causes, including empowering workers to realize their rights and to raise issues. It will focus on both directly employed workers and those sourced via temporary staffing agencies or service providers, recognizing that the risks of forced and child labor apply to, or can impact, both groups.

The initiative's starting point in any work with co-manufacturers, co-packers, suppliers, labor providers and service providers and their supply chains will be in compliance with the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (amended 2022), which includes the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor and the effective abolition of child labor⁶. Compliance with US national and state-level laws⁷ which contain specific provisions against different forms of child labor and forced labor, including bans on the employment of

¹ Child labor is defined by the [International Labour Organisation](#) as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that: is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work”.

² In 2021 the National Human Trafficking Hotline received a total of 51,073 substantive reports of human trafficking nationwide, a 40% increase from 2017.

³ The US Department of Labor reports that cases of child labour violations and minors employed in violation of the law have risen in the United States since 2016 with a 37% increase in child labour violations to 3,876 in FY 2022
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/data/charts/child-labor>

⁴ The Work and Hours Division of the US Department of Labour commonly finds young workers under the age of 16 working outside of federally allowed hours, and workers under 18 assigned to prohibited or hazardous occupations with employers failing to keep accurate records for young workers <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/data/charts/child-labor>

⁵ Forced and child labor impacts workers legally working in the US as well as those without documentation with a study by the National Institute of Justice finding that 71% of those experiencing forced labor in the US entered the country on lawful H-2A and H-2B visas
<https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/forced-labor>

⁶ [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work \(DECLARATION\)](#)

⁷ Federal child labour laws for different sectors are summarised [here](#) and state level child labor laws [here](#).



minors in 17 hazardous occupations⁸ is also required, as is ensuring all contractual requirements are met.

As initial steps, the initiative will support members' co-manufacturers, co-packers, suppliers, labor providers and service providers to:

- Enable all workers and staff on site to understand the indicators of forced and child labor and know who to report risks to
- Reaffirm systems for identifying cases of forced and child labor including grievance mechanisms, hiring protocols and age verification processes
- Strengthen the systems, grievance mechanisms, hiring protocols and age-verification processes of any providers of on-site outsourced labor to manage forced and child labor risks
- Increase focus on management and wellbeing of third-shift workers
- Support increased awareness of, and linkages to, organizations able to provide remedy to survivors of forced labor and child labor
- Identify and address, wherever possible, root causes of forced and child labor with workers, government, civil society and communities.

Participation in the initiative will be voluntary for all members with US operations or supply chains and will focus on the highest exposure co-manufacturers, co-packers, suppliers, labor providers and service providers. Further details will be provided by September 2023.

AIM-Progress recognizes that we will only effectively address these kinds of issues and enable remediation for those affected if there is transparency on the issues of forced and child labor. AIM-Progress encourages its members to promote openness about issues identified with their co-manufacturers, co-packers, suppliers, labor providers and service providers and responsible and supportive remediation for cases of forced labor and child labor wherever feasible.

Initial guidance for co-manufacturers, co-packers, suppliers, labor providers and service providers can be found via the following links:

- Federal and child labor laws for different sectors are summarised [here](#) and state level child labor laws [here](#).
- Guidance for understanding the risks of child labor in the US produced by Verite can be found [here](#)
- US agriculture forced labor resources for business produced by Stronger Together can be found [here](#)

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⁸ <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/FairLaborStandAct.pdf>