

MAKING YOUR COMPANY PART OF THE SOLUTION: LEGAL COMPLIANCE WITH CHILD AND FORCED LABOR LAWS

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Many countries are uniting for one simple cause: stopping child and forced labor. The US Department of Labor (DOL) is committed to stopping child labor and has adopted this as a key platform. On 13 June 2013, the World Day Against Child Labor, Carol Pier, Acting Deputy Undersecretary of the DOL's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), addressed this issue on the DOL's official blog. Previously, on 8 February 2013, the United Nations released a report finding that there are 21 million victims of child and forced labor worldwide, and called for tougher efforts and standards in the prevention, identification and prosecution of forced labor. The International Labor Organization (ILO), which prepared the report, estimated that about 26 per cent, or 5.5 million, of the 21 million victims are children under the age of 18. The US is not alone in providing funding for programs aimed at combating child labor internationally since the mid-1990s. Funds for such programs have resulted in more than 250 projects in over 90 countries, in partnership with a variety of governments, international institutions, civil society organizations and industry groups. Concerned employers have dedicated private resources to support this important initiative.

Companies should review their practices to ensure they are not violating child labor laws or unwittingly supporting such practices in their global operations. Many companies are already involved in efforts to combat child and forced labor on an international basis through numerous governmental and philanthropic programs. It may be difficult to maintain a high level of diligence because multinational businesses are

Related People



Cheryl L. Behymer

Senior Counsel

[803.255.0000](tel:803.255.0000)

not always familiar with every detail and participant in the supply chain.

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