

International Justice Mission Canada: Responses to the Study on the Vulnerabilities Created and Exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic

Presented to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

February 4, 2021

Question asked by MP Garnett Genuis

1. How would you compare Canada's existing laws around supply chains to other models that exist around the world? What other countries should we be looking to?

Canada is one of the G20 nations that has not yet taken action to stop sourcing goods and services at risk of being produced by forced labour slavery—in other words, to take action on slavery in supply chains. Of the G20 nations, six countries have developed legislation: Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia.¹

The five G20 countries in the Americas - Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, and the United States - collectively import US\$172 billion per annum of products at risk of being produced with modern slavery. Only Brazil and the United States are currently taking action to respond to forced labour in the private or public economy.² Other G20 Nations, including the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy have enacted legislation to minimize the risk of modern slavery in supply chains - Canada has not. This is in spite of polls indicating that 89% of Canadians want to know whether their purchases are tainted with slavery.³

According to Measurement Action Freedom, an independent assessment of government progress towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 (SDG 8.7), Canada was one of the three countries in the Americas who saw a decrease in their government response score.⁴ The Dominican Republic moved from 6 to 5 rating, while Jamaica and Canada moved from 7 to 6.⁵ This put Canada in 23rd place, having met only 59.4% of the desired milestones - almost 20% behind the United Kingdom, whose government was the most responsive.⁶

According to "Walk Free,"

¹ Global Slavery Index, "Table 4: G20 government responses on business supply chain transparency: Status of laws requiring business to report on actions taken to minimise modern slavery risk in supply chains," *Global Slavery Index*, 2018, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/importing-risk/g20-countries>.

² The Minderoo Foundation Pty Ltd., *Measurement Action Freedom*, 68, 2019, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/resources/downloads/>.

³ Ipsos Reid, "Canadians Drastically Underestimate the Number of Child Slaves Globally; On Average, Estimate 1/10th the Actual Amount," July 16, 2013, *Ipsos.com*, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/canadians-drastically-underestimate-number-child-slaves-globally-average-estimate-110th-actual>.

⁴ Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. *Sustainable Development Solutions Network*.

⁵ The Minderoo Foundation Pty Ltd., *Measurement Action Freedom*, 59-60, 2019, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/resources/downloads/>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

The findings in [Measurement Action Freedom] tell us that the world will not deliver on SDG 8.7 by the 2030 target date, forgoing the unique opportunity the Sustainable Development Agenda provides the international community to effect change as part of a global movement.

Accordingly, we must redouble our efforts and mobilise the full power of businesses, faiths, and the global community toward a common purpose: energising and galvanising governments to do more – much more – to end modern slavery in their countries.⁷

It is becoming increasingly clear that Canada should address the lack of supply chain legislation. Additionally, International Justice Mission (IJM) around the world is taking the stance that legislation like *Bill S-216* should be enacted alongside Forced Labour Import Bans - another important tool in the fight against slavery.

2. In Fighting OSEC (Online Sexual Exploitation of Children): what can we do to represent the rights of minors who are not Canadian and how can we hold Canadian perpetrators accountable?

For recent example, [refer to 2017 OSEC conviction of Saskatchewan perpetrator, Philip Chicoine.](#)

IJM's theory of change centers on replacing impunity with accountability. Where impunity is allowed to thrive, violence follows. Consequently, holding Canadian perpetrators accountable starts by ensuring a clear line of communication between Canadian law enforcement and national law enforcement in the country of the victim is crucial. Currently, Canada lacks an RCMP liaison officer in the Philippines, which significantly hampers the flow of information needed to track down leads coming out of Canada.

3. Mindgeek – Pornhub: Comment on the accountability of companies and role of internet service providers and government in ending OSEC.

IJM's [End OSEC Centre](#) is producing white papers on issues like this. Attached find the Center's recent white paper on the *Tech and Financial Sector Indicators of Livestreaming Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC)*, which highlights the need to prioritize protection of minors over other competing priorities.

4. What type of aid spending can advance justice, and how can that money be spent most effectively?

Investing in IJM directly is an efficient method to effect the desired outcomes of Canada's foreign aid agenda. In countries like [India](#), IJM works to end slavery by partnering with local justice systems which has produced systemic changes and led to greater equality. IJM also works in Latin America and throughout Africa on issues related to gender inequality including [Violence against Women and Children](#).

⁷ Walk Free Foundation, "Findings: Foreword," *Global Slavery Index*, accessed December 17, 2020, <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2019/findings/foreword>.

The most effective use of Canadian Foreign Aid would be to invest in protection for those in poverty: leveraging IJM’s strong global network of relationships to build capacity in justice systems throughout the developing world.

Questions asked by MP Peter Fonseca

1. Bill s-216 – Why did IJM Canada support this Bill and why is it important?

Modern slavery currently affects an estimated 40.3 million people globally, as reported by the Global Slavery Index, a majority of which are women and girls. While Canada is ranked 166 out of 167 countries for prevalence of modern slavery within its borders, Canadians still interact with products at risk of modern slavery on a daily basis. It is estimated that more than 1,200 companies operating in Canada are importing goods that have been produced by child or forced labour. Canada imports approximately \$15 billion in products annually whose supply chains are at risk of involving modern slavery.

Canada is one of the G20 nations that has not yet taken action to stop sourcing goods and services at risk of being produced by forced labour slavery—in other words, to take action on slavery in supply chains. Of the G20 nations, six countries have developed legislation: Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia.⁸

It is becoming increasingly clear that Canada should take action on this issue. A recent poll by Ipsos Reid showed that 89% of Canadians want to know if child labour and modern slavery have been used in the supply chain and what the government is doing to combat it.⁹ Bill S-216 would provide a framework to answer these questions and bring Canada in alignment with SDG 8.7.¹⁰

2. What gap would this address in the Canadian legal framework?

The primary gap identified is between Canadians’ desire to make informed purchase decisions and the lack of information (supply chain transparency) that would allow them to know if their purchases were tainted with slavery.

Additionally, IJM around the world is taking the stance that legislation like Bill S-216 should be enacted alongside Forced Labour Import Bans - another important tool in the fight against slavery.

⁸ Global Slavery Index, Table 4, “G20 government responses on business supply chain transparency: Status of laws requiring business to report on actions taken to minimise modern slavery risk in supply chains,” accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.globallslaveryindex.org/2018/findings/importing-risk/g20-countries>.

⁹ Ipsos Reid, “Canadians Drastically Underestimate the Number of Child Slaves Globally; On Average, Estimate 1/10th the Actual Amount,” July 16, 2013, *Ipsos.com*, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/canadians-drastically-underestimate-number-child-slaves-globally-average-estimate-110th-actual>.

¹⁰ Sustainable Development Goal 8.7: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. [Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#).

Question asked by MP Heather McPherson

1. Name one or two things that the Government of Canada needs to prioritize:
 - a. Passing Bill s-216 into law and critically considering the use of Forced Labour Import bans.
 - b. Investing in trusted partners like IJM, where 97% of staff are local citizens of the countries where work is carried out. It should be noted that the Philippines, India, Latin America, and South-East Asia are specific areas where Canada can have significant impact on protection for people living in poverty through government funded initiatives.

Question asked by MP Kerry Diotte

1. Are Canadians concerned that vaccines from the developing world are being re-directed to Canada through Covax?
 - a. IJM is a world leader in collaborating with other NGO's and governments and understands that aligning with the government is important. In the countries where IJM works, the organization is not involved in the distribution of vaccines but continues to support local justice systems as they manage their way through the pandemic.

Question asked by MP Ya'ara Saks

1. Has the crime of trafficking changed during this time of COVID-19? Should Canada's approach to Gender-Based Violence and trafficking change in light of it?
 - a. Yes, criminals and traffickers have changed tactics and have become very opportunistic, taking advantage of those pushed further into poverty through effects of the pandemic. Our response to combating this increase in trafficking needs to leverage technology in order to fight the crime at scale:
 - i. Investing in technology within justice systems to give service providers access to "on-call" training. This type of immediacy is essential, as many cases of Gender-Based Violence happen in rural areas affected by poverty where justice service providers have limited access to training. IJM's program plan and tactics to fight Gender-Based Violence within the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador) involves developing this kind of "on-call" technological response platform.
 - ii. In the Philippines, OSEC rose by 300% over the course of 2020. Investing in technology and information sharing between Internet Service Providers, financial institutions, and law enforcement will facilitate a transition away from reactive methods towards proactive approaches to combatting this crime.