

### MYTH 3

The risk of experiencing human and labor rights violations begins on fishing boats and at processing facilities

### TRUTH

Workers can be exposed to risk long before they enter a processing facility or board a vessel



*What does the recruitment industry have to do with forced labor and human trafficking?*



Traditional efforts to address exploitation of workers in supply chains has focused on the immediate working conditions at the factory or on a vessel. However, workers' risk of exploitation often begins during recruitment process, long before they even get a job.

Unscrupulous recruitment agents or brokers may require workers to pay excessive fees up front, or fees with an exorbitant interest rate to secure employment. Without other options for repayment, this can lead workers into situations of debt bondage, in which they are trapped in a job in order to repay accrued debt to secure employment.

Workers who have paid excessive fees are less likely to report their situation if they do not feel there is a very strong likelihood of receiving justice - fear of potential job loss, reprisals, or unfair treatment make workers more vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation, and less likely to report violations.

*"The existence of the debt—and the worker's urgent need to repay it— means that the worker can more easily be manipulated by the employer to accept lower wages than were promised, poor working conditions, excessive work hours, or similar abusive practices." - VERITÉ*

The "First Mile": This situation is sometimes called the "first mile" because workers accrue the debt that makes them vulnerable to exploitation, debt bondage, and threats early in the recruitment process - even before they've even stepped foot in a processing facility or arrived on a vessel.

Why this matters for businesses:

- Employers can have debt bonded workers at their facility, due to their own recruitment process
- Employers can share ethical and legal responsibility for recruitment practices
- Employers are developing responsible and ethical recruitment policies and practices as a critical component of reducing and preventing human rights risks in supply chains.

## Q *What is Ethical Recruitment?*

**A** Ethical recruitment refers to the idea that no worker should pay exploitative fees to secure a job, and that companies should ensure that workers are recruited into their supply chains through legal and ethical processes, with worker safe-guards and transparency built into the hiring process.

“Ethical recruitment means that workers are not charged any costs or fees related to the recruitment process. Ethical recruitment, however, is more than just an employer pays principle or “zero fees to workers” model. It is also about hiring workers lawfully, treating the workers with dignity, and ensuring transparency, accountability, and worker safeguards are embedded into the process” - Issara Institute

## Q *What can companies do to improve recruitment practices in supply chains?*

**A** Establish zero fees to worker policies throughout supply chains: In this context, there is a growing interest in the fee-free or “Employer Pays” model of recruitment. In this model, migrant workers are not charged a recruitment fee and all costs are met by the employer.

Map labor recruiters in supply chains and set clear transparent guidance on desired costs and steps throughout the recruitment process, including at source and destination countries, as appropriate

Work with partners who are on-the-ground and can support responsible recruitment initiatives, ideally those who can utilize worker voice from impacted job seekers/ workers.

Write responsible recruitment/Employer Pays Principle into supplier expectation letters and require ethical practices of subcontractors within their supply chains. In addition to protecting workers in own company supply chains, this also builds demand for ethical recruitment in the recruitment agency market and drives business to recruitment agencies upholding best practice.

Participate in a variety of multi-stakeholder initiatives focused on responsible recruitment involving corporate leaders, including the Responsible Business Alliance, Consumer Goods Forum, and the Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment.