

ENDING FORCED LABOUR

*Exclusive from
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The employment markets across Ciett's South East Asia Pacific Region are all very different with different regulatory as well as cultural challenges impacting the way our industry operates in all Ciett member countries. However there is one thing that is common across all of them – the desire by Ciett members to eliminate unethical recruitment practices that impact foreign workers working across the region and the reputation of the private employment agencies in the region.

More and more workers are looking for job opportunities outside their home country, and employers are looking offshore to gain access to workers where they are experiencing skills shortages — particularly in talent-strapped areas in Asia Pacific. With this trend comes the risk of human trafficking and forced labour.

It is estimated there are over 20 million workers in forced labour around the world with many examples across the entire Asia Pacific region. The ILO defines forced labour as when a person is coerced to work through the use of violence or intimidation, forced to pay debt accumulated

through fees, or is forced to work because he or she has had identity papers confiscated to prevent them leaving the employer or reporting the abuse.

Private employment agencies play a key role in the recruitment of workers across borders, and many reputable firms provide an important and valuable service. They would not engage in such practices! However, there are also operators, labour brokers, and informal intermediaries who seek to profit through exploitation.

This can lead to instances in which workers are deceived about the nature of the work and conditions they enter into, have had their identity documents confiscated, are forced to pay deposits and bonds, are subjected to illegal wage deductions, or forced into debt.

Ciett and Ciett members across the region are actively working with the ILO and IOM to develop ethical recruitment practice guidelines and educating governments and employers about the risks to workers across the region. ■

