

Modern Day Slavery

In a dynamic and not static world, it is expected that changes will come with the passage of time. There is also the expectation that lessons would have been learnt, and so there would be anticipated changes in behaviour and actions. The apparently sometimes happens belatedly or by virtually by force circumstances. If the definition of a new norm was to be carefully studied, it would convey that it speaks to change. According to the Oxford dictionary, the new norm is defined as a situation that used to be unusual but is now what you should expect.

In reflecting on the things which are happening locally, regionally and globally, it would appear that the more things appear to change, the more they remain the same. History would recall the long struggles in an effort to bring an end to slavery. This practice has always been and continues to an economic activity. It is a social injustice which has been denounced, but new ways have been found to exploit those who are vulnerable and more so, live in poverty.

The international Labour Organization through its Convention No. 105, addresses the issue of force labour. Article 2 of the Convention calls on each member of the International Labour Organisation which ratified the Convention, to undertake to take effective measures to secure the immediate and complete abolition of forced or compulsory labour as specified in Article 1 of the Convention.

Article 1 of Convention No. 105, states, Each Member of the International Labour Organization which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labour:(a) as a means of political coercion or education or as a punishment for holding or expressing political views or views ideologically opposed to the established political, social or economic system;(b) as a method of mobilizing and using labour for purposes of economic development;(c) as a means of labour discipline;(d) as a punishment for having participated in strikes;(e) as a means of racial, social, national or religious discrimination.

As of October 2022, 178 of the 187 ILO member countries have ratified the convention. There are nine ILO member countries who are yet to ratify the Convention. These are Brunei, East Timor, Laos, Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Palau, South Korea and Tonga. It is a matter of interest that the facts and figure show that 49.6 million people were living in modern slavery in 2021, of which 27.6 million were in forced labour and 22 million in forced marriage.

Research data suggest that forced labour is most prevalent in Arab countries, followed by Europe and Central Asia. It makes for interesting reading that nations with the highest number of people living in modern slavery included India, China, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey, Bangladesh, and the United States of America. It is shocking that in the USA, the land of the free and the home of democracy, that the thought of slavery could still be entertained.

Modern Day Slavery: Dennis de Peiza: Labour & Employee Relations Consultant: Regional Management Services Inc., October 27, 2023

It would seem that forced labour is the biggest component of modern-day slavery. This may be associated with the phenomenon known as human trafficking and even with the migration under the guise of refugees. These developments are seemingly extricably linked to globalization and poverty. With the promotion of immigration as the way to ensure population growth as a means of stimulating economic development, it is understandable why human trafficking is possible the prefer mode for the uptake of persons being exploited and abused across the world. These persons who generally lived in poverty become trapped. They are caught between a rock and a hard place, since they cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power. This is confirmed by Palermo Protocol, who made the observation that human trafficking involves three elements: the act (recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring and the receipt of persons), the means (threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception and abuse of power or vulnerability), and the purpose (exploitation).

Modern slavery is not far removed from the practice of slavery in the colonial times. It continues to maintain some distinct features which include; forced Labour, bonded labour or debt bondage, domestic servitude, forced child labour, unlawful recruitment and the use of child soldiers.