CASTING A WIDE NET TO CATCH THE BIG FISH:  
A COMPREHENSIVE INITIATIVE TO REDUCE HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE  
GLOBAL SEAFOOD CHAIN  

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Millions of Americans devour the “All You Can Eat Shrimp” buffets at large seafood restaurants without a second thought that their fish could be the product of human trafficking and forced labor. In contrast, off the coasts of Thailand, in an industry with very little oversight or regulation, rogue captains buy crew members from human traffickers, subject them to a life of slavery with no means of escape, and use them to plunder the fishing grounds of surrounding nations, creating “a perfect storm” of slavery and environmental degradation. These abhorrent practices are deeply embedded in many global seafood supply chains. 

The disjointed structure of the global supply chain has served as a corporate shield to hide forced labor and human trafficking. With no clear-cut international or national enforcement mechanisms to monitor the integrity of supply chains, little risk of punishment, diminishing courses of action in court, and a fragmented consumer base to hold corporations accountable, corporations have little incentive to maintain transparency in their supply chains. 

This article evaluates the strengths and inadequacies of proposed international guidelines, current domestic global supply laws, and federal and state transparency legislation in the United States. The article then recommends a comprehensive initiative based on a model international standard that would serve as a platform to harness the strengths of individual countries’ legal, legislative, and economic endeavors in a synergistic and collective fashion.

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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Introduction

Dramatic stories of imprisoned workers being pulled from antiquated factories, and of gaunt, dazed women and girls escaping from hidden sex brothels regularly dot our nightly newscasts on human trafficking. A common theme in their stories is the sliver of hope that kept these enslaved workers alive until they escaped or were rescued. However, for one specific category of trafficked workers unbeknownst to most Americans, there is no such hope. These are workers lured to a harsh and violent life—and sometimes, a watery grave—as fishermen aboard foreign fishing vessels. Surrounded by miles of unending water for months or even years, there is no glimmer of escape from twenty-hour days of hauling fish, except by death.

The United Nations estimates that 7.9% of the world’s population is involved in the commercial fishing industry. The largest providers of seafood to the United States are Thailand

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1 See, e.g., Damall Keith, Human trafficking victims share their stories with FOX 26 News, FOX NEWS, (updated Oct. 29, 2013), http://www.myfoxhouston.com/story/23672987/2013/10/11/human-trafficking-victims-share-their-stories-with-fox-26-news#ixzz2sn4lRo78. The Trafficking Victims’ Protection Act (TVPA) defines “severe forms of trafficking in persons” as: (a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or (b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjecting to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-386, § 103(8), 114 Stat. 1464 (2000).

and China.\(^3\) Thailand has become a top-ten fishing nation,\(^4\) and, as of 2011, over 650,000 people were employed in the Thailand seafood industry.\(^5\) An investigative report proposed that forty percent of squid shipped from New Zealand was caught on a vessel using coerced labor.\(^6\) In addition, fifteen percent of all New Zealand hoki exports and eight percent of the country’s southern blue whiting catch may have originated from slave or trafficked labor.\(^7\) (Hoki is used in fried fish sandwiches in fast food chain restaurants in the U.S. like McDonald’s.\(^8\) Species that are caught on Thai deep-sea trawlers include mackerel, sardines, and “trash fish” used for fish sauce.\(^9\) Thai fish sauce supplies nearly eighty percent of the American market.\(^10\)

The unappetizing fact is a substantial portion of the seafood delicacies on our plates comes at a tremendous human cost that can no longer be dismissed. One out of six pounds of U.S. seafood imports come from Thailand—making it America’s second largest seafood supplier.\(^11\) In 2011, Thailand exported over 800 million pounds of seafood to the U.S, worth more than $2.5 billion.\(^12\) The United States is the world’s largest consumer of shrimp.\(^13\) Red Lobster, known for its “all you can eat” lobster and shrimp, is owned by Darden, which directly imports four million kilograms of shrimp per year.\(^14\) The trafficked victims on the high seas—at the remote end of the global supply chain—are responsible for supplying the seafood that we regularly consume.

The “global supply chain” refers to the network for exchanging materials, information, and labor through which products develop—from the acquisition of raw materials to final distribution.\(^15\) The disjointed nature of the global supply chain—with multiple parties along an informal assembly line—has inadvertently served to shield corporations from liability related to forced labor and human trafficking. With no clear cut international or federal enforcement mechanisms to monitor the integrity of supply chains, no risk of punishment, and weak theories of

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\(^7\) Id.


\(^9\) Patrick Winn, Did Slaves Catch Your Seafood?, SALON (May 21, 2012), http://www.salon.com/2012/05/21/did_slaves_catch_your_seafood/.

\(^10\) Id.


\(^12\) NAT'L OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMIN., supra note 3, at 63.


\(^14\) Id. at 7, 38.

corporate liability, the task of maintaining transparency in corporate supply chains has been dismissed as an exercise in public relations. It is not a surprise, therefore, that there has been almost no visible decline in forced labor.

In fact, according to the 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report), only about 40,000 out of an estimated 27 million victims of human trafficking worldwide were identified in the last year. For example, in 2012, Thailand reported that despite an increase in potential investigations, the number of prosecutions significantly decreased from sixty seven in 2011 to only twenty seven in 2012; compared to the twelve convictions made in 2011, in 2012 the government of Thailand convicted only ten offenders in four trafficking-related cases. Out of 7,705 people prosecuted for human trafficking globally in 2012, only half were convicted. Similarly, despite a federal statute specifically providing for civil causes of action for forced labor and human trafficking, the number of successful plaintiffs obtaining restitution against their traffickers in the past decade has also been surprisingly low.

B. Executive Summary

International communities and individual countries should collectively share information and formulate one model standard to certify, monitor, and audit global supply chains. The resulting model law or convention could then serve as a springboard or foundation that could direct individual countries to adopt their own national counterparts. Within each country, national and regional legislatures could continue to refine burgeoning global supply and product sourcing laws to pressure corporations to comply and could use their leverage to effectuate changed policies in their overseas trading partners. A clearly enunciated, uniform guideline could then be


18 U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT 7 (2013).

19 Id. at 359.

20 Id. at 46.


22 Naomi Jiyoung Bang, Justice for Victims of Human Trafficking and Forced Labor: Why Current Theories of Corporate Liability Do Not Work, 43 U. MEM. L. REV. 1047, 1050-51 (2013) ("A surprisingly small number of trafficking cases have been filed in federal district courts, and few of those cases involve the overseas global corporate supply contracting system. Since the 2003 amendment . . . include a private right of action for trafficked victims, [there were] only approximately forty cases [until August 2012]."). Only three more TVPRA cases were located by running searches on PACER, Westlaw, and Bloomberg from August 2012 to August 2013. See Lainez v. Baltazar, 5:11-CV-00167- BR, 2013 WL 3288369 (E.D.N.C. June 28, 2013); Ruiz v. Fernandez, CV-11-3088-RMP, 2013 WL 2467722 (E.D. Wash. June 7, 2013); Francisco v. Susano, No. 12-1376, 2013 WL 2302691 (10th Cir. May 28, 2013).
used to educate courts about new theories of corporate liability that reflect the international agreement and, thus, to expand avenues of relief to victims of forced labor and human trafficking. The model standard would also serve as a guidepost for corporations working in those countries to voluntarily investigate and reform labor abuse found in the global supply structure. And, downstream consumers could rely on those standards as benchmarks to exert power through their dollars to lobby for better labor conditions on behalf of the fishermen and other trafficked workers who put dinner on our table.

After examining some international initiatives, this Article will examine the methods adopted by the United States, both as a whole and by some individual states. Given the fact that the United States is a dominant market leader in the world, it is in a strategic position to use its dominant market share and influence to set an example and pressure its trade partners to join the so called “accountability revolution.”23 In 2009, Americans consumed a total of 4.8 billion pounds of seafood; the United States continues to be ranked the third largest consumer of fish and shellfish behind China and Japan.24 It is inconceivable that this exorbitant amount of food is not tainted with the footprints of human trafficking and forced labor. Therefore, this Article will turn to U.S. laws and legislation as examples to evaluate domestic global supply initiatives and extrapolate relevant conclusions.

C. Outline of Article

While the prevalence of human trafficking and slavery in factories, brothels, and diplomatic mansions around the world cannot be ignored, this Article will focus on the labor conditions of the enslaved fishermen on the high seas as the backdrop for an analysis of the global supply chain. The story of the trafficked fisherman is a compelling component of the “aquaculture”25 industry, and a vivid example of how such human trafficking and forced labor can be so deeply embedded in a corporate global supply chain with little public attention until very recently.

Part I of the Article will set forth a general background of the seafood or aquaculture industry and analyze the unique nature of obstacles in this sector that give rise to the proliferation of labor abuses aboard foreign fishing vessels. It will also examine the workings of the global supply chain in the seafood industry, using the shrimp sector as an example to examine the effects of how factors such as production and consumption by exporters fuel the cycle of forced labor and human trafficking.

Part II will present an overview of some of the major legal obstacles faced by plaintiffs in court, based on the results of past and pending civil litigation26 cases filed by trafficked workers in American federal district courts. It will also discuss implications of recent landmark cases and

propose possible expansions of existing legal remedies, such as the “economic realities test” under the “joint employer” doctrine to hold corporations accountable for the actions of their overseas contractors.

Part III will examine U.S. federal and state legislative responses developed to address the need for transparency in the global supply chain. In particular, this Section will examine the progress of the recently enacted California Transparency in Supply Chains Act (also known as “S.B. 657”). It will also discuss federal securities laws and other statutes that have been used to curtail the importation of tainted goods into the United States and change the behavior of corporations overseas. Additionally, Part III will consider how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) could align with transparency legislation to further strengthen the private sector’s contribution to the fight against human trafficking and slave labor.

Part IV will review current international legislative efforts to issue guidelines and standards to redress corporations that avoid accountability by distancing themselves from the global supply chains on which they rely.

Part V will set forth recommendations supporting a comprehensive initiative that is based on uniform international guidelines and would give birth to national and regional transparency laws, expansion of theories of corporate liability in court, consumer activism, and education of both potential victims and the industry in source countries.

Part VI will summarize the recommendations and set forth the conclusion.

I. THE GLOBAL SEAFOOD SUPPLY CHAIN AS A BREEDING GROUND FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND FORCED LABOR

A. Human Trafficking in the Fishing Industry

Today, the International Labor Office (ILO) estimates that 20.9 million people are in forced labor as a result of trafficking. The ILO, a United Nations agency created in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles, has played a crucial role internationally in the prevention of and fight against forced labor and human trafficking. While the media has covered hundreds of cases of sex trafficking and slavery, the less glamorous forced labor practices in industries such as agriculture and aquaculture account for 14.2 out of the 20.9 million in forced labor

Generally, forced labor occurs because “[a] firm’s goal is to maximize profit . . . [and since] labor is such a large part of business costs, a small increase in the cost of labor can

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28 ILO GLOBAL ESTIMATE OF FORCED LABOR REPORT, supra note 17, at 13.
significantly increase the cost of production and decrease profit.\textsuperscript{32} Moreover, given the globalization and intermingling of the world’s economies, the use of trafficked labor is easily hidden in the process, and the worker becomes invisible.\textsuperscript{33} In the case of the aquaculture industry, discussed below, workers are even more vulnerable than their counterparts in other industries such as garment, agriculture, and construction.

 Trafficking in the fishing sector is not a new phenomenon, but it has not received as much attention as other areas of business or manufacturing that produce more luxury goods, such as designer clothes and high-end coffee products. In the fishing industry, studies have focused on the human trafficking of migrant workers from Southeast Asian countries, such as young men from Laos promised better jobs in Thailand who are fooled with false offers and forced to work without pay on fishing boats at gunpoint.\textsuperscript{34} The government of Thailand, in its Department of Fisheries Report of January 2013, estimates that there are “over 300,000 workers . . . on fishing vessels that operate both in national and international waters.”\textsuperscript{35} International organizations have also found similar plights of trafficked workers in the fishing industry in places such as Kaliningrad Oblast, Scotland, and Ireland;\textsuperscript{36} Ukrainian fishermen exploited by Turkey, Russia, and South Korea;\textsuperscript{38} and the economic zone (EEZ) off West African coastal states.\textsuperscript{39}

\section*{B. Demand for Trafficked Goods Fueling Consumption}

International consumers—primarily in Europe and the United States—desire cheap and plentiful seafood, but must ignore their role in the increase of human trafficking and forced labor.\textsuperscript{40} The statistics are daunting. In Thailand, the booming demand for seafood has vastly

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[33] \textit{See id.} at 129 (explaining the “coercive nature of human trafficking” and the multiple levels between the trafficked laborers and the international corporations).
\item[35] Dep’t of Fisheries, Ministry of Agri. and Cooperatives (Thailand), \textit{Action Plan and Implementation by the Dep’t of Fisheries in Addressing Labour Issues and Promoting Better Working Conditions in Thai Fisheries Industry} 11 (2013), \url{http://www.nocht.m-society.go.th/album/download/367802a4be462f413c7a028e50980f.pdf}.
\item[36] Caught at Sea, supra note 30, at 11.
\item[37] UK Deportation Threat to Filipino Seafarers, Int’l Transport Workers’ Fed., (June 19, 2009), \url{http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/3422/region/0/section/0/order/1}.
\item[39] Caught at Sea, supra note 30, at 5, 11-12; see also Env’tl Justice Found., All At Sea: The Abuse of Human Rights Aboard Illegal Fishing Vessels 18-20 (2010), \url{http://ejfoundation.org/sites/default/files/public/media/report-all%20at%20sea_0.pdf}.
\item[40] \textit{See GOAL Projection: Surging Demand to Challenge Aquaculture Capacity}, \textit{Global Aquaculture Alliance} (Nov. 2010), \url{http://www.gaalliance.org/newsroom/news.php?GOAL-Projection-Surging-Demand-To-Challenge-Aquaculture-Capacity-23} (discussing how the rising global demand for seafood is also driven by a rapidly growing middle class in China and other Asian nations, increasing pressure on the aquaculture industry to find sustainable
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contributed to the fishing sector becoming a vital component of its emerging economy. There, “[t]he lucrative deep-sea fishing aspect of [Thailand’s] booming economy alone brings in well over an estimated four billion U.S. dollars every single year.” Thailand’s seafood industry employed more than 650,000 individuals and earned $7.3 billion in exports in 2011 through seafood processing, aquaculture, and marine fisheries. Fish is one of the most traded commodities globally and is of particular importance to developing countries. Some 55.7 million tons of fish were exported in 2009. In 2011, nation states exported fish valued at $125 billion.

The largest importers of fish from Thailand to the U.S. in 2011 include such familiar names such as: Chicken of the Sea, the largest seafood importer; Wal-Mart, the largest retailer of shrimp; as well as Kroger, Costco, Safeway, and Trader Joe’s. Other household names include: Costco Wholesale, America’s largest wholesaler and the world’s seventh-largest retailer; P.F. Chang’s China Bistro, a U.S.-based chain “with more than 200 restaurants worldwide and more than $1.2 billion in annual revenue;” and P&E Foods, which supplies to Sam’s Club, a 47 million-member wholesaler. Other New Zealand fishing companies, such as Sanford, have similar ties to U.S. based companies and businesses, such as Wal-Mart, Safeway, and Whole Foods.

C. Unique Vulnerabilities of Workers in the Fishing Industry

The significant volume of estimated slave laborers in the aquaculture/fishing sector is unsurprising given the context of the industry. First, the nature of long-distance fishing operations is extremely labor intensive, with crews’ wages accounting for 30 to 50 percent of operating ways to increase productivity).
costs.\textsuperscript{56} Therefore, the use of forced labor and trafficking can significantly lower fishing companies' costs, greatly increasing their profit margins and giving them a competitive edge.\textsuperscript{57}

Second, the difficult manual tasks and harsh working conditions make this sector dangerous and unappealing to potential workers. When fishing vessels reach their fishing grounds, intensive periods of hard work must take place to gather and process the fish, leading to eighteen to twenty hour work days, seven days a week, regardless of adverse weather conditions.\textsuperscript{58} The workers must also operate hazardous machinery.\textsuperscript{59} Living quarters are cramped and dirty, and vessels may not have toilets.\textsuperscript{60} Food is scarce, often requiring victims to survive on fish and bait.\textsuperscript{61}

Third, chances of detection or rescue by authorities are slim on “long-haul fishing boats because they do not return to . . . shores for many weeks or months at a time and it is not possible for fishermen to escape or to receive assistance if their working conditions become unacceptable.”\textsuperscript{62} Being far off the coastal waters of any country also means there is almost no external observation or protection for these workers aboard boats where captains have unfettered control over almost every aspect of their lives.\textsuperscript{63} “[w]ith very little oversight or regulation, rogue Thai captains buy crew members from human traffickers and use them to plunder the fishing grounds of surrounding nations,” making it “a perfect storm of slavery and environmental degradation.”\textsuperscript{64} In fact, a 2009 survey by the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) found that fifty-nine percent of interviewed migrants trafficked aboard Thai fishing boats reported witnessing the murder of a fellow worker\textsuperscript{65} when they were too weak or sick to work. Bodies are disposed of overboard.\textsuperscript{66} Some interviewees reported seeing a fellow crewmember tortured\textsuperscript{67} for trying to escape as well as witnessing multiple murders.\textsuperscript{68} Loss of life

\textsuperscript{56} CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 6.
\textsuperscript{57} ENVTL. JUSTICE FOUND., supra note 5, at 5 (“In their efforts to make maximum profits from minimum costs, illegal fishing vessel owners and officers can ruthlessly exploit their crews, who often face the prospect of verbal and physical abuse, imprisonment, extortion and the withholding of pay.”).
\textsuperscript{58} CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 19.
\textsuperscript{59} Id.
\textsuperscript{60} Id.
\textsuperscript{61} Id.; see also Christina Stringer et al., Not in New Zealand’s Waters, Surely? Labour and Human Rights Abuses Aboard Foreign Fishing Vessels 13 (N.Z. Asia Institute, Working Paper No. 11-01, 2011) (“Often crews were fed just fish and rice or indeed in the case of one entire crew they were fed rotten fish bait.”).
\textsuperscript{62} See SCHULZ, supra note 4, at 3.
\textsuperscript{63} See PHILIP ROBERTSON, TRAFFICKING OF FISHERMEN IN THAILAND 7 (2011).
\textsuperscript{65} STRATEGIC INFORMATION RESPONSE NETWORK (SIREN), UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY PROJECT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING (UNIAP); PHASE 3, EXPLOITATION OF CAMBODIAN MEN AT SEA; FACTS ABOUT THE TRAFFICKING OF CAMBODIAN MEN ONTO THAI FISHING BOATS 5 (2009) [hereinafter SIREN]; see also ROBERTSON, supra note 63, at 7.
\textsuperscript{66} BRENNAN, supra note 41, at 11.
\textsuperscript{67} ENVTL. JUSTICE FOUND., supra note 5, at 20. One victim reported that a man helping others to escape was tied to a tree, covered with fire ants, stabbed in the stomach with a knife, then dripped with hot plastic and ink before dying. Id.
at sea takes place without repercussions. Even if workers do get sent home, they often leave with little or no pay and are blacklisted from any other jobs in the sector if they report violations.  

The bargaining power of the reluctant fisherman is virtually nonexistent aboard a ship under the complete control of the master of the vessel. Like other trafficked workers, fishing workers are frequently asked to surrender their identity documents while on board and restricted in their movements in foreign ports. Many trafficking victims are sold to boat owners for a price that the workers must work off before earning any wages. This results in slavery, leaving the fishers working for months or years without pay under brutal conditions. Moreover, communications back to family and friends from ships are limited or require special communication equipment aboard. Tracing of a particular vessel is dependent on available radio or satellite signals, meaning that workers are cut off from the rest of the world and thus made even more vulnerable. Moreover, these victims suffer exposure injuries from the seawater and sun. An inadequate supply of protective clothing leads to skin and other medical ailments such as seasickness. The lack of medical care contributes to the fact that the fisheries sector has one of the highest fatality rates of employment. Sleep deprivation, lack of health care, and malnourishment further subject fishers to accidents while working with dangerous machinery.

Fourth, many trafficked workers in the fishing industry may be even more vulnerable than their domestic counterparts. As some countries’ economic positions improve, the only people willing to take these hazardous jobs are migrant fishermen from other countries such as Myanmar, a pool even more susceptible to the risk of human trafficking for labor exploitation by boat captains, recruitment agents, government authorities, and even the police. Since the vast majority of migrant fishermen on Thai fishing boats have not registered with the Ministry of Labor (MOL), they are considered “undocumented workers” in violation of Thailand’s

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68 Id. at 4.
69 Skinner, supra note 6.
70 SURTEES, supra note 38, at 19-20.
71 Brokers who smuggle trafficking victims from Burma into Thailand will charge a fee that they tell the victims to work off in few months through a job in Thailand. BRENNAN, supra note 41, at 6. In some cases, the victims realize they have been bought by the employer. Id. In addition to broker fees, “the advances routinely paid prior to a fishing expeditions [sic] serve to bind workers to their jobs.” Id. at 13.
72 See ROBERTSON, supra note 63, at 7.
73 See SURTEES, supra note 38, at 126.
74 Id. at 19.
75 See Annuska Derks, Migrant Labour and the Politics of Immobilisation: Cambodian Fishermen in Thailand, 38 Asian J. Soc. Sci. 915, 925 (2010) (“The particularities of the work on fishing boats are especially hard for newcomers, who may suffer for weeks and sometimes up to months from the seasickness before they are adjusted to laboring at sea.”).
76 CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 20.
77 GUDRUN PETURSDOTTIR ET AL., SAFETY AT SEA AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT 1 (2001).
78 Stringer et al., supra note 61 at 13; Derks, supra note 75, at 924.
79 See SCHULZ, supra note 4, at 2 (“As a result of their relative economic prosperity, masses of Thai workers no longer desire to work in labor-intensive sectors such as fishing and fish processing”).
80 Sally Cameron & Edward Newman, Trafficking in Humans: Structural Factors, in TRAFFICKING IN HUMANS: SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS 27-29 (Sally Cameron & Edward Newman eds., 2008).
immigration law. According to Human Rights Watch, up to 250,000 Burmese migrants may work within the Thai fishing industry with little to no rights at all. As a result, they live in constant fear of deportation and choose to silently suffer through exploitative working conditions and discrimination in order to maintain a low profile.

Fifth, the fishing industry suffers from a lack of regulation, monitoring, and enforcement. These deficiencies contribute to the lack of attention given to the brutality of working conditions, which leads to more workers recanting or withdrawing any complaints. In New Zealand, for example, “there is no independent auditing of catch method” the fish has been processed. In fact, investigators have discovered that it is not uncommon for exact quantities of sales to be untraceable through public shipping records or for corporate officials to be unresponsive to requests for comment about sales and abuse allegations. Even the prominent United Fisheries founder, Kypros Kotzikas, thought that New Zealand’s labor laws “did not necessarily apply beyond New Zealand’s 12-mile territorial radius.”

Sixth, in areas where slave laborers are most likely to be recruited, endemic corruption undermines investigatory and law enforcement response mechanisms. For example, in Thailand, police raided a shrimp factory that used child slaves and charged the owner a mere $2,100 fine while allowing him to continue operations. “[C]orruption runs rampant through the protective structure in Thailand as the police and other government authorities are simply paid off to look the other way . . .” thereby facilitating exploitation and trafficking. Similarly, in recent reports, a group of Rohingya Muslims who fled from Myanmar were captured by the Indian Coastguard and then sold as slaves into Thailand’s 8 billion dollar profit seafood industry. In another report, Cambodian workers ages fifteen to fifty-three aboard long-haul fishing boats were deceived and then enslaved for up to two years through debt bondage.

Seventh, even when the workers escape or are freed, the fishermen may come into contact with police and immigration officials, leading to arrest, fines, caning, and deportation. A lack of awareness on the part of law enforcement agents frequently leads to them treating these fishermen as criminals rather than victims of human trafficking. In addition, when fishermen have escaped, there are accounts of re-trafficking the same men back onto other boats or plantations.

81 ROBERTSON, supra note 63 at 11, 21.
82 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, FROM THE TIGER TO THE CROCODILE: ABUSE OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN THAILAND 11 (2010) (“250,000 Burmese migrant fishermen and women work in Thailand’s fishing industry, at sea and in fish-processing factories, but only 70,000 are legally registered.”).
84 Skinner, supra note 6.
85 See id.
86 Id.
87 See Winn, supra note 9.
88 SCHULZ, supra note 4, at 8.
90 See SIREN, supra note 65, at 1, 3, 5.
91 See generally id.
92 Id. at 1.
In sum, as one investigator observed, “[w]hat stands out is the severity of abuse, even when compared to . . . other forms of human trafficking.”93 The harshness of the elements and required work, the isolation of the workplace, the strong competition spurned by the booming fishing industry, the desperate and ready supply of vulnerable migrant workers afraid to speak up,94 and the corruption and greed of local law enforcement who are complicit in the industry make human trafficking abuses in this sector particularly difficult to detect, investigate, prosecute, and prevent.

D. The Mechanics of the Global Seafood Supply Chain95

Abhorrent labor abuses are not uncommon in both the technologically developed chains in Thailand96 and the traditional versions of the seafood supply chain in poorer countries like Bangladesh.

The beginning of a typical seafood supply chain traditionally starts with the workers at the plant or work location who process, assemble, or produce the final product. This product enters a network of various middlemen who negotiate conditions of purchase until the product finally lands in the hands of the overseas consumer. The real story, however, starts much earlier and involves the recruitment of the fishermen, workers who are lured from their village or migrant ports to work on fishing vessels to catch seafood for direct consumption by downstream consumers. If the catch is not fit for human consumption, much of this “trash fish” is used indirectly to make fishmeal, which is fed to shrimps and prawns being raised for export to supermarkets in the UK and elsewhere.97

The global supply chain that yields shrimp is a prime example of modern day slavery. In fact, “in March 2011, Humanity United prioritized slavery in the global shrimp industry as a primary focus.”98 The enslaved efforts of the fishermen who provide the fishmeal (fed to shrimp) can be considered encompassed by the global shrimp supply chain since their labor is in the chain that brings food to the end consumer. Therefore, the findings from the shrimp supply chain data—which has already been the focus of several specific studies99 and of the media100 and represents a

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93 CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 19.
94 See id. at 1.
95 See Vitasek, supra note 15 (explaining that the supply chain involves the process from raw materials to the “final customer using the finished goods” and that “[a]ll vendors, service providers and customers are links in the supply chain”).
96 See ACCENTURE, supra note 13, at 26-28 (discussing Thailand’s seafood chain).
100 See Tom Philpott, Did a Slave Process the Shrimp in Your Scampi?, MOTHER JONES (June 17, 2013), http://www.motherjones.com/tom-philpott/2013/06/did-slave-process-shrimp-your-scampi.
significant share of exports from Asian countries to the rest of the world. Most notably, the United States – can be used to extrapolate findings relevant to the seafood sector at large. The abusive labor practices in this sector are further exacerbated by the fact that the revenue from the exportation of shrimp forms a significant component of the national economies of producing countries; authorities are simply not willing to disrupt the money flow.

Thailand’s global seafood chain stems from backyard hatcheries that cultivate shrimp in bulk and then deliver them to large-scale aquaculture farms. There, the shrimp are grown in high-yield ponds or tanks and then traded in the seafood market to large processing plants. Labor in these large processing plants is required for freezing, packaging, or breading the products, another under-regulated link of the chain. In contrast, poor coastal families in Bangladesh “collect wild shrimp to deliver to the tidal ponds of low-tech shrimp farmers, who raise the shrimp” and sell them in networks of exporters that ship their product to overseas markets. Those shrimp are minimally processed.

After the shrimp has been caught, cleaned, processed, and made suitable for export, it enters the “most concentrated part of the supply chain” and ends up in the hands of manufacturers or retailers, such as Wal-Mart, who operate their own integrated supply chains. Other large U.S. retailers include Kroger, Costco, Safeway, Publix, Trader Joe’s, and Darden (which supplies Red Lobster, Olive Garden, and Long John Silvers). In fact, “Americans consume more shrimp than any other seafood product.” While in 2012, the United States imported 533,500 tons of shrimp, the quantity has vastly grown, as “[s]hrimp imports have increased by 95 percent since 1995.” More than 20 years ago, 80 percent of shrimp consumed in America originated from domestic wild fisheries. Today, we import 90 percent of shrimp. It has only been within the past few years that international organizations and non-governmental agencies have seriously started investigating the exploitive conditions in this industry.

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101 See Fishing People, supra note 2 (finding that Asian countries of China, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, India and Bangladesh account for nearly 80 percent of the world’s fishers and fish farmers).
103 ACCENTURE, supra note 13, at 6.
104 Id.
105 Id.
106 Id.
107 Id.
108 Id. at 33-39.
110 Prawn (or Shrimp?) Prices on the Rise in the US, SPEND MATTERS (June 24, 2013, 2:22 PM), http://spendmatters.com/2013/06/24/prawn-or-shrimp-prices-on-the-rise-in-the-us/.
113 Id.
114 See, e.g., BRENNA, supra note 41; SURTEES, supra note 38; DEP’T OF FISHERIES, supra note 34; ENVTL.

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II. GLOBAL SUPPLY CASES IN COURT

In 2000 the United States enacted the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPRA), America's first comprehensive law designed to combat forced labor and sex trafficking. In 2003, the TVPRA was amended to include a civil remedy for trafficked victims to bring cases in federal district court. Since 2003, Congress has reauthorized the TVPRA three times, most recently on March 7, 2013.

This statute, however, has not yielded many complete victories for victims of human trafficking – especially those employed in a global supply chain. First, since the inception of the statute, there have been only about forty three cases filed seeking a civil remedy against corporate traffickers under 18 U.S.C. § 1595. Second, of the forty-three cases, only three involved a global supply context in which a corporation had hired middlemen and denied corporate liability for the forced labor and human trafficking in the chain used to produce the final goods. Third, even when legally victorious and morally vindicated, the collection of any funds is extremely difficult. For example, on April 16, 2002, a federal court of the United States awarded a $3.5 million judgment against corporate giant Daewoosa after trial in a human trafficking case. Yet, not one dollar of that judgment has been recovered in spite of the heinousness of the crime, as evidenced by one trafficker being sentenced to forty years in prison for the same actions alleged...
in that civil action. Even as recently as November 16, 2011, in another federal district court case, plaintiffs initially obtained only a nominal judgment of one dollar and no punitive damages in a TVPRA case, before they appealed the case which was remanded for further consideration regarding the award.

The tremendous cost, time, and anxiety of civil litigation against deep-pocketed defendants comprise one set of explanations for the dismally low instances of court victories. Another explanation is that existing legal theories of corporate liability tend to favor the corporation especially when applied to the attenuated facts of corporate connections to their contractors in a global supply context. The following is a brief overview of the most popular theories used to date.

A. Aiding and Abetting Under Alien Torts Claims Act

The Alien Torts Claims Act (ATCA) was used quite frequently by plaintiffs in human rights and human trafficking cases with facts occurring overseas, before its extra-territorial application was severely curtailed by the US Supreme Court’s holding in the Kiobel case. Most of the relevant ATCA cases primarily involved corporations that provided support or funding or contracted with tortfeasors in serious violations of human rights. Even before Kiobel, however, plaintiffs still had to overcome a high bar in that they were required to prove that the corporation aided and abetted through a demonstration of the corporation’s intent—or purposefulness—to engage in conduct that it knew would facilitate or cause serious human rights violations.

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See United States v. Lee, 472 F.3d 638, 641 (9th Cir. 2006).

See Francisco, 525 F. App’x at 829.

Since the inception of the Adhikari civil federal lawsuit, plaintiffs’ counsel have expended more than 20,000 hours litigating against 3 multinational law firms, each with hundreds of lawyers. Interview with Agnieszka Frysman, counsel for Plaintiffs, Adhikari v. Daoud & Partners, 697 F. Supp. 2d 674 (S.D. Tex. 2009) (Aug. 15, 2013).


28 U.S.C.A. § 1350 (West 2013). The ATCA bestows original jurisdiction upon U.S. district courts “of any civil action by an alien for a tort only, committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States.”

See Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co., 133 S. Ct. 1659, 1664 (2013). There, the Court severely curtailed the extraterritoriality application of ATCA to scenarios occurring overseas, stating that its decision was controlled by “the presumption against extraterritoriality.” Congress is presumed not to intend its statutes to apply outside the United States unless it provides a “clear indication” otherwise. Id. Notably, the Court unanimously concluded that courts may not recognize an action in a suit by aliens against foreign corporations for allegedly aiding and abetting the commission of human rights abuses on foreign soil. Id.


Even now, assuming a US corporation could overcome the jurisdictional issues pertaining to extra-territoriality, the standard to find corporate liability still remains a high bar and difficult task, as its destructive application in Nestle illustrates. Although Nestle was vacated, the case is instructive to demonstrate the tremendously high hurdle. There, the court found that the plaintiffs—Malian children who were forced to labor in cocoa fields in Cote d’Ivoire under extreme conditions that involved coercion with guns and whips and being locked into sleeping areas at night—failed to prove that Nestle intentionally aided and abetted the local contractor. In dismissing the ATCA claim, the court incredulously held that it was not enough to state that Nestle provided general support, which, in turn, allowed the farmers to continue farming. Instead, plaintiffs needed to allege the assistance furthered the alleged crimes; for example, that Nestle provided guns and whips or locks that were used to “threaten and intimidate the plaintiffs.”

While observers had expected the U.S. Supreme Court to abolish corporate liability under the ATCA, the Court side-stepped the issue and instead substantially weakened the extraterritorial reach of the ATCA. Therefore, the ruling in Nestle contributes to the further narrowing of the avenues of relief for victims of human trafficking. Perhaps, with clear global and national transparency guidelines for corporations to follow, the law will move in the opposite direction.

B. Principal-Agent Common Law Theory of Liability

Victims in human trafficking cases have had limited success in imputing liability to a corporation through its agents in the supply chain. Although agency law is a matter of state law, the main tenets of the test stem from the common law. The use of the agency theory to find a corporation liable for actions committed by its contractors has been less than successful.

In Adhikari, plaintiffs alleged an agency relationship in seeking liability for KBR, a military contractor, for the actions of its sub-contractor, which committed various human rights violations including human trafficking. Even though the court found that the plaintiffs had met the initial legal threshold to survive a motion to dismiss by alleging the principal-agent

2013), reh’g en banc dismissed (July 26, 2013) (outlining the criteria for civil tort liability for aiding and abetting: “(1) the party whom the defendant aids must perform a wrongful act that causes an injury; (2) the defendant must be generally aware of his role as part of an overall illegal or tortious activity at the time that he provides the assistance; (3) the defendant must knowingly and substantially assist the principal violation”) (quoting Halberstam v. Welch, 705 F.2d 472, 477 (D.C. Cir. 1983)) (internal citations omitted).

133 Doe v. Nestle, 748 F. Supp. 2d at 1082-87, vacated, 738 F.3d 1048.
134 Id.
135 Id. at 1100.
136 Id. at 1101.
137 See Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum Co., 133 S. Ct. 1659, 1664 (2013). The Court said that its decision was controlled by “the presumption against extraterritoriality.” Id. Congress is presumed not to intend its statutes to apply outside the United States unless it provides a “clear indication” otherwise. Id. Notably, the Court unanimously concluded that courts may not recognize an action in a suit by aliens against foreign corporations for allegedly aiding and abetting the commission of human rights abuses on foreign soil. Id.

138 Adhikari, 697 F. Supp. 2d at 694.
139 See Bell Alt. Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544 (2007) (To survive a motion to dismiss for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, factual allegations must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.); see also Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 556 U.S. 662 (2009).
relationship, that finding appears to have been based on other evidence of explicit control; evidence included the contractual relationship between KBR and its subcontractor and KBR’s authority to regulate its subcontractor’s personnel. Similar theories have been advanced in other courts, with mixed results. Therefore, it is unclear whether a pure global supply arrangement, without such specific terms of control enumerated in the contract, would suffice for a court to find a corporation and its contractor had a principal-agent relationship.

Other plaintiffs have attempted to argue that the overseas contractor was the corporation’s alter ego and, therefore, liability for the inhumane acts of a subcontractor should be imputed to the U.S. corporation. This theory requires plaintiffs to demonstrate that the parent controlled the subsidiary “to such a degree as to render the latter the mere instrumentality of the former.” The dearth of cases arguing this indicates that it is a very high standard of proof requiring extraordinary evidence.

C. Civil RICO Theories

Enacted as part of the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970, the RICO Act allows for the leaders of a syndicate to be tried for the crimes they ordered others to commit or assist. Under RICO, plaintiffs must prove that (1) the corporation was engaged in labor trafficking on a systematic, widespread scale; (2) the American defendant gained substantial economic benefit through this activity; and, (3) this gain occurred at the expense of trafficked workers. The pleading requirements of RICO are extensive and complex. Furthermore, the plaintiffs “must show at least two racketeering predicates that are related, and that they amount to or pose a threat of continued criminal activity.”

Even if trafficking victims can survive motions to dismiss their RICO claims, they must still endure arduous discovery to satisfy the numerous prerequisites of each individual claim. Moreover, the RICO statute has also been subject to extra-territoriality arguments in overseas actions. Finally, the four-year statute of limitations is relatively short for victims who suffer debilitating effects of psychological abuse from past physical abuse—such as foreign victims in the fishing scenario, who may take years to tell their story, complete necessary investigation, and find competent willing counsel. Arguments such as equitable tolling have generally not been

140 See Adhikari, 697 F. Supp. 2d at 694.
142 See Doe v. Unocal Corp., 248 F.3d 915, 926 (9th Cir. 2001) (quoting Calvert v. Huckins, 875 F. Supp. 674, 678 (E.D. Cal. 1995)).
143 See Bowoto v. Chevron Texaco Cor., 312 F. Supp. 2d 1229, 1246 (N.D. Cal. 2004) (The Court rejected plaintiff’s argument for alter-ego liability despite allegations that the corporation “knew of and approved CNL’s use of and payments to the Nigerian military.”) (quoting Plaintiff’s Opposition Brief at 15, Bowoto, 312 F. Supp. 2d 1229 (No. 99-2506)).
145 This test is derived from the RICO theory which makes it unlawful to operate or manage an enterprise that conducts its affairs, directly or indirectly, through a pattern of racketeering activity. See id.
147 See Adhikari, 697 F. Supp. 2d at 691 (finding RICO had extra-territorial application in trafficking case).
D. Contractual Privity Based on Third Party Beneficiary Theory

Some plaintiffs have attempted to argue that the corporation owed a duty to the workers stemming from the fact that “[a] promise in a contract creates a duty in the promisor to any intended beneficiary to perform the promise, and the intended beneficiary may enforce the duty.”150 Relying on this theory, plaintiffs have argued that they were third party beneficiaries of the global supply contract between the corporation and the contractor. In the 2009 case of Doe v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.,151 plaintiffs who endured substandard, grueling work conditions in Wal-Mart’s contractors’ foreign factories brought claims—including of forced labor—against Wal-Mart.152 They alleged that the corporation was liable to them because it promised suppliers—who were responsible for the abusive labor conditions suffered by plaintiffs—that it would monitor the suppliers’ compliance with basic labor standards.153 Therefore, the workers argued that “Wal-Mart necessarily intended to benefit Plaintiffs by incorporating its code of conduct in its supplier agreements, and making a binding commitment to enforce the code for Plaintiffs’ benefit.”154 They also used Wal-Mart’s public pronouncements as additional proof of a duty to plaintiffs, arguing that “Wal-Mart knew or should have known that its failure to adequately monitor code compliance would injure Plaintiffs.”155 Much to the workers’ chagrin, the court held that since the contract was between the corporation and the contractor, “no such promise [to inspect or monitor] flowed to Plaintiffs as third-party beneficiaries.”156

Interestingly, even though the court refused to impute any duty to Wal-Mart to monitor the suppliers, stating that there was no duty because privities did not extend to the workers,157 just a few years later, in January 2012, the California legislature enacted the California Business Transparency Law. This revolutionary transparency law imposes obligations of certification, auditing, and monitoring of third party suppliers to ensure that California’s imports will be

149 E-mail from Thomas Harré, Legal Team, Slave Free Seas (Aug. 12, 2013).
150 Doe v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., 572 F.3d 677, 681 (9th Cir. 2009) (quoting RESTATEMENT (SECOND) OF CONTRACTS § 304 (1981)).
151 Id.
152 Id. at 680.
153 Id. at 683.
155 Id. at 14. Plaintiffs supported their argument by noting that in third-party beneficiary negligence cases, “the contract is of significance only in creating the legal duty, and the negligence of the defendant should not be considered as a breach of contract, but as a tort governed by tort rules.” Id. (quoting Eads v. Marks, 39 Cal.2d 807, 810-11 (1952)).
157 Id. at 685.
trafficking-free.158

E. Joint Employer Theory

Given the above limitations on available theories of corporate liability, it is not surprising that litigation often results in long, drawn-out, expensive failures in court,159 and that plaintiffs face tremendous difficulty in obtaining restitution.160 Some plaintiffs have creatively challenged the status quo of current laws to expand theories of recovery. For instance, some recently argued that a corporation was a joint employer161 with its sub-contractor,162 and therefore, should be liable as a co-employer.163 Traditionally, courts employ the “common law” test, which examines the extent of control and authority of the employer over the employee.164 Some victims have argued, however, that the courts should instead employ the “economic realities” test that focuses on the worker’s dependency on the corporation. Not surprisingly, corporations have advocated for the common law test in global supply scenarios,165 since its core analysis focuses on the indicia of direct control of the employer over the employee.166 Unfortunately, it is challenging for workers in another country to demonstrate traditional facts of corporate control in these global supply cases, where the corporation and plaintiff are thousands of miles away from each other.

As part of a comprehensive battle against human trafficking in the global supply context, plaintiffs should nonetheless continue to advocate for courts to adopt and expand the “economic realities” test.167 This test focuses on worker dependency factors such as employer’s degree of control, opportunities for profit or loss, investment in facilities, permanency of relation, and skill required. While the economic realities version of the joint employer test still stands strong under the FLSA, state workmen’s compensation acts, the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act,168 it has yet to be applied in the global

158 See Section III.
160 See United States v. Lee (Daewoosa), 472 F.3d 638 (9th Cir. 2006); see also Francisco v. Susano, 525 F. App’x 828, 829 (10th Cir. 2013) (reversing and remanding district court’s determination of one dollar in restitution for victims under TVPRA).
162 See Vu v. W&D Apparel, No. 4:12-CV-00282 (S.D. Tex. dismissed July 20, 2012); Adhikari, 697 F. Supp. 2d at 684; Lee, 472 F.3d at 643.
163 See Plaintiffs’ Opposition to Motion to Dismiss, Vu v. W&D Apparel, No. 4:12-CV-00282 (S.D. Tex. dismissed July 20, 2012).
164 RESTATEMENT (FIRST) OF AGENCY § 220 (1933).
166 See Nationwide Mut. Ins. Co. v. Darden, 503 U.S. 318, 323 (“In determining whether a hired party is an employee under the general common law of agency, we consider the hiring party’s right to control the manner and means by which the product is accomplished.”) (internal citations omitted).
167 See United States v. Silk, 331 U.S. 704, 713 (1947) (holding that “employees included workers who were such as a matter of economic reality”) (internal quotations omitted).
168 See, e.g., Zheng v. Liberty Apparel Co., 355 F.3d 61, 66 (2d Cir. 2003) (applying the economic realities
supply chain context. The economic realities test should be recognized as a powerful precedent in areas directly impacting human trafficking and forced labor since it has already been used in garment production scenarios domestically and should be applied to U.S. corporations who perpetuate unjust labor practices internationally. In addition, the courts have already extended FLSA protections to undocumented workers who were trafficked into the United States. It is time for the legislature to incorporate this standard into the TVPRA or create a federal global transparency law.

Innovative theories, such as expanding the joint employer doctrine, are the next logical step in the courts reducing human trafficking in the corporate global supply chain and can be used in conjunction with a multi-faceted war against human trafficking. As one author aptly noted, “[L]awsuits—even if unsuccessful—hit a corporation where it hurts most, in the court of public opinion, because they inform the public of a business’s actual practices beyond the corporate propaganda.”

As seen above, the low rate of success in court appears connected to the complex legal hurdles associated with narrow theories of corporate liability and the tremendous cost of litigation. Because the existing remedies are insufficient to provide a clear cut test of corporate complicity, a comprehensive international initiative could provide a credible standard to expand the basis of corporate liability theories in court, set a benchmark for national and regional transparency laws for businesses that would prevent trafficking in the first place, and set a ready standard to instigate consumer activism.

III. GLOBAL SUPPLY ISSUES IN LEGISLATION AND CORPORATE COMPLIANCE: THE STICK AND THE CARROT

To date, most of the burden of preventing or punishing human trafficking has fallen on government agencies, social service providers, and non-profit organizations. In 2014, there were 879 non-profit organizations and social service organizations or coalitions in the United States working in the field of human trafficking and forced labor. In contrast, in 2012, the Department

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171 Id.


of Justice convicted only 138 traffickers, a decline from the 151 convictions in 2011.\footnote{174 U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT 383 (2013), available at http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210737.pdf (“During FY 2012, DOJ convicted a total of 138 traffickers in cases involving forced labor, sex trafficking of adults, and sex trafficking of children, compared to 151 such convictions obtained in 2011. Of these, 105 were predominantly sex trafficking and 33 were predominantly labor trafficking, although some cases involved both.”).}

Admittedly, some belated action has been taken by the private sector—in large part due to media outcry and consumer response—and usually after the release of high profile stories of trafficked laborers found in corporate supply chains.\footnote{175 See, e.g., Nike Faces New Worker Abuse Claims in Indonesia, HUFFINGTON POST (Sept. 12, 2011), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/13/nike-faces-new-worker-abuse-indonesia_n_896816.html; Nike Admits Abuse at Indonesian Plants, BBC NEWS (Feb. 22, 2001), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1184103.stm.} Some writers have advocated for a stronger role by the private sector,\footnote{176 See Jonathan Todres, The Private Sector’s Pivotal Role in Combating Human Trafficking, 3 CAL. L. REV. CIRCUIT 80, 85-89 (2012) (discussing the qualities of the private sector that can benefit the fight against human trafficking).} noting that some corporations already monitor, or claim to monitor, their own supply chains.\footnote{177 See Robert J. Bowman, Forging Responsible Supply Chains: Are Companies Growing Up?, SUPPLY CHAIN BRAIN (Nov. 5, 2012), http://www.supplychainbrain.com/content/think-tank/blog/article/font-size2forging-responsible-supply-chains-are-companies-growing-up/ (“[M]ore than 80 percent of the 750 companies polled had some kind of internal system for monitoring their social and environmental practices. Fewer than a third, however, had extended such efforts to their supplier networks. And that's where many of the worst problems occur.”) (citing Chief Supply Chain Officer Report, SCM WORLD (May 11, 2011), http://www.scmworld.com/Research/Reports/2011-Chief-Supply-Chain-Officer-Report/).} The private sector has more financial resources to devote to the issue of human trafficking, and is better situated upstream to apply pressure on their suppliers. While it may be true that the profits of many corporations exceed the GDPs of many small countries,\footnote{178 Todres, supra note 176, at 88-89; see also Jason Hanna, Report: California Slips to World’s 9th Largest Economy, CNN (Jan. 13, 2012, 8:20 PM), http://newsblogs.cnn.com/2012/01/13/report-california-slips-to-worlds-9th-largest-economy/ (“[California] dropped to ninth on the list of the world’s largest economies as measured by gross domestic product . . . .”).} convincing corporations to divert those dollars to fighting the faceless evil of human trafficking is another task. This is especially true when a corporation’s \textit{raison d’etre} is the maximization of profits.\footnote{179 ADOLF A. BERLE & GARDINER C. MEANS, THE MODERN CORPORATION & PRIVATE PROPERTY 9 (1991).} Simply, it appears that corporations will comply either in response to legal and economic pressure with the risk of costly sanctions or voluntarily because of the benefits to be derived.\footnote{180 See Top 50 Socially Responsible Companies 2013, MACLEAN’S (June 6, 2013), http://www2.macleans.ca/canada-top-50-socially-responsible-corporations-2013/ (“Philips Electronics—one of the few companies to feature its social and environmental performance alongside its financial performance in reports. Worked with more than 300 suppliers in 2012 to investigate the presence of conflict minerals in its products, encouraging their participation in the Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition’s Conflict Free Smelter program. In 2012, sales from Green Products rose to 45 per cent, up from 39 per cent in 2011—on track to reach the company’s new target of 50 per cent in 2015.”).} Thus, this Section addresses the “carrot and the stick” approaches to encouraging corporate compliance in global supply chains:

\begin{quote}
\textit{A. The Stick: Transparency Laws}
\end{quote}
conclusions on the effectiveness of such laws. Nevertheless, the corporate and public response to two bills in the United States, a state law that was adopted by the State of California and a federal law that recently died in the U.S. House of Representatives, may shed some light on the effect of legislation to influence corporate behavior. In addition, this Section will discuss other relevant federal legislation that has positively altered corporate behavior in regulating the entry of tainted goods into the United States that could be used as guidance for future laws.

B. California Transparency in Supply Chains Act of 2010

While several states are presently deciding whether to adopt global supply disclosure laws and others have already declined to do so, California appears to be the only American state proactive enough to have enacted specific measures to address the murkiness of the global supply system. In 2010, Governor Schwarzenegger signed California’s Transparency in Supply Chains Act of 2010 (“California Transparency Act”), and on January 1, 2012, the Act became enforceable.

There is no mistaking the intent in the stark language of the California Transparency Act that recognizes that “slavery and human trafficking . . . are often hidden from view . . . difficult to uncover and track,” and that “[l]egislative efforts to address the market for goods and products tainted by slavery . . . have been lacking.” This leads to the situation where “[c]onsumers and businesses are inadvertently promoting and sanctioning these crimes through the purchase of goods and products that have been tainted in the supply chain.” Absent . . . disclosures, consumers are at a disadvantage in being able to distinguish companies on the merits of their efforts to supply products free from the taint of slavery and trafficking, but may have in fact been unwittingly promoting it.

As its name connotes, the California Transparency Act compels companies meeting certain threshold requirements to disclose their efforts to eradicate slavery and human

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182 The Florida legislature’s Exploitive Labor Act died in the Business and Professional Regulation Subcommittee on May 3, 2013. H.B. 777, 2010 Leg., Reg. Sess. (Fl. 2013). The bill would have required retailers and manufacturers to disclose efforts to identify and eradicate human trafficking, slavery, and exploitive labor from supply chains, to post such disclosure on retailer's or manufacturer's website or provide written disclosure, provided minimum requirements for disclosure, including annual reports to the Governor and legislature, and mandated injunctive relief or divestment of state funds for violations. Id.


185 Id. at § 2(f).

186 Id. at § 2(h).

187 Id. at § 2(i).

188 See Cal. Civ. Code § 1714.43 (West 2012). Specifically, any seller or manufacturer doing business in California that has more than $100,000,000 in gross receipts must provide a written disclosure to the public addressing the extent to which the seller or manufacturer (1) verifies product supply chains to evaluate risks of human trafficking and slavery and whether a third party conducted the verification; (2) audits suppliers and whether such audit was independent
trafficking from their supply chains. Specifically, SB 657 mandates that any manufacturer or retailer with worldwide annual gross receipts of at least $100 million that is “doing business” in the State of California disclose on its website its policies on, and measures undertaken to, combat forced labor and trafficked persons in its supply chain. The new law is expected to apply to approximately 3,200 global companies. The new law is expected to apply to approximately 3,200 global companies.

While this bill has been a source of hope for those concerned with labor abuses in the supply chain and may be more effective than voluntary corporate codes of conduct, there are practical gaps in the California law. For example, the exclusive remedy for a violation of the disclosure obligations is an action brought by the California Attorney General for injunctive relief, which neither addresses any past harm already suffered by the trafficked workers nor provides for any enforcement mechanism. So far, retailers and manufacturers subject to the Act have responded by including language in their agreements with suppliers that covers business ethics and human rights in general, describes certification requirements, and evinces a readiness to cooperate during audits as set forth in the bill. No injunctions have been issued, and there is no indication of the significance of this compliance.

Moreover, since the California law is only a disclosure law, the true deterrent may be the fear of public shaming. In fact, it is too early to determine whether disclosure will result in any change at all. Ironically, corporations who report on their website that they are doing the minimum towards or even bluntly assert that they are doing nothing at all to audit, certify, or monitor their global supply changes, would still be in compliance with the letter of the law.

As an example of powerless enforcement, as recently as 2012, Walmart claimed that it stopped buying from Narong, a company alleged to commit human rights abuses in their shrimp processing facilities as a “result of [their] auditing process.” However, a reporter discovered, and unannounced; (3) requires suppliers to certify that materials incorporated into its products comply with slavery and human trafficking laws of the countries in which they are doing business; (4) maintains internal accountability standards and procedures for employees or contractors; (5) provides training to employees in supply chain management on human trafficking and slavery in the global supply chain. Id. at (a)-(c).

189 Id.
190 Id.
192 Mark K. Neville, Jr., Diamonds are a Warlord’s Best Friend – Enforcing Human Rights in the Supply Chain, J. INT’L TAX’N, Sept. 2012, at 19, 21 n. 5 (“Some nongovernmental organizations have gone so far as to tout [the California Supply Chain Transparency Act] as a ‘corporate slavery disclosure’ law.”).
193 For insightful discussion of the lack of legal liability, enforcement, and effectiveness in combating human trafficking found in Wal-Mart’s touted Global Procurement Program and Wal-Mart’s Standards/Ethical Sourcing Program, see Revak, supra note 172.
196 Todres, supra note 176, at 97 (“Ironically, for the company that openly declares it does nothing, it arguably has a better case for stating that it meets the . . . language of the disclosure requirement.”); see REMSEN KINNE ET AL., K&L GATES, CALIFORNIA TRANSPARENCY IN SUPPLY CHAINS ACT – FIRST 90 DAYS (2012), available at http://www.klgates.com/california-transparency-in-supply-chains-act--first-90-days-04-12-2012/ (“The Act requires that companies disclose the information about their supply chain compliance activities referred to above, but does not require companies to take specific verification, audit, certification, internal accountability and training actions.”).
through Warehouse Workers United and U.S. customs data, that Walmart “may have imported 36,000 pounds of Narong shrimp as recently as March 21, 2013, directly contradicting the company’s claim that it had stopped buying Narong shrimp in 2012;” when pressed further about the transparency of the shrimp supply chain, shipping documents, audits, export licenses, and other related questions, Walmart responded that it had “nothing further to share.”

Without an enforcement mechanism, there appear to be no consequences for companies that refuse to disclose more than what is minimally required. Incidentally, domestic and international watch-dog organizations, such as the Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking (ATEST), have offered numerous public suggestions, including extending the bill to cover the service sector in areas such as janitorial services, landscaping, security, recruitment, construction, and travel services that are not covered by the California Transparency Act.

C. The Business Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act

The federal counterpart to the California Transparency Act—which some had hoped would be the debut of federal guidelines for the unregulated field of the corporate global supply chain—died in the same year it was introduced in the US Congress. The Business Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act (“H.R. 2759”) introduced on August 1, 2011 during the 112th Congress by U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY14) would have required publicly listed companies to include similar disclosures in their annual reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Specifically, H.R. 2759 mandated anti-forced labor human trafficking policies, certification of products, verification and audits of suppliers, assessments of global supply chains, internal accountability standards, training, and mandatory policies regarding recruitment. Furthermore, the bill aggressively required companies to disclose what, if any, measures they have taken to “identify and address conditions of forced labor, slavery, human trafficking, and the worst forms of child labor within [their] supply chains.”

However, perhaps in lieu of H.R. 2759, Congress appears to have mustered enough support to enact a more benign reporting provision regarding global supply practices as an amendment to the TVPRA in 2013 that ordered, within two years, the Comptroller General to “submit a report on the use of foreign labor contractors.” Nonetheless, this is significant as a

197 Id.


201 Id. at § (2)(a)(1).


203 Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, Pub. L. No. 113-4, § 1235(a), 127 Stat. 54, 146 (2013). Specifically, the report “shall — (1) describe the role of labor recruiters or brokers working in countries that are sending workers and receiving funds, including any identified involvement in labor abuses; (2) describe the role and practices of employers in the United States that commission labor recruiters or brokers or directly recruit foreign workers;
first step to expose this crucial issue. Moreover, the defeat of Rep. Mahoney’s bill should only be viewed as a temporary setback. After all, it took almost three years to pass the TVPRA after a presidential directive and seven decades after the international community had promulgated specific conventions against slavery. On March 11, 1998, President Bill Clinton had first called for legislative action to combat human trafficking. Recognizing the Universal Declaration for Human Rights of 1948 and the Supplement Convention on the Abolition of Slavery,\textsuperscript{204} the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices similar to Slavery of 1956,\textsuperscript{205} the Clinton administration sought relief for victims of trafficking and harsher penalties for those who profited from trafficking schemes.\textsuperscript{206} On October 28, 2000, the TVPA was finally passed.\textsuperscript{207}

\textbf{D. Other Statutes that Regulate Tainted Goods}

By contrast, Congress and the Executive branch have not been afraid to pass similar laws requiring businesses to certify the source of some commodities with questionable sources, such as “blood diamonds,”\textsuperscript{208} or “conflict minerals.”\textsuperscript{209}

For instance, Congress passed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (Dodd-Frank) by inserting an amendment to the Securities Exchange Act of 1934\textsuperscript{210} requiring persons to disclose whether “conflict minerals” are used in their products. Although Dodd-Frank does not specifically apply to trafficking, “Congress recognized that the presence of conflict minerals in products may indicate that forced labor was used to obtain the minerals and trigger other laws.”\textsuperscript{211} The penalty for failure to verify such in good faith is that any company in violation of the Act would be subject to Exchange Act Section 18 liability.\textsuperscript{212} Indeed,
What is remarkable about the conflict minerals legislation is that human rights activists were successful in imposing this responsibility on publicly traded companies under the securities laws.213 Similarly, in 2003, Congress enacted the Clean Diamond Trade Act,214 noting that millions of people had died or been displaced in the previous decade from civil wars in Angola, Sierra Leone, and the DRC, over the control of lucrative diamond mines, and put into place a voluntary certification program to assure that the diamonds were not ‘blood diamonds.’215 Likewise, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 (FCPA) ‘makes it unlawful for a company to make a payment to a third party while knowing that all or a portion of the payment will go directly or indirectly to a foreign official for the purpose of influencing the official in his decision-making capacity.’216 While the FCPA met great resistance in earlier years, it is now taken very seriously by corporations wishing to do business overseas, where there was previously little monitoring.218

Therefore, in spite of the temporary legislative defeats and watered down legislation, popular pressure should continue to be applied to pass stronger legislation because it is “proactive rather than reactionary and gives corporations, local businesses, and politicians an opportunity to win public favor.”219 As will be demonstrated and argued in Part V, one uniform set of guidelines involving monitoring of global supply chains could be adopted internationally and then implemented nationally by all countries. This, in turn, could form the basis for future legislation with more teeth, in the aftermath of a clear cut standard with international support.

E. The Carrot – Time for Corporate Social Responsibility?

Corporations exist to make a profit for their owners.220 However, the methods to produce that profit are also strongly influenced by compliance with legislation, fear of corporate liability,

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213 Neville, supra note 191, at 21.
216 Id.
218 See Spotlight on Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, SEC, http://www.sec.gov/spotlight/fcpa.shtml (last updated Nov. 14, 2012) (“The SEC may bring civil enforcement actions against issuers and their officers, directors, employees, stockholders, and agents for violations of the anti-bribery or accounting provisions of the FCPA. Companies and individuals that have committed violations of the FCPA may have to disgorge their ill-gotten gains plus pay prejudgment interest and substantial civil penalties. Companies may also be subject to oversight by an independent consultant.”); SEC Enforcement Actions: FCPA Cases, SEC, http://www.sec.gov/spotlight/fcpa/fcpa-cases.shtml (last updated May 29, 2013). FCPA cases have been brought against Ralph Lauren Co., Tyco Int'l., Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Tyson Foods, Halliburton, Monsanto, Siemens, GE, IBM, Dow Chemical Co. and Chevron Corp, among others. Id.
220 See BERLE & MEANS, supra note 179.
consumer reactions that reduce the demand for a product, and other social factors. Corporate social responsibility (CSR)—"the integration of social, environmental, and economic concerns into business operations"—is one such factor. Some scholars have defined CSR as "actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law."  

Corporations that fail to sufficiently report about their corporate structures and practices prevent clarity about their true impact in countries around the world. As a result, the world’s largest companies may contribute to an environment in which evils such as human trafficking and forced labor can thrive. Transparency is especially important when companies operate through a network of interconnected subsidiaries, affiliates, joint-ventures, other holdings, or agents or contractors in diverse jurisdictions. Applying CSR to the human trafficking and forced labor context, “recommendations for domestic and international corporate social responsibility plans should be implemented not only for the benefit that accrues to the company, but also for the benefits that may be realized by existing and potential victims through a reduction in the supply and demand for trafficked goods or services.”

In 2012, Transparency International, a global civil society organization with more than 90 chapters worldwide, issued findings from a comprehensive analysis of 105 of the world’s largest companies—collectively worth more than 11 trillion U.S. dollars, with operations affecting people in more than 200 countries—regarding transparency relating to anti-corruption programs, organizational transparency, and country reporting. The report, Transparency in Corporate Reporting: Assessing the World’s Largest Companies concluded that “[m]ultinationals have a long way to go to improve transparency.” With such tremendous financial impact on the world, greater corporate transparency through means such as “publicly reporting on activities and operations” provides “necessary information for investors, journalists, activists and citizens to monitor their behaviour.”

For instance, during the 1990s, Nike’s dismissive attitude towards overseas sweatshop allegations changed “when widespread associations between Nike, child labor, and women’s exploitation caused the company’s capitalized value and brand reputation to plummet.” Even

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221 Shavers, supra note 211, at 88 (internal quotations omitted); Carole Ramsay, Corporate Social Responsibility: A Framework for Understanding the Legal Structure, 57 ROCKY MTN. MIN. L. INST. 17-A (2011); see CSR EUROPE, A GUIDE TO CSR IN EUROPE: COUNTRY INSIGHTS BY CSR EUROPE’S NATIONAL PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS 4 (2010), available at http://www.mas-business.com/documentos/guide_to_csr.pdf (observing, for example, that “growing attention is being paid to the voluntary actions that companies take as part of their CSR strategies to manage their economic, social and environmental impacts”).


223 Id. at 118.

224 Id. at 118.

225 Id. at 88.

226 Id. at 4.

227 Id. at 5.

228 Id.

after Nike adopted a code of conduct in 1992, the Portland Public School Board still debated in 1996 “whether to reject a multimillion dollar donation from Nike because of its practice to contract with sweatshops.” Since then, the company has become an industry leader in CSR.

Companies desiring to adopt anti-trafficking measures and comply with CSR guidelines, such as the Guiding Principles, can readily find them. There is an abundance of third party auditors, certifying agencies, monitors, and literature to assist the willing corporation. As further discussed in Section V, an increasing number of consumers are pressuring companies to identify tainted products through such consumer generated tactics as mobile applications (apps)—like Free2Work or Made in a Free World—and demand for “free-trade” product labels. This shift in consumer behavior can influence corporate behavior and have tremendously positive effects on reducing human trafficking in the global supply chain. Finally, from a shareholder’s perspective, there can be increased profits stemming from a more positive view of a corporation’s reputation and credibility, flowing from a CSR-influenced business plan.

IV. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND GUIDELINES

Since the turn of the century, the international community has set the example for individual countries in dealing with issues of slavery, human trafficking, and forced labor. In 1904, the International Congress passed the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic. Thereafter, the League of Nations (precursor to the United Nations) issued the first international agreement abolishing slavery the League of Nations Slavery Convention of 1926. The prohibition of slavery was strengthened with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948; the UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery

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230 Id.

231 See Top 50 Socially Responsible Companies 2013, supra note 180 (Nike Inc. is “[o]ne of the few manufacturers to have an executive-level committee in place, chaired by the CEO, charged with driving sustainable innovation. Nike’s materials sustainability index assigns scores to materials used in production based on sustainability factors such as the amount of water they require. Efficient materials and vendors stand a better chance of being selected as Nike suppliers.”).


(Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery) in 1956; and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966.\textsuperscript{239} The first international agreement to specifically prohibit human trafficking was the U.N. 1949 Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of Others.\textsuperscript{240}

In 2000, the United Nations issued the U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime\textsuperscript{241} and the accompanying Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children\textsuperscript{242} (Trafficking Protocol, also called Palermo Protocol). Referencing exploitation, the Trafficking Protocol makes a direct link between forced labor, and practices similar to slavery like human trafficking in the global economy.\textsuperscript{243} The Trafficking Protocol was widely ratified with 147 member States.\textsuperscript{244} It was unique from other treaties because it mandated law enforcement. In fact, the Trafficking Protocol directed parties to take action to penalize trafficking, protect victims of trafficking, and grant victims temporary or permanent residence in the countries of destination.\textsuperscript{245} Countries used the international standard as a framework for their national provisions.\textsuperscript{246} The United States incorporated the provisions in its federal anti-human trafficking statute TVPRA, which was passed as an amendment to the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.\textsuperscript{247}

A. International Labour Organization (ILO)

ILO is an international agency,\textsuperscript{248} which has played a central role globally in the prevention of and fight against forced labor and human trafficking. Importantly, its universal guidelines and standards have been adopted by many countries and international organizations. These conventions are crucial to creating and developing a well-regulated sector that can identify, report, investigate, prosecute, and penalize corporations that rely on trafficked labor in their supply chains. Even as far back as 1930, the ILO has sought to address human trafficking,\textsuperscript{249} promulgating Forced Labor Convention No. 29, which outlawed forced labor.\textsuperscript{250} In 1957, the ILO

\begin{footnotes}
\item 239 Id. at 19.
\item 240 Id. at 20.
\item 242 Trafficking Protocol, Nov. 15, 2000, 2237 U.N.T.S. 319.
\item 243 Id.
\item 244 CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 27.
\item 245 See Trafficking Protocol, Nov. 15, 2000, 2237 U.N.T.S. 319.
\item 246 124 countries became parties to the treaty. A “party” refers to a State that gives its explicit consent to be bound by the treaty. A party is legally bound by the provisions within the treaty and accepts all the treaty’s obligations, subject to legitimate reservations, understandings, and declarations.
\item 248 “The ILO was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is based on social justice. . . . In 1946, the ILO became a specialized agency of the newly formed United Nations.” \textit{Origins and History}, INT’L LABOUR ORG., http://www.iolo.org/global/about-the-ilo/history/lang--en/index.htm (last visited Aug. 25, 2013).
\item 249 ILO GLOBAL ESTIMATE OF FORCED LABOUR, supra note 17, at 28.
\item 250 FREE THE SLAVES, supra note 235, at 19-20.
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issued the Abolition of Forced Labor Convention No. 105, which urged States “to '[s]uppress and not make use of any form of forced or compulsory labor’ that is used as a means of political coercion and economic development.”

“In 1998, governments, workers and employers’ organizations adopted the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, calling upon States to eliminate all forms of forced labour.” In the fishing industry, the ILO was the first to address the forced labor issues and adopt the International Labour Conference on the Work in Fishing Convention No. 188 in 2007, which guides companies to reduce exploitive labor conditions on fishing vessels. The ILO has also highlighted protection for groups with special needs, including the unemployed and migrant workers.

A first step is for states who have committed to the elimination of forced labor and human trafficking in the fisheries sector to implement the core provisions of the Convention. There appears to be some movement. In May 2012, representatives of the European Union’s employers’ and trade unions in the sea fisheries sector signed an agreement, which is an important step towards implementing Convention No. 188 at the EU level.

B. Existing International Principles and Guidelines

Note should also be taken of the development of several non-binding principles developed as part of various international and regional responses to human trafficking, that should be consulted and incorporated as part of any future binding legal standards. Two examples dealing with the economic sector are set forth below.

The UN Global Compact (UNGC) is a broad-based multi-stakeholder initiative established to provide resources, tools, and examples of good practices to assist companies in developing more sustainable supply chains. Its participants are comprised of governments, employers, civil society groups, and trade unions, working on principles drawn from key UN and ILO standards, with human trafficking figuring prominently in the categories of human rights and labor. It is a forum that encourages businesses to promote markets, commerce, technology, and finance in ways that benefit economies, societies, and the environment. Since the UNGC’s launch in July 2000, 8,000–10,000 participants from over 140 countries have joined.

252 See CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 2.
253 See id. (“Until recently the fisheries sector lacked a holistic legal framework to secure fishers’ working conditions. This gap was filled in 2007 when the International Labour Conference adopted the Work in Fishing Convention (No. 188), which together with other labor and safety standards, will contribute to preventing and curbing forced labor and human trafficking in the fisheries sector.”).
254 Id. at 26.
255 Id. at 28.
257 See id.
258 See id.
The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are standards which cover aspects of human rights that were endorsed by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2011. The UN Human Rights Council established a Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises to promote the Guidelines. These Guidelines provide a common, authoritative standard and reference point for mitigating negative human rights linked to businesses, such as forced labor and human trafficking. The principles clarify the respective roles of State actors and business enterprises on human rights, emphasizing the objective of enhancing standards and practices to achieve socially sustainable globalization. Again, these are not binding.

While there appear to be committed organizations, innovative collaborations, several well intentioned guidelines, and numerous well researched reports, there are still no binding agreements with the authority to mandate enforcement by signatory members. Therefore, a model international standard that specifically responds to the unique need for transparency in the global supply chain and mandates specific enforcement measures is necessary. This standard would provide an underlying legal framework for uniform and concerted action by ratifying individual nation states, who were signatories to the agreement or protocol. “Legally-binding instruments are central reference points for business. For ratifying countries, they set out the framework for national law to which companies and employers must adhere in every jurisdiction in which they operate” and be a source of credibility, enforcement, and adherence. A binding international statute could also provide the necessary leverage in some countries to create a legal framework for monitoring global supply chains that would protect foreign documented and undocumented workers rather than punishing them, provide public authorities with a legal mechanism and with guidance to implement laws effectively, and decrease punitive actions by corrupt law enforcement. As seen above, there is already a history, an international commitment, and an abundance of initiatives, conventions, organizations, and movements upon which to develop an effective and comprehensive international initiative.


262 See Business and Human Rights, supra note 260.

263 Id.


265 See id. at 11 (discussing key concerns associated with implementation of national laws).
V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Model International Guidelines

Both the multiplicity of terms and the presence of conflicting terms in the various international and domestic certification guidelines may actually provide corporations and foreign governments with opportunities to deflect blame by claiming confusion—or even compliance. A uniform standard, therefore, would neutralize this excuse. It would also provide regulators and importers with clearly delineated standards, empower plaintiffs by providing the courts with a practical standard against which to hold corporations accountable, encourage further federal and state transparency statutes and certification programs, and educate consumers by establishing credible benchmarks against which to measure corporations’ actual compliance in lieu of their glitzy public relations messages.

First, uniform standards should build on existing structures and fora. For instance, as set forth in Part II, the ILO and other non governmental organizations, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), have already established several “binding legal instruments that will improve fishers’ safety and working conditions.”

Second, specific strategic points in the supply chain must be identified to determine any direct links between certain fishing practices or operations with forced labor. Such findings should be publicly distributed so that another corporate excuse to plead ignorance is dismantled. In fact, Ambassador CdeBaca believes that:

[T]he supply chain isn’t as murky as fish companies say, and he points to how quickly companies move to correct their chain when there’s a health concern like food poisoning or salmonella. ‘It’s a matter of connecting the dots . . . and finding out who the abusive contractors, farmers or ship captains are.’

Third, certifications under a uniform standard should stress labor content and tease out human trafficking and forced labor. Certain existing standards, such as BAP and the Global G.A.P., include only “standards on health and safety, but fail to address other key labor issues” that arise from human trafficking and forced labor. Specifically, any adopted guideline should

266 See ACCENTURE, supra note 13, at 41 (discussing Food and Agriculture Organization’s Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification).

267 See CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 84.


269 See CAUGHT AT SEA, supra note 30, at 82.


271 See ACCENTURE, supra note 13, at 43.
not permit the use of national standards and laws if they fall under international standards. Any model standard must meet international human rights standards to avoid denial of abuses, such has occurred in Thailand. Researchers in Thailand have cautioned that “the government is effectively turning a blind eye to the plight of migrant labor within this industry.” In fact, the Director General of the International Affairs Department for the Office of the Attorney General of Thailand considers the fishing business to be “an honest business like other industries” with “most[ly] good employers who hire migrants with good pay and fair work conditions.” His characterization of the workers as “illegal economic migrants, not victims, until the facts concerning the exploitation are revealed to the authorities,” should be even more telling.

Fourth, important aspects of certification, monitoring, and auditing have already been flagged as important by reputable non-corporate leaders in the field, such as ILO, should be incorporated. By contrast, the private sector should have a limited role on certifying bodies due to the inherent conflict of interest. Certain groups, such as Social Accountability International, which monitored garment factories in Pakistan where a deadly fire broke out in a garment factory killing hundreds, derived the majority of its funds from corporations such as Apple and Nestle in 2010. Social Accountability International earned much of its income from member companies, as well as from accreditation fees from for-profit auditors. Despite evidence of malnourished, weakened, and injured workers on his vessels, the founder of United Fisheries, Kypros Kotzikas, represented that “he had heard of no complaints from crew on board the ships, and he had personally boarded the vessels to ensure that the conditions ‘are of very high standard.’”

Finally, each nation should be encouraged to incorporate this uniform international standard as part of its national domestic law. The adoption of the asylum and refugee law into the United States Immigration and Nationality Act in 1980 is an example of how a major international treaty promulgated by the United Nations was successfully ratified and effectively implemented by the United States. Such federal statutes would also boost the credibility and enforcement power of individual states’ initiatives, such as the California Transparency Act, discussed in Section III.

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272 See id.
273 See SCHULZ, supra note 4, at 3.
275 Id.
277 Walsh & Greenhouse, supra note 276.
278 See Skinner, supra note 6 (describing abuse and coercion reported to and witnessed by New Zealand observers).
279 Id.
A complimentary solution will involve the consumers who desire abundant commodities, such as shrimp and seafood, and generate the underlying demand for the products. “[A]s far back as the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when sweatshops proliferated in this country, women exercised their economic power and shopped from ‘white lists’ of ‘stores that treated their employees well.”283 “In addition, the National Consumers League introduced a label in the early 1900s that certified garments ‘made under clean and healthful conditions.’”284 During the anti-slavery movement in Britain and United States, abolitionists influenced the public through various means such as advertisements.285 Organizations fought child labor, “through anti-sweatshop campaigns and labeling programs.”286

Today, technology allows rapid dissemination of information and resources that can instantly direct consumer behavior, which can then have a tremendous mobilizing influence on corporate behavior. For example, the iPhone app “Free2Work,” delivers instant product ratings to consumers as they shop for anything from food to footwear.287 Another free mobile app, “Slavery Footprint,” awards points for contacting more than 1,000 brands for verification of supply chains, or sending preferences for slave-free products to retailers.288 With a few shots on a keyboard, any consumer can evaluate the slave content in raw materials in consumer items derived from vetted data from the Trafficking in Persons Report and The Freedom House index.289

Consumers can also pressure the government or mount publicity campaigns to corporations to ban the use of certain products that have a proven connection to human trafficking. For instance, children are needed as workers in the fishing industry in Ghana, because “their small, nimble fingers are useful in releasing the fish from the ever smaller nets.”290 Therefore, “‘[t]he Government should ban the use of nets with tiny holes,’ says Jack Dawson, Executive Director of APPLE, a local NGO that works in several fishing villages. ‘Doing so would . . . discourage the use of kids because there would be no need for such small hands.’”291

Simply stated, “the most important thing is to work on reducing the demand for products that have been produced by slave labor. This means choosing to buy only from companies that...”

284 Id.
291 Id.
have proven their supply chains to be slave free.”

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a coordinated and multi-faceted initiative involving all the major international and national stakeholders in the relevant forums that address human trafficking and forced labor in global supply chains is necessary, and possible in our lifetime. The foundation of this strategy rests on first formulating or coordinating a uniform international standard of certification, monitoring, auditing and enforcement that is vetted by reputable international organizations.

Like the TVPA and the Asylum Act, that standard should then be adopted by individual nations as part of their national law. Moreover, these standards of conduct could then serve as a legal guideline against which individual countries or even regional associations of countries could expand or formulate new theories of corporate liability in global supply chains in their national courts, empower individual states with a national foundation strengthening a state’s basis to enact similar or more aggressive laws, and provide consumers with a credible benchmark against which to hold corporations accountable. Without legal benchmarks explicitly founded upon the goals of reducing slavery in the supply chain, any consumer boycott would simply be a temporary distraction “primarily orientated toward satisfying particular consumer and market demands.”

Only through a comprehensive solution incorporating the strengths of legal, legislative, and economic forums in a synergistic and collective fashion could there be any hope of freedom for those laboring under abhorrent conditions, such as the enslaved and trafficked fishermen.

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