

ManpowerGroup aims to promote ethical labour brokering

According to the International Organisation for Migration, more than 214 million people across the globe live outside their countries of origin, and migrant workers and their families account for 90% of all international migration. Unfortunately, as more individuals move for work, and more employers seek global talent, many migrants find themselves entangled in a "grey" market run by unscrupulous brokers and employers.



As a result, they can face abusive conditions that amount to modern-day slavery.

"Today's environment requires businesses to be global and talent to be mobile, therefore ManpowerGroup has made it a priority to be at the forefront of ensuring that global recruitment markets operate transparently and ethically," said David Arkless, ManpowerGroup president of global corporate and government affairs. "Leading firms already commit to high ethical standards, but too many other operators exploit workers through recruitment debt, fraudulent contract substitution, and other forms of abuse. Even well-intentioned businesses face reputational risk from unwittingly becoming entangled with unethical partners."

Illegal immigrants fuels the problem

South Africa sees a massive influx of unskilled migrant workers from other parts of Africa searching for manual labour. The deportation of around a 300 000 illegal immigrants a year from neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe and Mozambique is only fuelling the problem and complications such as the lack of capacity to issue passports in some of these countries makes many of these migrant workers undocumented, leading to deportation or 'slave like' working conditions without legal recourse.

ManpowerGroup and Verite's Ethical Framework for Cross-Border Labour Recruitment offers a checklist of specific standards of ethical practice for firms involved in cross-border recruitment of workers, which are designed to protect those workers against specific patterns of vulnerability and abuse. These standards are to be backed up by a verification system that certifies business compliance and provides key information for leveraging the influence of consumer groups, regulators, and other third parties.

Migrants can face slavery

"Labour migrants can face horrible conditions, including modern-day slavery. Through the Framework that we developed with ManpowerGroup, we are committed to using standards and credentialing systems to provide a market for ethical recruiters, as they should be the ones who supply workers to the factories and farms that supply consumers, rather than the unethical firms that currently play too big a role," said Dan Viederman, CEO of Verite.

"Our goal is a safe, effective, and transparent system for cross-border labour recruitment, where workers have maximum information to help them pursue opportunities, confidence in the enforceability of contracts, and effective protection against labour abuses, and where employers have access, on fair terms, to a global labour supply to sustain economic growth," added Arkless.

"This project is a model of collaboration between business and civil society. Companies and NGOs can achieve much more together than they can separately, provided they remain focused on demonstrating impact," said Viederman. "We are actively seeking dialogue with partners, stakeholders, and other interested parties as we build our demonstration project."

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