Forced labour in the UK and the Gangmasters Licensing Authority

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Aims

The research was commissioned by Oxfam and conducted by the Contemporary Slavery Research Centre, Hull University, to evaluate the Gangmasters Licensing Authority [GLA] and the Gangmasters [Licensing] Act. It examines the extent to which they have succeeded in protecting the rights of vulnerable and migrant workers.

Methodology

A literature review was conducted to examine the legislation, including legislation in other European countries. Fieldwork took place between August 2008 and January 2009 and consisted of 30 interviews with key stakeholders such as the Gangmaster

Licensing Authority [GLA], trade unions and retailers. In addition, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with vulnerable and migrant workers in Lincolnshire and Hull. Access to these individuals was facilitated by workers at Oxfam and other agencies who had existing relationships and contact with them.

Key issues

The report focuses on the nature and extent of worker exploitation in employment sectors such as food and agriculture; the strengths and success of the GLA in bringing greater regulation to these sectors; weaknesses in the GLA, and proposals and recommendations for change.

Conclusions

The report concludes that the UK Employment Enforcement Network is not effectively protecting the rights of temporary workers, in particular migrant workers. The GLA has made some progress and has been proactive in its investigations but ultimately is under resourced and too limited in its scope and remit. Exploited workers do not receive sufficient support to seek redress and face significant barriers in doing so. Undocumented migrant workers often remain entirely unprotected.

Recommendations

The report recommends that there should be greater government commitment to tackling exploitation and abuse, and

that this should include providing more resources to the GLA so that it can extend its scope and remit into labour sectors such as hospitality. It highlights the need for greater cooperation and better links between agencies, awareness raising amongst migrant communities and support for workers who wish to seek redress.

Migrant Group
EU migrants
Undocumented
Topic
Policy
Forced labour
Labour conditions
Migrant workers
Place
Hull
Humber
UK - inc. Yorkshire & Humber element
Year
2010
Resource Type
Report
Publisher
Contemporary Slavery Research Centre [CRSC], Wilberforce Institute, University of Hull

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