

Cleaning up Supply Chains: Step 2 “Beware of ethical audits”

This caution from Aidan McQuade of Anti-Slavery International seems counterintuitive. How can ethical audits be bad?

Another way to put this is: Be aware of what the audit, and the auditors, are looking for. An auditor without a clear objective may not ask the right questions. An audit that doesn't ask the right questions won't find the right answers. *Some questions to consider:*

- Does the audit take into account underlying conditions that create risk of forced labor?
- Are surveys designed to detect inconsistent or misleading responses?
- What factors motivated conducting the audit in the first place?

In any audit process, it's very likely you will find what you are looking for. The key to ending labor trafficking is to be sure you're looking for the right things. Audits and assessments must be undertaken with a clear and coherent focus to identify, analyze, manage and mitigate the potential risk for forced labor throughout supply chains.

This requires the ability and willingness to ask the right questions. It requires a deep understanding of the factors that lead to vulnerable populations being put at risk. It requires a thorough understanding of how supply chains work including business cycles, supply/ demand planning and logistics. Most of all, it requires the ability to synthesize all this information in a way that allows business leaders to make better decisions faster to ensure their operations and supply chains are run in a way that protects all their stakeholders.