

[HAILEY LYNNE MCKEEFRY](#)

Electronics OEMs Invited to End Human Trafficking & Slavery



[Hailey Lynne McKeefry, Editor in Chief](#)

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Every individual who buys or makes electronics products is complicit in slave and child labor—that is simply the fact of it. For a long time, many electronics OEMs thought it was an unavoidable reality. Now, Ariba has forged a partnership with [Made in a Free World](#) to help organizations track and mitigate slavery in their global supply chains.

"Slave and child labor is rampant in supply chains around the world. But it doesn't have to be," says Justin Dillion, founder and CEO of Made in a Free World. "We live in a digitally connected and data-driven economy. And we have the tools and information needed to uncover and end it."



Children are forced to work in mica mines in India to dig up the minerals needed in a variety of products from cosmetics to electronics.

The problem of human trafficking has grown to enormous proportions:

- Today, human trafficking has emerged as the world's fastest growing criminal enterprise, growing to become an estimated \$32 billion enterprise globally, according to the [United States Department of Justice](#).
- Trafficking occurs in every country in every region of the world, with four out of ten people forced into slave labor (compared to 53% become victims of sexual exploitation), according to the [2014 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#) released by the United Nations last year.
- An estimated 20 million to 30 million forced laborers work in global supply chains today – from conflict minerals in the Congo to fishing in Thailand to migrant workers in the United States and North America, Made in a Free World estimated.
- The weakest and least powerful, particularly women and children, remain at the greatest risk of being victimized.

The electronics industry has a critical part to play to eradicating human slavery in the supply chain. Ariba and Made in a Free World are working together to help OEMs get the tools they need to find and fight supply chain slavery. "We are building a networked economy of goods out of this," said Dillon. "If every manufacturing supply chain gets on the team, we are going to severely disrupt the business of slavery."

Dillon points out a three-fold challenge and barriers for organizations trying to do the hard work of tackling human trafficking and slavery:

1. Supply chain visibility past the first tier of suppliers is difficult, and larger organizations with more suppliers have the most difficult task of all. "The number one challenge is looking beyond tier one and the electronics industry needs to have curiosity and impulse to move beyond tier one. Now, we need to fix what happens one step or few steps beyond that first tier."
2. Consumers and stakeholders want their manufacturers to be perfect in terms of results. "They told us that they want to be aligned with good practices, but the goal posts keep getting moved by activists. There's no such thing as a perfect supply chain or a slave-free supply chain, so organizations need to figure out how to define what good is," said Dillon.
3. Many efforts end up in negative media scrutiny. "Manufacturers tell us that every time they try to do something good, they get picked on for something else," said Dillon.

The good news is that organizations that move beyond these challenges have every chance of helping the world and creating better business outcomes for themselves. "It's not just about doing good but how do we operationalize the better version of ourselves," said Dillon. "If we have business models that do good in the world but also do well in terms of delivering business benefit, we can finally take part in a bigger conversation."

In an effort to provide tools to do just that, Ariba and Made in a Free World plan to combine the [Ariba Network](#), a global business-to-business trading platform with more than 1.8 million companies in 190 countries, with the Made in a Free World forced labor database—in order to help OEMs get the information they need to make humanitarian sourcing solutions. "What we've done is curate a pathway to help them discover where there is most impact and to leverage that impact," said Dillon. The tools will be available to all

Ariba customers.

Made in a Free World started its journey by educating consumers about how their purchase choices might contribute to slavery. The company launched SlaveryFootprint.org in 2011, and has had 24 million visitors come through since then. The site leads consumers through a questionnaire about their consumer lives, from the products they use, to the amount purchased and finally produces a statistic about the amount of forced labor produced by that individual's choices. In the end, many people have been inspired to write strongly worded letters to their favorite brands about the problem of forced labor, said Dillon.

Of course, the problem of human trafficking in the electronics supply chain won't be solved overnight. However, the seeds planted today may bear fruit in a handful of years, Dillon aid. "We want to be on the same track when it comes to procurement and how things are bought and sold," said Dillon. "We want to have conversations about where we can find friction in terms of scrubbing spend data, getting suppliers to pay attention and more."

Let us know in the comments section below how you or your organization are planning to help end human trafficking in the electronics supply chain.