

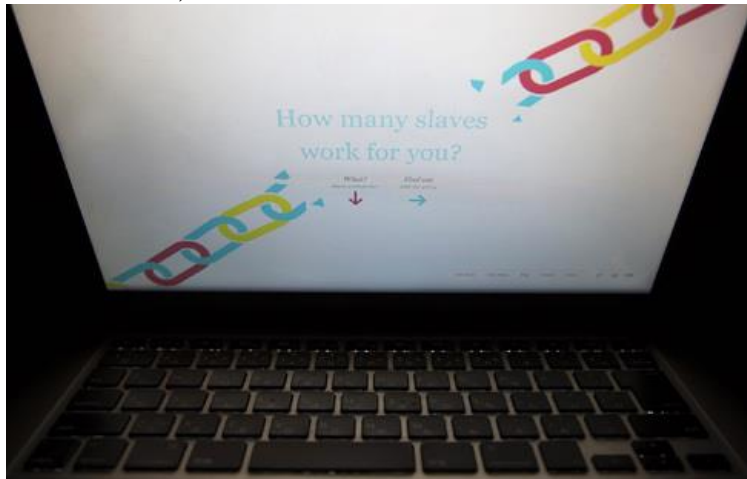
<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-12-21/apps-to-fight-human-trafficking-aimed-at-stamping-out-slave-labor>

Apps to Fight Human Trafficking Aimed at Stamping Out Slave Labor

E-Bay founder's Humanity United fuels anti-trafficking tech

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Photographer: Tomohiro Ohsumi/Bloomberg

With more than 1 million apps in the Apple and Android stores, it would be easy to assume we are nearing the limit of developers to come up with new creations. That would be a mistake.

The latest example: Apps aimed at fighting human trafficking. Yes, they exist and more are emerging as social entrepreneurs attempt to use technology to battle what they see as the forces of evil.

A group of government agencies and private foundations calling themselves Partnership for Freedom has set up a competition with the not-so-catchy name “[Rethink Supply Chains](#)” challenge. What is grabbing attention is \$500,000 in prize money that will be awarded for the best technology solutions to combat the use of slave labor. Finalists will be announced next month.

Rising awareness among global companies of labor abuses and new laws requiring steps to ensure fair labor practices across supply chains are spurring a new industry for technologies that help them enforce supplier rules. The challenge also intends to lure innovators who are working on related technologies, said Catherine Chen, director in charge of investments at Humanity United, a key supporter of the challenge.

“In many instances they have already been addressing issues that are analogous,” Chen said. “That could be conflict minerals, that could be tracking the source of e-coli, mobile money, digital payments -- those kinds of things. We wanted to get that community of problem solvers to focus their talents on this particular challenge and to see that there’s a lot of opportunity.”

Humanity United is the social welfare organization started by Pam and Pierre Omidyar, eBay Inc.’s founder, in 2005. [Goldman Sachs Group Inc.’s 10,000 Women](#) initiative and Steven Spielberg’s Righteous Persons Foundation are also supporting the challenge.

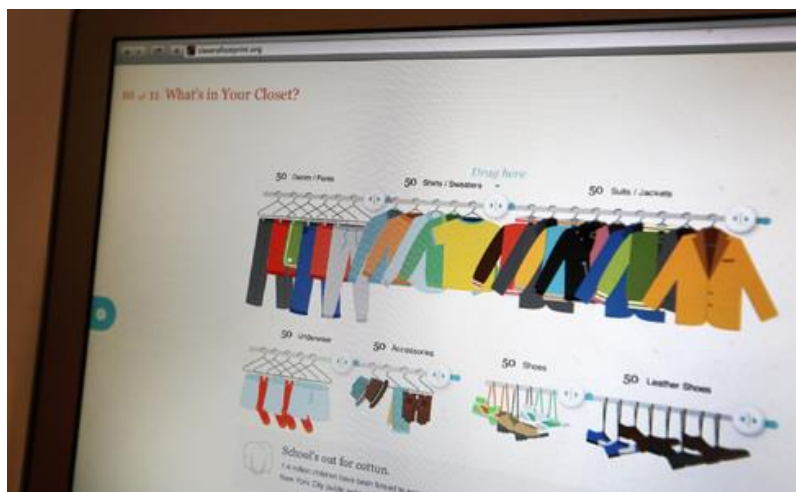
LaborVoices, a Sunnyvale, California-based venture, is entering the challenge with an app that allows workers to report abuses simply and anonymously using a voice activated smartphone app. [Made in a Free World](#), a five-year-old startup that’s built a database of labor abuse risk factors for global supply chains, is joining the race with an app designed to let small and medium-sized enterprises use its data more easily.

[Laborvoices Smartline](#), a voice-operated app that let workers anonymously share feedback on their working conditions, is also participating in the challenge.

Kohl Gill, a San Francisco-based entrepreneur and semiconductor physicist who worked on the human trafficking issue at the State Department, founded Laborvoices in 2010 after coming up with the idea of using mobile phones to help workers report working conditions.

Laborvoices works with garment maker Reliable Source Industrial, a [supplier to Nike Inc.](#), Victoria’s Secret and Under Armour with factories in China, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Taiwan. Gill’s organization is helping the company monitor its own production and sub-contractors by providing workers with a voice-activated mobile app to report labor abuses.

“We are creating these persistent, reliable reputations for employers, so that workers can vote with their feet,” said Gill. This lets the people who are in the best position to see human trafficking respond to it directly without waiting for the government or other authorities, he said.



A web page of the slaveryfootprint.org is displayed on a laptop computer. Photographer: Tomohiro Ohsumi/Bloomberg

Existing apps already help consumers get an idea of the scope of human trafficking. Made in a Free World, for example, created the [Slavery Footprint](#) app that generates estimates of an individual's reliance on slave labor from data on trafficked humans and labor-abuse rates at manufacturers and suppliers.

Justin Dillon, chief executive officer of Made in a Free World, is not shy about telling people that for all his efforts, his lifestyle still requires 47 slave laborers -- a number he's determined to get to zero. "That's what drives me," he says.

The [Rethink Supply Chains](#) challenge will pick as many as five finalists next month and award them \$20,000 each to build a prototype. The winner will be announced in April.