



COFFEE Project

Cooperation On Fair, Free, Equitable Employment

Labor Broker Interview Questions

TOOL 27 of 28

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About Our Funding

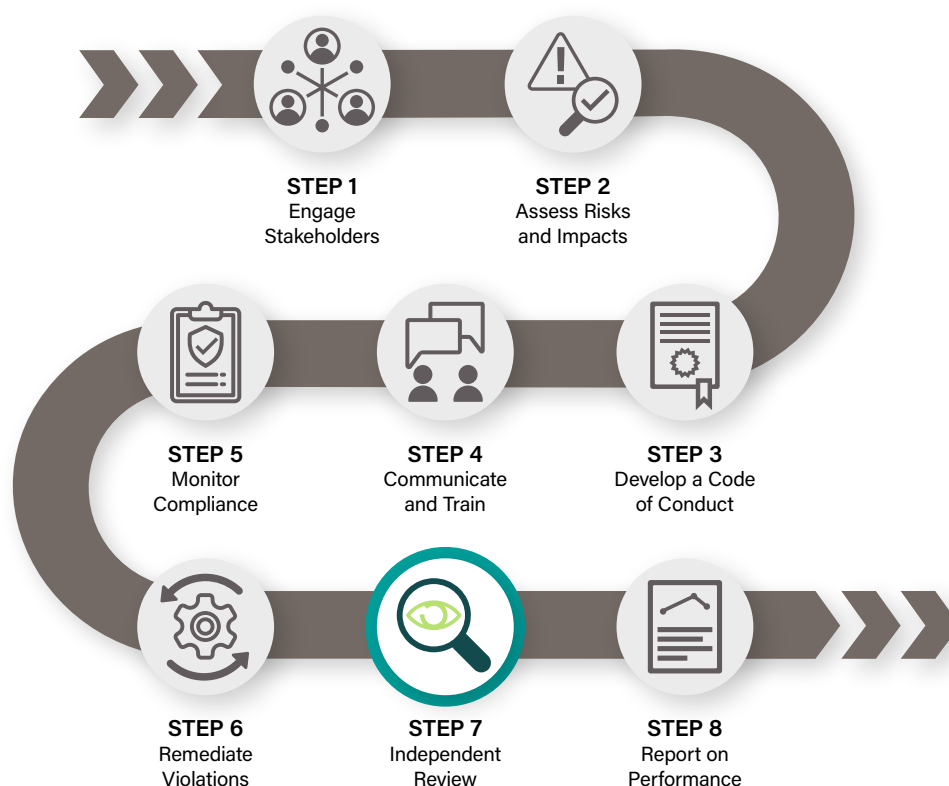
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About the COFFEE Toolkit

This tool is one of 28 tools and 14 online training modules comprising the [COFFEE Toolkit](#), which was developed as part of Verité’s Cooperation on Fair, Free, Equitable Employment (COFFEE) Project through generous funding from the US Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs (USDOL-ILAB). The purpose of the COFFEE Toolkit is to promote coffee retailer, roaster, trader, cooperative, and farm adoption of socially sustainable sourcing and farming practices in order to promote improved working conditions for farmworkers in the coffee sector.

The COFFEE Toolkit was developed in alignment with USDOL’s [Comply Chain](#) model, with at least one tool created for each of the eight steps of Comply Chain (see graphic below). Many of the tools are derived from tools created for the [Responsible Sourcing Tool](#), developed by Verité with funding from the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP). The tools can be used á la carte, but it is important that companies have systems and tools in place for each step of Comply Chain.



Why Interview Labor Brokers?

Verité research in the coffee sector has found that the use of labor brokers is correlated with higher risk of many forced labor indicators, including fraudulent recruitment, worker-paid recruitment fees, illegal deductions from workers' wages, and document retention. While some labor brokers operate within the law and Code of Conduct requirements, the enhanced level of risk associated with labor brokers means that auditors should be alert for recruitment-related red flags and should question labor brokers about them, whenever possible.

There are many different types of labor brokers, from formal subcontracting agencies to crew leaders, to labor recruiters and their local sub-agents. These labor brokers sometimes simply recruit workers, and in other cases transport them to their employers and/or are responsible for the supervision and payment of workers. This tool can be used to interview any type of labor broker.

About This Tool

The **purpose** of this tool is to provide auditors and others conducting farm monitoring with a comprehensive and adaptable list of questions to draw from when doing labor broker interviews. The questions focus on the most common labor rights risks in the coffee sector.

The main **audience** for this tool is auditors, as well as others who regularly visit farms for technical assistance or monitoring purposes. Auditors can include internal company personnel and representatives of certification organizations or independent third-party auditing firms. This guide can also be useful for companies seeking to design or improve the assurance aspects of their sustainable sourcing programs.

Labor Broker Interviews

The questionnaires below should be used as guides rather than rigid scripts. Interviewers should select those questions most appropriate for the situation being evaluated and the red flags they have noted (See [Tool 25: Guidance on Independent Auditing of Coffee Farms](#)).



General

Are you licensed or registered with the appropriate government entity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Is there a written contract in place between the farm/cooperative and labor broker, signed by both parties?

- ☐ Yes, and I have a copy
- ☐ Yes, but I don't have a copy
- ☐ Verbal agreement but no written agreement
- ☐ No agreement
- ☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

How are you paid for your work? (*Select all that apply*)

- ☐ Flat fee per worker placed
- ☐ Flat fee per harvest season
- ☐ Flat fee per worker managed/supervised
- ☐ Flat fee per task completed
- ☐ Weekly or monthly salary
- ☐ Annual salary
- ☐ Percentage of crew production
- ☐ Percentage of farm's harvest



Recruitment Costs and Transportation

Do you charge workers for any of the following?

- ☐ Paperwork
- ☐ Service fees
- ☐ Convenience fees
- ☐ Tax expenses
- ☐ Recruitment or job placement fees
- ☐ Visa processing fees
- ☐ The cost of transportation to the jobsite or lodging during travel
- ☐ Costs for job-related medical examinations, tests, or vaccinations
- ☐ Costs for tools, uniforms, or PPE necessary for the job
- ☐ Fees to secure identity documents or legalize contracts
- ☐ Skill evaluation or training/orientation fees
- ☐ Other fees (*please describe*): _____
- ☐ None of the above (*please continue to "Contracts"*)

How are these fees paid? (*Select all that apply*)

- ☐ Workers pay up front
- ☐ Fees are deducted from workers' pay
- ☐ Workers pay at the end of their employment
- ☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

Do workers have to take out loans to pay the fees?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (*Please skip next question*)
- ☐ I do not know

Do you offer any loans to workers? If so, do you charge any interest?

- ☐ I don't loan to workers
- ☐ I offer loans but I don't charge interest
- ☐ Yes. What percentage? _____
- ☐ I do not know



Contracts

How do you contract workers?

- ☐ We provide a written contract
- ☐ We provide a verbal agreement
- ☐ We deliver workers to the farm and the farm provides them a contract
- ☐ Workers are not provided with a contract
- ☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

Are the written contracts given to workers in a language they understand?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

When do workers sign their written contracts? (*Select all that apply*)

- ☐ The workers sign them before they leave their communities
- ☐ The workers sign them when they arrive at the worksite
- ☐ The workers do not sign their written contracts
- ☐ I do not know

Do workers get a countersigned copy of their contracts?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Which of the following do the written contracts include? (*Select all that apply*)

- ☐ A description of workers' rights and responsibilities
- ☐ The conditions of employment, including the start and end date of the employment contract
- ☐ The type of work and tasks the worker is expected to carry out
- ☐ The full name of the employer
- ☐ The location of the workplace
- ☐ Wages and benefits, including the rate and frequency of payment

- ☐ Working hours and overtime premiums
- ☐ Any occupational health risks to which workers may be exposed
- ☐ A description of worker accommodation and associated costs, if applicable

What are the requirements for workers for terminating their employment?

- ☐ None; they can quit anytime, for any reason, without penalty
- ☐ They cannot terminate a contract before it ends
- ☐ They must give reasonable notice before they can terminate the contract
- ☐ They can terminate the contract anytime but are penalized. Please describe the penalty.

- _____
- ☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

Once the worker terminates a contract, who covers the costs of transporting them back to their communities of origin?

- ☐ Worker
- ☐ You
- ☐ The employer



Discipline

Do you discipline workers for any of the following? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Being late/leaving work early without permission
- ☐ Missing a day of work
- ☐ Failing to meet a production quota
- ☐ Failing to work overtime
- ☐ Failing to pay debts on time
- ☐ Bringing children to work
- ☐ Bringing others to work with them
- ☐ Losing tools/PPE/materials given to them
- ☐ Being insubordinate (talking back, complaining, not obeying rules or orders)
- ☐ Harassing other workers
- ☐ Switching work assignment
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

Which of the following measures do you use to discipline workers? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Deductions from workers' pay
- ☐ Fines
- ☐ Dismissal
- ☐ Switching work assignment
- ☐ Blacklisting
- ☐ A progressive series of verbal and written warnings
- ☐ Threats to fire workers
- ☐ Threats to fire family members
- ☐ Increases or reductions to workers' hours of work
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____



Grievance Mechanisms and Resolution

How can workers file complaints or report any issues during recruitment or employment? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Talking directly to me
- ☐ A suggestion box, email address, or phone number
- ☐ The farm has its own system
- ☐ There is no system for workers to report grievances
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____



Training

Do you provide workers any type of training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *(if selected, please skip to next section "Children and Families")*

What topics are covered by trainings? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ How to do their job better
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Worker responsibilities
- ☐ Child labor and juvenile work
- ☐ Worker's labor rights
- ☐ The terms and conditions of their contracts
- ☐ Sexual harassment
- ☐ Complaint and grievance mechanisms
- ☐ Living conditions
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

What topics are covered in worker health and safety trainings? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ First aid
- ☐ Agrochemical/pesticide handling and application
- ☐ Areas of the worksite and tasks that are dangerous
- ☐ How to properly use work equipment and tools
- ☐ How to properly use PPE
- ☐ When to use PPE
- ☐ Emergency procedures and responsible persons
- ☐ Heat stroke/heat exhaustion
- ☐ Dehydration
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____



Children and Families

Who do you allow to accompany the worker to the worksite? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Spouse or domestic partner
- ☐ Children under minimum age of work
- ☐ Children over the minimum age of work
- ☐ I do not allow any family members to accompany workers

How do you make sure you are in compliance with national child labor laws? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ I conduct a thorough review of relevant laws and standards
- ☐ I rely on parents to monitor their children
- ☐ I inform all parents that child labor is not permitted
- ☐ I talk to workers on a regular basis to confirm they are of legal working age
- ☐ I require workers to submit official government identification documents, with date of birth, before being hired
- ☐ I know the people in my community and only hire adults
- ☐ I monitor all work areas to ensure that no children are working
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

How do you ensure that juvenile laborers (adolescents between the minimum age for work and 18 years of age) are working in legally permissible activities (including requirements related to hours of work, hazardous work, and school attendance)? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ I conduct a thorough review of relevant laws and standards
- ☐ I speak with workers on a regular basis
- ☐ I train workers on the types of work that are and are not permitted for juvenile laborers
- ☐ I post notices regarding permissible and non-permissible work
- ☐ I refuse to hire anyone under the age of 18
- ☐ I conduct regular inspections of work areas
- ☐ We do not have any procedures



Health and Safety

Do workers have to pay for any equipment? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ They must pay for all the equipment provided to them
- ☐ They must pay for some of the equipment
- ☐ They have to pay if they damage their equipment
- ☐ They have to pay if they lose their equipment
- ☐ All equipment is provided free of charge and workers are not charged if they damage or lose their equipment

Do workers have access to the following?: *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Potable water
- ☐ Toilet facilities
- ☐ Shaded rest areas
- ☐ Regularly scheduled breaks



Wages and Working Hours

How are working hours determined? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Workers are allowed to work as long as they please
- ☐ Workers have to complete production targets or quotas
- ☐ Workers may not work in excess of legal limits on regular working hours
- ☐ Workers may not work in excess of legal limits on overtime hours
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

Why do workers do overtime work?

- ☐ Workers are assigned overtime work
- ☐ Workers can request overtime
- ☐ We do not provide overtime
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

Are workers who are paid by production, piece rates, or tasks paid overtime premiums when they work over the standard workday hours?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Is overtime ever used as a form of disciplinary measure for any worker?

- ☐ Yes. If "Yes," please describe: _____
- ☐ No

Is overtime ever mandated for any worker?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are workers ever prohibited from working overtime as a form of punishment?

- ☐ Yes. If "Yes," please describe: _____
- ☐ No



Worker Supervision and Payment

Who supervises workers on the worksite?

- ☐ A direct employee of the farm
- ☐ Recruiters not employed directly by the farm
- ☐ Crew leaders not employed directly by the farm
- ☐ It depends on the situation

Who pays the workers?

- ☐ Recruiters pay workers
- ☐ Independent crew leaders pay workers
- ☐ The farm pays workers
- ☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

How often are the workers paid?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Each week
- ☐ Every 2 weeks
- ☐ Every month
- ☐ At the end of their contract
- ☐ At the end of the harvest season

How are workers' wages calculated?

- ☐ Set wage (Hourly/weekly/bi-weekly/monthly)
- ☐ By task (set amount for clearing a field, etc.)
- ☐ By production (by amount of coffee harvested, etc.)
- ☐ By contract (once they finish their 2-month contract, etc.)
- ☐ By harvest season
- ☐ Other. How: _____

Are workers provided with any written records of their pay and deductions (paystubs, receipts, etc.)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (*if selected, please skip next question*)
- ☐ I don't know

What information is included in these payment records? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Amount produced
- ☐ Number of tasks completed
- ☐ Rate of pay (per hour/day/production/task)
- ☐ Detailed calculations of piece rate pay based on production/tasks completed
- ☐ Deductions made from payment
- ☐ Calculation of overtime earnings

Do you guarantee that all workers are paid at least the legal minimum wage for their work, including workers paid on a piece rate basis?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know



Living Conditions

Are any of the workers you recruit, hire, and/or supervise provided with accommodation and/or food? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Yes, they are provided with accommodation
- ☐ Yes, they are provided them with food
- ☐ No *(if selected, please continue to the next section "International Recruitment")*

Are families, including children, allowed to stay in the provided accommodation and/or eat the food provided?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Who provides the workers with the accommodations and/or food?

- ☐ The recruiter(s)
- ☐ The farm
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

If you provide the accommodation and/or food, who pays for it? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ The worker
- ☐ The recruiter
- ☐ The farm
- ☐ Other *(please describe)*: _____

Does the accommodation have the following? *(Select all that apply)*

- ☐ Toilets
- ☐ Hot water
- ☐ Showers
- ☐ Clean drinking water
- ☐ Lockers or individual compartments to store valuables
- ☐ Emergency exits
- ☐ Security guards
- ☐ Somewhere to store food safely
- ☐ Somewhere to cook food safely

- ☐ Cleaning supplies
- ☐ Electricity
- ☐ Cots or beds for each individual
- ☐ The ability to lock the facility
- ☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

Does the farm/worksite have a store?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do workers have access to other stores besides the farm store?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How does the farm store charge workers for the goods they purchase?

- ☐ Cash only
- ☐ Workers can purchase goods on credit
- ☐ Deductions from wages
- ☐ Other (*please describe*): _____

If workers can purchase goods on credit, do they: (*Select all that apply*)

- ☐ Incur any interest?
- ☐ Have to pay their debts before leaving the farm?
- ☐ Have their debts deducted from their pay?

Are the prices at the farm/worksite store higher than the local market price?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Next Steps

