PREVALENCE REPORT
INTERVENTION DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH

COMBATTING FORCED LABOR IN BRAZIL:
PREVALENCE ESTIMATION AND VULNERABILITY PROFILING OF FORCED LABOR IN THE CATTLE RANCHING SECTOR IN PARÁ, BRAZIL

PADF
FUNDAÇÃO PAN-AMERICANA PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO

NORC at the University of Chicago

Access to the complete report is available on
Fair Work Program page:
https://www.padf.org/brazil/trabalho-justo

Prevalence of Forced Labor and Degrading Conditions: Assessing the extent of forced labor and unhealthy living conditions on cattle ranches in Pará.

Intervention Development Research (IDR): Identifying modifiable factors, potential targets for change, and mechanisms for future interventions to combat forced labor.

Gender-Specific Insights: Highlighting the often-overlooked circumstances of women living in or near cattle ranches, providing a deeper understanding of diverse intervention needs.

PREVALENCE ESTIMATION AND VULNERABILITY PROFILING OF FORCED LABOR IN THE CATTLE RANCHING SECTOR IN PARÁ, BRAZIL

The study estimated the prevalence of forced labor and degrading working conditions in Pará's cattle ranching sector, focusing on the municipalities of Marabá, Itupiranga, and Ulianópolis. Despite progress in Brazil's legal framework, forced labor persists, often involving deceptive recruitment, exploitative working conditions, and geographic isolation that hinders oversight and workers' access to rights. Rural sectors, particularly cattle ranching, are disproportionately affected, with marginalized groups, such as male internal migrants from northeastern Brazil and women in peripheral roles, being most vulnerable. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the study seeks to inform evidence-based interventions to address systemic vulnerabilities and improve worker protections.

3 STAGES

1 **Prevalence Estimation:** Collecting and analyzing empirical data to assess the prevalence of forced labor and degrading conditions in the cattle ranching sector in Pará.

2 **Contextual Analysis:** Identifying the socioeconomic and demographic profiles of workers, including factors like migration patterns, education levels, race, and gender, to understand vulnerabilities and systemic drivers of forced labor.

3 **Intervention Planning:** Using data-driven insights to develop tailored interventions aimed at mitigating forced labor, improving working conditions, and addressing the needs of both workers and surrounding communities.

RESEARCH METHODS
SAMPLING METHODOLOGY:

1. STUDY POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

- The cattle ranch worker population in Brazil is considered **hard-to-reach.**
- A **clear sampling frame** for this group does not exist.
- Workers frequently **remain at their workplace** and are **disconnected from the general population and public spaces.**

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The **'mark-remark' approach** was selected over alternatives such as:
- Respondent-driven sampling.
- Network scale-up method.

This method was chosen because workers only visit survey/data collection areas periodically.

3. RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION

Papel Social, a Brazilian research firm, was contracted to:
- Screen and capture cattle ranch workers.
- Conduct surveys in predetermined areas across the study region.

NORC provided:
- Rigorous training and field monitoring during data collection.
- Adherence to well-established data management protocols.

4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The study followed **context-specific ethical and safety protocols.**
- Ethics review boards in both the U.S. and Brazil **approved the study protocols.**

APPROACH TO MEASURING FORCED LABOR:

The statistical definition of the Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum (PRIF), developed by the University of Georgia, widely used in prevalence research and with the support of the US Department of State (J/TIP Office) was applied.

An indicator-based approach was used to measure forced labor victimization.

PRIF INDICATORS
12 MEASURES COVERING SEVEN DOMAINS:

1. Recruitment
2. Employment practices and penalties
3. Personal life and properties
4. Degrading conditions
5. Freedom of movement
6. Debt or dependency
7. Violence and threats of violence

PREVALENCE ESTIMATION:

Respondents meeting the conditions of either threshold **are classified as potential victims of forced labor.**

CLASSIFICATION THRESHOLDS

THRESHOLD 1:

A positive response to either of these indicators qualifies:

→ Being forced to **perform sex acts** to pay off debt or receive wages.

→ **Losing freedom of movement** - surveillance, isolation, or being locked in the workplace.

THRESHOLD 2:

→ **Two or more positive responses** required from different indicator categories (excluding Threshold 1).

CRITERIA THAT CHARACTERIZE FORCED LABOR IN BRAZIL

ART. 149 - BRAZILIAN PENAL CODE
NORMATIVE INSTRUCTION NO. 2, OF NOVEMBER 8, 2021

- Forced labor
- Exhausting working hours
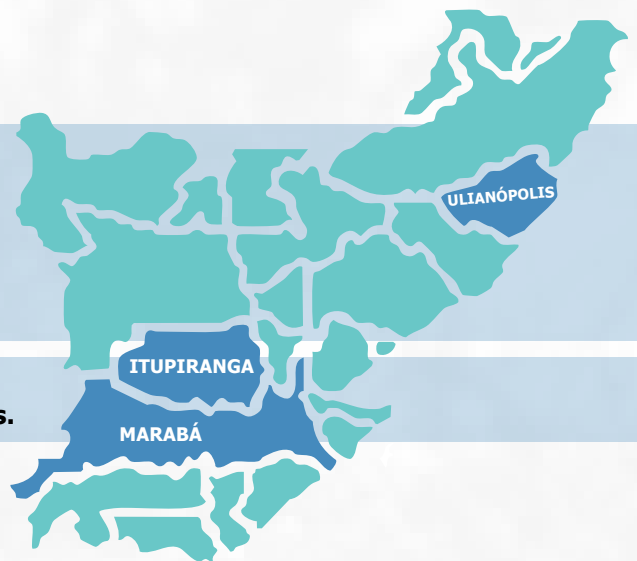- Degrading conditions
- Restriction of movement due to debt

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS:

1,241 workers were interviewed in three municipalities: **Marabá, Ulianópolis and Itupiranga.**

Inclusion criteria: Rural workers **over 18 years old** who have worked in the cattle ranch sector **in the last two years.**

ULIANÓPOLIS

ITUPIRANGA

MARABÁ

DEMOGRAPHICS:

74.38%

25%

1%

74.38% were **male.**
25% were **women.**
1% others.

Average age:
42.83 years old
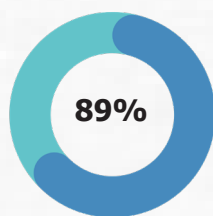
18 years
The youngest interviewee was 18 years old.

86 years
The oldest interviewee was 86 years old.

89%
self-identified as black or multi-racial.

MA

66.16%
were internal migrant workers, in **large majority from the state of Maranhão.**

Quantitative sample:

53%

were **day laborers** who **did not live on the ranch at the time of the survey.**

Qualitative sample:

Full time ranch workers

living on the ranches.

WORKING CONDITIONS

RESPONDENTS WORKED, ON AVERAGE:

Close to **9 hours** per day.
Almost **6 days** per week.

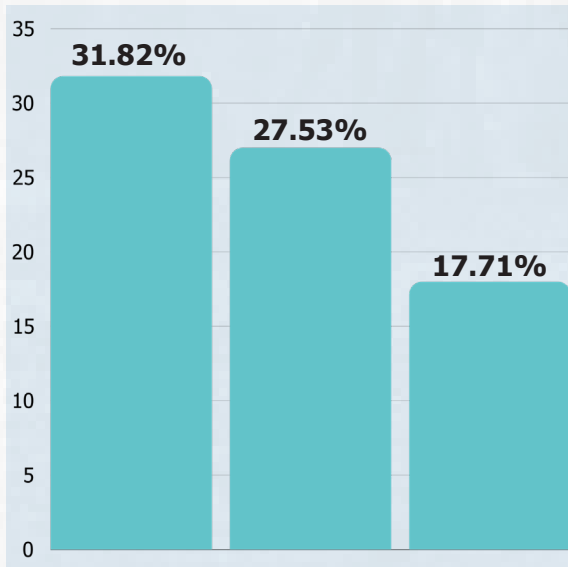### WAGES:

Paid almost **entirely in cash.**
Average monthly wage: **R$1,246 (approximately $250 USD).**

PRIF INDICATOR RESULTS

PREVALENCE OF FORCED LABOR IN ALL CATTLE RANCHING JOBS EVER WORKED IN THE LAST 2 YEARS:

31.82%

27.53%

17.71%

- **31.82%** when considering the working conditions **in any cattle ranch work already carried out.**

- **27.53%** met the **Threshold 2 indicators.**

- **17.71%** met the **Threshold 1 indicators.**

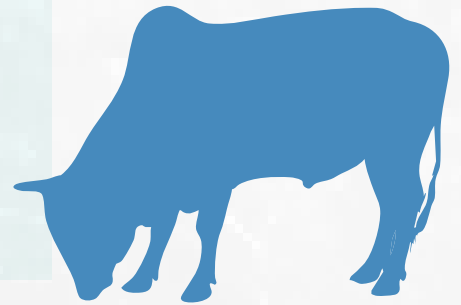## PREVALENCE OF FORCED LABOR IN THE CURRENT OR MOST RECENT JOB:

14.10%
of the target farmworker population **has likely been victims of labor trafficking under U.S. law.**

12.17%
were considered **potential victims based on Threshold 2 indicators** including unfair recruitment practices,withheld pay, and restriction of movement.

6.24%
were considered **potential victims based on Threshold 1 indicators** - sexual abuse, debt bondage, violations of bodily autonomy.
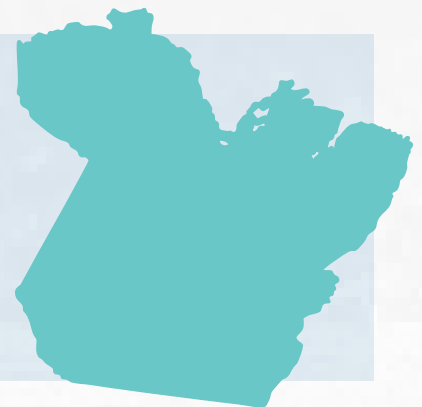
FORCED LABOR UNDER BRAZILIAN LABOR LAWS:
BASED ON NORMATIVE INSTRUCTION Nº 2 OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT (MTE)

31.82%
were victims of forced labor in any cattle ranch activity in the last 2 years.

28.79%
were victims of forced labor in their current or most recent job.

COMMON INDICATORS OF FORCED LABOR:

27.41%
experienced threats, fraud, deceit, coercion, or other practices to maintain labor in their current job.

QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS

WORKERS DESCRIBED:

- Withholding of **payments and threats** to withhold wages.
- Long and **exhausting working hours outdoors,** often in extreme heat.
- Lack of **scheduled time off,** including work on weekends and holidays.

These practices were reported among workers interviewed in focus groups held in the municipalities of Marabá, Itupiranga and Ulianópolis.

CHILD LABOR

Although the focus of the study was not on evaluating child labor in the cattle sector, data collected and analyzed demonstrates the following:
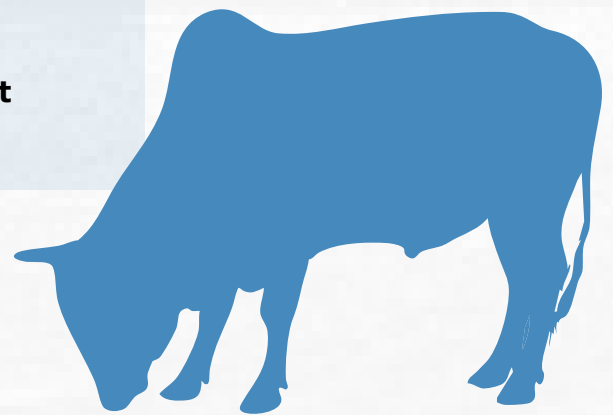
54%

started working in cattle ranch **between the ages of 10 and 17.**

12%

started working in cattle ranch **before they were 10 years old.**

12%

reported **seeing children working on their current farm.**

INTERVENTION DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH:

- 35% of the target population reported acquiring a serious illness while working on the cattle ranch.
- Among these, 90% reported having to stop working because of the illness for an average of 53 days.

- 38% of the target population reported being seriously injured while working in cattle ranch.
- Among these, 30% reported not having sought health care.

- 51% of the target population were affected by malaria and 25% by dengue
- The most commonly reported hazards were: dealing with livestock (72%), felling trees (32%), and snake bites, poison or other animal venom (23%).

- 58% reported providing their own PPE.
- In focus groups, workers confirmed that employers did not provide any type of PPE.

Challenges in Access: Workers in isolated areas faced difficulties reaching healthcare due to **long distances and transportation limitations.**

WORK AND LIVING CONDITIONS

MOST DIFFICULT ASPECTS OF CATTLE RANCH WORK:

- 36% reported that physical exhaustion was the worst aspect of their job.
- The next worst aspect of their job was salary/compensation (34%) and lack of security (8%).

LIVING CONDITIONS:

- Of those living on the farm, 54% reported living with their family and 44% with other workers.
- 67% live in houses, 11% in tents or makeshift housing.
- 25% considered the housing inadequate.

WATER AND SANITATION:

- Primary water sources: 36.46% noted their main source of water was a protected dug well and 30.73% reported relying on a tube-well/borehole.
- Only 13.78% of respondents reported having piped water in their dwelling and 7.56% reported relying on surface water as their primary source of water.
- The majority of respondents (63.54%) depended on using chemical toilets.

SUPPORT NETWORKS AND INTERVENTION OPTIONS

SUPPORT NETWORKS:

37% said they would go to a government agency.

32% reported that they would return to their families.

15% reported not having any support network.

SOCIAL SERVICES ACCESS AND NEEDS

DESIRED SERVICES:

Top priorities included:
- Professional medical care - **82.84%**
- Dental care - **73.01%**
- Assistance with shelter and sustenance- **59.47%**
- Life skills/job training - **56.24%**
- Legal assistance - **51.17%**

Qualitative Insights: Emphasized the need for healthcare, education, workers' rights training, and legal assistance.

37% reported that they would like to receive **mental health treatment.**

40% reported **never having received any public, social or health services.**

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

ASPECTS EVALUATED IN THE STUDY:

1. Prevalence of forced labor or labor trafficking.
2. Health and living conditions of workers on farms.

KEY FINDINGS:

Indications of labor trafficking detected in all main indicators.

PRIF DATA:

1 in every 3
workers were identified as **potential victims of human trafficking in previous jobs.**

14%
was **the victimization rate** in recent employment.

MAIN ASSOCIATED FACTORS:

- Deceptive recruitment.
- Abusive employment practices.

RESULTS BASED ON BRAZILIAN LEGISLATION:

- Higher rate of victimization in conditions analogous to slavery.
- Most respondents reported abusive labor practices in the last 12 months.

DATA ON DECEPTION:

68.72%
of respondents who were deceived about the nature of their work **said it had occurred in the past 12 months.**

78%
reported having been **required to do things that were completely different from what they were led to believe.**

COMPARISON BETWEEN PRIF AND BRAZILIAN INDICATORS
SIMILAR RATES OF VICTIMIZATION:

31.82%
reported **having been victimized at some point.**

28.79%
indicated victimization **in their current job.**

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND LIVING CONDITIONS
PRIORITY SERVICES FOR WORKERS:

- **Health and dental were the most desired services.**

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND INJURIES:

+1/3
reported **suffering serious injuries at work.**

+1/3
reported **contracting serious illnesses, often malaria.**
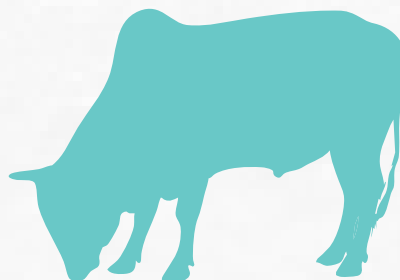
90%
of those affected by serious injuries or illnesses **had to stop work.**

RISKS AND WORKING CONDITIONS:

75%
consider **cattle handling the most dangerous task.**

- **Physical exhaustion is common. Workers reported nine-hour workdays and worked for about six days each week.**
- **Workers living on ranches (as opposed to day laborers) could be working even longer hours, according to qualitative findings.**

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS:

- **As climate change heats up this region, these long hours and workers' poor access to fresh drinking water are likely to increase heat stress and dehydration, with corresponding risk of kidney failure.**

LACK OF SUPPORT:

- **1 in 10 workers reported having no one to turn to for help.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate strategic areas of intervention to reduce damage related to forced labor in the cattle ranching sector in the three municipalities. Recommendations focus on specific target groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON IDR FINDINGS:

KNOWLEDGE AND ACTIONS OF EMPLOYERS

Preventing forced labor victimization and employment abuse often depends on the employer and the working conditions they create. However, governments and community organizations can play a central role in alerting cattle ranch owners to Brazilian labor legislation and their legal obligations in fair employment practices (e.g., payment duties and terms), working conditions and safe and healthy lives (e.g. providing protective equipment and safety training) - and holding them accountable for this.

INFORMATION ABOUT RIGHTS

Awareness raising activities should focus on informing them about their rights and how to assert them, as well as available support services.

FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Workers said legal assistance was a priority, but few workers reported being in contact with legal services.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Brazil has solid occupational health, safety and environmental regulatory standards that should have a greater reach on cattle farms in the State of Pará, through the training of employers and workers, in addition to the involvement of local health service providers in occupational health care.

VERIFICATION OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN TO REDUCE THE PRESENCE OF FORCED LABOR

Government and non-governmental agencies should aim to improve supply chain levers to pressure employers to comply with Brazilian labor laws. For example, routine labor, health and safety inspections and certifications of ethical working conditions should become an industry standard required of all ranch owners who wish to obtain an export license or access the domestic market supply chain.

ABOUT PADF

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