



# Unseen and ISG: Partnering for a brighter future against modern slavery in construction

BRIDGING ORGANISATIONAL GAPS,  
ENHANCING OVERSIGHT, AND  
BUILDING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.

## who is ISG?

ISG was a dynamic international construction services company. Known for contributing to some of the world's most impactful and recognisable places, their legacy extended far beyond buildings. Across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, they delivered spaces where people and businesses made memories, forged new experiences, and reached their goals.

Equally important was how they worked. ISG was committed to safe and ethical practices, demanding the same from their supply chain. Unseen worked closely with Agnes Kulpa and Claire Martin from ISG's Group Compliance Team to understand their approach and initiatives in tackling modern slavery.

In September 2024, ISG went into administration. While their closure marked the end of their operations, they left a lasting legacy of advancing ethical practices and raising awareness of modern slavery risks. Their partnership with Unseen is a testament to the meaningful progress they made in the construction industry, leaving an enduring impact on the fight against worker exploitation.

## THE CHALLENGE

# identifying gaps and benchmarking

Determined to strengthen their approach to modern slavery, ISG partnered with Unseen to complete a gap analysis. This exercise helped benchmark their efforts against industry best practices and established meaningful metrics to measure their impact.

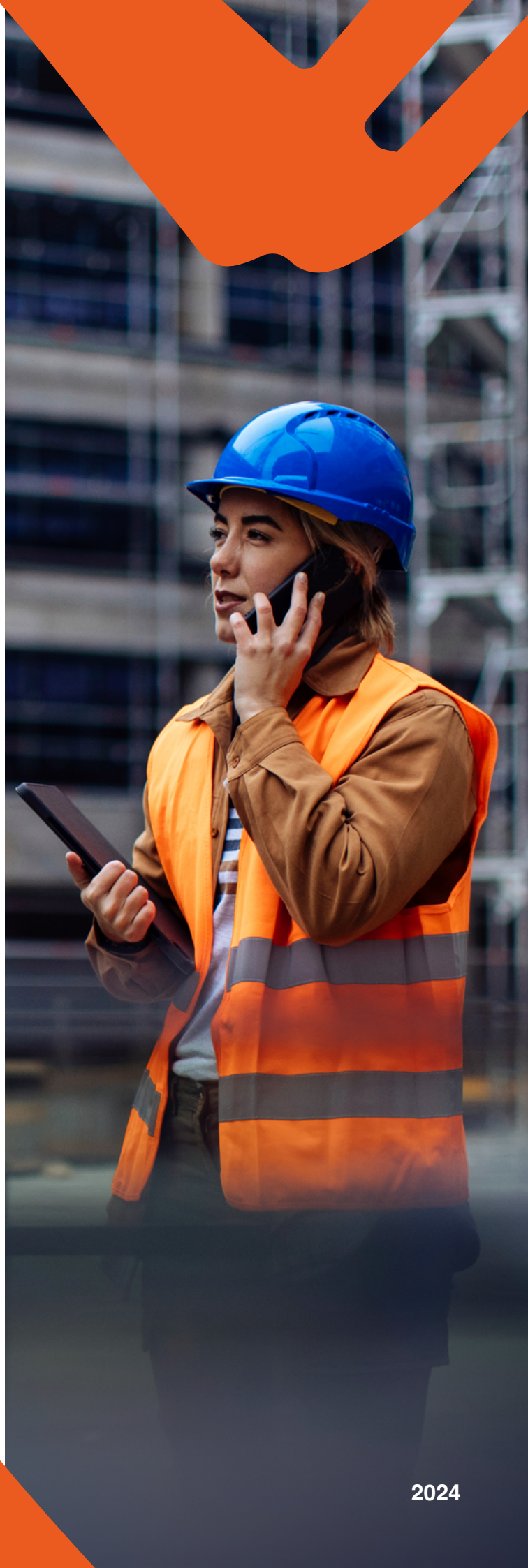
Beyond continual internal improvements, ISG also sought to raise awareness around modern slavery risks across the business and boost on-site understanding of how to identify these risks within construction projects. This holistic approach aimed to bolster their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategy and drive lasting industry-wide change.

“We knew that we wanted to develop some KPIs in this area, but we needed to understand where our business was at and what was needed to implement it,” explained Claire Martin, a Senior Compliance Manager at ISG.

Shifting industry mindsets and fostering collaboration also proved crucial to tackling these global challenges.

*“I think the misconception that modern slavery is not happening in the construction industry is one of the biggest challenges. Collaboration with other stakeholders and a centralised approach is key in tackling those challenges,”*

said Agnes Kulpa, Head of Compliance at ISG.





## THE SOLUTION

# partnering for impact

ISG recognised the value of collaborating with an anti-slavery charity like Unseen. According to Claire Martin, Unseen's "track record" in supporting victims through its Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline and other frontline services, while also providing practical guidance to similar businesses resonated deeply with ISG's mission. It was ISG's vision to make places where people and businesses thrive.

"It was about all the work that you're doing as a charity around this – the cases that you encounter on a day-to-day basis and the fact that you are helping victims and organisations to deal with the issue," said Agnes, Head of Compliance at ISG.

## enhanced understanding and collaboration

Through a thorough gap analysis, Unseen helped ISG identify areas for improvement and foster a holistic understanding of the risks across the entire organisation.

*"Partnering with Unseen helped us as an organisation to bridge gaps between those departments that had some objectives around modern slavery... You helped broaden our understanding of exactly what those risks are and how they present,"*

said Claire Martin.

"The gap analysis gave us understanding of all areas of our business that had a responsibility around this, not necessarily just the compliance team." added Agnes.

This led to establishing a centralised framework for tackling modern slavery. All relevant departments, including HR, supply chain sustainability, social value, and internal talent, are now involved and aligned.

"Collaboration across departments is crucial in effectively addressing modern slavery. By working together, we can ensure that all aspects of our business are aligned with our commitment to ethical practices," said Claire.

## amplifying worker voice and strengthening audits

ISG collaborated with Unseen on in-depth onsite worker wellbeing assessments, which helped to identify gaps in their anti-slavery approach and areas of focus. These assessments enhanced ISG's approach to worker engagement and internal audits, while supporting a more transparent and ethical supply chain.

*"Our collaboration further refined our approach to workforce engagement across our sites, with expert guidance on ethical employment practices across our business and supply chain,"*

explains Claire.

Our worker wellbeing assessments provided valuable insights that informed iterative updates and a change to ISG's approach with their current audit framework. This added another dimension to discussions around employment practices within the supply chain, allowing for better identification of potential modern slavery risks and concerns.

Informed by the worker wellbeing findings, ISG implemented a more project focused audit/review approach, alongside their existing audit framework, which allowed for a two-pronged approach to strengthen supply chain engagement, designed to assess modern slavery risks throughout the supply chain:

- 1 High-level supplier reviews:** these enhanced compliance reviews provide ISG with a broader understanding of a supplier's overall practices and potential risks. This included reviewing employment contracts to verify details and identify red flags that could indicate potential modern slavery situations.
- 2 Site-specific assessments:** In-depth visits directly observed worker engagement and conditions and identified potential modern slavery situations.

The worker wellbeing interviews also empowered ISG to have more robust conversations with their supply chain regarding ethical employment practices:

"Main contractors have a critical role to play in ensuring our supply chain is focused and vigilant in this space," said Claire.

"Our ability to share the very latest learnings and guidance from our specialist partners was a central plank in this commitment, and these site visits gave us tools and confidence to be able to have robust conversations with our supply chain partners."

ISG developed a comprehensive project pack containing essential resources and information, including Unseen's Helpline posters. The pack aimed to raise awareness not only among employees, construction workers and subcontractors but also project managers and directors who may need support to effectively manage modern slavery risks within their projects.

"Very often [those directly involved in construction projects] do not understand the full magnitude of those risks. This pack was designed to support people who might not know where to turn to if they feel themselves or somebody else could potentially be a victim," said Agnes.

## board-level training and ongoing awareness

ISG recognised the importance of raising awareness and fostering strong support for ongoing efforts around tackling modern slavery throughout the organisation, including at the board level.

To achieve this, Unseen delivered a training session, specifically designed for ISG's board of directors. This session addressed critical aspects of modern slavery in ISG's supply chains, along with their specific role in mitigating these risks.

## THE FUTURE

# a lasting legacy

While ISG entered administration in September 2024, their commitment to addressing modern slavery and raising awareness in the construction sector remains a powerful part of their legacy. Our partnership continues to inspire change across the industry.

Through this collaboration, ISG built a framework for identifying and addressing modern slavery risks. This partnership not only strengthened ISG's internal auditing and policies but also underscored the importance of cross-industry collaboration to drive transparency and ethical practices in the supply chain.

When asked about advice for other companies in the construction sector, Claire emphasised the importance of collective action:

*"I think there's a real opportunity for competitors and the people in our industry to start working together. For everyone to share best practices and really be transparent because we can't achieve anything unless we're prepared to be open and ensure we don't allow for any gaps to form in awareness and collective response."*

ISG also recognised the importance of ongoing communication with subcontractors and taking a joint approach to drive industry-wide change, especially since many companies share suppliers and contractors. Their work with Unseen showed that collaboration is key — by coming together, businesses can set a strong example and strengthen their collective impact in the fight against modern slavery.

Claire's powerful closing statement urges others to act: "Don't ignore this subject. It's there, it's happening, and it's a reality. So, embrace it because it's only when you do that, that change will happen."



**Want to make a real difference in the fight against modern slavery?**

Join our growing business community and collaborate with like-minded organisations. Get in touch for a chat about how we can help your organisation implement best practices and drive positive change.

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