

HTMS Ambassador Programme

Climate Change & HTMS

Human trafficking & modern slavery (HTMS) is the exploitation of people through the use of threats, fraud, coercion or deception. It involves the abuse of an individual's position of vulnerability - climate change is identified as a key contributor to increasing the vulnerability of a population and placing them at risk of HTMS, and one which is not well understood by many [1].

Climate change & displacement

Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather conditions. Countries and communities across the world are experiencing the effects of climate change, which include [2]:

- intense droughts,
- water scarcity,
- severe fires,
- rising sea levels,
- flooding,
- melting polar ice,
- catastrophic storms,
- declining biodiversity.

Climate change has a negative and often disastrous impact on developing countries and small island nations as they are the first to be impacted by severe weather conditions. Rising sea levels and flooding result in the relocation of whole communities, and protracted droughts put communities at risk of famine. These changes and forced displacement destroy ecosystems and livelihoods, threatening the survival of communities and pushing people over the poverty line [3].

Climate induced migration

The large-scale displacement of communities forces people to migrate in order to seek an alternative livelihood for survival. Forced displacement thus increases the vulnerability of individuals and exposes them to an increased risk of exploitation due to the lack of protection and support mechanisms available to them, whether internally displaced or crossing borders. These risks are further exacerbated during migration by the lack of safe routes and access to protections for migrants.

The World Bank estimates that by 2050 climate change will force more than 143 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America from their homes [4].

REFERENCES:

[1] <https://www.unseenuk.org/climate-change-modern-slavery/>

[2] <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>

[3] <https://cafod.org.uk/about-us/policy-and-research/climate-and-environment>

[4] https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021_low_res.pdf

Linking climate change, migration & HTMS

According to an Anti-Slavery International report [5], there exist at least 3 circumstances in which the link between climate change, migration and HTMS is evident:

1) Sudden events in the aftermath of disasters

- following the Indonesian tsunami of 2013, many survivors found themselves coerced into working as prostitutes or labourers.
- following annual flooding in Assam (north-east India), women and girls are forced into child slavery or forced marriage to make ends meet.

2) Slow onset events/disasters

climate variability often leads to drought which pushes communities reliant on natural resources and farming to look for alternative forms of income. however, the lack of viable options can lead to them embarking on dangerous migration journeys and/or incurring debt, which can then lead to situations of forced or bonded labour. One such example is of farmers forced into intergenerational bondage by kiln factory owners who buy their debt and force them to work in sub-human conditions.

3) slow onset events combined with conflict and forced displacement

countries experiencing conflict and high levels of insecurity are less able to cope with the adverse effects of climate change - conflict weakens existing institutions and livelihood support systems, leaving communities without the means to adapt or cope. Such income loss and displacement expose individuals to increased risks of exploitation.

The Climate Change & Modern Slavery Hub

The Climate change and modern slavery hub was developed in partnership by the International Institute for Environment & development, Anti-Slavery International and Oviyashi Karmi Unnayan Programme to address the issue of HTMS within the context of climate-induced migration. Due to the lack of understanding and information on the link between climate change and HTMS, the Hub brings together existing evidence to assist in the development of targeted policies and programmes. Resources and further information can be accessed via the map on the Hub's website: <https://www.climate-modern-slavery-hub.org/>

Resources:

Laudato Si: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

CAFOD resources: <https://cafod.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/climate-crisis>

Anti-Slavery International report: https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021_low_res.pdf

Climate Change and Modern Slavery Hub: <https://www.climate-modern-slavery-hub.org/>

REFERENCES:

[5] https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021_low_res.pdf