



Climate Change, Mobility and Modern Slavery:

Emerging approaches and
perspectives from civil society



Cover: Affected families carry emergency supplies over a makeshift bridge after the mudslide in Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2017.

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Introduction

The intersecting crises of **modern slavery** and climate change demand urgent global attention. While these phenomena may appear distinct, they are deeply interconnected and disproportionately affect the world's most disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Climate change has forced millions of people to leave their homes and relocate, putting them at higher risk of exploitation and modern slavery. This report highlights the need for a more holistic approach to climate action, one that explicitly recognises the linkages between climate-induced mobility and modern slavery.

Marginalised communities, who already contend with systemic inequalities tied to gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and political exclusion, face the worst impacts of climate change. Climate-related impacts destroy livelihoods, displace families and deepen economic hardship, driving people to move. This '**distressed mobility**' puts people at high risk of exploitation and modern slavery. Those who are '**immobile**' (due to poverty, systemic barriers to migration or their desire to stay in their homes) are similarly at risk.

This report provides a rapid assessment of current and emerging responses to the intersecting challenges of climate change, mobility and modern slavery. Through case studies, it shares the insights and emerging responses of civil society actors and researchers working with affected communities from South Asia, Southeast Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, the Pacific Islands and Latin America.

The stakeholders consulted include civil society groups operating at the international, regional and national level, United Nations agencies, private philanthropic organisations, research and policy thinktanks, grassroots organisations and media outlets. Drawing on their voices, the report highlights the need for safe migration pathways, rights-based relocation strategies, climate-resilient solutions for affected communities, robust social protections and climate policies that apply a modern slavery lens. Acknowledging the challenges they face, it recognises the need to support affected communities through sustainable measures that are relevant to the local context and take account of the needs of all community members. It recognises the compounding role of systemic inequalities and advocates for increased climate adaptation funding to prevent exploitation.

By centring the knowledge and experience of those working with the most affected communities, this report seeks to catalyse urgent action at the intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery. We hope to stimulate dialogue within and between both state and non-state actors and foster a more equitable rights-based response to these interconnected crises.

Structure of the report

The report begins with an introduction to the nexus of climate change, mobility and modern slavery. The main part of the report is organised by region. Each section includes an introduction to the situation of modern slavery, climate change and mobility in the respective region. Short country profiles are provided before the case studies for that country. We conclude with recommendations for multilateral organisations, international non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations based on the lessons learned from the case studies. Further information on the interviews is provided in annex.

Glossary

Modern slavery: An umbrella term for different forms of exploitation of individuals for someone else's personal or commercial gain. It includes forced labour, bonded labour/debt bondage, human trafficking and forced marriage.¹

Distressed mobility: The movement of people away from their homes in circumstances of severe need and/or precariousness. These circumstances can arise because livelihood opportunities at home are severely threatened or have ceased to exist.²

Displacement: The forced movement of people as a result of major events, such as sudden climate change impacts or conflict.³

Rapid-onset climate events: Events that destroy livelihood opportunities and household resources suddenly, such as floods or hurricanes.⁴

Slow-onset climate events: Events that evolve gradually due to incremental changes over many years or due to the increased frequency or intensity of recurring events. Recurring events can have both rapid and slow-onset effects, and rapid-onset events can contribute to slow-onset environmental changes. When extreme events occur frequently, their cumulative impact can accelerate different kinds of long-term environmental degradation. Slow-onset events include sea level rise, rising temperatures, ocean acidification, glacial retreat and related impacts, salinisation, land and forest degradation, biodiversity loss and desertification.⁵

Forced labour: All work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered themselves voluntarily (based on ILO definition).⁶

Immobility: The inability or unwillingness of a person or group of people to leave their home/place of residence. Immobility can be involuntary or voluntary. Involuntary immobility is when people who need or want to move are not able to do so due to tangible or intangible barriers or restrictions.⁷ Voluntary immobility is when people who could migrate choose to stay where they are.⁸

Human mobility: All the different ways that people move from one place to another. In climate spaces, the term is increasingly used to refer to three types of population movement: displacement, migration and planned relocation.⁹ By using the term 'human mobility', we recognise that migration is not always a voluntary choice, even when not displacement. Despite policy framework preferring a clear-cut distinction between the two, the line between voluntary and involuntary movements in the context of climate change is often blurred, as the loss of resources and livelihoods often leave no other choice than to migrate.

1 Anti-Slavery International (2025), 'What is modern slavery?', antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/. For more information on the concepts of modern slavery, including forced labour and human trafficking, see ILO (2024), 'What is forced labour?', ilo.org/topics/forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-trafficking-persons/what-forced-labour.

2 Anti-Slavery International and Walk Free (2023), 'The Costs of the Climate Crisis', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/spotlights/the-costs-of-the-climate-crisis/.

3 International Organization for Migration (2019), 'Glossary on Migration', https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf

4 Anti-Slavery International and Walk Free (2023), 'The Costs of the Climate Crisis', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/spotlights/the-costs-of-the-climate-crisis/; UNFCCC (2012), 'Slow onset events: Technical paper', <https://unfccc.int/documents/7429>.

5 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2018), 'Synthesizing the state of knowledge to better understand displacement related to slow onset events', IDMC and Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Task Force on Displacement, <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/task-force-displacement>.

6 ILO (2024), 'What is forced labour?', ilo.org/topics/forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-trafficking-persons/what-forced-labour.

7 Zickgraf, C. (2020), 'Were we all trapped? Reflections on immobility during a global pandemic', environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/were-we-all-trapped-reflections-immobility-during-global-pandemic.

8 Schewel, K. (2021), 'Staying put: Why it's time to pay more attention to mixed immobility', Mixed Migration Centre, mixedmigration.org/staying-put-why-its-time-to-pay-more-attention-to-mixed-immobility/.

9 IOM (2019), 'Glossary on Migration', publications.iom.int/books/international-migration-law-ndeg34-glossary-migration.



Loss and damage: The adverse effects of climate change that cannot be avoided through mitigation or adaptation. These adverse effects include both economic losses (such as damage to property and infrastructure) and non-economic losses (such as loss of life, cultural heritage or biodiversity).¹⁰

Economic loss and damage: The adverse effects of climate change that have quantifiable costs – for example, damage to infrastructure or lower crop yields.¹¹

Non-economic loss and damage: The negative effects of climate change that are harder to measure in monetary terms.¹² Non-economic loss and damage can affect individuals (e.g. loss of life, health or mobility), society (e.g. loss of territory, cultural heritage, indigenous or local knowledge, or societal or cultural identity) or the environment (e.g. loss of biodiversity or ecosystem services).¹³

Nationally Determined Contributions: National climate action plans made by each country. They outline how the country will reduce its emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.¹⁴

National Adaptation Plans: Plans made by countries to identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs. They are used to develop and implement strategies and programmes to meet those needs.¹⁵

Intersectionality: A concept that suggests the way different aspects of a person's identity, such as race, class, and gender, are linked together can create overlapping and interdependent forms of discrimination, unfair treatment, and marginalisation. In the context of climate change, it highlights how impacts are unevenly distributed, disproportionately harming marginalised and disadvantaged individuals and communities.¹⁶

Interconnection: The notion that two areas are related, so that effects in one have cascading impacts to another.¹⁷

10 UNFCCC (2017), 'Online Guide on Loss and Damage', unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/online_guide_on_loss_and_damage-dec_2017.pdf.

11 United Nations Environment Programme (2025), 'About Loss and Damage', unep.org/topics/climate-action/loss-and-damage/about-loss-and-damage.

12 UN Environment Programme (2025), 'About Loss and Damage', unep.org/topics/climate-action/loss-and-damage/about-loss-and-damage.

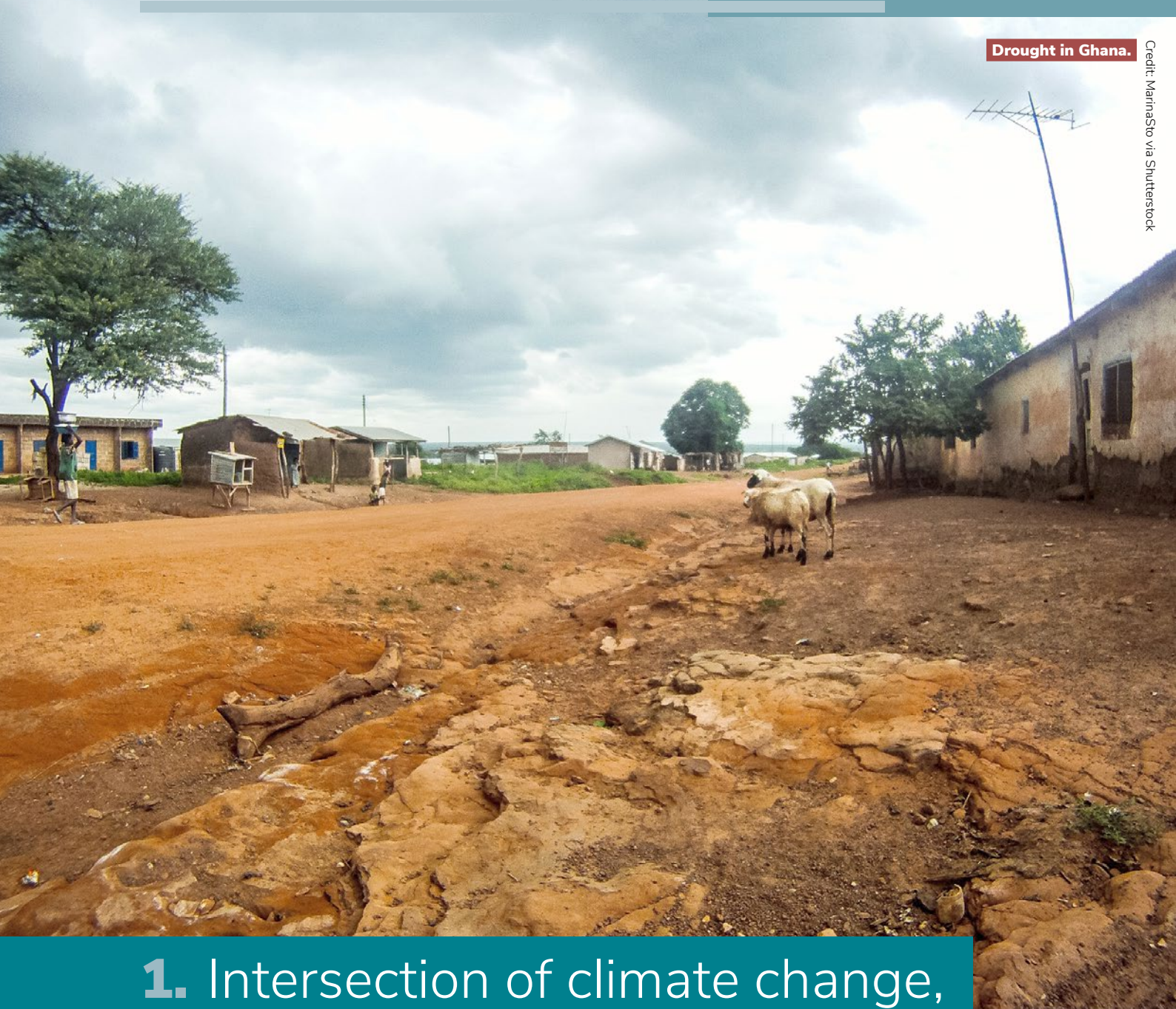
13 UNFCCC (2025), 'Non-Economic Losses', unfccc.int/process/bodies/constituted-bodies/WIMExCom/NELs.

14 United Nations (2025), 'All About the NDCs', un.org/en/climatechange/all-about-ndcs.

15 UNFCCC (2025), 'National Adaptation Plans', unfccc.int/national-adaptation-plans.

16 Kaijser, A., & Kronsell, A. (2014). Climate Change through the Lens of Intersectionality. *Environmental Politics*, 23(3), 417-433.

17 Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Interconnect. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved March 25, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interconnect>



1. Intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery

The intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery gives rise to global challenges that transcend geographical and political boundaries. **Rapid-onset climate events** – such as floods, cyclones and extreme weather – destroy people's livelihoods and infrastructure.

Slow-onset climate events – such as drought and sea level rise – make land uninhabitable, threaten food security and undermine livelihood opportunities. Both types of climate events drive people to move in search of better prospects elsewhere, whether as a direct impact or compounding factor.¹⁸ Without urgent climate action, by 2050, more than 200 million people will have had to move within their country's borders as a result of climate change.¹⁹

18 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2021), 'Displaced on the frontlines of the climate emergency', storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/065d18218b654c798ae9f360a626d903; Bharadwaj, R., Bishop, D., Hazra, S., Pufaa, E. and Kofi Annan, J. (2021), Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers, Anti-Slavery International and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), pp. 6-34, iied.org/20441g; Bharadwaj, R., Chakravarti, D., Karthikeyan, N., Hazra, S., Daniel, U., Topno, J. and Abhilashi, R. (2022), Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking, IIED, p. 5, iied.org/20936iied.

19 Clement, V. et al. (2021), Groundswell Part II: Acting on Internal Climate Migration. World Bank, documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/540941631203608570.

Climate change also exacerbates immobility when the people it affects become ‘trapped’ because they do not have the resources, institutional support, physical or mental capacity, or desire to migrate, despite environmental pressures.²⁰ A growing body of evidence shows that, in the absence of protections, many people who move or become immobile due to climate change are forced to pursue risky survival strategies. This puts them at heightened risk of modern slavery including forced labour, forced marriage and human trafficking.²¹ Recent global estimates suggest that the number of people in modern slavery increased by 10 million between 2016 and 2021 due to the combined impact of climate change, conflict and the Covid-19 pandemic.²²

The intersecting challenges of climate change, mobility and modern slavery disproportionately affect people who already inhabit climate-vulnerable environments, those who live in precarious socioeconomic situations and those who are marginalised based on their socioeconomic status (for example, gender, age, caste, race, ethnicity or belonging to Indigenous Peoples groups).

On a positive note, mobility is gaining increasing attention in climate policy spaces. This shift was catalysed by the creation of the **Loss and Damage** Fund in 2022 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).²³ The Fund aims to support the most affected countries to address the adverse effects of climate change. **Human mobility** was incorporated into the Fund’s mandate when it was operationalised in 2023.²⁴

This positive step builds on earlier frameworks, such as the 2015 Paris Agreement.²⁵ The Paris Agreement calls on governments to ensure respect for migrants’ human rights in climate action and requires them to take account of mobility in **Nationally Determined Contributions** and **National Adaptation Plans**.²⁶ Moreover, in its Sixth Assessment Report in 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change emphasises that guaranteeing the human rights of mobile populations in the context of climate change is a key challenge.²⁷ When designing and implementing policies to tackle both climate change and modern slavery, policymakers should therefore take a nuanced evidence-based approach that recognises the linkages between climate-induced (im)mobility and heightened risks of modern slavery.

Decision-makers must urgently address modern slavery and other human rights violations in the context of climate-related mobility, while providing targeted support to safeguard the livelihoods and rights of immobile populations. This report aims to provide both decision-makers and practitioners with insights into modern slavery in the context of climate-induced mobility and immobility and share emerging practical approaches to tackle it.

For further evidence and information on the intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery, visit the Climate Change & Modern Slavery Hub (climate-modern-slavery-hub.org).

20 Nawrotzki, R.J., DeWaard, J. (2018) ‘Putting trapped populations into place: climate change and inter-district migration flows in Zambia’. *Reg Environ Change* 18, 533–546, doi.org/10.1007/s10113-017-1224-3.

21 Anti-Slavery International, IIED and OKUP (2025), Climate Change & Modern Slavery Hub, climate-modern-slavery-hub.org/.

22 Estimates by the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration and Walk Free: International Labour Organization (2022), Global estimates of modern slavery: Forced labour and forced marriage, publications.iom.int/books/global-estimates-modern-slavery-forced-labour-and-forced-marriage.

23 UNFCCC (2022), ‘COP27 Reaches Breakthrough Agreement on New “Loss and Damage” Fund for Vulnerable Countries’ [press release], unfccc.int/news/cop27-reaches-breakthrough-agreement-on-new-loss-and-damage-fund-for-vulnerable-countries.

24 International Organization for Migration (2024), ‘Loss and Damage Fund Operationalized at COP28’, iac.iom.int/en/news/loss-and-damage-fund-operationalized-cop28?utm.

25 The Paris Agreement is a global treaty adopted in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to tackle climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C, with efforts to stay below 1.5°C, through Nationally Determined Contributions and international cooperation, unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

26 International Organization for Migration, ‘Climate Migration: From the Paris Agreement to the Global Compact for Migration’, weblog.iom.int/climate-migration-paris-agreement-global-compact-migration.

27 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2022), Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/.

1.1. Understandings of modern slavery

Anti-Slavery International understands modern slavery as an umbrella term for different forms of severe exploitation of individuals for someone else's gain. It includes forced labour, bonded labour/debt bondage, human trafficking and forced marriage.²⁸

The consultations did, however, reveal that modern slavery is not considered to be genuinely 'modern'. Rather, it is seen as a reframing of historical slavery and forced labour from colonial and pre-colonial times. Despite significant global progress on rights protections, justice and equality, slavery-like conditions persist today, mirroring those of the past.²⁹ This rapid scoping report does not seek to redefine modern slavery. Instead, it acknowledges that modern slavery exists in numerous forms across diverse contexts.

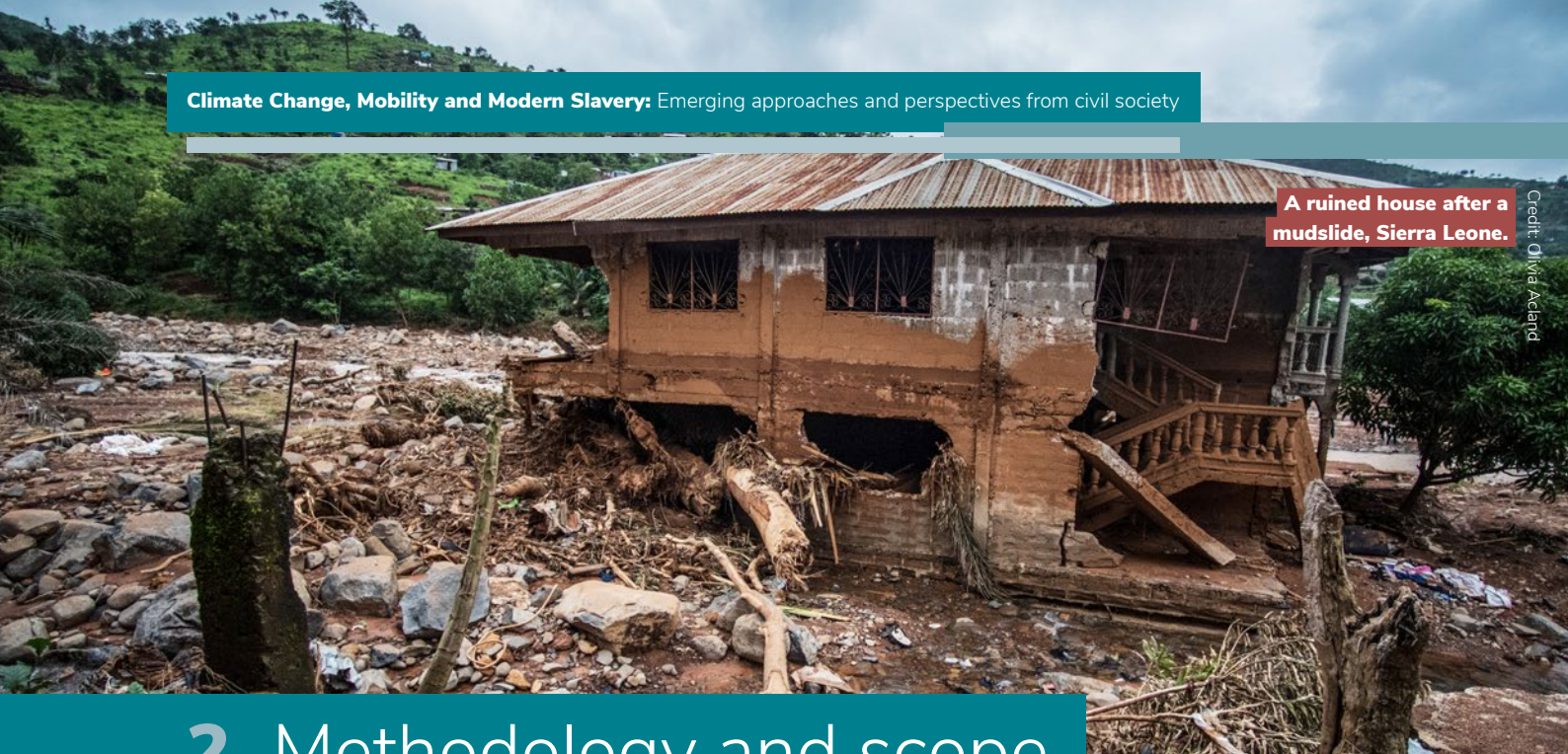
The research team also found that the term 'modern slavery' is not widely used in international discourse and remains largely absent from climate action narratives, which are largely framed around science, governance, business, technology, finance and development, rather than human rights. We therefore face the challenge of integrating a rights-based approach into the climate action and development discourse that has evolved over the past decades.

Rights-based civil society organisations and activist groups working at the intersection of climate, mobility, labour rights and welfare are more familiar with the concept of modern slavery and can identify deep structural connections. However, civil society groups focused on livelihoods, food security, adaptation, and resilience require more guidance to integrate modern slavery into their conceptual frameworks.

Mindful of this challenge, the researchers focused on the concept of forced labour in their discussions with contributors. By acknowledging the diverse contexts and complexities of forced labour, they were able to explore its manifestations in debt bondage, domestic servitude, and child and human trafficking. This framing resonated effectively with all participants. For the purposes of this research, we continue to use the broader umbrella term 'modern slavery' where appropriate, while recognising that this terminology does not resonate with all audiences in the same way.

28 Anti-Slavery International (2025), 'What is modern slavery?', antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/. For more information on the concept of modern slavery, including forced labour and human trafficking, see: International Labour Organization, 'What is forced labour?', ilo.org/topics/forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-trafficking-persons/what-forced-labour.

29 Consultation with Chris O'Connell, Trócaire, September 2024.



A ruined house after a mudslide, Sierra Leone.

Credit: Oliva Acland

2. Methodology and scope

Two research methods were used to prepare this report: wide-ranging desk-based research and key informant interviews with over 25 relevant organisations and stakeholders from around the globe.

The scope was limited to civil society activities in those regions most affected by climate change, mobility and modern slavery.

Region selection

The regions covered were selected based on the study team's expertise in the areas of climate change, mobility and modern slavery, whether as interrelated or siloed phenomena. They are:³⁰

- **South Asia:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
- **Southeast Asia:** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam³¹
- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe
- **The Pacific Islands:** Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu
- **Latin America:** Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela³²

30 We have used the regional groupings presented here throughout the report. They are based on the World Bank's groupings, unless stated otherwise. Where specific figures relate to different groupings, this has been noted. See: datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups; data.worldbank.org/region/pacific-island-small-states and datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/the-world-by-income-and-region.html.

31 These are the current Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus Timor-Leste: ASEAN, 'ASEAN Member States', asean.org/member-states/.

32 The World Bank defines Latin America as part of its broader Latin America and the Caribbean region. Mainland Latin America comprises the countries listed here. Note that the World Bank includes Mexico in this regional grouping despite it being geographically located in North America. See: datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups.

All these regions have large populations exposed to climate-related risks. Many communities in these regions also live in extreme poverty³³ and have limited access to social and legal protections. In this context, moving somewhere with better opportunities is a crucial adaptation strategy. The drivers of mobility, such as loss of livelihoods, can put particularly intense pressure on these communities and amplify systemic inequalities.

Case study selection

There are currently very few examples globally of initiatives to address the intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery specifically. When preparing the case studies, the researchers therefore identified action being taken in related areas, such as climate change and modern slavery, other human rights violations and climate change, and mobility and climate change. This enabled them to identify relevant approaches and lessons learned that could be applied to the intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery.

Desk research

To track current trends at the nexus of modern slavery, mobility and climate change, the team systematically reviewed, summarised and analysed key documents on these topics. The documents were selected through a consultative approach, engaging both rights-based and climate-focused civil society organisations to identify resources linking modern slavery and climate change. The research team spoke with experts, leveraged their global network, and drew on practical experience to pinpoint relevant materials. These ranged from civil society findings, media articles and academic papers, to policy briefs and reports produced by global and regional rights-based research and advocacy organisations, including Anti-Slavery International, IIED, Climate Action Network South Asia, Walk Free, Nottingham Rights Lab and United Nations agencies. The research team also reviewed vulnerability-focused literature such as the Climate Action Network South Asia review, to ensure thorough academic grounding. Due to the scope of this report, the desk review was not intended to be exhaustive.

Consultations

In-depth interviews were conducted between August and November 2024 with a range of stakeholders (see Participants section below). The interviews were open-ended and semi-structured, sometimes with an ethnographic focus. They were conducted both in person and online. Each interview lasted between 40 to 70 minutes. The interviews were later transcribed and annotated. By using a predetermined set of open-ended questions, the interviewers were able to explore the sensitive research subject in depth with each interviewee. Some participants also submitted written responses to the 'Questions for Experts' (in annex) and answered follow-up questions.

33 The United Nations defines extreme poverty as surviving on less than \$2.15 per person per day at 2017 purchasing power parity. See: United Nations, 'Sustainable Development. Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere', un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/.

Participant selection

Climate change is an inherently complex phenomenon that has very specific effects in different places. It becomes even more multifaceted when it intersects with mobility and modern slavery. To keep the scope of this study feasible, we focused on the experiences, perspectives and assessments of civil society actors and key experts in the regions selected.

The interviews were conducted with a diverse group of stakeholders, including activists and representatives from international, regional and community-based civil society organisations – many of which operate in rights-based spaces. The cohort also included subject matter experts from the United Nations agencies and international think tanks, legal professionals, and labour and human rights advocates. The research team's strong networks of civil society organisations, development agencies, and climate and human rights experts on these phenomena facilitated opportunities for consultation.

Geographically, participants hailed from South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands, Latin America, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union (see annex for a full list). Several respondents were affiliated with the Climate Action Network South Asia, a regional alliance that campaigns for better responses to climate-induced mobility in both national and regional contexts.

By listening to what these stakeholders have to say, we can begin to develop a clear and coherent picture of emerging responses to the intersecting challenges of climate change, mobility and modern slavery.

Limitations

Given our focus on civil society practice and insights, the core findings and central arguments we present in this rapid assessment are based mainly on our consultations with civil society stakeholders. Providing more detail about each local context, multilateral initiatives, government policy or the broader effects of specific initiatives, and conducting evaluations of specific initiatives mentioned, was beyond the scope of this study.

Flooding in Chittagong, Bangladesh,
August 2024.

Credit: Adobe Stock

3. Civil society responses to climate change, mobility and modern slavery: regional rapid scoping

This section of the report presents the findings of our consultations with experts who have regional knowledge and experience. The case studies presented are complemented by desk-based research, to frame each contribution in its regional and country context.

Although the combined focus on climate change, mobility and modern slavery is relatively new, substantial work has been done on each of these issues separately, particularly in the Global South. Not all the case studies directly integrate climate, mobility and modern slavery, and those that do, do not all address the three components to the same extent. Some focus more on the links between climate and modern slavery, with less emphasis on mobility, while others emphasise climate and mobility, with modern slavery playing a secondary role. Some address all three components equally.

3.1. South Asia

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Maldives
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka

3.1.1 Regional context

South Asia is acutely vulnerable to climate change, experiencing rising temperatures, erratic monsoons and intensifying climate events such as floods and cyclones.³⁴ These environmental challenges severely impact agriculture, the primary livelihood for many in the region, leading to reduced crop yields and food insecurity. Consequently, millions are compelled to migrate from rural to urban areas or across borders in search of safer living conditions and job opportunities. Projections indicate that by 2050, climate change could displace nearly 63 million people in South Asia.³⁵ These patterns exacerbate socioeconomic disparities and increase the risk of exploitation among migrant populations.³⁶

Remittances play a critical role in the economies of South Asian countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, serving as a key source of income and stability.³⁷ The consultations suggested that governments in these countries are actively encouraging outward migration, primarily for work in manual labour, construction and services.³⁸ While India receives the highest number of remittances globally, they account for only 3-4% of its gross domestic product (GDP). Remittances account for nearly 30% of Nepal's GDP, making it the most remittance-dependent country in South Asia.³⁹

South Asia also has a high number of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless and internally displaced people.⁴⁰ It has high levels of undocumented migration and human trafficking.⁴¹ Forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, forced commercial sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and human trafficking remain pervasive.⁴² Historically entrenched across the region,

34 World Meteorological Organization (2024), 'Climate change and extreme weather impacts hit Asia hard' [press release], wmo.int/news/media-centre/climate-change-and-extreme-weather-impacts-hit-asia-hard; World Bank, 'Climate and Development in South Asia', worldbank.org/en/region/sar/brief/integrating-climate-and-development-in-south-asia/integrating-climate-and-development-in-south-asia-region.

35 Singh, H. et al. (2020), Costs of climate inaction: displacement and distress migration. Action Aid, Brot für die Welt and CANSA, actionaid.org/publications/2020/costs-climate-inaction-displacement-and-distress-migration. This figure only includes Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and migration linked to slow-onset impacts.

36 Action Aid (2020), 'Climate migration in South Asia set to treble by 2050 due to political inaction on global warming', actionaid.org/news/2020/climate-migration-south-asia-set-treble-2050-due-political-inaction-global-warming; Singh, H., Faleiro, J., Anderson, T. and Vashist, S. (2020), Costs of climate inaction: displacement and distress migration. Action Aid, Brot für die Welt and CANSA, actionaid.org/publications/2020/costs-climate-inaction-displacement-and-distress-migration.

37 Abbas, S.A., Selvanathan, E.A. and Selvanathan, S. (2024), 'Impact of COVID-19 on migrant remittances in South Asia', *Applied Economics* 56(60), 9046–9059, doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2023.2297740; Sutradhar, S.R. (2020), 'The impact of remittances on economic growth in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka', *IJEPS* 14, 275–295, doi.org/10.1007/s42495-020-00034-1.

38 Consultations with Law & Society Trust, Sri Lanka.

39 World Bank Group Data, Personal remittances, received (% of GDP), data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS.

40 UNHCR (2025), 'Asia and The Pacific', unhcr.org/uk/about-unhcr/where-we-work/asia-and-pacific.

41 Migration Data Portal (2025) 'Migration data in Southern Asia', migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/southern-asia; Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index: Modern slavery in Asia and the Pacific', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/asia-and-the-pacific/. This covers a wider number of countries and is not solely focused on South Asia.

42 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index: Modern slavery in Asia and the Pacific', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/asia-and-the-pacific/.

these practices are sustained by discriminatory social structures that normalise them and allow exploitation to continue.

Caste-based discrimination – a persistent problem in the region – is directly linked to modern slavery.⁴³ People from lower-caste groups lack political representation and are exploited as disposable labour, making them the most marginalised and oppressed populations in South Asia.⁴⁴

At a glance

Climate change: South Asia is grappling with a 'new climate reality', marked by more frequent and severe heatwaves, cyclones, droughts and floods.⁴⁵ Over the past two decades, more than 750 million people in South Asia have been affected by climate-related disasters.⁴⁶ 800 million people in South Asia live in places that could become moderate to severe hotspots by 2050.⁴⁷ These people rely heavily on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, forestry and traditional fishing for their livelihoods.

Climate-related mobility: By 2050, nearly 63 million people in South Asia could be forced to migrate due to both slow- and rapid-onset climate events.⁴⁸

Modern slavery: At least 15 million people in South Asia are living in modern slavery.⁴⁹ Dalits and other so-called low-caste people make up the majority of people in forced or bonded labour working in agriculture, brick kilns or disposing of human excreta (called manual scavenging).⁵⁰

3.1.2 Emerging solutions and practices: analytical overview

The researchers identified the highest number of emerging solutions in South Asia. This can, in part, be attributed to the researchers' greater access to organisations in the region. The researchers identified examples from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan of work to support marginalised communities, including Dalits and migrants. Although not all the stakeholders view their work through the lens of climate change, their insights can inform such work in the future. Across the region, civil society is pushing for transformative changes, yet structural inequities, weak enforcement and climate pressures require urgent, systemic action to protect human rights and promote sustainable development.

43 International Dalit Solidarity Network, 'Caste-based slavery', idsn.org/key-issues/caste-based-slavery/; Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/; Norwegian Human Rights Fund, 'Pakistan's disposable labour needs attention', nhrf.no/blog/pakistans-disposable-labour-needs-attention;

44 International Dalit Solidarity Network, 'Caste-based slavery', idsn.org/key-issues/caste-based-slavery/; ; Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index'; ; Norwegian Human Rights Fund, 'Pakistan's disposable labour needs attention', nhrf.no/blog/pakistans-disposable-labour-needs-attention; Jha, C.K. and Jha, P. (2023), A Path to Equity and Progress: Empowering Communities in Madhesh Province. FORUM-ASIA, pp. 1–65, forum-asia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MADHESH-REPORT.pdf. walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/; Norwegian Human Rights Fund, 'Pakistan's disposable labour needs attention', nhrf.no/blog/pakistans-disposable-labour-needs-attention; Jha, C.K. and Jha, P. (2023), A Path to Equity and Progress: Empowering Communities in Madhesh Province. FORUM-ASIA, pp. 1–65, forum-asia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MADHESH-REPORT.pdf.

45 World Bank, 'Climate and Development in South Asia', worldbank.org/en/region/sar/brief/integrating-climate-and-development-in-south-asia/integrating-climate-and-development-in-south-asia-region.

46 World Bank, 'Why #OneSouthAsia?', worldbank.org/en/programs/south-asia-regional-integration/climate-change.

47 Asian Development Bank (2010), Climate Change in South Asia: Strong Responses for Building a Sustainable Future, adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27475/climate-change-sa.pdf; Mani, M.S. et al. (2018), 'South Asia's Hotspots: The Impact of Temperature and Precipitation Changes on Living Standards', World Bank, documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/201031531468051189.

48 Singh, H., Faleiro, J., Anderson, T. and Vashist, S. (2020), Costs of Climate Inaction: Displacement and Distress Migration, Action Aid, actionaid.org/publications/2020/costs-climate-inaction-displacement-and-distress-migration. This figure only includes Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

49 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/. This figure excludes Bhutan and Maldives.

50 International Labour Office Geneva (2005), A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour: Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 2005, pp. 31, ilo.org/publications/global-alliance-against-forced-labour-global-report-forced-labour-2005.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, climate-induced migration increases vulnerability to forced labour and exploitation.⁵¹ Cyclones, floods and drought damage agricultural land, leading disaster-affected communities to migrate and rely on trafficking networks to cross borders.⁵² Traffickers target migrants affected by climate events, forcing them into debt bondage.⁵³

Helvetas

[Helvetas](#) partners with local authorities to provide displaced and landless communities with resources and tools to overcome climate-related challenges and mitigate the risk of exploitation. Its work pays particular attention to those living in vulnerable areas, in terms of both socioeconomic deprivation and exposure to the effects of climate change.

Migration Information Hubs are central to its strategy. These hubs serve as comprehensive community centres offering tailored support, information and training for displaced people. They go beyond basic migration guidance, aiming to evolve into 'climate resilience centres' that provide essential resources and holistic support.⁵⁴

Helvetas conducts awareness sessions to inform migrants about job opportunities and the risks of forced labour, empowering them to make safer choices. The hubs also offer livelihood training in sustainable practices, such as water-efficient farming. Shifting from large workshops to apprenticeship models, they provide hands-on training in trades, such as welding, carpentry, IT and motor mechanics. This speeds up skills acquisition for the local job market. The hubs also work with families, particularly women and children, on climate-resilient agriculture and financial literacy initiatives.⁵⁵

Beyond community empowerment, Helvetas carries out adaptation activities, such as building climate-resilient infrastructure, securing embankments and promoting climate-smart agriculture – for example, using salt-tolerant seeds.⁵⁶

This inclusive climate adaptation approach combines climate-resilient infrastructure, skill-building and sustainable practices. It supports people to develop independent sustainable livelihoods, while building resilience against climate impacts and the risk of exploitation.

Helvetas' Migration Information Hubs not only facilitate safer migration. They also enhance community resilience, strengthen local job markets and promote economic empowerment for people affected by socioeconomic deprivation and climate change. Through these activities they support displaced people to find safer employment and therefore reduce the risk of people becoming exploited or at risk of modern slavery.⁵⁷

51 Walk Free (2023), 'Modern slavery in Bangladesh', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/bangladesh/.

52 Bharadwaj, R., Bishop, D., Hazra, S., Pufaa, E. and Kofi Annan, J. (2021), Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers, Anti-Slavery International and International Institute for Environment and Development, pp. 6-34, iied.org/20441g.

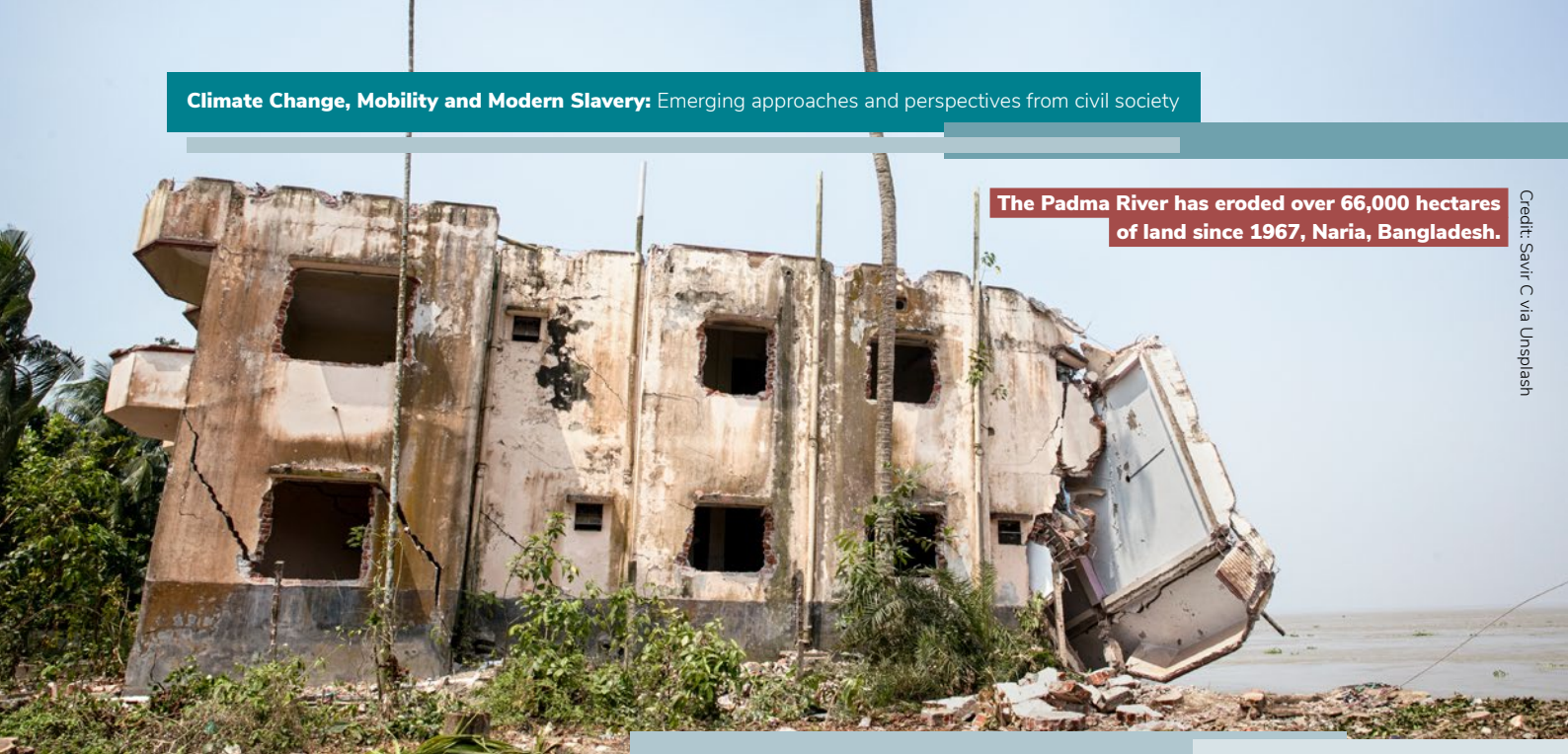
53 Bharadwaj, R., Bishop, D., Hazra, S., Pufaa, E. and Kofi Annan, J. (2021), Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers, Anti-Slavery International and International Institute for Environment and Development, pp. 6-34, iied.org/20441g.

54 Bharadwaj, R., Bishop, D., Hazra, S., Pufaa, E. and Kofi Annan, J. (2021), Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers, Anti-Slavery International and International Institute for Environment and Development, pp. 6-34, iied.org/20441g.

55 Durand-Delacré, D., van Schie, D., Anjum, H. et al. (2024), Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017-2024). UNU-EHS and Climate Justice Resilience Fund, lossanddamagecollaboration.org/publication/effective-support-for-communities-experiencing-climate-mobilities-lessons-from-the-climate-justice-resilience-fund-grant-portfolio-2017---2024.

56 Durand-Delacré, D., van Schie, D., Anjum, H. et al. (2024), Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017-2024). UNU-EHS and Climate Justice Resilience Fund, lossanddamagecollaboration.org/publication/effective-support-for-communities-experiencing-climate-mobilities-lessons-from-the-climate-justice-resilience-fund-grant-portfolio-2017---2024.

57 UN Women and Social Development Direct (2020) 'BALIKA, RESPECT Preventing Violence against Women Programme Summary', unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/RESPECT-implementation-guide-Programme-summary-BALIKA-en.pdf.



The Padma River has eroded over 66,000 hectares of land since 1967, Naria, Bangladesh.

Credit: Savir C via Unsplash

Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP)⁵⁸

OKUP aims to support agency and empowerment, and to enhance the capacity of migrant workers, their families, and communities to claim rights by holding the duty bearers accountable. OKUP's research and projects explore the links between climate change, migration and rights violations, and build rights-based and community-led solutions based on the human rights principle of "Right to Stay, Right to Move".⁵⁹

OKUP's programmes highlight the importance of ensuring durable solutions for those who want to stay in their communities by enhancing life skills on needs-based issues, such as health, particularly women's reproductive and sexual health, mental health, prevention of child marriage, and gender-based violence. This is undertaken through orientation, training, and assisting the most vulnerable people to access social protection schemes and available government services. The rights-based solutions also highlight the importance of enhancing market-driven technical and vocational skills of youth and girls to help them competitively access skill-orientated jobs and livelihoods at home and abroad.

Since 2018, OKUP has provided life skill orientation and training to around 10,000 climate-vulnerable people, including women and girls on reproductive health issues, in three southwestern coastal districts in Bangladesh. Around 98% of women and girls who participated in the orientation and training claimed the training helped them maintain good health, in particular reproductive health, which is significantly affected by the salinisation of water. Financial literacy training has also supported people to start building savings, and career counselling with mentorship assistance has helped around 70% of youths succeed in exploring skills-based livelihood opportunities by accessing skills training.

In addition, OKUP generates data, evidence, voices, and perspectives of climate-induced migrants in its research,⁶⁰ to in turn shape policy discussions and discourse to address the interconnected challenges that emerge from climate change and human mobility.

⁵⁸ The information in this case study was provided directly by OKUP, March 2025.

⁵⁹ OKUP aligns the principle of "Right to Stay, Right to Move" with key United Nations human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 13), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It also follows the principles and standards set by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), particularly the Convention concerning Migration for Employment (No. 97). By "Right to Stay, Right to Move," OKUP emphasises that people who choose to remain in their communities, despite severe climate change impacts, must be provided with durable solutions. These solutions should help them build resilience, adapt to changing conditions, and lead dignified lives. On the other hand, those who wish to migrate, whether internally or internationally, due to climate-related negative impacts should have access to safe migration pathways. Their rights must be protected to ensure their movement is secure, respected, and dignified.

⁶⁰ OKUP has published multiple reports on the intersection of climate change, mobility and human rights violations, including modern slavery. These reports can be found on its website: <https://www.okup.org.bd/research/>

The river islands in Bangladesh are especially vulnerable. These low-lying sandbanks that stretch from the northern border with India to the Bay of Bengal are increasingly disappearing under the rising river water.

Credit: Fabeha Monir



The Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents (BALIKA)

[BALIKA](#) is tackling child marriage and forced marriage through its community-based programme aimed at empowering adolescent girls. The programme involved local young women as mentors and engaged with communities to build awareness about adolescent skills development. The participants were offered basic life skills training tutoring in basic maths and English or IT or financial skills, or livelihoods training. The life skills training covered topics including sexual and reproductive health, decision making and negotiation, while the livelihoods training covered skills such as mobile phone servicing, photography and first aid.⁶¹

Evaluations of the BALIKA programme found that girls who participated were one-third less likely to be married by the end of the study, compared to those who did not participate. This significant reduction demonstrates the effectiveness of combining education, skills training and community engagement for protecting girls from exploitation and forced marriage.⁶² Applying a climate lens to similar initiatives could address the growing risk of child marriage exacerbated by climate change.⁶³

61 Prevention Collaborative, 'BALIKA Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents', prevention-collaborative.org/programme-examples/balika/.

62 Population Council, 'Projects: BALIKA (Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents)', popcouncil.org/project/balika-bangladeshi-association-for-life-skills-income-and-knowledge-for-adolescents/; Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index: Modern Slavery in Asia and the Pacific', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/asia-and-the-pacific/.

63 Baroraho, T., Islam, F., Mohammed, R. and Szabo, G. (2023), Global Girlhood Report 2023: Girls at the Centre of the Storm – Her planet, her future, her solutions, Save the Children International, resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/global-girlhood-report-2023-girls-at-the-centre-of-the-storm/

India

In India, generations of people are vulnerable to debt bondage due to the legacies of bonded labour systems and caste-based discrimination.⁶⁴ Despite it being legally abolished,⁶⁵ the practice remains widespread in many industries, including agriculture, brick kilns, mining and garment manufacturing.⁶⁶ India has implemented innovative approaches in Kerala to safeguard migrant workers,⁶⁷ yet national policy gaps persist, leaving millions at risk. For instance, the failure to take account of climate justice in national and state policies results in inadequate economic support in the aftermath of floods and cyclones.⁶⁸ This leaves people without a livelihood and puts them at risk of modern slavery.⁶⁹ Moreover, migrants and other affected people have limited access to support in the event of exploitation.⁷⁰

Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development (CMID)

The [Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development \(CMID\)](#) supports marginalised migrants, including Adivasis, Dalits and religious minorities. By improving access to social security for migrant communities, CMID reduces the risk of modern slavery and climate-driven **displacement** in Kerala. It has developed district-level mobility profiles to help local authorities deliver targeted assistance during emergencies. For example, during a landslide, CMID profiles were crucial in identifying at-risk migrant workers, enabling swift and tailored assistance.⁷¹

CMID also issues disaster alerts in regional languages and provides multilingual support at resource centres. Through initiatives such as WhatsApp groups, mobile clinics and multilingual safety posters, CMID closes gaps in service provision, reducing the risk of exploitation. Its model focuses on data-driven action and government partnerships.⁷² CMID trains its team on climate change, enabling it to adapt migrant support services to evolving environmental challenges. By working with organisations in the migrants' places of departure, CMID delivers a continuum of support along key migration corridors.

Using targeted mobility profiles and multilingual communication, CMID reduces risks for marginalised groups and enhances resilience. Its scalable model offers a blueprint for tackling the interconnected challenges of climate impacts and forced labour.⁷³

64 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index: Modern slavery in India', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/india/.

65 Paliath, S. (2023), 'Why does India still have a bonded labour problem?', India Development Review, idronline.org/article/social-justice/why-does-india-still-have-a-bonded-labour-problem/

66 Free the Slaves, 'India', freetheslaves.net/our-work/where-we-work/india/.

67 Thachil, Dr P.P. (2022), 'Welfare Schemes for Migrant Workers in Kerala', International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science 6(10), pp. 463–464. doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2022.61024.

68 S. Gulia (2024), 'Climate change and modern slavery in India', Institute of Development Studies, alumni.ids.ac.uk/news/blogs-perspectives-provocations-initiatives/perspectives-provocations-initiatives-gender/760/760-Climate-change-and-modern-slavery-in-India.

69 S. Gulia (2024), 'Climate change and modern slavery in India', Institute of Development Studies, alumni.ids.ac.uk/news/blogs-perspectives-provocations-initiatives/perspectives-provocations-initiatives-gender/760/760-Climate-change-and-modern-slavery-in-India.

70 G. Gupta (2019), 'Ending modern slavery in India', Safety Management, freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/British-Safety-Council-August-2019-Ending-Modern-Slavery-in-India.pdf.

71 Consultation with Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, Kerala, India, October 2024.

72 Consultation with Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, Kerala, India, October 2024.

73 Consultation with Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, Kerala, India, October 2024.

Nepal

Nepal's history of bonded labour and marginalisation of Dalit communities is tied to deep-rooted socioeconomic inequalities. This situation is exacerbated by climate vulnerabilities and serves to sustain modern slavery.⁷⁴ Former Kamaiya⁷⁵ and Haliya⁷⁶ labourers still experience landlessness and poverty, while Dalit groups such as the Musahar, Dom and Mestar lack access to citizenship, land and essential services.⁷⁷ People living under the Haruwa-Charuwa bonded labour systems in Nepal⁷⁸ remain vulnerable due to entrenched debt bondage, landlessness and systemic poverty. Predominantly Dalits, they are coerced into bonded labour for landlords to repay debts, often enduring long working hours and violence. Their landlessness exacerbates food insecurity and susceptibility to environmental hazards such as floods.⁷⁹ Climate change-induced displacement in landslide-prone areas and a shortage of local jobs push Dalits into seasonal migration, often resulting in forced labour in India.⁸⁰

Rastriya Dalit Network (RDN)

The [Rastriya Dalit Network \(RDN\)](#) has developed a scalable model that empowers marginalised communities through awareness, training and livelihood initiatives. The approach nurtures local leadership to drive social change. As a result of this initiative and the work of other Dalit and caste-justice NGOs in Nepal, leaders from the Kamaiya liberation movement now hold key roles in Lumbini's provincial government. The model, adaptable to other contexts, involves local leaders in advocacy and tailors programmes to community needs.⁸¹

RDN also works with Nepal's Department of Foreign Employment to strengthen migrant worker protections. They have established partnerships with countries including Saudi Arabia and Qatar to monitor labour conditions. The Government of Nepal also developed the Baideshik Rojgari app that⁸² provides pre-departure training and orientation for Nepali workers heading to Malaysia, Qatar and other Gulf nations. It covers climate impacts, forced labour risks and safeguarding measures for Dalit and migrant workers.

RDN also works with family members who stay behind, particularly women and children. It provides training on climate-resilient farming, sustainable livelihoods, inclusive financial access and the dangers of bonded labour.⁸³

74 The Freedom Fund (2024), 'Breaking the Bonds: Communities working together to end agricultural bonded labour in Nepal', freedomfund.org/news/breaking-bonds-agricultural-bonded-labour-nepal/.

75 According to the ILO: "The Kamaiya system was a form of bonded labour in which a worker and their family entered into an informal contract with a landlord to do agricultural work in return for payment-in-kind, such as a small percentage of the harvest". ILO (2018), 'Breaking bonded labour and gender roles in Nepal', ilo.org/resource/article/breaking-bonded-labour-and-gender-roles-nepal.

76 According to an ILO report, Haliya refers to "an exploitative agrarian, feudalistic labour relation practiced traditionally in the hills of mid- and far- western Nepal [...] widely recognized as bonded agricultural labourers". Kumar KC, B., Subedi, G. and Suwal, B.R. (2013), 'Forced labour of adults and children in the agriculture sector of Nepal: Focusing on Haruwa-Charuwa in eastern Tarai and Haliya in far-western hills', ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-kathmandu/documents/publication/wcms_217086.pdf.

77 Consultation with FORUM-ASIA, October 2024.

78 The Haruwa-Charuwa is a system of forced labour, often based on debt, rooted in historical and cultural practices in Nepal. See: csrncnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Haruwa-Charuwa-the-Bonded-Laborers-in-Agriculture.pdf

79 Consultation with FORUM-ASIA, October 2024. See also: Dhakal, S. (2024), 'Environmental justice for Harawa-Charawa', The Kathmandu Post, kathmandupost.com/columns/2024/04/13/environmental-justice-for-harawa-charawa; Grono, N. (2014), 'Slavery in Nepal – The Freedom Fund hotspot project', The Freedom Fund, freedomfund.org/news/overview-nepal-hotspot-project/.

80 Consultation with Rastriya Dalit Network, November 2024.

81 Consultation with Rastriya Dalit Network, November 2024.

82 Baideshik Rojgari App. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Department of Foreign Employment.

83 Consultation with Rastriya Dalit Network, November 2024.

RDN demonstrates how a holistic and scalable approach can empower marginalised communities to manage the interconnected challenges of climate impacts, forced labour and social exclusion. By integrating local leadership, advocacy and tailored programmes, RDN provides a replicable model for boosting resilience. Their initiatives, from migrant worker protections to climate-resilient livelihoods, highlight the importance of community-driven solutions and multi-stakeholder collaborations when working to end modern slavery and foster sustainable development.⁸⁴

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

The [Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development \(FORUM-ASIA\)](#) advocates for action to address the challenges faced by marginalised communities in Nepal. These challenges include modern slavery and socioeconomic and climate-related pressures that lead to displacement.

FORUM-ASIA works to meet basic needs (access to food, water and electricity) and close social security gaps for marginalised groups affected by climate change. Its work focuses on communities such as the Haruwa-Charuwa,⁸⁵ who were initially excluded from the 2002 Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act.⁸⁶ This Act abolished the Kamaiya system, a traditional form of bonded labour that had subjected generations of people to exploitative conditions.

FORUM-ASIA, in collaboration with the Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC), has raised awareness of the difficulties faced by the Haruwa-Charuwa community, including the economic and social pressures that increase the risk of forced labour and other forms of exploitation. In April 2021, FORUM-ASIA and CSRC published a report highlighting the challenges faced by these communities: *Tied Hands: Fact Finding Mission Report on Harawa-Charawa: Debt, Poverty and Climate Change in Dhanusha, Nepal*.⁸⁷

Looking ahead, FORUM-ASIA and CSRC will work with the community as part of capacity-strengthening programmes. They will also conduct follow-up research to evaluate what has improved and identify where further support is needed.⁸⁸

84 Consultation with Rastriya Dalit Network, November 2024. See also: Rastriya Dalit Network (2020), 'Full Project Proposal: Promotion of Sustainable Governance through Advancing Human Rights, Dignity and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Dalits at Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan in Nepal-PAHAL', rdnnepal.org.np/frontend/images/document/en/xb30UQwa3Uz1xqRS0oZ6OVtazchBqPKIPH2AniNN.pdf.

85 Jha, C.K. and Jha, P. (2023), A Path to Equity and Progress: Empowering Communities in Madhesh Province, FORUM-ASIA, pp. 1–65. forum-asia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/MADHESH-REPORT.pdf.

86 Government of Nepal, Bonded Labour (Prohibition) Act, 2058 (2002), csrcnepal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Bondeb-Labor-Prohibition-Act-2002.pdf.

87 Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC), Tied Hands: Fact-Finding Mission Report on Harawa-Charawa, Debt, Poverty, and Climate Change in Dhanusha, Nepal (Kathmandu, Nepal: Community Self-Reliance Centre, 2024), <https://csrcnepal.org/tied-hands-fact-finding-mission-report-on-harawa-charawadebt-poverty-and-climate-change-in-dhanusha-nepal/>. Statement by Professor Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to Nepal, 8 December 2021, ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/12/statement-professor-olivier-de-schutter-united-nations-special-rapporteur.

88 Consultation with FORUM-ASIA, October 2024.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, bonded labour remains common, particularly in brick kilns, mining, agriculture and domestic work.⁸⁹ Climate change reinforces cycles of bonded labour, with floods and droughts depriving marginalised people of their livelihood and their means of paying off debts.⁹⁰ Urban and seasonal migration is undertaken both as a way to find work and as a way to escape exploitation.⁹¹ Civil society initiatives aim to reform exploitative industries by advocating for workers' rights and environmental compliance.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)

The [Sustainable Development Policy Institute \(SDPI\)](#) developed the Socially and Environmentally Compliant Brick Kiln Framework (SECBKF)⁹² to protect brick kiln workers. These workers include children, women from religious minorities and undocumented Afghan migrants, among others. The framework emphasises workers' rights, including minimum wages, job security, medical benefits, and protection against extreme heat and heatwave conditions.

Rooted in ILO principles, the SECBKF promotes compliance with labour regulations and environmental standards. It aims to promote sustainable development in the industry by encouraging kiln owners to invest in worker wellbeing, adopt cleaner technologies and engage in social dialogue to ensure fair labour practices. As a result of this work and emerging demands for clean air, the federal and provincial environmental agencies strengthened their enforcement of the requirement to use more environmentally friendly technology. Over 80% of conventional brick kilns have now switched to cleaner technologies.

SDPI is also working closely with the National Human Rights Commission and the members of parliament who serve on the standing committees on human rights in the Senate and the National Assembly. Together they are developing national criteria, indicators and frameworks on human rights, climate change and modern slavery. This work is not solely focused on bonded labourers working in brick kilns. It also seeks to tackle the widespread issue of bonded labour in other sectors across the country, given that the prevalence of bonded labour has surged due to extreme climate conditions, such as heatwaves and super floods.

The SECBKF is an example of how to address systemic vulnerabilities that increase the risk of forced labour in labour-intensive industries that are heavily reliant on migrant labour. The framework integrates workers' rights, environmental compliance and actions to promote sustainable development. It therefore offers a model for targeting systemic challenges that could be replicated to reduce exploitation in climate-affected sectors.⁹³

89 United States Department of State (2024), '2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Pakistan', state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/pakistan/ (Accessed: 26 February 2025).

90 Hegewisch, N. and Dayo, A. (2023), 'Breaking the Chains: How to Tackle Bonded Labour in Pakistan?', Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, asia.fes.de/news/breaking-the-chains-of-bonded-labour-in-pakistan.

91 IOM (2019), 'Pakistan: Migration Snapshot', dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11461/files/reports/Pakistan%20Migration%20Snapshot%20Final.pdf

92 Shimshali, A.R. (2024), 'Brick by brick', Sustainable Development Policy Institute, sdpi.org/brick-by-brick/blogs_detail.

93 Consultations with Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan, September 2024. For more analysis see: Shimshali, A.R. (2024), 'Brick by brick', Sustainable Development Policy Institute, sdpi.org/brick-by-brick/blogs_detail.

Tea pickers, Sri Lanka.

Credit: Shutterstock

A call for Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's tea industry is vital to its economy and a key agricultural contributor. However, it faces escalating climate-related threats that disrupt production and livelihoods. Forced labour is prevalent in the sector, particularly of Malaiyaha Tamils.

Descendants of Tamil plantation workers brought to Sri Lanka by British colonisers around 200 years ago, the Malaiyaha Tamils remain tied to Sri Lanka's tea estates. Their ancestors were initially recruited under the Kangani system⁹⁴ from oppressed caste groups in South India (mainly Dalits). They endured harsh conditions and forced relocation.

When Sri Lanka became independent in 1948, Malaiyaha Tamils were denied citizenship, creating a stateless labour force of bonded workers. Today they face systemic exploitation and marginalisation. Sri Lanka's tea industry heavily depends on their predominantly female workforce. They are forced to live in poverty, exploited in modern slavery and excluded from social services and land ownership.

Civil society and human rights defenders have worked to raise the profile of Malaiyaha Tamils and the challenges they face. They have advocated for their rights, including living wages, decent housing, land tenure, political inclusion and full citizenship rights.

Our consultations in Sri Lanka revealed that significant work remains to be done to strengthen alliances between different labour and social justice movements. Likewise, more needs to be done to integrate a climate justice perspective into their work to address the interconnected issues of modern slavery, immobility and climate-induced vulnerabilities.⁹⁵

With climate change threatening the tea industry and therefore the livelihoods of Malaiyaha Tamils, the Sri Lankan Government – along with other stakeholders such as businesses and trading partner governments – must urgently recognise and respect their rights to break the cycle of marginalisation and improve their resilience against climate-induced threats, including the risk of modern slavery.⁹⁶

94 The Kangani system was a labour recruitment method used in British colonial Southeast Asia from the early 19th to early 20th centuries, especially in Myanmar, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Like indentured servitude, it grew popular in the late 19th century. 'Kanganis' (from Tamil for 'observer' or 'foreman') recruited labourers directly from South India, often through personal networks, and managed them on plantations. Consultation with Law & Society Trust, Sri Lanka, September 2024.

95 Consultation with Law & Society Trust and Janakthakshan, Sri Lanka, September 2024.

96 Consultation with Law & Society Trust, Sri Lanka, September 2024.



3.2. Southeast Asia

- Brunei
- Cambodia
- Indonesia
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Vietnam

3.2.1 Regional context

Southeast Asia is highly vulnerable to climate change.⁹⁷ It faces rising sea levels, intense storms, flooding and prolonged droughts.⁹⁸ These environmental impacts are particularly damaging because the region is heavily reliant on agriculture and coastal livelihoods. Rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall patterns disrupt food and water security, while extreme weather events, such as typhoons and floods, damage infrastructure and homes. As a result, many people are forced to migrate, either internally or across borders, in search of safer and more stable living conditions. Climate-induced displacement can push people (further) into poverty and increase the risk of exploitation, particularly in low-wage and informal sectors.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Norris et al. (2024), Climate risk report for the Southeast Asia region, Met Office, ODI, FCDO, metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/services/government/climate-risk-report-for-sea--v6-final-updated.pdf

⁹⁸ Norris et al. (2024), Climate risk report for the Southeast Asia region, Met Office, ODI, FCDO, metoffice.gov.uk/binaries/content/assets/metofficegovuk/pdf/services/government/climate-risk-report-for-sea--v6-final-updated.pdf

⁹⁹ Almulhim, A.I., Alverio, G.N., Sharifi, A. et al. (2024), Climate-induced migration in the Global South: an in depth analysis. npj Clim. Action 3, 47, doi.org/10.1038/s44168-024-00133-1; Siddiqui, U. (2023), 'What makes South Asia so vulnerable to climate change?', *Al Jazeera*, aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/8/what-makes-south-asia-so-vulnerable-to-climate-change.

Climate-induced displacement and unsafe migration pathways expose people to modern slavery, especially in urban centres and across borders. Smuggling of drought-affected migrants from Cambodia into Thailand increases the risk of human trafficking and exploitation in the region. Migrants, particularly those in the construction, textile and service industries, frequently encounter forced labour and trafficking.¹⁰⁰ Certain major industries in Southeast Asia also cause significant environmental harm, worsening climate change. The palm oil sector is a prime example. It is also heavily reliant on unethical recruitment and coercive labour practices involving foreign workers.¹⁰¹

Despite significant progress in disaster risk reduction, the region faces ongoing socioeconomic and environmental challenges. There is therefore a critical need for integrated adaptation strategies that address the root causes of exploitation, linking climate resilience with human rights protection.¹⁰²

At a glance

Climate change: Southeast Asia faces the combined risks of rising sea levels, heat waves, floods, droughts and other unpredictable weather events.¹⁰³ These climate events impact millions of people, especially in densely populated coastal areas.¹⁰⁴ Southeast Asia's sea levels are rising faster than the global average,¹⁰⁵ threatening shorelines where approximately 77% of the region's population resides.¹⁰⁶

Climate-related mobility: Between 2010 and 2021, Southeast Asia accounted for over 30% of the 225 million people displaced by weather-related disasters in the wider Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰⁷

Modern slavery: About 4.5 million people live in modern slavery in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁸

3.2.2 Emerging solutions and practices: analytical overview

The researchers identified fewer case studies in Southeast Asia that specifically address climate-induced migration and modern slavery despite the region facing interconnected challenges related to climate change, modern slavery and mobility. Cambodia and Thailand offer stark examples of the intersection of these three phenomena (see case studies). The organisations highlighted use research and advocacy to raise awareness and call for change. Across the region, civil society initiatives emphasise the need for integrated policies that address the root causes of exploitation and environmental degradation.

100 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2013), 'Smuggling of migrants and labour trafficking within the Greater Mekong Sub-Region' in Transnational Organized Crime in East Asia and the Pacific, doi.org/10.18356/ddc472ac-en.

101 International Organization for Migration (2017), The Climate Change–Human Trafficking Nexus, publications.iom.int/books/climate-change-human-trafficking-nexus.

102 Vigil, S., Steiner, C., Kim, D., Flores, D. and Davis, M. (2024), Climate Change, Vulnerability and Migration: Impacts on Children and Youth in Southeast Asia. World Vision International and Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok, Thailand, wvi.org/publications/research/world-vision-east-asia/full-report-climate-change-vulnerability-and-migration.

103 Dong, W.S. et al. (2024) 'The impact of climate change on coastal erosion in Southeast Asia and the compelling need to establish robust adaptation strategies', *Heliyon* 10(4), p. e25609. doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25609.

104 Dong, W.S. et al. (2024), 'The impact of climate change on coastal erosion in Southeast Asia and the compelling need to establish robust adaptation strategies', *Heliyon* 10(4), p. e25609. doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e25609.

105 World Meteorological Organization (WMO) (2024), State of the Climate in the South-West Pacific, p. 31. library.wmo.int/records/item/68995-state-of-the-climate-in-south-west-pacific-2023.

106 Bhandari, S.R. (2009), 'Asian Cities at increases exposure to rising sea levels, study says', Radio Free Asia, rfa.org/english/news/environment/sea-level-rise-03092023053115.html; ASEAN (2021), 'ASEAN State of Climate Change Report (ASCCR)', ASEAN Secretariat, asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASCCR-e-publication-Correction_8-June.pdf.

107 Arriola, S.L.Y. (2014), 'Acting Now for Tomorrow: Addressing Climate Mobility Challenges in Southeast Asia', The ASEAN, theaseanmagazine.asean.org/article/acting-now-for-tomorrow-addressing-climate-mobility-challenges-in-southeast-asia/. Figure excludes Singapore.

108 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/. This figure excludes Brunei.

A brick kiln worker, Cambodia.

Credit: Adobe Stock

Cambodia

In Cambodia, climate-induced crop failures push rural farmers to migrate to urban centres. Once there, they often become trapped in forced labour – most notably in the brick kiln industry, which is heavily reliant on debt bondage.¹⁰⁹ When flooding, exacerbated by climate change, stops production, people face mounting debts, further adding to their financial burden. Brick kiln emissions and clay extraction cause considerable environmental damage, creating a cycle of exploitation, socioeconomic inequality and ecological degradation.¹¹⁰

Blood Bricks project, Royal Holloway, University of London

The 2018 report *Blood Bricks – Untold Stories of Modern Slavery and Climate Change from Cambodia* was published by Royal Holloway, University of London as part of the Blood Bricks research project.¹¹¹ The report documents how climate-induced crop failures lead to rural families becoming trapped in debt bondage in the brick kiln industry in Cambodia, demonstrating the direct links between climate shocks and exploitation.¹¹²

Blood Bricks traced the path of bricks made by bonded labourers to luxury developments in Phnom Penh and documented the harsh conditions in (often unregulated) brick kilns through worker testimonies.¹¹³ Partnering with NGOs, international organisations and governments, the project worked to raise global awareness through publications, the media and advocacy to political and UN stakeholders. This advocacy put pressure on governments, companies and consumers to address the abuses, with Blood Bricks reporting that the impact included “material made available locally for wage negotiations, legislative change and action on child labour”.¹¹⁴ By engaging policymakers, the project promoted stronger environmental policies, labour rights and anti-slavery enforcement and better migration policies.

This two-pronged approach – field research and policy advocacy – could also be applied to industries such as agriculture, mining and construction. This could incentivise far-reaching and systemic change, supported by a broad network of stakeholders.

109 Brickell, K., Parsons, L., Natarajan, N. and Chann, S. (2018), *Blood Bricks: Untold Stories of Modern Slavery and Climate Change from Cambodia*. Royal Holloway, University of London, projectbloodbricks.org/publications.

110 Brickell, K., Parsons, L., Natarajan, N. and Chann, S. (2018), *Blood Bricks: Untold Stories of Modern Slavery and Climate Change from Cambodia*. Royal Holloway University of London, projectbloodbricks.org/publications.

111 Brickell, K., Parsons, L., Natarajan, N. and Chann, S. (2018), *Blood Bricks: Untold Stories of Modern Slavery and Climate Change from Cambodia*. Royal Holloway University of London, projectbloodbricks.org/publications.

112 The Nottingham University Rights Lab has explored similar issues in South Asia. See: Boyd, D., Brickell, K., Brown, D., Ives, C., Natarajan, N. and Parsons, L. (2018), *Modern Slavery, Environmental Destruction and Climate Change: Fisheries, Field, Forests and Factories*. Rights Lab, University of Nottingham, Royal Holloway University of London and Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, projectbloodbricks.org/publications.

113 Brickell, K., Parsons, L., Natarajan, N. and Chann, S. (2018), *Blood Bricks: Untold Stories of Modern Slavery and Climate Change from Cambodia*. Royal Holloway University of London, projectbloodbricks.org/publications.

114 See: Blood Bricks, 'Media', projectbloodbricks.org/media and 'Blog', projectbloodbricks.org/blog.

Thailand

Thailand's fishing industry relies heavily on migrant workers, particularly from neighbouring countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.¹¹⁵ People who have migrated often face severe exploitation and abuse, including forced labour, debt bondage, physical violence and confiscation of their identity documents.¹¹⁶ Many are drawn into the industry by economic hardship or displacement and find themselves trapped in exploitative conditions with little recourse due to language barriers, lack of legal status or inadequate protections under Thai law.¹¹⁷

Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)

The [Environmental Justice Foundation \(EJF\)](#) addresses environmental harm, illegal fishing and labour exploitation in Thailand's fishing industry through investigative research and advocacy.

Its investigations found a link between overfishing, ecosystem decline, and increasing forced labour and debt bondage. They highlight how economic pressures and the effects of climate change, such as ocean acidification and extreme weather, have driven fishing vessels beyond Thailand's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), where they are harder to monitor.¹¹⁸ These environmental disruptions place additional stress on the industry, creating a situation where marginalised workers, including migrants and minorities, are more easily exploited.¹¹⁹

EJF calls for stronger regulatory frameworks, including stricter enforcement of labour rights and anti-trafficking laws within the fishing industry. It advocates for mandatory human rights due diligence, more transparency through vessel tracking systems, and stronger laws, safeguards and enforcement to end illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. EJF also advocates for international cooperation to tackle forced labour and protect workers in the fishing industry. This can be done through existing frameworks such as the ILO Conventions and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹²⁰

By calling for stronger regulatory frameworks to end illegal fishing and protect labour rights, EJF aims to simultaneously restore marine ecosystems and break the cycle of exploitation.

115 International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2023), In the Shadow of the Ships: Migrant workers in the lower tiers of Thailand's seafood processing sector, thailand.iom.int/resources/shadows-ships-thailand.

116 International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2023), In the Shadow of the Ships: Migrant workers in the lower tiers of Thailand's seafood processing sector, thailand.iom.int/resources/shadows-ships-thailand.

117 International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2023), In the Shadow of the Ships: Migrant workers in the lower tiers of Thailand's seafood processing sector, thailand.iom.int/resources/shadows-ships-thailand.

118 From our consultations with a diverse group of stakeholders, details in the annex.

119 Brown, D., Boyd, D. S., Brickell, K., Ives, C. D., Natarajan, N., and Parsons, L. (2021), Modern slavery, environmental degradation and climate change: Fisheries, field, forests and factories. Rights Lab, University of Nottingham, Royal Holloway University of London and Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, projectbloodbricks.org/publications.

120 EJF (2019), Blood and Water: Human rights abuse in the global seafood industry, ejfoundation.org/reports/blood-and-water.



3.3. The Pacific Islands

- Fiji
- Kiribati
- Marshall Islands
- Micronesia (Federated States of)
- Nauru
- Palau
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa, Solomon Islands
- Tonga
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu

3.3.1. Regional context

The low-lying Pacific Islands are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Consequently, they are central to discussions about climate mobility. Climate-related mobility in the region takes many forms, such as the planned relocation of entire communities, rural-to-urban migration, migration to larger islands and cross-border migration. However, mobility often leads to the erosion of livelihoods, social networks and cultural identity, leaving people vulnerable to exploitative labour practices and modern slavery.¹²¹

The Walk Free *Murky Waters* report sets out how systemic poverty, inadequate enforcement, labour migration schemes, and the destabilising effects of climate-induced displacement have created conditions in which exploitation can flourish in Pacific Island nations.¹²² Seasonal worker programmes and temporary migration schemes provide economic opportunities, but sometimes lack sufficient safeguards to prevent forced labour and exploitation.¹²³ These issues are compounded by limited access to resources for adaptation, a reliance on informal economies, and insufficient legal protections.

121 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Programme (Phase II)', sdgs.un.org/partnerships/pacific-climate-change-migration-and-human-security-programme-phase-ii.

122 Walk Free (2020), *Murky Waters: A qualitative assessment of modern slavery in the Pacific region*, walkfree.org/reports/murky-waters/. This report focuses on the situation in Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

123 International Labour Organization (2022), *Seasonal Worker Schemes in the Pacific through the lens of International Human rights and Labour Standards*. Technical Report, ilo.org/publications/seasonal-worker-schemes-pacific-through-lens-international-human-rights-and. This report considers Australia's Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme.

At a glance

Climate change: The Pacific Islands contribute less than 0.03% of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet they are among the places most vulnerable to climate change.¹²⁴ Sea levels in the region are rising faster than the global average. For instance, around Tonga's capital, seas have risen 21 centimetres since 1990.¹²⁵ The frequency of extreme weather events, such as tropical cyclones and droughts, has increased, threatening livelihoods and infrastructure in these island nations.¹²⁶

Climate-related mobility: Between 2008 and 2022, an average of 50,000 people were internally displaced per year due to climate-related disasters in the Pacific.¹²⁷ In Kiribati, a study found that over 70% of households are considering migration because of climate stresses.¹²⁸ Similarly, in Tuvalu, 97% of households surveyed reported being impacted by natural hazards between 2005 and 2015, with most viewing migration as necessary if their living conditions worsen as a result.¹²⁹

Modern slavery: Several Pacific Island countries face notable risks of forced labour, forced marriage and other forms of modern slavery.¹³⁰ Papua New Guinea has the highest prevalence in the region, with an estimated 93,000 people in modern slavery.¹³¹ In Fiji, estimates range from 5,000 to 15,000 people in modern slavery out of a total population of 924,145.¹³²

3.3.2 Emerging solutions and practices: analytical overview

Examples from the Pacific region were solely provided by the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF). CJRF provides grants and support to organisations and communities to implement their own climate resilience solutions.¹³³ In the Pacific, this includes Fiji and Tuvalu. These programmes address climate-induced displacement caused by extreme weather and gradual processes such as sea level rise. The initiatives it funds are part of a broader, holistic approach to climate adaptation, loss and damage. They take a human rights-based approach rooted in dignity and justice. While not yet focused on modern slavery, CJRF and its partners highlight the complex ties between climate change, historical injustices and socioeconomic vulnerabilities that increase the risk of exploitation. The case studies below emphasise the need for integrated, protective measures for Pacific Island communities facing both contemporary and historical legacies of displacement.

124 Subregional Office for the Pacific of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) (2022), Pacific Perspectives 2022: Accelerating Climate Action, unescap.org/kp/2022/pacific-perspectives-2022-accelerating-climate-action.

125 Associated Press (2024), 'UN chief calls rising seas a "worldwide catastrophe"', politico.com/news/2024/08/26/un-guterres-rising-seas-catastrophe-00176389.

126 Ober, K. and Waters, K. (2023), 'Pacific Island Nations Seek Climate Solutions Outside of COP28', United States Institute of Peace, usip.org/publications/2023/11/pacific-island-nations-seek-climate-solutions-outside-cop28

127 Karp, O. (2024), 'Why Young Pacific Islanders need to be in Conversations around Climate-Induced Migration', International Organization for Migration, environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/why-young-pacific-islanders-need-be-conversations-around-climate-induced-migration. This figure relates to the slightly broader Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) grouping, which also includes the Cook Islands and Niue.

128 Geddes, A. (2015), 'Most Kiribatan households are mulling climate migration – and that's just the start', The Conversation, theconversation.com/most-kiribatan-households-are-mulling-climate-migration-and-thats-just-the-start-51627.

129 UNFCCC (2017), 'Pacific Islanders Faced with Migration Can Benefit from Paris Agreement', unfccc.int/news/pacific-islanders-faced-with-migration-can-benefit-from-paris-agreement.

130 Walk Free (2020), Murky Waters: A qualitative assessment of modern slavery in the Pacific region, walkfree.org/reports/murky-waters/.

131 Walk Free (2023), 'Modern slavery in Papua New Guinea: Global Slavery Index 2023 Country Snapshot', cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2023/09/27165026/GSI-Snapshot-Papua-New-Guinea.pdf.

132 World Bank (2023), 'World Bank Open Data', data.worldbank.org; Walk Free (2020), Murky Waters: A qualitative assessment of modern slavery in the Pacific region, walkfree.org/reports/murky-waters/.

133 CJRF has set up a Small Grants Fund to enable partners to conduct exchanges, attend conferences or workshops, travel for unexpected outreach opportunities and collaborate with other partners on lessons learned, research, reports and other media products. The CJRF promotes leadership development by supporting women, young people and Indigenous leaders to build community resilience and advocate for climate justice. It funds organisations to nurture activists' advocacy and organisational skills, connect leaders for peer learning and develop plans for climate action in their communities. More information and updates available on their website: CJRF, 'Small grants', cjrffund.org/small-grants and 'Drivers of change', cjrffund.org/drivers-of-change.



Fiji and Tuvalu

For many Pacific Island communities, the legacy of displacement long predates recent climate events. Forced relocation, often tied to colonial exploitation, has removed people from the security of their homes and communities. The Banaban people, for instance, were forced to relocate from Banaba to Fiji after phosphate mining under British colonial rule made their homeland uninhabitable.¹³⁴ The Banaban people remain politically, economically and socially marginalised in Fiji, putting them at high risk of exploitation.¹³⁵ These historical injustices both exacerbate and are mirrored in today's climate crisis, as communities displaced by rising seas, worsening cyclones and erosion often lack the means to rebuild their lives sustainably. Displaced communities often find themselves in temporary shelters, sometimes for years, while they await sustainable relocation options.¹³⁶ In Fiji, relocation has become a central adaptation strategy, with 42 villages already identified for relocation due to rising sea levels and increased storm surges.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Shennan, J., (2006), 'The Banabans of Rabi', New Zealand Geographic Issue 080, nzgeo.com/stories/the-banabans-of-rabi/.

¹³⁵ Shennan, J. (2006), 'The Banabans of Rabi', New Zealand Geographic Issue 080, nzgeo.com/stories/the-banabans-of-rabi/.

¹³⁶ Fitzpatrick, D. (2016), Land and Human Mobility in The Pacific: The Effects of Natural Disasters, Discussion Paper pp. 1–40. pacificclimatechange.net/sites/default/files/documents/DP_Land_and_Human_Mobility_in_the_Pacific_the_Effects_of_Natural_Disasters.pdf.

¹³⁷ Lyons, K. (2022), 'How to Move a Country: Fiji's radical plan to escape rising sea levels', The Guardian, theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/08/how-to-move-a-country-fiji-radical-plan-escape-rising-seas-climate-crisis.

Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) and its Pacific partners

CJRF's grant partnerships in the Pacific – for example with the [Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#) – respond to both immediate and long-term challenges. These partnerships support communities that have lost their homes, livelihoods and security due to recurrent disasters.

By supporting communities to tackle both environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities, the programmes enable people to strengthen their resilience in the face of climate risks. CJRF partner activities range from seawall repairs and setting up an evacuation centre in Cogeia, Fiji, securing access to water on Rabi Island, Fiji, to establishing a salt-tolerant food farm in Tuvalu. This holistic approach relieves some of the socioeconomic pressures that drive people into unsafe working situations and exploitation in the form of debt bondage or forced labour.¹³⁸

As another example, the Banaban Human Rights Defenders Network on Rabi Island, Fiji, combines environmental and cultural preservation work. Though their work does not apply a modern slavery lens, the Defenders' efforts to maintain community dignity and prevent climate-induced displacement likely reduce the risk of modern slavery.¹³⁹

These projects focus on empowering communities to make informed decisions about whether to stay or relocate in response to climate pressures, based on what best ensures their security, dignity and resilience.¹⁴⁰ They also empower immobile communities (those unable or unwilling to relocate) by providing the resources and infrastructure needed for them to adapt to the effects of climate change.¹⁴¹

By addressing the unique situation of people who stay, this approach mitigates the socioeconomic pressures that often lead to modern slavery in the form of debt bondage and forced labour. It supports communities to become climate-resilient and able to claim their rights. In recognising both **economic and non-economic loss and damage**, CJRF and its partners go beyond basic attribution approaches and embrace Indigenous views that link the material and cultural aspects of life.¹⁴²

138 Consultation with Climate Justice Relief Fund, October 2024. See also: Durand-Delacre, D., van Schie, D., Anjum, H. et al. (2024), Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017-2024). UNU-EHS and Climate Justice Resilience Fund, lossanddamagecollaboration.org/publication/effective-support-for-communities-experiencing-climate-mobilities-lessons-from-the-climate-justice-resilience-fund-grant-portfolio-2017---2024.

139 Durand-Delacre, D., van Schie, D., Anjum, H. et al. (2024), Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017-2024). UNU-EHS and Climate Justice Resilience Fund, lossanddamagecollaboration.org/publication/effective-support-for-communities-experiencing-climate-mobilities-lessons-from-the-climate-justice-resilience-fund-grant-portfolio-2017---2024.

140 Durand-Delacre, D., van Schie, D., Anjum, H. et al. (2024), Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017-2024). UNU-EHS and Climate Justice Resilience Fund, lossanddamagecollaboration.org/publication/effective-support-for-communities-experiencing-climate-mobilities-lessons-from-the-climate-justice-resilience-fund-grant-portfolio-2017---2024.

141 Consultation with Climate Justice Resilience Fund, October 2024.

142 Consultation with Climate Justice Resilience Fund, October 2024.

3.4. Sub-Saharan Africa

- Angola
- Benin
- Botswana
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cabo Verde
- Cameroon
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Comoros
- Cote d'Ivoire
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eritrea
- Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)
- Ethiopia
- Gabon
- the Gambia
- Ghana
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Republic of the Congo
- Rwanda
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Senegal
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- South Africa
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Togo
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

3.4.1 Regional context

Sub-Saharan Africa is highly vulnerable to climate change, facing severe impacts such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events and worsening droughts.¹⁴³ The region's reliance on rainfed agriculture, combined with low access to resources to adapt, has exacerbated its socioeconomic challenges, pushing millions into food insecurity and poverty.¹⁴⁴ Recent climate hazards, such as cyclones Idai and Kenneth, and prolonged droughts have caused widespread displacement, reduced agricultural productivity and exacerbated conflicts, particularly in the Sahel.¹⁴⁵ Droughts in East Africa have decimated pastoralist communities and their way of life, worsening poverty. This has led people to sell their land, migrate to urban areas and withdraw girls in their care from school to marry early or work, often under exploitative conditions, including in domestic work and agriculture.¹⁴⁶

Eritrea, Mauritania, South Sudan and the Republic of the Congo have the highest rates of modern slavery in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁴⁷ Weak government responses and ethnic discrimination further increase people's risk of being exploited in slavery.¹⁴⁸ The effects of climate change worsen poverty and food insecurity, leading to displacement and migration, and exposing people – especially women and children – to forms of severe exploitation.¹⁴⁹

143 International Monetary Fund (2020), '2. Adapting to Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa'. In Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa, imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2020/04/01/sreo0420.

144 International Monetary Fund (2020), '2. Adapting to Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa'. In Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa, imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2020/04/01/sreo0420.

145 International Monetary Fund (2020), '2. Adapting to Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa'. In Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa, imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2020/04/01/sreo0420.

146 Abebe, M.A. (2014), Climate Change, Gender Inequality and Migration in East Africa, 4 WASH. J. ENVTL. L. & POL'Y 104, digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wjelp/vol4/iss1/6; North, A. (2010), 'Drought, drop out and early marriage: Feeling the effects of climate change in East Africa', Equals: Newsletter for Beyond Access: Gender, Education and Development, Institute for Education and Oxfam, girlsnotbrides.org/learning-resources/resource-centre/drought-drop-out-and-early-marriage-feeling-the-effects-of-climate-change-in-east-africa/.

147 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index 2023: Modern Slavery in Africa', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/africa/

148 Paul, M. (2023), 'In Africa, climate change has exacerbated modern slavery & government response is poor', Down To Earth, downtoearth.org.in/africa/in-africa-climate-change-has-exacerbated-modern-slavery-government-response-is-poor-90220; World Meteorological Organization (2021), 'Climate change triggers food insecurity, poverty and displacement in Africa', Africa Renewal, un.org/africarenewal/magazine/climate-change-triggers-food-insecurity-poverty-and-displacement-africa.

149 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index 2023: Modern Slavery in Africa', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/africa/

Modern slavery takes many forms in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Horn of Africa, increases in the rate of child marriages in drought-affected areas have been linked to the impacts of climate change.¹⁵⁰ In conflict zones, modern slavery manifests in the recruitment of child soldiers and forced labour in camps for internally displaced people.¹⁵¹

At a glance

Climate change: Sub-Saharan Africa is highly vulnerable to climate change, with intensifying droughts, floods and heatwaves threatening agriculture, water resources and public health.¹⁵² Climate variability disrupts food security, accelerates the spread of disease and amplifies socioeconomic problems such as poverty.¹⁵³ Limited capacity for adaptation and insufficient resources make it difficult for governments and individuals to respond effectively. This worsens the effects of climate change on livelihoods and leads to population displacement.¹⁵⁴

Climate-related mobility: Recent cyclones (Idai and Kenneth) and prolonged droughts have caused widespread displacement. Mozambique, Malawi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia are particularly badly affected.¹⁵⁵ In the Sahel (e.g. Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger), the combined effects of climate-related pressures and conflict have forced millions of people to flee their homes.¹⁵⁶

Modern slavery: An estimated 6.2 million people live in modern slavery in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁵⁷

3.4.2 Emerging solutions and practices: analytical overview

In sub-Saharan Africa, civil society organisations work at the intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery by addressing systemic vulnerabilities and building resilience. The initiatives presented below take a rights-based approach to reducing the risk of exploitation. They range from grassroots movements advocating for land rights in South Africa to efforts in East Africa to support climate-adaptive livelihoods and end human trafficking. By prioritising immobile communities and integrating economic justice, sustainable practices and policy advocacy, they address the root causes of forced mobility and exploitation. The case studies underscore the critical importance of holistic, community-driven strategies for advancing justice, dignity and sustainable development in the face of escalating climate challenges.

150 Paul, M. (2023), 'In Africa, climate change has exacerbated modern slavery & government response is poor', Down To Earth, downtoearth.org.in/africa/in-africa-climate-change-has-exacerbated-modern-slavery-government-response-is-poor-90220.

151 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/.

152 International Monetary Fund (2020), '2. Adapting to Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa'. In Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa, imf.org/en/Publications/REO/SSA/Issues/2020/04/01/sreo0420; World Meteorological Organization (2024), 'Africa faces disproportionate burden from climate change and adaptation costs', wmo.int/news/media-centre/africa-faces-disproportionate-burden-from-climate-change-and-adaptation-costs.

153 Baptista, D. et al. (2022), Climate Change and Chronic Food Insecurity in Sub Saharan Africa, International Monetary Fund, imf.org/en/Publications/Departmental-Papers-Policy-Papers/Issues/2022/09/13/Climate-Change-and-Chronic-Food-Insecurity-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa-522211.

154 IPCC (2022), 'Africa', in Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, p. 9-11, doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844.011.

155 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2022), 'More than half a million displacements across south-eastern Africa as five tropical storms strike in two months', internal-displacement.org/news/more-than-half-a-million-displacements-across-south-eastern-africa-as-five-tropical-storms; Prevention Web, 'Cyclones Idai and Kenneth 2019', United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, preventionweb.net/collections/cyclones-idai-and-kenneth-2019.

156 Mureithi, C. (2024), 'Almost two dozen countries at high risk of acute hunger, UN report reveals', The Guardian, theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/31/almost-two-dozen-countries-at-high-risk-of-acute-hunger-un-report-reveals.

157 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index 2023: Modern Slavery in Africa', walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/africa/. This estimate excludes Cabo Verde, Comoros, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles; the estimates for these countries were not provided in the Global Slavery Index.

Kenya

In Kenya, climate change events, such as droughts and desertification, have worsened livelihoods of pastoralists, agropastoralists and hunter-gatherers. Moreover, they have been excluded from land due to enclosure for development, private sale and the establishment of conservation areas. Government and international support is often temporary and focused on short-term survival. Affected communities have migrated internally to urban areas to find work, exposing them to exploitative working conditions, including forced labour and debt bondage. Women often stay behind to care for dependent family members, leading to family separation and the breakdown of social support networks. Some women travel to urban areas to work in bars, hotels or private households, and some women experience commercial sexual exploitation. Language barriers and poor knowledge of the law, as well as low pay and poverty, put Indigenous communities at risk of debt bondage and mean they are not always able to recognise exploitation or negotiate for better conditions.

Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT)

The [Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation \(IMPACT\)](#)¹⁵⁸ – a CJRF partner (see [page 31](#)) – works mainly with Indigenous communities in northern Kenya. These communities traditionally rely primarily on pastoralism, agropastoralism and hunter-gathering for their livelihoods, which, particularly in the case of pastoralists, have been impacted by climate change.

IMPACT supports families affected by climate change to rebuild their livelihoods in their community. It is piloting and testing initiatives such as helping families to restock their herds by providing animals, installing solar-powered boreholes and setting up a training centre to teach life skills incorporating Indigenous knowledge. It has also helped set up a low-interest lending scheme to support people to start small businesses.

IMPACT supports communities to obtain land titles and draw up community land use plans, which enables them to better adapt to the effects of climate change. It supports community-led ecosystem restoration projects to counter desertification and restore landscapes without resorting to conservation areas that exclude Indigenous people from the land they need to survive. IMPACT conducts advocacy at the national, regional and international levels for better recognition of Indigenous ways of life and knowledge in climate policies.

All these initiatives support people to build a livelihood in their community, where they have strong social networks and support. This reduces the push factors for migration to places where they are at higher risk of modern slavery.

¹⁵⁸ Case study based on late-stage consultation with IMPACT Kenya, February 2025.



A family making a dangerous river crossing during a flash flood in dry river bed, Ethiopia.

A regional approach across the East and Horn of Africa

As outlined above, modern slavery remains a pressing issue across the East and Horn of Africa.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, droughts have threatened traditional livelihoods such as pastoralism and increased food insecurity, forcing communities to migrate to urban areas.¹⁶⁰ Floods have displaced 1.6 million people in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, worsening food insecurity and malnutrition.¹⁶¹

To address some of these challenges, the [Intergovernmental Authority on Development \(IGAD\)](https://www.igad.int/) operates as a regional economic community in East Africa. It takes a holistic approach to modern slavery that integrates mobility management and climate change adaptation. It operates in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda, among other countries.

By addressing both climate adaptation and mobility, IGAD aims to reduce forced mobility and provide climate-resilient livelihoods, thereby reducing the risks of exploitation. Projects such as sustainable agriculture, water conservation and renewable energy solutions strengthen local resilience, reducing the economic pressures that often drive people into exploitative labour situations.

IGAD also works to prevent human trafficking by training law enforcement and border officials to detect trafficking. It emphasises the importance of collecting data on mobility flows and climate impacts to create early warning systems that can anticipate adverse events.¹⁶² This integrated approach addresses a critical link between climate change, migration and modern slavery, emphasising the need for coordinated responses to protect affected communities.¹⁶³

159 The World Bank classifies Eastern and Southern Africa as a region (data.worldbank.org/country/africa-eastern-and-southern). The UN classifies East African Countries, including countries in the Horn of Africa subregion, as: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. The countries included in the Horn of Africa are: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia. unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49

160 World Food Programme (2023), 'More Than a Decade of Drought – Impacts and lessons learned across the Eastern Horn of Africa 2011–2022', reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/more-decade-drought-impacts-and-lessons-learned-across-eastern-horn-africa-2011-2022-february-2023.

161 Action Against Hunger (2023), 'Deadly climate-induced flooding displaces nearly 1.6 million people across the Horn of Africa', actionagainsthunger.org.uk/press-releases/deadly-flooding-displaces-1-6-million-people-in-the-horn-of-africa.

162 Consultation with The Freedom Fund, September 2024; Intergovernmental Authority on Development (2023), The IGAD Climate Adaption Strategy (2023-2030), igad.int/download/the-igad-climate-adaptation-strategy-2023-2030/.

163 Consultation with ILO, October 2024. See also: UNHCR, MDCC, IGAD and Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (2023), Human Mobility and Climate Change in the IGAD Region: A Case Study in the Shared Border Regions of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, environmentalmigration.iom.int/resources/human-mobility-and-climate-change-igad-region-case-study-shared-border-regions-ethiopia-kenya-and-somalia.

Malawi

In Malawi, forced labour is common on farms, particularly affecting tobacco farm workers who face debt bondage and hazardous working conditions.¹⁶⁴ Migrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, and severe weather events have increased displacement in the country.¹⁶⁵

Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD)

Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) in Malawi is a prominent local organisation tackling climate change, displacement, gender-based violence and the protection of marginalised and economically impoverished communities.

CARD works to lessen the harmful effects of climate-induced displacement and immobility. Its innovative projects strengthen local livelihoods and reduce the need for mobility. Examples include the installation of solar irrigation systems, high-value crop cultivation and setting up digital market tools (e.g. WhatsApp groups connecting farmers with urban buyers).

CARD works with immobile populations to bolster local resources to withstand climate impacts, helping to prevent forced mobility. By promoting community savings and loan schemes, CARD builds financial resilience, empowering people to invest locally and counteract the economic drivers of forced mobility.

CARD's gender-sensitive programming responds to the heightened risk of gender-based violence faced by women during displacement. It provides cash transfers and livelihood support to reduce their exposure to violence and improve their financial security. Its community-based monitoring system links women who have experienced violence to services.

CARD is also working to end human trafficking. The organisation educates communities on anti-trafficking policies and implements robust reporting mechanisms. Its rights-based advocacy has led to a notable decrease in child trafficking along the borders with Mozambique and Zambia.

Combining traditional knowledge with innovative practices, CARD strengthens food security, stabilises incomes and reduces the push factors behind displacement. Its work on economic justice, climate resilience and migrant rights effectively tackles the root causes of displacement, while promoting sustainable local development.¹⁶⁶

CARD takes a holistic, community-led approach that improves resilience against climate shocks and socioeconomic challenges. It offers both immediate support and sustainable long-term solutions to reduce the risk of human rights violations, including modern slavery and gender-based violence, in the context of climate-induced mobility and immobility.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Leigh Day (2020), 'Claim against tobacco giants by poverty-stricken farmers in Malawi', leighday.co.uk/news/news/2020-news/claim-against-tobacco-giants-by-poverty-stricken-farmers-in-malawi/.

¹⁶⁵ United States Department of State (2024), '2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Malawi', state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/malawi/.

¹⁶⁶ Consultation with CARD, November 2024.

¹⁶⁷ Consultation with CARD, November 2024.

South Africa

In South Africa, persistent gaps in social protections and high unemployment put many people at risk of modern slavery. Marginalised communities are at even higher risk. Their situation is compounded by systemic inequalities, police violence, political threats and the impacts of climate change, which worsen their living conditions and increase their risk of exploitation. Informal workers and migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and are often forced to work on farms and in mines, where they are exposed to dangerous conditions.¹⁶⁸

Abahlali baseMjondolo and War on Want

In South Africa, [War on Want](#) supports social movements such as [Abahlali baseMjondolo](#) (The Residents of the Shacks).¹⁶⁹ With 150,000 members, Abahlali baseMjondolo is one of the largest movements of urban poor anywhere in the world. Its members are organised in community branches across shack settlements, mainly in urban and peri-urban areas, though there are some rural branches. Abahlali baseMjondolo's members include people who have been forced off their land, informal economy workers and migrants from rural areas forced to move to urban areas in search of work, better education or health services (there are significant disparities in public service provision between urban and rural areas).


Abahlali baseMjondolo calls for land, housing and dignity. Through collective grassroots action, Abahlali tackles systemic social justice issues, such as improving access to land, housing and services, democratising development, opposing evictions and political repression, responding to climate-related disasters, securing access to green energy and opposing exploitation.

The movement supports communities to act collectively and engages in policy advocacy to advance social justice. It has used the law and public protest to engage with and challenge government and private real estate interests. It has won unprecedented victories, securing land for the urban poor. As a result of the movement's work, many thousands of people now have access to urban land.

The Abahlali movement emphasises the integration of climate justice and labour rights, ensuring that solutions to global challenges such as climate change and modern slavery prioritise the needs of marginalised groups. It amplifies the voices of local communities and promotes systemic change. Abahlali and War on Want have created a powerful model for grassroots advocacy and international solidarity, which are essential when tackling the intertwined challenges of modern slavery and climate change.

¹⁶⁸ United States Department of State, '2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: South Africa', state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/south-africa/.

¹⁶⁹ Consultation with War on Want, November 2024.



Illegal amazon deforestation,
Mato Grosso, Brazil.

Credit: Shutterstock

3.5. Latin America

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Guyana
- Honduras
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Suriname
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

3.5.1 Regional context

Climate change is significantly impacting Latin America due to rising temperatures, more frequent and prolonged droughts, glacier retreat, extreme rainfall and rising sea levels. There is also increased frequency of massive fires in the northern Amazon, that has led to further and severe droughts (such as the Central Chile Mega Drought).¹⁷⁰ These conditions damage farms and reduce crop yields.

Rising sea levels threaten highly populated coastal areas due to freshwater contamination with saltwater, coastal erosion and storm surges.¹⁷¹ In addition, deforestation in the Amazon is at its highest level since 2009, worsening food insecurity in countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.¹⁷² As a result, climate-induced mobility has surged in Latin America, amplifying social and economic vulnerabilities. Climate-sensitive regions such as the Andes, northeast Brazil and Central America are particularly badly affected.¹⁷³ Weak government policies and inadequate disaster preparedness and response in the region make it difficult for the millions of people affected to recover from climate events. This not only increases their risk of exploitation but also increases the pressure on them to migrate.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ World Meteorological Organization (2024), 'El Niño and climate change impacts slam Latin America and Caribbean in 2023', [wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-and-climate-change-impacts-slam-latin-america-and-caribbean-2023](https://www.wmo.int/news/media-centre/el-nino-and-climate-change-impacts-slam-latin-america-and-caribbean-2023); United Nations Climate Change (2022), 'New Report Details Dire Climate Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean', unfccc.int/news/new-report-details-dire-climate-impacts-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Climate Change (2022), 'New Report Details Dire Climate Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean', unfccc.int/news/new-report-details-dire-climate-impacts-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.

¹⁷² United Nations Climate Change (2022), 'New Report Details Dire Climate Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean', unfccc.int/news/new-report-details-dire-climate-impacts-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.

¹⁷³ IPCC (2023), 'Central and South America', in Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844.014; ECLAC (2022), 'WMO issues report State of Climate in Latin America and Caribbean', cepal.org/en/news/wmo-issues-report-state-climate-latin-america-and-caribbean.

¹⁷⁴ International Organization for Migration, 'In Central America, Disasters And Climate Change Are Defining Migration Trends', environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/central-america-disasters-and-climate-change-are-defining-migration-trends.

In addition to climate impacts, human mobility is fuelled by political instability and violence.¹⁷⁵ People migrating from Venezuela, Haiti and El Salvador face exploitative conditions in agriculture, domestic work and global supply chains. The situation is particularly bad for people without legal protections. Migrants are at higher risk of gender-based violence, labour exploitation, trafficking and other forms of modern slavery.¹⁷⁶ Despite some progress in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico, significant gaps remain in the regional response to modern slavery.¹⁷⁷ To reduce the risk of forced labour and exploitation, it will be essential to strengthen legal frameworks, address systemic inequalities and improve regional cooperation.¹⁷⁸

At a glance

Climate change: From 1991 to 2021, the warming rate of Latin America and the Caribbean doubled to 0.2°C per decade.¹⁷⁹ Glaciers in the Tropical Andes have lost over 30% of their area since the 1980s, threatening the water supply of millions.¹⁸⁰ Rising sea levels and ocean temperatures affect coastal communities, while deforestation, drought and wildfires continue to impact agriculture and ecosystems.¹⁸¹

Climate-related mobility: By 2050, up to 17.1 million people in Latin America could become internal climate migrants due to falling water availability and crop productivity, and rising sea levels. With stronger climate action, this figure could drop to 9.4 million.¹⁸²

Modern slavery: An estimated 3.7 million people in Latin America live in modern slavery.¹⁸³

3.5.2 Emerging solutions and practices: analytical overview

In Latin America, there are fewer examples of initiatives that directly address the intersection of climate-induced migration, immobility and modern slavery. However, the case studies from Chile, Brazil and Bolivia provide insight into the interplay of exploitative labour practices and environmentally degrading industries. The case studies highlight the power of affected communities and Indigenous peoples to organise, claim their rights and pursue self-determination. They illustrate the transformative potential of rights-based, community-driven approaches when addressing the intertwined challenges of climate change and modern slavery. They provide valuable lessons on resilience, empowerment and social justice across the region.

175 Human Rights Watch, 'Darién Gap: The Jungle where Poor Mobility Policies Meet', [hrw.org/feature/2024/09/11/darien-gap/the-jungle-where-poor-migration-policies-meet](https://www.hrw.org/feature/2024/09/11/darien-gap/the-jungle-where-poor-migration-policies-meet).

176 Care (2019), 'Venezuelan Migrants at High Risk for Trafficking and Abuse', [care.org/media-and-press/venezuelan-migrants-at-high-risk-for-trafficking-and-abuse](https://www.care.org/media-and-press/venezuelan-migrants-at-high-risk-for-trafficking-and-abuse); Legros, A.J. (2024), 'We need 'em worse than they need us': How Haitian workers feed the US', The Guardian, [theguardian.com/us-news/2024/oct/03/haitian-farm-workers-north-carolina](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/oct/03/haitian-farm-workers-north-carolina).

177 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index: The Americas', [walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/americas/](https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/americas/); Bansal, V. et al. (2023), 'An intervention-focused review of modern slave labor in Brazil's mining sector', World Development 171(C), doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2023.106362.

178 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index: The Americas', [walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/americas/](https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/americas/).


179 ECLAC (2022), 'WMO issues report State of Climate in Latin America and Caribbean', [cepal.org/en/news/wmo-issues-report-state-climate-latin-america-and-caribbean](https://www.cepal.org/en/news/wmo-issues-report-state-climate-latin-america-and-caribbean).

180 ECLAC (2022), 'WMO issues report State of Climate in Latin America and Caribbean', [cepal.org/en/news/wmo-issues-report-state-climate-latin-america-and-caribbean](https://www.cepal.org/en/news/wmo-issues-report-state-climate-latin-america-and-caribbean).

181 United Nations Climate Change (2022), 'New Report Details Dire Climate Impacts in Latin America and the Caribbean', unfccc.int/news/new-report-details-dire-climate-impacts-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.

182 World Bank Group (2018), Groundswell: Preparing for internal climate migration. Policy Note #3: Internal Climate Migration in Latin America, documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/983921522304806221/pdf/124724-BRI-PUBLIC-NEWSERIES-Groundswell-note-PN3.pdf.

183 Walk Free (2023), 'Global Slavery Index: The Americas', [walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/americas/](https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/regional-findings/americas/) (excludes Suriname).


 Credit: Shutterstock
 Illegal logging in the Amazon rainforest, Brazil.

Brazil

Forced labour is prevalent in rural and urban areas of Brazil. It is particularly common in sectors such as mining, agriculture, construction and domestic work, in which marginalised communities often face debt-based coercion.¹⁸⁴ Modern slavery in Brazil's mining industry often affects seasonal migrants who are forced into debt bondage and exploitative working conditions. Brazil is the largest country in the Amazon, and its expansion of gold mining has led to massive deforestation and biodiversity loss.¹⁸⁵

Repórter Brasil and other local organisations

[Freedom Fund](#) supports a cluster of local partner organisations, notably [Repórter Brasil](#), to implement a project addressing climate change and modern slavery in Brazil. Repórter Brasil is implementing a holistic, community-based strategy on the interconnected challenges of climate change, loss of sustainable livelihoods and exploitative labour conditions in the Amazon rainforest. Focusing on regions where deforestation is most prevalent, in the states of Pará and Amazonas, their approach combines community empowerment, legal collaboration and supply chain accountability.

While many of those in the exploited labour force are internal and cross-border migrant workers, workers from nearby communities are also recruited into illegal logging. Through the approach of Repórter Brasil and other partner organisations, these communities assess the presence of forced labour and determine how to resist exploitation. This approach has increased grassroots reporting and led to the official rescue of workers held in modern slavery.

Companies involved in illegal practices are put on Brazil's 'Dirty List',¹⁸⁶ which publicly names them. This step promotes accountability and systemic change because it makes it easier for others in the supply chain to act.

This approach is scalable. It could be replicated by other Latin American countries to improve supply chain transparency, tackle modern slavery, and safeguarding traditional livelihoods and the climate.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ [United States Department of State, '2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Brazil', state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/brazil.](#)

¹⁸⁵ Bansal, V. et al. (2023), 'An intervention-focused review of modern slave labor in Brazil's mining sector', *World Development* 171(C), [doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2023.106362.](#)

¹⁸⁶ Inspeção do Trabalho (2024), 'Cadastro de Empregadores que tenham submetido trabalhadores a condições análogas à de escravo', [gov.br/trabalho-e-emprego/pt-br/assuntos/inspecao-do-trabalho/areas-de-atuacao/cadastro_de_empregadores.pdf.](#)

¹⁸⁷ Consultation with The Freedom Fund, September 2024.

The Guaraní people

Bolivia's grassroots movement, led by the Indigenous group of the Guaraní people in the Chaco region, has worked to address historical exploitation. This often takes the form of debt bondage on haciendas,¹⁸⁸ which has persisted since colonial times. Since the 1980s, the Guaraní have mobilised to secure land titles and the right to self-governance, and to prevent exploitative labour practices. They have benefited from the support of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the government of Evo Morales.¹⁸⁹

However, the expansion of natural gas operations and the impacts of climate change now pose new challenges. Increasing droughts and floods disrupt traditional agriculture, undermining the Guaraní's autonomy and exacerbating socioeconomic pressures. These environmental shifts have prompted migration from rural areas, increasing the Guaraní people's risk of exploitation and modern slavery. This is especially the case when they migrate to urban areas in search of new livelihoods.¹⁹⁰

Their situation highlights the urgent need to address structural inequalities and protect Indigenous rights, particularly in the face of climate change. It underscores the importance of incorporating climate resilience into strategies to tackle modern slavery, because marginalised communities are more exposed than others both to exploitation and to the effects of climate change. As it does for many Indigenous peoples, for the Guaraní, land serves as a bulwark against exploitation. It forms part of a broader strategy for self-determination. When their autonomy is constrained, new capitalistic forms of vulnerability and exploitation can thrive.¹⁹¹

188 Debt bondage on haciendas is a form of forced labour where workers, often Indigenous or impoverished, are trapped in a cycle of indebtedness. They pledge their labour to repay a debt – often one that is manipulated or inflated – making it nearly impossible to ever fully settle the debt and regain freedom. This exploitative practice has historically been used to control labour and maintain economic and social hierarchies on large estates. See more here: un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/10Session_factsheet_forced_labour_EN.pdf

189 Consultation with Chris O'Connell, Trócaire, September 2024.

190 O'Connell, C. (2022), 'Modern Slavery: Brazilian 'flying squad', Guaraní land reform and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers', The Modern Slavery Series, [DevelopmentEducation.ie](https://developmenteducation.ie/developmenteducation.ie/feature/modern-slavery-brazilian-flying-squad-guarani-land-reform-and-the-coalition-of-immokalee-workers/), developmenteducation.ie/developmenteducation.ie/feature/modern-slavery-brazilian-flying-squad-guarani-land-reform-and-the-coalition-of-immokalee-workers/; Consultation with Chris O'Connell, Trócaire, September 2024.

191 Consultation with Chris O'Connell, Trócaire, September 2024; See Anthias, P. (2018), Limits to Decolonization: Indigeneity, Territory, and Hydrocarbon Politics in the Bolivian Chaco. Cornell University Press, doi.org/10.7591/9781501714290.

Chile

Growing migrant communities in Chile are at increasing risk of trafficking due to stricter immigration laws in the country.¹⁹² Migrants from Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, Thailand and Venezuela are especially at risk.¹⁹³ Climate events in Chile have also led to displacement, particularly of people working in the agricultural and industrial sectors where forced labour is common.¹⁹⁴ Resource extractivism – the large-scale removal of the earth’s natural resources with minimal processing for profit – is a key part of Chile’s export-oriented economy. Demand for minerals is rising to meet the demands of the energy transition. Workforce dynamics in this sector segment the workforce into the industrial labour force on the one hand and rural, Indigenous and informal workers on the other. While industrial unions have secured benefits for formal workers in the energy sector, informal and precarious workers – and marginalised populations – remain largely unprotected.

Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts with War on Want

In Latin America, War on Want is working with partners such as the [Latin American Observatory of Environmental Conflicts \(Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales, OLCA\)](#) to tackle forced labour linked to large-scale resource extraction.¹⁹⁵ OLCA represents coalitions of mining-affected communities and Indigenous movements across the region, particularly in Chile. This network of organisations plays a pivotal role in resisting extractivism and promoting ecological and economic justice. They challenge the development model that prioritises exports and corporate profit over workers’ rights and territorial sovereignty.

OLCA also supports communities impacted by environmental conflicts. It provides them with training and guidance on their rights. OLCA tracks environmental disputes, develops management tools, offers conflict resolution training and researches environmental protection in relation to citizens’ rights. Through these efforts, OLCA supports the creation of alternative development models that prioritise life, ecosystems and the wellbeing of local communities.¹⁹⁶

192 United States Department of State, ‘2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Chile’, state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/chile.

193 United States Department of State, ‘2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Chile’, state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/chile.

194 Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley (2024), ‘Climate Crisis, Displacement, and the Right to Stay’, belonging.berkeley.edu/climatedisplacement/case-studies/chile/; United States Department of State, ‘2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Chile’, state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/chile.

195 Consultation with War on Want, 2024.

196 War on Want, ‘Partners’, waronwant.org/about/partners.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The case studies above represent a snapshot of actual and potential approaches to addressing the intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery. Given that this is an emerging area, not all case studies addressed this intersection directly. Nonetheless, through their local or community-led and justice-based approaches, they provide insights and inspiration for stakeholders seeking to address climate change, mobility and modern slavery. All case studies highlight the need for **an inclusive, community-centred approach based on human rights and robust evidence** to tackle interconnected challenges. They also highlight the complexity of the intersection and **the need for context-specific solutions**. This requires strong collaboration between civil society organisations, global organisations and multilateral bodies aiming to work with governments, local authorities and communities towards sustainable solutions to the problem. By acting swiftly and prioritising the worst affected, we can make meaningful progress towards a just future free from exploitation. Building on the lessons shared throughout this paper, we have developed recommendations presented below.

Multilateral organisations must:

- Advocate for:
 - Safe, climate-resilient migration pathways for people impacted by climate change, including as part of adaptation plans.
 - Robust climate adaptation strategies that adopt a modern slavery lens to ensure justice and resilience for affected groups.
 - Rights-based and community-driven relocation strategies.
 - Robust disaster response policies.
 - Strong social protection systems, particularly for marginalised groups.
 - Strong protections for migrant workers, including protection of the rights to land, citizenship, political inclusion and secure livelihoods.
 - Strong government regulation and enforcement of decent work, particularly in high-risk sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and renewable energy.
 - Strong government action on climate change and sustainable resource management.
- Strengthen international frameworks to:
 - Integrate labour rights into climate policies.
 - Use loss and damage funds to close social protection gaps.
 - Facilitate intra-regional and inter-regional collaboration.
- Adopt inclusive, solution-oriented policies that address human rights violations and climate impacts, taking a nuanced, evidence-based approach.
- Address structural inequities and systemic failures, to protect human rights and promote sustainable development.

- Support the development of programmes to address the intersection of climate change, mobility and modern slavery, including by assessing and evaluating existing programmes and seeing where insights from comparable programmes can be applied.
- Support knowledge and data generation, including by building local expertise.
- Increase investments in disaster risk reduction and early warning systems.

International non-governmental organisations should:

- Support climate-affected communities to claim their rights through initiatives focused on training, building resilience and engagement in climate adaptation.
- Ensure programmes take a human rights and gender-sensitive approach and are co-designed with and led by local communities.
- Nurture local leaders' ability to drive social change, for example, by co-designing advocacy strategies with them.
- Adopt flexible funding models to improve marginalised communities' access to funding and address the combined effects of climate change and systemic inequalities.
- Promote sustainable livelihoods, decent work, and local development by partnering with local organisations working on areas such as sustainable agriculture, forest management and food sovereignty.
- In combination with support for better livelihoods, support poverty eradication and improved public services.
- Focus on innovative approaches that support affected communities in adapting to the effects of climate change, overcoming socioeconomic challenges and preventing exploitation.
- Advocate for more climate adaptation funding from wealthier nations, prioritising at-risk populations and addressing historical injustices that increase the risk of exploitation in countries worst affected by climate change.

Civil society organisations should:

- Support the development of local support systems.
- Set up resource centres staffed by (local) people with local and cultural awareness/competence.
- Allocate sufficient resources to local resource centres.
- Develop innovative, sustainable initiatives to support local communities in adapting to the effects of climate change.
- Take a rights-based approach that is inclusive of marginalised, at-risk and immobile groups.
- Combine immediate relief with long-term resilience strategies to improve people's socioeconomic situation and prevent exploitation.
- Empower communities through education, training and livelihood initiatives that are sustainable and designed to meet local needs.
- Create district-level mobility profiles to help local authorities deliver targeted support, especially during emergencies.
- Implement inclusive, rights-based programmes grounded in people's needs.
- Co-design solutions with local communities to ensure they are at the centre of the solutions.
- Advocate at the national and international levels for local responses that meet communities' needs.

Annex 1: List of organisations interviewed

ORGANISATION	REGION
Red Cross Society Sri Lanka	South Asia
Trócaire	Global
South Asians for Human Rights	South Asia
Janathakshan (GTE) Limited (Sri Lanka)	South Asia
UNU (United Nations University) Institute for Environment and Human Security (Germany)	Global
Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee	South Asia
Clean Energy Nepal	South Asia
Nepalese Youth for Climate Action	South Asia
The Bio Diversity Project	South Asia
Law & Society Trust, Sri Lanka	South Asia
Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan	South Asia
YouthNet Global	South Asia
The Freedom Fund	South Asia and Latin America
Climate Justice Resilience Fund	Global
War on Want	Global
International Labour Organization (ILO)	Global
Kolkata Climate Action Plan	South Asia
Utkal University	South Asia
Climate Action Network South Asia	South Asia
Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development	South Asia
People's Courage International	South and S. E Asia
Centre for Environment Communication	South Asia
Prakriti Resources Centre, Nepal	South Asia
Vikram Solar, Indian Institute of Engineering, Head of Swacch India	South Asia
United Nations Human Rights Office	Asia Pacific
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)	Pacific Island
Climate Action for Rural Development	Southeast Africa (Malawi)
Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association	East Africa
Kenyan Civil Society - Il'laramatak	East Africa
The BOMA Project, UNFCCC	East Africa
Christian Aid	East Africa
Women's Climate Centers International	East Africa
Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT), Kenya ¹⁹⁷	East Africa
Purak Asia	South Asia
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), South Asia	South Asia
Rastriya Dalit Network (RDN)	South Asia

Annex 2: Questions for experts

For NGOs (regional and international), community-based/individual initiatives and civil society organisations

Causes:

- 1. Observations of intersectionality:** How does your organisation perceive the intersection between climate change, migration and modern slavery in your region? What are the primary manifestations of this intersection? (caste, race, queerness, religious minorities, descent-based profiles, extremely impoverished families, disability, age, etc.) Are there any context-specific nuances?
- 2. Vulnerability factors:** What local factors contribute most to increasing the vulnerability of people who move in the context of climate change to modern slavery in your area? Are these factors influenced by existing socioeconomic conditions, policies or cultural contexts? How is climate change enhancing vulnerability to modern slavery risks in the different contexts where you work?

Solutions:

- 1. Community interventions:** What local strategies or community-based interventions has your organisation implemented to combat modern slavery linked to climate change and migration? Are the strategies customised to different contexts? How effective have these been, and what challenges have you faced?
- 2. Empowering local actors:** What is the current role played by local actors (communities and civil society) in addressing the challenges of modern slavery and of climate change? How can local communities and civil society play a stronger role in preventing modern slavery exacerbated by climate change for people pushed to migrate? What support is needed from external actors (e.g. local leaders, local governance bodies, INGOs, governments) to strengthen these efforts?

Examples and models:

- 1. Successful practices:** Can you share examples of successful local interventions that have mitigated or prevented the risks of vulnerabilities (modern slavery) among people who move in the context of climate change? What were the key contributing factors towards the success of the practice? How can these be replicated or adapted in other contexts?
- 2. Innovative approaches:** What innovative approaches or practices has your organisation adopted to address this issue, or comparable issues of people facing vulnerabilities in the context of climate change? Why do you consider this an innovation? What have been the outcomes, and what lessons have been learned? What were the enabling factors for the innovation to be successful (if it was successful)?

Vision and impacts:

- 1. Policy gaps and community needs:** From a local perspective, what are the critical gaps in current policies for addressing modern slavery or comparable vulnerabilities in climate-affected regions? What policy changes would you advocate for at the regional or national level? What are the current gaps in the implementation architecture of existing policies and how can they be addressed?

Recommendations:

- 1. Strengthening partnerships:** What are the current collaborative mechanisms between civil society, governments, INGOs and international bodies for combating modern slavery? How can local civil society organisations better collaborate with governments, INGOs and international bodies to address modern slavery linked to climate change and migration? What improvements are needed to enhance these partnerships?
- 2. Resource allocation:** What resources (financial, technical or other) are most needed to effectively combat modern slavery in your community, especially in the face of climate-induced challenges and consequent mobility?

For INGOs

Causes:

- 1. Regional vulnerabilities:** Which regions or communities have you identified as most vulnerable to the combined impacts of climate change and modern slavery? What are the main contributing factors to vulnerability enhancement for modern slavery, and how do they vary across different regions?
- 2. Observational insights:** Based on your organisation's work, how does climate change drive migration patterns that increase vulnerability to modern slavery?

Solutions:

- 1. Collaborative interventions:** How do you collaborate with local NGOs, governments and international bodies to address modern slavery exacerbated by climate change? What improvements or additional support would enhance these partnerships?
- 2. Adaptation, prevention and risk mitigation:** How does your organisation ensure that climate adaptation/resilience building efforts do not inadvertently increase the risk of modern slavery? What best practices have emerged from your experience? What were the enabling factors for these best practices?

Examples and models:

- 1. Best practices:** Can you provide examples of best practices or successful interventions that your organisation has supported or implemented to combat modern slavery exacerbated by climate change for people who are pushed to migrate in that context? What were the enabling factors for these?
- 2. Scalable models:** Which innovative approaches have shown promise in your projects and could be scaled up or replicated in other regions?

Vision and impacts:

- 1. Global advocacy and policy influence:** What are the current global policies and legal frameworks for addressing the challenges of climate-induced migration and modern slavery? How would you consider their effectiveness in addressing modern slavery? In your opinion, what are the most critical gaps in global policies or legal frameworks in addressing the nexus between climate change, migration and modern slavery? How can global organisations/INGOs influence these gaps effectively?

Recommendations:

- 1. Support for local organisations:** How can INGOs better support community-based organisations in preventing modern slavery among climate migrants? Are there specific resources or strategies that have proven particularly effective?
- 2. Policy recommendations:** What key recommendations would you make to the global community to enhance efforts in combating modern slavery risks for people who move in the context of climate change?

For international organisations and global institutions

Causes:

1. **Global risk assessment:** How does your organisation assess the global risk of modern slavery/related vulnerabilities, exacerbated by climate change for people who move in the context of climate change? Which regions or populations are most at risk, and why?
2. **Policy gaps:** What do you perceive as the primary gaps in international policies or legal frameworks that prevent effective action against modern slavery for people who move in the context of climate change? What policies have been effective and why? What are the gaps in the current implementation architecture of the policies?

Solutions:

1. **Framework development:** What frameworks or guidelines has your organisation developed to address the risks of modern slavery for people who move in the context of climate change? How are these frameworks implemented across different regions?
2. **Ensuring safe adaptation, prevention:** How do you ensure that global adaptation/resilience building, prevention and risk mitigation strategies do not inadvertently increase the vulnerability of at-risk populations to modern slavery?

Examples and models:

1. **Successful interventions:** Can you provide examples of effective policies or practices implemented by specific countries or regions that could serve as models for others facing similar challenges?
2. **Scalability and replication:** What innovative practices have been identified that could be scaled up or replicated to address modern slavery within climate-affected regions? What are the factors for success?

Vision and impacts:

1. **Role of international organisations:** What role should international organisations play in guiding and supporting regional and national efforts to address the intersection of modern slavery, migration and climate change? What are the current roles of international organisations with respect to this aspirational role?
2. **Rights protection:** How do you advocate for stronger rights protections and compliance with international obligations, particularly in regions vulnerable to climate-induced migration?

Recommendations:

1. **Collective global action:** What specific recommendations would you offer to enhance global efforts in combating modern slavery for people who move in the context of climate change, particularly for regions most at risk?

For governments/officials

Causes:

- 1. National vulnerability assessment:** How does your government assess the risk of modern slavery linked to climate change, particularly in regions vulnerable to climate-induced migration?
- 2. Policy gaps and challenges:** What are the main challenges your government faces in addressing modern slavery risks for people who move in the context of climate change? How are these being addressed?

Solutions:

- 1. Government interventions:** What specific policies or programmes has your government implemented to prevent or mitigate the risk of modern slavery among people who move in the context of climate change? How robust is the implementation architecture?
- 2. Community resilience building:** How is your government working to strengthen the resilience of communities at risk of climate-induced displacement to reduce their vulnerability to modern slavery?

Examples and models:

- 1. Successful collaborations:** Can you share examples of successful collaborations between your government and international organisations, NGOs, local governance units or other countries in addressing modern slavery linked to climate change, especially for people who are pushed to move?
- 2. Best practices and lessons learned:** What lessons have been learned from implementing policies or programmes aimed at reducing the risk of modern slavery in the context of climate change-induced migration?

Vision and impacts:

- 1. National policy reforms:** What legal frameworks or policy reforms are being considered or implemented to better protect climate migrants from modern slavery?
- 2. Decentralising climate initiatives:** What are your thoughts on locally led adaptation and the importance of decentralising climate change initiatives and funding?

Recommendations:

- 1. Global and regional coordination:** What recommendations would you offer to other governments or international bodies to enhance global efforts in addressing the link between climate change, migration and modern slavery?
- 2. Role of the international community:** In your view, what role should the international community play in supporting national efforts to tackle modern slavery risks for people who move in the context of climate change?

For academics, researchers, research institutes

Causes:

- 1. Research focus areas:** What are the key research areas currently being explored that link climate change, migration and modern slavery? What gaps remain in this field?
- 2. Evidence and data collection:** What evidence or data or studies have you found that demonstrate a direct link between climate change and an increased risk of modern slavery, particularly among populations who migrate? Which are the most studied areas (geographically/ thematically) and which areas require research attention?

Solutions:

- 1. Interdisciplinary research contributions:** How can interdisciplinary research contribute to a deeper understanding of how migration in the context of climate change impacts modern slavery? What innovative methodologies have been employed in this context?
- 2. Policy integration:** What research findings suggest ways to integrate climate adaptation policies with anti-slavery efforts to minimise risks?

Examples and models:

- 1. Case studies and examples:** Can you share case studies or examples from your research that highlight how climate change exacerbates the risk of modern slavery?
- 2. Innovative practices in research:** What innovative research practices have been developed to study the intersection of climate change, migration and modern slavery? How can these practices be further developed or adopted by other researchers?

Vision and impacts:

- 1. Emerging research priorities:** Looking ahead, what are the most pressing research priorities to ensure that efforts to combat climate change also address the risks of modern slavery for people who move?
- 2. Support for policy and practice:** How can academia better support policymakers, NGOs and governments in addressing modern slavery in the context of migration and climate change?

Recommendations:

- 1. Leveraging technology and innovation:** What role do you believe emerging technologies or innovative practices can play in studying or mitigating the impact of climate change on modern slavery for people on the move?



Credit: Fabeena Monir

Datinakhali, Satkhira, Bangladesh, a woman regularly catches fish after completing household chores. The mother of two has been suffering from skin discoloration and a skin infection for three years now.



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