11 November 2022

Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change

**WALK FREE INPUT FOR REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE DISPLACEMENT**

**Introduction**

Walk Free is an international human rights organisation working to eradicate modern slavery in all its forms.[[1]](#endnote-2) This begins with building a robust evidence base to hold government and business to account. We engage with political, business, religious and community leaders and invest in direct implementation through our civil society partners to drive systems change and dismantle the drivers of modern slavery.

The term modern slavery covers a set of specific legal concepts including human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, forced or servile marriage, slavery and slavery-like practices, and the sale and exploitation of children. Although modern slavery is not defined in law, it is used as an umbrella term that focuses attention on the commonalities across these legal concepts. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power.

In 2022, Walk Free, together with the International Labour Organization and International Organization for Migration, released the Global Estimates of Modern Slavery.[[2]](#endnote-3) The report finds that there are 49.6 million people living in situations of modern slavery on any given day – an increase of almost 10 million people since the previous estimates were released in 2017. The 2022 Global Estimates were released in the context of compounding crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts, and climate change, which have led to unprecedented disruption to employment and education, increases in poverty and forced and unsafe migration, and reports of gender-based violence – together serving to heighten the risk of all forms of modern slavery.[[3]](#endnote-4)

Walk Free welcomes the opportunity to respond to the call for input into the report on addressing the human rights implications of climate change displacement, including legal protection of people displaced across international borders. Our organisation’s input relates to the following questions:

1. What experiences and examples are you aware of, of individuals or communities, displaced by climate change?
2. What legislation, policies and practices are you aware of that are in place to give protection to the rights of individuals and communities displaced by climate change?
3. Please provide examples of policies, practices and legal remedies and concepts of how States, business enterprises, civil society and intergovernmental organisations can provide protection for people and communities displaced by climate change.
4. What international, regional, and national policies and legal approaches are necessary to protect people and communities displaced by climate change?
5. **What experiences and examples are you aware of, of individuals or communities, displaced by climate change?**

The adverse impacts of climate change, including both rapid- and slow-onset events, can magnify other drivers of displacement such as loss of livelihoods, poverty, food insecurity, and a lack of access to water and other resources,[[4]](#endnote-5) pushing people to migrate and exposing these vulnerable populations to modern slavery.[[5]](#endnote-6) In 2021, disasters triggered 23.7 million internal displacements around the world.[[6]](#endnote-7) Most of these displacements were attributed to weather-related events such as storms, floods, wildfires, droughts, landslides, and extreme temperatures.[[7]](#endnote-8)

There may be a distinction between the experiences of those migrating from rapid-onset events and slow-onset events, although data are limited. In the Philippines, for example, trafficking risks dramatically increased in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Rai, which damaged 1.7 million homes[[8]](#endnote-9) and displaced hundreds of thousands of people.[[9]](#endnote-10) The typhoon significantly damaged the agricultural sector and the livelihoods depending on it,[[10]](#endnote-11) exacerbating vulnerabilities particularly for Indigenous populations.[[11]](#endnote-12) A study of two climate-affected locations in India, found that while trafficking impacted all climate migrants, a higher prevalence was found among those migrating from a district suffering from slow-onset events (Palamu) compared to a district experiencing rapid-onset events (Kendrapara).[[12]](#endnote-13) In Palamu, increasing drought and frost in recent decades damaged the sustainability of agriculture and forest resources, spurring unemployment and pushing community members to migrate in search of work. The study found that among migrants from Palamu, 42 per cent had experienced trafficking as opposed to 16 per cent from Kendrapara. In this instance, it appears that a lack of national attention and support for slow-onset events as well as limited social protections exacerbated the vulnerabilities faced by the Palamu communities.[[13]](#endnote-14)

Across the world, the climate crisis disproportionately affects women and girls.[[14]](#endnote-15) For families unable to cope with climate-induced insecurity, girls are at risk of being sold into sex work or early marriage to ease the financial strain on the household,[[15]](#endnote-16) sometimes through the payment of bride price.[[16]](#endnote-17) In affected areas in the Horn of Africa, drought has been associated with increasing rates of child marriage and female genital mutilation practices, as the climate crisis spurs economic and food insecurity, displaces people from their homes, and drives girls out of schools.[[17]](#endnote-18) Extreme weather in Bangladesh has been linked to the early marriage of girls as a coping mechanism for families living in poverty and as a means to protect daughters from the heightened risk of sexual violence during crises.[[18]](#endnote-19) Similarly, increasing reports of young girls being married in displacement camps followed the devastation of Cyclone Idai in southern Malawi.[[19]](#endnote-20)

1. **What legislation, policies and practices are you aware of that are in place to give protection to the rights of individuals and communities displaced by climate change?**
2. **Please provide examples of policies, practices and legal remedies and concepts of how States, business enterprises, civil society and intergovernmental organisations can provide protection for people and communities displaced by climate change.**
3. **What international, regional and national policies and legal approaches are necessary to protect people and communities displaced by climate change?**

Walk Free makes three key recommendations to governments and policymakers to address the vulnerability to modern slavery in the context of climate-induced displacement:

**Recommendation 1: Facilitate safe, regular, and orderly migration for those who are displaced and remove barriers that prevent migrants from seeking refuge from the impacts of climate change.**

It is well established that migrants, especially irregular migrants and migrants in situations of forced displacement, are particularly vulnerable to modern slavery.[[20]](#endnote-21) Further, the link between climate change, migration, and modern slavery is increasingly recognised as a significant concern.[[21]](#endnote-22) Migration restrictions can push migrants to undertake more expensive or dangerous routes, rendering them more vulnerable to exploitation.[[22]](#endnote-23) It is therefore critical to remove barriers, such as restrictive border controls and migration legislation, to improve migrant protection.[[23]](#endnote-24) Facilitating safe, regular, and orderly migration in the context of climate change includes regularising the status of migrants in irregular situations, developing labour migration pathways from regions most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, enabling people to migrate across borders by developing free movement protocols, integrating the principle of non-return for those displaced by climate into legislation and policy, and ensuring migrants’ access to health, education, and employment.[[24]](#endnote-25)

**Recommendation 2: Integrate responses to modern slavery within national climate adaptation and resilience plans, planning for the relocation and resettlement of displaced populations.**

The effects of climate change threaten the existence of entire communities. In atoll countries such as Kiribati and Niue, permanent relocation has long been considered as a coping strategy for climate change.[[25]](#endnote-26) In 2014, the entire town of Vunidogoloa in Fiji was permanently relocated by the government due to the impact of climate change.[[26]](#endnote-27) In Uganda, the government established a decade-long voluntary resettlement initiative to relocate communitiesin landslide-prone districts to safer areas. The community received support in the form of housing, services, income-generating activities, and land.[[27]](#endnote-28)

***“Our land is disappearing fast than global action can stem climate change… That means we must urgently find ways to rehome our people.”*** *Akka Rimon and Anote Tong, Kiribati[[28]](#endnote-29)*

As climate-induced displacements become increasingly inevitable, it is important to develop plans to safely relocate displaced communities ahead of disasters in order to also prevent modern slavery.[[29]](#endnote-30) Governments and policymakers must acknowledge and address the vulnerability to modern slavery that occurs as a result of climate-induced displacement within climate policy discourse, develop policies to provide social safety nets to vulnerable communities (such as livelihood protection support, access to basic services, and facilitating safe migration), and embed this into climate adaptation and resilience plans, migration response plans, and development plans.[[30]](#endnote-31) Relocation plans should centre human rights and be developed in consultation with local communities, displaced persons, and migrants*.*[[31]](#endnote-32)

**Recommendation 3: Introduce risk management strategies, livelihood protection support and social protection initiatives to prevent households adopting risky coping strategies due to climate-related displacement.**

Following a disaster, vulnerable households may adopt risky coping strategies such as marrying their children early,[[32]](#endnote-33) undertaking risky migration, or borrowing from informal lenders*.*[[33]](#endnote-34) A report by IOM Philippines found that the impact of climate change on migration depends on a person’s livelihood and access to security, peace and stability.[[34]](#endnote-35) In Palamu, India, a lack of support and social protection for communities facing slow-onset events exacerbated the vulnerabilities of households to exploitation.[[35]](#endnote-36) It is critical to introduce social protection programs, particularly in communities exposed to climate-induced migration and modern slavery, to address vulnerability and strengthen community resilience to climate change. Social protection may include ensuring access to resources such as food and water, healthcare, education and skills development, credit, and insurance.[[36]](#endnote-37)

1. For more detail, see [www.walkfree.org](http://www.walkfree.org) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Walk Free, International Labour Organization & International Organization for Migration 2022, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*. Available from: https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2022/09/12142341/GEMS-2022\_Report\_EN\_V8.pdf. [8 November 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. As above [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2021, *Displaced on the frontlines of the climate emergency*. Available from: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/065d18218b654c798ae9f360a626d903. [13 January 2022], Bharadwaj, R, Bishop, D, Hazra, S, Pufaa, E & Annan, JK 2021, *Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers*, Anti-Slavery International & International Institute for Environment and Development, pp. 6-34. Available from: https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021\_low\_res.pdf. [7 June 2022], Bharadwaj, R, Chakravarti, D, Karthikeyan, N, Hazra, S, Daniel, U, Topno, J & Abhilashi, R 2022, *Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking*, International Institute for Environment and Development. Available from: https://pubs.iied.org/20936iied. [1 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. Bharadwaj, R, Chakravarti, D, Karthikeyan, N, Hazra, S, Daniel, U, Topno, J & Abhilashi, R 2022, *Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking*, International Institute for Environment and Development. Available from: https://pubs.iied.org/20936iied. [1 June 2022], Bharadwaj, R, Bishop, D, Hazra, S, Pufaa, E & Annan, JK 2021, *Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers*, Anti-Slavery International & International Institute for Environment and Development, pp. 6-34. Available from: https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021\_low\_res.pdf. [7 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
6. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2022, *Global Report on Internal Migration 2022: Children and youth in internal displacement*, pp. 11-16. Available from: https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/IDMC\_GRID\_2022\_LR.pdf. [22 August 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
7. As above. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
8. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2022, *Super Typhoon Rai (Odette) Humanitarian Needs and Priorities*, p. 8. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-super-typhoon-rai-odette-humanitarian-needs-and-priorities-revision. [15 July 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
9. As above, United Nations Population Fund 2022, *Situation Report 03: Super Typhoon Rai (Odette) - 30 January 2022*, pp. 1-2. Available from: https://philippines.unfpa.org/en/resources/situation-report-03-super-typhoon-rai-odette-30-january-2022. [27 July 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
10. International Labour Organization 2021, *Typhoon Rai (Odette) and employment in the Philippines: A rapid impact assessment*, p. 4. Available from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-manila/documents/publication/wcms\_833523.pdf. [15 July 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
11. Gender in Humanitarian Action Community of Practice Philippines 2022, *Gender Alert: Philippines Super Typhoon Rai Response*, pp. 3-4. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/gender-alert-philippines-super-typhoon-rai-response-may-2022. [15 July 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
12. Bharadwaj, R, Chakravarti, D, Karthikeyan, N, Hazra, S, Daniel, U, Topno, J & Abhilashi, R 2022, *Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking*, International Institute for Environment and Development. Available from: https://pubs.iied.org/20936iied. [1 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
13. As above [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
14. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2022, *Dimensions and examples of the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, the role of women as agents of change and opportunities for women: Synthesis report by the secretariat* FCCC/SBI/2022/7, Subsidiary Body for Implementation, Fifty-sixth session, pp. 1-10. Available from: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbi2022\_07.pdf. [25 August 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
15. Plan International n.d., *Effects of climate change on girls' rights*. Available from: https://plan-international.org/emergencies/effects-of-climate-change-girls-rights. [17 June 2020], Plan International 2019, *Climate Change has Devastating Impact on Girls*. Available from: https://plan-international.org/news/2019-09-19-climate-change-has-devastating-impact-girls. [16 June 2020]. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
16. United Nations Population Fund 2020, *State of the World Population 2020. Against My Will: Defying the Practices that Harm Women and Girls and Undermine Equality*. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNFPA\_PUB\_2020\_EN\_State\_of\_World\_Population.pdf. [20 July 2020]. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
17. United Nations Children's Fund 2022,'Child marriage on the rise in Horn of Africa as drought crisis intensifies', 28 June. Available From: https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-marriage-rise-horn-africa-drought-crisis-intensifies. [25 August 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
18. Ahmed, KJ 2019, 'The nexus between extreme weather events, sexual violence, and early marriage: a study of vulnerable populations in Bangladesh', *Population and Environment,* vol. 40, no. 3,pp. 303-324. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-019-0312-3. DOI:10.1007/s11111-019-0312-3. [18 December 2020]. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
19. Higgins, A 2020,'Marriage of survival: Will climate change mean more child brides', *Al Jazeera*, 19 February. Available From: https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/2/19/marriage-of-survival-will-climate-change-mean-more-child-brides. [27 October 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
20. David, F, Bryant, K & Joudo Larsen, J 2019, *Migrants and their vulnerability to human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour*, International Organization for Migration. Available from: https://cdn.minderoo.com.au/content/uploads/2019/08/28110623/2533\_walk.free\_.V8\_190723\_Digital\_P.pdf. [13 January 2022], United Nations General Assembly 2021, *Nexus between displacement and contemporary forms of slavery - Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences* A/HRC/48/52. Available from: https://reliefweb.int/report/world/nexus-between-displacement-and-contemporary-forms-slavery-report-special-rapporteur. [9 November 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
21. International Organization for Migration 2016, *The Climate Change-Human Trafficking Nexus*. Available from: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/mecc\_infosheet\_climate\_change\_nexus.pdf. [9 November 2022], Bharadwaj, R, Chakravarti, D, Karthikeyan, N, Hazra, S, Daniel, U, Topno, J & Abhilashi, R 2022, *Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking*, International Institute for Environment and Development. Available from: https://pubs.iied.org/20936iied. [1 June 2022], Bharadwaj, R, Bishop, D, Hazra, S, Pufaa, E & Annan, JK 2021, *Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers*, Anti-Slavery International & International Institute for Environment and Development, pp. 6-34. Available from: https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021\_low\_res.pdf. [7 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
22. Delta 8.7 2021, *Crisis Policy Guide*, United Nations University. Available from: http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:8065/Delta87\_CrisisPolicyGuide.pdf. [17 January 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
23. As above [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
24. International Organization for Migration 2022, *People on the Move in a Changing Climate – Linking Policy, Evidence and Action*. Available from: https://publications.iom.int/books/people-move-changing-climate-linking-policy-evidence-and-action. [3 November 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
25. Parker, R 2018, *Unregulated population migration and other future drivers of instability in the Pacific*, Lowy Institute. Available from: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/unregulated-population-migration-and-other-future-drivers-instability-pacific. [18 September 2019]. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
26. Worland, J 2019,'The Leaders of These Sinking Countries Are Fighting to Stop Climate Change. Here's What the Rest of the World Can Learn', *TIME*, 13 June. Available From: https://time.com/longform/sinking-islands-climate-change/. [22 December 2021]. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
27. GP20 2019, *A regional exchange series: Comparative experiences on preventing, addressing and resolving international displacement*, p. 13. Available from: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/old/wp-content/uploads/IGAD-Regional-Exchange-report.pdf. [3 November 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
28. Rimon, A & Tong, A 2021,'The seas are coming for us in Kiribati. Will Australia rehome us?', *The Conversation*, 23 November. Available From: https://theconversation.com/the-seas-are-coming-for-us-in-kiribati-will-australia-rehome-us-172137. [26 October 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
29. Bharadwaj, R, Chakravarti, D, Karthikeyan, N, Hazra, S, Daniel, U, Topno, J & Abhilashi, R 2022, *Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking*, International Institute for Environment and Development. Available from: https://pubs.iied.org/20936iied. [1 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
30. Bharadwaj, R, Bishop, D, Hazra, S, Pufaa, E & Annan, JK 2021, *Climate-induced migration and modern slavery: A toolkit for policy-makers*, Anti-Slavery International & International Institute for Environment and Development, pp. 6-34. Available from: https://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ClimateMigrationReportSep2021\_low\_res.pdf. [7 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
31. International Organization for Migration 2022, *People on the Move in a Changing Climate – Linking Policy, Evidence and Action*. Available from: https://publications.iom.int/books/people-move-changing-climate-linking-policy-evidence-and-action. [3 November 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
32. Plan International n.d., *Effects of climate change on girls' rights*. Available from: https://plan-international.org/emergencies/effects-of-climate-change-girls-rights. [17 June 2020], Plan International 2019, *Climate Change has Devastating Impact on Girls*. Available from: https://plan-international.org/news/2019-09-19-climate-change-has-devastating-impact-girls. [16 June 2020]. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
33. Bharadwaj, R, Chakravarti, D, Karthikeyan, N, Hazra, S, Daniel, U, Topno, J & Abhilashi, R 2022, *Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking*, International Institute for Environment and Development. Available from: https://pubs.iied.org/20936iied. [1 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
34. International Organization for Migration Philippines 2022, *Framing the Human Narrative of Migration in the Context of Climate Change: A Preliminary Review of Existing Evidence in the Philippines*. Available from: https://philippines.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1651/files/documents/framing-the-human-narrative-of-migration-in-the-context-of-climate-change\_0.pdf. [3 November 2022]. Borja, F, Empamano, A & Flores, R 2022,'Less Catch, Less Cash: How Climate Change is Affecting Fisherfolk in the Philippines', *International Organization for Migration*, 14 March. Available From: https://storyteller.iom.int/stories/less-catch-less-cash-how-climate-change-affecting-fisherfolk-philippines. [3 November 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
35. Bharadwaj, R, Chakravarti, D, Karthikeyan, N, Hazra, S, Daniel, U, Topno, J & Abhilashi, R 2022, *Climate change, migration and vulnerability to trafficking*, International Institute for Environment and Development. Available from: https://pubs.iied.org/20936iied. [1 June 2022]. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
36. As above [↑](#endnote-ref-37)