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CLIMATE CHANGE, DISPLACEMENT, AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN PAKISTAN: MAPPING A CLIMATE–VULNERABILITY NEXUS

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Abstract
The impacts of climate change are now seen as a cause for displacement, insecurity of livelihoods, poverty and social vulnerabilities, but climate change and its connection to human trafficking have not been sufficiently explored, especially in climate-vulnerable developing nations like Pakistan. The present paper looks into the climate change and its role with regard to human trafficking in Pakistan by understanding it as a risk multiplier which increases pre-existing socio-economic and institutional vulnerabilities and not as a direct and automatic cause of trafficking. The paper builds on the climate-impact material from the original study, and updates the analysis with evidence from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank and U.S. Department of State to develop a climate–vulnerability nexus: the connection between environmental shocks and trafficking risks. Flood, drought, heatwaves, agriculture loses, water insecurity, displacement, unemployment, indebtedness, child vulnerability, gender inequality and unsafe migration are specific issues that are highlighted. Pakistan floods of 2022 are assessed as a critical case due to the number of people affected (around 33 million), millions of people displaced, livelihoods disrupted, and the total damages and economic losses of more than US$30 billion. As of 2024, there are indications that climate-related disasters can lead to an increase in poverty, food insecurity, unemployment, debt and displacement, which may create conditions for forced labor, bonded labor, child labor, domestic servitude and other forms of exploitation to become more prevalent. As such, the paper concludes, the policy on anti-trafficking needs to be linked to the policy on climate adaptation, DRR, social protection, labor governance, safe migration arrangements, and child protection measures in Pakistan. It puts forward a climate-sensitive anti-trafficking framework with six pillars – prevention, protection, safe mobility, decent work, institutional coordination and climate-resilient livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of climate change is no longer just an environmental one. It has an ever-growing impact on livelihood, public health, food security, migration, employment, social protection and human security. Climatic hazards are especially devastating in countries that are most vulnerable to them and have the least ability to adapt. Pakistan is a crucial case study as a population susceptible to climate risks such as flooding, drought, extreme heat and water insecurity, glacial hazards, coastal degradation etc., and large parts of the population are still engaged in climate-sensitive

livelihoods. Thus, climate change does not just affect physical environmental processes, but also economic and social processes. According to the original study on climate change and its effects on Pakistan, the impact of climate change is not limited to flooding, but rather encompasses various other factors such as drought, heatwaves, water scarcity, agricultural losses, disease, poverty, displacement, and gendered vulnerability. These dimensions are all relevant as environmental shocks rarely have singular impacts. A flood may kill a household's livestock and crop production simultaneously, a drought may cause a decline in farm output and increase the demand for water collection, intense heat may lower production in the farm fields and/or raise health costs, and extended environmental degradation may induce migration for employment.

The vulnerability to exploitation can be worsened when these processes engage with poverty, deficient social protection, informal economy, indebtedness, discriminatory practices, and insufficient institutional protection. This is especially relevant to human trafficking as it is a common practice where people have few economic alternatives and where traffickers can exploit dependency, deception, coercion or vulnerability. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (United Nations, 2000) defines trafficking in terms of acts, means and exploitative purposes. One of these factors is not climate change. That means that a flood victim is not automatically a trafficking victim and a person who migrates due to drought is not necessarily a trafficking victim. The connection is rather indirect and multi-faceted. Climate shocks can lead to the loss of livelihoods, loss of jobs, school closures, higher debts, family separation, breakdowns in community coping mechanisms, and migration. Such conditions can lead to greater vulnerability to recruiting agents, brokers, unscrupulous employers, smugglers, and traffickers. Leveraging on these two factors, climate change is highlighted by UNODC (2024) as another key contextual phenomenon that can intersect with trafficking and migrant-smuggling risks, especially in the form of irregular migration, livelihoods and displacement.

The International Panel on Climate Change also states that mobility as a result of climate change is complex. Extreme events and climatic conditions can affect migration and displacement, however economic, political, demographic and social factors to a great extent mediate migration decisions (IPCC 2022). Therefore, it is analytically insufficient to state that "climate change causes trafficking". The better argument to be made is that climate change can make trafficking more likely because it exacerbates the vulnerabilities that trafficking can exploit. The experience after floods in 2022 in Pakistan is especially interesting to explore this relationship. The disaster had an estimated impact of about 33 million people, millions of people were affected, homes were damaged or destroyed, employment was disrupted and agriculture and livestock affected. The official Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) estimated damages of over US$14.9 billion, economic losses of around US$15.2 billion and resilient recovery and reconstruction needs at least US$16.3 billion (Government of Pakistan et al., 2022).

The World Bank also calculated that the floods might have driven up to 9.1m more people into poverty (Knippenberg et al., 2023). These economic implications have a direct link to trafficking vulnerability. According to the 2024 U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report, climate-related issues in Pakistan, such as flooding, forced bonded laborers into further indebtedness since bonded laborers were unable to work after the flood, and increased poverty, food insecurity, and displacement. This is one of the most transparent country-specific connections to an existing type of exploitation and a climate-related disaster. Thus, this paper poses a question of the role of climate change in increasing vulnerability to human trafficking in Pakistan, how the socioeconomic pathways work to increase this vulnerability and what measures can be taken in the policies to prevent climate-induced vulnerability from turning into exploitation.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is designed to have four main objectives

- To explore how climate change, displacement, livelihood insecurity and being at risk of human trafficking are linked in Pakistan.
- To understand the socioeconomic and institutional routes that can lead to greater vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation as a result of climate-related shocks.
- To evaluate vulnerabilities of children, women, agricultural workers, indebted households, displaced populations and informal workers.
- To recommend a comprehensive policy package that connects climate adaptation, safe migration, labor protection, social protection and anti-trafficking.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions are being answered in the study

- Explain how climate change enhances vulnerability towards trafficking in Pakistan?
- How do climate-related disasters, displacement, poverty, unemployment and indebtedness contribute to trafficking risks?
- What are some of the specific social groups that are at a higher risk of being trafficked due to climate change?
- How to incorporate AT in Climate adaptation and Disaster-risk-management policies in Pakistan?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a qualitative type of research which is secondary source research. Firstly, the analysis is done on the information provided in the study of climate change and its effects on Pakistan. The themes found in that study on climate change are regrouped and placed under a single research question: what is the link between climate change and human trafficking? The themes identified in that study – flooding, drought, heatwaves, water insecurity, agriculture, health, poverty, migration, displacement and gender vulnerability – are regrouped under a specific research question: what is the link between climate change and human trafficking? To reinforce the original material, evidence from international organizations and governmental sources (IPCC, UNODC, ILO, UNICEF, World Bank, UNDP, and US Department of State) up to 2024 is used.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan specific post disaster assessments, and labor-related reports are also used in the analysis. The study is of conceptual nature rather than econometric. It does not suggest that the effects of climate change are the only factors in determining trafficking outcomes. Rather, it builds a mediated causal model where climate shocks are mediated by poverty, loss of livelihoods, the informal nature of the labor market, displacement, gender inequality, the absence of protection mechanisms and unsafe migration. This is in line with the IPCC's evaluation that the extent of climate-related migration is dependent on environmental factors, but also socioeconomic and institutional factors (IPCC, 2022).

In this section, we will explore the idea of a Climate–Trafficking Nexus. The issue of trafficking in persons is an exploitation issue. As per the Palermo Protocol, trafficking involves recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of, for the purposes of, exploitation (United Nations, 2000). Exploitation can be forced labor, slavery like practices, servitude, sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation. These conditions are not the sole product of climate change. Instead, it can make the protective factors against exploitation less effective. A family with stable jobs and even savings, with social security, access to education, public services and legal migration options might be able to resist a flood without relying on unscrupulous agents. A household with no house, no crops, no livestock, no work and no documents can have a lot less options.

The relationship can thus be thought of as a series of five interconnected phases: Climate hazard, livelihood disruption, socioeconomic vulnerability, constrained mobility/unsafe migration, risk of exploitation/trafficking. It is not a determinate sequence. The process can be interrupted at each stage by effective institutions and social protection. For instance, a family after a flood may be unable to earn an income from their farming activities. When assistance is available to the household in time, the household might stay economically stable. Distress migration may be prevented if employment programs are able to offer

temporary employment. With available cash transfers, the need for borrowing can be lowered. Child labor risks can be minimized if children stay in school. The potential for exploitative employment may decrease if migrants are provided access to regulated recruitment. However, a climate shock can turn into an exploitation multiplier if these protection mechanisms don't exist.

UNODC (2024) underscores the need of comprehending this nexus in the context of both rapid and slow onset disasters. Floods may result in immediate displacement and protection deficits, while drought, degradation of the environment and loss of livelihoods can impose long-term economic pressures. This is crucial because climate-related disruption can have risks for trafficking in various phases. The climate vulnerability of Pakistan is discussed in this section. The country's vulnerability to climate risks is geographically and socially varied in Pakistan. Large agricultural areas are flooded by riverine and monsoon floods and mountainous/semi-arid regions are flooded by flash floods. However, in arid and semi-arid regions of Sindh and Baluchistan, drought is of special importance. Both urban and rural populations are more and more impacted by heatwaves. Sea-level rise, erosion, salinity and ecosystem degradation are some of the threats to coastal communities.

Climate change is a key risk to development and poverty alleviation, as pointed out in the World Bank's Pakistan Country Climate and Development Report. It is highlighting that the risks of extreme climate events and environmental degradation, effects on economic growth and disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations (World Bank, 2022). Vulnerability to climate change is not the same for everyone. Agricultural, livestock, fisheries, daily wage, and other climate-sensitive livelihood activities are less ability to buffer shocks by households. Likewise, poor households are also likely to be uninsured, unable to save, or unable to access formal sources of credit, and live in insecure housing. All these factors make the economic impact of climate change potentially far harsher for the poor. This disparity in vulnerability has its trafficking implications.

RISK OF TRAFFICKING, LIVELIHOOD DESTRUCTION, AND FLOODS

One of the most robust climate change-trafficking nexus in Pakistan is flooding. As the 2022 floods have shown, it's a big issue. According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, housing, agriculture and livestock, and transport and communications were among some of the most impacted sectors. The disaster caused the damage of productive assets and disruption of employment throughout the country (Government of Pakistan et al, 2022). The ILO estimated that around 4.3 million workers were impacted by the disaster and warned that 8.4-9.1 million people could fall into poverty if adequate recovery measures were not put in place (ILO, 2022a). A previous ILO assessment predicted between 2.36 and 3.6 million jobs might be lost or disrupted (ILO, 2022b). These numbers are significant on the level of more than just economics. Employment is a protective factor against exploitation. Without job opportunities people might start taking loans from informal recruiters or labor contractors, landlords or employers willing to advance money in exchange for future labor. This is especially a risky situation in bonded labor economy of Pakistan.

According to the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report, bonded labor is the country's biggest trafficking issue, with climate related disasters driving up poverty, displacement, food insecurity and loss of employment. It also reports that recent floods also added to the indebtedness of bonded laborers (U.S. Department of State, 2024). The connection thus lies in the presence of an existing trafficking mechanism: the flood itself does not induce bonded labor but it can exacerbate the economic situation which makes bonded labor possible to grow.

It further explores how debt can serve as a mediating mechanism. One of the key linkages between climate shocks and trafficking vulnerability is debt. Families require cash in a crisis of immediate need when crops are lost, livestock are killed, houses are destroyed or employment is disrupted. Informal borrowing can be the only source of borrowing. Loans might be linked to future labor in communities where workers already rely on landlords,

contractors, brick-kiln owners or other employers. Things are even worse if employers control wages, interest, working conditions, movement and accounting. Precisely these features are captured in the bonded-labor system of Pakistan in the 2024 report of the U.S. Department of State, especially those in which workers' debts are fabricated, or in which family members are coerced into labor arrangements (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Loss can as a result create a chain of events related to climate: loss of assets, loss of income, borrowing, dependency, limited freedom, exploitation.

Successful anti-trafficking prevention efforts cannot be solely based on arresting traffickers once exploitation takes place. Addressing distress debt and accessible emergency income can help tackle one of the structural mechanisms that can lead to trafficking. Displacement, loss of protection networks Another key mechanism is displacement. The IPCC (2022) identifies climate hazards as significant factors influencing migration and displacement decisions, and that the mobility outcomes will be shaped by economic, social, political and demographic factors. Displacement due to climate change may be temporary, recurrent or extended. In 2022, the floods resulted in displacement of millions of people in Pakistan. Households were displaced to camps, tents, rented houses, host communities and elsewhere, leading to the loss of homes, livelihoods and jobs. Such a move may disrupt existing social networks. Important protection mechanisms are social networks. When children or adults are suspected of being exploited or at risk, relatives, neighbors, teachers, community leaders and local organizations can intervene, to provide temporary assistance and/or to help identify exploitation. These relationships, which help to protect, can be weakened by displacement. This is especially critical if an individual has misplaced their identity documents.

Additionally, the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report also states that many people trafficked to Pakistan, such as bonded laborers, do not have national identity cards and consequently are unable to obtain government services (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Documentation is not just an administrative matter, then. It's an element of trafficking prevention. Unsafe Migration and Exploitative Recruitment Movement (migration) may be an adaptation. Individuals can migrate due to low productivity in agriculture, loss of jobs, or a need for diversified income in the households.

Thus, migration is not necessarily a bad thing and should not be presented as such. Dangers arise when migration takes place when choice is limited. People unable to obtain formal jobs or regulated migration options might rely on brokers or informal recruiters. They can pay high recruitment fees, take out loans for travelling, give away ID papers or take a job without contracts. Workers can find that upon arriving in a destination area, they find wages and working conditions are not as advertised. Their ability to leave can be limited, if they have a debt or if they are undocumented or isolated from others. According to UNODC (2024), having safe and regular migration routes can lower the risks of being exploited by criminal groups. Especially in climate-sensitive situations where migration needs might grow. Therefore, efforts towards climate adaptation should not be to merely avert migration. This should help to make migration safer.

CHILD VULNERABILITY

Children are in a situation of extreme vulnerability during climate related disasters. Disasters can disrupt school attendance, sever children's ties with caregivers, wipe out family income and further drive children into informal work. Under extreme economic constraints, families may resort to the child labour market, child marriage, or entrusting children to employers or families, in return for subsistence. In 2022, the ILO raised concerns after the 2022 floods that the disaster will drive children towards the worst form of child labour and debt-bondage labour (ILO, 2022c). Based on UNICEF's post-flood humanitarian needs assessment in Pakistan, the number of children needing support after the 2022 disaster is also highlighted.

Among those in need of humanitarian assistance after the event were millions of children (UNICEF Pakistan, 2024). It is also warned in the report that the officially reported figure of child trafficking in Pakistan does not reflect all forms of trafficking such as forced labour and

bonded labour, which is evident in the 2024 State of Children in Pakistan report. It is important to note as a methodological issue that the number of trafficking cases that have been recorded does not necessarily reflect the true extent of trafficking. This means that preventive investments must be made in education, social protection, family income, documentation, child-protection systems and safe shelter to address the vulnerability of children to climate change.

CLIMATE-RELATED TRAFFICKING VULNERABILITY AND GENDER

This is because access to resources, jobs, mobility, land and decision-making is gendered, and so is climate change. Women might have less formal employment opportunities and less control over the household assets. Such inequalities may be exacerbated in disaster situations. Women also may have higher responsibilities related to children and the elderly, food, water and health. When household incomes are lost, women may resort to informal work, where they are not covered by labor protections. In certain cases, women and girls can be subjected to domestic servitude, forced labor, sexual exploitation, forced marriage or other abuses. But gender cannot be considered as one cause. Vulnerability of women is influenced by class, age, marital status, disability, ethnicity, place, documentation and access to social protection. An intersectional approach needs therefore to be used in a climate-sensitive trafficking strategy.

Water insecurity is a slow-onset risk that can be exacerbated by drought. Sudden disasters are given a great deal of attention because it is a disaster you can see. Slow-onset climate change could also give rise to equally important climate change trafficking risks, but over a longer time frame. During droughts, agricultural productivity, livestock availability as well as household income may be affected. The need for less water can mean that households spend more and need more labour. The environmental degradation over the years can progressively render rural life unviable. The resultant migration can be a gradual process. One member of the household can first be transferred to another nearby city for employment. Subsequent migration may occur (later) for more members. Children are at risk of leaving school to work to earn a living. Debt may accumulate. Such incremental developments may be hard to recognize as trafficking risk pathways as there may not be one single event that looks like the cause. But the overall loss of means of livelihood can significantly decrease the bargaining power of households.

Climate-related migration is heavily dependent on socioeconomic conditions and adaptive capacity, the IPCC (2022) stresses. Households with adequate resources can be strategic in their migration, but those with limited resources can be displaced or stuck in the same place. Both scenarios have trafficking issues at stake. 14. HEATWAVE AND LABOUR VULNERABILITY Another new dimension is heatwaves. Pakistan has had extreme heat events, such as the unprecedented heat wave that has preceded the 2022 floods. As per the Pakistan Climate and Development Report of the World Bank, the economic and human impacts of climate disasters and extreme heat have been highlighted (World Bank, 2022). Agricultural laborers, construction workers, transport workers, domestic workers, street vendors and others working outdoors or in poorly-ventilated areas are subject to the effects of heat. Loss of productivity of labor can lead to a fall in the income of the household. When a wage-laborer loses a day of work, he or she will be food insecure, as well. For workers who must borrow to make up for the wages, indebtedness can rise. So, heat indirectly impacts trafficking vulnerability, by leading to income loss and economic insecurity.

INFORMAL ECONOMY AND WEAK PROTECTION OF LABOR RIGHTS

The informal economy also plays a significant role with regards to the climate–trafficking nexus. Informal workers are often without a written contract, social insurance, paid leave, unemployment benefits, occupational safety and have limited complaint channels. Informal workers might receive limited institutional protection during climate disaster situations where informal work is affected. The study by ILO in Pakistan's Brick Kiln industry shows that there are persistent issues with bonded labor,

child labor, labor inspection and enforcement capacity (ILO, 2022d). This is especially true with Brick kilns where debt-based labor can affect whole families. Economic stress as a result of climate change can make labor advances more appealing and workers' negotiating power less so. There is a need, therefore, to enhance labor inspection and enforcement as a key climate adaptation action.

2022 FLOODS; AS A CASE STUDY

The 2022 floods are a very interesting empirical case as there were multiple trafficking-risk pathways operating at the same time. Initially, there was a physical destruction of house and productive assets. Second, agriculture losses led to decreases in rural income. Thirdly, work was interrupted. Fourth, millions were uprooted. Fifth: Food insecurity was higher. Sixth, there were disruptions of public services. Seventhly, the household's debt stocks grew. According to the World Bank's disaster assessment, the disaster impacted around 33 million people and almost 8 million people were reportedly displaced (World Bank, 2022a). ILO estimated 4.3 million workers as affected (ILO, 2022a). The U.S. Department of State then reported on the additional indebtedness of bonded laborers as a result of the floods and noted that children and other vulnerable populations were more vulnerable. (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Through this case it can be seen that the consideration of climate change in conducting a trafficking-risk assessment is justified. The disaster was the flooding itself; the socioeconomic conditions which ensued, were the conditions of vulnerability to trafficking.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING FRAMEWORK

Pakistan needs a comprehensive model, comprising of six components.

- Climate-Risk Mapping, Trafficking-risk mapping should be related to climate-risk mapping. Districts that are vulnerable to the occurrence of floods, droughts, heatwaves or environmental degradation should be screened for trafficking vulnerabilities. Indicators should include: • displacement; • unemployment; • child school dropout; • food insecurity; • household debt; • loss of official documents such as identification; • informal employment; • labor recruitment activity; • bonded labor prevalence; • shelter vulnerability; and • access to social protection.
- Social Protection; One of the most effective preventive measures is social protection. Emergency cash assistance can help to decrease distress borrowing. Household pressure can be reduced by food assistance. There is a need for livelihood grants which can help with recovery. Public employment can compensate for the income loss. An example is the post-flood response by ILO in Pakistan. Emergency employment and infrastructure-rehabilitation programs were developed to generate income and help with community recovery (ILO, 2022e). These programs can be considered economic recovery, as well as trafficking prevention.
- Safe Migration; Pakistan needs to provide increased access to safe and regular migration information and recruitment. Information should be provided to potential migrants on: • legitimate recruiters; • employment contracts; • wages; • recruitment fees; • documentation; • destination-country labor rights; • complaint mechanisms; and • trafficking risks. Migration should be considered a potential adaptation strategy and unsafe migration should be minimized.
- Child Protection; Children's specific trafficking protection measures must be a part of disaster planning. We should strive to reopen schools as soon as possible. Mechanisms of family tracing and reunification should be enhanced. Mechanisms for child protection should be part of all temporary shelters. The monitoring of child labour should be expanded in the post disaster recovery period. Children are a population with particular risks to trafficking and exploitation and should not be seen as simply a dependent population in disaster policy.
- Labour Governance; Labour inspection needs to be reinforced in target industries that are identified as having the greatest risk of bonded labour and exploitation. This encompasses agriculture, brick kilns, domestic work, construction, fisheries, mining, manufacturing and other informal activities. Labour debt should not be resorted to as a tool for labour coercion on the part of the employer.

- Climate-Resilient Livelihoods; The only way to prevent it is to decrease the reliance on climate-sensitive livelihoods, but with no alternative. For rural households we need to provide access to: • climate-resilient agriculture; • livestock protection; • skills training; • non-farm employment; • microenterprise support; • social insurance; and • accessible financial services. A resilient household has more bargaining power and thus it is less vulnerable to exploitative recruitment.
- Institutional Coordination; The large problems are the fragmentation of institutions. The institutional framework for climate policy, disaster management, labour governance, migration, child protection, social protection and anti-trafficking enforcement may be distinct from one another. Coordinated action between the following is necessary to implement a climate–trafficking strategy: • Ministry of Environment and Sanitation; and • The National Disaster Management Authority; • provincial disaster-management authorities; • Federal Investigation Agency; • labour departments; • social-protection institutions; • education departments; • child-protection authorities; • local governments; • ILO; • IOM; • UNICEF; • UNODC; and • civil-society organizations. UNODC (2024) recommends in particular to reinforce evidence-based interventions, integrate the impact of climate change in the collection of data on trafficking and on migration and connect climate, trafficking and migration policies.

RESEARCH GAPS

There is still lack of research in the climate – trafficking nexus in Pakistan. District level data is needed that integrates: • climate hazards; • displacement; • employment loss; • poverty; • household debt; • migration; • trafficking complaints; • child labor; • bonded labor; and • social-protection coverage. Great care needs to be taken with existing statistics on trafficking, as they are significantly under-reported. The State of Children in Pakistan 2024 clearly states that despite the available data on child trafficking, it does not encompass all types of trafficking (UNICEF Pakistan, 2024). Administrative data should therefore be complemented in future studies with household surveys, qualitative interviews and longitudinal studies.

DISCUSSION

There is evidence that it is a climate–vulnerability model and not a direct climate–trafficking model. Climate change can contribute to trafficking in a multitude of interlinked ways. Firstly, it devastates livelihoods or weakens them. Second, it leads to more poverty and indebtedness. Third, it produces displacement. Fourth, it hinders school and other social functions. Fifth, it can be a driver of unsafe migration. Seventh, it undermines the power of people to refuse to work for an exploiter. In Pakistan, these pathways are of special concern as bonded labor and informal employment already constitutes high rates. The 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report gives particularly clear indication of this connection, as it notes that bonded laborers are more likely to be impacted by climate-related disasters, which can lead to poverty, displacement, food insecurity, loss of employment, and increased indebtedness (U.S. Department of State, 2024). Climate change, however, should not be a way of hiding behind the scene and deflecting the institutional responsibility. Trafficking is possible because there are vulnerable persons who can be exploited. Climate vulnerability can turn into exploitation by weak labor enforcement, insufficient social protection, discriminatory structures and migration systems that are unsafe. This presents an opportunity to make climate adaptation, trafficking prevention. With a good social protection system, households may not require predatory loans. With decent jobs, workers may not rely on the exploitative recruiters. Children's continued schooling reduces their risk of entering hazardous labor. But, when migrants do have legal channels for recruitment, their interactions with traffickers are reduced. The less displaced people are vulnerable the more likely they have access to services and identity documents. The best response is thus a preventative one, not just punitive.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The analysis leads to a number of policy implications for Pakistan. Incorporating

trafficking risk into national and provincial climate-vulnerability assessments is a first step. Secondly, the trafficking should be part of the disaster-response plans, there should be screening and referral mechanisms. Thirdly, social-protection programmes need to be swiftly implemented in the aftermath of climate disasters. Fourthly, emergency employment programmes should focus on workers who are affected, and should not lead to any accumulation of debt. Fifth, child-protection mechanisms should be integrated into the planning for displacement and shelter. Sixth, replacement of identity-document should be considered as an emergency protection service. Seventh, that labor inspection should be stepped up after climate catastrophes in high-risk sectors. Eighth, awareness messages to ensure safe migration should be made available in disaster hit districts. Ninth, climate-resilient livelihood programs should be directed towards households at high risk of distress migration. Tenth, databases of national trafficking should include climate-disaster variables. Lastly, there is a need to further develop institutional linkages between climate, disaster-management, labor, migration and anti-trafficking institutions in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

Climate change is now emerging as one of the key underlying issues in Pakistan's context of human security. The significant negative impact on livelihoods and rise in poverty, displacement, debt and migration due to floods, droughts, heatwaves, water insecurity and agricultural losses and loss due to climate pressures/stresses. While not necessarily trafficking in itself, these consequences can facilitate trafficking for the traffickers and make it more profitable. This relationship can thus be considered as a climate–vulnerability nexus. This relationship is clearly demonstrated in the 2022 floods. About 33 million people were affected by the disaster, millions were displaced, employment and agriculture were affected and more than US$30 billion in combined damages and economic losses occurred. Later on, it was recorded that bonded labourers were saddled with more debts, and children and other vulnerable groups were more vulnerable.

The policy takeaway is obvious: there can be no disassociation between trafficking prevention and climate resilience. Pakistan's anti-trafficking approach must go beyond criminal prosecution to provide social protection, decent work, safe migration, child protection, labour inspection, documentation, livelihoods resilience, and disaster preparedness. Similarly, exploitation needs to be acknowledged as a possible downstream impact of socioeconomic vulnerability and thus be part of climate adaptation. Building a resilient society isn't just about making roads, embankments, irrigation systems and houses stronger. It is also one in which households will not be pushed into exploitative relations by the economic shocks. So, it is important to perceive the climate-resilient development and anti-trafficking policy as complementary agendas. Prevention of vulnerability will be more effective, more humane and more sustainable than intervention after the trafficking has happened. The key challenge for Pakistan is to move away from the climate adaptation being more of an environmental and infrastructural agenda to a human-security framework. This can help to preserve livelihoods, ensure safe movement, bolster social protection, prevent children from being trafficked, enhance labor rights, and decrease the conducive circumstances for trafficking in persons.

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