



Climate Change and Migration

KEY INTERVENTIONS AND IMPACTS:

“ migration is an unintended consequence of a failure of coping and adaptation. When people have hardly any options left due to the impacts of climate change on their livelihoods and security, they have less control over their movement. In this situation, internal and international migration become a last resort. The lack of good governance in the recruitment system and the lack of adequate protection measures for migrants expose them to exploitation and increase their risk of ending up in situations of trafficking and forced labour, resulting in undignified lives lived in servitude and despair. ”

Our strategic approach to respond to the interconnections of climate change and migration focuses on "Rights-Based Solutions for Sustainable Adaptation and Resilience." This means that people must be provided with the necessary assistance for sustainable adaptation if they choose to stay in their communities despite the impacts of climate change. Conversely, opportunities for safer migration within the country and overseas, along with appropriate protection measures, must be in place to facilitate migration for those who feel compelled to leave their communities to find employment due to losing their traditional livelihoods in the context of climate change.

In 2023, OKUP has implemented three projects to address the interconnections of climate change and migration. The key focus of the projects were: (i) conducting research to have a deeper understanding among the nexus between climate change and migration; (ii) community level interventions to equip climate-affected people including youths, women and girls with knowledge and transformative skills and capacity so that they can cope with adverse climate crisis and build resilience to live with dignity and respect; and (iii) carryout evidence-based advocacy at national and international level aimed to addressing the issues of human mobility (i.e., migration and displacement) caused by climate change.

OKUP in partnership with Secours Catholique Caritas France (SCCF) has implemented a research project called **"Environmental Migration Study (EMS)"**. The project was undertaken under a Multi-annual Partnership Agreement between French Development Agency (FDA) and the SCCF to address issues of social and environmental transitions. The research has been conducted in Bangladesh, Senegal and Honduras. OKUP has conducted the research at Koyra Upazila of Khulna district considering the fact that Koyra is severely affected by slow-onset e.g., salinization, sea level rise as well as by rapid onset e.g., cyclones, floods etc. The research followed a mixed method strategy to gather firsthand data from the affected communities in the research location.



Please [Click here](#) to get access to the Full Report

In September 2023, the Secours Catholique Caritas France (SCCF) published a Global Report entitled **"Free to Leave And Free to Stay: Protecting Human Rights in the Context of Environmental Mobilities"**. The global report compiled findings of all three research countries and produce recommendations for global actions. However, the report has included separate case study on each participating country. The Global Report was launched inperson in Paris in September 2023 with the presence of high level stakeholders. OKUP lead researcher, Shakirul Islam who is also the Chairperson of OKUP together with OKUP Executive Director attended the high-level launching event in Paris, and presented the research findings and the grassroots experiences, for example, how the terminology like 'sea level rise' is linked with tidal surge, overwhelm embankments, bring sea water to the communities, and create floods and waterlogging that results in increasing salinization, reducing soil fertility as well as crop yields, and other socio-economic consequences.

They participated in various dissemination events organized by the SCCF including an interesting interview with Radio France which aimed to making awareness among the France people on interconnections of climate change and migration.

Key interventions and impacts: Climate Change and Migration

With the core funding of the UK based international organization - **Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)**, OKUP, since April 2022, has been implementing a community focused project entitled “**Climate-induced Migration and Modern Slavery in the Sundarbans Region of Bangladesh (CIMMS)**” in Shyamnagar upazila of Satkhira district in Bangladesh.

The key intervention of the project was to conduct a longitudinal research to generate evidence on the complex interconnections between natural disasters, migration, human trafficking, and modern slavery. Contrary, the project has implemented intensive community-level interventions to create resilience of the female spouses of migrant workers through enhancing their life skills on reproductive health management, women empowerment and financial literacy for productive investment of remittances. The project has implemented educational sessions to create awareness for informed and skilled migration by choice and provided assistance to the most vulnerable youths both men and women to enhance technical and vocational skills to find employment both at home and international job market. The project has been facilitating a Youth Group for unity, empowerment and leadership to bring change in their respective communities. The interventions have a good impact on the lives of the direct project beneficiaries.

For example, 99% out of 90 female spouses who are received orientation on reproductive health issues reported that the sessions were critically important for them to prevent their common reproductive health issues. They have demanded to expand the sessions to reach all women and girls in their communities to help them cope with reproductive health issues caused by severe salinization of water. Around 90% youths who participated in the career counseling sessions reported that the training helped them to open their vision towards a skill-based career at home and abroad. Following mass awareness activities, families of migrant workers who are trapped into exploitative situation abroad having been coming forward to file complaints and seek assistance for remedies.

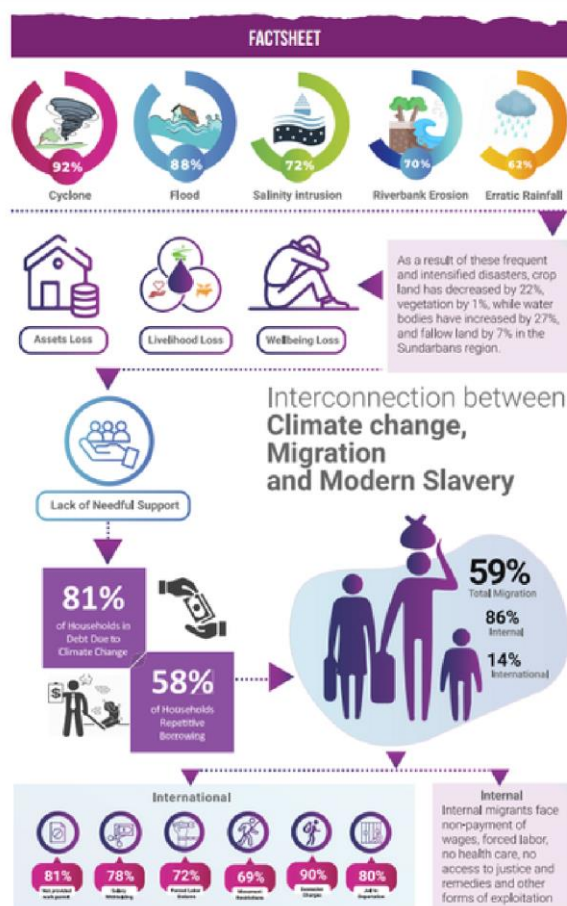
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“I had white discharge continuously, but I had no idea how to treat it. Now, thanks to what I learned in the OKUP health session, I’m happy to say I haven’t had any discharge for the past three months! I’ve even shared this knowledge with my daughter, sister-in-law, and a few neighbors, and they’ve all benefited from it. I’m so grateful to OKUP!”

”



As part of the longitudinal research under the CIMMS project, we have published a report in November 2023 entitled **“Migration - not a choice but a compulsion: Lived Experiences of Climate-Induced Migrants in the Sundarbans Region in Bangladesh”**. The research employed multi-pronged methodology i.e., household survey, testimonies, transect walk in communities in different seasons between July 2022 to September 2023 to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the affected people including migrant workers, families, local stakeholders.



The research has demonstrated that climate disasters in Bangladesh has been frequent and intensified in the last 15 years. Research data indicates that 92% households in the research area have been severely affected by cyclones while 88% households have been affected by floods, 72% by salinization in water and soil, 70% by river bank erosion and 6% by erratic rainfall since 2007 when the high profile cyclone Sidr hit the coastal Bangladesh. All these climate disasters cause critical loss of assets, livelihoods and wellbeing of the people in the region. The absence of comprehensive assistance and support, many people depend on taking loan to rebuild their lives and livelihoods but the repeated and multiple of such losses locked many of them in debt traps. Research data shows, 81% households have taken loan to tackle their losses; of whom 58% have fallen into debt trap due to repetitive loans. In such a situation, when there is hardly any option left to survive, people feel compelled to migrate elsewhere in other districts in country or abroad.

Please [Click here](#) to get access to the Full Report.

As per research data, 59% households in Shyamnagar Upazila of Satkhira districts have at least one member who migrated to find a better livelihood. Of those households, 86% have migrants to a new city, town or a district within Bangladesh while 14% migrate abroad. The trend of international migration from the region has been increased 65% over 12 months from October 2022 to September 2023. This is significant to mention that both internal and international migrants are ended up with low skilled informal sector work and therefore, encounter non-payment of wages, forced labour, no health care, no access to justice and remedies, and other forms of exploitation. The exclusion of informal sector workers in the Bangladesh Labour Act 2018 and the Rules 2022 has increased the risks and vulnerabilities of climate-induced internal migrants to exploitation and denial of fundamental rights and protection. Contrary, the absence of regular pathways for the climate-induced people put majority of them into exploitation, trafficked situation and modern slavery. 81% returnee migrants reported that they were not provided work permit upon their arrival and therefore, they became undocumented being the victim of salary withheld (78%), forced labour (72%) movement restriction (69%) while 80% reported that they were caught by the police and had been jailed before they were deported.

Under the CIMMS project, OKUP has provided assistance to Modern Slavery and Sustainable Ecosystems at the Rights Lab, University of Nottingham in the UK to conduct primary research both qualitative and quantitative in Shyamnagar upazila. The Rights Lab, comprising data of OKUP, Caritas Bangladesh and Caritas India has produced and published a report entitled **“Climate change, migration and human trafficking: Assessing the impact of climate change, migration, and human trafficking risks for populations in the Bangladesh and India Sundarbans”**. Please click [here](#) to get the full report.

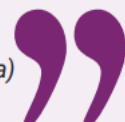


Our boat and the fishing net was carried away by the storm surge during cyclone. My father took a loan to replace the boat and net. In the next year, another cyclone hit us and destroyed our boat again. After that, my father got severe heart disease. We sold our boat and net to pay for his treatment.

That time, we had no other means to live on. So, I moved to a brick kiln for work when I was only 16. I worked there two years but it was so hard for me. My father decided to send me abroad. With the help of a local broker, I went to Qatar in 2018 at the cost of € 4000 (BDT 400,000).

I was given a job in a vegetable farm. I worked there and got a salary of € 500 after one month. In the middle of second month, the police raided the farm. I managed to flee. The employer had not given me my work permit, so I became undocumented. I managed a job under another employer at € 150 per month. He used to pay me every three months. He provided me a salary receipt of € 150 but only paid me € 100 for some months and € 120 for some other months. I worked there for 22 months in that way. After that they sent me back. My employer had not paid my dues at all. Now I am struggling to pay off my loan that I had taken for migration.

(A climate-induced international returnee migrant interviewed in Padmapukur union, Shyamnagar, Satkhira)



“The Human Cost of the Climate Crisis: Solutions to the Intersection of Modern Slavery, Migration, and Climate Change (HCCC)” is another research project that OKUP has undertaken in January 2023 in partnership with the UK-based International Organization, Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and the International Institute for Environmental Development (IIED). The 27 months project is awarded by the Modern Slavery Innovation Fund (MISF) of the Home Office, the government of the United Kingdom.

The project is focused on creating evidences on interconnections between climate change, loss and damage and its linked to human mobility and modern slavery. Two different geographical locations have been selected to conduct the research. Mathbaria upazila of Pirozpur district from the southeast coastal area has been selected considering slow onset effects including river erosion, sea level rise, salinization while Gowainghat upazila of Sylhet district has been selected in the north-west of Bangladesh considering its sudden onset disasters i.e., flash-flood together with the flow of out-migration from both upazilas. In 2023, OKUP with the technical support of ASI and the IIED has completed primary data collection for the research. The research report is supposed to be launched during the COP29 in the end of 2024.

OKUP 2023 ADVOCACY ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

A Successful Advocacy Through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

OKUP and Anti-Slavery International (ASI) jointly submitted a report to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Bangladesh during the 44th Session in November 2023. The report entitled “**The Interconnections of Modern Slavery, Migration and Climate Change**” was prepared primarily from OKUP’s beneficiary database with evidence from various projects on labour migration and climate-induced migration, as well as research that OKUP has conducted (published and unpublished).

Interestingly, one of our recommendations was forwarded to the Government of Bangladesh by the government of Chile during the 59th Human Rights Commission Session in Geneva. The recommendation no. 144.122 by Chile: **Integrate meaningful measures to prevent trafficking in persons and forced labour into climate change adaptation and mitigation plans, including the national action plan (Chile)** has formally been accepted by the Government of Bangladesh. This has opened opportunities for further advocacy to have comprehensive policies and actions to ensure protection of people from human trafficking and forced labour situation in the migration cycle. For this success, Anti-Slavery International and OKUP carried out needful lobby and advocacy with different state parties through either in-person or on-line meetings as well as by providing video statements during the 53rd and the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council.



OKUP Chairperson Shakerul Islam is Speaking at the 53rd session of the [#UN](#) Human Rights Council welcoming the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

Being the Steering Group (SG) member of the Climate Migration Displacement Platform (CMDP), OKUP plays an active role in international advocacy with the aim to bring the community voice and perspectives in the global discussion to avert, minimize and address the crisis of climate change and human mobility.

Participation in SB58 and 53rd Human Rights Council in June 2023

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), a non-profit German foundation funded by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, jointly with Climate Migration Displacement Platform (CMDP), a global platform of civil society, activists and academics, organized a delegation visit representing from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America for participation in consultations sessions in SB58 in Bonn and the 53rd Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva.

OKUP Chairperson was selected as one of the delegates and participated in the SB58 and the 53rd HRC. Apart from SB58 events, the trip had created opportunities to have an exchange meeting with the representatives of the UN-EHS (Institute of Environment and Human Security), the representative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), German federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the key officials of the FES various regional offices for exploring future collaboration to address the issue of climate change and migration.

The participation in the 53rd HRC brought opportunities to exchange ground experiences in relation to climate change and migration with a wider group of key stakeholders in international advocacy spaces including the Special Rapporteur Dr. Ian Fry through organizing an interactive session on the issue of promotion and protection of human rights of the people on move in the context of climate change; being a speaker in a HRC53 parallel event entitled “Advancing Human Rights in Response to Climate Displacement and Human Mobility: Regional Perspectives”, as well as meetings with the representatives of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), the Geneva Climate Change Consultation group (GeCCCCo) etc. This visit contributed a lot to enhance OKUP voice and visibility in the international advocacy area on climate change and human mobility.



OKUP Chairperson Shakeril Islam is Speaking at the HRC53 parallel event: Advancing Human Rights in Responses to Climate Displacement and Human Mobility: Regional Perspectives



OKUP Participation in COP28 in Dubai

The key advocacy focus for OKUP in the COP28 was to bring evidences and community perspectives in the discourse on interconnections between climate change and migration, and carryout lobby for inclusion of the human mobility issue in the cover decision. The OKUP research “Migration – Not a Choice but a Compulsion in the Context of Migration” has been appreciated by different stakeholders. OKUP Chairperson, Shakirul Islam, was invited to speak at five different sessions – (i) Climate Change and Forced Displacement: Loss and Damage in Focus organized by Climate Refugee, Loss and Collaborative Initiative and the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF); (ii) Finance and Investment: Practical Solutions for Loss and Damage organized by ICCCAD, UNDRR, ODI, and German Watch; (ii) Nothing About Us Without Us: Local Leadership in Climate Mobility Decisions (organized by Refugee International with Arizona State University's Global Futures); (iv) Immobility as an Overlooked Aspect in the Loss and Damage Debate organized by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs; and (v) Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change: Local Approaches to Protecting Rights and Building Resilience organized by CMDP and GNDR.

OKUP representative participated in 15 other sessions including those organized by different international organizations including the Platform of Disaster Displacement (PDD). He was invited to have an exchange with a nine member delegation of the UK Parliament to the COP28 facilitated by CAFOD and attended meeting with the IOM Director General on Climate Change, the Bangladesh Special Envoy to the UNFCCC, Mr. Saber Hossian Chowdhury, the current minister for the ministry of environment, forest and climate change.

OKUP Advocacy Through Media

OKUP advocacy efforts were also visible in print and television media throughout 2023 by taking part in news coverage, talk-shows as well as writing op-eds. Several television channels including Channel 24 and Ekhn TV on the one hand and the National dailies including The Daily Star, The Business Standard and the New Age BD have published reports highlighting the key findings of the OKUP research “Migration – Not a choice but a compulsion in the context of climate change”. OKUP op-ed entitled “We Need to Talk about Climate Migration” was published in the Daily Star in the eve of COP28. Another op-ed entitled “Living with disasters: A tale of adaptation and survival of coastal communities in Bangladesh” has been published on OKUP website while various advocacy messages have been disseminated through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn for reaching wider stakeholder’s community at national and international level.

Civil Society, Headlines, Human Rights, Inequality, Migration & Refugees, TerraViva United Nations

MIGRATION & REFUGEES

Forced Migration Grows, Justice Withers, Say Activists at World Social Forum

By Marty Logan



"Governments are not motivated to fix migrants' issues because the money they send home keeps their economies running" Credit: Shutterstock

Published at [Ipsnews](https://ipsnews.net): At the recently concluded Nepal World Social Forum (WSF) 2024, **OKUP hosted a session** exploring the critical intersection of climate change, migration, and modern slavery. Experts and activists discussed the impact of climate-induced migration, particularly on vulnerable communities.

Op-ed published in [The Daily Star](https://www.thedailystar.com.bd) during COP 28 highlights the urgent issue of climate-induced migration in Bangladesh, featuring valuable insights from OKUP Chairperson Shakirul Islam. He urges Bangladesh, a front-runner in climate negotiations, to recognize the interconnections between climate change and migration for effective action on this critical issue.

The Daily Star

Journalism Without Fear or Favour

We need to talk about climate migration



Shakirul Islam
is the founding chair of Okup Bangladesh
a national programme of ILO, a prominent
migrant's organisation in Bangladesh.

SHAKIRUL ISLAM

That Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change is no longer news, being a deltaic low-lying plain with a long coast, Bangladesh is geographically susceptible to natural disaster. Climate change has heightened that susceptibility and increased consequences and impacts. Testimonies and lived experiences of the affected people in the Sundarbans region prove that climate-induced disasters in Bangladesh have been frequent and intensified largely after the large cyclones Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009. The Okupachi Karmi Ummidan Program (OKUP) conducted a longitudinal research in Shyamnagar upazila of Sadkhira from July 2022 to September 2023, which found that the people of the Sundarbans region, over the last 15 years, have been hit by cyclones once every 17 months, and been victims of floods, river erosion or erratic rainfall almost every year. The frequency of high tidal surge and the rapid salinisation of water and soil have emerged as a persistent threat for the communities. The impacts of frequent and intensified disasters, local as well as

informal sector workers in the labour law and regulations is a complete denial of fundamental rights and protection of the workers. Most of the seasonal migrants testified that they often face non-payment of wages and salaries, excessive work by force, no healthcare, and many other forms of exploitation, but cannot claim any justice or remedies due to being excluded in the law.

On the other hand, data from the

some of them were not provided any work permits at all. Some returnees stated that they had fled without paying. Many migrants who were recruited by small companies lost their jobs all of a sudden because the companies shut down operations without any notice and without giving any reason. They all became undocumented and fell into more exploitative conditions.

The returnee migrant workers, both internal or international, and the families of the current migrant workers stated that migration was never a choice for them. They opted to migrate mostly because they were compelled to pay off their loans and rebuild their lives in the context of persistent threats by climate-induced disasters. Lack of good governance and accountability in the recruitment system as well as lack of protection measures push them into more risks and vulnerabilities, towards an undignified life as victims of trafficking or forced labour.

To address climate change and its impacts, the Bangladesh government has several plans, policies and strategies. It has also ratified various international conventions, protocols, compacts and adopted national laws, policies and rules to ensure safe, orderly and responsible migration. However, when it comes to climate-induced migration, policy frameworks are disconnected from reality or limited.

Being a front runner in the climate negotiations and having a firm commitment to promote safe and orderly migration, Bangladesh must recognise the interconnections between climate



The frequency of high tidal surge and the rapid salinisation of water and soil have emerged as a persistent threat for coastal communities in Bangladesh, driving up migration.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

Key interventions and impacts: Climate Change and Migration



Popular Bangladeshi Newspaper [The Business Standard](#) and the [New Age BD](#) have published reports highlighting the key findings of the OKUP research "Migration – Not a choice but a compulsion in the context of climate change".



Several Bangladeshi national television channels, including [ATN Bangla](#), [Channel 24](#), [Independent TV](#), and Ekhon TV, covered the OKUP climate change migration research.



How Climate Change Influences Migration Patterns

BY: JANA JUNGHARDT, REGIS BLANC - 19. JUNE 2023



19 JUNE 2023
Article published in
helvetas website
showcasing conducted
multi year OKUP-
Helvetas Collaborated
[action research](#).



Climate Change & Forced Displacement: loss & damage in focus

OKUP Chairperson Shakirul Islam discussed the interconnection between climate change and migration at the Climate Refugee and Loss and Damage Collaboration (L&DC) side event at the Ghana Pavilion during #COP28UAE. This [event](#) was supported by the Ghanaian government and the Climate Vulnerable Forum.

OKUP Chairperson Shakirul Islam joined a webinar on the critical link between climate change-induced migration and human trafficking in the Sundarbans of Bangladesh and India. The [webinar](#) was hosted by CAFOD and rightsbeacon.

FEATURE

Reporter
Spring 2023 17

Grassroots campaigning helping people impacted by climate change

Around the world, people are losing their livelihoods because of climate change. Many have been forced to migrate in search of new ways to survive, making them more vulnerable to modern slavery.

In South Asia, where this is particularly true, many people's lives are being turned upside down by climate change. Grassroot movements are expanding their work to support and protect the people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Much more research is needed to fully understand the connections between climate change and modern slavery, and how communities are impacted. That is why we have launched a new project with the Oibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP), a grassroots migrants' organisation in Bangladesh, and the International Institute for Environment and Development. The project will generate evidence that will help governments take meaningful action to support people who migrate because

of climate change and reduce their vulnerability to modern slavery.

In Bangladesh, the effects of climate change are damaging livelihoods, causing more and more people to migrate or turn to dangerous industries where they are more vulnerable to exploitation and modern slavery.

Working with innovative partners, like OKUP, allows us not only to support grassroots change, but also to raise awareness of this issue to ensure global action.

Support people affected by climate change and modern slavery:
antislavery.org/donate

“The weather has changed a lot and thus, our life. It is so difficult to survive. To earn my living, I am planning to go out and to work at a brick kiln this year (an industry where modern slavery is notoriously widespread) I will take my wife with me so that she can also find some work there.”

A farmer from Kaikhali union, Shyamnagar Upazila, Satkhira district in Bangladesh



OKUP has been featured in the latest issue of Anti-Slavery International's magazine, "[Reporter](#)" for Spring 2023!

Climate Change, Migration and Human Trafficking in the Sundarbans of Bangladesh and India

 Dr Arook Toppo, Caritas Bangladesh	 Dr Bethany Jackson, University of Nottingham	 Fr Paul Moonjely, Caritas India	 Phil Taiman, CAFOD
 Prof. Saleemul Huq, ICCCAD	 Shakirul Islam, OKUP	 Monisha Majumdar, Caritas India	 Join the webinar Wednesday 11th October 10:00 - 11:30 BST

CAFOD
Catholic Agency for Overseas Development



OKUP produced a series of short documentary videos, posters, and reels to highlight climate change migration, amplifying community voices on social media platforms such as [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

