

Position Paper:

NEXUS OF CLIMATE CHANGE & DISASTERS with MIGRATION & TRAFFICKING IN INDIA, NEPAL and BANGLADESH: Relevance and Initiatives of AWO International in South Asia



International e.V.

Lalitpur, 10th December 2015

Globally 232 million people were considered international migrants in the year 2013. Out of 136 million international migrants living in the North 60 per cent originated from a developing country. 86 per cent of the 96 million international migrants residing in the South originated from development countries. Between 1990 and 2013, the number of international migrants worldwide rose by over 77 million or 50 per cent. The migrant population originating from the South and living in the South grew from 59 million to 82 million; an increase of 41 per cent¹. In the same time period the scale and frequency of natural disasters significantly increased. With 72 million international migrants in Asia the continent hosts one third of all international migrants worldwide. The mentioned figures do not cover internal migration (that has immense dimensions, for example in India) and also does not cover the whole migration scenario between Nepal and India, where no documents are required to cross the border (as per the Nepal-Indian Friendship Treaty of 1950).

Larger-scale movements, or migration, can always be seen if the gap between income and living conditions in two different regions is wide, when problems in the country of origin put the people under great pressure, and/or when the destination countries appear particularly attractive. All lack of prospects, poor governance, high unemployment rates, political or social conflicts, a lack of educational opportunities and health care, drought, worsening environmental degradation and climate change are some of the major factors that motivate migrants to leave their homes (fleeing populations of war and prosecution within their own countries are recognized as refugees).²

In the devastating earthquakes from 25th April, 7th of May 2015 and more than 300 aftershocks in Nepal 8.969 people died, 22.321 got injured and 602.600 houses were completely destroyed, leaving millions of people homeless. As a consequence the pressure to migrate increased and many migrants who did not get the chance to leave the country in a formal, registered way left unsafe. Hundreds of women and girls got widowed or orphaned and became more vulnerable to human traffickers in the post disaster scenario. The border monitoring stations of AWO International's partner organization MAITI Nepal registered 745 cases of incepted female potential trafficking victims at the borders between Nepal and India, in the first three month after the earthquake. A comparison with the same time period before the earthquake showed that the numbers had increased by 130 cases.

AWO International responded to the earthquake by setting up a Relief Program including temporary shelters, and following the "Linking Relief and Rehabilitation - LRRD" approach that is driven forward even after closure of the relief program by regular development programs of AWO International in Nepal. The program was funded by the emergency response fund of AWO International, by the German Relief Coalition (ADH) the Austrian Volkshilfe and Nachbar in Not such as by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and consisted of 9 sub-

¹ International Migration Report 2013 (2013): United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. New York

² Migration. harnessing the opportunities to promote development (2011): Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Bonn

projects that were implemented in Nepal and in the border region in India, where Non Food Items (NFIs) were purchased and cross boarder counter trafficking measures were implemented by AWO International's partner organization MSS Seva.

In Nepal the emergency response interventions were mainly implemented by the long term partners POURAKHI, MAITI Nepal and SAHAMATI who enabled NFIs, supported in interim shelters and enabled awareness for safe migration and against human trafficking in an integrated way. Participatory selection processes for distributions – taking into special consideration the vulnerability of women and children (for example women headed households) and marginalized segments of communities, regular coordination with government institutions and with the cluster system were given highest priority. The SPHERE and quality standards of the shelter cluster were respected and blanked coverage was implemented in villages where all houses were heavily affected. The entire relief program consisted of the following components:

- Emergency relief for 7670 households / nearly 43.000 people: Distributed goods were Tarpaulins for tents, matrasses, blankets, hygiene kits and kitchen utensils, water disinfection drops, medicines and rice (in the initial stage)
- Transitional shelter for 1.350 households / more than 7.500 people: Temporary shelters (CGI-sheets, tool boxes, support for skilled laborers, training of multipliers for light constructions utilizing local materials)
- Psychosocial counseling in 7 villages including capacity development for partner staffs and local multipliers
- Campaign against unsafe / forced migration and human trafficking: Nationwide awareness campaign incl. development & distribution of IEC-Materials, cross-border multi-stakeholder meetings & awareness at bus parks and at Indian boarder sites, issue placement by media works and press conference, international and national workshop to highlight and mainstream safe migration and to combat trafficking in persons jointly
- Geographic Intervention areas: Distributions of Tarpaulins and other NFIs in 22 villages (VDC) in 4 districts of Nepal (Sindhupalchowk, Kathmandu, Nawalparasi, Dolakha). Transitional shelters in 13 villages of 2 districts (Kathm. & Nawalparasi). Campaign against human trafficking implemented in 31 districts & national level.

As scientists see the threat of another earthquake in western Nepal that could be even larger than the 2015 ones a new Earthquake Prevention Program is under preparation and shall be implemented in 2016 and 2017 in Nepal, considering AWO International's social structure approach that is also outlined in the Regional Humanitarian Aid Strategy. Social structures, for example social inclusively formed "Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) Committees" are formed to promote community resilience and to ensure sustainability.

Climate change is statistically a significant change in measurement of either the mean state or variability of the climate for a place or region over an extended period of time due to natural variability or as a result of human interventions. This is resulting in the increase in the emission of the greenhouse gases reflecting variation in the climate statistics like temperature, precipitation and wind³. It is proven that atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases rising and with them, global temperatures. In addition to increases in temperature, global warming results in more extreme weather patterns: More rain, longer dry spells, stronger and more violent storms, more fires, the spread of tropical diseases.

³ Orindi, V.A. and Eriksen, S. (2005). Mainstreaming adaptation to climate change in the development process in Uganda. African Centre for Technology Studies.

Further extreme high and low temperature resulting in heat and cold waves and tropical cyclones. As climate change pushes the world towards more extreme weather, more and more people will be exposed to recurrent disasters during their lives.

Widespread increase in the risk of flooding for many human settlements is predicted. Flooding and landslides, the unavoidable results of climate change, pose the most widespread direct risk to human settlements. It's estimated that by 2025 over half of all people living in developing countries will be highly vulnerable to floods and cyclones⁴. At global level climate change, a consequence of global warming has been a hot discussion topic since years. Poor people around the world are among the most suffering of the erratic climatic events. Climate change is also being proved as doldrums for making people more vulnerable to shocks and stresses more over burden on livelihood capitals i.e. natural, physical, social, financial and human.

Climate change signs are happening at an unprecedented scale in South Asia. Extreme events have seen an alarming increase in recent years, having significant implications in the region. Severe flooding in 2007 along the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers affected more than 13 million people in Bangladesh⁵; The Ganges River system is the main source of freshwater for half the population of India and Bangladesh and nearly the entire population of Nepal. These rivers are mainly fed by glacial and snow melts from the Hindukush-Karakoram-Himalayan mountain ranges in the north of the country. As glaciers and precipitation are highly sensitive to climatic variation, any changes in climate pose serious risks to the region's water security putting food production and agro-based livelihoods of millions in jeopardy.

South Asia, home to the greatest number of poor people in the world, is especially vulnerable due to its food and energy shortages along with soaring population, which will put greater stress on resources and eventually forcing the population to migrate to urban cities or other countries to meet the basic need of the families and work as unskilled labours. Large populations in India live in areas likely to experience greater riparian flooding and water stress as a result of climate change—major factors that will lead to lower agricultural productivity. A significant number will also be affected by coastal flooding and cyclones. Most of India's population is employed in the agriculture sector and is heavily dependent on water for irrigation purposes. It is predicted that, by 2050, annual runoff in the Brahmaputra and Indus basins will decline substantially⁶. In light of the dependence on agriculture for daily subsistence and livelihoods, more floods, landslides, droughts, and cyclones will increase vulnerability and lead to displacement.

Most migration in India is rural–urban, particularly to regional urban areas such as Delhi (north), Mumbai and Ahmedabad (west), Kolkata (east), and Bangalore and Chennai (south) in search of better economic opportunities⁷. Growing population pressures have put great stress on urban infrastructure. A major migration corridor lies between the poor northern states of UP and Bihar to Delhi and Kolkata.

⁴ IPCC, (2007). Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. The Working Group II. Contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 4th Assessment Report. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

⁵ Rasul, G. (2014). Food, water, and energy security in South Asia: A nexus perspective from the Hindu Kush. Environmental Science and Policy

⁶ Kelkar, U. and Bhadwal, S. 2007. South Asian Regional Study on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation: Implications for Humarn Development. New Delhi. The Energy and Resources Institute.

⁷ Mitra, A. and M. Murayama. 2008. Rural to Urban Migration: A District Level Analysis for India. Chiba, Japan. Institute of Developing Economies

While socioeconomic factors continue to be the primary motivator for migration, anecdotal evidences suggest that floods and loss of agricultural lands are playing an increasing role in migration decisions⁸.

Experiences in the project areas of AWO International in the Indian States of Uttar Pradesh (implementation area of MSS Seva) as well as in remote districts of Odhisa (implementation area of MADHYAM Foundation) have further more shown that poor marginalized communities with missing food sovereignty and low educational background are a high risk group for Human Trafficking. The vulnerability of these groups is also highlighted by MAITHI Nepal (a partner and specialist in context of Human Trafficking to India and China) for the rural areas of Nepal.

One project of AWO international in India is addresses the prevention of drought by capacitating communities to adapt to changing climatic patterns in Beed District of Maharashtra State. The semi-arid project area is adversely affected, since many years due to recurrent drought situations; it receives erratic and uncertain rainfall with annual average of less than 500 mm. There are less than 40 rainy days in a year concentrated in the four monsoon months (June – September) duration. This, together with low water retention of soil and agriculture practices that are not sustainable and adapted to the local environment present a handicap in growing crops in non – monsoon period. In absence of any assured irrigation, due to poor ground water conditions, less run off or water in the river systems and missing access of marginalized communities to respective government schemes in the project area, the soil has not enough water storage capacity to last for the whole year. Due to this, even monsoon crops suffer in case of longer dry spells. The adverse geological conditions, undulating topography, degraded landforms, lack of decentralized water harvesting measures, further exacerbated by climatic stress, the villages have a limited source of groundwater and offer limited livelihood options.

Agriculture in the Vidharbha and Marathwada (rain shadow area) is rain-fed and predominantly prone to drought. Rain-fed farming is complex, diverse and risk prone and is characterized by low levels of productivity and low input usage. Variability in rainfall results in wide variation and instability in crop yields resulting scarcity of food & fodder. The only source of irrigation is either dug well or bore wells. Most of them are getting dry very early in the year. The earning from agriculture is not enough to meet out their livelihood needs. To maintain the livelihood, migration to distantly located cities viz. Mumbai, Pune, Goa for construction and/ or working as agriculture labourers in the operational area of sugar industries in western Maharashtra on daily wage is the accepted / forced alternatives in case of crop failure or insufficient return from agriculture produce. Except older member, in many cases the entire family migrates; the obvious result is negligence towards their own agriculture & education of children. Social tensions often appear in the villages of origin when resources are taken by others in the absence of the migrants.

Children of migrants are forced to change schools frequently with widely negative effects on their educational career. School drop outs are common and promote child labour. Social protection is less, exploitive situations very common and especially for women and children of labour migrants are vulnerable to human trafficking.

With funds of the German Relief coalition (ADH) AWO International coordinates a Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) project in Maharastra, implemented by the civil society partner AFARM (Action for Agricultural Renewal in Maharastra).

⁸ Addressing Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific(2012) . Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Furthermore AWO International coordinated 7 projects in South Asia for the improvement of livelihoods by promotion of organic agriculture among the poorest of the poor and marginalized communities, with funding support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). In these projects, CCA issues have been mainstreamed to some extent and relevant practices and techniques have been developed and tested.

Bangladesh figures with climate induced extreme events are hot topics for global discussions. With increasing population growth and underlying poverty, millions of people are living in low lying deltaic plain and are obvious subject to environmental and climatic hazards. International and internal migration of unskilled labours in Bangladesh is increasingly used as a coping mechanism. Forty percent of migrant workers originate from just 5 of 64 districts (Brahmanbaria, Chittagong, Comilla, Dhaka, and Tangail), all in the south of the country⁹. These areas are especially prone to flooding and environmental hazards. It is clear that environmental factors are working together with economic forces in causing migration. AWO international under its BMZ project has already started Migration Information Centers (MISC) in 3 out of the 5 districts (Commilla, Roazan - sub district of Chittagong division and Tangail). Other than these areas, Satkhira, Jessore, Jhenaidah, and Khulna are disaster prone areas from where people tend to migrate to gulf countries in search of better livelihood options and many are trafficked to different parts of India. From July 2015 onwards AWO International is promoting safe migration and the prevention of human trafficking by help of the specialized NGO RIGHTS JESSORE covering three boarder districts to India (Jessore, Satkhira and Jhenaidah). An AWO International supported cyclone preparedness project is implemented in the Ganges delta of Khulna division.

For Nepal major threshold for a nonlinear increase in migration could originate from increasing flood risk in the relatively low-lying Terai region, which is comparatively densely populated and already experiences regular flooding¹⁰. More than half of 2.2 million Nepali's who have left the country for foreign employment in the last six years were from the flat southern Terai-districts, according to a government report. In the year 2014 nearly half a million Nepalis migrated officially registered through Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu (the number of the unregistered ones migrating to and through India might be even higher). Of the total migrants taking labour permits from the Department of Foreign Employment, 50.4 percent were from flat Terai region, the flood prone area that also highly suffers from the effects of climate change. Many of the people seasonally migrate to India from far western region for temporary job when there are agricultural slacks. In 2015 AWO International works in four Terai Districts (Nawalparasi, Kanchanpur, Chitwan and Bardya) and implements migration related projects in three migration prone districts (Doti, Sindhupalchowk and Kathmandu).

Out of seven livelihood projects of AWO International in 2015 four started to mainstream safe migration issues and trafficking components have been inbuilt in two projects. In addition three new Safe Migration and Counter Trafficking projects in Nepal and Bangladesh were started in July 2015. Never the less the connections between (natural) disasters, climate change, migration and human trafficking is an emerging issue and needs to be further assessed and addressed. As per information of the Organization on Migration (IOM) in Nepal there is not one available study that analyzes these connections for Nepal.

⁹ Siddiqui, T. 2005. "International migration as a livelihood strategy of the poor: The Bangladesh case." In Migration and development: Pro-poor policy choices. T. Siddiqui. ed. Dhaka: The University Press as cited in Addressing Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific(2012)

¹⁰ Addressing Climate Change and Migration in Asia and the Pacific (2012). Mandaluyong City, Philippines: Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Since 2012 AWO International is implementing two cooperation projects in Nepal and Bangladesh focusing on labour Migration to the Gulf, to Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and other countries. The implementing civil society organizations WARBE and POURAKHI are experts in the field and labour migration. Further else three new projects will be launched in context of awareness raising, repatriation / rescue and socio-economic re-integration of victims of labour migration and survivors of human trafficking in Bangladesh and Nepal. Two partners are specialized on Human Trafficking (especially of girls and women) and one partner has a strong expertise in context of forced seasonal Migration from Nepal to India such as DRR.

To address the nexus of disasters, climate change and migration development cooperation plays a vital role¹¹ an integrated programmatic approach is needed. Since 2014 disaster preparedness is a cross cutting issue for all development projects of AWO International in South Asia. Migration is considered as a cross-cutting issue in all humanitarian aid related projects in the region. The regional partner structure and experiences of AWO International in South Asia can be seen as a treasure for further assessment of the linkages between (natural) disasters, climate change, migration and human trafficking, and for the development and mainstreaming of suitable adaptation and protection mechanisms.

Through its livelihood promotion and DRR initiatives such as migration and counter trafficking projects AWO International has achieved relevant results in context of safe migration, livelihood promotion and building of resilient communities. However, evidence based success, good practices and information are lacking due to limited (human) resources in AWO International's Regional Office as well as on partner level. The placement short term experts with a specific expertise on DRR, research and public relation at partner and at region office level would be highly needed to analyze, outline and mainstream best practice examples and to strengthen knowledge management systems and capacities at partner level. A development of a publication focusing on resilience building on community level against the impact of (natural) disasters and climate change, outlining the linkages to migration and trafficking and suitable mitigation mechanisms and human security strategies in South Asia would be highly relevant. The findings would be mainstreamed and brought forward by advocacy and media interventions on a national and international level through AWO International's regional office, located in Nepal.

Lalitpur/ Nepal, 10th December 2015

Felix Neuhaus, Head Representative (AWO International, South Asia)

Sushant Sharma, Humanitarian Aid Coordinator (AWO International, South Asia)

¹¹ Study of the climate adaptation-migration nexus and the role for development cooperation (2012), Eschborn, Germany: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH