



Climate Change: A Push Factor for Human Trafficking

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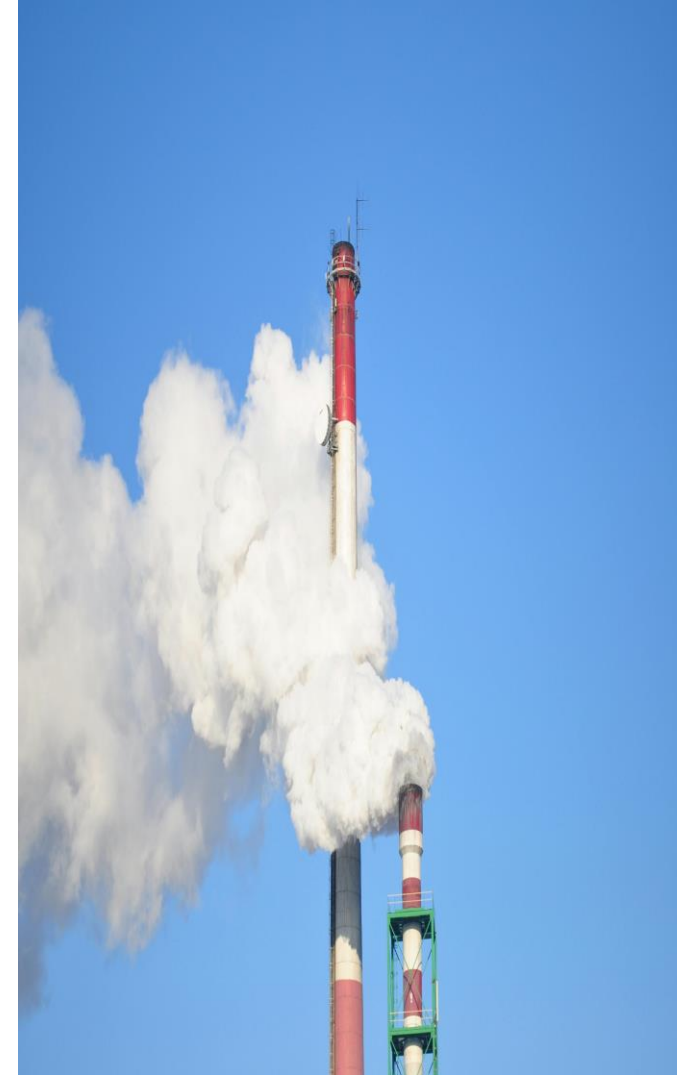
Introduction

There seems to be a correlation between climate change, consumerism and human trafficking. The victims of climate change, having lost their livelihoods, are the number one target of traffickers. Long-term changes in the planet's climatic system render vulnerable local communities already threatened by a consumeristic society that rides on the principle of supply and demand.



Introduction (-ctued)

Unchecked constant human gratification and marathons for cheap goods and services favour trafficking in persons. Throughout Mother Earth's history, the climate has continuously changed. If climate change existed from time immemorial, why does it matter today?





Points to discuss:

- Defining concepts
- The principle of supply and demand
- Threats of a consumeristic culture
- Rituals for wealth and power
- International Law and human trafficking
- The Church response

1. Defining concepts



Climate change denotes:

- Significant variations in the average conditions of temperatures and rainfalls in a region over a long period. It refers to a « Natural large-scale and long-term change in the Earth's climatic system, as brought about by ice ages.» It is also a « Rapid, large-scale, and long-term change in the Earth's climatic system produced by global warming ».

Climate Change for Kids».

Cf. NASA, «A Guide to

Defining concepts(-ctued)

There are two types of climate change:

1. **Natural**: it pertains to the normal changes that the Earth goes through.
2. **Anthropogenic**: finds its origin in the influence of human activity on nature such as the burning of fossil fuels, agriculture, deforestation, etc.



Causes of climate change

The cause of current climate change is largely human activity, such as the burning of fossil fuels, as natural gas, oil, and coal. The burning of these materials release **greenhouse gases** (**carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, nitrous oxide, water vapor**, etc) into the Earth's atmosphere. There, these gases trap heat from the sun's rays inside the atmosphere (**greenhouse effect**) causing the Earth's average temperature to rise. This rise in the planet's temperature is called global warming. The warming of the planet impacts local and regional climates. Throughout Earth's history, the climate has been steadily changing. When it occurs naturally, it is a slow process that has taken place over hundreds and thousands of years.

(NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, «Climate Change»)



Global warming

Global warming is making weather more extreme, bringing about longer droughts and heat waves. The increase in the planet's temperature is making the ice melt, which makes the sea level rise, causing floods. The loss of soil moisture and high temperatures during drought increase the risk of wildfires. All these make life difficult not only for humans but also for other animals. Farms and crops used to feed the population are destroyed, threatening people's livelihoods and food security.



Link between climate change and HT

- The high temperatures both on land and in oceans have negative impacts on various ecosystems, making humans and other animals migrate for survival. Human mobility makes people vulnerable. In their search for survival, they end up doing undignified jobs, exploited, both in the public and private sectors.



Link between climate change and HT (- ctued)

Jasmine argues that

- *Climate change and modern slavery are inextricably linked.* As climate change threatens the very foundations of our society, we are beginning to see that the heightened vulnerabilities that people experience as they are faced with losing their livelihoods and contemplating migration are making them even more at risk of exploitation.

J. O'CONNOR, «Climate Change and Modern Slavery: The Nexus that Cannot Be Ignored».

Defining concepts (- ctued)

Consumerism denotes

- «An economic theory that increased consumption is beneficial to a nation's economy in the long run.» It is an exaggerated attachment to material possessions. However, consuming more than what is needed leads to an excess of waste, human exploitation and pollution. It brings about negative consequences for the environment, habitat destruction, water and air pollution, and in the long run, hasten climate change.



Defining concepts (- ctued)

Human trafficking

- According to the Palermo Protocol, human trafficking means « the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.



Defining concepts (- ctued)

- Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.»

UNITED NATIONS (UN), «Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime», Art.3.a.

2. The principle of supply and demand

- « a capitalistic model of price determination in a market, according to which, holding all else equal in a competitive market, the unit price for a particular good will eventually settle at a point where the quantity demanded will equal the quantity supplied. »
- **Increase in supply is driven by an increase in demand.**
- To make profit, increase in supply calls for cheap labour force. Here originates human exploitation.



Some statistics

- Worldwide, **about 50 million people** are victims of modern slavery (according to the 2022 Report of the Migration Data Portal).
- In sub-Saharan Africa, An **estimated 6.04 million individuals** are enslaved (**12%** of the total global enslaved population)
- Africa: An **estimated 7 million individuals** are enslaved (**14%** of the total global enslaved population)

ASEC, «Human Trafficking Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa (Infographic) | ASEC-SLDI News».



E-commerce

- The consumer's exaggerated appetites – « instant gratification and commercial sex » – make human trafficking thrive. As stated above, whenever the level of demand increases, it pushes the industries of gratification to increase their supply level. With COVID-19 lockdowns, most of the things became «**e-things**», as remarked by Klauss and Thierry. Human instant gratification also, I argue, became "e-human instant gratification". KLAUS SCHWAB, THIERRY MALLIRET, «COVID-19: The Great Reset», 62.



E-commerce (- ctued)

- Modern e-commerce makes such a form of gratification thrive. It is believed that «The rise of e-commerce has also led to an increase in electronic waste. As more people purchase electronics online, the disposal of old electronic devices becomes a growing problem.» How is electronic waste managed? Such waste is another threat to the natural environment.

C. EARTH5R, «The Environmental Impact Of E-Commerce».

3. Threats of a consumeristic culture

One among the few who have noticed the dangers of consumerism is Pope Francis. He sees consumerism to be « a virus that attacks the faith». He said this while addressing the Congolese community on December 1, 2019.



Threats of a consumeristic culture (- ctued)

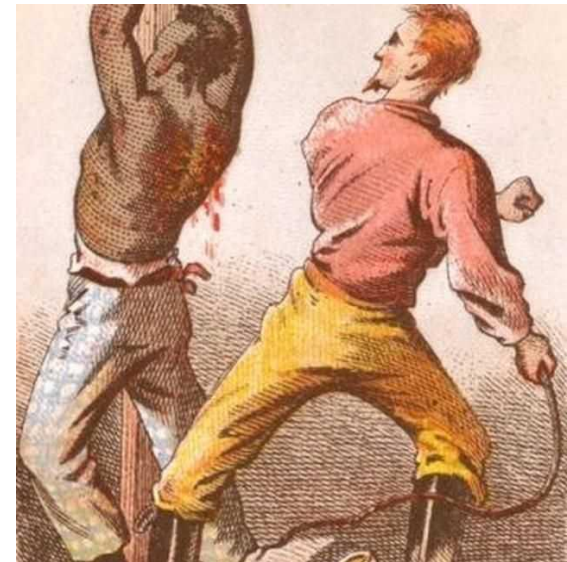
The earth's resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses. Different species contain genes which could be key resources in years ahead for meeting human needs and regulating environmental problems (LS, 32).



Human beings: as objects to be bought and sold

Humans are no longer treated "as *ends* in themselves, but merely as a means to an end." In other words, using humans as *mere means* is to involve them in an action to which they could not in principle consent. Thus, using them as objects to be exploited for all kinds of purposes, one of them being rituals for wealth and power.

Informed by Immanuel Kant (1724-1084)



4. Rituals for wealth and power

- Human trafficking does not only involve smuggling and border crossings.
- It also happens "internally" :
 - Restaurants,
 - bars and nightclubs,
 - domestic and hotel housekeeping,
 - brothels, etc. **There is high risk of being trafficked.**



Reasons for rituals



Albinos are threatened because «Their bones, skin and internal organs are used for amulets or concoctions that some believe bring good fortune, health, wealth and even powers like flying to those who use them.»

M. DAGHAR, «Tanzanians Hard Hit by Trafficking in People with Albinism».



Reasons for rituals (-ctued)

Those trafficked can easily be used for rituals.

- According to Pascal Durand who did research in Sukumaland of Tanzania, people in albinism are trafficked for their « hair ‘attracts fish in large quantities’ and their ‘bones are also believed to strike gold in mines’ ».



5. International Law and HT

- Most countries have enacted Laws that combat it. However, it takes people of goodwill to have effective legal frameworks that prevent human trafficking, protect the survivors and prosecute traffickers. Two points to consider: protocols and controls in the labour chains play a crucial role. The 2000 UN Palermo Protocol came in to reinforce the Law against human trafficking. Another aspect that needs attention is the area of labour and supply transparency. The Church can advocate for constant "checks and balances" within labour systems.



Some challenges

- Referring to people trafficked for the removal of organs, Capron and Delmonico argue that the Palermo Protocol is violated when the means used to obtain consent « involve coercion, threats, or use of physical force, deception, or abuse of power or a position of vulnerability.» It remains difficult to prove that an organ broker took advantage of the victim, argue Capron and Delmonico. Another phenomenon that may conceal the traffic of organs is voluntary organ harvesting. In Kenya, impoverished youth opt to sell their organs, mostly kidneys, in return for cash to begin a business.

A.M. CAPRON – F.L. DELMONICO, «Preventing Trafficking in Organs for Transplantation», 8. / W. OKUMU, «Organ Harvesting Syndicates Prey on Kenya's Desperate Youth».





6. The Church response

- **Working with vulnerable individuals and communities:** to inform, form and empower local communities to face the challenges of climate change, consumerism and human trafficking.
- **Big solutions:** advocacy and lobbying at global level – (1) to challenge and hold accountable systems that pollute more; (2) phasing out of burning fossil fuels and move to renewable and greener energy such as solar, hydroelectric and wind energy; (3) reducing emissions caused by industry and transportation by investing in greener technology; (4) no deforestation of land; (5) call for proper waste management, etc.
- **Small solutions:** recycling, composting organic waste, eating more vegetables and fewer meat products, saving electricity, buying things that last longer or can be reused, etc.

6. The Church response (- ctued)



- Challenging systems that favour environmental degradation.
- Working with vulnerable individuals and communities. The option for the vulnerable is fundamental.
- Approach: **4Ps** –
 - **P**revention,
 - **P**rotection and
 - **P**rosecution
 - & **P**artnership

Conclusion

- There is a correlation between climate change, consumerism and human trafficking.
- **Climate change – the anthropogenic one – matters:** **(1)** it is occurring at a much faster rate; **(2)** there seems to be no consolidated consensus to tackle its negative impacts on humans; **(3)** human greed is destroying the planet, and this is a serious matter that needs attention.
- The reality of spiritual beliefs that propel human trafficking calls for proper research.



Questions for reflection

1. The future of the planet is in our hands. How can our human consumeristic society redeem itself and the planet?
2. To fight against human trafficking, what can we concretely do:
 - a. To prevent
 - b. To protect
 - c. To prosecute
 - d. and to partner



Thank you...

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