

Researchers warn that modern slavery has been exacerbated by COVID-19

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Credit: Keele University

The COVID-19 pandemic has made more people vulnerable to modern slavery and caused an increase in worker exploitation and child labor around the world, Keele researchers have found.

Keele University researchers Professor Tomoya Obokata and Dr. Forough Ramezankhah have published a [new report](#) into the impact of COVID-19 on modern [slavery](#) which details best practice and recommendations for the protection of vulnerable workers from the effects of the pandemic.

Professor Obokata and Dr. Ramezankhah, from Keele's School of Law, have produced the report, in partnership with Minority Rights Group International, to provide a rapid global assessment of the major impacts of COVID-19 on modern slavery and offer recommendations aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of the pandemic on modern slavery and unemployment.

The research, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council-supported Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Center, found that the pandemic has impacted on how countries have responded to modern slavery as a result of disruption and delays to anti-slavery actions such as investigations and court proceedings, and has exacerbated vulnerabilities to modern slavery because of unemployment and temporary school closures which in many cases has led to the exploitation of workers, increases in child labor, and movement into the illegal economy.

The report seeks to act as a resource for governments and non-governmental bodies which shares best practice of how to overcome the challenges the pandemic has posed. The team also created a set of 11 guiding principles on actions against modern slavery in emergency situations which contain important human rights norms and principles that should be upheld in order to foster a victim-centered approach to tackling modern slavery.

To carry out the research, the team analyzed emerging academic literature reports and data provided by governments, civil society

organizations, trade unions, regional and international organizations, and media reports where appropriate. This desktop research was complemented by a series of semi-structured interviews with over 30 non-governmental stakeholders working in the areas of modern slavery and workers' rights.

Professor Obokata, who is lead author and a Special Rapporteur for the United Nations on contemporary forms of slavery, said: "I was excited to carry out this research together with our partner Minority Rights Group International as there are a number of knowledge gaps which needed to be filled in order to identify best practice in protecting workers and victims of modern slavery."

Dr. Ramezankhah, co-investigator of the project, added: "It is a privilege to be part of this significant and timely project. Workers and victims of [modern slavery](#) are being maltreated more than ever in such challenging times and this is a critical contribution to highlight shortcomings and good practices globally."

More information: Good practice in protecting people from modern slavery during the COVID-19 pandemic:
minorityrights.org/publications/cfs-report/

Provided by Keele University

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