TRILATERAL RESEARCH
Ethical AI

Investing in AI to address human trafficking and modern slavery

In a time where technology powers innovation, it's time for Governments to harness the immense potential of data-sharing and artificial intelligence in their pursuit against human trafficking and modern slavery. Amongst so many controversial issues that divide policy, this is a bi-partisan opportunity to fight a crime affecting all aspects of society.

Leverage the power of responsible AI

The public sector is lagging behind private businesses worldwide, who are actively pursuing the benefits of AI - and with good reason. AI's intelligent applications empower businesses to enhance their operations, expand their reach, and expedite decision-making across various departments, resulting in improved efficiency and effectiveness. They recognise that utilising responsible AI in decision-making processes offers the distinct advantage of facilitating evidence-based choices that are both transparent and accountable. For instance, in financial services, responsible AI can be utilised to assess investment opportunities by analysing diverse market data and thus identifying risks and opportunities. In marketing, businesses are leveraging responsible AI to analyse customer demographics, behaviour patterns, and preferences, so they can tailor their strategies effectively.

The benefits that AI can bring to the public sector

Governments can greatly benefit from observing and adopting strategies employed by private businesses when it comes to embracing AI. They too can enhance their operations and decision-making processes. Moreover, by embracing AI, governments can also unlock new possibilities and avenues for providing efficient and effective public services, ultimately leading to improved citizen satisfaction and overall societal progress. All government sectors should aim to benefit from AI, including understanding and addressing crimes like modern slavery (more below).

There is awareness from governments that AI can drive positive advancement, and across the globe governments have consistently expressed ambition to be at the forefront of AI innovation and development. Yet, despite stated aspirations to be frontrunners in AI, a notable disconnect exists in certain sectors. For instance, essential agencies like the police force seem to be missing out on AI-driven opportunities. While the government promotes technological advancements, the adoption of AI tools for law enforcement appears limited, hindering the potential for data-driven crime prevention and investigation. This gap suggests a need for more cohesive strategies to ensure that the overnments' AI leadership goals are consistently implemented across all sectors, fostering comprehensive advancements and reaping the benefits of AI technology in its entirety

Modern Slavery

With estimates varying from 24.9 million people to a staggering 40 million, the true extent of human trafficking remains shrouded in uncertainty. This global crime encompasses a multitude of forms, with sexual exploitation taking the lead as the most prevalent, followed closely by forced labour.

40 million may still be an under representation. Instances of forced labour for example often go undetected and unreported, particularly when compared to the prominence of sexual exploitation. While efforts to raise awareness about human trafficking have progressed, the true understanding of the crime and the criminals' modus operandi, coupled with innovative and effective preventive measures, are still in early stages.

Policy and law makers should be ambitious as they re-draft human trafficking, modern slavery and supply-chain focused legislations and policy. They must explore AI opportunities.

AI & fighting modern slavery

This white paper emphasises the critical necessity for government investment in data utilisation to address the pressing issue of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT). By providing funding for innovation – for both the purchase of technology and engaging in tech development – directly to law enforcement agencies and local councils, governments can harness the power of data-driven approaches to better identify, respond to, and prevent MSHT more effectively.

What data driven solutions could these stakeholders benefit from?

Explanatory models visualised in dashboards. This shows trends and patterns and, in near real time, answers what has been going on and where. It allows for the rapid and efficient analysis of large quantities of text and documentation – e.g., how many people in 2021 needed support with compensation compared to 2020.

Use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) capabilities to pull out insights from victim stories, witness statements, court files, anything written, and then present the relevant information to the end user e.g., allowing end users to find out how many victims gave an account of passing through Liverpool Airport on their way to the UK.

Document summary visualised in dashboards. This, in near real-time, digests endless amounts of documents and produces answers to information requests – e.g., how many documents are discussing forced labour in agriculture in Kent.

Predictive models with outputs visualised in dashboards, they can risk-score individuals as (potential) perpetrators or victims (or both) or that try and predict the patterns of crime (see Trilateral's CESIUM application as an example)

Share and utilise data across partnerships thus allowing different pieces of the puzzle to fit together.

The above shows how data science can inform understanding and responses. It can help the public sector meet investigative, protection and prevention duties, optimise resource allocation, uncover meaningful patterns, and predict future trends to inform strategic decision-making. All this done almost in real time, thus saving the public sector time and money.

However, it is not enough that governments dedicate a portion of a budget to procurement of AI driven applications, there is also a need for further activity:

Invest in developing data literacy amongst workers. By investing in data literacy programmes, alongside infrastructure development, governments can foster a culture of data sharing, something that consistently gets mentioned as one of the reasons why data is not used for fighting MSHT.

Governments should publish/ make available more data to enable a better understanding of modern slavery in the UK, and for training of AI technology. There is a desperate need for available and regularly updated datasets that are available for legal use, including to help engineers who want to build ethical AI solutions for responding to human trafficking.

Conclusion

By allocating funds and making data legally available to support data-driven strategies, governments can empower stakeholders to enhance their understanding, response, and prevention efforts against modern slavery human trafficking. Embracing innovative technologies, fostering data sharing ecosystems, and ensuring ethical data usage will pave the way for a more effective and comprehensive response to this heinous crime.