

Migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation

Leads: ILO, IOM, UNFCCC

Thematic Priority 4

Workplan

September 2021

The adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and of the Paris Agreement on climate change are landmark developments that are bringing visibility to the migration and climate change nexus. The acknowledgment and inclusion of environmental drivers of migration in the GCM signals the strong commitments of States to prepare for future scenarios of migration, as well as those afoot today. Several Objectives of the GCM address the adverse impacts of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation¹. Objective 2 of the GCM calls for inter alia minimizing disasters, climate change and environmental degradation that compel people to move (Objective 2, para 16). Furthermore, Objective 5 promotes regular pathways for those moving in the context of slow and sudden-onset events and processes (Objective 5, para g and h), and Objective 7 aims to address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration. At the same time, the integration of migration issues in the Paris Agreement and the work under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is another milestone². Via the Task Force on Displacement (TFD), established under the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts and its Strategic workstream (d): Enhanced cooperation and facilitation in relation to human mobility, including migration, displacement and planned relocation, States, the UN system, and civil society have sought solutions at the nexus of climate change and migration.

Background

Climate change, environmental degradation and disasters due to natural hazards, both sudden and slow-onset, are profoundly reshaping contemporary migration patterns worldwide, with significant effects on human rights and human dignity³. In 2020, some 30.7 million people were newly displaced by disasters

¹ For an analysis of the integration of environmental drivers of migration in the GCM, please see <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/policy/10-key-takeaways-gcm-environmental-migration>.

² For an analysis of the integration of human mobility considerations in the UNFCCC, please see https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/environmentalmigration/files/WIM-TFD-Stakeholder-Meeting_Background-Paper.pdf.

³ IPCC, [*Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*](#).

within their countries⁴. Slow-onset events and processes such as desertification, coastal erosion, sea level rise, ocean acidification, ecosystem loss and land degradation also directly and indirectly influence migration decisions but are difficult to precisely quantify. Migration in the context of slow-onset events and processes is often multicausal, and most people migrate due to a combination of social, political, economic, environmental, and demographic drivers. In such contexts, people engage in different forms of temporary and permanent migration, within their countries or across borders. These forms of migration exist on a continuum from displacement to more voluntary forms of migration. In many cases, situations of vulnerability are enhanced for populations who already experience human rights harms, do not have the financial and social means to migrate out of degraded areas, and are trapped in dangerous conditions. Migration in turn can also impact ecosystems and the availability of natural resources.

Even with the most ambitious mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, all countries around the world will need to focus on adaptation and resilience, including for people in precarious situations and those who may be on the move. The adverse impacts of climate change are anticipated to contribute to increased migration in many parts of the world⁵. It is also anticipated that planned, well-governed migration can help communities in vulnerable situations better cope with the adverse impacts of climate change, *inter alia* by offering human rights protection and options for livelihood diversification and, by promoting the meaningful participation of migrants in climate action⁶.

Most climate change-related migration journeys lead to cities, compounding this with rapid urbanization and existing urban climate mitigation and adaptation challenges. Over 90 percent of cities⁷ already face serious exposure to climate risk while urban climate adaptation finance represents only three to five percent of total adaptation finance flows⁸ in a context in which all adaptation finance represents only some 20% of all climate finance⁹.

Following the adoption of the new UN Migration Network workplan for 2021 and 2022 by the Principals of the Network Executive Committee, Network members started working hand in hand to leverage the commitments under the Paris Agreement and the GCM to provide a road map of action towards the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26) and the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in 2022.

⁴ IDMC 2021, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/>

⁵ PDD and OHCHR 2018, [The slow onset effects of Climate Change and Human Rights Protection for cross-border migrants](#).

⁶ IOM 2017, <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/making-mobility-work-adaptation-environmental-changes-results-meclep-global-research>

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/12/one-in-four-cities-cannot-afford-climate-crisis-protection-measures-study>

⁸ <https://www.citiesclimatefinance.org/2021/02/an-analysis-of-urban-climate-adaptation-finance/>

⁹ [Climate Finance | United Nations](#)

Given the strong commitments of States on migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation in the GCM as well as in the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, there is a significant opportunity for the UN system to strengthen our concrete, coherent and joined-up responses to address challenges and maximize opportunities linked to migration and the protection of the human rights of migrants in a changing climate. For the first time, the annual workplan of the UN Network on Migration includes a thematic priority on climate change and migration. The strategic goal of this thematic priority is to ensure that the climate discourse fully embraces the migration dimension and vice-versa, including that outcomes at upcoming COPs, the IMRF, and the Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement comprise concrete, actionable recommendations in this regard. The workplan of this thematic priority has three pillars:

- **Pillar 1:** Assess existing knowledge, lessons and practices that can foster synergies across UN work on migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation;
- **Pillar 2:** Expand spaces for dialogue, exchange, capacity building, and collaboration on practices and knowledge with States, stakeholders and other state-led initiatives;
- **Pillar 3:** Develop joint advocacy and messaging on migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation to help advance the implementation of GCM Objectives 2, 5 and 7, and the recommendations of the UNFCCC TFD, building on the Network's existing work.

i. **Workplan 2021-2022**

Thematic workstream on climate change and migration		Outputs	Description	Expected delivery	Lead
Pillar 1	<i>Assess existing knowledge, lessons and practices that can contribute to review of collective progress, and synergies across UN work on migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation.</i>	1. Policy guidance brief	<p>"Linking Policy, Evidence and Practice: The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and Its Relevance to the Migration, Environment and Climate Change Agenda."</p> <p>The policy brief will offer an analysis on how to use the GCM commitments to respond to the migration, environment and climate change agenda. This brief will directly contribute to bring a human mobility angle to discussions at the next COP 26.</p>	October 2021	IOM with contributions from the wider group
		2. Policy guidance brief	<p>"An analysis of the integration of environmental considerations in migration policies, with a focus on West Africa".</p> <p>The document will illustrate how migration policies integrate climate change and provide recommendations for potential replication of this practice. While mapping/considering all available migration policies worldwide, the recommendations will focus on West Africa. It will build on an update of the IOM-TFD mapping of national migration and climate change policies conducted in 2018.</p>	January 2022 before the Migration week in NY	IOM, with contributions from the wider group



	3. Policy guidance brief	<p>This brief will be based on an analysis to predict the number of children at risk of climate-related displacement/migration and identify where they are located (<i>based on UNICEF's new children's climate risk index</i>).</p> <p>Building on this new data, the brief will also highlight emerging solutions and recommendations to protect, equip and empower children and youth affected by climate mobility.</p>	November 2021 - to be launched at a side event to COP26	UNICEF (in partnership with the Data Alliance for Children) with contributions from the wider group
	4. GCM implementation baseline mapping	<p>The GCM baseline mapping will develop an analytical framework with indicators and, on this basis, analyse provisions and related processes in national public policy and law that are relevant for implementing GCM commitments to address human mobility in the context of disaster and climate change.</p> <p>The mapping will focus on relevant GCM objectives, specifically related to addressing the adverse effects of climate change (Objective 2) and to enhancing the availability of pathways for regular migration in cases of sudden-onset disasters and slow-onset processes (Objective 5), building on ongoing work by TWG3 on regular pathways.</p>	March 2022 (interim outputs may be disseminated at earlier stages)	PDD Secretariat with contributions from the wider group. Potential to align with UNFCCC Global Stock-take technical assessment—inputs from “observers” will be welcomed next year which will be synthesized by the UNFCCC secretariat and feed into political considerations under the Global Stock-Take.
	5. Focused expert discussion on improved coherence of the international response to environmental mobility	Expert discussion on the state of play on existing responsibilities of the international community and potential models for structuring/coordinating international action on environmental-related migration to improve coherence and better assist regional and subregional organizations and States.	TBC	Co-leads with inputs from the Zolberg Institute, Georgetown University and the contributions from the wider group. Similarly may feed into UNFCCC Global Stock-take.
	6. Good Practice Guide	For responsible data gathering on climate change impacts on migration, with a focus on the impacts of slow-onset climate effects.	TBC	OHCHR

		7. Policy guidance brief	On addressing the needs of migrants in vulnerable situations through humanitarian action in the context of sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters.	TBC	OHCHR
Pillar 2	<i>Expand spaces for dialogue, exchange and collaboration on practices and knowledge with States, stakeholders and other state-led initiatives.</i>	1. Discussion space in the Migration Network Hub	Set up a discussion space to exchange on climate change and migration. The space will provide a platform for consultation and collection of inputs from stakeholders ahead of the social media campaign, meetings and events organized by the workstream.	September 2021	Co-leads, Migration Network Hub
		2. Dialogue series	A dialogue between GCM Champion countries, local authorities, stakeholders and practitioners on human mobility in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. The session will benefit from IGAD's experience of implementation of the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund joint programme to address migration and climate change that region and other adaptation practices from the Pacific. The meeting will contribute to frame IMRF discussions on GCM implementation of objectives 2 and 5.	March 2022	Co-leads.
		3. Capacity Building Workshop	Aimed at GCM champion countries but open to other States, on climate change, the GCM, and human rights of migrants. This could incorporate the content of training materials already being developed by Network members, with some tailoring to make them more GCM-specific.	TBC	OHCHR
Pillar 3	<i>Develop joint-advocacy and messaging on migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation to help advance the implementation of GCM objectives 2, 5 and 7, and the</i>	1. Social media messaging	social media messaging to raise awareness of the impact of climate and environmental degradation on migration. To be based on collective, coordinated messaging and human-interest stories as well as on concrete recommendations by the Network.	From October 2021 to COP 26	Network secretariat with co-leads and stakeholders' contributions
		2. Consultation on COP messages	Open consultation with stakeholders on joint messaging on migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation for the upcoming COP 26.	September 2021	Network Secretariat with co-leads and stakeholders
		3. Op-Ed	An Op-Ed by the Network Coordinator on the GCM and its relevance to the migration, environment and climate change agenda to be issued.	November 2021 – COP 26	Network secretariat based on inputs from IOM with co-leads.



<i>recommendations of the UNFCCC TFD, building on the Network's existing work.</i>	4. Policy Brief	Based on the 1.2 analysis, develop a joint policy brief on how countries can integrate the environment in their migration policies.	IMRF 2022	IOM with co-leads and inputs from the group
	5. Guiding Principles on Climate Mobility and Children	<p>The guidelines will draw from existing normative frameworks, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Sustainable Development Goals, international migration and refugee law, international human rights law, climate change law (including the Paris Agreement), relevant documents and international agreements on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.</p> <p>This was a deliverable which came from UNICEF and IOM's on climate mobility and children in 2020, which brought together academics, experts, civil society, policymakers and young climate migrants to better understand how children and young people are affected by climate mobility.</p>	November 2021 – COP 26	UNICEF and IOM together with PDD, Georgetown University, with inputs from the group



ii. Timeline for 2021-2022

OUTPUTS	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	Q1 2022
Pillar 1 Output 1 - Policy guidance GCM implementation to advance the migration, environment and climate change agenda							
Pillar 1 Output 2 - Policy brief. Integration of environmental considerations in migration policies							
Pillar 1 Output 3 - Policy brief. Projected impact of climate-related displacement on children.							
Pillar 1 Output 4 – GCM implementation baseline mapping.							
Pillar 1 Output 5 Expert discussion on improved coherence of the international response to environmental mobility							
Pillar 2 Output 1 - Discussion space in the Migration Network Hub.							
Pillar 2 Output 2 - Dialogue series.							
Pillar 3 Output 1 - Social media campaign and collection of human-interest stories.							
Pillar 3 Output 2 – Consultation on COP messages							
Pillar 3 Output 3 – Op-Ed							
Pillar 3 Output 4 - A policy brief on integrating environmental considerations in migration policies.							
Pillar 3 Output 5 - Guiding Principles on Climate Mobility and Children							