GCM Talk: Migration and Adaptation in the Context of Climate Change: Key Takeaways and Recommendations

Introduction

On 7th September the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the International Organization for Migration organised a GCM talk on *Migration and adaptation in the context of climate change: a pragmatic approach towards removing barriers and enhancing opportunities*. The roundtable discussion featured speakers from UN agencies, academia and civil society, and included opening remarks from Minister Andrew Mitchell (Minister of State for Development and Africa at FCDO) and Jonathan Prentice (Head of Secretariat for the UN Network on Migration).

The event focused on the potential adaptive capacity of migration in the context of climate change, widening the scope of current conversations around climate change and migration. Speakers explored concrete ways in which different migration pathways can support adaptation and how migrants and diasporas can be part of the solution if included in adaptation planning, implementation and monitoring.

This timely discussion and its outcome document will help to inform the UK White Paper on Development, as well as UK contributions to COP28, and to next year's GCM Regional Reviews, where climate change is likely to feature heavily as a key theme. Please see Annex X for further information about the objectives, speakers and background to the event.

Takeaways

- Migration in its various forms, is an effective and popular adaptation strategy, as it allows individuals to manage risks related to the negative impacts of climate change (e.g. loss of income and livelihoods). It can become more effective if enabling conditions are created by appropriate policy instruments.
- The recognition of migration's potential to enhance adaptation is embedded in several global frameworks including the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs). The GCM recognises the urgency of interconnections between climate change and migration and outlines a potential set of actions for response as well as a framework for collaboration.
- Addressing the intersections between climate change and migration requires a canopy of stakeholders to be engaged, particularly migrants themselves. It also requires partnerships between humanitarian, development, and climate actors.
- When speaking of migration and climate adaptation, it is just as important to focus on populations unable to move ('immobile populations') and areas experiencing out-migration and declining populations due to environmental degradation, as it is to focus on the challenges of migration and the risks and human security needs that migrants face in areas of destination.

- Diasporas are transnational communities bridging the interests of communities of origin/heritage and residence. Their financial contributions and the application of their knowledge and skills make them crucial actors and partners in both times of crisis and in the longer-term planning and policy changes needed to accelerate climate action.
- Cities provide key support to migrants, who arrive looking for employment, housing, and security. However, cities are also affected by climate risks. Migration to cities often involves a 'double whammy', or swapping of one risk with another, as migrants might move away from climate risks in areas of origin only to settle in high-risk areas (e.g. informal settlements) in cities of destination.
- Looking at routes for return migration or cyclical migration will be key to provide adaptation options and reduce demographic pressures on cities. Equally important will be ensuring that migrants are well integrated in areas of destination/residence. Receiving cities will play an increasingly important role in ensuring this.
- Some communities will be more affected by negative climate impacts due to compounding vulnerabilities, including youth and children, women and people with disabilities. It is important to engage these groups in regional and global mechanisms/forums and ensure their voices are listened to.

Good Practices

- The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is funding a global programme on Human mobility in the context of climate change, which has been running since 2017. This innovative project has been supporting partner countries in the Pacific, Caribbean and East Africa, and organisations, at different levels in managing mobility in context of climate change in a sustainable and development-oriented way. In Fiji, for example, the project supported the development of guidelines and capacity building around voluntary planned relocation.
  - BMZ supports and is looking to expand regular migration pathways, which currently have a development focus, to provide climate action outcomes. This follows the increasing need for (green) skilled workers in Germany, including for the energy transition. Two initiatives were mentioned which could be expanded to focus on green skills and climate adaptation:
  - Since 2017, the BMZ has been financing "centres for migration and development" in nine selected countries. These centres offer information to people considering migration for work and training purposes to help them in making their decisions.
  - The BMZ is funding an initiative 'Improving employment opportunities within skilled craft professions', which provides refugees in Jordan with vocational training, and information and advisory services for specific sectors. The project aims to improve private-public cooperation through the strong collaboration with the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts.
- The Government of Jamaica established the Global Jamaica Diaspora Council to connect diaspora experts in specific areas with the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. The Council draws from Jamaican diaspora's expertise around the globe and covers sectors such as health, commerce, development and the environment. It directly informs policy at local, national and even regional level, as well as offering a platform for dialogue between diaspora and countries of heritage, and among the diaspora themselves.

- IOM is managing a global project, 'Diaspora 4 Climate Action' which aims to connect diaspora from Ghana, Jamaica and Bangladesh, with Governments and stakeholders in countries of origin to strengthen climate action. This project also provides a platform for diaspora from different countries of heritage to work together and share best practices, strengthening collective capabilities and outcomes.
- In 2021, C40 Cities and the Mayors Migration Council (MMC) established a Global Mayors Task Force on Climate and Migration and developed an Action Agenda, which are grounded on three main principles:
- Strengthen climate resilience in cities
- Promote integration and inclusion of climate migrants in cities
- Create opportunities for a just and green economy, and provide good-quality employment
- Within the C40 network, good practices were highlighted where cities are successfully changing the narrative around migration by promoting job creation in green sectors and safer housing options to minimise urban expansion in areas at high climate risk.
- The Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF) supports a 360-degree implementation of the Global Compact for Migration. Climate change has been a priority for the Fund since 2021, following a growing demand from the ground. The MMPTF currently funds 4 joint programmes and has 4 in pipeline focusing on climate change and migration. These include a Regional IGAD project and a Regional Pacific project. The Trust provides a good mechanism for supporting initiatives that advance both migration and climate adaptation goals, while ensuring diversity of partnerships, a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and people-centred approach.

Recommendations

- Speakers highlighted the need for national governments to regularise migration routes – particular for return migration, circular/cyclical migration, and migration to urban areas. Governments should also focus on providing meaningful life opportunities in areas of destination.
- Governments in countries/areas of origin and destination should prioritise protecting people's dignity of choice and providing safe and regular migration pathways. Policy and programming efforts should focus on ensuring 1) people's right to stay, through building resilient livelihoods in climate-vulnerable countries; 2) that safe and regular migration pathways are available, particularly labour migration which builds on cooperation and benefits both communities of origin and destination; 3) voluntary and planned relocation options that are grounded in human rights and participatory approaches; 4) involuntary immobility is minimised.
- Diasporas, with their knowledge, networks and expertise, can advise governments on climate action and inform their strategy on environmental migration. Small Island Developing States in particular are faced with a threat to their own existence – diasporas from the region can support and enable government climate initiatives by providing information and knowledge.
- Countries of residence such as the UK, can benefit from diasporas knowledge and links to countries of heritage to achieve best outcomes in the implementation of humanitarian response and development programming.

- The experience of the African continent – which is witnessing a significant growth in youth population - highlights the potential and existing aspiration of youth to improve the living conditions in their communities. Investing in green skills training and jobs for young people will advance climate adaptation goals to the benefit of the wider community.
- Including youth representation in global, regional and national forums on climate change and migration is crucial as youth are usually the first ones to move and are already engaged on the topic of climate change. Young people should also make themselves available to be listened to at these forums. Youth active participation in the Africa Climate Summit and the draft of the first Youth Climate Assembly Declaration this year is a good example of youth engagement on the topic.

Annex: Background Information

Objectives of the Talk

- Increase knowledge and understanding of best practices around programming and policy in the context of migration, climate change and adaptation amongst UK Government and the wider GCM community
- Increase the level of awareness within the UK of the climate change and migration nexus, including the role of migration in the context of adaptation
- Inform UK's statement and contributions to COP28, GCM Regional Reviews and the White Paper on Development
- Create an opportunity for peer learning and networking

Organization and Attendance

- The 90-minute GCM Talk was held in-person (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in London) and online. The GCM Talk was organised by the FCDO and IOM UK, with the support of the Network secretariat.
- Registered external participants: 490, Participants: 350 (including FCDO colleagues and external participants both online and in-person)
- Moderator: Soumyadeep Banerjee, Regional Migration, Environment and Climate Change Specialist, IOM
- Opening:
  - Minister Andrew Mitchell, Minister of State (Development and Africa) at FCDO
  - Jonathan Prentice, Head of the UN Migration Network Secretariat
- Closing: Hayley Sharp (Head of Programmes, FCDO), Jonathan Prentice
- Panel: Prof Neil Adger, Elizabeth Mullings-Smith, Christina Dexel, Sachin Bhoite, Marc Tilley, Reiko Matsuyama

Background

- Climate change presents an immediate and growing threat across the world and is already influencing migration flows. The intersection of climate change and migration is

becoming an increasingly important global challenge, requiring international action and co-operation. Currently, the vast majority of people moving in the context of climate change are doing so within their own country. However, some of the most vulnerable people are already being left behind.

- The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) recognises this challenge, identifying slow onset environmental degradation, disasters, and climate change impacts as drivers of migration. The GCM outlines potential responses to these drivers including; disaster preparedness, disaster risk reduction and disaster response, and facilitation of population movements. Different forms of migration (e.g., labour migration, planned evacuation, pastoralism, and planned relocation) could enhance adaptation if enabling conditions are available. In recognition of its growing salience, climate-related migration was discussed at length at the International Migration Review Forum in 2022 and will likely grow in prominence as a theme in future international dialogues.

- The UK recognises climate change as a significant factor in driving migration. The international community will need to work together to ensure these movements are safe, orderly, and regular, and that they work to benefit both countries of origin and destination, as well as the migrants themselves. To help develop our understanding of the challenges and potential solutions arising from this issue the UK has funded research on the relationship between climate change and human mobility. We are using this, and the growing body of evidence from around the world, to support development of a comprehensive policy position on climate migration.

- To add to this evidence base, this talk will focus on the potential adaptive capacity of migration in the context of climate change, widening the scope of current conversations around climate change and migration. Speakers will explore concrete ways in which different migration pathways (e.g. labour migration, planned evacuation, pastoralism, and planned relocation) can support adaptation and how migrants and diasporas can be part of the solution if included in adaptation planning, implementation and monitoring. The timing of this event is particularly relevant in the lead up to COP28, and to next year's GCM Regional Reviews, where climate change is likely to feature heavily as a key theme.

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