

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION  
FOR MIGRATION IS COMMITTED TO  
THE PRINCIPLE THAT HUMANE No. 18  
AND ORDERLY INTERNATIONAL  
MIGRATION DIALOGUE BENEFITS  
MIGRANTS AND ON MIGRATION  
SOCIETY IOM ASSISTS IN MEETING  
THE GROWING OPERATIONAL  
CHALLENGES OF MIGRATION  
MANAGEMENT CLIMATE CHANGE,  
ADVANCES ENVIRONMENTAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF DEGRADATION  
MIGRATION ISSUES AND MIGRATION  
ENCOURAGES SOCIAL AND ECO-  
NOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH  
MIGRATION UPHOLDS THE HUMAN  
DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING OF  
MIGRANTS





No. 18

**INTERNATIONAL  
DIALOGUE  
ON MIGRATION**

**CLIMATE CHANGE,  
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION  
AND MIGRATION**



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International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Opinions expressed in the chapters of this book by named contributors are those expressed by the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM.

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*The primary goal of IOM is to facilitate the orderly and humane management of international migration... To achieve that goal, IOM will focus on the following activities, acting at the request of or in agreement with Member States:...*

*7. To promote, facilitate and support regional and global debate and dialogue on migration, including through the International Dialogue on Migration, so as to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges it presents, the identification and development of effective policies for addressing those challenges and to identify comprehensive approaches and measures for advancing international cooperation... (IOM Strategy, adopted by the IOM Council in 2007).*

IOM launched its International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) at the fiftieth anniversary session of the IOM Council in 2001, at the request of the Organization's membership. The purpose of the IDM, consistent with the mandate in IOM's constitution, is to provide a forum for Member States and Observers to identify and discuss major issues and challenges in the field of international migration, to contribute to a better understanding of migration and to strengthen cooperation on migration issues between governments and with other actors. The IDM also has a capacity-building function, enabling experts from different domains and regions to share policy approaches and effective practices in particular areas of interest and to develop networks for future action.

The IOM membership selects an annual theme to guide the IDM, as well as the topics of the IDM workshops. The inclusive, informal and constructive format of the dialogue has helped to create a more open climate for migration policy debate and has served to build confidence among the various migration stakeholders. In combination with targeted research and policy analysis, the IDM has also contributed to a better understanding of topical and emerging migration issues and their linkages with other policy domains. It has also facilitated the exchange of policy options and approaches among policymakers and practitioners, with a view towards more effective and humane governance of international migration.

The International Dialogue on Migration Publication Series (or “Red Book Series”) is designed to capture and review the results of the events and research carried out within the framework of the IDM. The Red Book Series is prepared and coordinated by the IDM Unit of IOM’s Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships. More information on the IDM can be found at [www.iom.int/idm](http://www.iom.int/idm).

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This publication contains the report and supplementary materials of a workshop on “Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration”, which was held in Geneva, Switzerland on 29–30 March 2011. The workshop, which took place under the overarching theme of the 2011 IDM, “The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change”, was attended by 230 participants, representing 80 governments and 16 international organizations, 29 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the private sector, academia and the media.

The publication opens with a Chair’s Summary of the principal conclusions derived from the workshop, which were presented to the workshop participants at the end of the two-day event, followed by a more detailed report of the deliberations and recommendations which emerged from the discussions. In addition, the publication also contains the agenda and background paper pertaining to the workshop.

The IDM 2011 was organized by the IDM Unit of IOM’s Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships, under the overall direction of Md. Shahidul Haque. Special thanks for the preparation of the background paper and the report are owed to Karoline Popp and Daniel Salmon, the principal authors.

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# **CHAIR'S SUMMARY**



## CHAIR'S SUMMARY

As part of IOM's annual International Dialogue on Migration – dedicated in 2011 to the theme “The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change” – the IOM membership selected the topic “Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration” as the focus of a workshop in Geneva, Switzerland on 29–30 March 2011.<sup>1</sup> The workshop identified some of the main areas in which governments and institutions may need to reinforce their capacities to manage the complex interactions between climate change and environmental degradation and human mobility.

The workshop was framed by the notion that a comprehensive approach to managing environmental migration would aim to minimize to the extent possible forced migration resulting from environmental factors; where forced migration does occur, to ensure assistance and protection for those affected and seek durable solutions to their situation; and, lastly, to facilitate the role of migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change.

Three main areas of capacity-building emerged: building knowledge and improving data collection; strengthening policy, institutional, administrative and legal frameworks; and reinforcing operational and technical capacities.

This document summarizes the workshop discussions through a series of main messages and makes proposals for future activities to take forward the conclusions of the workshop.

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<sup>1</sup> The workshop background paper, “Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration”, and other conference material can be found at: [www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en](http://www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en).

## Main messages

### 1. Main messages on the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and migration:

- Environmental migration, like all migration, is a multi-causal phenomenon. There are no simple causal relationships between the environment and migration.
- While the empirical evidence base remains thin and needs reinforcement, it is recognized that environmental drivers play a significant and increasingly determinative role in migration phenomena.
- Environmental migration is multifaceted: it can be internal, regional or international, temporary or permanent, forced, voluntary or a mix of those characteristics. The blurred distinction between forced and voluntary migration was mentioned repeatedly at the workshop.
- Participants at the workshop acknowledged that, given the complexity of the phenomenon, it is not easy to establish clear definitions and standard terminology. There was a general understanding, however, that the term “environmental/ climate change *refugee*” should be avoided due to the specific meaning of “refugee” in international law.
- The importance of preparing for internal migration, in particular rural–urban migration, was a strong theme throughout the workshop, as was the need to reckon with increasing urbanization and the vulnerabilities of and in cities in the context of climate change.
- It was acknowledged that, in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, migration can be both considered a challenge and a solution. Where displacement means harm and suffering, measures are needed to stabilize populations as much as possible. However, migration’s positive role as a potential adaptation strategy was also highlighted numerous times.

- Participants reflected on how to talk *about* and how to talk *with* the populations affected by climate change and possible migratory consequences.
- Speakers underlined that the concept of vulnerability is important but needs to be applied carefully. It was repeated that often the most vulnerable populations are in fact those *not* able to move.

## 2. *Main messages on capacities and policy processes:*

- There was a strong call for inclusive and participatory processes involving affected populations as directly and as early as possible.
- It was repeatedly stated that local communities should form the primary locus of action and attention. Consultations, training and capacity-building at the local level were cited.
- Particular emphasis was placed on capacities in developing and least developed countries that are at greatest risk of suffering the effects of environmental degradation and climate change.
- Systematic budgeting and long-term planning of resources was called for, especially to allow for flexibility in responding to emergencies.
- The workshop reiterated the significance of adopting human rights-based strategies in addressing environmental migration and suggested that multi-pronged legal approaches may be the best way to tackle the diverse manifestations of environmental migration.
- As a starting point, it was suggested that policymakers should make full use of all existing bodies of laws and instruments, both hard and soft law (humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, instruments on internal displacement, disaster management, legal migration and others).

- It was emphasized that migration management systems should be linked with other policy objectives, in terms of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian responses and sustainable development, in comprehensive policy strategies.
- The discussions sent out a strong message of urgency: even if not all consequences of climate change are visible now and even if there are still many gaps in our understanding of environmental migration, this should not be a disincentive to start acting now.
- Strong political will and the building of partnerships are indispensable for progress in dealing with environmental migration.

## **Way forward**

Based on the discussions that took place during the workshop, a number of possible future activities emerged in three main areas of capacities: building knowledge and improving data collection; strengthening policy, institutional, administrative and legal frameworks; and reinforcing operational and technical capacities.

### *1. Building knowledge and improving data collection:*

- Developing a strategic research agenda to enhance data and knowledge on the linkages between migration and the environment, as recommended also by the Global Forum on Migration and Development Round Table 3.2 in 2010, *inter alia*, by:
  - Producing analytical frameworks that help isolate the climate change drivers of migration;
  - Analysing how other factors (such as gender, conflict or economic, political, cultural elements) interact with

environmental ones and impact on vulnerabilities and possible migratory outcomes;

- Using scenario-based approaches to obtain a better picture of future migration patterns and flows related to climate change and environmental degradation;
  - Clarifying the terminology related to environmental migration.
- Preparing country/ regional reports, in particular for the most vulnerable countries, to assess existing evidence on migration and environment issues and sharing lessons learned.

## 2. *Strengthening policy, institutional, administrative and legal frameworks:*

- Formulating strategies that involve local public, private and non-governmental actors at all stages of policy design, from the assessment of needs to planning and implementation;
- Extending regional consultation and cooperation in addressing migration and environment/ climate change, possibly in conjunction with regional bodies and/or Regional Consultative Processes on Migration;
- Acting in partnership at all levels and among a variety of actors, for example through inter-ministerial coordination, through inter-agency collaboration, and by bringing together stakeholders from the migration, climate change, humanitarian, and development communities;
- Devising strategies to facilitate regular migration in response to environmental factors and developing solutions for those already on the move, including temporary authorization to stay for environmental migrants and temporary protection models.

### *3. Reinforcing operational and technical capacities:*

- Developing preparedness measures and programmes to prevent and manage displacement and to minimize the impacts of forced migration on natural disaster scenarios, through such measures as early warning systems, contingency planning and bolstered capacities for humanitarian assistance and protection, especially for the most vulnerable groups;
- Focusing on local communities, particularly in vulnerable areas, in efforts to mitigate any negative impacts of environmental factors on livelihoods and prepare for potential movement of people;
- Building comprehensive migration management approaches by mainstreaming disaster risk reduction, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation strategies into existing migration management policies as tools and frameworks that contribute to sustainable development;
- Facilitating migration as an adaptation strategy by incorporating migration issues into existing tools such as National Adaptation Programmes of Action, Poverty Reduction Strategies Plans and National Climate Change Programmes.

According to priorities defined by the IOM membership, based on the Organization's mandate<sup>2</sup> and experience, and in partnership with appropriate organizations, IOM will continue to support and facilitate the management of environmental migration.

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<sup>2</sup> IOM Constitution and IOM Strategy: Council Resolution No. 1150 (XCIII) and Annex.



# WORKSHOP REPORT

*“Climate change is already triggering displacement and migration, as a result of increasingly intense weather events, rising sea levels, and accelerated environmental degradation.*

*In the future, we may be facing an increase in population flows that the world is presently ill-equipped to tackle effectively. While climate change is not the only driver of such movements, it is likely to be one of the major ones in the decades to come.”*

William Lacy Swing, Director General of IOM,  
at the Sixteenth Conference of the Parties (COP 16)  
of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
in Cancun, Mexico  
9 December 2010



# INTRODUCTION

As part of IOM's annual International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) - dedicated in 2011 to the theme "The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change" - the membership of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) selected the topic "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration" as the focus of a workshop in Geneva, Switzerland on 29-30 March 2011.

Climate change is, by now, a certainty and is becoming increasingly visible. While the phenomenon has been widely studied, its impact on migration is not yet sufficiently explored or recognized. However, as the IDM workshop highlighted, there are strong reasons to believe that climate change and environmental degradation play an increasingly determinative role in shaping human mobility. Climate change is understood to heighten the intensity and frequency of natural disasters and accelerate environmental degradation, which may induce people to migrate because of threats to their lives or livelihoods.

Environmental migration, however, is essentially a complex, multi-causal phenomenon, driven by a variety of factors and compounded by social, economic and political forces. In this context, it is important to note that environmental migration is not necessarily a problem and does not necessarily carry negative effects for migrants and countries of origin, transit and destination. Indeed, migration has been a traditional coping mechanism, widely used by populations around the world to adapt to a changing environment. If properly managed, migration can therefore also be a solution to cope with climate change. A comprehensive approach to managing environmental migration

would therefore aim to minimize instances of forced migration; to ensure assistance and protection to the displaced where forced migration does occur; and to facilitate the potential of migration to be an adaptation strategy to climate change.

The workshop built on IOM's concerted effort in recent years to bring this topic to the attention of migration policymakers and the international community at large, including through an Expert Seminar held in 2007, a session on migration and the environment at the Ninety-fourth Session of the IOM Council in the same year, its inclusion in the IOM *World Migration Report 2010: The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change*, and numerous publications and smaller initiatives.<sup>1</sup> The workshop also took place in the context of other multilateral processes which devoted attention to the question of human mobility in relation to climate change, such as the Fourth Global Forum on Migration and Development in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico in 2010. In the same year, the migration consequences of climate change were, for the first time, acknowledged in the United Nations climate change negotiation, specifically at the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Cancun, Mexico. Paragraph 14f of the Cancun Agreements "...invites all Parties to enhance action on adaptation under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances, by undertaking, inter alia, the following: ... measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at national, regional and international levels."

While these and other developments demonstrate the growing awareness of policymakers and practitioners of the challenges of environmental migration, the translation of this awareness into concrete policies and actions at the national level is still

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<sup>1</sup> For more on IOM's work on migration, climate change and the environment, visit [www.iom.int/envmig](http://www.iom.int/envmig). The 2010 World Migration Report entitled *The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change* is also available on the Organization's website [http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=37&products\\_id=653](http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=37&products_id=653).

in its early stages. The IDM workshop thus contributed to the exchange and development of innovative solutions, specifically by identifying some of the principal capacities required by governments to tackle the links between migration, climate change and environmental degradation. Capacity-building, as discussed in the aforementioned IOM *World Migration Report 2010*, implies a wide range of activities to strengthen knowledge, abilities, skills, resources, structures and processes to achieve policy goals effectively and sustainably and to adapt to change. While capacity-building does not necessarily imply increased financial investments, it requires political will, priority-setting, a strong information base, coherent administrative structures and systematic dialogue among relevant stakeholders.



## **SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP**

The workshop on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration was the first session of the 2011 International Dialogue for Migration.<sup>1</sup> The workshop was attended by 230 participants, representing 80 governments and 16 international organizations, 29 NGOs, as well as the private sector, academia and the media. Participants came together to exchange experiences, lessons learned, effective practices and policy approaches on the link between climate change, environmental degradation and migration.

The specific objectives of the workshop were:

- To bring together governments to exchange their experiences of and responses to the realities of environmentally induced movements in their respective societies and to identify effective practices for minimizing vulnerability;
- To provide the IOM membership with the opportunity to discuss different dimensions of capacity-building required to manage the multifaceted impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility;
- To exchange innovative ideas for multi-stakeholder partnerships at all stages of the migration process, including strategies for a comprehensive approach to ensure effective protection and assistance to environmental migrants.

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the workshop, including presentations by speakers and background material, can be found at [www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en](http://www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en).

A background paper, provided to participants in advance of the workshop, outlined the principal concepts, definitions, policy challenges and areas of focus for capacity-building. The conclusions of the discussion were presented at the end of the two-day deliberations in the form of a Chair's Summary. Both the background paper and the Chair's Summary are enclosed in this report.



# **DELIBERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP**

The following four main areas for capacity-building received particular emphasis during the workshop and serve to structure this report:

1. Knowledge base and research capacity on environmental migration;
2. Capacities to devise solid legal and institutional frameworks to ensure the protection of those on the move for environmental reasons;
3. Capacities for comprehensive migration management policies to tackle the multifaceted impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility;
4. Technical and operational capacities to support vulnerable populations and promote effective migration management in the context of environmental changes.

## **1. Expand the knowledge base on environmental migration by investing in strategic, policy-relevant research and data collection.**

The development of capacities to better confront the migration challenges relating to climate change requires a solid understanding of the patterns and causalities of environmental migration, through sound data and further investment in the knowledge base. While it is unlikely that absolute certainty can be achieved on questions such as the number of environmental migrants in the world, it was acknowledged that more can be done to address several persistent knowledge gaps. The development of raw data, local case studies and country-specific analyses, a focus on internal/rural-urban migration, agricultural livelihood strategies, slow-onset disasters and regional migration flows in least developed parts of the world were cited as particularly crucial elements in building a strategic research agenda. Considering that the most detrimental effects of climate change will likely be witnessed in developing countries, these should receive priority in reinforcing research capacities and improving the knowledge base on the potential effects of environmental factors on human mobility.

- **Developing a comprehensive research platform:** One major impediment besetting global research on environmental migration is the scattered nature of the existing material; as well as its low levels of comparability. Compiling and systematizing existing research on environmental migration could further interdisciplinary cross-fertilization, allow researchers to compare and contrast different methodologies, promote more targeted future research, and extract policy-relevant conclusions from a broader information base.
  - A recommendation advanced during the workshop, in line with that discussed at the Global Forum on Migration and Development in Mexico in 2010 (Round Table 3.2), was to design a virtual clearing house, storing all relevant studies, policy documents, data sources and other materials relating to environmental migration.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gfmd.org/en/gfmd-meetings/mexico-2010.html](http://www.gfmd.org/en/gfmd-meetings/mexico-2010.html)

- **Pursuing interdisciplinary approaches and innovative methodologies:** Researchers are acknowledging that simple causal links are a rare occurrence when examining the connections between migration, climate change and environmental degradation. Scenario-based approaches, household surveys, migrant questionnaires and participatory research methods were some of the techniques mentioned to help obtain a better grasp of complex and non-linear relationships and of current and future migration patterns and flows. In general, participants also stressed that more primary data, both qualitative and quantitative, is needed.
  - Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios (EACH-FOR), a two-year-long research project of the European Commission which concluded in 2009, aimed to identify the causes of forced migration in relation to environmental degradation/change and direct and indirect links with other social, political and economic phenomena. The case studies covered Europe and Russia, Newly Independent States and Central Asia, Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana, Middle East and Northern Africa, and Latin America. EACH-FOR developed detailed and aggregated forced migration scenarios on the basis of interdisciplinary analysis of local and regional environmental, economic, political and social processes.<sup>2</sup>
- **Developing data and knowledge with a long-term vision.** Given the limited availability of data, drawing conclusions about medium- to long-term trends in climate change and their impact on migration is fraught with difficulties, but nonetheless essential to help chart the future direction of policies and programmes. Under shorter time horizons, the effects of slow-onset disasters, for example, are often neglected or discounted. Similarly, the true impact of migration on adaptation capacities needs to be assessed under longer timescales.
  - Led by the Government Office for Science, London, UK, the 2011 Foresight Project on Migration and Global Environmental Change studies the potential effects of

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<sup>2</sup> [www.each-for.eu/](http://www.each-for.eu/).

global environmental change on population movements between today and 2060. The scope of the project encompasses international as well as internal migration patterns. A key feature of the analysis is the way in which “traditional” drivers of migration interact with or may be altered by environmental change. Using scenario-based approaches and regional workshops, the project involves around 350 experts and stakeholders from 30 countries around the world.<sup>3</sup>

- **Linking research to policymaking** to better inform the formulation of policies and programmes, while also orientating research towards policy needs was called for numerous times. Establishing two-way feedback between research and policymaking can enhance the institutional capacities of governments in managing environmental migration and promote more guided and practical research. The workshop discussions drew attention to the fact that research capacities in developing countries remain limited; as a result, research on migration, climate change and environmental degradation is concentrated in developed parts of the world, even though some of the biggest impacts of climate change on migration are likely to be felt in less and least developed countries. Twinning projects between research institutions in the developing and developed worlds were suggested as a possible measure.
  - The African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Observatory on Migration is working on building up research capacities in the three regions and linking policymakers with the research community. An important objective of the ACP Observatory is to develop the knowledge base on “South-South” migration, exceedingly relevant in the context of climate change.<sup>4</sup>
- **Preparing country/regional reports**, in particular for the most vulnerable countries, to gather information and gauge the evidence on environmental migration on a scale that

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<sup>3</sup> [www.bis.gov.uk/foresight/](http://www.bis.gov.uk/foresight/).

<sup>4</sup> [www.acpmigration-obs.org/](http://www.acpmigration-obs.org/).

is useful for policymakers. Consolidating the available information in such a format not only enhances the capacities of governments to address issues, it also allows researchers to obtain a more comprehensive picture of what evidence exists and where more research may be needed.

- *Assessing the Evidence: Environment, Climate Change and Migration in Bangladesh* is one example of such a country report prepared by IOM that draws on a variety of sources and studies. The report provides evidence on the nexus between climate change, the environment and migration in Bangladesh, in relation both to sudden- and slow-onset natural disasters and various forms of environmental degradation. The report also analyses the role of the environment and climate change in shaping the country's long-term development and migration dynamics, and offers a number of policy options.<sup>5</sup>
  - In a similar project in Mauritius, IOM and its expert partners conducted a field assessment of environmental migration and adaptation to climate change. The assessment paid particular attention to the analysis of the vulnerabilities of different communities and groups, noting that some of those most severely affected lack the resources to relocate or change their livelihood activities. The study presented the current situation in Mauritius as regards environmental migration and was complemented by various capacity-building efforts, including awareness-raising campaigns and pilot job creation and training projects for vulnerable communities.<sup>6</sup>
- **Reinforcing data collection on internal migration and displacement:** The IDM workshop highlighted that most migration caused by environmental degradation and

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<sup>5</sup> This publication can be obtained through the IOM website: [http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&products\\_id=631](http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=631).

<sup>6</sup> The report *The Other Migrants Preparing for Change: Environmental Changes and Migration in the Republic of Mauritius* is available here: [http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=41\\_7&products\\_id=695](http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=41_7&products_id=695).

climate change is likely to take place internally, rather than internationally. Increased rural-urban migration, and enhanced rates of urbanization, are highly likely impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and require dedicated attention. Natural disasters, too, are resulting in internal displacement on a large scale. Strengthening existing monitoring systems and building a reliable base line from which to understand displacement and its magnitude, patterns and impacts helps to devise appropriate responses, assistance measures and long-term solutions.

- The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, carried out the first systematic estimate of displacement due to natural disasters in 2008. In that year, 20 million persons were newly displaced due to sudden-onset, climate-related disasters, with floods and storms being responsible for the largest share of displacement.<sup>7</sup>
- **Integrating livelihoods and agricultural patterns in research on migration, climate change and environmental degradation:** The importance of livelihoods, a key variable mediating between environmental factors and migration, was a consistent theme throughout the workshop. Researchers are increasingly devoting attention to the role of livelihood strategies and agriculture, particularly in analysing rural-urban migration as a result of environmental stresses.
  - Viet Nam's Can Tho University has developed in-depth research and predictions on the effects of climate change on the agricultural and livelihood strategies of populations and looked at potential ways to better manage internal migration patterns.
  - The United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, in collaboration with CARE International, is launching the research project "Where the rain falls: changing agro-climatic risks, hunger and

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<sup>7</sup> [www.internal-displacement.org/](http://www.internal-displacement.org/).

human mobility”, which focuses on how changing rainfall patterns are increasingly acting as a major driver of human migration and displacement. The 36-month research project will analyse the links between agro-climatic risks, food and livelihood security, and human mobility. Specifically, the project will examine the dependence of livelihoods on water, rainfall patterns and river systems in Asia to sustain farming and agricultural livelihoods, and the depletion of water basins in Central America and Northern Africa.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. Design and implement solid legal and institutional frameworks to ensure the protection of those on the move for environmental reasons.**

Today, there is no single legal framework which explicitly addresses the rights and needs of environmental migrants. It was noted at the workshop that the protection needs of environmental migrants often fall by the wayside, even though international human rights law and international migration law also apply to people uprooted by environmental degradation and climate change. As was repeatedly stressed, the complexity of environmental migration in terms of root causes, intervening factors and outcomes complicates the creation of unequivocal definitions and legislative frameworks. Some of the principal – and most vexing – questions in devising legal categories for environmental migrants include whether such movement is perceived as voluntary or involuntary; the nature of the trigger (a disaster versus a slow-onset process); whether international borders are crossed; the extent to which there are political incentives to characterize something as linked to climate change or not; and whether movement is driven or aggravated by human factors such as discrimination.<sup>9</sup> All of these considerations have implications for applicable protection frameworks and for the allocation of responsibilities. Therefore, in the absence of a

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<sup>8</sup> [www.wheretherainfalls.org/](http://www.wheretherainfalls.org/).

<sup>9</sup> Refer to the presentation by Professor Jane McAdam available at the workshop website, [www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en](http://www.iom.int/idmclimatechange/lang/en).

unified international legal framework to address these concerns, a combination of existing sources of law – including both “hard” and “soft” law and international and regional instruments – offers the best starting point to meet some of the legal challenges posed by environmental migration. The workshop reiterated the significance of adopting rights-based approaches to environmental migration, and enshrining these in national legislation.

- **Adopting multi-pronged legal approaches.** The complex, multi-causal nature of environmental migration is a major reason why “one-size-fits-all” solutions cannot capture the multiple manifestations of environmental migration and the variety of protection and assistance needs of environmental migrants. Instead, a combination of humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, instruments on internal displacement, legal migration and others can be applied to guarantee protection and rights to those on the move in a wide range of circumstances.
  - A number of participants underlined the importance of human rights instruments, including resolutions passed as part of the United Nations Human Rights Council, to guide States in resolving some of the challenges created by the impacts of climate change. The rights to life, shelter, food, water and self-determination were considered particularly relevant in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and migration.
  - Particular concern surrounds the situation of countries such as the Maldives, whose existence is threatened by rising sea levels and other hazards associated with climate change. There was acknowledgement of the fact that the unprecedented legal questions resulting from these scenarios continue to remain unanswered. Nonetheless, timely steps should be taken to address this gap and prevent potential statelessness. Adaptation measures and possibly gradual relocation cannot wait until legal debates have reached a definitive conclusion.



- **Consolidating protection and assistance provisions for internal migrants:** Internal migration and displacement is already larger than cross-border migration by several orders of magnitude and is likely to become even more significant in the context of climate change. In anticipation of these challenges, States are developing and implementing legal frameworks that provide for the protection of the internally displaced as a result of natural disasters and other environmental factors.
  - The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement received much attention at the workshop, as a legal tool which, though considered “soft law”, is now widely adopted and applied. Furthermore, the Guiding Principles explicitly include persons internally displaced as a result of environmental disasters.
  - At the regional level, the African Union Convention on the Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (known as the “Kampala Convention”), adopted in 2009, integrates existing international human rights and humanitarian law that apply to the situation of internally displaced persons. Importantly, the Convention makes explicit reference to displacement as a result of natural disasters and climate change. The Convention, however, is not yet in force<sup>10</sup> and ratification remains low, demonstrating that the effectiveness of legal instruments also depends on political will and institutional capacities to translate them into practical tools.
- **Clarifying terminology related to environmental migration:** In the same vein, the workshop discussed the many complications of agreeing on a standard vocabulary on environmental migration. Participants concurred that the term “environmental refugee” or “climate change refugee” is inappropriate due to the specific meaning of “refugee” in international law: the precise conditions that need to be met

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<sup>10</sup> At the time of the workshop. For updates on the ratification status of the Kampala Convention, see [www.internal-displacement.org/kampala-convention](http://www.internal-displacement.org/kampala-convention).

to classify a person as a refugee as per the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees do not – or only under very exceptional circumstances – apply to situations where population movement is induced by environmental factors.

- Rather than allocating rights, IOM's proposed working definition intends to descriptively encompass the many dimensions of the phenomenon: "Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to have to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their territory or abroad."<sup>11</sup>
  
- **Building on existing instruments and mechanisms, including those unrelated to environmental issues:** Extending, adapting or systematizing existing legal tools regarding migration can offer a range of useful options to facilitate positive migration and offer protection to those in need, for instance at the national and regional levels.
  - Temporary Protection Status, as utilized in the United States of America and several other countries, is an ad hoc policy that entitles nationals of designated countries to remain in the country of destination if it has been deemed dangerous for them to return to their home country because of an environmental disaster, war or other temporary severe condition. Generally, temporary protection is not open to those leaving their country because of a natural disaster, but only to those already abroad. Nevertheless, such provisions can protect individuals from being returned to situations of extreme risk and vulnerability. They can also help relieve the strain on rebuilding countries by stemming the flow

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<sup>11</sup> The definition was first proposed in a paper on Migration and the Environment presented to IOM Member States and Observers at the Ninety-fourth Session of the IOM Council in 2007. The definition is restated in IOM's *2008 World Migration Report* and IOM's *2011 Glossary on Migration* (Second Edition).

of returnees, while supporting the country through remittances sent by nationals working abroad.

- New Zealand has created the Pacific Access Category as a regional migration strategy for labour migrants from neighbouring Small Island Developing States Kiribati, Tuvalu and Tonga. While environmental or climate change factors did not play into the development of this policy, such migration schemes can indirectly support adaptation efforts in developing countries and countries vulnerable to the effects of climate change through remittances and other benefits brought about by migration.<sup>12</sup>
- **Evaluating the use of soft law in addressing environmental migration:** Soft law approaches to environmental migration have gained some traction, as agreements can be reached gradually and consensus may emerge more easily than if a full-fledged convention were at stake. Although many participants recognized the attractiveness of soft law approaches, they also highlighted some of the challenges, in particular if the process of creating soft law instruments is not a State-led one. Experiences have also shown that soft law processes are not necessarily much faster than the negotiation of hard law treaties. As regards their translation into national legislation and implementation on the ground, soft law instruments, too, require investments, training, capacity-building and awareness-raising.

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<sup>12</sup> [www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/live/pacificaccess/](http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/live/pacificaccess/).

### **3. Build comprehensive migration management policies to tackle the multifaceted impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility.**

Three key themes emerged throughout the discussions: Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive policies which integrate disaster risk reduction, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into migration management policies. The link between migration, adaptation and sustainable development was highlighted as particularly important and one that needs to find expression in national policies. Secondly, participants stressed the value of systematic consultation with affected populations, especially vulnerable communities. Thirdly, policy formulation and implementation must be based on close coordination among the different branches of government and State agencies, as well as on strong partnerships with other actors. The capacities and involvement of local government are critical in this regard. Workshop participants expressed a sense of urgency in tackling environmental migration. Nonetheless, as most environmental changes occur gradually, they also pointed out that there remains a critical window of opportunity to plan for the consequences of climate change to migration. Policymakers were thus encouraged to use the opportunity to act ahead of time and improve policy coherence in this area of migration, for instance, by considering staggered and circular forms of migration as a form of adaptation, instead of reacting to spontaneous and often desperate flight when it is too late.

- **Recognizing and facilitating migration as a possible adaptation strategy:** The workshop discussions highlighted repeatedly that migration can bring about benefits for development and may thus also be harnessed for adaptation to climate change. Migration policies, however, have yet to take account of this fact; for example by promoting temporary and circular forms of migration as one possible adaptation strategy which allows for livelihood diversification, generates remittances and promotes the circulation of know-how.

Governments may therefore not only consider mainstreaming issues of environmental migration into development planning, but also include them in existing tools for climate change adaptation, such as National Adaptation Programmes of Action.

- There is a growing body of evidence, including through the studies prepared for the Foresight Project on Migration and Global Environmental Change, that remittances can act as powerful levers in increasing household resilience by supplementing incomes and allowing communities to cope with external stresses, including disasters and adverse environmental conditions.
- **Creating coherence between disaster risk reduction/disaster risk management and climate change adaptation strategies** would reduce duplication of efforts and save resources. Participants highlighted the synergies between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, in particular, as strategies that centre on vulnerability reduction, sustainable development and preparedness.
- **Bringing national policy frameworks in line with international standards.** A number of regional and international frameworks already exist that can support governments in developing appropriate policies. Mention was made of the guidance offered by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction,<sup>13</sup> the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Global Database on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as particularly relevant in addressing natural disasters and displacement.
- **Improving policy coherence through systematic inter-ministerial consultation and collaboration on migration and climate change.** Tackling the multiple manifestations of this phenomenon – disaster-induced displacement, rural–urban migration, international migration, planned relocation – necessarily requires the involvement and input

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<sup>13</sup> [www.unisdr.org/](http://www.unisdr.org/).

of a number of different branches of government. Increasing communication and coordination between ministries may facilitate the formulation and implementation of coherent policies and programmes in this regard.

- In 2010, the first multi-stakeholder Policy Dialogue on Environment, Climate Change and Migration was held in Bangladesh and saw the participation of officials from several ministries and government agencies, parliamentarians and experts from civil society and international organizations.<sup>14</sup>
  - In Pakistan, systems of inter-ministerial communication have been established to ensure that disaster risk reduction strategies are included in the projects of 12 ministries.
- **Developing far-sighted policies to manage inevitable relocations in the most humane and sustainable way:** Participants acknowledged that, in some cases, where areas are becoming uninhabitable or too dangerous, relocation may be inevitable, but that it should be planned for in order to minimize the human cost. Communities, including in the receiving locations, should be prepared for the move and consulted at all stages of the process. To the extent possible, relocation should preserve the social network of communities, while integrating them into their new environment. Likewise, adequate and appropriate socio-economic opportunities, the provision of services, and infrastructure development are critical if relocation is to be sustainable and successful.
- For example, Uruguay's National Relocation Plan (*Plan Nacional de Relocalizaciones*) aims to support the relocation of communities from flood-prone areas of the country. The plan is guided by the principles that households are to be relocated to temporary or permanent housing in dignified conditions and that social segregation is to be avoided. The affected communities will be relocated as close as possible to the area of origin and appropriately

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<sup>14</sup> [www.iom.org.bd/](http://www.iom.org.bd/).

supported with the necessary infrastructure. The plan also guarantees access to social protection and provides training to facilitate access to the labour market. A pilot project is being undertaken in the city of Durazno, which has already received around 400 relocated families since 2007.

- **Formulating policies that tackle rural-urban migration** which should, on the one hand, aim to strengthen and diversify rural livelihoods, while preparing urban areas for an influx of rural migrants, on the other hand. Policymakers at the workshop reiterated that temporary and seasonal migration is a traditional adaptation strategy to climatic variability which allows rural pastoralists and agriculturalists to spread risks and supplement their income through non-farming activities. At the same time, agricultural livelihoods are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and appropriate measures must be taken to protect fragile ecosystems and sustain local livelihoods in the long-term.
  - The Mbororo pastoralists in the Sahel have long adapted to the ecological and climatic conditions around them by leading a nomadic lifestyle. Accelerated environmental degradation, however, has caused their livelihood options to shrink. The Mbororo are compelled to cover larger distances, while the resistance by many countries and communities towards transborder pastoralism has resulted in discrimination and, on occasion, open tensions. Though ill-equipped for urban economies, increasing numbers of Mbororo are forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle and move to the cities.
  - Guatemala has introduced the *Sistema Guatemalteco de Áreas Protegidas* to conserve, rehabilitate and protect the country's biodiversity and natural resources, covering 32 per cent of national territory through this scheme. The preservation of rural land allows for sustainable farming and may help to slow rural-urban migration.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [www.conap.gob.gt/biodiversidad/sigap](http://www.conap.gob.gt/biodiversidad/sigap).

- The degradation of the fragile coastline of Senegal has prompted the government to implement policies to better support the socio-economic livelihoods of coastal and fishing communities, as stated in Senegal’s National Adaptation Programme of Action.
- **Approaching environmental migration from a “human security” perspective:** According to the workshop participants, climate change presents non-traditional security threats and policymakers are challenged to revisit standard notions of “security”. It was also stated that there is little in the way of conclusive evidence that migration in the context of climate change is a cause of conflict; at most, it can be considered an aggravating factor of pre-existing tensions. The concept of human security shifts the focus on the protection of individuals in terms of rights, choices, livelihoods and health, and is considered a more relevant approach to environmental migration.
- **Increasing consultation with and participation of affected communities in the policymaking process:** The IDM noted the importance of local and community-based capacity-building and called for the consistent involvement of local communities and the affected population as directly and as early in the policymaking process as possible. Enhancing communication is an important tool to fully include all stakeholders in gathering knowledge and formulating policy.
  - The Government of Senegal has carried out extensive community consultations, both in drafting the national law on protection of coastal areas and in preparing the country’s National Adaptation Programme of Action.
  - In Guatemala, “National Round Tables” on climate change have been established as a way of creating spaces for consultation and dialogue with affected populations. Specifically, the National Round Table on Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change promotes communication and consultation with some of the most vulnerable communities in the country.



- **Fostering inter-State partnerships and dialogue on environmental migration, especially at the regional level:**

The question of climate change, environmental degradation and migration is slowly appearing on multilateral agendas, both regionally and globally. Regional bodies, interregional processes and Regional Consultative Processes on Migration are well-placed to discuss implications for regional migration flows and develop joint responses. However, it was also noted that care should be taken to involve the right stakeholders in various bodies and processes if environmental migration is to be addressed in all its facets.

- The ASEAN Regional Forum on the Security Implications of Climate Change in 2010, while acknowledging climate change as a possible threat multiplier, also saw it as potentially galvanizing international cooperation. The forum also considered the question of migration and included the production of studies and scenarios on migration and other potential transboundary impacts of climate change among its recommendations.
- The 2006 African Union Migration Policy Framework for Africa is one of the few regional policy frameworks which refer to the relationship between migration and the environment, including rural-urban migration due to environmental degradation and disasters and the consequences of forced migration on the environment. The framework also offers a series of policy recommendations.

#### **4. Strengthen technical and operational capacities to support vulnerable populations and promote effective migration management in the context of environmental change and natural disasters.**

In developing and reinforcing capacities that comprehensively address the needs of vulnerable and (potentially) mobile communities, governments need to be equipped with a range of tools, structures and coordination mechanisms. Preparedness measures to minimize the impact of natural disasters, generally, and their displacement consequences more specifically, were stressed as a priority. Disaster risk reduction and disaster risk management are already applied in many countries, but depend on adequate capacities, information, governance structures and resources. Similarly, the role of migration in climate change adaptation needs to be further operationalized, as to date most countries focus exclusively on the prevention of forced migration as a result of environmental factors. As previously stated, few National Adaptation Programmes of Action make reference to migration at all, and even fewer recognize the adaptation potential of human mobility. Furthermore, the effects of climate change on migration will take different forms in different countries. For example, governments may anticipate disaster-related displacement, or predominantly rural-urban migration driven by environmental degradation. Population movements are often internal, but could also spill across borders, necessitating not only effective preparedness at the national level, but also strong cooperation and coordination structures with neighbouring States. Lastly, the workshop repeatedly stated the importance of engaging with local communities and local authorities, including through consultations, training and capacity-building, to enhance local resilience to slow- and sudden-onset natural disasters and facilitate local responses to challenges related to migration, climate change and environmental degradation.

- **Assessing vulnerability and strengthening livelihoods** are key steps in reducing repeated displacement. The cumulative effects of frequent natural disasters, ongoing environmental degradation and low levels of socio-economic resilience erode the capacities of local communities to adapt to environmental

challenges and may prompt forced migration. Various effective practices exist in the area of risk and vulnerability analysis to support efforts to ensure livelihood sustainability.

- In Sudan, Environmental and Livelihoods Vulnerability Mapping (ELVM) attempted to map the vulnerability of traditional rural livelihoods as well as key natural features and patterns across North and South Darfur. The project aimed to guide and inform return and resettlement planning by highlighting areas where natural resources (especially rainwater and groundwater) are climatically stable and where they are subject to fluctuations. The ELVM project was developed through remote sensing using a range of satellite imagery and databases, complemented with expert technical advice and some on-the-ground verification of data. The project also incorporated participative approaches and elements to reverse the severe land degradation caused by years of conflict, so as to ensure the sustainability of the return of displaced populations.<sup>16</sup>
- In Viet Nam, research has identified populations living in remote rural parts of the country, low-lying coastal regions and on semi-arid lands as the ones most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. There is also a high incidence of migration away from these areas to larger cities and, to a lesser extent, abroad. A survey will be undertaken to better understand these migration patterns, while in the medium and long run, interventions in the realm of disaster preparedness, environmental conservation and rural development are foreseen in order to support these vulnerable areas.
- **Increasing cohesion between different government institutions and agencies and building the capacity of local governments** were considered critical for effective preparedness to environmental risks and timely interventions

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<sup>16</sup> Environment and Livelihoods Vulnerability Mapping was carried out in partnership between IOM and the ProAct Network. The project was funded by the Government of Japan. For more information, see <http://proactnetwork.org/proactwebsite/en/assessmentmonitoringevaluation/vulnerability-mapping-darfur-sudan>.

in the event of a natural disaster. Where different government agencies or different levels of government are involved in disaster preparedness and response, for example, a review of responsibilities, processes and coordination mechanisms may be necessary to streamline and rationalize activities and planning.

- Pakistan has elaborated a multilevel system for its disaster management programming, consisting of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities, and District and Municipal Disaster Management Authorities. Under the NDMA's Medium Term Plan (2011–2015), particular efforts are made to strengthen capacities at the district level, including the preparation or updating of district and provincial disaster management plans to incorporate disaster risk reduction components. The aim is to enable local communities through resources and training to become “self-responders” in the event of natural disasters.
- **Empowering local communities:** Local populations need capacities to mitigate or adapt to the effects of climate change. Consultations, dialogue, training, awareness campaigns and educational strategies should be widely used to guarantee that the livelihood, economic and social needs of communities are addressed.
  - For example, Guatemala's reforestation programme (*Programa Piloto de Apoyos Forestales Directos*) involved local authorities and communities with the aim to support them in protecting and revitalizing rural areas and water resources, and to reduce the need to migrate.
  - Related to the above-mentioned project in Sudan, Environmental Planning for Return sought to enhance the potential for durable return to selected areas in Darfur by consulting specific communities, gathering knowledge pertinent to peoples' use of natural resources, and supporting sustainable environmental management and livelihood development. The project conducted a series of stakeholder consultation meetings which

resulted in community-based environmental action plans being developed and implemented at selected sites. The process was based on a participatory learning and action approaches.<sup>17</sup>

- **Focusing on urban areas** which are not only primary destinations for environmental migrants, but are often themselves threatened by climate change. As a result, urban populations can also experience significant risk. Furthermore, migrants from rural areas arriving in cities are often forced to live on marginal lands and in precarious circumstances, further increasing their vulnerability. Urban areas need to be better prepared for an inevitable increase in their populations, coupled with severe environmental and infrastructural challenges.
  - Uruguay's Ministry of Housing, Territory Planning and Environment has developed a five-year housing plan (*Plan Nacional de Vivienda 2010–2014*) to increase access to and the quantity, quality, and diversity of permanent housing. One particular feature is the focus on households who had to be relocated from flood-prone zones to urban and semi-urban areas.
  - In Senegal, the Ministry of the Environment and the Protection of Nature is concerned about the drought-induced rural exodus which has led to an increase in the population of coastal cities, which themselves could be at risk of climate change.
  - In Bangladesh, large numbers of internal migrants arrive in the country's cities every year. Many left their homes in rural areas due to flooding, coastal and riverbank erosion, and the cumulative effects of natural disasters and environmental degradation. While migration to cities can generate opportunities for those living in vulnerable areas and affected by environmental hazards, it also places considerable strain on housing, infrastructure, sanitation and services in Bangladesh's urban areas.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://proactnetwork.org/proactwebsite/en/envirodemonstrationproject/environmental-planning-for-return>.

- **Budgeting systematically for disaster preparedness and investing in long-term planning:** Implementing long-term national plans that incorporate and combine elements of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction prepare countries for the likely effects of climate change, including a greater frequency of slow- and sudden-onset natural disasters. Synergies with existing development or adaptation plans should be sought wherever possible, in order to use technical, human and financial resources in the most rational way.
  - To allow for rapid response to unforeseen disasters, Guatemala sets aside a percentage of its budget every year as a reserve for emergencies.
  
- **Strengthening and integrating disaster preparedness, response, recovery and adaptation capacities** to minimize forced migration and its impacts in natural disaster scenarios. Both immediate protection and assistance and recovery and reconstruction support should aim to ensure that displacement does not become protracted. Putting in place and regularly updating disaster risk management and disaster risk reduction plans and capacities is critical, as are practical steps such as implementing early warning systems and investing in contingency planning.
  - In relation to disaster preparedness, some of the action plans presented at the IDM highlighted the following areas as strategic capacities to enhance and activate: a) risk assessment of major human settlements and economic centres; b) technical studies on hazards associated with climate change; c) investment in more robust national institutions for disaster management; d) investment in early warning and risk monitoring systems; e) preparation and regular updating of national and local disaster management plans; f) community-based disaster risk reduction activities; g) response mechanism for disaster-induced displacement; and h) contingency planning and stockpiling material in preparation for disaster.

- The European Union invests in disaster risk reduction programmes in developing countries as a form of adaptation to climate change. Considering that prevention yields better returns than relief, recovery and reconstruction, the programmes focus on training, capacity-building and investment in civil protection mechanisms related to disaster risk reduction.
  - The Kampala Convention, referred to earlier, stipulates development of early warning systems, disaster risk reduction strategies and disaster response measures in areas of potential displacement.
  - Collaboration with a range of partners, including the private sector, can yield innovative approaches, as in Pakistan, where the Watan Card programme was created to support recovery following the 2010 floods. The programme conducted a needs assessment of affected households and distributed VISA cards, with up to 20,000 Rupees cash grants to advance the recovery and reconstruction process. More than 1.7 million Watan Cards have been issued to date. Among the partners in this programme were several banks, as well as VISA itself.<sup>18</sup>
  - Following the devastating impact of tropical storm “Agatha” and the eruption of the Pacaya volcano in 2010, the Government of Guatemala has instituted a plan for “Reconstruction with Transformation” (*Plan para la Reconstrucción con Transformación*) in order to systematically integrate vulnerability reduction in response to cumulative natural disasters.
- **Fostering inter-State dialogue to increase cooperation and information exchange:** The impacts of climate change, natural disasters and environmental migration do not respect national borders and thus require collaborative efforts. Exchanging information, coordinating responses and designing joint programmes are important steps towards

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<sup>18</sup> <http://watancard.nadra.gov.pk/>.

burden-sharing and tackling the cross-border dynamics of climate change.

- The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organization in East Africa, has taken up the issue of pastoralist migrations in the region as part of the IGAD-Livestock Policy Initiative, an issue whose urgency is exacerbated by the frequent occurrence of severe droughts.
- Under the umbrella of the Community of the Sahel-Saharan States and the African Union, Senegal is participating in the Great Green Wall project. The transcontinental initiative relies on a collaborative approach to slow desert encroachment, promote development and sound resource management in the Sahel zone, foster sustainable agricultural and pastoralist livelihoods, and reduce poverty and rural-urban migration.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> [www.grandemurailleverte.org/](http://www.grandemurailleverte.org/).



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the IDM workshop offered an opportunity to policymakers and practitioners to discuss and exchange on the emerging challenges presented by the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility. While environmental migration is fundamentally multi-causal, numerous examples presented at the workshop demonstrated that environmental factors are already playing a highly significant role in shaping human mobility. In this context, sudden- and slow-onset disasters lead to different migratory outcomes – in some cases, migration may be necessary for sheer survival; in others, forced movement would best be prevented, and in others yet migration can serve as a logical and legitimate adaptation strategy to environmental changes. As a result, policymakers need to devise a range of policies and programmes to adequately capture and tackle the multiple facets of environmental migration.

In order to work towards this goal, four principal areas of focus for capacity-building were identified during the course of the workshop: Firstly, all concerned actors need to continue building the foundations of data and knowledge for action on environmental migration. While the overall research base needs to increase, research should also be better coordinated, more targeted and more policy-friendly. Research capacities in less and least developed countries and the preparation of country profiles on the migration–environment nexus, for example, were cited as priorities in this regard. Secondly, legal and institutional frameworks need to be able to account for the growing possibility of environmental migration and make relevant provisions for a rights-based approach to the issue. Existing instruments from different branches of law, at regional and international

levels, can offer a solid basis from which to develop national legislation. Thirdly, a reinforcement of capacities is necessary to improve coherence between migration-related and climate-related policy fields. Given the complexity of environmental migration, a variety of policy areas need to be harmonized, such as humanitarian action and preparedness, development, poverty reduction, urban planning, environment and climate change adaptation. Particularly, the synergies between adaptation, migration and sustainable development deserve to be translated into more coherent policy action. Policymakers may therefore wish to seek new methodologies of consultation and coordination amongst different ministries, as well as between different levels of government in achieving this goal. Fourthly, governments require strong technical and operational capacities to respond to the practical challenges posed by climate change, environmental degradation and migration. From contingency planning, early warning and systematic budgeting to vulnerability assessments and a focus on rural livelihoods and urban infrastructure, a wide spectrum of measures feed into a comprehensive approach to environmental migration. In combining disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, communities may become more resilient to the effects of climate change, thus reducing instances of forced migration. Capacity-building should extend to local communities and give priority to those countries and segments of the population most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

As has become amply clear by now, narrow-minded attempts at managing environmental migration are unlikely to be met with success. Instead, the workshop called for strong partnerships between policymakers, researchers and practitioners from the migration, humanitarian, developmental, and climate change/environmental spheres. According to the workshop delegates, international organizations, including IOM, have an important role to play in supporting these efforts. Recognizing that the dialogue on climate change, environmental degradation and migration has only just begun, the IDM participants committed to continuing the conversation and striving for a proactive approach to environmental migration.

# **MIGRANT'S VOICE**



## **MIGRANT'S VOICE**

No dialogue on migration can be complete without the voices of migrants. For this reason, the IDM has made it a tradition and a priority to invite migrants to share their personal stories, experiences, hopes and dreams with government representatives and others attending the IDM workshops. The following is one such testimony.

### **Testimony of Hindu Oumarou Ibrahim on the impact of climate change on her community, the Peul Mbororo of Chad<sup>1</sup>**

Dear all, please accept my greetings and my sincere apologies for being unable to be present with you in this room. I would like to thank IOM for allowing me to submit my written testimony. I would have liked to join you in person to tell you how my community has become a direct victim of the impacts of climate change. Nonetheless, I hope these few lines will remain in your memory.

Firstly, let me introduce you to my community, the "Peul Mbororo". We are nomadic farmers by tradition, depending on the land and on well-defined distances. We rely heavily on natural resources for our own survival and that of our animals.

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<sup>1</sup> This text is an unofficial translation from French, faithful to Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim's original statement.

Indeed, climate change is not a new phenomenon for my community. For several years now, we all have observed and noticed the gradual changes in the environment, rainfall patterns, natural resources and biodiversity. But recently, the pace of change has quickened and now more than ever our activities are disrupted and we are no longer in control of our environment.

Given our dependence on natural resources, we feel that we are direct victims of climate change. We are now forced to migrate over long distances and to areas where we never used to venture. In order to survive we will either have to abandon our lands or stay away from our usual locations. Migration has now become an inevitable method of adaptation for us. However, it does not come easy as, given demographic pressures and the lack of free land, we are facing several conflict factors. Let me illustrate our experience with a few examples:

Part of my community living in the south of the country, in Eastern Mayo Kebbi, is exclusively made up of cattle breeders. Ten years ago, due to lack of water and pasture for their animals, they were forced to leave Daralsalam and migrate to another place called Gournoida. With increased migration to Gournoida, the city has expanded, leading to serious land issues between communities.

Another example is that of cross-border migrants. Another part of my community practices nomadism, covering distances of 700 kilometres, and currently migrates to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These groups do not comprehend the colonial system of borders and find themselves obliged to cross frontiers to survive, find water and pasture. Consequently, conflicts between them and the natives of DRC have arisen over natural resources and land. The problem has even reached the African Union, which has issued a resolution on migration caused by climate change.

Moreover, with climate change, the transhumance corridors are increasingly under cultivation by indigenous sedentary populations in search of fertile soils, forcing my people to migrate ever further into the bush despite the risks that this entails. Today, we are obliged to negotiate the right to stay in areas that are traditionally ours.

And then border controls take advantage of our own ignorance about our rights, and although we are Chadian cattle breeders, they regularly accuse us of illegally exporting livestock when in reality we are going to the border to water the animals in the large rivers bordering Cameroon (Logone and Chari). Sometimes, because we do not possess identification papers, we are taxed as if we were undocumented migrants in our own country.

This “climate change migration” has other grave consequences for us: we are experiencing more and more child kidnappings and demands for ransom by bandits because the paths we venture on are unsafe. We are robbed of everything, even of what we value the most, our children. It is as if the livestock thieves we used to encounter had not already stolen enough, our money and our animals; now they are also attacking our children.

We have no choice. As a means of survival for us and our animals, we are forced to continuously migrate despite all the risks involved. This is our form of adaptation. We have always mastered it, but if nothing is done to ensure the safety of our space and activities, we risk, one day, being forced to abandon our way of life and join the swelling ranks of the unemployed in the city.

Thank you.

Hindu Oumarou Ibrahim  
Mbororo, daughter of a Chadian  
cattle breeder





**WORKSHOP AGENDA  
AND BACKGROUND PAPER**





International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)  
Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)

INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION 2011  
THE FUTURE OF MIGRATION: BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR CHANGE

INTERSESSIONAL WORKSHOP ON

**CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION  
AND MIGRATION**

29 – 30 MARCH 2011

FINAL AGENDA

29 March 2011 DAY 1	
09:00 – 10:00	<i>Registration</i>
10:00 – 10:10	<b>WELCOME REMARKS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Laura Thompson</b>, Deputy Director General, International Organization for Migration (IOM), delivered by Peter Schatzer, Chief of Staff, IOM</li></ul>
10:10 – 10:40	<b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Luis Alfonso de Alba Góngora</b>, Special Representative for Climate Change, Mexico</li></ul>
10:40 – 11:00	<b>SETTING THE SCENE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Md. Shahidul Haque</b>, Director, Department for International Cooperation and Partnerships, IOM</li></ul> <p><i>This workshop will explore the policy, research, operational and technical capacities required to manage the multifaceted impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human mobility. The discussions of the various aspects of environmental migration will incorporate different dimensions of capacity-building, such as access to and use of reliable and compatible data and information, institutional capacity for national policymaking and international cooperation, as well as the development of appropriate legislation. The opening presentation will outline the history and rationale of IOM's operational, research and policy interventions in this area. An overview of the key concepts and ideas relating to migration, climate change and environmental degradation, including climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, vulnerability and the role of migration as an adaptation strategy, will lay the foundation for subsequent discussions. The scene-setting presentation will also highlight relevant developments on this subject that have taken place in other regional and international fora.</i></p>

11:00 – 13:00	<b>Session I: Environmental migration state of the art: Where we are, where we need to go</b>
	<p><i>The outlines for an analytical research framework for trying to better understand the linkages between migration and environmental change are emerging. Thus, an essential first step in capacity-building consists of establishing a more robust evidence base on these linkages. Though important strides have been made in recent years to enhance the knowledge base, significant gaps still exist at the national, regional and global levels: to name but a few, there is a lack of systematic data collection and data collection tools and limited knowledge on movements in relation to slow-onset disasters, on South-South migration flows and on internal movement (the latter currently being a key issue and a significant trend for the future). At the same time, systematic evaluation of policy frameworks, whether on migration, adaptation, resettlement or other issues, and of their implementation remains rare. This session, in addition to addressing the current state of knowledge and identified gaps, will offer guidance to policymakers and practitioners regarding the way forward in building research capacity and pooling expertise to better inform policy and practice.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator: Paul de Guchteneire</b>, Chief, International Migration and Urbanization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Richard Black</b>, Chair, Lead Expert Group of the Foresight Global Environmental Migration Project, Government Office for Science, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, United Kingdom</li> <li>• <b>Kate Halff</b>, Head, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Norwegian Refugee Council</li> <li>• <b>Koko Warner</b>, Head of Section, Academic Officer, Environmental Migration, Social Vulnerability and Adaptation, United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (Bonn, Germany)</li> <li>• <b>Frank Laczko</b>, Head, Migration Research Division, Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships, IOM</li> </ul> <p>The following questions are proposed to guide the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What types of capacity are needed to improve the knowledge base on migration and environmental change? How can multi-stakeholder partnerships support such efforts?</li> <li>• What are the methodological, practical and capacity challenges related to data collection on environmental migration and how can they best be addressed?</li> <li>• Which innovative approaches have been used to address current knowledge gaps, including, but not limited to, internal movement, South-South migration flows and movement in relation to slow-onset disasters?</li> <li>• How can the links between the research and the policy community be strengthened to foster policy-relevant research and informed policymaking? What is the way forward?</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Afternoon Break</i>

14:00 – 15:00	<p><b>Side Event: Reducing vulnerability, building resilience</b></p> <p><i>Already today, environmental change is a reality for people around the world, and IOM and its partner organizations have developed a variety of strategies and activities to respond to the specific emerging challenges linked to those changes. In line with IOM's comprehensive approach to human mobility, interventions cover the continuum from emergency preparedness and response to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, contributing to the sustainable development of countries and communities. This side event will present an illustrative selection of concrete projects, which support governments and populations in coping with the effects of climate change.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator: Gervais Appave</b>, Special Policy Advisor, IOM</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Paul Rushton</b>, Independent Expert</li> <li>• <b>Alexandre Magnan</b>, Research Fellow, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change, Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations–Sciences Po, France, and</li> <li>• <b>Lalini Veerassamy</b>, Head of Office, IOM Mauritius (<i>joint presentation</i>)</li> </ul> <p><i>Please note that simultaneous interpretation will not be available during the side event.</i></p>
15:00 – 18:00	<p><b>Session II: Capacities for comprehensive responses: From emergency assistance to sustainable development</b></p>
	<p><i>Environmental factors ranging from natural disasters, such as flash floods or earthquakes, to environmental degradation, such as desertification or sea-level rise, have a negative impact on exposed and especially vulnerable countries, cities and populations around the world. They have prompted States and their partners, as well as local populations, to develop strategies, policies and programmes along a continuum ranging from emergency preparedness and response to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. In trying to enhance their resilience and achieve sustainable forms of development, populations and their governments have paved the way for innovative, efficient and comprehensive strategies taking into account human mobility, including minimizing and managing displacement and reducing migratory pressures. This session will present different types of responses to different types of challenges ranging from sudden to slow-onset disasters, based on sound disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation practices.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator: Margareta Wahlström</b>, United Nations Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>José Miguel Leiva</b>, Vice Minister for Natural Resources, Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources, Guatemala</li> <li>• <b>Ahmed Kamal</b>, Member, National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan</li> <li>• <b>Ndéye Fatou Diaw Guene</b>, Head of Division, Programme Manager for Climate Change, Directorate of Environment and Classified Establishments, Ministry of the Environment and Nature Protection, Senega</li> <li>• <b>Anh Tuan Le</b>, Senior Lecturer, College of Environment and Natural Resources, Research Institute for Climate Change, Can Tho University, Viet Nam (recommended by the Government of Viet Nam)</li> </ul>

	<p>The following questions are proposed to guide the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What forms of capacity are required to prepare for and respond to different types of movement induced by natural disasters or environmental degradation?</li> <li>• What are some of the innovative approaches in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation which have proven effective in durably enhancing the resilience of local communities?</li> <li>• How can the links between different communities of practice be strengthened to ensure that a comprehensive approach is developed and to increase synergies and cost effectiveness in response to movement caused by environmental factors?</li> <li>• How to foster collaboration between affected communities, local authorities, governments and the international community, including NGOs, to achieve coherent adaptation strategies?</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p>
	<i>End of Day One</i>
<b>30 March 2011 DAY II</b>	
10:00 – 10:30	<p><b>MIGRANT'S VOICE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim Statement delivered on Ms. Ibrahim's behalf by Dina Ionesco, IOM</li> </ul>
10:30 – 13:00	<p><b>Session III: Protecting and assisting environmental migrants: Building and strengthening frameworks and capacities</b></p>
	<p><i>Migration induced by environmental factors can and often does result in heightened vulnerability for the affected population – migrants themselves, but also origin and destination communities. Certain groups of people or regions of the world are of particular concern due to their limited resilience and high exposure to the effects of climate change. Although the human rights of all those migrating are provided for by international migration law, there remains a need to strengthen mechanisms and capacities to ensure effective protection and assistance to environmental migrants. Guided by a broad aim to minimize displacement and guarantee the safety and security of those who do move and their home and host communities, this session will focus on instances of high vulnerability in the context of environmental migration. It will examine existing legal frameworks and operational capacities in this regard and discuss possible avenues to address the identified gaps.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator: Janice Marshall</b>, Deputy Director of International Protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Allehone Mulugeta Abebe</b>, Minister Counsellor, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland</li> <li>• <b>Jane McAdam</b>, Professor, Director of Research, School of Law, University of New South Wales</li> <li>• <b>Khalid Koser</b>, Academic Dean and Head of the New Issues in Security Programme, Geneva Centre for Security Policy</li> </ul> <p>The following questions are proposed to guide the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways can migration due to environmental factors heighten or reduce the vulnerability of those on the move? What conditions, frameworks and capacities need to be in place to minimize vulnerability? What is the impact of environmental migration on communities of origin and destination?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do existing legal frameworks, at international, regional and national levels, cover environmental migrants? Where are the gaps?</li> <li>• Which actors need to be involved to ensure assistance to and protection of those migrating for environmental reasons and how can their capacity to act be strengthened?</li> <li>• What specific measures could be put in place to assist and protect particularly vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and indigenous communities in the context of environmentally induced movements?</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p>
13:00 – 15:00	<i>Afternoon Break</i>
15:00 – 17:30	<b>Session IV: Capacity-building for effective policymaking on environmental migration: Towards comprehensive policy frameworks</b>
	<p><i>Coordinated and complementary policies at the local, national, regional and global levels are essential to effectively address the multiple dimensions of environmental migration. This session will highlight capacity-building initiatives which support governments in strengthening policy coherence at the national level by, for example, identifying potential complementarities between migration policies, related policy domains and specific tools such as National Adaptation Programmes of Action or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. The importance of local capacity-building and the role of local communities, civil society and the private sector in national policy processes will also be examined. Furthermore, the session will explore the benefits of bilateral and regional cooperation between countries facing similar environmental and migration challenges, and highlight opportunities for dialogue and shared responsibilities at the global level.</i></p> <p><b>Moderator: Irena Vojackova-Sollorano</b>, Director, Department of Migration Management, IOM</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hasan Mahmud</b>, State Minister for Environment and Forests, Bangladesh</li> <li>• <b>Enrique Manalo</b>, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, Mission of the Philippines to the European Union (Brussels, Belgium)</li> <li>• <b>Raquel Lejtregger</b>, Main Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Housing, Territory Planning and Environment, Uruguay</li> </ul> <p>The following questions are proposed to guide the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which capacities do States need to achieve better policy coherence at the national level? What are some possible options?</li> <li>• What is the role of local government and communities and how can capacity-building at the local level contribute to strengthening national migration policies?</li> <li>• What are some of the concrete examples of bilateral/regional cooperation among States experiencing similar environmental conditions and migration patterns?</li> <li>• What kind of synergies can be pursued between dialogues at the regional and global levels?</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p>
17:30 – 18:00	<p><b>WRAP-UP AND CLOSING REMARKS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Laura Thompson</b>, Deputy Director General, IOM, delivered by Peter Schatzer, Chief of Staff, IOM</li> </ul>
	<i>End of Workshop</i>





# BACKGROUND PAPER

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The consequences of climate change are becoming increasingly ineluctable and are attracting the attention of governments around the world. It is already obvious that few aspects of social and economic life will remain unaffected: climate change is likely to have repercussions for development, human rights protection and security, to mention but a few. Among the most significant impacts of climate change are those on human mobility.<sup>2</sup> Estimates vary widely, with figures ranging between 25 million and one billion people displaced by climate change over the next 40 years.<sup>3</sup> While the magnitude may be uncertain, the actual impact on people is not.

The central idea of this workshop is that migration in the context of climate change can be both problem and solution: On the one hand, the serious humanitarian consequences of environmental migration cannot be ignored. On the other hand, and far from being a mere failure to adapt to a changing environment, migration has the potential to serve as an adaptation strategy. A comprehensive approach to environmental migration would thus pursue three broad objectives: *a) to minimize forced, unmanaged migration as much as possible; b) where forced migration does occur,*

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<sup>1</sup> The topic of this workshop was selected by the IOM membership. In 2011, the International Dialogue on Migration is guided by overarching theme “The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change”.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the International Panel on Climate Change stated as early as 1990 that “the gravest effects of climate change may be those on human migration” (IPCC First Assessment Report, p. 103).

<sup>3</sup> See IOM (2009) *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence* (p. 9).

to ensure assistance and protection for those affected and seek durable solutions to their situation; and c) to facilitate the role of migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change. As such, particular emphasis will need to be placed on building capacities to effectively link migration management with climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development.

## **The nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and migration<sup>4</sup>**

There has always been a fundamental interdependency between migration and the environment, rooted in the history of human civilization. The contemporary reality of climate change, however, adds a new and urgent dynamic to this nexus.<sup>5</sup> While not itself the sole trigger of migration, climate change is likely to exacerbate gradual processes of *environmental degradation* and the frequency and intensity of *natural disasters*, both slow-onset (e.g. desertification, drought, coastal erosion) and sudden-onset (e.g. tropical storms, flash floods). In the long-term, gradual environmental degradation is expected to produce the largest impact on migration. Adding a further layer of complexity, most migration scenarios usually involve a range of political, social, economic and other factors. In sum, *environmental migration is understood as a multi-causal phenomenon, yet one in which environmental drivers play a significant and increasingly determinative role*. These drivers can be in the form of natural disasters or environmental degradation and these may or may not be related to climate change.

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<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the annex for suggested further reading, a list of useful definitions and a selection of relevant policy and legal frameworks at the international level, to complement this overview. You may also wish to consult [www.iom.int/envmig](http://www.iom.int/envmig).

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that climate change, i.e. alterations in the state of the climate brought about by changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use, is *one* form of broader and ongoing environmental change. In other words, not all changes in the physical environment are due to climate change. This paper is based on the premise that, on balance, scientific evidence supports the thesis that human activity is contributing to climate change.

The type, severity and reversibility of the environmental phenomenon at hand influences the migratory outcome – for example, sudden-onset natural disasters tend to result in temporary migration, while severe forms of slow-onset environmental degradation are more likely to lead to permanent movement. Furthermore, most available empirical research suggests environmental migration is likely to be mainly internal, with a smaller proportion taking place between neighbouring countries, and even smaller numbers migrating long distances.

The concept of vulnerability plays an important role in understanding the linkages between migration and climate change.<sup>6</sup> Vulnerability is a function of people’s exposure (in this case, to environmental factors) and their capacity to adapt. Vulnerability can take a geographical or social dimension – for example, people living in drylands, small islands or low-lying coastal areas are more susceptible to the effects of climate change; and some social groups are more vulnerable than others, especially those facing socio-economic disparities and discrimination. Migration can heighten or lessen an individual’s vulnerability: migration can be a *survival strategy*, above all in the event of impending or acute natural disaster. It can also be an *adaptation strategy*, especially where environmental degradation is not yet too severe, by reducing or modifying reliance on the environment for subsistence and allowing for livelihood and income diversification. Of course, migration, and forced migration in particular, can also lead to new and greater vulnerabilities for migrants and communities of origin and destination. Insofar as the adaptive potential of migration is concerned, however, it is often not the poorest and most vulnerable groups of society who are able to “move out of harm’s way”, as migration typically requires social and economic resources and opportunities not available to them.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A definition of vulnerability is contained in the annex.

<sup>7</sup> For more detail, please refer to IOM (2009) *Policy Brief on Migration, Climate Change and the Environment*, available at [www.iom.int/envmig](http://www.iom.int/envmig).

## Capacity-building to meet current and future challenges

Addressing disaster-induced displacement, alleviating the vulnerability of populations, connecting sustainable development and climate change adaptation, and transforming migration into an adaptation strategy present complex tasks for policymakers and practitioners alike. How, then, can States meet the multiple challenges of environmental migration, which are compounded by dynamic and largely unpredictable changes in climatic conditions?

Migration continues to be a relatively new area of policymaking for many countries, but even where this is not the case, the environmental dimension adds complexity to existing migration management systems. Consequently, countries may need to assess their existing capacities in this area and build new ones, where necessary. IOM's *World Migration Report 2010* defines capacity-building as "the process of strengthening the knowledge, abilities, skills, resources, structures and processes that States and institutions need in order to achieve their goals effectively and sustainably, and to adapt to change".<sup>8</sup> Governments need to be equipped with a range of capacities to understand and anticipate such changes; to formulate legislative, policy and programmatic solutions; to implement appropriate measures tailored to specific needs and circumstances; and to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness.

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<sup>8</sup> *IOM World Migration Report 2010: The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change*. The report enumerates several aspects of capacities specific to migration (migration and labour market data; national migration policy goals and priorities; training of migration officials; development of legislative frameworks; coherent administrative structures; consultation mechanisms; international cooperation). With respect to migration in the context of environmental change, the report identifies 10 areas in which capacity-building is required. See in particular chapters 2 and 7. For more on capacity-building from an IOM perspective, refer to IOM document SCPF 52/2010 *Capacity-building in Migration Management*. N.B.: "Capacity-building", as used in this paper, fully recognizes that most countries possess capacities which may need to be enhanced, not built from scratch. The term "capacity development" has been suggested as an alternative.

Capacity-building needs will vary between different countries, depending on the way in which environmental migration manifests itself in a given geographic area. At the same time, capacity-building is not necessarily relevant only at the national level: empowerment and capacity of local governments and civil society are equally important, as are mechanisms and fora to consult and cooperate on issues of environmental migration at regional and international levels. Finally, the need for adequate capacities cannot be isolated from three fundamental and interrelated building blocks of any policy process: priority/objective setting, allocation of resources, and political will.

In the following sections, this paper will attempt to address the issue of capacity-building in the context of environmental migration in three areas: knowledge-building, institutional responses and operational intervention.

*i) Building the knowledge base through enhanced research and data capacities*

It hardly bears repeating that the most effective policies and programmes are those constructed on a reliable evidence base. Yet, and notwithstanding significant advances in researching the migration–environment nexus, robust data sets and forecasts remain largely elusive and true interdisciplinary research limited. The main challenges in terms of capacity-building reside in the realms of *causalities* (e.g. to what extent the environment acts as the primary driver, what migration patterns emerge in response to different environmental stressors, what socio-economic factors need to be considered with regard to vulnerability); *data* (e.g. how many people will migrate and where, how climate models can be improved and account for the multi-causal nature of migration, how migration and environment data sets can be enhanced and/or harmonized); and *definitions and terminology* (e.g. what definitions and concepts are needed for research and policy, their strengths and limitations).

While it is unrealistic to expect to have absolute certainty on the patterns and volumes of environmental migration, much

can be done to enhance the knowledge base in the three criteria mentioned above: for instance, data collection, analysis and comparability could be improved at the national level by including questions on migration (including, crucially, internal movement) or experiences of environmental degradation and natural disasters in census data and household surveys. Innovative or successful methodologies in smaller case studies could be tested on a larger scale where possible. Combining technological advances in geographical information systems and mapping with relevant research methods represent another way to enhance knowledge. A further underutilized source of evidence is the knowledge that can be gained from a systematic monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes already in place. Not the least to justify continued expenditures, governments have an interest in assessing the performance of existing measures or past programmes (including planned relocation). Furthermore, a conscious effort to move towards standardized terminology on environmental migration will result in significant improvements in research and ease international cooperation on the issue. Capacity needs in the area of data and research are not limited to developing countries, but generally greater, not the least as they tend to be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Research cooperation – through development aid for higher education or institutional “twinning” of universities and research bodies in developed and developing countries – not only transfers skills and knowledge, but can also give rise to innovative interdisciplinary thinking and methods essential for gaining a deeper understanding of environmental migration.

*ii) Effective legislative and policymaking processes through strengthened institutional capacities*

No internationally agreed definition of “environmental migration” or “environmental migrant” exists to date. This complicates research and data collection, but also has implications for national, regional and international legal frameworks. It is undisputed that the human rights of all those migrating are dealt with by international migration law. There is, however, currently no specific framework at the global level that would explicitly

cover the protection and assistance needs of *international migrants* propelled by natural disasters and environmental degradation. How to ensure effective protection and assistance for such individuals is one of the most vexing questions in the management of environmental migration. At the national level, capacities are required, on the one hand, to create the appropriate legislative basis which would cover situations arising from environmental migration, and, on the other hand, to ensure the implementation of such laws in practice. Existing legislation and policies may need to be reviewed to account for cases of individuals crossing borders due to environmental factors, for example, through granting of Temporary Protection Status.

Seeing that the bulk of environmental migration is expected to be internal in nature, States may also consider revisiting legal and policy arrangements to protect and assist *internally displaced persons* who had to move due to natural disasters and environmental degradation. Again, international instruments provide important guidance in this regard.

Given the multidimensionality of the phenomenon, policy coherence on environmental migration is equally critical. Governments must have the capacities and mechanisms to draw on all relevant areas of expertise and competency in designing their policies. Besides migration and environmental policy, environmental migration touches on broader development policy, emergency preparedness, human security, and urban and land-use planning, to name a few. The existing relevant policy tools do not, for the most part, take into account environmental migration. For instance, few National Adaptation Programmes of Action make mention of migration, and even fewer recognize the adaptation potential of migration. Likewise, disaster risk reduction strategies could go further in promoting sustainable development (e.g. via enhanced synergies with Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) and cross-fertilization with climate change adaptation measures.<sup>9</sup> Insufficient capacity to coordinate and streamline these and other policy tools will, at best, result in duplication and a stretch of resources; at worst, it could lead to contradictions. Conversely, a closer meshing of these strategies will contribute to improved

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<sup>9</sup> See section 3 of the annex for more on these policy instruments.

resilience of populations to the effects of climate change and to minimizing instances of forced migration.

Institutional capacity also requires the involvement of local governments, affected populations and international partners. For instance, given the likely increase in rural–urban migration due to the effects of climate change, urban areas may need to enhance their capacity to absorb larger populations within existing infrastructure and services. Similarly, strong local institutional networks and communication lines between authorities are critical in ensuring a coordinated response in emergency situations. For example, should evacuations or relocation be necessary, these should not take place without consultations with and the active involvement of affected populations and receiving communities. Lastly, regional and international cooperation significantly strengthens States’ capacity to manage international migration, including when provoked by environmental factors. As a practical example of the adaptive potential of migration, temporary and circular labour migration programmes can be arranged on a bilateral basis to support populations affected by environmental degradation and natural disasters.<sup>10</sup>

*iii) Connecting emergency preparedness and response with sustainable development through reinforced operational capacities*

Given the potential of natural disasters to trigger forced migration, disaster risk reduction (i.e. preparedness for natural disasters and prevention of humanitarian emergencies) is a crucial area for capacity-building. The Hyogo Framework for Action makes several recommendations in this regard, including risk assessments and risk reduction (ranging from early warning systems to evacuation plans) and the creation of institutions and response mechanisms in case of emergency. Operational

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<sup>10</sup> IOM’s Temporary and Circular Labour Migration programme between Colombia and Spain involving disaster-affected populations is one such example. See “Operational Activities – Selected Examples” at [www.iom.int/envmig](http://www.iom.int/envmig) for more.



capacities need to be oriented towards connecting humanitarian and development work. What is often simplified as “build back better” means that preparations for the next emergency already ought to start during the recovery and reconstruction phase of the previous one. Especially under the dynamic conditions of climate change, recurring disasters, combined with more intense environmental degradation, lead to cumulative vulnerabilities and eroded resilience for affected populations. Disaster risk reduction, with strong emphasis on sustainable development, is key to reducing forced migration and stabilizing populations in areas affected by degradation or disaster. It should be recognized, however, that migration can sometimes be the only option for survival.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, ensuring protection of and assistance to populations affected or displaced by sudden- or slow-onset disasters requires particular strong capacities on the part of the State (as the primary duty-bearer) and the various entities which participate in a relief effort, such as local authorities and civil protection bodies. Capacities and contingencies need to be in place to respond to the immediate and most basic needs of displaced populations in terms of shelter, food, sanitation and medical attention. Furthermore, a rights-based approach to disaster response also means making adequate provisions for the most vulnerable groups and taking account of special vulnerability factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, and health (including HIV/AIDS).

Lastly, climate change adaptation is becoming an increasingly important dimension of operational and programmatic activities aimed at supporting populations affected by natural disasters or environmental degradation. Capacity-building efforts to better link migration and development are already under way. These now need to be reinforced, taking into account the dynamic variable of climate change in order to promote migration as an adaptation strategy to changing environments. For instance, labour migration programmes can promote skills and income diversification for migrants and channel remittances towards adaptation measures in home communities; or diaspora contributions can be factored into operational activities, for instance, following natural disasters.

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<sup>11</sup> This is elaborated in IOM (2010) *Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Migration – A Policy Perspective*.

## Conclusion

In 2010, the fourth Global Forum on Migration and Development considered the question of the impact of climate change on migration and development. In the same year, the Cancun Agreements concluded at the United Nations Climate Change Conference called attention to “climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation”.<sup>12</sup> As this paper has tried to demonstrate, the challenges posed by the human mobility consequences of climate change need to be met by cross-sectoral responses of precisely this sort – linking migration, sustainable development, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Many of the capacities needed to address environmental migration and its repercussions for individuals and communities already exist, but need to be mobilized, reinforced and better coordinated to support those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and to work towards a comprehensive approach to environmental migration.

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<sup>12</sup> Cancun Agreements, paragraph 14 (f) “invites all Parties to enhance action on adaptation under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances, by undertaking, inter alia, the following:... (f) measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change-induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at national, regional and international levels.”

# ANNEX



# USEFUL DEFINITIONS

## **Climate change**

A change in the climate that persists for decades or longer arising from either natural causes or human activity (Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

## **Climate change adaptation**

The adjustment to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities (Adapted from UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009).

## **Disaster risk reduction**

All efforts that can contribute to reducing risk through analysing and managing the causal factors of disasters; through reducing exposure to hazards; through lessening vulnerability of people and livelihoods; through managing land and the environment; and through improving preparedness for adverse events (Adapted from UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009).

## **Environmental degradation**

The reduction of the capacity of the environment to meet social and ecological objectives and needs (Source: UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009).

## **Environmental migrant**

Environmental migrants are persons or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their homes or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad (Source: *IOM World Migration Report*, 2008).

## **Internally displaced person**

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or *natural or human-made disasters*, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Source: Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, emphasis added).

## **Natural disaster**

A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society due to a natural process or phenomenon which involves widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts and which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources (Adapted from UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009).

## **Resilience**

The ability of a system, community or society to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner (Adapted from UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009).

## **Sustainable development**

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Source: Brundtland Commission, 1987).

## **Vulnerability**

The characteristics and circumstances of a community, system or asset that makes it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard (Source: UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009).





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Please note that all publications are available on the IOM website at <http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/>.

For more information specifically on climate change, environmental degradation and migration and IOM's activities, please also visit [www.iom.int/envmig](http://www.iom.int/envmig) and [www.iom.int/climateandmigration](http://www.iom.int/climateandmigration).

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- 2008a *Climate Change and Migration: Improving Methodologies to Estimate Flows*. IOM Migration Research Series, No. 33.
- 2008b *Migration, Development and Environment*. IOM Migration Research Series, No. 35.
- 2008c *Expert Seminar: Migration and the Environment*. International Dialogue on Migration, No. 10.

- 2009a *Compendium of IOM's Activities in Migration, Climate Change and the Environment.*
- 2009b *Migration, Climate Change and the Environment. IOM Policy Brief.*
- 2009c *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence.*
- 2010a *Assessing the Evidence: Environment, Climate Change and Migration in Bangladesh.*
- 2010b *Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Migration – A Policy Perspective.*
- 2010c *World Migration Report: The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change.*
- 2011a *Climate Change, Migration and Critical International Security Considerations. IOM Migration Research Series, No. 42.*
- 2011b *The Other Migrants – Preparing for Change. Environmental Changes and Migration in the Republic of Mauritius. An Assessment Report.*

# **LIST OF SELECTED INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS**

- Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement:  
[www.idpguidingprinciples.org/](http://www.idpguidingprinciples.org/)
- National Adaptation Programmes for Action:  
[www.napa-pana.org/](http://www.napa-pana.org/)
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers:  
[www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prsp.htm](http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prsp.htm)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) / Cancun Agreements:  
[www.unfccc.int/](http://www.unfccc.int/)
- United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) / Hyogo Framework for Action:  
[www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm](http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm)



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1. 82nd Session of the Council; 27-29 November 2001 (available in English, French, Spanish), May 2002
2. Compendium of Intergovernmental Organizations Active in the Field of Migration 2002 (available in English only), December 2002
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4. 84th Session of the Council; 2-4 December 2002 (available online only at [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)), 2003
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