



CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

Tuesday, 18 May 2021, 3 PM CEST

CONCEPT NOTE

Climate change is already affecting who moves, where, how, and under what conditions. While people have always moved to escape disasters and environmental degradation, climate change presents new challenges—to migrants and their families, to people who have been displaced, and to those who are at risk of displacement due to direct or (more often) indirect impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. Ensuring that these challenges are recognized and addressed in a way that respects and protects people’s rights, reflects their needs and aspirations, and provides for their sustainable futures is critical. This will require coordinated action at all levels across multiple policy frameworks, with **COP26** and the 2022 **International Migration Review Forum** to review the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** being particularly relevant, but also requiring coordination across international agreements and frameworks including the **2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Nansen Agenda and Platform on Disaster Displacement**, and **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**.

Even with ambitious mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions, adverse impacts of climate change are expected to increase over the coming decades. This will exacerbate existing inequalities both within and between countries. Effects will be global, but much more pronounced in the Global South; the most climate vulnerable countries (and those with fewest resources available for adaptation and mitigation) include SIDS, landlocked developing countries, and least developed countries as well as middle-income countries. This is despite the fact that the industrialized countries bear responsibility for the vast majority of the greenhouse gas emissions over the past century and a half. In addition, the most serious impacts of climate change are experienced by those with few resources to adapt, frequently exacerbating gender and other forms of structural inequality. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is more the case than ever.

Increased risk from more frequent and severe sudden-onset events (e.g. extreme weather like cyclones, storms, floods and wildfires) as well as from slow-onset events (e.g. sea-level rise, soil and water salinization, desertification, changing rainfall patterns, and glacial melt) is already affecting lives and livelihoods. Across multiple regions, millions of people on the move or at risk of displacement are already in situations where they require urgent assistance, protection of their human rights, and opportunities for sustainable futures. Every day, people are making decisions about when and whether to move, often with very constrained options and resources. For some, migration opportunities (internal or international) may present an effective opportunity to “adapt,” but for those who do not wish to move, or do not have resources and options to move in safety and dignity to a situation that offers them and their family members a sustainable future, migration may not be adaptation at all.

While most migration and displacement takes place within rather than across borders, many IDPs and internal migrants face new risks after moving, including insecure livelihoods and accommodation, sometimes leading to further movement.

For those who seek to migrate internationally, the absence of accessible regular migration pathways leads some to use irregular migration channels and risk exploitation and abuse in transit. Although the Nansen Protection Agenda and ongoing work of the state-led Platform on Disaster Displacement seek to address protection issues, particularly at the regional level, people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change face uncertain reception and conditions. Precarious legal status and limited livelihood opportunities are frequent challenges even upon reaching an intended destination, where available shelter may again leave people vulnerable to climate and weather related risks.

In 2018, governments committed in the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)** to ensure “that desperation and deteriorating environments do not compel [people] to seek a livelihood elsewhere through irregular migration.” They committed to take action, including at national and regional levels, to address adverse drivers of migration including disasters, the adverse effects of climate change, and environmental degradation. They also committed to enhance availability and flexibility of regular migration pathways to address the needs of those affected by sudden- and slow-onset disasters, climate change and environmental degradation.⁽¹⁾ The GCM specifically promotes implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

This webinar will explore the particular challenges faced in different regions, the ways that migration governance might contribute to addressing emerging needs for migration opportunities, and consider possibilities for better integrating migration and displacement issues into climate, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and development policy-making as a means of respecting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights in the context of climate change.

(1) See <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/10-key-takeaways-gcm-environmental-migration> for a summary of GCM commitments relevant to migration in the context of climate change and environmental degradation.

We will invite the panelists, whose work covers different regions and issues, to bring their perspective to the following questions:

- What are some of the challenges that migrants, family members, people at risk of displacement or in need of migration options (e.g. for livelihood diversification) are facing in various regional contexts? How do these depend on existing circumstances and vulnerabilities?
- What does this mean for migration governance, migration policy and migrant rights advocacy, in terms of implications for action at national, regional and international levels? What kinds of policies are needed to more adequately protect the human rights of people who are displaced, compelled to migrate, or at risk of displacement? What are some examples to draw on?
- What opportunities are there to improve linkages between climate governance, development, DRR and migration governance, for example,
 - to ensure that climate change and environmental degradation are addressed more adequately in migration governance, including but not limited to acting on the provisions in Objectives 2 and 5 of the GCM?
 - to get migration, displacement and planned relocation more effectively integrated into climate action (especially adaptation), development, and DRR plans in ways that respect the rights and address the needs of people who are compelled to, or choose to, move in the context of adverse effects of climate change/environmental degradation?

Instead of formal presentations, we will do three rounds of questions covering some aspects of what is above, allowing the panelists flexibility in choosing how they respond. We will then seek reflections and questions from the floor, with a brief final comment from each panelist.

PEOPLE'S MIGRATION CHALLENGE

CIVIL SOCIETY PRIORITIES WEBINAR SERIES from 13 April to 18 May 2021