



## **Climate Change, Internal Displacement and Development: Submission to the UN High Panel on Internal Displacement<sup>1</sup>**

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### **1. Introduction**

Climate change and other environmental factors will likely have greater influence on patterns of internal displacement than they will on cross-border movements. Such movements will also greatly affect development in some of the poorest countries in the world. The development goals of eradicating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity recognize the need to build capacity to address displacement in this context. The World Bank latest climate targets for 2021-2025 support more ambitious action and better adaptation as well as leverage private sector finance and drive systemic change at the country level (World Bank Group 2018). Specifically, the World Bank (2019b) Adaptation and Resilience Action Plan commits to scale up support to social resilience for the most vulnerable populations, including for climate risks associated with human mobility, food security and economic shocks.

In its latest

(IDA) offers support for legal to raise benefits for both sending and host countries (World Bank 2020). It commits to apply a migration lens in partner countries where migration or remittances play a significant socioeconomic role, including through

implementation of pilot projects, evaluation of migration policies and data collection. As one example, KNOMAD advocated successfully to have goals related to migration included among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). KNOMAD also established a specific Thematic Working Group on Environmental Change and Migration, which focuses on dimensions such as the determinants of movements and impacts on those who move, those who are left behind and those in host communities.

evidence base on climate change and human mobility are discussed below. They include work on both internal movements as well as cross-border ones.

## **2. The nexus between environmental change, mobility and development**

The linkages between environmental change, human mobility and development are significant (Ferris (2020)). Both mobility and forced immobility related to environmental change have important implications for the SDGs as well as the World Bank's aim to eradicate poverty and enhance shared prosperity, reflected in the vulnerability and resilience of concerned populations, that need to be managed carefully (Martin & Bergmann 2017). The incidence of

adverse environmental conditions (Foresight 2011). Households and communities use it to manage risk and build resilience by diversifying sources of income (Mohapatra et al. 2012). Anticipatory migration is also used to reduce the likelihood that entire households will become displaced.

Yet the most vulnerable groups too often have the fewest opportunities to adapt locally or move away from risk (Adger et al. 2014). Those trapped in unsafe situations, willing but unable to move, are of particular concern as they may face high impoverishment and survival risks. In that sense, forced immobility should be of equal interest to the High Level Panel as is mobility.

Further, research indicates that climate change affects pandemic, which in turn affect mobility (Brenner and Marwen 2018) As Wu et.al. (2016), note climate conditions constrain the geographic and seasonal distributions of infectious diseases, and weather affects the timing and intensity of disease outbreaks. It is not only the diseases themselves that affect movements but also the responses by governments and households to their spread. In many cases, the response is to order quarantines and stay at home rules that limit mobility. Edelstein et al (2014) found, in an analysis of infectious diseases, that when people move as a result of such health crises, they tend to move over short distances and for relatively short periods of time, and often because of misunderstandings and panic (Edelstein et al. 2014:97). A recent survey in Senegal indeed found an increase in urban to rural migration as a result of COVID-19 (Le Nestour and Moscoviz 2020).

As above, forced immobility may, in fact, be a far greater risk for those who are unable to relocate during a pandemic to where they can distance themselves from others. The spread of COVID-19 through nursing homes and prisons is an example. This leads to a direct concern about the impact of COVID-19 on those already displaced by environmental change (as well as conflict). There is great potential for a rapid spread of the disease through the contained and often unsanitary places in which the displaced reside whether camps or urban spaces.

From a development perspective, the implications of environmentally-induced human mobility for the vulnerability and resilience of large populations must be taken seriously. While the issue has recently come to feature prominently in national, regional and international debate (Ionesco et al. 2016), it is still insufficiently incorporated in long-term development planning. There is need for more evidence-based norm-setting and practice in this area if the international community is to be prepared to address internal displacement in the context of climate and other environmental change.

### **3. World Bank response**

The World Bank engages with environmentally-driven mobility through research and financing. Several World Bank research reports provide insights into the nexus (Adams et al. 2014; Cervigni & Morris 2016; Hallegatte et al. 2017; Hallegatte et al. 2015; PIK & Climate Analytics 2013; World Bank 2012, 2016). One of the key research efforts is

scenario assesses high greenhouse gas emissions combined with an unequal development pathway; the second scenario is based on similarly high emissions but an improved development pathway, resulting with lower global emissions but the same unequal development as the reference scenario.

In the three focus regions Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, finds a scaling up of internal climate migration between now and 2050, with a likely intensification thereafter if status quo prevailed. More than 143 million (around 86 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million in South Asia, and 17 million in Latin America) are projected to move by 2050 in the high end of the pessimistic scenario. In a scenario climate- by between 31 million to 72 million.

- and out-migration, reflecting shifts in the viability of ecosystems to sustain livelihoods, will have important implications for development and economic transitions. Climate- that are increasingly marginal and can include low-lying cities, coastlines vulnerable to sea level rise, and areas of high water and agriculture stress n-migration hotspots have climatic conditions for agriculture as well as cities able to provide better livelihood opportunities (Rigaud et al. 2018: xxii). When hazards multiply and render local adaptation difficult, migration may be a reasonable development and adaptation strategy for the affected population, but adequate preparation of internal migrants and host communities is a key precondition. Already more resilient households tend to fare better from environmentally-induced migration (Martin & Bergmann 2017). In the absence of such preparation, however, migration can readily turn into challenging mass displacement when conditions rapidly deteriorate (such as during acute natural hazards).

Far-sighted planning which moves from reactive to anticipatory responses is increasingly urgent. To avoid future crises, enhance emissions mitigation to limit global temperature increase; integrate climate migration into national development plans; and invest in research to better contextualize and understand the phenomenon. Such research needs to focus on scales ranging from regional to local, not just global, as local impacts differ. Responses must also go beyond the proximate causes to address the underlying drivers, including environmental and climate-related factors that jeopardize livelihoods and fuel conflicts. For example, in Rwanda a World Bank projects seeks to consolidate the ongoing shift from a humanitarian approach to long-term, government-led programs that improve access to basic services, environmental management and economic opportunities for both the displaced and host communities.

The World Bank is attempting to fill some of these gaps and to mainstream climate migration into development planning and policy. First, it will provide a more complete picture of potential climate migration by extending previous climate migration modeling analysis for additional regions and sub-regions where the World Bank is engaged. Second, ongoing work is expanding the current model for more granular analysis and contextualization modelled migration for



Human mobility is already an important global phenomenon with significant implications for poverty and inequality. While a share of the global movements of people has traditionally occurred in the context of environmental influences, climate change will significantly alter the magnitude of environmental degradation and hazards that human beings and systems face. This amplification of risks is particularly concerning from a development perspective, since on the one hand, vulnerability to climate impacts is highest in poorer countries. On the other hand, both mobility and immobility related to environmental change have important implications for the vulnerability and resilience of large numbers of concerned people that need to be managed thoughtfully.

Therefore, an explicit development lens is indispensable for approaching climate change and human mobility. But, no one development agency, including the World Bank, can build the resilience necessary to help people remain where they live or, if necessary, move in a safe, orderly and regular manner that protects them and the communities into which they settle. Collaboration between development actors and with organizations focused on human mobility within and across international borders is essential. At present, research and policy development on climate change and mobility is being addressed across different silos. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has focused on displacement in the context of its work on loss and damage.

Brookings, Georgetown University and UNHCR (2015) *Guidance On Protecting People From Disasters And Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation*

Martin, S. F. and Bergmann, J. (2017) *Environmental Change and Human Mobility: Reducing Vulnerability and Increasing Resilience. KNOMAD Policy Brief 6.*