

Towards COP30: Key Action Areas for Displacement in the Context of Climate Change

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Despite Progress Made, We Cannot be Satisfied

By *Walter Kälin*, Envoy of the Chair of Platform on Disaster Displacement; Switzerland

Fifteen years ago in Cancun, the Parties to the UNFCCC explicitly recognised that displacement, migration and planned relocation are among the key challenges of climate change adaptation. Ten years ago, 109 countries endorsed the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, which identified effective tools to address these challenges, and COP21 in Paris established the Task Force on Displacement, recognizing that human mobility often results in loss and damage rather than adaptation gains. At the time, it was unclear to those involved in these processes what the impact of these important steps would be. The topic remained rather marginal, negotiations at COPs were notoriously difficult, and necessary measures did not keep pace with realities on the ground.

Today, the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage and its Task Force on Displacement provide the forum for sustained policy discussions; the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage is mandated to finance, among others, migration-related projects; and the Santiago Network can catalyse technical assistance in this area. Thus, as the contributions in this publication show, human mobility

has become a legitimate issue that is now mainstreamed in much of the work under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

And yet, all too often support does not reach those most affected by adverse effects of climate change. Even worse: People displaced under such circumstances not only lose their homes and livelihoods and become poorer, but also run the risk of becoming victims of exploitation and human rights abuses. Those who are willing or unable to move may even be worse off. The lack of robust mitigation and adaptation efforts adds to the fragility of States that are already affected by economic crises, conflict and dysfunctional governance systems, all of which contribute to further displacement and migration.

That is why we cannot be satisfied with what has been achieved at COP29 and beyond. Continuing work on indicators and other technical aspects relevant to human mobility remains extremely important. At the same time, there is a risk that the big picture will get lost in bureaucratic details and negotiating tactics that pursue short-term interests. Mobility is the human face of global warming. It is

important to ensure that this issue remains high up on the agenda of relevant stakeholders. While the Loss and Damage Fund needs more resources, developing stronger synergies between the Fund and IFIs to ensure that the latter systematically integrate climate-related human mobility into their work would contribute to its catalytic function and effectiveness at scale. The Santiago Network and other actors are well advised to ground their work in a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics and multi-causality of displacement and migration and its underlying structural causes, even when the adverse effects of climate change are at the forefront. Promoting approaches based on the human rights of those affected and ensuring real participation by affected communities are crucial to achieving sustainable solutions. In other words, human mobility in the context of climate change is a multifaceted challenge that cannot be considered in isolation, but requires a high degree of coherence and close cooperation between policy areas. The articles in this issue are a welcome contribution to achieving this goal. ■

This issue of Southasiadisasters.net on “Towards COP30: Key Action Areas for Displacement in the Context of Climate Change” focuses on displacement as a reflection of the human cost of environmental challenges. It encompasses migration, planned relocation, and involuntary movements triggered by extreme weather events or slow-onset disasters such as rising sea levels. Addressing these challenges requires equitable climate finance, rights-based policies, and integrated planning to minimize impacts and build resilience.

INTRODUCTION

The Many Facets of Human Mobility in Climate Policy and Action

By *Lorenzo GUADAGNO*, Platform on Disaster Displacement, Switzerland

In the decade and a half since the Cancun Adaptation Framework, which first anchored displacement, migration and planned relocations in UNFCCC negotiations, human mobility topics have become a fixture of climate change policy discussions. Today, different facets of the 'climate and mobility' nexus are integrated into different UNFCCC workstreams, including Adaptation, Loss and Damage, Just Transition, and Finance. Following limited progress at COP29, key processes remain ongoing, and many issues still need to be resolved before relevant arrangements can be fully operationalised. The coming months promise to be a key moment in the development of global and national architectures to support people,

communities and societies facing the adverse effects of climate change – and a period of intense reflection and activity for human mobility stakeholders engaging with human mobility discussions.

In this issue of *Southasiadisasters.net*, we have gathered the contributions of professionals working at different intersections of climate change and human mobility, in an attempt to understand their operational and policy priorities for the coming months. Their contributions provide a diverse picture of the work needed to shape a more effective and just climate action, which addresses the impacts of climate change in a tailored and comprehensive manner, all while promoting approaches that

leverage the resources and capacities of every member of every society.

The diversity of perspectives this issue provides reflects the complex implications of mobility issues for climate policy and action. As shown by the contributions from work in the field by **OKUP**, **La Ruta del Clima**, **ICCCAD**, among others, climate impacts manifest through different mobility patterns and decisions for different people and communities. Today, much of this mobility takes place in the context of economic and non-economic impacts that overwhelm local capacities and resilience. Diverse, context-specific responses, including elements of climate change mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, are



Drawing credit: RMMRU.

needed to protect and restore people's agency and freedom of choice in the face of climate impacts, and to uphold their right to stay and right to move with dignity. These efforts need to be fully integrated into objectives and operations to resolve ongoing displacement and mobility, as highlighted by **Miron**.

Shaping the systems which will provide these responses is a key concern for many of the contributing colleagues.

On the Adaptation side, **Slycan Trust**, **ILO** and **IOM** have been closely following the development of the Indicator Framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation, which should capture information about migrants (both to disaggregate the specific climate vulnerability that is associated with migration status, and to identify the benefits of migration in support of adaptation).

On the Loss and Damage side, as highlighted by **Schmidt**, the technical assistance architecture has been established with the Santiago Network, and countries have started elaborating requests for capacity building and assessments, which should include displacement and other human mobility issues. The financial picture is a bit less defined, but work will take place in Spring

2025 to advance the Fund and relevant Funding Arrangements, and **IOM** advocates for a system that can address some of the gaps in responding to displacement and other forms of human mobility in the context of climate change. While a more detailed and comprehensive evidence base is still needed to fully support decision-making on technical assistance and finance on Loss and Damage, **IDMC** is working to provide more systematic and nuanced data on displacement, and other actors such as **IMPACT Initiatives** can contribute significant knowledge through their ongoing data collection efforts in humanitarian contexts.

On the Just Transition side, **Anti Slavery International** highlights how the protection of the rights of migrant workers should be an essential component of global dialogues and policies, and in particular in sectors that feature high exposure to climate impacts.

As outlined by the **Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre** researchers, promoting comprehensive climate action will also require understanding how climate change is embedded in broader social and political processes: responses will not be effective and sustainable unless they

are designed to also address the social, political and economic factors that create and reproduce the vulnerability. As highlighted in the advocacy by **Beyond Climate Collaborative**, more needs to be done to fully embed analysis and reform of migration policies in response to climate change, both to multiply people's choices in the face of climate impacts, and to address a key driver of marginalisation and vulnerability.

Addressing all these different perspectives cannot remain a global policy concern: human mobility, in all its relevant facets, needs to be embedded in processes to plan climate action at the national level. Moreover, local-level actors and institutions that support the implementation of relevant measures need to be fully equipped to address human mobility, climate change, and other drivers of risk in comprehensive, integrated manners. In the coming months and years, this will require strengthening local partnerships and collaborations, and enabling human mobility stakeholders, including representatives of migrants, displaced persons and other affected groups, to actively participate in the design and implementation of all climate action. ■

CLIMATE MOBILITY

We Belong Together: Human Mobility and Climate Change Negotiations

By Ileana Sînziana Pușcaș, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Switzerland

COP29 was named the transition COP or the finance COP, for its larger goals. But for human mobility, COP29 was the legitimacy COP.

The 2024 Conference came fourteen years after the milestone *Cancun Adaptation Framework paragraph 14.f*,

which anchored human mobility in UNFCCC negotiations, and seventeen years after the first human mobility side event in [COP13](#). Three main trends legitimized human mobility in the climate change negotiations at COP29.

To start with, human mobility was discussed in eight relevant negotiations. These are in loss and damage (Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FrLD), Warsaw International Mechanism, Santiago Network (SNLD)), adaptation

(National Adaptation Plans, Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)), the Just Transition Work Programme, finance (New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)), and gender. The two most consequential ones concluded with decisions integrating human mobility, namely the [NCOG](#) and the [GGA](#). These could lead to accelerating climate finance for human mobility and strengthening migration as an adaptation strategy.

Secondly, climate mobility was recognized at the highest levels of the COP29 political debates. The COP29 Presidency together with the human mobility community elevated the discourse to [events](#) and [political outcomes](#) among Presidents and Ministers as well as heads of NGOs and UN agencies. We saw all the facets of climate mobility being analyzed, from its links to [peace](#) and [protection](#) to its relevance in [mountain](#) areas and [extreme heat](#).

Thirdly, the climate mobility community has never been stronger and larger. COP29 gathered a [diverse set of actors](#), including not only the usual mobility entities, like IOM, UNHCR, IDMC, PDD, but also migrants and refugees representatives, Youth Delegates on Climate Migration, climate mobility think tanks and humanitarian organizations. The strength in numbers was felt throughout the negotiations and advocacy efforts to ensuring that climate mobility is part of the COP29 agenda and decisions.

These engagements made COP29 a milestone: human mobility is now an inevitable topic in UNFCCC. The next step is for the human mobility community to capitalize on these gains for sustainable action. These include:



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1. Human mobility actors should support the [Expert Group](#) for the GGA indicators with evidence and knowledge on migration as a solution to the climate crisis. This could contribute to establishing regular migration pathways, when adaptation in-situ is no longer possible. IOM organized such a first discussion at its COP29 Pavilion, and the UN system will continue the exchange in 2025 before the Group drafts proposals in [June 2025 in Bonn](#).
2. The operational entities working directly with governments and communities on climate mobility should quickly adjust their technical services and be on standby to support the elaboration of [technical assistance requests to SNLD](#) and of finance requests to [FrLD](#) as well as for the use of eventual allocations to implement relevant programming.
3. IOM, as the only named UN entity in the group of 30

members of the [Annual High Level Dialogue on Loss and Damage](#), will have to position human mobility at the Dialogue's first session in Spring 2025. IOM could carry the diverse expertise of the human mobility community, including through its role as Coordinator of the UN Network on Migration. It should [advocate](#) for covering the financial gaps in responding to increasing disaster displacement, planned relocation, and migration in the context of climate change, not least by leveraging its broad membership of 175 States and presence in over 500 locations.

Finally, looking ahead, COP30 in Belém, Brazil is set to be an important one for human mobility. With the work programmes on [just transition](#) and [adaptation goals](#) concluding their work, there is an opportunity for Parties to fully leverage the positive potential of human mobility for effective climate action. ■

Climate Change: Different Human Mobility Implications, Different Responses

By MA. Adrián Martínez, and Maria Paula Calvo Barboza, *La Ruta del Clima*, Costa Rica

Human mobility is a right, not an obligation or a crime. In La Ruta del Clima, we have been working in Los Chiles and Caldera in Costa Rica, researching alongside local communities how climate change has caused severe consequences on their lives and livelihoods. One thing these processes have shown is how diverse human mobility impacts are: not all people and communities want to leave their territories, and the ones who do cannot always access the economic and social resources to restart their lives in a safer place with dignity. There is an International Law and Human Rights obligation to enable the exercise of the right to adapt to climate change, meaning to be provided with the resources to ensure their human dignity, food

security and development. People and their territory have a right not to be harmed, and this applies to climate impacts, due to their transboundary nature and human-made causality. Climate change harm is an internationally wrongful act for which responsible states are obliged to provide climate reparations. These obligations include the duty to deliver climate finance and resources for adaptation measures and to address loss and damage.

In Los Chiles, the community prioritized adaptation measures for agriculture. La Ruta del Clima designed a program tailored to the local conditions that allowed community members to learn about new techniques to protect their crops from adverse climate effects. The

project adopted an intergenerational, participative approach, allowing families to participate together in planning and capacity-building workshops. Participants from different generations learned from each other and from the technical experts on how to protect their territories, families and agricultural activities to ensure a good quality of life in the face of climate impacts. This approach focused on providing resources to prevent forced human mobility.

Most of the families that used to live in Caldera, instead, have already been forced to leave due to sea level rise. Those who remained in the affected territory were constantly threatened by wave surges or high tides overnight, which also generated fear and anxiety. Different



Young people of Los Chiles participating on the workshops. Source: La Ruta del Clima, 2024

community members have different positions: some are desperately trying to find the economic resources to move to a new location and others do not want to leave their territory but are also in need of resources to maintain their livelihoods and protect their land. This situation is extremely difficult for the subnational government, which does not have enough public finance for planned relocation or other actions. The case of Caldera shows how access to climate finance to perform risk assessments and support planned relocation is both an immediate urgency and a matter of climate reparations.

All these realities are deeply related to Loss and Damage due to climate change, as affected communities feel directly economic impacts on their livelihoods and health, culture and social dynamics. Even the psychosocial health of their members has been harmed due to environmental processes caused far

from their homes and ecosystems, as they are living in fear and anxiety over the adverse effects of climate change. This underpins the need for establishing legal obligations and rights-based governance for the international climate change regime. Human mobility due to climate change must be addressed in the climate discussion, as it relates to Loss and damage.

Therefore, we want to conclude with three urgent recommendations:

1. There's an urgent need to have a legal protection framework for human mobility in the context of climate change, especially for people who cross international borders to protect their human rights. Currently, there is a legal gap that leaves people unprotected and unable to exercise their right to safe and dignified mobility.
2. Planned relocations entail a wide range of impacts that are frequently forgotten. When

addressing human mobility in the context of climate change, we need a broader approach that considers the economic and non-economic loss and damage suffered by communities. A direct engagement with and the effective participation of frontline communities is a minimum requirement to have adequate and rights-based planned relocations.

3. Adaptation measures need to be built in collaboration with the communities. The development of adaptation actions must be tailored to the specific needs of communities. The protection of livelihoods, well-being and sociocultural systems must be factored into adaptation planning and implementation. It is important that the adaptation measures and the economic resources provided to a community generate effective results, specially to prevent forced human mobility. ■

CLIMATE CRISIS MIGRATION

Intersections of Climate Change, Migration, and Modern Slavery: A Cycle of Debt Traps, Distress, and Despair

By *Shakirul Islam*, *Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP)*, Bangladesh¹

Due to its deltaic plain, Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to natural hazards and disasters. Climate change has increased this vulnerability. Since 2007, when large-scale cyclone Sidr hit the coastal districts, particularly the Sundarbans region, cyclones and tropical storms have impacted the

country almost every year, causing extensive destruction of assets and livelihoods, and undermining people's wellbeing.

Testimonies of affected persons reveal that, in recent years, tidal surges have become higher than usual causing frequent floods and waterlogging. Rainfall more often

manifests as heavy downpours with severe thunder and lightning, leading to loss of lives and flooding of crop fields and fish farms. Meanwhile, lack of rain or untimely rains also cause severe impacts on farming. At the same time, rising temperatures and increasing heatwaves have exacerbated

¹ This paper is written by Shakirul Islam, a researcher, activist, and the Chair of OKUP, a grassroots migrant organization based in Bangladesh. Shakirul is a 'Steering Group' member of the [Climate, Migration & Displacement Platform \(CMDP\)](#), a global advocacy platform. The paper is prepared based on the findings of OKUP's longitudinal research in the Sundarbans region.

drought conditions while salinization of surface and groundwater has emerged as a persistent threat, leaving communities with no drinking water and suitable soil for farming, in addition to threatening the biodiversity of local ecosystems. Furthermore, riverbank erosion made many families landless and displaced.

OKUP's surveys show that over 93% of households in the Sundarbans region have suffered partial or total destruction of their homes more than once in the last 15 years, while many others have lost significant livelihood assets, namely 76% of their agricultural production and 63% of their livestock. Additionally, 48% of households have reported health issues, including physical, mental, and reproductive impacts. These losses have undermined food security, income, and employment. Knock-on effects of these processes even include early marriage, which in turn results in early pregnancy and related complications, and risk of gender-based violence, divorce, and stigma.

The recurrence of disasters leaves many families struggling to survive. Due to limited assistance, most people rely on loans from local moneylenders or microcredit organizations to rebuild their lives. However, high-interest rates and exploitative practices make repayment challenging, especially for families whose incomes collapse after repeated disasters. OKUP data shows that 87% of households have taken out multiple loans to cope with losses since Cyclone Sidr in 2007, trapping them in a cycle of debt. In this context, when livelihoods remain unstable and debts accumulate, migration becomes a necessity for many families to



Leaving barren land behind: A journey towards a new place to find work.

survive. OKUP's research found that 65% of households in the Sundarbans have at least one member who has migrated for work. Among these, 84% migrated within the country, while 16% went abroad. Unfortunately, the lack of safe migration pathways, legal protections, and access to essential services forces many migrants into informal work, making them vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, and slavery-like conditions.

To respond, we strongly advocate for the following points:

1. All relevant policies and frameworks under the UNFCCC should be fully aligned with the fundamental human rights frameworks.
2. Policy and operational efforts should aim to create community-led and rights-based solutions to address

'mobility' and 'immobility' based on human rights principles, including upholding people's 'right to stay' and 'right to leave'. This will require enhancing the knowledge and skills of affected communities, increasing their access to services including social protection schemes, justice, and remedies, and creating safer migration pathways and decent work conditions.

3. The countries are historically responsible for climate change must fulfil their commitment to financing. Relevant international funding mechanisms, including loss and damage funding, adaptation finance, and other instruments, must ensure effective mechanisms for frontline organizations to access resources to ensure community-led solutions. ■

Why Does UNFCCC COP29 Matter in Addressing Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change

By Soumyadeep Banerjee, Climate Action Division, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The 2010 Cancun Adaptation Framework (Decision 1/CP.16) was the first decision text of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that mentioned human mobility in the context of climate change. Paragraph 14f invited parties to enhance understanding, coordination, and cooperation on human mobility (viz., climate change-induced displacement, migration, and planned relocation).² Since then, key decision texts of the UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties (COPs) mentioned human mobility, including the Paris Agreement (Decision 1/CP.21), the recommendations of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (Decision 10/CP.24), the establishment of the Fund to Respond to Loss and Damage (Decision 2/CP.27), and the operationalisation of the Fund to Respond to Loss and Damage (Decision -/CP.28).

COP29 is a key milestone for human mobility in the context of climate change. Substantive progress was made on this issue. The decision text on Global Goals on Adaptation mentions ‘migrants’ in paragraph 21d³ and the decision text on the New Collective Quantified Goal mentions ‘migrants and refugees’ in paragraph 26.⁴ This could facilitate the integration of human mobility-related measures in adaptation planning. Though a consensus could not be reached by the Parties on the

Review of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage at COP29, feedback on the work of the Task Force on Displacement was generally positive. The mainstreaming of human mobility in the context of climate change was also observed in the key initiatives by the COP29 Presidency, namely the Baku Call on Climate Action for Peace, Relief, and Recovery⁵ and the Baku Guiding Principles on Human Development for Climate Resilience⁶. During COP29, UNFCCC also published the Technical Guide on Integrating Human Mobility and Climate Change Linkages into Relevant National Climate Change Planning Processes.⁷ This product provides guidance for mainstreaming human mobility into adaptation planning processes, for example, the formulation and implementation of National Adaptation Plans.

Following the trend established at COP27, an increasing number of entities—including government bodies, UN organizations, international organizations, civil society groups, universities, private sector representatives, migrants, internally displaced persons, and refugees—participated in human mobility-related side events at COP29. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been actively supporting its member states and partners in addressing the challenges and opportunities related to human mobility through policy and

programmatic actions at the global, regional, national, and local levels.⁸

COP30 will take place in Belem in less than a year. Some concrete actions could help to build upon the gains from COP29:

1. Relevant entities should **raise awareness** among human mobility-related stakeholders at the national and sub-national levels (i.e., province, district, and community) about the progress in addressing human mobility that was achieved at COP29. The COP decision texts support the inclusion of human mobility-related stakeholders in the planning of climate action, especially climate change adaptation and response to loss and damage, and should be fully leveraged to this end.
2. The dissemination of the Technical Guide among the human mobility-related stakeholders at the national and sub-national levels will help **develop their capacities** as well as mainstream human mobility in relevant planning processes.
3. Bringing together relevant stakeholders in each country, i.e., sectoral government entities, local government entities, UN Organisations, international organizations, civil society organizations, universities, the private sector, migrants, internally displaced persons, and refugees will help jointly develop context-specific, gender-responsive and rights-based **engagement plans** for COP30, to ensure we continue progressing along this journey. ■

² <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>

³ [Global goal on adaptation | UNFCCC](#)

⁴ [New collective quantified goal on climate finance | UNFCCC](#)

⁵ [COP29 Presidency Launches Baku Call on Climate Action for Peace, Relief, and Recovery](#)

⁶ [Baku Guiding Principles on Human Development for Climate Resilience](#)

⁷ [WIM ExCom human-mobility TFD 2024.pdf](#)

⁸ <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/human-mobility-cop-29>

Climate-related Human Mobility in Adaptation Frameworks

By *Dennis Mombauer and Marek Szilvasi*, SLYCAN Trust, Sri Lanka and Germany

While over the last few years the climate change and human mobility community has primarily focused on the UNFCCC loss and damage (L&D) workstreams, [the recent decision under the Global Goal on Adaptation](#) (GGA) presents a significant opportunity for integrating human mobility into the adaptation pillar of the global climate action agenda.

Climate-induced Human Mobility in the GGA

Adaptation negotiations continued to be technical at COP29 and to some extent shielded from current geopolitical tensions. Although discussions on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and the Adaptation Committee were not concluded, the process of operationalizing the GGA under the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience and the UAE-Belém work programme resulted in [a decision that provides further direction for developing indicators](#) for the GGA's seven thematic and four-dimensional targets.

In Para 21/d, the decision text emphasizes that the final outcome of the UAE-Belém work programme should also include indicators that capture information pertaining to migrants as a specific climate-vulnerable group. As the decision does not specify against which target such migration-relevant indicators should be tracked, they could be seen as relevant for all thematic and dimensional targets. Moreover, the text refers to migration in association with vulnerability – a crucial concept, as the main GGA objective

is to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change. This makes human mobility an integral and ambitious focus for assessing climate adaptation progress.

There are other clear technical linkages between climate-related human mobility and the thematic targets of the GGA Framework. For example, climate impacts on food systems and livelihoods are often strongly connected to rural-urban migration; ensuring continuity of healthcare and preventing health hazards is a key challenge in situations of displacement; and adaptation investments in human settlements and infrastructure are important for both origin and destination areas. Furthermore, the dimensional targets also offer entry points for connecting the GGA to human mobility, such as through disaggregated data collection, migration-specific vulnerability assessments, or the mainstreaming of mobility into monitoring and evaluation systems.

However, it remains uncertain whether the three main forms of climate-related human mobility – migration, disaster displacement, and planned relocation – will be monitored under the GGA, and what form such monitoring would take.

Climate-induced Human Mobility in NAPs

As highlighted in the COP29/CMA6 decision on the GGA (para 16), NAPs are “one of the important channels via which the targets [...] could be achieved.” New research conducted

by SLYCAN Trust indicates that out of 60 NAPs submitted by developing country Parties, the vast majority (83%) reference climate-related human mobility, with almost two-thirds (63%) also containing concrete provisions or actions to address migration, displacement, and/or planned relocation. Climate mobility considerations are also well incorporated into the localization provisions of submitted NAPs, their existing sectoral and other subnational development and adaptation plans.

However, there is a considerable range of perspectives on mobility, with some Parties aiming to prevent mobility responses to climate change, others trying to better manage ongoing movements, and yet others recognising mobility as an adaptation strategy in itself.

Enhancing data availability, closing knowledge gaps, strengthening anticipatory planning, and building a more robust and coherent enabling environment are among the key challenges faced by countries in addressing human mobility through all stages of their NAP process. In particular, there is an opportunity to mainstream mobility not just into the NAP document but also into relevant implementation structures, particularly those at the subnational level which can address specific local or regional contexts in a more differentiated way.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The often informal or transboundary nature of human mobility offers a unique perspective for contributing

to the climate adaptation agenda. Going forward, the GGA indicator framework should integrate mobility-related metrics to help track transboundary risks and elements of adaptation using established tools and databases from the human mobility community.

Moreover, climate-induced human mobility should be further integrated in the NAPs. Our research shows that this integration has happened already, but, as the cornerstones of national adaptation planning, NAPs

will remain the key platform for including climate-related human mobility in climate change adaptation through a dedicated, iterative policy cycle. To avoid imposing additional reporting burdens on Parties and utilize existing data collection and monitoring processes, NAPs will be the most efficient way to operationalize human mobility considerations and ensure evidence-based and context-specific interventions at the local and national levels.

However, for climate-related human mobility to be considered a successful adaptation strategy, it must ensure livelihood and economic opportunities, protection for those on the move, and the preservation of traditional practices, cultural heritage, and community networks. Moreover, inadequate funding and no substantial commitments for adaptation under the new collective quantified goal on climate finance (NCQG) pose significant challenges that must be addressed. ■

CASE STUDY

Climate Displacement and Land Access: Lessons from Bangladesh

By *Lutfor Rahman and Juel Mahmud*, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), Bangladesh

In 2022 alone, over 7.1 million Bangladeshis were displaced by climate change, according to the World Health Organization (WHO)⁹. Within the next three decades, up to 20 million people are projected to lose their lands and face displacement due to both extreme and slow-onset climate change events in the country¹⁰. Thus, it is a high priority for Bangladesh to take decisive measures to deal with the issue of displacement of people due to climate change impacts, including floods, cyclones, erosion on riverbanks and coastal areas, sea-level rise and salinization. While Bangladesh has been successful in reducing the loss of lives from cyclones and floods, it has been less effective in creating conditions to help displaced persons recover

access to land, housing and livelihoods once disasters are over.

Bangladesh has adopted a comprehensive approach to address the challenges faced by displaced individuals. As part of this strategy, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) is conducting participatory research to enhance knowledge and understanding of land access for displaced persons. The goal is to contribute to improved policies and interventions that meet their housing and livelihood needs.

The research is being conducted in various areas of Bangladesh, including slums in the capital city of Dhaka, and Sirajganj District Municipality and its Union, Char.

Findings show that most displaced persons occupied Government land (Khas Land) before their displacement. When they were hit by disasters, they faced both economic and non-economic loss and damage. People and communities affected by floods mainly reported damages to homes, roads and bridges, loss of agricultural crops and domestic animals. Those affected by erosion, meanwhile, primarily reported loss of land, assets and livelihood, as well as loss of economic stability, psychological distress and anxiety, loss of community networks and customs, as well as cultural and religious infrastructure (e.g. mosque, mandir, graveyard) – all effects that are magnified by population displacement. This demonstrates

⁹ Sakib, SM Najmus. (2022, November 29). "Climate change displaced millions of Bangladeshis in 2022: WHO." Anadolu Agency. Accessed January 10, 2025. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/climate-change-displaced-millions-of-bangladeshis-in-2022-who/2750491>

¹⁰ Clement, Viviane; Rigaud, Kanta Kumari; de Sherbinin, Alex; Jones, Bryan; Adamo, Susana; Schewe, Jacob; Sadiq, Nian; Shabhat, Elham. 2021. Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration. © World Bank, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/36248> License: [CC BY 3.0 IGO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).

that one-size solutions will not fit all displacement contexts.

Research indicates that most displaced persons prefer to remain near their original homes, provided land is available. If they cannot find land in these familiar areas, they typically move to nearby locations or the nearest city. After the initial displacement, many individuals ultimately relocate to larger cities like Dhaka. Throughout this journey, their livelihoods often change to adapt to the urban labor market, which can lead to de-skilling and impoverishment, at least in the short term.

Access to land plays a crucial role in influencing these mobility decisions. However, many displaced individuals lack awareness of their land rights and do not follow the necessary procedures to register and reclaim their losses. Instead, they tend to rely on traditional customs. This reliance can create conflicts and hinder the effective resolution of displacement issues.

Economic and non-economic losses and damages overwhelm local adaptive capacities. This highlights the urgency of establishing a global Loss and Damage architecture that can support affected persons and communities.

The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) was established at CoP28 in Dubai to provide support to vulnerable countries that are facing the impacts of climate change. The operationalization of the fund has been a key policy item since, and was an important element of policy discussions at the UNFCCC COP29 in Baku. Currently, the total funding pledged to the FRLD is about \$720 million – a sum widely inadequate to address growing impacts and needs.

Much remains to be done to operationalise the FRLD. First, mechanisms for accessing climate finance for countries facing displacement challenges, particularly the most vulnerable ones, including Bangladesh, should be simplified. Moreover, channels should be established to directly support communities affected by displacement due to sudden and slow-onset events climate shocks. This support needs to translate into protecting the livelihoods of displaced and at-risk populations, particularly women, youth, and indigenous communities.

Mainstreaming human mobility considerations into climate action plans provides a foundation for these efforts, as it enables local governments to address displacement issues through site-specific adaptation and loss and damage responses and empowers community organizations managing displacement at the grassroots level through technical and financial resources, structures and collaborations. These efforts also need to be supported by a broader integration of human mobility in climate policy. NDC and NAP

priorities should be aligned with development planning to ensure that long-term urban planning, flood management measures, and land policies align with displacement challenges.

Bangladesh stands at the frontline of climate-induced displacement. Bangladesh's National Action Plan to Implement the National Strategy on Internal Displacement (2022-2042) provides a strong foundation for rights-based and community-centric solutions. By drawing on its experiences, Bangladesh can position itself as a global leader in advocating for solutions to climate-induced displacement, contributing valuable lessons and policy pathways for other vulnerable countries.

Addressing displacement requires a whole-of-society approach that bridges policy, funding, and grassroots action. Ensuring access to land, securing livelihoods, and empowering communities – particularly women and marginalized groups – will be pivotal in building a more resilient and adaptive future for Bangladesh in the face of climate change. ■



People are displaced by river erosion and access to land in government land (Khas land) and build their houses.

Displacement and Loss and Damage at COP29: A Perspective on Catalyzing Technical Assistance through the Santiago Network

By *Timo Schmidt*, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), Switzerland

At COP29, advancing approaches to avert, minimize and address loss and damage remained a key topic of discussion. While some outcomes were deferred to negotiations in 2025, the conference provided further perspective on the evolving loss and damage architecture and its mechanisms within the UN climate policy framework, including the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM ExCom), the Santiago network and the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage.

The Santiago network plays a particular role in addressing the needs of developing countries and vulnerable communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis. The network catalyzes demand-driven technical assistance from organizations, bodies, networks and experts to avert, minimize and address loss and damage at the local, national and regional levels. This can include risk assessments of extreme weather and slow-onset climate impacts, identifying financing needs, establishing pre-disaster preparedness, facilitating access to knowledge, building institutional capacity and implementing measures for recovery and rehabilitation, among others.

Displacement as a dimension of loss and damage

Displacement in the context of climate change reveals the growing human cost of the climate crisis. Its compounding effects on social,



COP29 event: "Scaling up climate action on loss and damage – full operationalization of the Santiago network". Photo credit: UNFCCC (2024).

economic and environmental challenges reflect its multifaceted nature - not only as a form and indicator but also as a driver of loss and damage. In keeping with this broader notion, addressing displacement through the Santiago network requires a holistic approach: one that mitigates risks and removes obstacles to safe and regular migration to avert and minimize displacement, while also supporting protection and recovery for displaced populations.

COP29 discussions highlighted the diverse protection needs of displaced populations who move in a changing climate, both within their countries and across borders. This includes particularly those communities who are already marginalized, including women, youth and children, and Indigenous Peoples. With the Santiago network's focus on delivering technical assistance, its processes are developed to consider

urgency and demand in addressing these needs, guided by the priorities of developing countries that receive technical assistance.

The Santiago network's first call for proposals (CFP), launched during COP29 in response to a technical request from Vanuatu, exemplifies the network's commitment to address loss and damage comprehensively and connect developing countries with the expertise of its members. The CFP seeks to support Vanuatu in developing a nationally determined programme to address loss and damage, with an emphasis on both economic and non-economic dimensions.

Looking ahead

Building on discussions at COP29, the Santiago network could be well-positioned to advance efforts in averting, minimizing and addressing the impacts of displacement associated with the adverse effects of

climate change. Three key actions stand out:

1. Enable tailored and demand-driven responses to address displacement challenges through technical assistance, with solutions based on local, national and regional contexts and priorities.
2. Facilitate strong and diverse network membership, including

expertise on displacement associated with the adverse impacts of climate change.

3. Generate insights into technical assistance needs relevant to displacement and strengthen knowledge-sharing mechanisms to support the dissemination of lessons learned and best practices.

As the Santiago network is expected to move towards full operationalization in 2025, its capacity to drive these actions will grow. Developing countries will have the opportunity to leverage this opportunity, based on their priorities, by accessing technical assistance that considers displacement associated with the adverse effects of climate change. ■

SUSTAINABLE DISPLACEMENT SOLUTIONS

Durable Solutions to Displacement: 'Raising the Bar' in Loss and Damage Discourse and Practice

By *Steven Miron*, Refugee Law Initiative, School of Advanced Study University of London, United Kingdom

The IASC's *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* states that displacement is considered "resolved" only when 1) affected communities have returned home or settled and fully integrated elsewhere and 2) all the adverse effects of displacement have been addressed through a multifaceted approach that considers safety and security, housing and WASH, livelihoods and standard of living, access to services including healthcare and education, participation in community and civic life, non-discrimination and legal and human rights.

The ongoing field research conducted by the Refugee Law Initiative in Bangladesh, supported generously by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, demonstrates the need for a multifaceted approach to prevent, minimize, and address displacement due to climate change. Additionally, it underscores the importance of integrating durable solutions for displacement within the emerging Loss and Damage framework of the UNFCCC.

In one administrative Union in the southwest coastal region near the Bay of Bengal, Super Cyclone Amphan (2020) displaced approximately 5000 of the 36,000 residents, primarily from the three most exposed wards. Many permanently lost homes, land and livelihoods as Amphan cut new saltwater canals where people lived and worked. Twice-daily tidal flooding, caused by multiple breaks in the levy, lasted two years until the embankment was repaired, prolonging human suffering and leading to further losses and damages - reduced access to schools, health facilities, markets and services, and worsening poverty, indebtedness and food insecurity.

People who remain displaced in the Union today, as well as many who were involuntarily immobile during Amphan, spoke of wanting to relocate elsewhere but said they lacked the means to leave during and after the super cyclone. Among both displaced and immobile male residents, exploitative and often dangerous debt-bonded seasonal labour migration increased in the aftermath of the cyclone. As a

consequence, women, children, older people and people with disabilities or illnesses were left behind, isolated and with diminished means to cope. Several interviewees spoke of mental health issues, gender-based violence and other trauma during and after Amphan. Female childhood marriage, already common in the Union, increased.

In 2022, the situation began to improve. Under the leadership of a newly elected Union Chairman, the embankment was finally repaired, stopping the saltwater tidal flooding. Residents of the Union and the Chairman together took the bold step of curtailing widespread shrimp farming, which had degraded agricultural land, weakened natural defences against storm surges and contributed to food insecurity. When we visited the Union in the fall of 2024, agriculture was recovering. Many people displaced during Amphan had returned. Some, who had undertaken debt-bonded labour migration for several years, now had the means to remain in the Union year-round rather than toil in distant brick kilns or on dangerous fishing boats. These are positive signs that

some of the causes and consequences of displacement are being addressed.

Yet, the recovery in the Union is partial and fragile. Critical levies remain vulnerable, while other disaster risk reduction measures are insufficient. Recent livelihood and food security gains could be lost to the next super cyclone. Storm-resilient housing is still rare, as are climate-resilient livelihoods, with several women reporting few opportunities outside of traditional family agriculture and aquaculture. Many, particularly those who remain displaced on eroding riverbanks on the Union's periphery, still have difficulty accessing services and schools because of the remoteness of their temporary abodes and the newly formed canals that have made land travel difficult. Levels of precarity remain far greater than pre-Amphan times.

The multifaceted criteria for a durable solution constitute a "high bar". In the context of climate change loss and damage, the bar has to be high. Climate and mobility justice requires addressing all 'loss and damage' contributing to and resulting from displacement. Critically, solutions' durability necessitates integrated, multifaceted approaches to addressing displacement.

Our fieldwork also highlights how the conventional "durable solutions bar" – the IASC *Framework's* benchmark criteria for when a solution has been achieved – is still insufficiently high. Restoring people to pre-disaster displacement conditions – or to parity with non-displaced populations – won't adequately address growing climatic risks. In this Union, which faces

increasing loss and damage from sea level rise, saline intrusion, riverbank erosion, intensifying cyclones and extreme heat, unless the root causes of vulnerability and exposure that led to previous displacements are addressed, repeated displacements, protracted displacements and associated erosive coping behaviors, such as debt-bonded labour migration, are likely to become even more commonplace.

Closer integration of disaster risk reduction practices into durable solutions approaches – and vice versa – is an obvious requirement for averting, minimising and addressing loss and damage. So, too, is the application of human mobility and durable solutions lenses to ongoing and future climate adaptation and development work. ■



Satkhira District, Bangladesh. Many village men leave home to work on fishing boats or in brick kilns six months per year. Debt-bonded seasonal labour migration increased in the aftermath of Super Cyclone Amphan. Photo: 2024 © Steven Miron.

Accounting Starts with Counting: Including Displacement Data into Loss and Damage (L&D) Assessments

By Vicente Anzellini, Alice Baillat, and Sylvain Ponserre; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Norwegian Refugee Council, Switzerland



Women and children collecting water in Pakistan's Sindh province in the aftermath of cyclone Biparjoy, which triggered 85,000 displacements. © UNICEF/UNI431676/Sokhin

The disappointing outcomes of COP29 in Baku, left many developing countries frustrated, as the newly agreed climate finance goal – 300 billion USD per year by 2035 – falls far short of the initial target of 1.3 trillion USD that developing nations had sought from developed countries to address climate change impacts. With loss and damage (L&D) projected to reach staggering amounts, comprehensive L&D assessments are essential to informing decision-making related to finance, planning, and implementation.

Displacement is one of the most tangible manifestations of loss and damage due to climate change and disasters. Many people are forced to leave their homes behind when risks become unmanageable, disrupting their lives, livelihoods and cultural

identities and creating long-term community impacts. Every year, storms and floods generate millions of movements of people globally. However, L&D assessments often fail to account for displacement and its impacts, resulting in an underestimate of the total losses incurred by affected communities.

Assessing displacement requires understanding its multiple dimensions – temporal, geographical, and social – which presents significant challenges.

First, the lack of standardized definitions and metrics makes it difficult to report accurately on disaster displacement and its impacts. Reporting systems often use different metrics such as “families” and “households”, making it challenging to estimate the number

of individuals involved. Furthermore, terms like “displaced” and “evacuated” are frequently used interchangeably, further complicating data collection.

This may not seem like a problem, but this inconsistency, combined with a lack of time-series data, makes it hard to determine when people are displaced, assess their specific vulnerabilities and needs and how they evolve over time, and evaluate the effectiveness of disaster risk reduction measures.

Second, a key gap is the difficulty in estimating the length of displacement, especially as internal displacement becomes increasingly protracted. This is closely linked to the magnitude of displacement triggered by disasters, which can fluctuate rapidly before, during and

after an event due to a variety of reasons. The intensity of hazards, the extent of vulnerability and the distance people move from their homes are among the factors that impede detailed assessments and the production of time series data.

This dynamic nature makes it challenging to track the impact of preparedness and response measures. While some countries, like the Philippines, have made progress in tracking displacement over time, this remains a significant challenge globally, hindering efforts to compile comprehensive estimates of the number of people living in internal displacement as a result of disasters. The lack of long-term tracking also limits our ability to estimate the direct, indirect, and long-term costs associated with displacement.

Third, inconsistent methods used by different stakeholders for collecting data in the same areas or on the same events can lead to conflicting estimates of the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as new and repeated movements or returns. This can cause confusion for policymakers, donors, and organizations working to address IDPs' needs, undermining the effective allocation of resources. The lack of harmonised data systems makes it difficult to understand how displacement crises evolve. Standards like the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS), developed by the Expert Group on Refugee, IDPs, and Statelessness Statistics (EGRISS), have yet to be systematically implemented.

To be comprehensive and robust, data should capture the triggers, impacts, scale and duration of displacement in all its forms.¹¹

Analysis protocols to examine trends and patterns should also be defined. Such data is critical for supporting L&D assessments, informing financial requests and guiding the provision of technical assistance under the UNFCCC. The following recommendations outline key steps to improve displacement monitoring and align it with global frameworks:

1. **Enhancing data standardization and harmonization:** Establishing a global baseline for displacement data will facilitate consistent comparisons and learning across countries, directly contributing to more accurate L&D assessments. Standardised, interoperable and comparable data will enable countries to quantify the scale of displacement and its impacts, providing robust evidence to request financial support and technical assistance. This data is crucial for prioritising responses under key UNFCCC mechanisms, such as the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage and the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage.
2. **Filling data gaps:** Addressing data gaps will improve our understanding of the complexity of displacement, including its duration and long-term impacts on communities and economies. This evidence is essential for refining methodologies to quantify economic and non-economic losses and damages linked with displacement and support countries' requests for accessing climate finance and assistance.
3. **Ensuring interoperability between reporting systems:** Integrating displacement data into global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development

Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement will help operationalise these frameworks at the national level. For instance, displacement metrics can inform Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptations Plans under the UNFCCC as well as disaster risk reduction strategies and enable countries to align their priorities with global targets.

4. **Strengthening national capacities:** Empowering governments to generate and use displacement data ensures that L&D assessments are nationally owned and context-specific. Incorporating displacement metrics into national planning, budgeting, and reporting systems will support country requests for financial and technical assistance. IDMC is well positioned to provide technical expertise, tools and guidance to governments and UNFCCC bodies to strengthen displacement data integration into these processes, by bringing its expertise on data collection and analysis, socio-economic impacts or risk assessments, and facilitating cross-country knowledge sharing and good practices.

Displacement is a powerful people-centered indicator of where better policies and actions are needed for risk reduction, adaptation and durable solutions. By failing to account for displacement in loss and damage assessments, decision-makers lack a complete understanding of climate change impacts, impeding effective resource allocation, policy planning and assistance delivery. ■

¹¹ EGRISS, International Recommendations on Internally Displaced Persons Statistics, March 2020.

Leveraging Climate and Humanitarian Data for Loss and Damage

By *Jeremy Wetterwald, IMPACT Initiatives, Switzerland*

In 2024, efforts to operationalize a Loss and Damage support architecture led to the establishment of the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage. While there are ongoing discussions occurring on the modalities and priorities of these two bodies, the importance of grounding relevant discussions, decisions and action in science and evidence is critical, especially given the significant gap between estimated needs and available finance. As of December 2024, the Fund has mobilized a bit more than 700m USD, when yearly needs are estimated between 290bn

and 580bn¹². The allocation decisions of scarce resources against massive gaps will be complex and will have to be:

1. Transparent and open, to ensure funds are going where they are most needed and not where it is least challenging to disburse
2. Aligned with priorities defined by communities experiencing the most severe forms of economic and non-economic loss and damage
3. Grounded in evidence of interventions that result in the best outcomes for affected populations

Allocating scarce resources is something that the humanitarian sector is also confronted with. In 2023, the total amount of international humanitarian assistance reached around 50bn USD (46.3bn USD) with about 60% of humanitarian needs remaining unmet¹³. While the gap is not as large in comparison to the one between loss and damage faced by communities and relevant financial commitments, there are several elements of humanitarian assistance planning that can be applied to loss and damage funding operationalization.



¹² [Unpacking finance for Loss and Damage | Heinrich Böll Stiftung | Washington, DC Office - USA, Canada, Global Dialogue](#)

¹³ [Fighting Humanitarian Funding Gap 2024](#)

In 2016, the Humanitarian System established the Grand Bargain to address growing financial gaps between humanitarian needs and available financing. One of its workstreams focused on improving 'joint and impartial needs assessment'. Commitment to this objective allowed the humanitarian system to significantly increase its capacity to generate, analyse, use and store data. Today, the humanitarian planning cycle produces regular humanitarian needs overviews and response plans (HNORPs) based on coordinated needs assessments.

Since 2016, IMPACT Initiatives via its REACH initiative has been working closely with the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination to deploy Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessments (MSNAs): nationwide, statistically representative household surveys covering all crisis-affected groups, which allow to better understand what the critical needs are (shelter, water, food), where are those needs most salient, and who are the most severely affected populations.

There are several interesting similarities between humanitarian planning and emerging loss and damage planning. First, there is a complex country prioritisation decision. While there are increasing efforts to distribute resources based on the needs, allocations are decided based on geopolitical priorities. Loss and damage funding should focus on countries that are experiencing the most severe forms of climate change impacts. There are several global indexes that can be used to inform those discussions ([JRC climate change](#) INFORM, [ND-Gain](#)), allowing for a prioritisation based on country vulnerability. The second action is urgent and time-sensitive. The right support needs to reach the right people at the right time. One lesson learned from the humanitarian sector in the last ten years is that unconditional cash transfers tend to have high levels of impact as they enable decision-making at the lowest possible level: households or individuals. Organisations such as Give Directly are sharing principles for cash transfers for loss and damage action, and the humanitarian actors, with their experience in identifying needs

and vulnerabilities, can support effective targeting of support to the right people. Finally, there is a need to invest in what works best based on priorities defined by affected people. Understanding the impact of loss and damage funding will be important to ensure that scarce resources are going towards solutions that meet the priorities of communities and help them effectively avert, minimise and address climate impacts.

In conclusion, as climate change threatens to multiply the needs of people affected by crises all over the world, the experience of the humanitarian system to generate and use data to inform resource allocation can be leveraged specifically to: i) understand the impacts of extreme events and slow-onset processes (using remote sensing and rapid needs assessments) ii) understand the recovery priorities of communities and iii) understand the result of loss and damage interventions. Fully leveraging this potential will be key to developing more solid and effective Loss and Damage responses. ■

CLIMATE MOBILITY

Reframing Climate Mobility: A Decolonial and Feminist Analysis of COP29

By *Lauren Grant*, *Beyond Climate Collaborative* and *Gabriela Nagle Alverio*, *Beyond Climate Collaborative & Duke University, United States*

“Nothing more than an optical illusion.” These are the powerful words that an Indian COP29 delegate, Chandni Raina, used to describe the “paltry sum” of \$300 billion per year pledged by developed countries to support developing countries cope with climate change impacts. The ‘Finance COP’, which purported to place

climate justice at the center of the negotiating table, proved woefully disappointing for developing countries, further enshrining the need for justice-based, decolonial and feminist approaches to equitable climate action.

COP29 outcomes have significant consequences for millions around

the world with few options to adapt to intensifying climate stressors, especially those in poorer countries and communities, who are least responsible and hardest hit. Many are left with no choice but to migrate away from their homes, leaving behind their communities, connections to land, and integral parts of their cultures. Conversely,



Source: AP News

many others, lacking the financial resources to undertake a move, involuntarily remain in precarious and unsafe circumstances.

Displacement and involuntary immobility driven by extreme heat and other climate impacts are no longer future scenarios – they are an urgent reality. Yet, COP29 dialogues failed to prioritize or adequately address climate mobility. Mobility has remained primarily limited to conversations about loss and damage, which frame it as an irreversible and unavoidable climate impact. While that may be true for many, siloing the mobility conversation leaves those using migration as an adaptation strategy out of the negotiations. Working against this, mobility advocates were successful in including non-binding language in the [Presidency Text on the Global Goal on Adaptation](#) that calls for data collection specific to

migrants. But if we want to ensure that mobility is not just a form of loss and damage, we must go much further to incorporate human mobility within climate action, planning and finance as a matter of justice, equity and respect for the rights and dignity of those on the frontlines of climate change.

As we witnessed at COP29, wealthy nations continue to exploit global resources, while evading their climate finance obligations and closing and securitizing their borders, leaving countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India to manage escalating displacement crises. For instance, South Asia has seen a growth [in displacement](#) caused by [extreme heat waves](#). Studies from India reveal how rising temperatures and precipitation anomalies disrupt livelihoods, forcing internal migration among

[agricultural workers](#) from rural communities and the urban poor.

Climate stressors that lead to displacement do not impact everyone in the same way. Instead, persons living in poverty and groups such as women and girls, children, the elderly, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities bear disproportionate burdens. Such groups are often excluded from policy, planning, and finance – further exacerbating their vulnerabilities and poor adaptation outcomes. Climate action that fails to place the realities of differential vulnerability at the center, while obfuscating the crucial role of migration as an adaptation strategy and displacement as a consequential outcome, will only serve to heighten vulnerabilities and reproduce dynamics of structural inequities and colonial power systems.

Far from being passive victims, people on the move and displaced individuals—and women in particular—are key agents of adaptation, contributing to local climate resilience through knowledge, resource management and social networks. Communities on the frontlines are acutely aware of the challenges they face and the possible solutions that can mitigate risks, enhance their resilience and advance positive migration outcomes. Decolonial and feminist approaches to climate action require inclusive governance processes and discourses that champion the agency of impacted groups. To this end, governments must support equitable climate action by:

1. Recognizing that mobility is inevitable on a warming planet, and requires the advancement of safe, orderly, and regular migration pathways

Parties to the UNFCCC must consider mobility in their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) through inclusive, participatory and informed processes at all levels of

2. Acknowledging and supporting local climate action, even in the absence of coordinated government policies

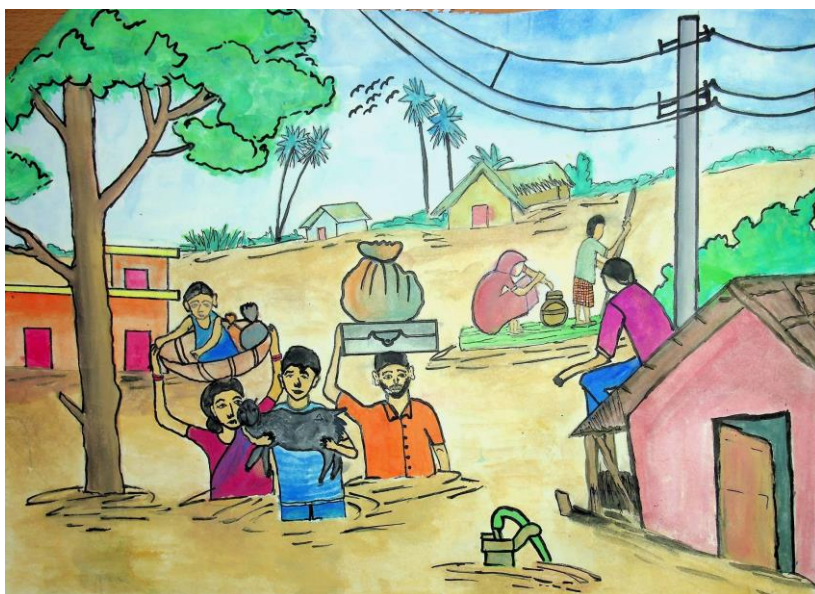
Rather than continuing to approach climate mobility

development, implementation and monitoring. This includes planning for migration at the intersection of national climate action and domestic policies by, for instance, expanding the stock of affordable housing, providing access to healthcare and social services to those without documentation, and removing barriers to accessing education in receiving areas. Countries should also consider how migrants can promote economic development and provide legal protections for migrant workers to reduce the risk of abuse and trafficking. Domestic policies should be complemented with regional agreements facilitating migration, such as the [Kampala Convention](#), or permanent residence, like the [Falepili Union Treaty](#).

3. Collecting data and crafting inclusive policies with affected populations that are responsive to differential vulnerability dynamics

A new narrative that recognises that climate impacts and experiences of climate-related (im)mobilities affect distinct groups of people differently should be normalised within UNFCCC processes and beyond, mainstreaming the lived experience of intersectional identities within knowledge production, policy agendas, migration governance and climate action.

As we reflect on the outcomes of COP29, it is essential that we prioritize climate mobility through decolonial and feminist lenses going forward. People are already on the move; it's time policies move with them. ■



Drawing credit: RMMRU.

Beyond Climate: Addressing the Socio-Political Drivers of Displacement – A Call for Action at COP29

By *Hyeonggeun Ji and Rodrigo Mena*, The Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre (HSC), International Institute of Social Studies (ISS); Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

Displacement is one of the most visible and urgent consequences of a warming planet, yet it is far more than just an environmental issue. Beneath rising seas and intensifying storms lie deeper narratives of inequality, governance, and socio-political structures that shape who is displaced, how, and why. As part of the Humanitarian Governance¹⁴ research project, our studies in Bangladesh demonstrate that socio-political factors often outweigh climatic conditions in shaping displacement. In the coastal

Patuakhali District, land acquisition for large-scale coastal development projects increases the vulnerability of poorer farmers to cyclones, pushing villagers to urban centres like Dhaka for survival. In the Kurigram District, social marginalisation and elite control over humanitarian governance hinder the transparent distribution of aid resources to those most in need, perpetuating vulnerability and consequent displacement. These insights challenge the framing of ‘climate-induced displacement’ and highlight the need to address the socio-

political dimensions of vulnerability and resilience for effective climate action.

The intersection of climatic and socio-political factors in shaping displacement has been acknowledged by researchers for decades. Observations in Patuakhali reaffirm Oliver-Smith’s concept of ‘development-forced displacement,’ highlighting how economic development initiatives perpetuate vulnerability and displacement. Similarly, the intellectual movement embodied in *No Natural Disasters*



The panel ‘Rethinking Climate Displacement: Disaster, Socio-political Drivers, and Anticipatory Action’ was organised at COP 29 by The Hague Humanitarian Studies Centre with Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and International Centre for Climate Change and Development. (Source: Authors)

¹⁴ This research was supported by the European Research Council (ERC) Horizon 2020 programme (Grant number 884139).

asserts that disasters' impacts are mediated by inequalities, social norms, and global systems. Building on this scholarship from human geography and disaster studies, displacement is best understood as a multi-causal and complex process rather than solely the result of climate-related hazards.

However, during COP29, the term 'climate-induced displacement' dominated formal negotiations, informal side events, and participant discussions. This terminology oversimplifies the phenomenon by reducing displacement to climatic and natural forces, obscuring the socio-political and economic dimensions that underpin vulnerability to extreme weather events. Such framing not only creates a cognitive dissonance between academia and policy but also distorts institutional and practical responses to displacement, steering them toward an asocial, depoliticised, and technocratic approach. This omission may stem from the UNFCCC process itself, which is constrained by funding mechanisms tailored to issues explicitly defined as 'induced by' climate change. With the emergence of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), this simplistic narrative is further reinforced to keep 'climate displacement' on the agenda or to justify the need for financial resources.

In Baku, a meaningful contribution to this agenda emerged as an attempt to re-direct our focus from the quantity to the quality of financing, particularly in the Loss and Damage sector. For instance, during a high-level dialogue, the IFRC Director underlined that not more than 2% of climate finance actually reaches the community level. The fact that as



Research participants in a coastal village in Bangladesh have experienced considerable consequences of cyclones on their economic and non-economic assets, exacerbated by social conditions that marginalise them from equitable access to resources, decision-making processes, and protective measures. (Source: Authors)

part of the whole financialisation process 98% of resources are inaccessible to those affected and at risk is a key driver of vulnerability to climate change. At several side events, potential critical practices were discussed, including a pilot project by GiveDirectly that focuses on providing cash grants to displaced people to address loss and damage. These contributions show that both existing problems and possible solutions are the outcome of human choices, rather than framing displacement as merely a consequence of climate change forces beyond our control.

To genuinely support individuals and communities experiencing climate-related displacement, the UNFCCC process requires substantial epistemological reform. Moving beyond the reductive paradigm of 'induced by,' the focus

must shift to the socio-political dimensions of displacement and people's vulnerability. Along with the contributions of other participants mentioned earlier, we organised the panel 'Rethinking Climate Displacement' to advocate for a reflective use of language and concepts representing displacement during UNFCCC COPs. At the institutional level, the Santiago Network is expected to play a crucial role by providing technical advice and fostering knowledge development for the FRLD. Its forthcoming guidance must address the socio-political drivers of displacement (and another type of losses and damages) to inform policies and interventions that are contextually grounded, promote equitable and just climate action, and respond to the lived realities of displaced populations. ■

Climate Mobility and Decent Work: Addressing Severe Rights Violations through International Climate Policy

By *Cristina Patriarca*, Anti-Slavery International, United Kingdom

Since 2023, Anti-Slavery International has actively contributed to the discussions at the UNFCCC COPs, advocating for a rights-based approach to adaptation, loss and damage financing and for a genuinely “just” transition to green economies. Our goal is to protect individuals who are vulnerable to exploitation and forms of modern slavery, such as forced labour and debt bondage. As UNFCCC parties increasingly focus on human mobility, they must address the heightened risk of severe exploitation in the context of climate mobility.

Despite some progress at COP29 to acknowledge the connection between climate change and human mobility, significant gaps remain. Commitments made to increase funding for climate-affected communities do not adequately address the widespread impacts many are facing. Additionally, many of these financial commitments lack accountability measures to ensure funding reaches the most vulnerable people, and thus may well be ineffective in addressing the risks of exploitation they face.

The struggles of climate-affected communities

Growing evidence shows that climate change impacts and environmental degradation are impacting individuals and communities worldwide. They push them into different forms of mobility and, in the process, expose them to increased vulnerability to diverse forms of modern slavery.

In Ghana, climate-driven migration is leading young women to fall into situations of debt bondage, with risks being exacerbated by intersecting issues, such as gender



A ruined house a little way down the valley from the mudslide. The brown mark shows how high the torrent of mud and water came up. Photo credit: Olivia Acland

norms. In Bolivia, environmental degradation is pushing Indigenous communities to leave their homes in search of new livelihoods, facing forced labour risks. Recent reports also point to (migrant) workers in sectors as diverse as construction and agriculture experiencing significant health impacts related to their employment due to climate change. Tragically, there have been cases of migrant workers dying due to extreme temperatures in countries such as Qatar and Italy.

People disadvantaged by intersecting factors (such as gender or migration status) face heightened vulnerability to modern slavery in the context of climate change impacts and mobility. For example, women and girls who are displaced by climate change often become targets of traffickers. Migrant workers from marginalised groups are also often excluded from social protection mechanisms, which may push them into situations of forced labour.

Mobility and climate change also closely intersect with human and labour rights abuses in sectors that are key to the green transition, such as transition minerals and renewable energy. A significant share of the workforce in these industries is composed of migrant workers, including people who have moved due to the impacts of climate change

at home. There is a high risk that migrant workers will continue to experience vulnerability to severe exploitation and human rights abuses as these industries grow and expand their labour force, due to heightened demand for renewable forms of energy. This has been shown in recent NGOs investigations in the Gulf region, for example. Hence, for the transition to be truly sustainable and just, the human and labour rights of workers, including migrant workers, must be at the centre of policy and action.

What action do we need to see

To effectively mitigate and address the human and labour rights implications of the climate crisis, several concrete actions are needed:

1. Governments must ensure that every person who moves in the context of climate change has access to fundamental rights.
2. Governments should develop and implement legal frameworks that protect migrant workers in sectors such as agriculture, construction and renewable energy, where they are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and modern slavery risks.
3. Governments need to commit to funding solutions that support community-led adaptation solutions that enable people to

migrate out of choice rather than need. They should also support migrants and displaced populations to adapt to climate change impacts.

4. UNFCCC parties must specifically address the just transition by formalising the UNFCCC Just Transition Work Programme and linking it to other UNFCCC and national policies on just transition. The programme must include protections for the rights of workers in climate-vulnerable sectors and in the entire supply chain (extraction, processing, manufacturing) of transition minerals.

As we look to COP30, we will continue to advocate for stronger frameworks that explicitly incorporate protections for migrants, displaced people and refugees impacted by climate change. Furthermore, more needs to be done to address modern slavery risks in the transition to green economies, while fostering solidarity among affected communities worldwide. Anti-Slavery International remains committed to advocating for the adoption of critical measures and ensuring that the voices of the most affected communities are at the heart of climate action. ■

The cover page (no. 1), page no. 3, and page no. 21, including drawings, were produced by pupils from the Satkhira area, Bangladesh, who participated in the "Drawing Competition on Cyclone Remal and other Disasters" organised by the Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit as part of their work to promote adaptation rights in climate vulnerable-community. This work takes place under the Project to Avert, Minimise and Address Displacement (PAMAD), funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and implemented by the Secretariat of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) and its partners. The copyright of the drawing is held by RMMRU.

Saving Lives at Work: Heat Stress and Migrant Workers in a Warming World

By Paul Tacon, Katherine Velastegui, and Halshka Graczyk,
International Labour Office (ILO), Switzerland

Extreme heat in the workplace is a particularly potent consideration in the context of climate-related human mobility. Globally, more than 70 per cent of the workforce is exposed to excessive heat in the workplace, leading to at least 22.85 million work-related injuries, and 18,970 deaths per year.¹⁵

Extreme heat is not experienced equally. For example, migrant workers are often over-represented in physically-demanding outdoor jobs in sectors like construction and agriculture. This may cause them to suffer from debilitating injuries and diseases due to prolonged exposure to extreme heat and other climate-related hazards such as UV radiation or air pollution.¹⁶

These effects are not inevitable, however. Workplaces can be adapted through collaborative efforts to make the right to a safe and healthy workplace a reality even as the climate changes.

Addressing occupational safety and health (OSH) challenges must therefore be at the heart of climate adaptation, as a critical mechanism for reducing vulnerability and ensuring dignity in work. Proactive OSH interventions, such as heat action plans for workplaces, regular heat-stress risk assessments, and the provision of adequate hydration, cooling facilities, and rest breaks, can

save lives and enhance productivity, even under rising temperatures.

Such measures should be based on workplace social dialogue between employers' and workers' organizations to mitigate risks and save lives. However, migrant workers often face workplace discrimination, including limitations on their fundamental right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. As a result, they often cannot participate in workplace OSH processes, exacerbating the risks they face.

To adapt to extreme heat in the workplace, rights-based and inclusive processes, engaging non-traditional adaptation actors such as employers' associations and trade unions are needed.

Realising fundamental rights at work, including rights to a safe and healthy working environment, and the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining for all should be at the heart of all climate change adaptation and labour policies. National reforms should set out clear criteria for addressing extreme heat, including giving workers the right to remove themselves from work in situations of dangerous heat.

At the workplace level, social dialogue should include migrant workers.

National adaptation planning should integrate human mobility and should include ministries of labour and representatives of employers' and workers' organizations to capture workplace adaptation issues. As discussions towards a global goal of adaptation advance, climate-related workplace injury data disaggregated by migrant status should be considered as a potential indicator of adaptation.

Robust, inclusive and portable social protection mechanisms are also crucial to adaptive capacity. As the Global Goal for Adaptation and its indicators are developed, the upcoming adaptation architecture would benefit from integrating SDG indicator 1.3.1 (percentage of the population covered by social protection floors/systems), disaggregated as much as possible by migration status, to identify gaps and promote appropriate solutions.

Adaptation for migrant workers requires safe, healthy workplaces protected against extreme heat and ensuring decent work. Fostering decent work and ensuring OSH-centred approaches to climate resilience directly address one of the most immediate and life-threatening impacts of extreme heat on vulnerable populations. ■

¹⁵ ILO (2024). Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health. [ILO OSH Heatstress-R16.pdf](#)

¹⁶ ILO (2024). Ensuring safety and health at work in a changing climate. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/ensuring-safety-and-health-work-changing-climate>

Let the Displaced Lead: Displacement in the Context of Climate Change

By Mihir R. Bhatt, AIDMI, India

Addressing displacement in a sustainable way is a key challenge for effective and sustainable climate action. Efforts in this direction need to be accelerated, extended, and fully and substantially supported. The following are ten ways to achieve this, drawn from the contributions in this publication.

1. **Strengthen the Protection of People Displaced in the Context of Climate Change:** Create and implement global, regional and national frameworks that ensure rights-based protections for climate-displaced individuals, including those crossing international borders. Address current legal gaps to provide safe and dignified mobility pathways.
2. **Integrate Mobility into Climate Policy Agenda:** Mainstream displacement into National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and other climate strategies, recognizing human mobility as both a consequence of and an adaptive response to climate change.
3. **Empower people on the move to lead on Adaptation:** Directly engage all people on the move, in particular women and those living and working in irregular conditions, in adaptation planning and implementation, adopting participatory and intergenerational approaches to address their unique vulnerabilities and capacities.
4. **Operationalize Technical Assistance to Avert, Minimize and Address Displacement:** Expand the scope and capacity of the Santiago Network to provide targeted, demand-driven support to face displacement challenges, including risk assessments, technical assistance, and capacity building for governments.
5. **Ensure Equitable Climate Finance for the Displaced:** Streamline access to climate finance through mechanisms like the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), prioritizing community-led, gender-responsive, and locally tailored solutions for displaced populations.
6. **Enhance Data Systems to Support Decision-making:** Standardize and harmonize global methodologies for collecting and tracking data on climate displacement, focusing on its scale, duration, and impacts. Leverage such data to guide resource allocation, as well as loss and damage assessments.
7. **Bridge Socio-Political Gaps between Displaced and Non-Displaced Population:** Recognize socio-political drivers of displacement, such as inequality and governance issues, and integrate disaster risk reduction, development, and climate policies to address underlying vulnerabilities that displacement amplifies and perpetuates.
8. **Prioritize Marginalized Groups within the Displaced:** Focus on the needs of vulnerable populations, such as women, Indigenous peoples, children, and those living in poverty. Ensure their inclusion in governance, planning, decision-making, and resource mobilization on displacement.
9. **Leverage Migration as Adaptation:** Facilitate safe and dignified migration as an adaptive strategy through regional agreements, bilateral partnerships, and enhanced mobility pathways that respect human rights and dignity.
10. **Advocate for Centrality of Climate Mobility on COP30 Agenda:** Build on progress made at past COPs by promoting displacement as a central issue at COP30 and beyond. Develop inclusive, and actionable local agendas with a coalition of stakeholders to ensure continued momentum on climate mobility.

As highlighted by the contributions in this issue, it is urgent to set up systems that will enable all people mentioned above to move in the context of climate change to lead future climate action. Ensuring that men and women displaced and on the move can shape all decisions on mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage will allow us all to set up more just systems that are better able to address the challenges that lay ahead. ■

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the author.

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