Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Bangkok, 6-8 November 2017

Items 3 (b) and (d) of the provisional agenda*

Thematic discussions on key issues in the Asia-Pacific region for facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration:

- Addressing the drivers of migration, including adverse effects of climate change, natural disasters and human-made crises, through protection and assistance, sustainable development, poverty eradication, and conflict prevention and resolution
- Regional cooperation and governance with regard to migration in all its dimensions, including at borders and during transit, entry, return, readmission, integration and reintegration

Migration and climate change in Asia and the Pacific

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The role of climate change in driving current and future migration trends, along with the legal status of persons migrating as a result of climate change impacts, is complex, requiring a detailed understanding of the factors underlying migration, the vulnerabilities of different populations with regards to climate change impacts and the nature of climate change impacts, including fast- and slow-onset disasters.

In response to these challenges, the present document contains an outline of the nature of differentiated climate change impacts and their relationship to migration in Asia and the Pacific; different migration impacts in relation to climate change impacts; frameworks to guide country responses to climate change and migration; and ongoing efforts by member States to respond to these challenges.

The present document is intended to guide the intergovernmental process in the Asian and Pacific region to develop inputs to the negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration by highlighting these issues of relevance and providing recommendations for consideration by the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

I. Introduction

1. Climate change is a multi-causal hazard that interacts with other factors to increase the drivers of migration. Left unmitigated, it is projected to slow economic growth, compromise livelihoods, erode food security and create new poverty traps, especially in urban, coastal and agriculture-dependent areas and

* E/ESCAP/GCM/PREP/L.1.
emerging hotspots, many of which are in Asia and the Pacific. Climate change is already having an observable impact in Asia and the Pacific, particularly on coastal, riverine and alpine ecosystems, agriculture, aquaculture and through increasing natural hazards and disasters, with significant regional variations.¹

2. As land and natural resources become less productive and habitable, people face difficult decisions about whether to leave their homes temporarily or permanently; in some cases, people have no option but to move. In these contexts, the distinction between forced and voluntary movement is blurred. In most cases, factors that influence whether people move, where they move to, what pathways they use and whether they return are likely to be non-climate-related, depending more on capacity to adapt in situ, availability of hazard mapping, disaster risk reduction advice, recovery assistance and local livelihood diversification options. Whether people attempt international migration in response to climate-related pressures is also shaped by non-climate variables, such as affordability of migration pathways, porosity and proximity of nearby borders, receptivity of host populations, networks and information about labour migration opportunities.²

3. Research has identified the role of migration in adapting to the effects of climate and environmental change. International migration is particularly significant for low-lying, small-island States facing the prospect of entire territories being submerged by sea-level rise. Across Asia and the Pacific more generally, extreme weather events, such as floods, have a direct relationship to population displacement, most of which is internal and temporary, but which also contributes to international migration.³ While the evidence is mixed, declining agricultural yields as a result of drought, rising temperatures and excessive and variable rainfall prompt people to consider migration as a way of diversifying livelihoods. Migration also assists communities to recover from disasters and adapt to climate change through remittance transfers and development of skills and networks.⁴

4. At the same time, if current trends continue, migrants are as likely to move into environmentally vulnerable areas as they are to move away from


⁴ ADB, A Region at Risk.
them, whether they move within their own countries or across borders. Those who are unable to move, so-called trapped populations, are among the most vulnerable. The increasing impacts of climate change and disasters can also expose people to dangerous and exploitative forms of migration, including human trafficking and smuggling. This is especially the case where affordable regular migration pathways are not available immediately following disasters, as traffickers and smugglers are known to target disaster-affected areas.

5. In the present document, the relationship between climate change and international migration in Asia and the Pacific is assessed, drawing on peer-reviewed academic publications, reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and well-designed commissioned studies. The way in which climate change is affecting the region is outlined, conceptual challenges are clarified and at least six ways in which climate change is impacting international migration are identified. The final sections contain an outline of global, regional, national and local level responses. The conclusion contains recommendations which support people in order to enable them to live safely and decently in their communities of origin for as long as possible, to limit the use of migration out of necessity rather than choice, and to ensure that policy responses are based on localized understandings of climate risks, adaptation options and potential migration pathways.

II. Climate change in Asia and the Pacific

6. The impacts of climate change vary across the Asia-Pacific region, which spans diverse topographies of tropical islands, deltas, mountainous regions and deserts. The region is already the most disaster-prone in the world, with over 200,000 lives lost and almost a billion people affected by storms and floods alone between 2005 and 2014, while a heatwave in North and Central Asia in 2010 killed 56,000 people. Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of these sudden and slow-onset disasters, primarily relating to:

(a) Increased flooding in coastal and urban areas, rivers and glacial lake outburst floods;

(b) Sea-level rise, contributing to more severe storm surges, inundation, saltwater-intrusion salinization of freshwater sources and soil, submergence, destruction of coastal ecosystems and ecosystem services, loss of land mass and erosion;

(c) Hydrological changes in major river basins where 1.5 billion people live (especially the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Mekong, Yellow, Yangtze, Tarim and Amu and Syr Darya rivers);

(d) Shifts in precipitation patterns and temperatures impacting agricultural production;

(e) Increased droughts, resulting in water scarcity and food shortages, exacerbating livelihood stress and increasing malnutrition;

---


7 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Summary for policymakers”, “Asia” and “Small islands”, in *Climate Change 2014*. Note that there are inadequate studies in relation to North, Central and West Asia.

8 ADB, *A Region at Risk*, p. 38.
(f) Increased heat-related morbidity and mortality, including workplace heat stress, for both outdoor and indoor workers without air-cooling systems, especially in factories;

(g) Changes in the incidence and geographic distribution of climate-sensitive infectious diseases, including vector- and water-borne diseases;

(h) Ocean acidification, impacting biodiversity, ecosystem resilience and fish stocks.

7. Many impacts will be concentrated in densely populated urban and coastal areas. Half of the population of Asia – some 2.4 billion people – live in low-lying coastal zones and flood plains. A total of 17 of the 25 cities that are most exposed to a one-metre sea-level rise worldwide are in Asia and the Pacific. In Bangladesh, 130 million people live on the coast at approximately 1.5 metres above sea level, where floods and storms are intensified by poor drainage and infrastructure and high levels of poverty. This situation is made worse by trends suggesting that people are increasingly moving towards coastal and urban areas, rather than away from them. Migrants moving to these areas tend to have less knowledge of disaster risks in new areas, leading them to take up residence in more hazardous locations than long-term residents.

8. Rural areas are also expected to experience major impacts, especially on freshwater supply, food security and agriculture- and aquaculture-based livelihoods. Vulnerability is highly differentiated, arising from climatic and non-climatic factors. In rural areas, poor and female-headed households are expected to be most affected, along with people who have limited access to land, formal labour markets, social finance, resilient agricultural methods, infrastructure and education.

9. Risks are generally amplified for people without social protection or essential infrastructure and services, and for people with limited access to land and quality housing, especially those in exposed areas and informal settlements without secure tenure. Stateless people are disproportionately affected by climate change and disasters as they tend to reside in hazard-prone areas and their status as non-citizens often limits access to assistance. Other disproportionately affected groups include women, children, older people, persons with disabilities and indigenous groups.

10. Many people – such as those who are single, female and stateless – will experience multiple risk factors. Incidences of gender-based violence are known to increase when food and water is scarce. Young people are also disproportionately exposed to risks, especially as they are often the ones who leave families to migrate for work. Climate change also affects social and environmental determinants of health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter – influencing nutrition and reproductive health, among other impacts.

---


III. Conceptualizing climate change as a driver of migration

11. Climate change is rarely a direct trigger for displacement or migration. It intensifies the consequences of underlying environmental, social and governance challenges to reduce resilience, exposing people to increased risks of displacement or motivating people to move elsewhere.

12. Different migration responses emerge from sudden-onset disasters – such as cyclones, which immediately displace people but displacement is not necessarily permanent – and slow-onset disasters – such as sea-level rise and drought, which tend to slowly displace people or contribute to pre-emptive migration or planned relocation of whole communities.

13. Many of the forms of disasters that displace large numbers of people are linked to climate change (see box 1). Climate change increases hydrometeorological disasters – such as flooding, storms, heat waves and extreme weather events – and climatological disasters – such as drought and wildfire.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{center}
Box 1
How many people will be displaced?
\end{center}

Climate-related displacement is already occurring. In 2016, 24.2 million people were newly displaced as a result of sudden-onset disasters alone, more than three times the number of people displaced by conflict in the same year. Most of these disasters were climate- and weather-related, and two thirds of this displacement occurred in East Asia and the Pacific.\textsuperscript{a} While most of the displacement was temporary and internal, the links between internal climate-related displacement and international migration are becoming clearer, as discussed below.

Future projections of climate-related displacement have been difficult to quantify. It is now generally accepted that cross-border movement in response to climate change will be gradual and hidden, as people moving for climate-related reasons will often be recorded in national monitoring systems as labour migrants, if at all.

Estimates reported by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predict that a sea-level rise of 2 metres without adaptation measures would result in significant land loss by 2100, displacing an estimated 187 million people, mostly in Asia.\textsuperscript{b} At least initially, most displacement would be internal or within the same region.

Movement of coastal populations is already occurring through spontaneous community-led migration and Government-initiated relocations, especially away from low-lying flood-prone areas. Some Governments (for instance, in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu) have started relocating vulnerable populations. Relocation is associated with detrimental impacts in terms of loss of livelihoods, health and other socioeconomic and cultural impacts.

Cross-border movement is expected to happen gradually, mostly through existing channels, rather than in a mass influx of irregular migrants. However, reduced options for affordable, safe and regular migration increase the motivation to use irregular and dangerous migration channels. Accordingly, climate change risks are highest when people’s capacity to move is reduced or constrained.\textsuperscript{c}


\textsuperscript{b} Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Human security”, in \textit{Climate Change 2014}, p. 770 (see footnote 1).

\textsuperscript{c} Ibid., p. 767; Richard Black and others, “Climate change: migration as adaptation”, \textit{Nature}, vol. 478, No. 7,370 (October 2011), pp. 447-449.

\textsuperscript{12} Vinod Thomas and Ramón López, \textit{Global Increase in Climate-related Disasters} (Manila, ADB, 2015).
IV. Climate change and international migration

14. According to the evidence, there are at least six key ways in which climate change and international migration are connected, in addition to disaster-related displacement.

A. International migration to diversify livelihoods

15. Migration from environmentally stressed places across international borders is generally manifested in apparent economic migration, as people respond to the pressures of climate change on their livelihoods by seeking to diversify income sources. In Bangladesh, weather-related events have been cited as contributing to international labour migration (see box 2).\(^\text{13}\) In Tuvalu, 5 per cent of respondents to a household survey cited environmental reasons as a reason to migrate internationally.\(^\text{14}\) In the Philippines, declining rice production linked to climate variations in certain areas correlated with increased international migration, especially among women.\(^\text{15}\) The relationship between international migration and temperature increases is also statistically significant in agriculture-dependent countries.\(^\text{16}\)

16. Remittances from family members working abroad also tend to increase in the period following disasters, providing a direct and immediate means of providing assistance to affected communities.

17. Generally, most people travel internally to major cities in search of work, with a proportion of them migrating internationally as they connect with new networks and opportunities in urban areas. Factors determining whether people use international rather than internal migration routes include the existence of social networks, access to assistance and basic services in places of origin, financial means or access to credit, and accessibility of or familiarity with regular and irregular migration channels.

18. Another study found that storms, floods, drought, wildfire and extreme high temperatures boosted international migration among highly educated people rather than the most vulnerable.\(^\text{17}\) This highlights a consistent finding that the financial requirements of international migration constitute a barrier to access for those who are the poorest and most vulnerable to climate change.

\(^{13}\) IOM, *Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus* (see footnote 2).


\(^{16}\) Ruohong Cai and others, “Climate variability and international migration: the importance of the agricultural linkage”, *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, vol. 79 (September 2016), pp. 135-151.

impacts. This suggests that there is a need for greater focus on ensuring the accessibility of labour migration routes to those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change to ensure that the benefits of migration are not distributed unequally, and to prevent migrants being compelled to use unsafe and irregular means of migration (see box 2).

19. Migrants affected by climate change are likely to travel to where labour market opportunities are or are perceived to be. For Asia and the Pacific, migration corridors between Asia and the Middle East (and sometimes onward to Europe) and within East and South-East Asia, especially towards Malaysia and the Republic of Korea, are critical. International migration along these routes has tripled since 1990. The number of women accessing labour migration from climate-affected countries, such as Bangladesh, has also dramatically increased, bringing new dynamics for the migrants and communities left behind.

20. Temporary low-skilled labour migration exceeds permanent migration, presenting challenges for ensuring decent work and reducing migration costs. Temporary or seasonal migration has the potential to assist people in climate-affected countries, but it is most effective when accompanied with appropriate protections for migrants and their families.

Box 2
Case study on Bangladesh, 2017

A 2017 study in Bangladesh in climate change and environmental hotspots found that influences that impacted on agriculture- and aquaculture-based livelihoods such as weather variability, floods, excessive rainfall, droughts, salinity intrusion and tropical cyclones contributed to internal and international migration. Nearly 60 per cent of respondents migrated internally as an adaptation response. International migration comprised up to 14 per cent of respondents, depending on the village.a

Most internal migration was towards Dhaka or the closest large regional city. International migration was towards India and the Middle East.

International migrants were mostly from middle-income to wealthier households and were typically male and aged 18 to 40 years. However, some poorer and lower-middle-income households took out high-interest and risky loans to support international migration.

The dynamics of poorer households taking out such loans to support irregular, international migration from Bangladesh were examined following the Andaman Sea crisis. Evidence suggests that smugglers target poorer households offering to facilitate international journeys with no upfront cost, leading to migrants entering into debt bondage arrangements and creating desperate situations for family members left behind, compounding impoverishment and risk.b

---

18 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, “Human security”, in Climate Change 2014, p. 767 (see footnote 1).
B. Loss of whole territories: low-lying small island States

21. Small island nations will be disproportionately affected by rising sea levels. Low-lying small island States face the prospect of being entirely submerged by sea-level rise. Countries such as Maldives and the Pacific island nations of Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu are vulnerable to these impacts, as they are comprised of atolls which are mostly only a few metres above sea level. Loss of territory makes internal relocation unfeasible. One potential implication of entire nations being submerged is the potential loss of statehood.21

22. Migration from low-lying islands in the Pacific towards other Pacific nations with higher elevation, such as Fiji and Vanuatu, is expected to increase. The Government of Kiribati, in particular, has intensified efforts to develop a mix of strategies, including pre-emptive voluntary migration pathways, especially through labour migration, as well as purchasing 20 square kilometres of land in Fiji for potential population relocation. However, relocation of a whole national population across national borders poses social, cultural and legal challenges, as also discussed below.

C. Conflict

23. Climate change can also exacerbate conflict, driving people to leave their countries in search of safety.22 Although climate change is not likely to be the cause of conflict or cross-border movement, it is a threat multiplier, contributing to factors that destabilize already volatile situations.

D. Increased human trafficking and smuggling

24. In the Philippines, following Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, increased rates of trafficking were recorded in highly affected areas. Traffickers targeted internally displaced persons, women-headed households and children who had lost their parents in the disaster. Similar trends were recorded in Bangladesh following Cyclone Sidr in 2007 and Cyclone Aila in 2009. Smuggling of drought-affected migrants from Cambodia to Thailand has also been reported.23

E. People abroad during disasters in home countries

25. People may be outside their country of origin when disasters occur at home. The Nansen Initiative identified at least 50 countries that in recent decades have received or refrained from returning people following disasters in their home countries.24 Disasters can temporarily overwhelm the capacity of

---


States to handle the return of nationals or it may be unsafe to return until emergency and recovery efforts are well under way. For example, after Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti in 2016, the United States of America offered “temporary protected status” to Haitians in the United States, allowing them to stay temporarily after the hurricane.

F. Migrants caught in disasters

26. Migrants may also live or work in or transit countries that experience disasters, and be affected by their impacts. Language barriers, irregular immigration status, confiscated or lost identity or travel documents and limited networks may influence migrants’ access to emergency support and protection. Responding to these challenges is the focus of the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative.

V. Global efforts to address climate change and migration challenges

27. Limited specific protection is offered under international law for people displaced by climate change, disasters and other environmental processes in Asia and the Pacific. Although there have been discussions about whether the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) should be expanded to include protection for people migrating for environmental reasons, there is now broad consensus against this position. This is because renegotiation of the Refugee Convention might weaken protections for those fleeing persecution, and because of the problematic nature of setting apart migrants moving for reasons related to climate change from migrants moving for other reasons, such as poverty and environmental degradation. Furthermore, those who may need to move the most, as noted above, are likely to lack the financial and social capital to move at all. Given that rights to protection under the Refugee Convention flow from the act of being displaced, it is not clear how to conceptualize the inability to move within existing protection approaches.

28. These debates have moved away from establishing new categories of protection towards non-binding, State-led initiatives to address the root causes of displacement from climate change and disasters. Efforts now focus on mainstreaming displacement considerations into global agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, through processes such as the Nansen Initiative, discussed below. These initiatives aim to address displacement drivers in countries of origin to enable people to stay in place for longer. Where people are on the move, they provide best practice examples of how to assist vulnerable people.

29. Key issues which cut across these efforts include the need to consider how displacement and migration affect people differently, especially women, children, indigenous populations, stateless people, people living in informal settlements and others. Promoting women’s leadership and gender-responsiveness and emphasizing the importance of traditional knowledge and


community-based approaches are critical to effectively identifying disaster- and climate-related risks and developing appropriate responses.

30. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, adopted in 1992 and now ratified by 197 countries, sets out measures to assist countries mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

31. Migration was first recognized as an adaptation strategy by the Framework Convention in 2010 through the Cancun Adaptation Framework, the aim of which is to provide a global guiding framework for climate-related cross-border displacement. To date, efforts to address migration through this framework have not received broad support. However, from these negotiations, the Nansen Initiative was created as a non-binding State-led process, in recognition of the sensitivities of States towards climate-related displacement.

32. The Cancun Adaptation Framework set out other adaptation measures, including building resilient socioeconomic and ecological systems, enhancing disaster risk reduction and strengthening institutional capacities. It led to a process of national adaptation programmes of action for least developed countries, then national adaptation plans and now intended nationally determined contributions by all States party to the Framework Convention.

33. Under the Framework Convention, climate finance to support adaptation and mitigation efforts is a potential channel through which to mainstream displacement considerations at the national and local levels. The Green Climate Fund has been established to channel funding to those most in need. However, it requires receiving countries to be accredited, which is difficult as they need to demonstrate high levels of financial, social and environmental safeguards to manage funds.

34. In the Paris Agreement, adopted at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2015, States committed to ensuring that the global average temperature rise is well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement also led to the creation of the Task Force on Displacement, which will develop recommendations to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse effects of climate change. While migration as adaptation is still dealt with under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, the Task Force will operate under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts and focus on enhancing understanding of and expertise on patterns of migration, displacement and human mobility.

35. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is a non-binding agreement building on the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. It aims to address drivers of climate- and disaster-related displacement in countries of origin by minimizing disaster impacts, including loss of life and damage to critical infrastructure and services. It promotes international cooperation, aims to increase the number of States with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies, including increasing multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information available by 2030.

36. The Sendai Framework recognizes that displacement is a major impact of disasters, and that migrants experience certain types of vulnerability during disasters. It includes migrants as key stakeholders in disaster risk reduction planning.

38. The Nansen Initiative does not seek to create new categories of legal protection for displaced people. It offers a toolbox of practices to address displacement at various stages (preparedness for displacement, protection during displacement and durable solutions following displacement). It stresses the need for better data collection, enhanced use of humanitarian protection measures and strengthened management of disaster-related displacement in countries of origin.

39. Examples of effective practices include temporary protection models, including admission and stay of people affected by disasters, and non-return of foreigners abroad when disasters occur in home countries. Other effective practices include the Pacific Access Category introduced in New Zealand in 2002 to enable quotas of citizens from certain Pacific countries to gain residence visas each year, as discussed below. The Nansen Initiative also recognizes the links between internal and international migration. It recommends planned relocation for people living in disaster-prone areas only when it cannot be avoided, and requires measures to protect people from impoverishment risks associated with relocation. It also encourages the use of traditional knowledge- and community-based approaches in mapping disaster risks and identifying suitable evacuation and planned relocation options.

40. The Platform on Disaster Displacement, launched in 2016, is the successor to the Nansen Initiative, chaired by Germany with Bangladesh as the Vice-Chair. The platform aims to address knowledge gaps, increase the use of effective practices, promote policy coherence and mainstream human mobility considerations into policy. It will take on a coordination function, assisting States to implement other initiatives that require mainstreaming of migration considerations, especially the Sendai Framework and preparation of national adaptation plans under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

41. Recognition that safe, well-managed migration is a contributor to inclusive, sustainable development has influenced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The adverse impact of forced displacement on sustainable development is also highlighted in the 2030 Agenda. In Sustainable Development Goal 10, on reducing inequality, migration is most clearly addressed through target 10.7, to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. Migration is also reflected in Goals 3 (with respect to migrants’ health), 4 (facilitation of student mobility and educational opportunities abroad), 5 (migrant women and girls, vulnerability to human trafficking and gender-based violence), 8 (decent work for and ethical recruitment of migrants), 11 (migrants in cities), 13 (with respect to vulnerable populations and climate change), 16 (human trafficking) and 17 (partnerships to deliver migrant services).

42. In the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, of September 2016, the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters are recognized
as key drivers of human mobility and the commitments made by Heads of States to address these drivers in the 2030 Agenda are reiterated.

43. Other global instruments and developments include:


(b) The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, adopted in July 2015, in which States committed to reducing the cost of remittances and engaging in international cooperation to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, with full respect for human rights and commitments to sustainable industrial development to combat climate change;

(c) The Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative;

(d) The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, which represents commitments made by leaders of 115 small island developing States;

(e) Human rights and climate change have received attention through a series of resolutions and activities, notably through the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, including Human Rights Council resolution 35/17 of 22 June 2017 in which the role of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration to make provisions to address these challenges is highlighted;

(f) Relevant United Nations and ILO conventions and initiatives such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and general recommendation No. 26 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on women migrant workers, in which protections for women migrants, including those in an irregular status, are set out; ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), and its supplementing Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201); the ILO general principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment; the ILO guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market; and the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration, the Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143);

(g) The outcomes of IOM Council meetings, including the IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework and the Migration Governance Framework.
VI. Responses in Asia and the Pacific

44. The Asia-Pacific region is leading global action on climate change and migration.

A. Initiatives in the Pacific

45. Pacific Governments are working together to respond to climate-related challenges, especially through the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, which together provide an overarching regional pathway to strengthen resilience to climate change and disaster risk management, including displacement.

46. Under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, members of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat define their regional approach, including addressing climate change and enabling freer movement of people and goods within and among countries.

47. In the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, climate change and disaster risk management are addressed, with Pacific countries and development partners encouraged to tackle human mobility considerations through targeted national policies and actions, including planned relocation and labour migration policies. Also encouraged are increased disaster preparedness, recovery programmes and support for those most vulnerable to climate change.

48. Several national, bilateral and regional migration policies are in place in the Pacific. Pacific nations have varying degrees of privileged entry linked to historical ties with Australia, New Zealand, the United States and France. For example:

   (a) Guam and American Samoa are overseas territories of the United States, and French Polynesia and New Caledonia and are overseas territories of France, allowing free movement of people and citizenship;

   (b) The Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau are part of the Realm of New Zealand and have constitutional ties allowing for rights of entry;

   (c) The Pacific Access Category in New Zealand has ballots for permanent residence for people from Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu;

   (d) The United States Compact of Free Association agreements with the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau allow all citizens of those countries to live and work in the United States indefinitely;

   (e) The Recognized Seasonal Employment scheme in New Zealand and the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia are open to citizens of selected Pacific islands;

   (f) A student visa scheme operating from 2006 to 2014 enabled students from Kiribati to train as nurses in Australia; on graduation, they were able to apply for an 18-month temporary graduate visa, which increased the likelihood of later being granted employer sponsorship and a permanent visa.

49. In the Kiribati National Labour Migration Policy, overseas employment and protection of workers while abroad are promoted, maximizing the
contributions that they can make to adaptation at home.\textsuperscript{26} Kiribati has also purchased land in Fiji as a potential relocation option, and the Prime Minister of Fiji has indicated that the country could welcome citizens of Kiribati and Tuvalu who migrate because of climate change.

50. In Tuvalu, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2020 and National Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2012-2016 included recommendations relating to climate change and migration. In the National Labour Migration Policy, climate change is also identified as one reason to increase efforts to find labour mobility opportunities abroad. In other national policies in the Pacific, the focus is on relocation and displacement. In Fiji, for example, national relocation guidelines are currently being finalized, developed in coordination with different government and non-government stakeholders.

51. Vanuatu is one of the first countries to prepare a comprehensive policy on internal displacement stemming from disasters and climate change.\textsuperscript{27} In the Nationwide Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy in the Federated States of Micronesia, the role of migration is also acknowledged as an adaptation strategy, while recognizing that it will need to be managed to ensure protection of those involved.

52. Gaps remain in the region. Pacific countries have highlighted the lack of a Pacific-wide legal instrument to ensure that migration in the context of climate change is safe, orderly and regular. At a meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the United Nations under the umbrella of the Pacific Climate Change Migration Project in 2016, representatives of Governments in the Pacific stressed the need to work towards a binding agreement to regulate cross-border human mobility in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{28}

B. Initiatives in Asia


54. In the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, States undertook to reduce disaster losses by jointly responding to disaster emergencies. In the ASEAN Trade Union Council Inter-Union Cooperation Agreement, decent work in labour migration is also promoted. Also relevant are the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers and draft instrument and the ASEAN Labour Ministers’ Work Programme 2016-2020.

55. The Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration, established in August 2015, is a track-II dialogue to advance durable, effective and dignified approaches to forced migration in the region, and is proving to be a useful forum to share good practices, shape policy ideas and generate regional perspectives.


\textsuperscript{28} See www.unescap.org/events/regional-meeting-climate-change-and-migration-pacific.
56. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with its partners, has also organized several key dialogues on migration issues, such as the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Forum on Migration and Development 2010 and the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development 2013.

C. Regional dialogues and processes

57. The aim of Asia-Pacific regional consultative processes, such as the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, and the Colombo Process, is to facilitate regular migration and reduce irregular movement, with a focus on the protection of migrant workers. The Dhaka Declaration of Colombo Process Member Countries is one example of this. Climate change and migration have not been prioritized in these processes, although regional consultative processes do provide a forum for future dialogue and cooperation.

D. Bilateral labour agreements and memorandums of understanding in Asia

58. Many bilateral labour agreements and memorandums of understanding have the potential to enable management of future climate-related movement. The Philippines has entered into agreements with 21 destination countries. Labour migration in the Republic of Korea is governed through memorandums of understanding with countries of origin, including Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.29

59. National-level developments and policies responding to climate-related migration have also been developed in Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal in the form of model national plans, although these have not yet been adopted.

E. Gender, migration and climate change in Asia and the Pacific

60. The specific risks and vulnerabilities faced by women, men, boys and girls need to be mainstreamed into the management of climate-related migration in Asia and the Pacific. For example, labour mobility schemes in the Pacific have unequal participation of men and women. Of the 9,869 Pacific workers that participated in the Recognized Seasonal Employment scheme in New Zealand and the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia (see above) in 2013-2014, 1,138 (11.5 per cent) were women.30 Such schemes are being increasingly promoted as one potential climate change adaption option; however, without more equal participation by gender, women may be excluded from opportunities to diversify their livelihoods in the context of climate change.

61. It is also critical that the empowerment of women and girls should be a core component of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Promoting gender equality requires recognition that women and children are disproportionately affected by natural disasters. Available sex-disaggregated

---


data indicates that women made up the largest proportion of the dead following disasters in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Nepal between 1991 and 2015. Additionally, women are exposed to secondary impacts such as sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in persons.

62. Women must be empowered to take leading roles in designing and implementing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities in Asia and the Pacific at all levels. Additionally, the collection of accurate data disaggregated by sex and age is critical to understanding the gendered impacts of climate change and migration and designing effective responses.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

63. Efforts to address climate-related migration challenges must focus on underlying drivers and providing protections for people on the move. In communities of origin, priority should be given to engaging in participatory multi-hazard mapping, building codes and compliance, transitioning towards inclusive and sustainable economies, and mainstreaming mobility considerations into adaptation and disaster risk reduction planning at all levels, from regional to local. It is also critical to increase access to basic services, education, health, sustainable livelihoods and decent work and improve property and land rights, in order to reduce displacement triggers.

64. Once people are on the move, effective protection practices should be adopted by all Governments, such as those identified by the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change. It is critical to reduce the costs of migration and strengthen labour migration protections and options, given that many migrants leaving their communities for climate-related reasons will be travelling as labour migrants.

65. A human-rights based approach, reflecting the specific risks and vulnerabilities faced by women, men, boys and girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, stateless people and other vulnerable groups, needs to inform responses at all levels.

66. A list of suggestions is presented below. Overarching actions and high-level priorities for States are identified first, followed by actions for countries of origin, transit and destination, recognizing that these groups often overlap.

Overarching actions for all parties

67. Member States could consider the following actions:

(a) Prioritize the 2030 Agenda, the Sendai Framework, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity and support developing countries that are highly exposed to climate change and disasters;

(b) Implement the Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change and the Platform on Disaster Displacement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Task Force on Displacement, the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, including strengthening dialogue between countries of origin and destination on climate-related migration, strengthening regular migration pathways, expanding visa options, providing temporary protection, addressing seasonal or circular labour migration and permanent migration options and increasing humanitarian visa quotas and student mobility and family reunification schemes;

(c) Ensure that climate change and migration are addressed in forums such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and related Transnational Crime, the Colombo Process, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, the Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration, the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and global compacts;

(d) Counter human trafficking and other exploitative forms of migration, with attention to post-disaster and climate-vulnerable contexts;

(e) Strengthen bilateral and regional labour agreements and private sector partnerships, which integrate safe and regular migration management and decent work goals into shared agendas;

(f) Strengthen the evidence base upon which to develop context-specific responses, by:

(i) Building capacity in all countries to gather disaggregated data on risks, projected impacts and internal and international migration patterns;

(ii) Harmonizing data-collection methodologies and moving towards integrated regional data-collection systems.

68. Countries of origin could consider the following actions:

(a) Gain accreditation to multilateral funds (such as the Green Climate Fund) and mainstream mobility considerations into projects financed by these funds;

(b) Develop durable solutions in line with the Nansen Initiative for internally displaced populations or those at risk of displacement, which:

(i) Provide options for well-planned internal relocation that is protection-centred and community-driven and addresses multidimensional recovery needs relating to issues including health, education, infrastructure, livelihoods and security of land tenure;

(ii) Support return and reintegration of displaced populations following disaster and local integration where people have sought refuge or been evacuated, where appropriate and in consultation with host communities;

(iii) Strengthen internal migration management and develop durable solutions for people living in informal settlements and stateless people;

(c) Establish integrated regional frameworks and national, subnational and local plans to mainstream mobility considerations into disaster risk reduction and adaptation, which:

(i) Establish emergency response centres and coordination structures (such as cluster systems and early warning systems which are frequently monitored);
(ii) Promote climate- and disaster-resilient land-use planning, including multi-hazard mapping and integrated vulnerability assessments using participatory methods to ensure that multi-hazard data underpins infrastructure, rural and urban planning;

(iii) Strengthen disaster-resilient building codes and compliance, and climate- and disaster-proof critical infrastructure and services (such as water, health, education, energy, biomass, waste management, food and telecommunications);

(d) Equip communities with skills and capacities to adapt to changing environments, including:

(i) Mapping and protecting traditional knowledge and cultural heritage, especially of indigenous communities and those who need to relocate away from hazards;

(ii) Integrating local knowledge of risks and responses into disaster risk reduction and adaptation planning;

(iii) Promoting livelihood diversification and social protection by expanding safe, regular labour migration opportunities, such as new safe and decent labour migration “products” and visa types and insurance schemes, with assistance to vulnerable people;

(iv) Ensuring that national health systems adapt to climate-related challenges, including pandemic preparedness, implementation of World Health Assembly resolutions 61.17 on the health of migrants and 70.15 on promoting the health of refugees and migrants, and heat health warning systems and new work regulations to avoid heat stress among workers;

(v) Investing in climate-resilient agriculture, in careful consultation with affected communities;

(vi) Prioritizing integrated water management, infrastructure and reservoir development, including diversification of water sources and reuse options;

(vii) Promoting ecosystem-based approaches, including quantifying the value of ecosystem services and building it into adaptation and risk reduction planning;

(viii) Enhancing sustainable management of ecosystems, including forests and coral reefs, by preparing inventories, mapping carbon stocks and critical ecosystems, strengthening legal frameworks for environmental protection and ensuring that equitable benefits are created that do not impact negatively on or displace vulnerable communities;

(e) Establish protocols with neighbouring countries for action in the event of disaster, including protocols to address cross-border displacement;

(f) Establish national institutional structures to implement the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, including insurance mechanisms and risk-pooling solutions;

(g) Intensify efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda with special attention to the Sustainable Development Goals with components related to climate change, disaster and migration, with a focus on:

32 Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16 and 17.
(i) Reducing migration push factors through poverty reduction, decent job creation, sustainable development and improved access to basic necessities (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All initiative, health, education and basic infrastructure);

(ii) Promoting women’s leadership;

(iii) Strengthening the rule of law and access to justice, especially in relation to land, property rights and gender-responsive land reform;

(iv) Promoting education, training and skills recognition systems, to match migrants to appropriate international labour opportunities based on skills levels;

(v) Maximizing the benefits of safe, well-managed international migration at home, by expanding decent labour migration options, enabling low-cost remittance transfers, increasing financial literacy, leveraging remittances for adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and seeking support from diaspora communities to these ends;

(vi) Recruiting migrant workers under fair recruitment principles, recognizing the dual responsibilities of Government and business to adhere to the “employer pays” principle of the Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment, and that employment conditions should be specified in contracts in advance of departure;

(vii) Empowering and protecting migrant workers through pre-departure training, orientation and return assistance, including free, comprehensive and accurate information regarding rights and conditions of recruitment and employment;

(viii) Including stateless people and other non-citizens in all national sustainable development planning, disaster risk reduction and adaptation activities.

69. Transit and destination countries could consider the following actions:

(a) Increase humanitarian and development assistance to countries of origin to intensify efforts to implement the recommendations above;

(b) Increase international cooperation and dialogue on implementation of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts;

(c) Facilitate safe, well-managed and regular international labour migration channels, in particular for people in countries and communities highly vulnerable to climate change, including by:

(i) Expanding circular and seasonal international migration opportunities to new regions and countries to fill genuine short-term labour needs;

(ii) Implementing the ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative and general principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment, and the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930, and its accompanying recommendations;

(iii) Developing skills recognition and qualification frameworks to facilitate migration to support key sectors (such as the health sector and the aged-care sector);

(iv) Ensuring that all migrants have access to health services in transit and destination countries, regardless of status and reason for migration, that migrants are included within universal health coverage efforts and that national health systems are migrant-sensitive;
(v) Facilitating access to social protection for migrant workers and their families, in accordance with national laws and regulations and international obligations;

(vi) Promoting scholarship opportunities for students in the region to enhance mobility and the recognition of skills;

(vii) Expanding humanitarian visa options and the number of people accepted under humanitarian categories, including temporary protection for foreigners caught overseas when disasters occur in home countries (such as the temporary protected status in the United States);

(viii) Increasing the flexibility of policies and quotas under existing bilateral special relationships that confer privileged rights of entry and stay (such as the Pacific Access Category in New Zealand);

(ix) Making allowances for in-country change of immigration status, in particular to allow for the transition from visitor to worker status;

(x) Providing pathways to residence based on a specified period of lawful presence and stay in the host countries;

(xi) Reviewing sponsorship requirements for residence in cases where the applicant is from a community highly exposed to climate change impacts;

(xii) Allowing entry and stay of family members (including parents) of residents from at-risk countries;

(d) Support skilled workers to remain in countries of origin through social and economic investment, facilitation of regional and bilateral trade and investment;

(e) Advocate lower remittance costs and transfers, including through regional and bilateral agreements and partnerships with private sector;

(f) Sign and ratify, without exceptions, the following conventions:

(i) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;

(ii) ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97);

(iii) ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143).