

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

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UPDATE ON DISPLACEMENT, MIGRATION AND CLIMATE ACTION:

PROMOTING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO PREVENTION,

PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND SOLUTIONS

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Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to inform the membership about the first year of the roll-out of IOM's [Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021–2030](#), with a focus on work carried out in relation to displacement, migration and climate action since the subject was last discussed at the Twenty-eighth Session of the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance in 2021. IOM is in a unique position to respond to the escalating humanitarian and development needs related to human mobility in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters. This is the seventh update on the subject requested by the membership since 2014, reflecting its relevance for Member States. Covering institutional developments, operational activities and policy processes, this update comes in the context of renewed commitment by States to address the issues surrounding human mobility, including at meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Fifteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the International Migration Review Forum.

Institutional developments for a strategic, integrated IOM response

2. In line with the [IOM Strategic Vision 2019–2023](#) and following the update provided at the Twenty-eighth Session of the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance in 2021, IOM launched its Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021–2030 in November 2021 on the occasion of the Twenty-sixth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP26). With the aim of guiding IOM efforts to strengthen its capacity to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to migration and displacement in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters, the Strategy contains three strategic objectives for the next decade:

- (a) Solutions for people to move: managing migration in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters due to natural hazards;
- (b) Solutions for people on the move: assisting and protecting migrants and displaced persons in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters due to natural hazards;
- (c) Solutions for people to stay: making migration a choice by building resilience and addressing the adverse climatic and environmental drivers that compel people to move.

3. Following the IOM Headquarters organizational review and in line with the Strategy, IOM programming related to migration, environment and climate change, and disaster risk reduction is now located within the Migration, Environment, Climate Change and Risk Reduction Division, bringing together more than 30 years of experience within the two teams. The Director General has also appointed a Special Envoy for Migration and Climate Action to lead policy engagement.

The profound impacts of climate change on human mobility: implications for prevention, preparedness and response

4. The [Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) has unequivocally shown that climate change is having profound impacts on human mobility, acting as a risk multiplier to increasingly reshape mobility patterns. In addition, the convergence of climate risks and conflict is having serious humanitarian consequences in terms of food security, the social fabric of communities and economic security, notably amplifying gaps in service access that reinforce socioeconomic, health and gender disparities, while weakening the capacity of governance institutions. The interconnected nature of these complex factors is actively shaping human mobility dynamics and requires an innovative response anchored in integrated solutions.

5. The frequency and intensity of natural hazards is increasing, leading to the escalation of disasters and contributing to conflicts. According to the Emergency Events Database, in 2021 alone there were 432 disasters related to natural hazards worldwide, accounting for 10,492 deaths, affecting 101.8 million people and causing approximately USD 252.1 billion of economic losses.¹ In the same period there were 23.7 million new displacements in the context of disasters, including those not related to climate.² Although most people displaced by disaster move temporarily – often on a pendular basis or as part of pre-emptive evacuation – and usually remain close to home, these population movements have significant long-term demographic and socioeconomic implications. Looking ahead, the scenarios are not encouraging. The World Bank estimates that an additional 216 million people could become internal climate migrants by 2050 if efforts are not made to strengthen climate action and development investments.³

6. Disaster displacement can have devastating cascading effects, including the loss of lives, property and livelihoods. It can also increase insecurity, which further influences people's mobility decisions and shapes the pattern of protracted crises. In areas of destination, unmanaged population flows lead to overcrowding and limit access to services, housing and livelihoods. In areas of origin, displacement results in a loss of adaptive capacity, reverses development gains and contributes to insecurity – which is experienced most acutely by women and children. Disasters, climate change and environmental degradation also increase the risk of human trafficking and raise protection issues for children, women and those crossing borders.

7. Migration in the context of climate change can also be transformed into an opportunity, allowing populations to adapt while living with manageable risks and to move out of harm's way in time. Migration as an adaptation strategy can support the diversification of livelihoods, strengthen sustainable development in countries of origin and destination, reduce pressures on natural resources in communities of origin, help people acquire new adaptive skills and increase household savings via remittances, which can be invested in resilience-building.

8. Well-managed circular or seasonal migration, whether international or internal, can act as a risk management strategy for climate-vulnerable communities. Indeed, labour migration, including transhumance, is both affected by climate change and a response to climate change. Pathways for labour migration could be developed between climate-vulnerable communities or countries and more developed economies with labour market gaps and workforce shortages, especially in sectors undergoing a green transition. This might require training to help people access jobs within their countries or on the global labour market, or special visa categories for people from areas affected by climate change, i.e. complementary pathways.

¹ CRED, [2021 Disasters in numbers](#) (Brussels, 2022).

² IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement 2022](#).

³ World Bank, [Climate change could force 216 million people to migrate within their own countries by 2050](#) (13 September 2021).

9. Certain emerging trends have been observed in this area. Adaptation strategies for populations affected by climate change include an increasing reliance on evacuation as a disaster management tool, which has significantly reduced the number of deaths due to disaster. More critically, planned relocation is emerging as a priority policy concern for governments across the world, especially in the context of rising sea levels continuing to erode shorelines and encroach on coastal communities. Diaspora contributions to climate action are also increasingly visible, including through remittances, knowledge transfer and advocacy.

Integrated solutions from IOM for prevention, preparedness and response to human mobility in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation

10. In recognition of this increasingly complex situation, it is more critical than ever to deliver creative solutions. IOM is able to do this by leveraging its extensive global staff presence, strong community engagement and active programming portfolio, taking an innovative approach to prevention, preparedness, response and solutions as described in the following sections. Through a broad range of operations spanning migration management, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, emergency preparedness, humanitarian responses and development solutions, combined with early warning and anticipatory approaches, IOM is supporting States and communities to improve the resilience of all populations at risk and address the needs of both people on the move and those staying behind.

IOM disaster displacement data at the centre of early warning and early action

11. Internal displacement data provides vital insights, guiding the work of humanitarian, development and peace actors. Indeed, understanding the scale and characteristics of internal displacement within a country helps prevent, prepare for and respond to crises. IOM is therefore leveraging its global leadership on displacement data to ensure effective early warning and early action by providing crucial information regarding internally displaced persons. The IOM [Global Data Institute](#), which houses the Displacement Tracking Matrix, is expanding its data collection and analysis work on climate change. The [Displacement Tracking Matrix](#), the world's largest repository of displacement data, is operational in more than 100 countries and tracked over 31 million displaced persons in 2021.

12. Data scarcity in many hazard-prone areas is a major and pressing challenge, requiring investment in national hydrological and meteorological services. Gaps in available resourcing, reporting and data collection systems represent additional areas to be addressed by IOM, which works alongside communities in vulnerable locations to understand historic, current and changing conditions, collect data and assess the accuracy of forecasts. This approach supports the improvement of monitoring and warning systems, and builds dialogue and trust between stakeholders in demonstrating how forecasts can guide early action.

13. Given the lack of displacement-related metrics among the indicators that countries use to monitor progress of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, IOM and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre have launched a [joint project to develop a set of indicators for monitoring disaster displacement](#), its impacts and related risks. Similarly, to cover the gap in indicators to monitor implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, IOM and the Platform on Disaster Displacement have developed an indicator framework to assess the progress made by States on implementing the Global Compact objectives related to disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. This framework has already been piloted to produce a [baseline analysis](#) for 21 countries. Both sets of indicators are intended to support countries in measuring progress in relation to their commitments.

Locally owned early warning systems to prevent avoidable loss and damage associated with climate change for countries and communities

14. Given the dramatic rise in humanitarian needs, cost-effective, locally owned solutions are more critical than ever. To this end, IOM is strengthening a variety of early warning systems in multiple countries around the world. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Senegal, the Organization has used the Transhumance Tracking Tool to set up early warning systems to prepare communities for early or large seasonal transhumance movements, thereby contributing to efforts to reduce conflict between pastoralists and local farmers. The Tool has also been adjusted to account for changes in climate, with a pilot project carried out in Mali. In Bangladesh, another early warning system has been developed by IOM and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to tackle rainfall-triggered landslide risks affecting Rohingya refugees in the Cox's Bazar district, while support has also been provided to host communities under the Government's Cyclone Preparedness Programme. Other examples of IOM's work in this area include the establishment of disaster management committees linked to a national disaster management information system in 25 provinces in Afghanistan, and the development of early warning systems in the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Vanuatu.

Low-cost, community-owned solutions: a multidimensional approach to disaster risk management

15. The impacts of climate change on human mobility have particularly significant implications for States with limited resources. This key consideration informs the response of the Organization, which has developed an innovative approach to programming involving low-cost prevention and preparedness measures that are selected and owned by communities. The goal is to provide communities with advance warning of incidents that could rapidly become disasters, ensuring that they can make informed decisions to move or shelter in place in order to protect their families and property.

16. IOM supports communities to identify environmental risks and community actions that could lead to disasters. These efforts include work on ecosystem restoration alongside communities to identify key risk behaviours that have direct negative impacts on the environment and living conditions. For example, the Organization is actively contributing to reforestation to combat desertification, and to the restoration of coastal mangrove forests to reduce the impacts of coastal flooding. It also supports work on drainage systems in urban and peri-urban areas affected by flooding, rapid population growth and limited mitigation infrastructure in cities such as Dakar, Freetown, Port-au-Prince, Bangui, N'Djamena, Dili and Beira (Mozambique).

17. In South Sudan, IOM is using community-based disaster risk management to foster resilience and improve the ability of communities to sustainably prevent and respond to flooding. This approach centres on strengthening knowledge and the capacity for an effective community response to climate-related shocks, while enhancing resilience through strategic infrastructure interventions. By building dikes and other protective infrastructure to address the consequences of more regular and intense flooding along the Nile, it has been possible to recover hundreds of hectares of land – which is home to tens of thousands of people – from flood waters. As a result, local residents have been able to return and quickly resume their livelihood activities, which include farming as well as market-based activities. Land reclamation programmes have also helped curtail outbreaks of water-borne diseases by removing standing water from communal areas.

18. In Somalia, competition over access to land and water is the structural driver of most violent conflict. Climate change and environmental degradation are further reducing already scarce water resources, forcing communities to migrate and generating confrontations over diminishing yields. Through multisectoral, multidisciplinary collaboration, IOM, the United Nations Environment

Programme and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute are implementing and advancing policy through a pilot project on breaking the climate–conflict cycle in Galmudug, Somalia. The aim is to reduce displacement and conflict in target locations through tangible investments in water infrastructure and practical innovations for water and energy capture in the agropastoral sector, bolstered by sustained dialogue, conflict mediation and enhanced natural resource management.

Linking migration management to adaptation strategies

19. Recognizing that further efforts are needed to improve the adaptive capacity of vulnerable households and communities, IOM seeks to support people to take informed, safe decisions regarding mobility. As part of a multi-country programme in the Pacific region, IOM has been working in partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the Platform on Disaster Displacement, the International Labour Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to protect and empower communities adversely affected by climate change. The programme supports regional responses to climate change-related displacement and planned relocation through training and skills development activities to increase access to labour mobility schemes. Pre-departure orientation is also provided to support migrants to move safely, with a good understanding of their rights. In addition, the programme will increase the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to promote safe, regular and inclusive labour mobility.

20. IOM supports policy development to facilitate regular migration pathways in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. In 2021, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa adopted a [freedom of movement protocol](#), which allows those displaced by disasters to cross borders. Regional processes such as the South American Conference on Migration have also informed national policy developments; one example in this case is Argentina's special humanitarian visa to facilitate the admission of people from Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean who are fleeing disasters. Another example of policy development is the set of [planned relocation guidelines](#) recently developed in Solomon Islands through collaboration between IOM and over 300 government, civil society and community representatives. IOM is also in the process of consolidating guidance on better integrating human mobility into national adaptation plans; this is already being piloted with governments in several countries, including the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Moldova and Tajikistan.

Leveraging partnerships for innovative solutions

21. IOM views partnerships and community engagement as essential to addressing migration and displacement in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. By connecting key stakeholders and approaches, developing standards of practice and sharing knowledge, it is possible to strengthen links between solutions and continue to improve their effectiveness. IOM has made a key commitment in this area by signing the partnership-driven [Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations](#), which calls for transformational change to improve action to address the climate and environmental crises and reduce humanitarian needs.

Driving the agenda as Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration

22. The Organization uses its role as Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration to drive forward a broader agenda on innovative approaches to address the impacts of climate change. The second workplan of the Network's [migration and climate change workstream](#), which is co-led by IOM, the International Labour Organization and UNFCCC, outlines aims to link the work of the Network more closely to that of the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement. The intention is to identify innovative

solutions from climate action for use in migration management, and vice versa, by linking programmes funded by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund with programmes financed by climate funds.

Harnessing the IOM Development Fund

23. The IOM Development Fund is also harnessed to develop innovative solutions. In one example, the Fund is supporting a project in Tajikistan to address the climate change adaptation needs of women staying behind, who live in predominantly rural areas that are vulnerable to slow-onset hazards, particularly droughts and severe water shortages. Recognizing the gendered impacts of climate change and that women staying behind can be powerful agents of change and leaders in their families and communities, the project aims to ensure that migration is mainstreamed into the Government of Tajikistan's climate change policy and programming.

Joint efforts to monitor and address risks

24. IOM intends to join key initiatives such as the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP), the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) initiative and the Centre of Excellence for Climate and Disaster Resilience, with a view to supporting efforts related to early warning and capacity-building. IOM will contribute its broad experience and practice from humanitarian, development and climate interventions to accelerate progress and improve coherence with regard to climate action.

Capacity-building to share innovative practices

25. In 2021, IOM's capacity-building programme on migration, environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction supported 1,993 government officials and 91,206 community members (including women, young people and children) in their efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

26. The Organization is engaged in multiple forms of capacity-building related to disaster risk reduction, both on a bilateral basis and through partnerships. For example, as part of the United Nations Senior Leadership Group on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience and the related Focal Points Group, IOM is working with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and other United Nations agencies to mainstream disaster risk reduction into humanitarian action through the roll-out of risk-informed planning workshops in 10 countries. In addition, IOM and the United Nations Development Programme, as co-chairs of the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI), are working to establish collaboration with resident coordinators' offices, United Nations country teams and governments. The aim is to advance a common agenda on comprehensive risk management and the capacity development of national disaster management and civil protection agencies; over 40 of the countries most affected by climate change have already benefited from this work.

27. As the lead for the Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster in disaster settings, IOM has been an early forerunner in linking camp coordination and camp management to preparedness and disaster risk reduction in capacity-building programmes for national disaster management authorities. Although camps are generally considered to be short-term solutions, people are displaced on average for between 10 and 26 years. The Organization continues to reinforce the linkages between camp coordination and camp management, and disaster management through its capacity-building programme across Southern Africa, which was a milestone case study, and the adaptation of the MEND guide for planning mass evacuations in natural disasters to specific countries, including the Philippines, Thailand and Vanuatu. A new MEND training course is planned for the Caribbean in early 2023.

28. Reflecting the key role that migration plays in climate action and sustainable development, IOM is also working with the European Union and specific Member States to build capacity through a [project to mainstream migration into international cooperation and development](#). This project involves the development of dedicated toolkits on environment and climate change, and rural and urban development.

Next Steps

29. Building on its innovative approaches to prevention, preparedness, response and solutions, as described in this paper, IOM will continue to support its membership in the coherent, comprehensive implementation of their commitments relating to human mobility in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. The Organization will also continue to consult Member States on how to enhance their active involvement in the roll-out of the Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment and Climate Change 2021–2030.

30. The following next steps for action have been identified in line with the [messages that IOM will seek to convey](#) ahead of the Twenty-seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP27). IOM will continue to work with Member states and partners to:

- (a) Ensure that human mobility linked to climate hazards is well addressed at local and national levels through dedicated climate change and migration policies with a whole-of-government approach. Integrating human mobility considerations into national adaptation plans, disaster risk reduction strategies and development plans will support coherent and comprehensive approaches to migration management and climate action, and advance implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change; the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- (b) Increase support for climate change adaptation action, measures and resources to avert and minimize displacement, where possible, and strengthen the resilience of populations. Strengthening preparedness efforts, including early warning, will help ensure that States and communities are equipped to avert and minimize displacement and facilitate migration in the context of disasters, climate change and environmental degradation. Emergency preparedness investments in communities would enable action to be taken prior to disasters based on more accurate early warnings, in line with the [United Nations Secretary-General's call](#) to ensure that everyone is protected by early warning systems within five years.
- (c) Deliver scaled-up activities targeting the people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. This requires sustainable, predictable financing for adaptation and resilience, in addition to major political efforts and concrete action to limit environmental degradation, foster adaptation and mitigate climate change impacts with a view to averting disastrous consequences for people and the environment.
- (d) Promote whole-of-society mobilization bringing together public and private partners, civil society, women, young people, indigenous peoples, migrants, displaced persons and affected communities within processes related to climate change and migration. Partnerships and locally led solutions are key to addressing the links between these two global issues, while solutions must be child-sensitive, gender-responsive and embedded in justice and human rights.