

Bridging the Climate Crisis, Gender & Migration

The Issue

- The climate crisis is rapidly becoming a major factor in population displacement and in the migration decisions and circumstances of people at risk of displacement around the world. An estimated 25 million persons are displaced each year due to climate-related factors. By 2050, some 250 million or more people could face displacement.
- While most climate-related displacement occurs within countries, forced migration across international borders is increasing. Diverse social, economic and political conditions and inequalities are exacerbated by climate change, and already-marginalized populations are most affected by both slow and sudden-onset events.
- There are significant gaps in global, regional and national policy responses to displacement and migration, compounding the dire situations of affected populations. Sudden and slow onset climate and extreme weather events disrupt access to housing, jobs, health care, education, services and more—prior to, during and following migration—putting people’s lives, rights and sustainable futures at risk.
- Climate-induced migration is often framed as a future event—a looming large-scale migration crisis -- in rhetoric that fuels anti-migrant sentiment and xenophobic prejudices. This can lead to violence against migrants, including structural violence in the forms of increased border surveillance, militarisation, and criminalisation.

Gender Dimensions

- Women are disproportionately affected by all the dimensions of the climate crisis. Climate-related natural disasters, droughts, floods and other extreme weather events, and slow onset climate events exacerbate gender-based inequalities.
- As climate change erodes existing livelihoods, women are increasingly migrating to raise household incomes, often in domestic and care work. (CEDAW GC 37)
- Women often do not enjoy equitable access to and control over land and productive resources; the lack of resources and social capital, as well as discriminatory laws and migration policies frequently restrict women’s migration choices and they may be unable to migrate in the wake of extreme climatic events. (CEDAW GC 37)
- Women who remain at home when male family members migrate may have to take on responsibility for coordinating climate mitigation, recovery, and adaptation efforts.
- On average, disasters kill more women than men. Women’s gendered social roles may leave them staying behind to look after children and other relatives. (Climate and Development Knowledge Network, Policy Brief, March 2014)
- Women and LGBTQI migrants are likely to have less access to resources and have less control over their migration experience, putting them at increased risk of exploitation, rape and other forms of

sexual violence, and other human rights abuses, while their irregular status prevents access to justice and services, including sexual and reproductive health services, for fear of arrest and deportation.

Recommendations -- States should:

- Adopt a rights-based and gender-equitable response to climate-induced migration during crisis events, and throughout displacement, including forced migration across borders.
- Ensure the needs, protection and human rights of all migrants, regardless of status or reason for migrating. Promote outcomes that increase resilience and self-reliance.
- Provide humane, fair and effective refugee and migration policies, including regular migration pathways.
- Transition to just, safe, equitable, environmentally sound, zero-carbon economies that are intersectional, inclusive, and meet the differentiated needs of diverse populations. States should engage affected populations in all stages of policy development and implementation, support the resilience and adaptive capacities of all women and girls, and strengthen women and girls' economic agency and access to sustainable livelihoods. (UN-CSW E/CN.6/2017/L.5, 27 March 2017, para.40(hh))
- Minimize the drivers and structural factors compelling forced migration. Promote Agenda 2030, disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Guarantee women's and girls' inheritance rights and access to and control over assets and other productive resources including rights to own and lease land and other property. Provide equal rights to financial assets, science and technology, vocational training, communication technologies and access to justice and legal assistance.
- In some situations, planned relocations should be a measure of last resort: gender-responsive; grounded in human rights; without forced evictions; with meaningful participation of both migrants and receiving communities

Relevant International Policy

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2, 5) policy development and protection of people migrating in the context of "natural disasters, adverse effects of climate change, and environmental degradation"; data development, adaptation and resilience strategies, coordination of sub-regional and regional efforts to address people in vulnerable situations; need for states to consider options for regular pathways for migration.

Platform on Disaster Displacement, a State-led consultative processes: Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change (Nansen Protection Agenda)

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: measures at national and international levels to reduce displacement risk, improve resilience, and address disaster displacement. (A/RES/69/283)

Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: HR obligations to people in situations of internal displacement

Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage [under **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**] Taskforce on Displacement to address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Global Compact on Refugees: UNHCR has outlined how the GCR and other protection mechanisms may benefit people displaced across borders due to climate change factors. Some regional refugee instruments employ definitions that may enable people to receive international protection as refugees.

<https://www.unhcr.org/5a12f9577.pdf> and <https://www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html>