

act!onaid

— REALIZZA IL CAMBIAMENTO —

**Climate
migration:
risks and
challenges for
adaptation
policies**

This policy brief is based on the analysis and background report written by Christopher Horwood (Ravenstone Consult).

Author: Roberto Sensi

Contributions: Lorenzo Figoni, Tino Orbon

Sign-off: Livia Zoli, Katia Scannavini

Editing: Giuseppina Lupi

Graphics: Tadzio Malvezzi

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
1. Migration and climate: a complex relationship.....	4
2. Difficult causal connections	10
3. Adaptation policies and climate migration.....	13
4. Migration as adaptation	14
5. Lack of policies for migration as adaptation.....	16
6. Risks in considering migration as a form of adaptation	17
7. Existing gaps in promoting adaptation practices through migration	21
8. Recommendations.....	23

FOREWORD

Climate change and migration are significantly affecting the geopolitics of the 21st century, and although they are still dealt with by common policies as distinct phenomena, they are indeed strongly interrelated and the nature of this relationship is the subject increasing attention both in the academic environment and in international political *fora*. In fact, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), for example, - which took place in Glasgow, Scotland, on the occasion of COP26 - has established a specific Task Force on Displacement and Mobility driven by the environmental effects of climate change. Given our globalised world, both phenomena require a response at national and international levels, involving state sovereignty, social justice and Human Rights. The aim of this paper, from a climate justice perspective, is to contribute towards the debate on the impact of climate change on migration and on the latter's possible contribution to adaptation processes in response to the negative effects of the current climate crisis.

1. Migration and climate: a complex relationship

Since the 2010 Conference of the Parties held in Cancun (COP 16), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has adopted the term “human mobility” to define the various forms of mobility that occur within the context of climate change and environmental disasters, such as migration, displacement and planned relocation (BOX 1). Established during COP 15 in Paris,¹ the Task Force on Displacement has provided a mapping of international processes, policies and legal frameworks that deal with the three different types of mobility mentioned. Most of these documents refer international migration, although it has been widely documented that most climate induced migration still takes place within countries.²

BOX 1: MIGRATION, DISPLACEMENT AND PLANNED RELOCATION

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has identified three main forms of mobility associated with climate change. The first form is *migration*, a term used in a broad sense to mean people moving within or outside their country for a variety of reasons, including environmental. *Displacement*, the second form of mobility, is understood as forced movement due to environmental disasters. *Planned relocation*, on the other hand, is the third form of mobility and concerns communities that are relocated to a safer place in light of the impossibility to remain in territories irreversibly compromised by environmental events.

Source: IOM, Making mobility work for adaptation to environmental changes: Results from the MECLEP global research, 2017.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) classifies climate migration as a subcategory of environmental migration, as it is driven by a specific phenomenon: climate change.³ For the purpose of this paper, the terms “climate migrant” and “climate migration” shall be used, although these definitions are complemented by others that crowd an ever-evolving space of categories and terminologies. Although, in our opinion, the term “environmental migration” is perhaps a more accurate way to describe the phenomenon at hand, referring to the word “climate” when discussing migration driven by extreme environmental events helps to clarify the human causes and related political responsibilities that characterise these phenomena.

¹ Established during the Conference of the Parties held in Paris and included in the work plan on the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, the Task Force on Displacement aims to develop recommendations for an integrated approach so as to avert, minimise and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change. <https://unfccc.int/wim-excom/areas-of-work/migration-displacement-and-human-mobility>

² A recent study conducted by the World Bank has estimated that 260 million people will be forced to migrate within their own countries due to climate change by 2050, the majority, 86 million, being located in Sub-Saharan Africa. See World Bank, Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration, 2021, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36248>.

³ IOM defines climate migration as “the movement of a person or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change, are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a State or across an international border”. IOM, Glossary on migration, 2019.

BOX 2: **MINI-GLOSSARY**

Adaptation. A process of adjustment to present and future effects caused by climate phenomena. In human systems, adaptation aims to avert or mitigate environmental damage, or to be able to exploit the opportunities thereof. In some natural systems, human intervention can facilitate adaptation to climate impacts.

Mitigation (to climate change). This term refers to the set of human interventions that aim to reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions and/or ensure the absorption and storage of carbon.

Resilience. The social, economic and environmental capacity of systems to cope with extreme events, in order to preserve their essential functions and adapt through learning and transformation processes.

Sudden environmental disasters. They can be caused by meteorological and hydrological events such as violent or prolonged rainfall (which can cause floods or landslides), storms such as tropical cyclones (typhoons and hurricanes), geophysical events including earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. In this paper, environmental disasters associated with hydrological and meteorological phenomena are considered to be related to climate change.

Slow on-set environmental disasters. They can be caused by hydrological and meteorological phenomena or by gradual changes in the climate system over long periods of time, such as drought (which can cause food and water insecurity and hunger) and desertification. Other negative effects of climate change such as rising temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns (affecting agriculture and livestock), rising sea levels, salinisation of drinking water resources, thawing permafrost, may not constitute environmental disasters but may contribute to displacement.

Damage and loss. These refer to the negative effects of climate variability and climate change that take place despite mitigation and adaptation efforts. The UNFCCC has defined them as the actual or potential manifestation of impacts associated with climate change in developing countries that negatively affect human and natural systems. They can be distinguished into economic (with associated value) and non-economic losses, the latter including loss of life, valuable places, cultural artefacts, biodiversity, ecosystem services, and productive and residential sites characterised by intrinsic value and identity.

Source: UNEP, Adaptation GAP, Report 2020, 2021.

Historically, “ecological refugee” was the first definition used, coined forty-five years ago.⁴ Although it is still a hotly debated issue, there is a tendency to avoid using the term “refugee” due to the lack of legal bases in international law; from a legal viewpoint, in fact, the term “environmental refugee” is inappropriate, as international law has not yet defined the status of those who leave their homes for environmental reasons, mainly due to the difficulty of distinguishing them clearly from other drivers, and therefore they are not covered by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.⁵ The response to the vacuum in international policy and legislation has

⁴ Brown, L., Mcgrath, P. & Stokes, B. Twenty-Two Dimensions of the Population Problem, Worldwatch Paper 5, 1976.

⁵ Mile, A. Protecting Climate Migrants: A Gap in International Asylum Law, Earth Refuge, 2021.

led to the adoption of the *Nansen Initiative* (BOX 3) and the dialogue on the *Platform on Disaster Displacement*.

BOX 3: NANSEN INITIATIVE ON DISASTER-INDUCED CROSS-BORDER DISPLACEMENT

The Nansen Initiative was established in 2012 upon the initiative of Switzerland and Norway with the aim to build consensus among States on how to better govern the phenomenon of cross-border mobility associated with displacement driven by both sudden and gradual extreme environmental phenomena (*sudden and slow-onset disaster*) caused by climate change. In particular, in order to fill the protection gap that exists at the international level with regard to climate induced migration, this initiative was inspired by the model of the 1998 *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*:⁶ a soft law instrument whose objective was to study displacement phenomena occurring within countries. The initiative led to the establishment of a *Platform on Disaster Displacement* whose aim is to promote the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the dialogue on the *Nansen Initiative*, in particular with reference to the Protocol on Protection which recommends as follows: to collect data and improve knowledge on disasters and displacement which cause cross-border mobility; to increase humanitarian protection; to improve disaster and displacement management; to work on risk management in countries (e.g. integrating human mobility into risk reduction and national adaptation plans).

⁶Source: The Nansen Initiative, Disaster-induced cross-border displacement, 2015

However, the term climate refugee also continues to be used to emphasise the fact that those affected by these events are involuntary victims entitled to support and compensation; an emphasis that the more “neutral” term “climate migrant” tends to avoid. The shift from the term “climate refugee” to “climate migrant” over the past decade is representative of the political contention around this phenomenon.⁷ Moreover, the polarisation of the debate around these two terms is a useful representation of the critical elements and opportunities that characterise the idea of migration as a form of adaptation and its progressive affirmation in the political debate at the international level. Table 1 shows the main characteristics of these two concepts, highlighting their different views and narratives, the institutions’ different responsibilities and the necessary responses required.

⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>

⁷ de Haas, H. Climate refugees: The fabrication of a migration threat, 2020.

Table 1. **Politicisation of the narrative and of the terms related to climate mobility**

	Climate refugee	Climate migrant
Type of intervention	Mitigation	Adaptation
View of migration	A failure of mitigation policies	Part of an adaptation strategy
Nature of migration	Forced, compelled	Voluntary, and part of a continuum of a more general mobility to be governed
Causes, responsibilities	Major greenhouse gas emitters (Global North)	Vulnerability of individuals in particular geographical and socio-economic contexts
Responses	Mitigation, reparation (through global funds), reception and support policies for refugees	Capacity-building in the most vulnerable countries and contexts, strengthening the resilience of affected populations
Impact of the migration process	Environmental degradation at reception sites, safety risks, problems and political consequences	If well managed, new resources, opportunities, remittances and knowledge transfer
Institutional level of engagement	States, international security, international law	Communities, individuals, local government and adaptation policies at territorial level
Type of legislation	International conventions and/or treaties	Soft laws to be internalised through domestic policies, approaches and policies promoted at different levels of government
Narrative	An inhospitable world, human tides, refugee invasion	Human mobility and opportunities for resilience and development
Preferred terminology	Emphasis on the human consequences of climate change and on the responsibilities of the main greenhouse gas emitting countries	Replacement of migration policies (not feasible, not viable) with adaptation policies. Promotion of migration management and the reform of the institutional agenda, placing emphasis on migration as a supply in response to labour demand in the Global North
Position concerning freedom of movement	Mobility is restricted and politicised in a migration-averse environment with limited reception opportunities	Mobility is a viable option with access opportunities for intranational, intraregional and international movements

Source: adapted from Felli, R. Managing Climate Insecurity by Ensuring Continuous Capital Accumulation: 'Climate Refugees' and 'Climate Migrants', *New Political Economy* 18 (3): 1-27, 2012.

The lack of international consensus is exemplified by the fact that the term climate refugee has not been adopted by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), which prefers to refer to people forced to move within the context of disasters and climate change.⁸ However, this should not defer from the fact - as also recognised by the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees - that increasing phenomena of climate and environmental degradation and disasters are affecting the determinants of refugee movements.⁹ Since displacement caused by environmental factors is an evident rising phenomenon, there is an increasing urgency for the adoption of legal protection

⁸ UNHCR, Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made, in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters, *Refworld*, 2020.

⁹ UN, Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Part II), *Global compact on refugees*, 2018.

mechanisms at international and national levels, such as, for example, the possibility of obtaining some form of protection based on environmental grounds (BOX 4). To this end, despite legal considerations and states' resistance in recognising the status of climate refugees, a recent pronouncement by the UN Human Rights Council has opened the door to future asylum claims for reasons related to the effects of climate change.¹⁰

BOX 4: OPENNESS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING A FORM OF PROTECTION CONNECTED TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

In its judgment 5022/2021, the Court of Cassation upheld the appeal of a Nigerian citizen whose application for international protection had been rejected. Such request was supported by a situation of serious environmental disruption, due in part to the indiscriminate exploitation of the Niger Delta area by oil companies. Although the trial judge had recognised a situation of considerable poverty and environmental insecurity, this was not sufficient for the granting of humanitarian protection. Ruling on the judgment of the trial judge, the Court of Cassation reiterated the decision of the UN Human Rights Committee of 7 January 2020, concerning the case of Ioane Teitiota, a citizen of the Republic of Kiribati, from the Tarawa Atoll, located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Due to the effects of climate change and the consequent rise in sea level resulting in documented overcrowding, drinking water shortages and soil erosion, leading in turn to a housing crisis that resulted in social unrest and violent clashes, the applicant decided to move with his family to neighbouring New Zealand in order to seek asylum. Since his request was not granted and he was consequently repatriated, Teitiota decided to refer the matter to the UN Committee, claiming that, by obliging him to repatriate to the Republic of Kiribati, the State of New Zealand had violated his right to life as enshrined in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The UN Committee, even if considering the conditions of uninhabitability of the Republic of Kiribati plausible, also considered that the 10-15 year timeframe, as suggested by the applicant, left room for the Republic of Kiribati to intervene, with the assistance of the international community, adopting measures to protect the population and, where necessary, to relocate it.¹¹ The Committee also noted that the Republic of Kiribati had already put in place measures to reduce vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change by implementing resilience mechanisms. Although Teitiota's request was not accepted, the UN Committee opened the door to the application of the Convention to asylum claims related to the effects of climate change in countries of origin. In the decision, in fact, it is stressed that both sudden events (such as intense storms and floods) and events whose effects are progressive (such as rising sea levels, salinisation and soil degradation) can encourage cross-border movements of individuals seeking protection from damage caused by climate change.¹² In addition, the Committee stated that "without robust national and international efforts, the effects of climate change in receiving States may expose individuals to a violation of their rights under articles 6 or 7 of the Covenant, thereby triggering the non-refoulement obligations of sending States. Furthermore, given that the risk of an entire country becoming submerged under water is such an extreme risk, the conditions of life in such a country may become incompatible with the right to life with dignity before the risk is realized".¹³

On the basis of such decision, the Court of Cassation, in relation to the appeal of the

¹⁰ UNHCR, Historic UN Human Rights case opens door to climate change asylum claims, 2020.

¹¹ Views adopted by the Committee under article 5 (4) of the Optional Protocol, concerning communication No. 2728/2016, p. 12.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Nigerian citizen, substantiated and redefined the concept of “situation of danger”, establishing that its evaluation should not be conducted solely with reference to the hypothesis of armed conflict, but more generally with regard to the existence, in concrete terms, of a condition capable of reducing the individual’s fundamental rights to life, freedom and self-determination below a minimum threshold which is identified in the concept of “ineliminable core constituent of personal dignity”, identified by the jurisprudence of the same Court of Cassation. By accepting the appeal and remitting the case to the judge of merit, the Court emphasised that the identification of this minimum threshold should include, “if actually existing in a particular geographical area, the cases of environmental disaster, as defined by art. 452-quater of the Criminal Code, climate change and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources”.¹⁴

The decision of the Court of Cassation is therefore one of the first results of the openness expressed by the UN Committee on the possibility of obtaining a form of protection related to the effects of climate change. Said openness will allow the Court of First Instance to reformulate its assessment taking into account also vulnerabilities caused by the serious situation of environmental disruption in Nigeria.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) prefers the term “climate migrant” to “refugee”, thus emphasising the need for the debate on climate migration to maintain a priority focus on preventive measures. It also highlights that mobility associated with extreme climate events is not exclusively forced and that migration management and related policies can provide solutions. IOM also stresses the complexity of isolating environmental drivers from economic, political and social ones and the political risks associated with the reopening of the UN Refugee Convention. Finally, IOM highlights that there is already an extensive set of *soft* and *hard law* instruments that can be drawn upon to respond to the challenges of climate migration in the areas of human rights, refugees, humanitarian law, as well as instruments to manage internal displacement, disasters, and climate migration.¹⁵

Further terminology proposed by FAO is “*distress migration*”,¹⁶ which aims to emphasise that climate induced mobility is rarely, if ever, voluntary and that the socio-economic conditions of many of the people affected by these phenomena worsen precisely due to involuntary migration. As it will be highlighted below, this view also challenges the positive concept of “migration as adaptation” whose aim, through mobility, is to build resilience and risk diversification.¹⁷

¹⁴ Court of Cassation No. 5022/21

¹⁵ Ionesco, D. Let’s Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees, UN Sustainable Development, 2020.

¹⁶ Distress migration characterises all forms of movement that occur in conditions where the individual and households perceive that the sole option to lift themselves out of poverty and secure their livelihoods is migration. This emergency nature is associated with a lack of other options due to limited economic and employment opportunities, as well as conditions such as drought, crop failure and food insecurity. FAO, Scoping study on defining and measuring distress migration, 2017.

¹⁷ ActionAid, Exploring the cost of inaction. Displacement and distress migration, 2020.

2. Difficult causal connections

The debate that has characterised the definition and conceptualisation of climate migration has indeed been long-standing due to the indirect relationship between climate and migration. In fact, said relationship is mediated by other structural and individual factors that can determine the eventuality and direction of the migration path and influence its outcomes.¹⁸ Therefore, it is wrong to attribute a direct relationship between climate effects and mobility in a context where climate change competes with other important drivers such as overpopulation, underdevelopment, weak governance, violence, conflict, social and gender inequalities.

Although migration and displacement are increasingly perceived as a result of the effects of climate change, human mobility is multi-causal and operates in spatial, temporal and political dimensions where environmental factors are more appropriately identified as threats or as vulnerability multipliers that can exacerbate pre-existing conditions of inequity. Field research suggests that diverse scenarios exist in relation to migration experiences linked to rapid and progressive environmental events; it follows that migration and displacement are part of a spectrum of possible responses to environmental change.¹⁹ However, it is useful to underline that in terms of causality, extreme sudden onset disasters allow for a less complex or questionable cause-effect correlation to be identified although, even in this case, existing inequalities and power dynamics play a crucial role in the migration pathway, influencing its destination, duration and conditions. If this consideration is valid for forced displacement in conflict contexts, it is even more so in cases of sudden onset disasters.

The importance of climate change in determining, within fragile environmental contexts, the critical threshold beyond which displacement and migration occur varies greatly, as well as the ways in which these movements take place, their destination and duration. Due to the complexity of such variables and their interdependence, it is very problematic to assign direct attribution and predict flows. In fact, the question is: how should people moving due to climate change be classified within broader population movements for other reasons? At the same time, another question is: how can decision-makers be convinced of the urgency of this situation without being able to draw on reliable data on the future dimension of this phenomenon? These are questions that have long animated debates within the scope of migration.²⁰ The discourse is further complicated by the presence of contextually high levels of “voluntary and involuntary immobility” among those who are affected by the effects of climate change (*trapped communities*), who are often more vulnerable because they cannot leave dangerous and unsustainable environmental contexts due to lack of resources or for other reasons.²¹

The complexity of these situations highlights that the way in which households respond to climate change and environmental stress depends on variables that lead to heterogeneous migration outcomes.²² In many cases the ambiguity of attribution is due to specific local conditions, analysed through the adoption of participatory qualitative field research.²³ However, the increasing number of documented cases of climate induced displacement and migration

¹⁸ McLeman, R. Thresholds in climate migration, *Population and Environment* 39 (2-3), 2018.

¹⁹ Warner, K. *Global Environmental Change and Migration, Governance Challenges*, 2019.

²⁰ Ferris, E. *Climate Change, Migration, and the Incredibly Complicated Task of Influencing Policy*, 2015.

²¹ Schewel, K. *Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies*, *International Migration Review*, 2019. Also, Black, R. *et al.* *Foresight: Migration and global environmental change, final project report*, The Government Office for Science, London, 2011.

²² See Warner, K. & Affi, T. *Where the rain falls: Evidence from 8 countries on how vulnerable households use migration to manage the risk of rainfall variability and food insecurity*, *Climate and Development*, 2014.

²³ For example, Climate Action Network South Asia. *Is Climate Change Fuelling Migration in Sri Lanka?*, 2020. Also Salik, A.M. *et al.* *Climate-induced displacement and migration in Pakistan: Insights from Muzaffargarh and Tharparkar districts*, SDPI & CANSAs, 2020.

leaves no doubt that the latter are currently a key driver and will increasingly be so in the coming years.²⁴

Despite the persistence of a “sedentary bias” - which identifies migration as a negative consequence of climate change and therefore something to be averted²⁵ - highlighted in many documents and discussions since Cancun, in recent years we have witnessed a shift in meaning that has transformed climate migration from a problem into an opportunity for adaptation.²⁶ Regardless of how it is conceived, climate migration is already taking place. Altered rainfall patterns, rising temperatures and other extreme environmental events are making people’s living conditions increasingly precarious, forcing them to move,²⁷ as evidenced by farmers and agricultural workers seasonally migrating from Mexico and other Central American countries to the United States, as well as shepherds in the Sahel region relocating to overcrowded urban centres, and numerous rural exoduses throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China. As is already the case in small island states in the Pacific region (Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshal Islands), more and more people around the world are using emergency migration as a response to climate crisis.

Rather than contributing to the resolution of the structural inequalities and power imbalances that underlie the failures of *in situ* adaptive capacities of the most vulnerable communities, the view of migration as a form of adaptation risks promoting a narrative of the migrant as one who copes with climate change and builds a different future through the countless possibilities offered by mobility. In this framework, migration is not only a reaction to the problem but, if effectively managed, a success on all fronts: that of the migrant, the destination community and the community of origin.²⁸ This paradigm shift in the relationship between migration and climate moves away from the view of climate mobility as a failure and as a risk for safety, favouring instead an interpretation that views it as an opportunity for adaptation.

²⁴ For example, Pasini, A. & Amendola, S. Linear and nonlinear influences of climatic changes on migration flows: a case study for the ‘Mediterranean bridge’, *Environ. Res. Commun.*, 2020. Also, Afifi, T. *et al.* Human mobility in response to rainfall variability: opportunities for migration as a successful adaptation strategy in eight case studies, *Migration and Development*, 2016. Finally, Warner, K. & Afifi, T. 2014, *op. cit.*

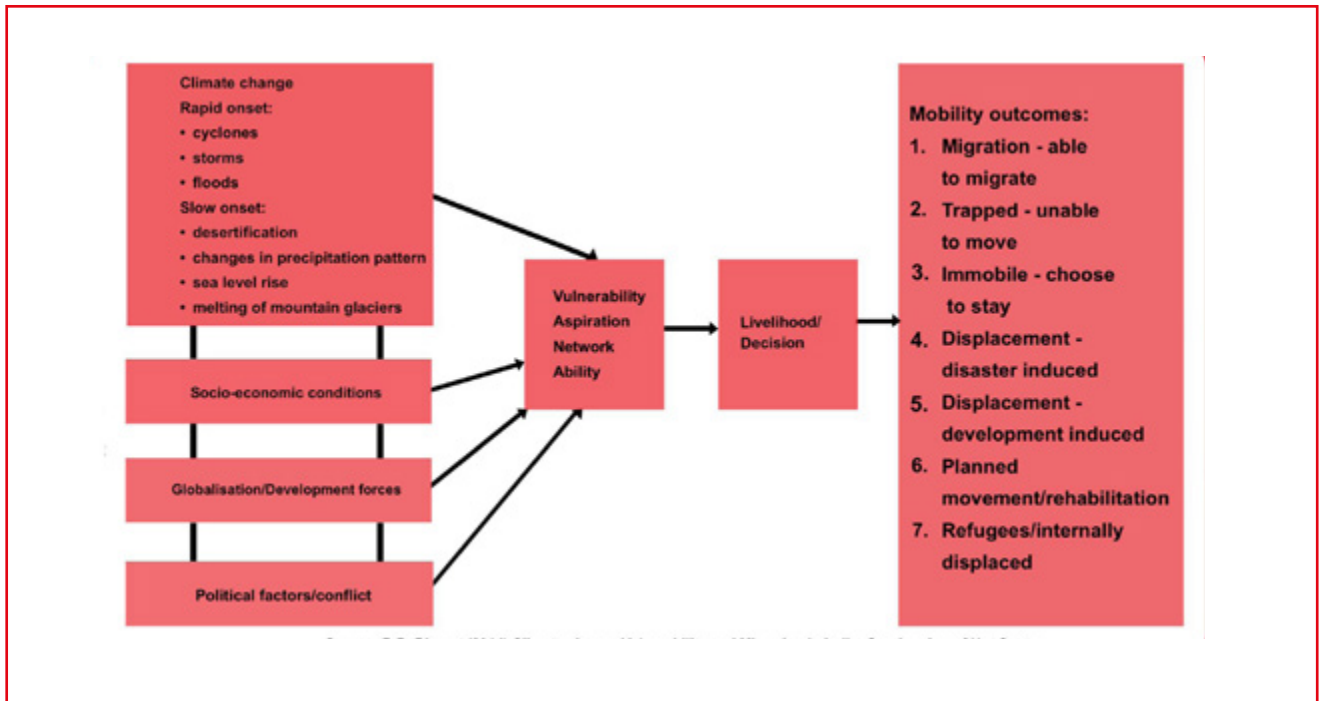
²⁵ “Sedentary bias” refers to a way of understanding mobility as a result of climate change, as a form of failure or something undesirable, see Bakewell, O. *Keeping Them in Their Place: the ambivalent relationship between development and migration in Africa*, International Migration Institute, 2007. Also, Ober, K. *Migration as adaptation*, UK Climate Change and Mobility Coalition, 2014.

²⁶ For a general analysis see Ober, K. 2014, *op. cit.*

²⁷ <https://mixedmigration.org/articles/climate-exposure-the-complex-interplay-between-cities-climate-change-and-mixed-migration/>

²⁸ Felli, R. 2012, *op. cit.*

CHART 1. The role of climate change and environmental stresses in defining the choice to migrate and its different outcomes



Source: Bhagat, R. B. Climate Change Vulnerability and Migration in India: Overlapping of Hot Spots, 2014.

3. Adaptation policies and climate migration

Since the 1996 Second Assessment Report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), mitigation and (*in situ*) adaptation have progressively become a priority on the international policy agenda within the framework of countering climate change. In its 2014 report, the IPCC Working Group 2 on Adaptation argued that human mobility associated with climate change would become a humanitarian and development priority in the following decades.²⁹ Adaptation policies were strongly encouraged during the Conference of the Parties held in Cancun in 2010 with the adoption of the *Cancun Adaptation Framework*,³⁰ of the *National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPs)* and the launch of the Adaptation Fund.³¹ Subsequently, the *Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated With Climate Change Impacts* - established during COP19 in Poland - set up a *Task Force on Displacement* to explore possible climate and mobility measures to be included in the national adaptation plans.³² In the report on the first two years of the *Task Force's* work (2017-2019), evidence showed a limited capacity of states to identify concrete actions to respond to climate migration at the national policy level. Although 81% of the 37 countries and territories that had shared their NAPs referred in their documents to the issue of human mobility with reference to policies, plans and adaptation strategies, and 53% of the 66 countries that had adopted regulatory frameworks on migration and displacement referred to climate change and environmental stresses, significant limitations emerged with reference to coherence and the lack of adequate synergies within national development processes.³³ In its conclusions, the *Task Force* pointed out that, although (few) policies existed, they were not implemented, they were managed 'in silos' and not in a synergetic and integrated manner, and there was a clear lack of coherence and coordination. Moreover, the almost total lack of specific sectoral legislation within the scope of climate change and human mobility³⁴ was also highlighted. While there is growing political consensus around the idea of migration as a form of adaptation, the lack of related policies and programmes is striking. There is a need to fill this gap in order to finally and effectively demonstrate the full potential of this approach, which in our view is far from being free of risks that should be properly taken into account and mitigated.

²⁹ IPCC, Climate Change 2014 Working Group 2, Contribution To The Fifth Assessment Report Of The Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change, 2014.

³⁰ UNFCCC, Cancun Agreements

³¹ The National Adaptation Plan Global Support Programme (NAP-GSP) funded through the Global Environment Facility, together with UNDP, has provided support to 59 developing countries in the drawing up of their NAPs.

³² Task Force on Displacement, First Phase of Implementation June 2017 - April 2019, 2019.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

4. Migration as adaptation

The concept of migration as a form of adaptation first appeared in a seminal study in 2011 that encouraged the idea of mobility as a proactive approach aimed at building resilience and reducing vulnerability.³⁵ Imagining migration as an adaptation strategy means entrusting this specific action with the capacity to strengthen people's resilient response to climate change. Consequently, the risk of this view is to overemphasise the individual capacity to respond strategically to environmental challenges through the potential of migration, instead of investing in adaptation processes with policies characterised by technical and financial transfers from emitting countries to those most vulnerable to climate shocks, which is central to the concept of climate justice (BOX 5).³⁶

When considering migration as an adaptation strategy, there is the risk of disempowering states and international organisations that, instead of intervening in structural conditions such as economic and social inequalities and lack of development - which are the root causes for the high vulnerability of communities to the effects of climate change - put the emphasis on individuals and their response through mobility. The extent to which it is possible or whether there is the political will to manage migration as a form of adaptation remains to be seen. In international migration, for example, there is a governance regime - particularly on the part of the United States and the European Union - that aims to limit mobility as a logic of adaptation, rather than to encourage it, through the use of both restrictive asylum policies and externalization strategies aimed at containing flows in key transit countries toward their borders. Supporting migration as adaptation implies the need not only to expand international protection schemes, but also to create channels for voluntary and regular migration.³⁷

The question, though, also concerns internal movements, particularly for those countries most affected by the effects of climate change, where mobility is anything but a governable or governed phenomenon. Rural exoduses in developing countries in recent years have occurred in a chaotic and unplanned manner, resulting in the proliferation of informal settlements with millions of people living without basic infrastructure and transport, with precarious sanitation and without social protection systems.³⁸ The claim that migration as adaptation will be managed in a technocratic way, using planning and resources, raises many doubts in light of the failures witnessed in recent years.

In conclusion, the emphasis on migration as a form of adaptation is an oversimplification of the concept itself, which is indeed the result of a complex set of factors related to economic development, financial stability, human capital, cultural norms, political dynamics, social groups and networks.³⁹ Therefore, adaptive capacity is heterogeneous across regions, social groups and households within a given population and is constantly evolving. Migration, due to certain conditions for its realisation, is one of the possible ways in which a given population, at a given time, can adapt to the impacts of climate change.⁴⁰

³⁵ Black, R. *et al.* Foresight: Migration and global environmental change, final project report, The Government Office for Science, London, 2011.

³⁶ Felli, R. Managing Climate Insecurity by Ensuring Continuous Capital Accumulation: 'Climate Refugees' and 'Climate Migrants', *New Political Economy* 18 (3):1-27, 2012.

³⁷ Black, R. *et al.* Migration As Adaptation, *Nature* 478, 447-49, 2011.

³⁸ Lucas, R. E. B. Internal Migration in Developing Economies: An Overview, *Knomad Working Paper* 6, 2015.

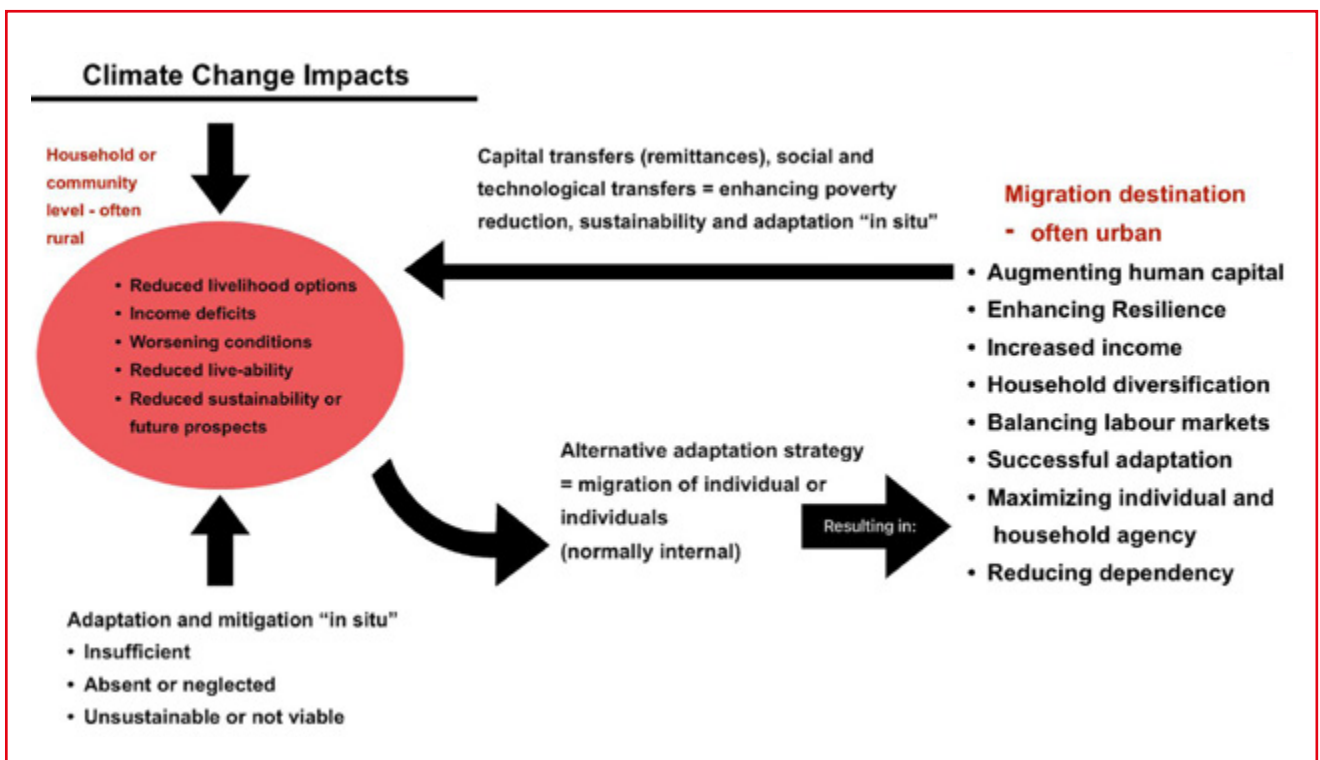
³⁹ McLeman, R. Climate Change, Migration and Critical International Security Considerations, 2011.

⁴⁰ McLeman identifies six types of thresholds in response to climate hazards: 1) adaptation becomes necessary; 2) adaptation proves ineffective; 3) substantial changes in the use of land and of other livelihoods become necessary; 4) *in situ* adaptation fails; 5) migration rates become non-linear; 6) migration rates cease to be non-linear. Displacement along these thresholds is determined by specific contextual characteristics where climate events occur, by natural and human systems. The transition from an increase to a non-linear migration rate can be accelerated by people's perceptions, by the actions of influential individuals or social groups, and by changes in infrastructure, services and other community assets. McLeman, R. Thresholds in climate migration, *Population and Environment* 39 (2-3), 2018

BOX 5: CLIMATE JUSTICE

Climate justice for ActionAid represents the call for social justice at the core of the responses to the climate crisis. Climate change has caused increasing inequalities between rich and poor countries. It has been estimated that by 2030 the damage and loss suffered due to the impacts of climate change will amount to 300 billion dollars a year, with a total of 1.2 trillion dollars by 2060.⁴¹ The climate crisis is the result of decades of pollution produced by rich countries, with the price being paid by the countries of the Global South, who can invest limited resources to deal with the negative consequences of climate change. These countries, which need more and more resources to increase their adaptive capacity and resilience, cannot be left alone in facing the disastrous consequences of the climate crisis for which they are not responsible. Climate justice implies the acknowledgment of different responsibilities in the face of climate change, the commitment to mitigation and adaptation by the countries primarily responsible, and the eradication of all social, economic and gender inequalities that make people more vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change.

CHART 2. **The theory of change of migration as adaptation**



Source: processed by ActionAid

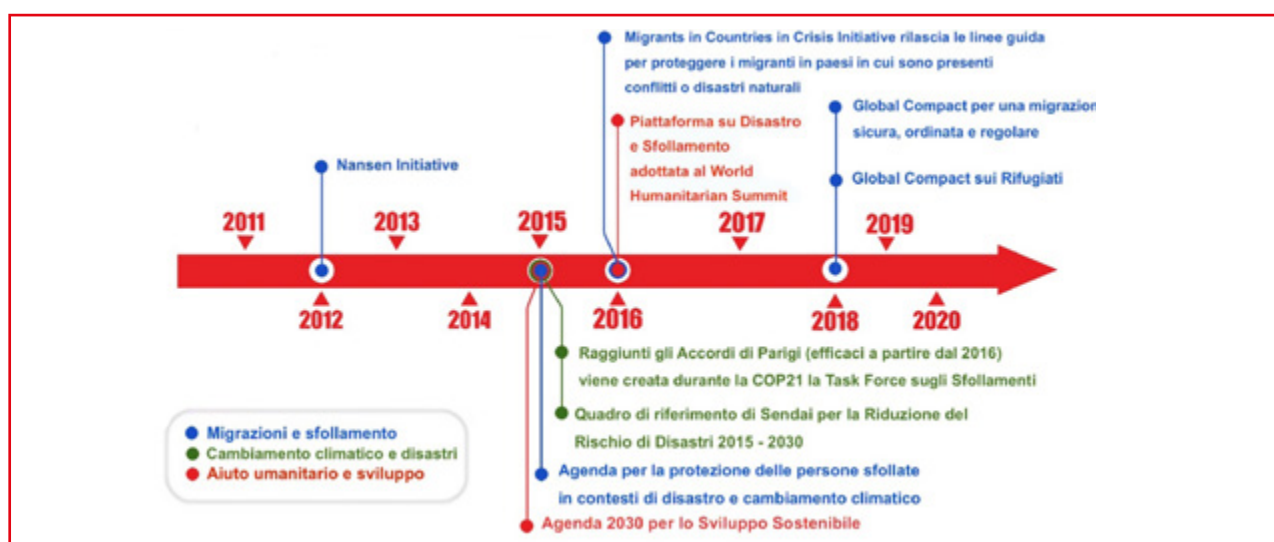
⁴¹ ActionAid, Market solutions to help climate victims fail human rights test Finance through innovative and public sources must be raised to address loss & damage and protect human rights, 2020.

5. Lack of policies for migration as adaptation

In recent years, efforts to develop and identify strategic lines of action on climate migration have multiplied, leading to the development of policy frameworks, guidelines and other initiatives.⁴² The 2018 *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Global Compact for Migration)*,⁴³ which has not yet been signed by Italy, highlighted the issue of environmental drivers of migration and suggested some lines of action through international cooperation. However, these policy frameworks do not provide indications on the issue of migration as adaptation, focusing on the transnational dimension, despite the fact that climate mobility is a predominantly internal phenomenon.

Furthermore, there are regulatory frameworks both at national and international levels that address migration, disaster risk reduction, displacement and climate change, but there is a lack of those that exclusively address the issue of migration as adaptation.⁴⁴ This can be interpreted as a lack of will and consensus among states to proceed with the implementation of a concept that would require a significant amount of political and financial capital in order to work. Another possible explanation is the need for exchanges of views and debates in *fora* dedicated to climate change policies on a relatively recent concept that does not yet have its own statute as to laws and policies and relies on regulatory frameworks that relate to sustainable development, disaster management, humanitarian action, human rights, international labour management, climate and environmental change and, of course, migration, displacement and planned relocation.⁴⁵ Without a dedicated policy framework, there is the risk that many of the constraints analysed will not be overcome. Chart 3 highlights the main milestones achieved in the global governance debate on environmental migration between 2011 and 2020, and shows the policy frameworks that are indirectly relevant to the concept of migration as adaptation.

CHART 3. Stages in the evolution of climate migration governance



Source: Kraler, A. et al., 2020, op. cit.

⁴² Kraler, A. et al. *Climate Change and Migration - Legal and policy challenges and responses to environmentally induced migration*, Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs Directorate-General for Internal Policies, European Parliament, 2020.

⁴³ <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

⁴⁴ Tangemann, J. *Migration as adaptation? A comparative analysis of policy frameworks*, 2016.

⁴⁵ As highlighted in the IOM mapping, IOM 2018, op. cit.

6. Risks in considering migration as a form of adaptation

The paragraph that follows will explore the crucial elements of the debate developed on the issue of migration as adaptation, in an attempt to highlight the risks and ambiguities surrounding this concept.

Neutralising the attribution of responsibility. The need for adaptation policies, as well as the increasing costs associated with loss and damage, are the result of the failure of mitigation policies, the responsibility for which falls upon the most industrialised economies. Those who suffer the most from the above are the populations whose climate and ecological footprint is much more contained, but that live in geographical locations and under socio-economic conditions that make them the most vulnerable to the environmental effects of climate crisis. The so-called developed countries should act in a much more incisive manner with regard to mitigation, taking into account what is actually taking place.⁴⁶ Although adaptation is increasingly necessary due to the irreversibility of the effects of climate change, the fact of putting the emphasis on this concept - even if it is a priority for the climate justice agenda - represents a shift of responsibility from those who should invest in mitigation to those who are forced to deal with its negative consequences. In this logic, the concept of migration as adaptation not only represents a further transfer of responsibility to the affected institutions and communities, but risks burdening the responsibility on individuals, households and communities instead of public institutions. This concept, in fact, emphasises pull factors rather than push factors in relation to the causes and dynamics of responsibility, and promotes individual and household responses rather than the intervention of public institutions. From a climate justice perspective, focusing on the resilience and adaptation of individuals tends to evade the responsibility of states in terms of mitigation policies and funding for *in-situ* adaptation interventions. It is therefore a “convenient” concept that, by masking the responsibilities of states confronted with the urgency of serious mitigation policies, evades the issue of accountability for their inaction.

Migration can be both adaptive and erosive. Those who support the concept of migration as adaptation argue that it already occurs everywhere and with relative or significant success.⁴⁷ Climate migration is viewed as an opportunity to provide adaptive responses through the diversification of livelihoods, family risk and the use of remittances.⁴⁸ However, migration does not necessarily have an automatic positive outcome, nor is it inherently adaptive or maladaptive⁴⁹ in nature. What determines its outcome are the conditions within which it takes place.⁵⁰ Migration can, moreover, be both adaptive and erosive not only for those who move but also for the households that remain in their communities of origin.⁵¹ It is also useful to mention here the debate on the migration-development nexus: migration can be a strategic but also problematic choice that exposes people to the risk of a poverty spiral, reducing their adaptive and resilience capacity in the short, medium and long term.⁵² Several studies,⁵³ including a recent field study

⁴⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/environment/climate-change/mitigation-we-must-do-more.htm>

⁴⁷ Felli, R. & Castree, N. Neoliberalising adaptation to environmental change: foresight or foreclosure?, 2012.

⁴⁸ The theory at the basis of this view is the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM), which conceptualises migration as a risk diversification tool for households that must adapt to environmental stresses. ActionAid, Exploring the cost of inaction. Displacement and distress migration, 2020, op. cit.

⁴⁹ McLeman, R. 2021, op. cit.

⁵⁰ IOM, Making mobility work for adaptation to environmental changes: Results from the MECLEP global research, 2017.

⁵¹ Warner, K. & Afifi, T. 2014, op. cit.

⁵² Jacobson, C., Crevello, S., Chea, C. *et al.* When is migration a maladaptive response to climate change? Reg Environ Change, McLeman, R. How Will International Migration Policy and Sustainable Development Affect Future Climate-Related Migration? Transatlantic Council on Migration, 2020.

⁵³ Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Evidence for Policy (MECLEP) was a three-year project funded by the European Union and implemented by IOM through a consortium of six research partners. The project aimed to contribute to improved knowledge on the relationship between migration and environmental changes, including climate change. The research aimed to formulate hypotheses on how migration can contribute to

conducted by ActionAid in Afghanistan, have highlighted the prevalence of negative aspects associated with the migration project: unemployment, dangerous journeys, debt and continuous hardship.⁵⁴

The myth of freedom of choice. Another argument used by those who advocate for migration as an opportunity for adaptation is that it is a free option that allows households and communities to decide when and if to undertake it, where to go and for how long, and to whom, among family members, to entrust the project. It is an approach that postulates a transformative capacity based on the possibility of a strategic use of this means, calibrated to the intensity of the climate phenomenon and the capacity to respond.⁵⁵ Without external coercion, households and individuals can respond to climate pressure with a significant level of (non-forced) freedom and dignity (autonomy and independence). By emphasising the autonomy and agency of migrants, migration as adaptation falls within a “developmentalist” narrative which places at the centre the labour market and free initiative instead of the institutions’ responsibilities.⁵⁶ Reality demonstrates that people do not have unrestricted access to the labour market, nor, in many cases, the necessary information, networks and skills to meet this demand. Moreover, as highlighted, migration is increasingly controlled, reducing the freedom of action of migrants;⁵⁷ not only are immigration policies more and more restrictive but, due to border externalization strategies, the EU and Italy are exerting a repressive remote control over flows that are directed at migrants’ countries of origin and transit⁵⁸. Moreover, the concept of migration as adaptation considers a necessary, and often forced movement as voluntary.⁵⁹ Although the dualism between “voluntary” and “forced” migration has many critical issues, as the reality is more nuanced and the forced nature of migration is always conditioned by environmental and social factors, the idea of a completely voluntary migration once again contributes to the idea that adaptation is an action to be attributed to households and individuals and not to institutions.

Overestimating the impact of remittances. In the concept of migration as adaptation, a strong emphasis is placed on the positive potential of remittances in terms of increasing resilience. Indeed, remittances are likely to represent an alternative source of climate finance;⁶⁰ households, in fact, can use remittance income not only to survive but also to improve resilience and protection against new adverse environmental and climate events.⁶¹ However, overestimating the role of remittances carries the risk of environmental reductionism: although remittances have been and continue to be an unquestionable support for poverty reduction for millions of households, their ability to produce long-lasting resilience in communities of origin is far from proven.⁶² There are doubts concerning the possibility to spend remittance income for adaptation. Moreover, remittances are not the only way in which migrants, households and communities of origin perceive the effectiveness of their migration project. In fact, the costs in terms of reduced quality of life, sense of belonging, cultural and emotional uprooting may outweigh the benefits deriving from the availability of a higher income.

the effectiveness of climate and environmental change adaptation strategies. The six case study countries were: Dominican Republic, Haiti, Kenya, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam. See Odipo, G. *et al.* Migration as Adaptation to Environmental and Climate Change: The case of Kenya, IOM, 2017.

⁵⁴ ActionAid, Climate change drives migration in conflict-ridden Afghanistan, 2020.

⁵⁵ The term “transformative” in relation to migration as adaptation was first used in the Foresight report, Black, R. *et al.* 2011, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Bettini, G. & Gioli, G. Waltz with development: insights on the developmentalization of climate-induced migration,

⁵⁷ Benveniste, H. *et al.* Effect of border policy on exposure and vulnerability to climate change, PNAS, 2020.

⁵⁸ Horwood, C. Setting The Highest Standards For Global Europe Implementation Policy paper on EU ODA, migration and Global Europe, CONCORD, 2021.

⁵⁹ Baldwin, A. & Bettini, G. Life Adrift: Climate Change, Migration, Critique, 2017.

⁶⁰ Pauw, P. & Bendandi, B. Remittances For Adaptation: An “Alternative Source” Of International Climate Finance? DIE, 2016.

⁶¹ IOM Remittances and potential for adaptation (not dated).

⁶² ECDPM and Action Aid, The nexus between food and nutrition security, and migration; Clarifying the debate and charting a way forward, 2017.

Policy incoherence. As mentioned, the neo-liberal “developmental” view - which represents the cultural humus from which the concept of migration as adaptation has taken shape - has to reckon with the current security migration policies that represent the main obstacle to freedom of movement and to a positive impact of migration on development. If the concept were to be operationalized and incorporated into specific public policies, the profound incoherence between a narrative that encourages people to move as a form of adaptation and policies that prevent effective mobility at both international and regional levels would emerge. The externalisation policies that in recent years have promoted asymmetrical partnerships with the poorest countries are emblematic in this sense. Indeed, with regard to said countries, public development aid has been increasingly used to control migratory flows and has been conditioned by the repressive action against migrants in both countries of origin and transit.⁶³

The effectiveness of funding migration as adaptation. Making migration a legitimate adaptation option requires appropriate regulatory frameworks, governance mechanisms and financial resources. Although migration is increasingly mentioned in climate change policy frameworks and National Adaptation Plans, there is little evidence of projects and/or interventions related to the area of migration as adaptation. Financial support at the international level is therefore crucial, and distribution modalities should take into account differences between contexts and guide more comprehensive interventions, avoiding the fact of using scarce resources in one area to the detriment of the other, where, for example, adaptation strategies through mobility are not effective and social protection interventions are more urgent.⁶⁴ As it has been repeatedly pointed out, one of the critical issues in operationalizing the concept of migration as adaptation lies in the tendency to manage policies in a sectoral and uncoordinated way. The same problem is also reflected in the way adaptation programmes are funded. In fact, although the profound development impact of climate change is evident, many donors tend to promote an artificial distinction between development funding and adaptation funding, limiting the latter - such as the Green Climate Fund or the Global Environment Facility - to projects where the adaptation strategy passes through more general development initiatives.⁶⁵

Underestimating the problem of involuntary immobility. Optimism in the approach to migration as a form of adaptation does not take into account that for the majority of people mobility is not a possibility.⁶⁶ For those affected by climate change, in fact, the spiral of poverty causes the so-called involuntary immobility.⁶⁷ Therefore, any funding of programmes that aim to support migration as adaptation should not be implemented at the expense of *in-situ* adaptation programmes aimed at improving the resilience of communities affected by climate change.

Climate vulnerability of destination areas. Mobility as a form of adaptation risks underestimating the fact that destination areas - which in most cases are located within the same region or country - may often be subject also to strong environmental stresses due to their geographical proximity. Urban centres are the main destinations and the fragile or absent infrastructure that characterises the rapidly expanding areas of these territories makes them even more vulnerable to climate change, increasing the possibility of mal-adaptive outcomes.

⁶³ ActionAid, *Willing to go back home or forced to return? The centrality of repatriation in the migration agenda and the challenges faced by returnees in The Gambia*, 2019. Also, ASGI, *The outsourcing of borders and migrant management: EU migration policies and legal effects*, 2019. Finally, Caritas Europa, *The impact of EU external migration policies on sustainable development: A review of the evidence from West, North and the Horn of Africa*, 2020.

⁶⁴ ActionAid, *Avoiding the Climate Poverty Spiral: Social protection to avoid climate-induced loss & damage*, 2021.

⁶⁵ Singh, H. & Bose, I. *Artificial distinction between climate change adaptation and development restricts access to climate finance for developing countries*, Heinrich Boll Stiftung E-paper, 2021. Details on climate finance architecture in Watson, C. & Schalatek, L. *The Global Climate Finance Architecture*, Climate Funds Update, 2021.

⁶⁶ See Tamer Afifi, T. *et al.* *Human mobility in response to rainfall variability: opportunities for migration as a successful adaptation strategy in eight case studies*, Migration and Development, 2016.

⁶⁷ Bettini, G. & Gioli, G. 2016, op.cit.

The importance of cooperation. Promoting migration as a positive form of adaptation requires an integrated and coordinated policy approach, cooperation between the different responsible Ministries and Departments, and a good deal of cooperation between States, including in terms of financial resources used. This level of coordination, financial commitment and policy coherence is currently lacking, resulting in a total disconnect between the areas of origin and destination of climate migrants.⁶⁸

Underestimating the gendered dimension of environmental impacts. As highlighted by the UNFCCC, women living in poverty are the most exposed to risks and the most affected by the impacts of climate change. The profound gendered inequalities are reflected within society, from the labour market to community and household relations.⁶⁹ In particular, the option of mobility as a form of adaptation is much less feasible for women. The gendered dimension should become structurally embedded in the conceptualisation of migration as adaptation and in the necessary policy responses.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Stojanov, R. *et al.* Climate Mobility and Development Cooperation, Population and Environment, 2021.

⁶⁹ United Nations Climate Change, Gender & Climate Change: an important connection

⁷⁰ Lama, P., Hamza, M. & Wester, M. Gendered dimensions of migration in relation to climate change, Climate and Development, 2021.

7. Existing gaps in promoting adaptation practices through migration

Climate migration involves millions of people, a number destined to increase in the coming years as extreme environmental events intensify. Migration can contribute toward dealing with the consequences of climate change, but its conceptualisation, as well as its definition in policies and programmes, entails risks that need to be addressed in order to prevent an opportunity from becoming a problem for adaptation policies. As already pointed out, in addition to the risks that come along with this concept, another obstacle is the lack of regulatory frameworks and policies that are currently still underdeveloped. The following sections highlight some of the shortcomings that contribute to the political and regulatory weakness of the concept of migration as adaptation.

The lack of policy frameworks. Although there are numerous legal instruments both at national and international levels that address the issues of migration, risk reduction, displacement and climate change, there are no specific ones on migration as adaptation. Moreover, many frameworks refer to international migration although the phenomenon is still predominantly characterised as internal. Migration as adaptation represents a sub-category of climate change adaptation and needs specific guidelines and policy frameworks anchored in the concept of climate justice and human rights.

The importance of preparedness. A certain level of preparedness needs to be ensured in cases where migration represents a possible adaptation and development strategy for communities affected by climate change and extreme environmental events. In particular, in order to ensure a successful adaptation strategy through migration, in cases of intranational mobility, both those who move and destination communities need to be able to plan well in advance.

The importance of timing. Assuming that mobility can indeed be an option for the adaptation of communities affected by climate change, the adaptation “dividend” through migration could be greater if planned at the early stages of environmental degradation, before it becomes more of a necessity than an opportunity. Such planning would make return a viable option after the migration experience. In this sense, migration as adaptation, if planned and timed correctly, could contribute to an effective long-term *in situ* adaptation strategy.

Forced in dangerous contexts. Mobility is not always a viable option as a consequence of the deterioration of environmental conditions. Those who cannot choose to migrate are forced to face increasing environmental risks and subsequent levels of poverty. The focus is on those who move, whereas policies must also adequately take into account involuntary immobility which can lead to very high-risk situations. Forced immobility should be as much a priority as mobility for policy-makers, researchers and social actors who work actively on the idea of migration as a form of adaptation.⁷¹

Communities of destination and origin. Migration as adaptation does not take place in empty spaces. People migrate from communities affected by the negative effects of climate change in order to reach other communities, in most cases within the same country. Interventions designed to assist people moving for climate reasons must therefore take into account not only the communities of origin but also those of destination to prevent negative impacts in both contexts.

⁷¹ Martin, S.F. *et al.* 2020, *op. cit.*

Gendered dimension. Acknowledging that the impacts of climate change are experienced differently between men and women due to historical gender inequalities, COP25 held in Madrid gave a strong spur to the goal of including gender equity in climate policies.⁷² Gender inequalities represent a major challenge also for migration and, specifically, its adaptation potential. Future programmes and action plans will necessarily have to include specific measures aimed at gender interventions and at countering inequalities.

⁷² UNFCCC, Decision 3/CP.25 Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan, 2020.

8. Recommendations

As mentioned, there are numerous *soft* and *hard law* instruments addressing the issue of mobility in the context of climate crisis. The following recommendations are addressed to policy-makers and international organisations on the specific topic of mobility as a form of adaptation.

Taking full responsibility for environmental impacts induced by climate change.

Communities should not consider displacement and mobility associated with climate change only as a viable option in the context of risk diversification strategies. Said mobility, in fact, is the result of the failure of mitigation policies and as such should be recognised by the international community in order to promote effective responses and not a delegation of responsibility to the most affected states and, consequently, to communities and households. As such, states have the responsibility to protect the rights of climate migrants and ensure their access to essential services, contributing to a successful migration outcome. Furthermore, as part of an effective and just response to the impacts of climate change, the most responsible states, as well as international institutions, should ensure adequate investments to better understand the nexus between migration and adaptation. They should also promote the funding of programmes aimed at strengthening adaptive practices and, within them, those related to migration as adaptation.

Lack of an adequate legal and policy framework. Although many documents, including official ones, acknowledge the role of migration in adaptation practices, to date there are no guidelines, policy frameworks or strategies dedicated to this specific aspect. It is therefore important that policy-makers fill this gap, promoting the adoption of coherent tools, funding and policies so that migration can represent an effective contribution to adaptation processes. Furthermore, recognising that environmental factors and their impact differ from context to context, and that mobility takes different forms in relation to climate phenomena, these elements should be better integrated in the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), through evidence gathering and risk assessments in relation to climate mobility and adaptation. NAPs should better integrate mobility within adaptation strategies but, at the same time, recognise the risks highlighted herein. Climate mobility should also be integrated within national strategies, such as development and poverty reduction strategies, in order to ensure a coherent approach capable of minimising risks and exploiting the opportunities that migration can represent in addressing climate change. Strategies aimed at responding to climate-induced migration should also better address internal mobility, taking into account the political and social challenges of such phenomenon and intervening in an appropriate and planned manner with regard both to communities of origin and destination. It is also important for climate migration to be integrated within adaptation and development programmes funded by donor countries. Finally, all programmes, strategies and policies related to climate migration and to the latter as adaptation should be informed by contextual analyses at territorial, national and regional levels capable of providing the necessary elements to promote effective action.

The importance of groundwork, timing and coordination. Funds allocated to adaptation should better integrate an approach to mobility by viewing it as a process that requires adequate timing, groundwork and support for both migrants and communities of origin and destination. At national level, better coordination between actors and policies in relation to migration and climate should be achieved, as cooperation is needed to prevent incoherent approaches between different policies leading to ineffective migration as adaptation strategy. Furthermore, greater cooperation should be promoted at regional level leading to the development of common policies, guidelines, exchange of information, analyses and data collection on the issue of climate migration and its impacts.

Involuntary immobility. An increased focus on migration as adaptation should lead to the recognition of the phenomenon of involuntary immobility of households and entire communities that cannot migrate and thus potentially benefit from mobility as an adaptation option. These “trapped populations” should be adequately supported and mobility programmes should not be at the expense of *in situ* adaptation.

Adaptation and maladaptation. Support interventions by national and international institutions need to identify specific targets. Moreover, the lack of an automatic success of mobility in terms of adaptation requires adequate support and the identification of specific bodies through which to help communities and households involved in migratory experiences in response to climate change. Finally, since the risks of “maladaptation” are high, it is important to profoundly understand the social, economic, environmental, cultural and gender factors that can influence adaptation processes through mobility, in order to understand whether mobility can represent an actual opportunity or a risk.

Supporting migration processes and ensuring policy coherence. Policy-makers should acknowledge that environmental migration does not take place within the framework of free choice, the maximisation of opportunities and the absence of risks. It is a phenomenon that needs to be properly governed in order to reduce the risks of negative impacts through coherent public policies. It is necessary to overcome the contradiction according to which, on the one hand, states show limits in the effective management of internal mobility as they actively work at an international migration governance with a security and containment perspective, while they uninterruptedly discuss in dedicated international *fora* how to promote mobility as a form of adaptation, on the other hand.

Adequately funding migration as a form of adaptation. Migration as adaptation requires the investment of resources in social protection systems for migrants, communities of origin and destination, economic and social support, compensation for damage and loss suffered as a result of environmental disasters, as well as long-term development investments that create the conditions for individual and community success in the migration path, making the latter a choice and not a necessity. It is also important to recognise the risk that adaptation programmes (both through migration and *in-situ*) and development programmes can overlap and prevent the implementation of one at the expense of the other, thus ensuring an organic and non-sectoral approach in funding different programmes. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that, as climate mobility is still predominantly an in-country phenomenon taking place from rural to urban contexts, programmes related to migration as adaptation should be managed in a decentralised manner, creating partnerships between central and local institutions. The former, in turn, should ensure that adequate funding is allocated to internal mobility in the framework of adaptation policies.

Attention not to overestimate the impact of remittances. It is important to recognise that remittances alone are not sufficient to reduce risks and improve the adaptation of communities to extreme environmental phenomena induced by climate crisis. Remittances can contribute to the effort to build resilience, but this needs to be supported through appropriate *in-situ* programmes that aim at livelihood diversification, creation of employment opportunities, skills development, infrastructure, improved water management, awareness raising, micro-credit, improved agricultural practices, expansion of sustainable practices, compensation for loss of livelihoods. Remittances should therefore be supported by reducing their transaction costs. At the same time, it is important that they are not considered as an alternative form of climate finance as it is the duty of institutions, not individuals, to adequately finance responses to the challenges and impacts of climate crisis.

Attention to gender inequalities. Programmes and policies aimed at supporting mobility as a form of adaptation, and more generally related to the issue of climate migration, should adequately take into account gendered aspects. Therefore, they should intervene in the cultural, social, political and economic factors that fuel inequalities and expose, particularly women and girls, to the negative impacts of climate change, making the response through mobility a less viable option.



act:onaid

— REALIZZA IL CAMBIAMENTO —

Via Carlo Tenca, 14
20124 - Milano
Tel. +39 02 742001
Fax +39 02 29537373

Via Ludovico di Savoia, 2B
00185 - Roma
Tel. +39 06 45200510
Fax 06 5780485

Via San Biagio dei Librai, 39
80138 - Napoli
Tel. +39 345 2604842

Codice Fiscale
09686720153



informazioni@actonaid.org

www.actonaid.it