



A Real Mosaic of Solutions to Respond to Loss and Damage from Climate Change

Human Mobility

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Introduction

This publication is part of a [series of briefs](#) unpacking the pieces of a fit for purpose “mosaic of solutions” to respond to loss and damage from climate change. This series expands on our earlier work, which presented a [five-year vision for Loss and Damage under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) to look beyond the international climate regime at catalysing a wider mosaic of solutions.

In the [flagship paper](#) of the series, we unpack the pieces of the mosaic. In these thematic briefs, we dive deeper into existing solutions and how they can be strengthened. We also consider any reforms needed and explore emerging solutions.

This brief unpacks responses to loss and damage associated with human mobility, including migration, displacement and planned relocation. It provides a short introduction to how climate change is leading to human mobility, highlights emerging and existing solutions and related challenges, and how these challenges can be addressed.

What is the problem?

Human mobility results from multiple factors including conflict, economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental, and climate change.¹ Loss and damage from climate change is driving human mobility—including displacement, migration, planned relocation and immobility.² Table 1 unpacks the difference between climate-induced migration, displacement, planned relocation, and immobility.

Table 1: Understanding the difference between climate-induced migration, displacement, planned relocation, and immobility.

Climate-induced displacement	Climate-induced migration	Planned relocation	Immobility
Climate-induced displacement refers to forced, often sudden population movement due to extreme weather events, events such as floods. Displacement is frequently a measure of last resort for people facing intolerable levels of risk, including those who cannot cope with hazards while remaining where they are and/or those whose communities are becoming uninhabitable. ³ These movements are usually within borders and are often short term. However, cross border displacement and protracted displacement are occurring as a result of loss and damage.	Climate-induced migration is broader, encompassing temporary and permanent, seasonal and singular, as well as voluntary, and forced movement. ⁴ For example, an individual may move proactively to escape desertification, while another may move seasonally to work in a different region due to climate-induced changes in local agriculture. Movement can be within or across borders, yet the vast majority of movements take place within borders. ⁵	Planned relocation in the context of climate change is the permanent, coordinated, and community-wide movement of people away from hazardous areas facing, or expected to face, loss and damage to safer locations. Examples might include relocating a community facing unavoidable loss and damage from sea level rise. Planned relocation usually takes place within national borders, but some States, such as small islands at risk of being submerged by sea level rise, are seeking planned relocation solutions for their citizens abroad. ⁶	Climate-induced immobility refers to populations unable or unwilling to leave areas severely affected by environmental stressors, often becoming “trapped” due to poverty, lack of resources, social ties or obligations (e.g. to ancestors). Immobility is a critical, often overlooked, dimension of human mobility in the context of climate change, despite the risk that climate impacts will create massive “trapped populations” in developing countries. ⁷ Trapped populations face increased vulnerability to other forms of loss and damage as a result of, amongst other things, poverty and lack of access to health care, education, and livelihoods. ⁸

Over the past 10 years, weather-related disasters alone have caused approximately 250 million internal displacements —equivalent to around 70,000 displacements per day.⁹ As emissions grow and the limits to adaptation are reached, displacement and other forms of involuntary mobility will become increasingly frequent and consequential to communities affected by climate change.¹⁰

The relationship between loss and damage and human mobility is complex. Climate change acts as a risk multiplier for human mobility, with climate impacts driving displacement and voluntary migration. Yet, in most situations, people choose or are forced to migrate due to a number of factors.¹¹ Loss and damage also affects people who are already on the move, including migrants and refugees who have moved for reasons other than climate change, and those who are in situations of immobility in refugee camps or temporary settlement.^{12 13}

While often viewed as an adaptation failure, for some groups, under certain circumstances, migration can be an effective form of adaptation.¹⁴ Yet for most migration leads to increased vulnerabilities and a poverty spiral, reducing their adaptive capacities.¹⁵ When it comes to displacement, it can result from loss and damage, is a form of loss and damage in itself, and can lead to more loss and damage for those affected, if not addressed.¹⁶

The relationship between planned relocation and loss and damage is also complicated.

This is because planned relocation can be viewed as a form of proactive adaptation while also being a manifestation of unavoidable loss and damage.¹⁷ Planned relocation can also cause loss and damage and human rights violations, if not undertaken effectively.¹⁸

To avoid exposing affected communities to further loss and damage, planned relocation requires careful execution, including sustained investment in livelihoods, social infrastructure, and ensuring the dignity of displaced communities.¹⁹ It must be voluntary and human-rights aligned and also take into consideration the loss of ancestral burial grounds, cultural sites, community bonds, and sense of identity.

What are the existing solutions?

Climate-induced migration and displacement are not governed by a single comprehensive, legally binding international treaty, but rather by a fragmented, complex, and evolving framework of international law, non-binding instruments, and regional and State-to-State agreements.

The UN system, guided by the [International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#), [United Nations High Commission for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), and [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), manages migration via normative frameworks, data collection, and policy dialogue with the aim of promoting safe, orderly, and regular migration. Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), target 10.7 of SDG 10 ([Reduce Inequality](#)) calls for facilitated orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people.

The [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#), adopted in 2018 under the [United Nations \(UN\)](#), was the first intergovernmental agreement to cover all dimensions of international migration. The GCM explicitly recognises climate change as a driver of migration and promotes measures to address it.

Under the UNFCCC, the Task Force on Displacement (TFD) was established under the [Executive Committee \(ExCom\)](#) of the [Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage \(WIM\)](#) in 2021 as part of the [Paris Agreement](#). The purpose of the TFD is to develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimise, and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change. The TFD also works to enhance knowledge and understanding of loss and damage associated with human mobility, —including migration, displacement, and planned relocation— amongst other things.²⁰

Within the scope of the [Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage \(FRLD\)](#), “promoting equitable, safe and dignified human mobility in the form of displacement, relocation and migration in cases of temporary and permanent loss and damage” is recognised as needing support from the Fund.²¹ Finance is also to be provided by the FRLD to address challenges associated with migration, displacement, and relocation.²² While the Santiago Network can catalyse technical assistance from its membership of organisations, bodies, networks and experts (OBNEs) for countries and communities facing human mobility challenges.

Regional mobility frameworks and agreements incorporating climate change are emerging as critical tools to manage, support, and plan for population movement driven by climate impacts. Key examples that include dedicated provision for human mobility associated with climate change include the [Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility](#), the [Intergovernmental Authority on Development’s \(IGAD\) Protocol on Free Movement of Persons](#), the [Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States \(OECS\)’s free movement agreement](#), and the [Kampala Declaration on Climate Mobility](#). While other regional mobility frameworks, such as the [Economic Community of West African States’s \(ECOWAS\) Protocol on Free Movement](#) can enable climate-mobility despite lacking dedicated provisions.

Bilateral agreements on climate-mobility are also emerging as tools to manage movement of people between two countries. The [Australia–Tuvalu Falepili Union Treaty](#) is the world’s first and only bilateral agreement explicitly creating a climate-mobility pathway. However, other existing labour migration arrangements in the Pacific, such as [Australia’s Pacific Australia Labour Mobility \(PALM\) scheme](#) and [New Zealand’s Recognised Seasonal Employer \(RSE\)](#) may also contribute indirectly to resilience through remittances, skills development, and poverty reduction.²³ Efforts to establish regional mobility frameworks and bilateral agreements is supported by Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs), which are often facilitated by the IOM,²⁴ as well as the implementation of IOM’s [Migration Governance Framework \(MiGOF\)](#).

The core legal instruments related to the movement of refugees are the [1951 Refugee Convention](#), which defines refugee status and rights, and the [1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), which updated the 1951 Convention, giving it universal scope and extending protection to new refugee situations worldwide. Despite the frequent use of the term “climate refugees” by the media and cultural practitioners, the term does not exist in international law.²⁵ This is because the 1951 Refugee Convention offers protection only to those fleeing war, violence, conflict or persecution.²⁶ Therefore people crossing borders solely as a result of climate-induced displacement are not offered protection under refugee law.²⁷

However, the 1951 Convention can offer protection when an individual’s risk of facing persecution or violence is increased by climate change, for example, when a climate-intensified drought leads to conflict over water or pasture for grazing animals. Recognising this significant legal gap, the [Nansen Initiative](#) and subsequent [Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change](#) were established with the aim to fill this gap, with the [Platform on Disaster Displacement \(PDD\)](#) working to implement the agenda.²⁸

Planned relocation is governed through a mix of international guidelines, national policies, and local, community-driven action. Key examples include Fiji’s [Planned Relocation Guidelines](#) and subsequent [Standard Operating Procedures](#), the [Solomon Islands Planned Relocation Guidelines](#), and Vanuatu’s [National Durable Solutions Task Force](#).²⁹ In the case of Fiji, planned relocation is supported by Fiji’s [Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund \(CRCT\)](#). The CRCT is primarily financed by 3 percent of the revenue generated by [Fiji’s domestic Environment and Climate Adaptation Levy](#)— a levy applied to luxury goods and services.³⁰

Data plays a critical role in tracking and monitoring climate-induced displacement and migration. It provides real-time information on population movements and the needs of people on the move, informing evidence-based policy and durable solutions.³¹ Countries collect data on migration, displacement, and planned relocation, often through a combination of population censuses, household surveys, border counts, administrative records, and beneficiary registers.³² At the international level, data is collected and/or compiled by various intergovernmental organisations including UNHCR and the IOM, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the [Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#).³³

On the ground, [durable solution](#) approaches play a critical role in comprehensively preventing, reducing, and addressing displacement.³⁴ Conflict and fragility sensitivity is key to ensuring that people on the move in conflict affected situations and fragile States (e.g. refugees) can get the support they need. While, community-led loss and damage responses, [locally led adaptation](#), and [community-based disaster risk management](#) all play crucial roles in preventing displacement, addressing challenges related to immobility, and ensuring rights-based and voluntary planned relocation.

What do we need to see?

Developing countries must receive scaled up finance, technical assistance, and capacity building support to put in place pathways, policies, and plans to ensure equitable, safe, dignified, and human-rights aligned human mobility. This must include sustained support to participate in RCPs and implement the IOM's MiGOF to establish regional and bilateral mobility frameworks. Support is also needed to develop and implement community-driven guidelines and policies for voluntary planned relocation, national strategies and plans for displacement, and to establish related national financial mechanisms.

The TFD must increase understanding of loss and damage associated with climate-induced migration, displacement, and planned relocation, and produce technical expert guidance on the quantification of related costs. Improved data collection and analysis must be enabled through increased finance, capacity building and technical assistance. People on the move, the communities sending and receiving them, and the local organisations supporting them must be able to directly access finance and other forms of support, including from the FRLD. Table 2 highlights the existing solutions for responding to loss and damage associated with human mobility and how they can be strengthened.

Table 2: Strengthening existing solutions for responding to loss and damage associated with human mobility.

CURRENT SOLUTIONS	HOW DOES IT WORK?	WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?
Migration, displacement, and planned relocation data	Data is fundamental for understanding, anticipating, and responding to human mobility driven by climate change. Key data services include IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix and the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre and the Global Internal Displacement Database maintained by the IDMC.	Challenges include limited funding for data collection, inconsistent data quality across regions, limited capacity for analysis in certain countries, and difficulty tracking irregular migration. Isolating environmental factors from economic or political drivers, especially when it comes to slow onset loss and damage events, remains a significant challenge. ³⁵	Developed countries must increase and sustain finance to strengthen data collection and analysis. New technologies, including AI, present opportunities for collection and analysis. ³⁶ Technology transfer, capacity building, and technical assistance must be provided by developed countries to developing countries to ensure data can be collected and analysed.
Regional mobility frameworks and bilateral agreements	Regional and bilateral mobility frameworks and bilateral agreements help to manage, support, and plan for population movement driven by loss and damage within regions and between countries.	Putting in place regional mobility frameworks and bilateral agreements that support safe, orderly, and regular pathways can be challenging due to legal, political, operational, and financial challenges.	Initiatives such as RCPs, that help to facilitate the establishment of regional mobility frameworks and bilateral agreements need to be supported with sustained funding. Developed countries must ensure that developing countries have the finance, technical assistance, and capacity building, they need to establish frameworks and agreements. They must also ensure that the organisations facilitating RCPs, such as IOM, have the finance they need.
Migration Governance Framework (MiGOF)	IOM's MiGOF is a non-binding, comprehensive blueprint adopted to help states foster safe, orderly, and dignified migration. ³⁷	MiGOF is primarily operationalised through Migration Governance Indicators (MGI) to identify policy gaps, strengthen institutional capacity, and align with international standards, including the GCM. While many countries have policies on paper, the MGI reveals that implementing them—particularly in crisis management—is a major hurdle. ³⁸	Developing countries need scaled up technical, financial and capacity building support to implement policies that foster safe, orderly, and dignified migration. Developed countries must provide the support needed to meet these critical needs.

CURRENT SOLUTIONS	HOW DOES IT WORK?	WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?
Taskforce on Displacement (TFD)	The TFD develops recommendations to avert, minimise, and address human mobility caused by climate change. It works under the WIM ExCom to create integrated policy approaches and strategies for populations vulnerable to climate-related disasters.	The TFDs fourth rolling plan of action focuses on integrating climate-induced mobility into loss and damage reporting and strengthening financial support, amongst other things. ³⁹	The TFD must implement its plan of action in a timely manner and ensure uptake of its knowledge products by developing countries. Loss and damage associated with displacement and other human mobility challenges must be integrated into the regular report on the State of Loss and Damage and knowledge products on assessment and response plans mandated by the third review of the WIM at COP 30. ⁴⁰
Nansen Initiative and Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)	The Nansen Initiative and subsequent Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change were established with the aim of filling the legal protection gap for people displaced across borders by disasters. The PDD works to implement the agenda.	The PDD has faced significant funding challenges that risk jeopardising its work to fill the legal protection gap for people displaced across borders.	The PDD should continue its support for collaborative efforts that promote predictable, complementary and integrated approaches to address displacement in the context of disasters and climate change. To do so, it will need sustained financial support from developed countries. ⁴¹
Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund	The Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF) is the only UN financing mechanism fully dedicated to supporting collective action in the national implementation of the GCM. The joint programmes are designed and implemented through collaborative work by members of the United Nations Network on Migration working with national governments, local authorities and relevant stakeholders.	Only 68 million USD has been mobilised toward the MMPTF's target of 100 million USD. ⁴²	To increase national implementation of the GCM in the context of loss and damage, developed countries must ensure that the 100 million USD funding target of the MMPTF is exceeded.

CURRENT SOLUTIONS	HOW DOES IT WORK?	WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?
Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs)	RCPs are State-led dialogues that share information and build consensus on migration challenges in specific regions. They are often facilitated by the IOM. ⁴³	Challenges addressed by RCPs include building trust between states and increasing understanding of migration issues. This serves to break down divides between States and between different government departments within states. Creating networks and facilitating a harmonisation of positions across regions and building capacity and effecting changes in concrete laws, policies or practices governing how migration is managed at the national and regional level.	RCPs are key to advancing bilateral agreements and regional mobility frameworks that support safe, orderly, and regular pathways for people displaced or migrating as a result of loss and damage. Without sufficient funding RCPs can easily fail. ⁴⁴ Support must be scaled up for the international organisations facilitating RCPs and the States participating in them.
Regional and National Policies and Plans on Displacement	Regional and national policies and plans on disaster displacement are increasingly integrating climate-induced displacement. ⁴⁵ Examples include the South Pacific Islands Crisis Response Plan and Vanuatu's National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement .	Developing countries require finance, technical assistance and capacity building to put in place national and regional policies and plans on disaster displacement that can help to avoid, reduce and address loss and damage associated with displacement.	The FRLD's Country Support System, the Santiago Network and the Green Climate Fund's (GCF) Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme (RPSP) require finance at the scale of the needs from developed countries to assist developing countries in developing disaster displacement policies and plans.
Nation Funds for Planned Relocation	National funds for planned relocation are increasingly utilised to enable the orderly movement of communities, with countries like Fiji pioneering Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund , which is funded by innovative sources.	Developing countries require finance, technical assistance and capacity building to set up national financial mechanisms for planned relocation.	The FRLD's Country Support System, Santiago Network and the GCFs RPSP require finance at the scale of the needs from developed countries to assist developing countries in setting up national funds.

CURRENT SOLUTIONS	HOW DOES IT WORK?	WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?	WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?
MDB Coordination Platform on Economic Migration and Forced Displacement	The MDB Coordination Platform on Economic Migration and Forced Displacement is a collaborative initiative launched by leading Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to harmonise their response to global displacement crises. It streamlines financing, policy dialogue and data sharing, ensuring comprehensive support for refugees, migrants, and host communities in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.	Despite all MDB Platform members having stepped up their policy and financing effort, the focus is on concessional loans/ blending instruments, equity, guarantees, and insurance products rather than grants. ⁴⁶	Grants are the only appropriate instrument to avoid debt crises in developing countries. They must be prioritised. MDBs must scale up finance to prevent, reduce, and address climate-induced displacement.

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