

## **THE HAMBURG CONFERENCE DECLARATION**

Hamburg, 18 July 2013

**The Hamburg Conference: Actions for Climate-Induced Migration** saw the congregation of academic experts and development practitioners from across the globe to discuss the issue of climate change and migration. The conference was designed through an action-based framework with the overall goal being to identify key areas of future action and further areas in need of research. Case studies from over 25 countries were presented, which formed the substantive foundations of the need for decisive action. Understanding and being in-tune with the geo-political context was acknowledged to be very important to be able to inform policy-making processes, which remained a constant theme throughout the conference.

This declaration intends to provide a summary of the main outcomes of the conference. The main concerns and issues are categorised into 12 key points, which are followed by a set of clear recommendations. We hope our accumulative efforts will contribute positively to the creation of constructive and bold agreements and frameworks surrounding climate change and migration.

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1) Currently, there is no common agreed definition in place for those migrating under the context of climate change. Several definitions are in use (e.g. environmentally displaced, climate refugee, etc.) though they lack a consensus of their adequacy in providing an appropriate description. Given the diversity of contributing factors and patterns of mobility outcomes, we acknowledge the difficulty in finding a single encompassing definition that is able to capture the complexity of the interaction between climate and migration.

2) There is a gross lack of interaction between different scientific communities, which is severely hindering progress and action. Climate change and migration has been studied independently within different spheres through their own expert disciplinary lens, under the fields of migration, development, environmental science, etc. However, this has resulted in disconnected perspectives and a general lack of shared holistic and consilient ideas surrounding climate change and migration. A common perspective is paramount to gain a clear understanding and for effective policy-making.

3) So far, a predominately *negative* understanding of migration in the context of climate change has prevailed. Migration itself has largely become portrayed as a threat to national and human security. Internationally- from governments, to global and regional networks to the military complex - the issue has been framed within security agendas; with policies focusing on preventing cross-border movement. This attitude has prevailed in different policy fora and instruments (e.g. National Adaptation Programmes of Action - NAPAs, climate change national policies, etc.), as well as in the media.

4) There is a *vast* and *dangerous* gap in protection mechanisms in place for those migrating under the context of climate change. Climate-related relocation is already a reality in some parts of the world, such as on the coast of Alaska, in Papua New Guinea

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and on the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. Detrimental high-impact environmental events are likely to become more prevalent in many regions in the years to come while our current ability to manage displaced populations is often grossly inadequate.

5) It is essential to acknowledge that environmental changes affect migration in complex ways that are very difficult to accurately predict and disentangle. The vast majority of the case studies presented provide evidence that in the face of climatic changes, complex social, economic, political, demographic, cultural and developmental factors also feed into and influence the processes of migration. Climate and environmental change can trigger a wide spectrum of mobility outcomes, ranging from voluntary and autonomous responses to forced migration scenarios. This also means that an accurate prediction of the number of people migrating under the backdrop of environmental change, as often demanded by the media, is presently beyond scientific reach.

6) Migration is still often treated separately or excluded as a viable sustainable development strategy, including those linked to adaptation. While acknowledging the inclusion of migration as a form of climate change adaptation in different agreements, consultative processes and international initiatives, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 2012 Nansen Initiative, many steps have yet to be taken to adequately mainstream migration in climate and development policies, as well as in climate finance programmes.

7) Several case studies evidenced that rural-to-rural, urban-to-urban, and rural-to-urban migration are important strategies for livelihood and income diversification. Especially for communities that are highly dependent on natural resources and live in areas that are particularly vulnerable to climate change. Under specific circumstances, such migration can reduce vulnerability to, and poverty from, environmental and climatic stress.

8) People moving out of areas affected by environmental disruption are at risk of unknowingly migrating into areas also vulnerable to volatile climatic changes. Urbanisation is increasingly becoming the migration trend of the modern day, however, urban destination centres are often prone to high environmental risks, such as low-lying urban areas in mega-deltas or slums in water-insecure expanding cities; exposing the migrant to new vulnerabilities.

9) Entrenched inequalities are crucial in shaping migratory responses. The studies indicated that vulnerability is contingent on social inequalities at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, age and economic means. For example, mobility outcomes are greatly influenced by gender norms and relations and this has major influence on the opportunities available to women. More affluent rural households are also more likely to be able to migrate and find capital to enable adaptation and resilience. However, migration for some is often a coping strategy that might prove detrimental in the medium and longer run. Others might be unable to migrate at all, thus posing the increasingly recognised problem of “trapped populations”.

10) Local perspectives and context specific approaches are essential in understanding the vastly complex dynamics that affect communities, both internally and externally. Context-specific aspects include localised environmental variabilities to local economic, social, political and cultural contexts that feed into specific community dynamics and responses. Without seeking the knowledge and inclusion of those affected, there is the danger of important issues and dynamics being missed.

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11) Although evidence shows that cross-border migration within the context of environmental change is already a reality, migration happens largely within national borders or sub-regions rather than between continents or countries. Moreover, in many cases it was discovered that people are very reluctant to migrate and leave their home behind, even when presented with immediate environmental threats. Instead they would opt to find adaptation opportunities where they are based, or close by. Mobility patterns that span over smaller geographical regions do not indicate the migrants to be less vulnerable, though it may result in them being less visible to policy-makers. This concern was highlighted to be particularly important surrounding urbanisation, as migrants appear to 'disappear' amongst the settled population.

12) Climate and environmental induced migration is not only a problem for the Global South. Also countries in the Global North, such as Australia, Canada, the Russian Federation, USA (e.g. Alaska, New Orleans, New York) and Central European countries are already being affected by climate change related hazards and may well, in the near future, have to consider displacement or resettlement plans in their policy frameworks.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKING AND RESEARCH**

Following the outcomes of the conference, clear points of recommendations and actions emerged. 24 points, clustered into *definitions and perspectives, policy-making, future research* directions and the role of the *media*.

#### **Definition and Perspectives**

1) There is an imminent need for an international agreement on a *distinct* and *appropriate* definition for those migrating under the context of climate change; which must be anchored in the frame of international negotiations. This definition may need to be creative and innovative to exist outwith the established available terminologies (e.g. refugee and migrant). It must capture the complexities that define the subject at hand as well as the *challenges* and the *opportunities* that have the potential to arise from such mobility. To reach an internationally accepted definition- which is essential to move forward with policy-making- focused international dialogue must take place.

2) The development of inter- and transdisciplinary views on environmental and climate-induced migration between different disciplines and influential bodies is essential. This is needed to ensure a common global understanding of the issue, its challenges and opportunities and to allow for effective policy-making and capacity building.

3) To facilitate constructive and cooperative approaches to climate-induced migration it is important to avoid the 'securitisation' of the environmental migrant discourse, which portrays displaced people as a threat that provokes conflicts and countermeasures.

#### **Policies and Decision-making**

##### *Charting a basis for protection*

4) It is paramount that decision-makers work towards new long-term political mechanisms, globally or regionally as is decided, that address and provide protection to the climate-induced migrant. Following efforts such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Nansen Initiative, the development of functioning and coherent legal frameworks must be a priority.

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5) Mono-causal explanations of those migrating under the context of climate change that forge the basis of policy-making (i.e. that single out environmental reasons as the driver of migration) must be avoided. The complexity of factors that also influence mobility patterns: social, economic, political, demographic, cultural and developmental dimensions must be kept at the forefront of policy-making to ensure that frameworks are as appropriately encompassing as possible and prevent people from falling through the net.

6) Human rights should be a fundamental principle of resettlement, relocation and migration policies. This is particularly essential because of the current legal gaps regarding cross-border displacement and the lack of international laws providing protection, as mentioned above.

7) Inequalities and vulnerable groups must be given special consideration within policy-making. The significance of social differences, including gender, ethnicity, age and economic means, must not be undervalued. In-line with this, there is an urgent need to integrate perspectives on gender, ethnicity, age and economic means in all ongoing research and policy discussions.

8) Policy frameworks should focus on vulnerabilities, not on hazards. Different parts of different populations are affected differently by the same environmental or climatic event, which issues of gender, age, economic means and culture also feed into. There is no standard type of climate or environmental migrant around the world. The possibilities and the scope for adaptation vary largely across regions and communities, and recommendations must be context specific.

### *Policy-making*

9) In the case of environmental hazards, support for vulnerable communities should be planned in advance to ensure that basic needs and human rights are met. This should be addressed through adequate resources, infrastructures, institutional frameworks and legal mechanisms. Included within this, the safeguarding of communities' right to participation and self-determination regarding the decision to stay or to migrate is essential.

10) Climate induced migration need to be treated not in isolation but to be integrated across different policy sectors, including the agricultural sector, water sector, urban and rural planning. For example, proactive land use planning and management should be put in place in critical areas, like coastal regions, to assist with increasing mobility and non-mobility options.

11) Migration must be facilitated as a legitimate adaptation option for climate change through adequate financial support, institutional frameworks and governance mechanisms. This must be enhanced through building on opportunities and resources that develop the social capital and livelihood of migrant networks between regions of origin and destination.

12) Attitudes must be developed to understand how migration can be also part of the solution of the climate change challenge; instead of simply viewing it as part of the problem and focusing on how to avoid migration scenarios. Though, policy-makers must equally understand that migration is not the only response, but rather is one out of a

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possible range of adaptive measures and livelihood diversification strategies.

13) Policy frameworks should be in place to buffer the negative effects of migration on communities and to absorb the positive effects. Measures for this include those outlined in point 9, as well as accounting for the needs and dynamics of receiving communities, to avoid burdening host communities and inciting tension or conflict.

14) Incentives are needed for urban-to-rural and urban-to-urban migration to lessen the burden on the most common urban migration destinations and direct migration away from urban *environmentally vulnerable hotspots*.

15) Financial differences between countries need to be taken into account in the international political arena. It is largely countries with lower GDPs that suffer more from the impacts of environmental and climate disruptions and are thus less able to cope with the consequences.

16) Systematic data collection and common databases across regions to facilitate resettlement and relocation processes is strongly encouraged. Data provision is very important for the planning of migration, resettlement and relocation, and streamlining and sharing knowledge and experiences will greatly help such processes and avoid mistakes being repeated.

## **Research**

17) Scholars must work to understand patterns surrounding *thresholds* and critical *tipping points* where migration becomes significantly more likely, to provide more concrete points of action for policy-makers. Defining such thresholds is crucial to encourage policy-makers to make decisions, as well as to enable them to make more appropriately targeted decisions.

18) Linear and non-linear impacts of climate change on migration must be better understood. This is important for disentangling the driving factors and to better understand the dynamics and needs of the migrating groups.

19) More research is needed to better understand under which circumstances migration can be considered to be a positive adaptation strategy. As migration is likely to become an increasingly common pattern, a deeper understanding of the context specific positive and negative dimensions is essential to enhance understanding and policies surrounding mobility.

20) It is important to assess the problems and challenges that will arise with increasing populations in small and medium sized cities, as well as megacities. Research must also be carried out to understand the needs of the migrants following urbanisation or internal migration to ensure they do not become invisible to policy-makers.

21) There is a need for a better understanding of the role of remittances. The potential opportunities derived from the use of 'migration for adaptation' are still largely untapped. While migrants cannot be made to bear the brunt of long-term adaptation alone, and remittances shall by no means be a substitute for state intervention; the role of remittances in the context of climate adaptation, development and migration is still inadequately understood.

22) There is a need to boost research capacities in the Global South. As mentioned

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above, environmental hazards will increase more in the Global South, however, the majority of research takes place either via external actors or from afar through institutions from the Global North. This presents a real risk of misrepresenting or misunderstanding the context-specific situations and needs on the ground and missing local perspectives.

23) There is a need to develop common principles; to guide and compare research methods, to pull together our understanding of the complexity of the human, environment and climate nexus and further help build capacities.

**Media**

24) The media plays a key role in raising the attention of environmental and climate-induced migration. It is the responsibility of the media, and those that work with the media, to ensure that these contents are both scientifically-based and accurate. It is also crucial to portray the views of the local populations affected, not just understandings gained from external perspectives.

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The accumulative voice from the conference raised the urgency of the need for bold and solid actions to be taken in order to adequately address the impending reality of increased climate-induced migration. The collective discussion produced well-informed and targeted recommendations for policy-makers and for future research areas. We hope that these pinpointed concerns and recommendations will be positively used to direct and inform policy-making decisions surrounding climate change and migration in the coming years.