



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

IOM Programmatic Activities on Migration, Climate Change and the Environment

A Few Facts and Figures on IOM's Programmatic Activities

- Migration, climate change and the environment present a complex set of cross-cutting issues that are very likely to be of growing importance for all of IOM's activities. As climate change and environmental factors will become more dominant in shaping migration trends and patterns, considerations of these issues will have to enter all of IOM's areas of work, for example migration and development, labour migration, migration health, emergency response and post-crisis recovery.
- In line with IOM's comprehensive approach to human mobility, a broad spectrum of activities has been developed over the years, ranging from humanitarian response to displacement caused by natural disasters to the promotion of adaptation to gradual environmental degradation through migration and development activities. In general terms, IOM's response aims to increase communities' resilience to underlying risk factors and expected changes in their natural environment.
- Since 2000, more than 500 projects have been funded in the context of IOM's response to environmental migration, demonstrating that creative solutions exist for communities affected by environmental degradation and climate change. In 2009 alone, activities related to migration, climate change and the environment have been implemented in more than 20 countries across four continents.
- In particular, IOM provides humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters, as mandated by the IOM Constitution and the 2007 IOM Strategy (point 9).
- IOM also supports vulnerable and mobile communities affected by environmental factors through Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) activities, two essential and complementary pillars of IOM's strategic migration management framework. Finding durable solutions to displacement creating an environment conducive to sustainable development feature as overall objectives of such activities.
- IOM's role in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) is reinforced by the Organization's participation in the international community's system for humanitarian response and its commitment as global cluster lead for Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCCM) in natural disasters. IOM also contributes actively to the Logistics, Emergency Shelter, Protection, Health and Early Recovery Clusters.
- From 2005 to 2008 funding received for responding to displacement induced by natural disasters reached almost USD 300 million.
 - Of IOM projects related to natural disasters in 2007 and 2008, emergency and immediate assistance responses represented 54 per cent of the total number of projects endorsed. 46 per cent of projects were addressing longer-term recovery

needs, strengthening disaster risk reduction to lower the vulnerability of populations to future disasters.

Selected IOM Activities related to Migration, Climate Change and the Environment

1. Emergency, recovery and disaster risk reduction

Philippines: Implementing durable solutions for the displaced in Bicol

Typhoon Durian (Reming) hit Catanduanes, an island-province in the Bicol Region, on 30 November 2006, forcing some 20,788 families (101,000 people) to seek refuge in 338 evacuation centres. IOM supported the Government of the Philippines in its emergency response, providing immediate assistance including transport and logistic support and distribution of emergency shelters and non-food items. IOM also assisted in early recovery and community development through the construction of community centres and health facilities. Furthermore, legal clinics were set up to help safeguard the beneficiaries' rights and provide general legal assistance to strengthen property rights and address land tenure issues. Other proactive IOM services accompanying the reconstruction process included food security and livelihood enhancement exercises, such as vegetable-seed distribution and organic farming seminars.

Cambodia: Investing in disaster risk reduction for vulnerable communities

Cambodia is one of the most hazard-prone countries in South East Asia. Today, climate change, deforestation, logging, and environmental degradation are converging to contribute to a higher occurrence of unexpected and extreme floods and droughts. Over 85 per cent of the population in the Northern provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri belongs to indigenous and ethnic minority groups who lead a traditional way of life and strongly rely on the forest for their subsistence. The mapping exercise conducted by IOM identified community-level vulnerabilities to natural hazards and assessed the linkage between environmental degradation and increased vulnerability. It further examined existing indigenous coping mechanisms for natural disasters and proposed strategies for further building community resilience that are now being put into practice.

2. Climate change adaptation through migration and development

Egypt: Supporting adaptation efforts to sea level rise in the Nile Delta

Sea-level rise will have a potentially severe impact on Egypt's most densely populated areas. It has been estimated that a sea-level rise of 50 centimetres by 2025 in the Delta could displace over 2 million people. IOM aims to increase awareness of the actual and potential impacts of sea-level rise on migration, and identify and implement strategies to best respond to and utilize environmental migration. Migration strategies, such as temporary and seasonal migration schemes, may be channelled towards development projects and risk reduction efforts to increase the resilience of vulnerable populations living in low-lying parts of the Delta.

Colombia: Promoting migration as an adaptation strategy for vulnerable populations (read more on IOM's [Temporary and Circular Labour Migration](#) programme)

In addressing environmentally induced vulnerabilities, one strategy is to adapt existing migration programmes for the benefit of communities affected by environmental risks. One of the target groups of IOM's Temporary and Circular Labour Migration programme between Colombia and Spain are people from high-risk zones of natural disasters. The scheme offers a livelihood alternative through temporary work abroad to families confronted with natural disasters, principally communities affected by the eruptions of the Galeras Volcano in Nariño, Colombia.

The circular migration model supports migrants and their families in maximizing the impact of remittances and knowledge transfer to promote the area's recovery and enhance the community's resilience to environmental factors. To make these investments sustainable, monitoring and technical assistance is being provided.

Azerbaijan: Providing community stabilization programmes to reduce migration pressure in Nakhchivan (see feature in [IOM Magazine Migration Autumn 2009](#))

The lack of access to potable water, along with a number of other intervening factors, has spurred migration from the rural regions of Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan. At the end of the 1990s, local communities requested IOM to intervene to help reduce migration pressures which were further impeding long-term development prospects of the region. The reintroduction of the traditional Kahriz system quickly appeared as the most efficient way to address the issue in a sustainable manner. First developed in ancient Iran 3,000 years ago, the Kahriz is a system that takes underground water to the surface through gravity flow. Kahrizes are environmentally friendly as they require no external energy for functioning. Ten years later, 77 renovated Kahriz systems were handed over to the communities, sufficient to irrigate over 1,500 hectares of land.

Mauritius and Rodrigues: Reducing migration pressure from gradual environmental change (see [The Other Migrants – Preparing for Change Assessment Report](#) 2010)

On islands such as Mauritius and Rodrigues the meteorological impact of climate change could be disastrous, as a result of rising sea levels, altered precipitation patterns and fiercer hurricanes. IOM implemented a pilot project to help mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on the population and minimize the risk of forced migration. The project included a national assessment and an exploration of new employment opportunities and job creation in the ecological sector (recycling, ecotourism, renewable energy, ecotourism, etc.) for vulnerable communities. It also aimed to raise awareness of the consequences of climate change, including for migration, as well as of the employment opportunities in the environmental sector. Through training and information-sharing activities, the project built capacities of national institutions to assist those who may wish to start an income-generating activity in one of these sectors. A combination of these measures was intended to contribute to both mitigating the impact of climate change and developing alternative sustainable livelihood options to reduce migration pressures in vulnerable areas. This is a pilot initiative with potential for replication at the regional level.

Bangladesh: Building knowledge and policy coherence on environmental migration (see [Assessing the Evidence: Environment, Climate Change and Migration in Bangladesh](#) 2010)

Due to a combination of geographic, climatic and socio-economic characteristics, Bangladesh experiences extreme vulnerability to the effects of climate change. The impact and aftermath of Cyclone Aila which struck in May 2009 and affected 3.9 million people, with many continuing to be displaced long after the event, gave rise to IOM's initiative to develop an in-depth study of the nexus between climate change, the environment and migration in Bangladesh. A complementary policy dialogue in May 2010 contributed to exchange and cooperation among different government agencies, civil society and international experts. The study and the dialogue also identified a series of policy tools to minimize displacement and provide protection for those displaced, while also supporting migration as a positive livelihood and adaptation strategy.

3. Comprehensive strategies to address migration in situations of complex emergencies combining political and environmental crises

Eastern Africa: Supporting peaceful cohabitation with pastoralist communities affected by drought (read more about the [Security in Mobility](#) initiative)

The human security of pastoralist communities living along the borders of Sudan, Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda is under threat due to increased cross-border armed conflicts over resources. While drought is not uncommon to this region, a steady decline in rainfall has become the norm over the past two decades, a phenomenon likely related to the effects of climate change. Food insecurity is a real threat, a result of poor harvests due to lack of rain and ongoing small-intensity inter-communal conflict. Along with its project partners, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Environmental Programme and the Institute for Security Studies, IOM contributed to a regional preparedness strategy to reduce drought-induced cross-border conflict among pastoralists in East Africa. Working in consultation with pastoralist communities across the Horn and East Africa, the Security in Mobility initiative advocates for appropriate and comprehensive responses to reduce the risks - conflict and displacement - associated with pastoralist livelihood activities. The initiative sought to promote climate change adaptation strategies for highly mobile and vulnerable populations in the Horn and East Africa, including by facilitating safe movements of pastoralists in border regions as a coping strategy in the face of climate change.

Sudan: Ensuring sustainable return to South Sudan by considering environmental factors

The monitoring of 4,905 villages shows that an overwhelming majority of the 1.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees who have returned to Southern Kordofan and Southern Sudan since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in January 2005 continue to face insurmountable challenges accessing basic services and facilities. In Unity State, for instance, 77 per cent of the villages do not have access to safe drinking water because of broken hand pumps. In-depth analysis of village needs, environmental vulnerability mapping and land use mapping is helping IOM to assess the resources available locally for reconstruction and rehabilitation, to advise on crop seeds and tree varieties most suited to this ecological zone, and to identify areas in which water points and other structures can be built to avoid the risk of local inter-group conflict. The Organization has also advised on potential flashpoints over natural resource use between returnees, IDPs, resident sedentary farmers and nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralist groups.

For more information, please visit www.iom.int/envmig

For more on IOM's programmatic activities, please see:

[Compendium of IOM Activities on Migration, Climate Change and the Environment \(2009\)](#)
[IOM \(2010\) Disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and environmental degradation](#)
[IOM \(2011\) Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in IOM's response to environmental migration](#)