

# Climate Change and Migration

Findings of the GMF Transatlantic Study Team  
UNFCCC Tianjin Climate Talks 2010  
presented by Dr. Koko Warner





United Nations

FCCC/AWGLCA/2010/14



## Framework Convention on Climate Change

Distr.: General  
13 August 2010

Original: English

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### Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention

Twelfth session

Tianjin, 4–9 October 2010

Item X of the provisional agenda

#### Negotiating text

### Chapter II

#### Enhanced action on adaptation

4. *Invites* all Parties to enhance adaptation action under the Copenhagen Adaptation Framework [for Implementation] taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances, [and whereby developing country Parties shall be supported by developed country Parties and in accordance with paragraph 6 below], to undertake, inter alia:

- (f) Measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation related to national, regional and international climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate;

# GMF Transatlantic Study Team

- Established in June 2010 through generous support from the German Marshall Fund of the United States
- Composed of academic experts, policymakers and practitioners from the
  - Migration field
  - Environmental field
  - Humanitarian field

# Activities of the Study Team

- Background papers on the following topics
  - Climate change **adaptation strategies** and migration
  - Interconnections between **climate change, conflict and migration**
  - Climate change, migration and **rural development**
  - **Humanitarian consequences** of climate change and forced displacement
  - International **legal frameworks** for addressing climate change-induced migration
  - **Governance structures** within which climate change and migration policies are formulated
  - Migration policies in potential **destination countries** regarding environmental migrants

# Activities of the Study Team

- Site visits to
  - Senegal
  - Mexico
  - Bangladesh
- Exchange of perspectives at three team meetings
- Preparation of final report with policy recommendations

# Findings

- Focused on four principal issues:
  - The impact of climate change on migration trends and patterns
  - Adaptation strategies
  - Emergency displacement
  - Migration policies and frameworks

## Impacts of Climate Change on Internal and International Migration Patterns

- Direct and determinative causal linkages between climate change and migration are difficult to identify
  - Migration results from combination of drivers in source and destination countries
  - Climate change and other environmental factors may exacerbate migration pressures....

# Climate Change Scenarios

- Four climate change scenarios may affect migration:
  - intensified **drought and desertification** that adversely affect livelihoods,
  - **rising sea levels** that inundate coastal areas and may prove particularly harmful to low lying deltas and island countries;
  - intensified **acute natural disasters** that lead to temporary and permanent displacement; and
  - **competition for natural resources** that results in intensified conflict, which in turn causes mass displacement.
- Migration patterns will differ, depending on scenario
  - Drought and rising sea levels ➡ gradual migration
  - Acute natural disasters and conflict ➡ emergency displacement
- Internal migration (e.g., rural to urban) more prevalent than long-distance international migration



# Factors Affecting Migration

- Combination of factors affects people's ability to cope with the impact of climate change:
  - availability of **sustainable livelihood options**
  - **household vulnerability**
  - **rates of population growth**
  - extent of **cultivable and habitable land**;
  - availability of **assets** (including education, money and skills) and **social networks** to support out-migration to cities or to other countries where they might find employment; and
  - **admission policies and opportunities** in destination countries.

# Adaptation Strategies

- Foster adaptation alternatives
  - Where possible, help people remain in place via sustainable rural and urban development:
    - Modifying agricultural and fishing practices
    - Management of pastoral lands
    - Infrastructure such as dykes and coastal barriers
    - New livelihood alternatives
    - Other strategies to reduce pressures on fragile ecosystems

## Adaptation Strategies (cont)

- Where necessary, help people to move (in safety and dignity):
  - Migration as a risk management strategy
  - Resettlement of at-risk populations
  - Migrants and diaspora as resource to support mitigation and adaptation strategies

# Emergency Displacement

- Support disaster risk reduction, conflict mediation strategies, and improvements in humanitarian response. If governments do not take action to reduce the risks people face from acute crises arising from natural disasters and competition over resources leading to conflict, they may be faced with uncontrolled crisis situations.

# Migration Policy Challenges

- Lack of clear standards and accountability mechanisms to address complex forms of migration
  - Internal migration, some progress in Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (AU Convention)
  - International migration, absent with limited exception of temporary protection mechanisms
- Identify guiding principles and effective practices to help governments in developing appropriate legal and policy frameworks to address internal and international migration related to environmental drivers.

# What policy makers can do now

- **Science.** Support more in-depth qualitative and quantitative research, collection of necessary demographic, socioeconomic, and environmental data on different patterns and scenarios of climate change, migration & displacement in specific areas.
- **Dialogue.** Foster solutions-oriented policy dialogues that review existing experience and identify emerging good practices.
- **Participatory policy planning.** Involve & provide information to affected communities in planning and implementation of human mobility solutions. Recognize that migrants & diasporas can be effective partners in addressing climate change and involve them in planning processes.
- **Proactive approaches.** Get ahead of the curve. Create alternative livelihoods in situ and opportunities when in situ adaptation may not be possible. Implement effective disaster risk reduction and conflict mediation policies to reduce the likelihood of emergency movements with accompanying humanitarian consequences.

For empirical evidence, background papers and further information:

[www.ehs.unu.edu/article/read/gmf](http://www.ehs.unu.edu/article/read/gmf)

**Dr. Koko Warner**

warner@ehs.unu.edu

United Nations University Institute of Environment & Human Security

UN Campus, Hermann-Ehlerstr. 10

53113 Bonn, Germany

warner@ehs.unu.edu