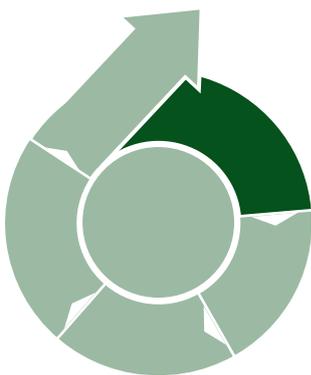




Thematic Brief 3: Promoting migration as a livelihood strategy

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Under certain conditions and circumstances, migration can be used as a livelihood or coping strategy that has the potential to greatly reduce the exposure and vulnerability of families and communities. Making mobility an option for these vulnerable households gives them an opportunity to multiply and diversify their incomes, secure resources in the face of hazards and generally enhance their resilience. Effectively managing migration can therefore prevent subsequent, larger and more permanent movements.

Actions

- ▶ Protect traditional, mobility-based strategies by ensuring the safety and freedom of circulation of mobile communities and freeing their migration routes from material and political obstacles. *Example: Kenya.*
- ▶ Promote labour migration schemes to prevent the loss of livelihood associated with environmental degradation and natural hazards by facilitating institutional arrangements, transportation and access to labour markets. *Example: Colombia.*
- ▶ Enhance and protect the livelihoods of migrants in their community of destination (e.g. through the provision of technical assistance, financing, tools and other assets, and insurance schemes). (See thematic brief 16.)
- ▶ Maximize the impact of diasporas on the well-being of migrant-sending societies, by mobilizing remittances to improve living conditions in the source community, for example, by enhancing health care, education and income opportunities. (See thematic brief 19.)
- ▶ Implement, whenever possible, policies for the return of qualified nationals and facilitate the dissemination of know-how acquired by mobile individuals, in order to enhance human capital in the community of origin. *Example: Colombia.*
- ▶ Facilitate leveraging diaspora resources during and in the aftermath of crises, to allow for better relief and recovery.
- ▶ Promote research on migration patterns, in order to better understand the complexity of its implications on the levels of disaster risk in the community of origin. *Example: Tajikistan.*

CASE STUDY 4: Labour migration in Tajikistan (IOM, 2012c)

In recent years, the population of Tajikistan has been experiencing some negative consequences of environmental degradation: droughts and floods, salinization, erosion and depletion of local water resources. In addition, warm winters have led to the spread of agricultural pests and inadequate irrigation, and the lack of new resources for land cultivation is threatening agricultural productivity. Rapid demographic growth and the unsustainable exploitation of ecosystems are adding further pressure on rural populations.

The IOM experience shows a higher-than-average rate of migration in districts affected by natural hazards and environmental degradation. The mobility observed also takes different forms, from short-term, cyclical labour migration, to permanent resettlement, which often coexist at the household level and even during the lifetime of a single individual. Labour migration is a very well-established phenomenon in Tajikistan, which, during the last decades has created an immense social network for migrant families, and in areas affected by natural hazards over 80 per cent of families participate in this kind of movement.

Distinguishing the drivers of mobility in Tajikistan is almost impossible, but environmental factors definitely play a role in a household's decision to move. Most families send out young men for periods of 3 to 10 months before returning home for the winter. Those who can raise enough money send family members to Russia; otherwise, migration is directed to cities in the region. In both cases, migrants mostly engage in low-skilled manual labour – for example, in construction, mining, industry and agriculture. Unmarried migrants tend to stay in the host community for longer periods.

There also exist examples of livelihood and coping strategies based on rural-to-rural mobility. Some migrants from areas exposed to environmental hazards and degradation move to nearby regions to engage in primary sector activities (e.g. apricot-drying and livestock pasture). Others lease productive land in other regions, thereby diversifying risk to agricultural production. Risk considerations often lead more affluent households to settle in urban areas.

Secondary migration is experienced by some households who have previously resettled due to environmental factors. Economic factors and the lack of participation in decision-making processes often cause the spontaneous return of resettled households to their communities of origin.

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ISSUE I: Small island developing States

“Small island developing States” (SIDS) were first identified during the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 as a distinct group of countries that share unique development challenges. Today, these countries host a total estimated population of 50 million people, disproportionately concentrated in coastal areas, and are facing rapid population growth, which increases pressure on an already-overexploited and narrow resource base. Small island States tend to have small economies that are highly dependent on foreign resources, with limited prospects for economic growth due to the high costs of infrastructure, communication and transportation associated with their isolation.

Around 90 per cent of SIDS lie in tropical areas, exposed to seasonal weather extremes and susceptible to the variability of atmospheric and oceanic circulation. Over the last decades, climate change has been driving the increase in the frequency and intensity of natural hazards and eroding the natural resource base, upon which local agriculture, fisheries and tourism rely. Along with recent global economic crises, this has greatly increased the vulnerability of SIDS.

Island people have a long tradition of migration. Polynesian culture is common to islands throughout the Southern Pacific and extensive familial networks link islanders in the Caribbean and the Pacific with North America, Australasia and Europe. This has allowed for the diversification of exposure and income opportunities at the household level and the enhancement of community development and recovery through remittances and foreign assistance. Nonetheless, the utilization of coping strategies based on mobility in the face of natural hazards can be problematic, due to the small size of affected populations and the remoteness of their communities or origin, which increase the risk of these populations of becoming trapped in unsafe areas. Small island nations have relatively small populations which tend to concentrate in few settlements. Disasters, therefore, have the potential to affect disproportionate shares of the national community. This poses specific challenges when managing emergencies, especially because the capacity of local civil defence institutions is usually limited.

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Environmental change impacts are particularly acute in SIDS: sea-level rise results in the loss of land, erosion, salinization and increased coastal hazard risks; and the acidification and warming of oceans are degrading coral reefs, leading to a loss of biodiversity and the depletion of hazard buffers. All small island States will suffer losses from damages to assets and activities located in coastal areas, and the most vulnerable are those whose territories are entirely low-lying, such as Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Maldives.

As local resources are scarce and rarely protected from the main risk factors, relocation (both internal and across national borders) is often considered a risk reduction option for many SIDS (see Thematic brief #2) despite posing serious challenges to the livelihoods, land tenure, legal statuses and rights of the affected populations. In future sea-level rise scenarios, though, it is possible that low-lying island States could completely disappear, making

international migration inevitable. Identifying responsibilities for such movements and providing settlement and assistance to stateless migrants would pose unprecedented legal, ethical and political issues.

Successful risk reduction and adaptation practices are growing increasingly essential for small island States. International collaborations have been promoted through the Barbados Programme of Action and, more recently, through the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation, which identifies 19 priority areas of development interventions (e.g. waste management, water and energy, tourism and institutional capacity-building). In order to overcome financial constraints, SIDS are calling for the pooling of resources and capacities and are looking to obtain privileged access to GEF resources (which has been proposed in the Rio Summit outcome document).

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