

Implementing the Cancun Adaptation Framework: Vulnerability, changing populations and human mobility

**COP17 Side Event, Durban, South Africa
6 December, 13:15-14:45
Blyde River Room, Durban Exhibition Centre**

Background:

Many countries, especially Least Developed Countries, are experiencing rapidly changing populations, including population growth, urbanization rates that will mean a doubling of the urban population in as few as 20 years, significant migration and displacement, and large and growing numbers of children and young people. Many of these same countries are also projected to experience the most severe human impacts of climate change, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, including those linked to conflict. It is now widely accepted that migration policies and measures to address displacement need to be part of adaptation strategies, as stated in paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Adaptation Framework. However, implementation remains a work in progress, as does the inclusion of other key issues, such as population change, settlement issues and conflict sensitivities, which are essential to protect and empower vulnerable people in a changing climate and to ensure people's human rights, health and well-being.

I. Keynote Address

Mr. Michael Herrmann, Senior Adviser on Population and Sustainable Development, UNFPA, began the side event with a keynote on the vulnerability, population change and human mobility on behalf of the 12 international organizations that supported this event. Mr. Herrmann discussed the importance of considering the size, location, mobility and composition of current and future populations, and how population change and human mobility will have major implications for climate vulnerability and adaptation, including where vulnerabilities are multiplied, such as in conflict settings. He presented a set of pathways for implementing paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, including recommendations for how to do so by influencing and accounting for population change through access to education and health services, youth empowerment and inclusion, and the use of data and projections to incorporate future changes to the population.



II. Panel: Bringing population change and human mobility to climate adaptation

The panel began with opening statements from the assembled speakers, representing countries, international organizations and the UN system.

Ms Winnie Ndebele, Secretary General of the South Africa Red Cross Society discussed activities linked to vulnerability reduction and resilience building in both communities of origin and destination, as well as disaster risk reduction and awareness raising on positive aspects of migration in bringing greater community cohesion. She also discussed the UBUNTU initiative, which focuses on social inclusion of migrants and on the collection and analysis of data on population movements in Southern Africa with a view to inform future policy developments.

Ms. Axumite Gebre-Egziabher, Director of the Shelter and Sustainable Human Settlements Development Division of UN-HABITAT, discussed how to support adaptation planning in the context of rapid urbanization. The challenges of rapid urbanization, especially in Africa and Asia, are now exacerbated by a changing climate, and climate impacts often most severely affect newly arrived urban migrants, slum dwellers and other vulnerable urban populations. Ms. Gebre-Egziabher demonstrated that capacity development for effective urban planning to prepare for rapid urban expansion is one of the most effective ways of reducing long term vulnerability. She said that people need to be able to help themselves. If this city is not planned, people cannot help themselves, and that is when disasters have the worst impact.

Mr. David Mwenda Karuti, Senior Environment Associate at the Kakuma Refugee Camp, UNHCR Kenya, discussed the humanitarian impacts of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, in particular on refugee and operations for Internally Displaced Persons. He discussed building resilience measures and adaptive infrastructure within the context of sector wide approaches. UNHCR takes a participatory approach to services for refugees, and also integrates both weather forecasting and hazard mapping within camps, particularly for better planning when there are sudden increases in refugees.



Mr. Mzolisi Toni, Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Women, Children and Persons with Disabilities, South Africa, described the many costs to climate change, with particular focus on vulnerability among children. Mr. Toni argued for the importance of capacitating children to address climate change, and making sure that they take a keen interest in it through education and participation.

He described children as the future generation, the people global warming will effect, the future doctors and scientists who will address climate change, but also the people who are going to suffer from it. The key is to make sure that there is awareness and discussion of climate change among children at an early age, and the possibility for children to persuade their leaders and help new ideas emerge.

Dr. Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, World Health Organization team leader on Climate Change and Health and a co-author of IPCC Special Report on Extreme Events, discussed the importance of thinking about health and climate change linkages not just through changes in disease burdens but also through changes in population size, distribution and composition. Population change affects demand for public health systems, both introducing new challenges and creating new solutions, as when urbanization creates higher concentrations of people who are easier to serve. Ageing can create new vulnerabilities, as the case of heat waves in Europe in 2003 showed. With regard to population size, Dr. Campbell-Lendrum argued that while the issue often brings political challenges, rights-based access reproductive health services is the way to address it programmatically.

Ms. Dina Ionesco, Policy Officer working on migration, climate change, environment and development with the International Organization for Migration presented a series of key messages focused on implementing paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, stressing that migration can be planned, prepared for and supported, including with regard to planned relocation, and that human mobility is a critical part of adaptation solutions, with the right supports. Ms. Ionesco argued that policy can do a lot to enable migration to be part of migration strategy through collaboration and exchange of planning. In Bangladesh, IOM is supporting a national conversation, bringing together ministries of migration and climate change. In Egypt and Mauritius, work is being done on migration data and a migration climate vulnerability index, on the basis of the fact that if we do not have knowledge, we cannot respond.

III. Question and Answer session

Audience members drove a very dynamic question and answer session. Several questions revolved around the importance of both health and employment for migrants and in general for climate resilience, and how tools and programmes could support them, including with the participation of the diaspora. The IFRC representative argued for providing community-based services without distinguishing between residents' tenure in the community. IOM suggested that making it easier for members of the diaspora to support their home countries would be beneficial, particularly through easing the flow of resources to impacted areas. UN-Habitat introduced the importance of community participation in disaster recovery through pooling of resources, as a means of accessing remittances, which are private funding. IDMC pointed to its Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (<http://www.internal-displacement.org/guidingprinciples>) as an effective tool.

Another set of questions addressed how to distinguish between forced and voluntary migration, and whether an international migration framework was a prerequisite for further action. In the climate and environment context, there are cases that are clear cut instances of forced migration, and cases that are

clearly voluntary, but most cases are a gray area between the two. Once mobility happens, services in receiving communities are essential, and shifting people along the continuum from forced to voluntary is critical as well. On the issue of a broad international agreement, there was consensus that while it is important, we should not wait to act, and that implementation on the ground now will make lives better, and perhaps create more favorable conditions for that agreement.

IV. Closing statement

Mr. Herrmann of UNFPA closed the session by framing the issue of human mobility within a broader context of a people-centred approach that considers other types of population change as well, including population growth and rapid urbanization. Mr. Herrmann said that comprehensively addressing and accounting for population change is essential for effective climate change responses, and that if we listen closely, we will hear a call for action. He encouraged audience members and organizations alike to answer this call.

Supporting Organizations:

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations University (UNU)
World Health Organization (WHO)
International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
International Organization for Migration (IOM)

A concept note for this side event, outlining detailed recommendations put forward by the supporting organizations, can be accessed on the UNFCCC website, on the COP17 Side Events page.

Contact point at lead agency: Daniel Schensul, UNFPA, schensul@unfpa.org, +1.212.297.5236