

Sea-level rise is the biggest threat to Bangladesh and movements to escape rising sea waters in Bangladesh's coastal regions are set to accelerate in the coming years. Climate change is creating new patterns of human mobility, and fuelling rapid, chaotic urbanization in Bangladesh. People are increasingly moving to cities due to climate-related challenges and destination areas are often ill-prepared to receive additional climate migrants. It is important to note that migration can often not be prevented and, if well-managed, it can become part of an effective adaptation strategy, allowing people to rise out of poverty and build resilient livelihoods.

Under its national 8th Five Year Plan (8FYP), the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) remains committed to ensuring that all who seek to migrate from regions vulnerable to the impacts of climate change can do so. Bangladesh has demonstrated strong leadership in proactively responding to the risks posed by climate change by making adaptation and disaster response central pillars of its national development framework. However, the regulatory frameworks have to date fell short to combine climate change, internal displacement, and their impact on labour migration.

Human mobility in the context of climate change can be broadly categorised into the following three main areas:

- **Migration**, or movements that are predominantly voluntary, for example, movement in search of employment or better access to services, internally or across borders;
- **Displacement**, or forced movement, where people are compelled to move, either within a country or across borders; and
- **Planned relocation** of communities or individuals, through the transplanting of communities and their assets to another location.

The exact nature of the movement depends on numerous factors, including the type of hazard and existing vulnerabilities. All types of human mobility take place on a spectrum between forced and voluntary and different types of human mobility are often linked to each other. Some people proactively move to adapt to climate change, especially when slow-onset hazards such as sea-level rise, desertification and drought gradually erode their livelihoods. The decision to move may appear as a voluntary choice, yet it is difficult to establish the exact thresholds when human mobility decisions become 'forced'.

¹ Md. Arif Chowdhury, Md. Khalid Hasan, Md. Robiul Hasan, Tahmina Bintay Younos, Climate change impacts and adaptations on health of Internally Displaced People (IDP): An exploratory study on coastal areas of Bangladesh, Heliyon, Volume 6, Issue 9, 2020

The links between slow-onset events and human mobility are difficult to establish because climate variables interact with other key drivers, including lack of decent work and employment opportunities, weak governance, population growth, individual aspirations, and lack of access to information on job opportunities.

Labour migration, like other types of human mobility, is caused by a variety of complex and partially interlinked factors or 'drivers' of which the effects of climate change have become increasingly important. ILO's experience has shown that labour migration when adhering to international labour standards, can support countries impacted by extreme weather events and play an important role in future development.

Migrants who are able to migrate in safe and orderly ways may find job opportunities which enhance their skills and upward mobility. This allows them to return to their home communities with acquired learning that can help to support improved economic development and resilience. However, if those displaced by climate events are forced into irregular channels of migration or become undocumented or irregular in a host country, they are more likely to suffer increased risk of trafficking and forced labour, poor wages and working conditions, and be forced to take jobs below their skills level.

To date, climate mobility has been a mostly internal and increasingly urban phenomenon, with many displaced persons and labour migrants moving to urban areas. Although most climate migrants are staying within their countries of origin, the accelerating trend of global displacement related to climate impacts is leading to increased cross-border movements. Moreover, internally displaced persons in particular may look for employment opportunities abroad or may be pushed across borders. It is also important to consider people's diverse and layered rational for moving. It is almost impossible to quantify the number of "climate migrants" because climate change is usually only one amongst many other drivers of migration and it is virtually impossible to isolate the exact climate impacts. Policy coherence to ensure protection for those moving is essential to address different forms of climate mobility and to ensure that resources and efforts are used efficiently and effectively.

International and regional frameworks on climate mobility

The number of international and regional frameworks that recognize and seek to help countries address forced displacement and migration has increased significantly in recent years.

The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* were adopted by the Commission on Human Rights in 1998.

They remain the most widely recognized standard to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement and set forth 30 principles that outline the rights of internally displaced persons and the responsibilities of national governments to protect and assist them.

The **2010 Cancun Adaptation Framework** of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was the first major climate policy document that includes migration issues.

The **Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda** which was launched in 2012 is a state-led consultative process outside the framework of the United Nations to build consensus on a protection agenda addressing the needs of people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change. This was later on followed up by the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

The **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030** was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015, aimed at achieving a substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

The **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** was adopted by the majority of UN member states is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration comprehensively.

It recognizes that climate change and environmental degradation may lead to migration, and reaffirms states' commitment to addressing the challenges of climate migration.

The **Global Compact on Refugees** was adopted in 2018 by the majority of UN member states, providing a framework to improve the worldwide response to the needs of refugees. It acknowledges and addresses the reality of increasing displacement in the context of disaster, environmental degradation and climate change, and provides a basis for measures to tackle the many challenges arising in this area.

The **1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families** is a UN multilateral treaty governing the protection of migrant workers and families that came into force in 2003. Bangladesh ratified the Convention in 2011 and is one of 57 Parties to the Convention.

Bangladesh is also a member state of the **Colombo Process** which currently has twelve member states which are countries of origin, and eight observer states which are countries of destination. The aim of this regional consultative process is to facilitate regular migration and reduce irregular movement, with a focus on the protection of migrant workers. Climate change and migration have not been prioritized in this process, although regional consultative processes do provide a forum for future dialogue and cooperation.

The Just Transition Policy Brief published in 2022 is intended to present the linkages between just transition and industrial and sectoral policies, providing stakeholders with information and recommendations for implementation.

Climate change and human mobility in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, a large number of people are engaged in different forms of human mobility over different timeframes and distances. In an average year, a few million people are displaced by extreme climate events. Most people who are displaced in disasters are poor and are sheltered in cyclone and flood protection centres. After the disaster is over, many go back to their previous communities and livelihood. Some displaced people move to the slums of big cities in search of work. Many towns and cities are unfit to host additional people thus exacerbating environmental problems already faced in these areas and resulting in hasty and carbon-intensive urbanization and poor living conditions.

The World Bank published a comprehensive report on internal displacement in 2018² and argued that understanding the scale of internal climate migration and the patterns of people's movements was critical so countries could plan and prepare.

Under the pessimistic scenario³, the World Bank projected that the number of internal climate migrants in Bangladesh would reach 13.3 million on average and that climate impacts may become one of the dominant forces driving internal migration in Bangladesh by 2050. The report also argued that it was important to recognise that there were limits to "adaption in place" and that there was a risk that people will be induced to remain in places where conditions are deteriorating. According to the World Bank, it is therefore necessary that, where the limits of local adaptation are anticipated, migration can be a sensible climate change adaptation strategy if managed carefully and supported by good policies.

In Bangladesh, international migration has long played an important role in climate resilience, poverty reduction and income diversification. Most Bangladeshi migrants work in predominantly "low-skilled" jobs in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. In 2020, an estimated 11.5 million Bangladeshis were working abroad.

There are clear gender differences in the impact of disasters and the migration process. Women, as a group, are poorer than men and less well able to face and adapt themselves to disaster.

² Kumari Rigaud, Kanta, Alex de Sherbinin, Bryan Jones, Jonas Bergmann, Viviane Clement, Kayly Ober, Jacob Schewe, Susana Adamo, Brent McCusker, Silke Heuser, and Amelia Midgley. 2018. Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

³ A pessimistic reference scenario in which low income countries are characterized by high population growth, high rates of urbanization, low GDP growth, and low education levels.

If disasters occur, women are harder hit in terms of socio-economic impacts and experience higher rates of mortality. Women and other vulnerable population groups have fewer options for planned human mobility and are more at risk of forced migration. The migration process itself may lead to shifts in gender roles that may contribute to changing oppressive gender relations, but it may also exacerbate existing inequalities between women and men. COVID-19 had far-reaching impacts on Bangladeshi workers within Bangladesh and abroad. According to a comprehensive study conducted by the ILO, when COVID-19 broke out, internal and international migrant workers in Bangladesh experienced major job losses, non-payment or partial payment of wages, and a resulting inability to pay for food and shelter. Crowded working and living environments, participation in front-line jobs and lack of access to protective measures caused higher infection and death rates among migrant workers compared to local workers in many destination countries.

According to the ILO, the year 2020 highlighted the fact that people in areas affected by climate change faced multiple simultaneous stresses.

These included health risks, labour market collapses and disasters related to climate change in addition to COVID-19. In 2020, Bangladesh was heavily impacted by disasters, including Cyclone Amphan, which was the largest disaster event in the world in 2020.

The national response to climate mobility in Bangladesh

Several ministries and agencies of the Government of Bangladesh have responsibilities related to climate migration including the *Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, the National Disaster Management Council and the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment*. In Bangladesh's *National 8th Five Year Plan, 2021-2025*, the role of external migration in reducing poverty is emphasized. The GoB remains committed under the 8FYP, to design cities that make them more accommodative to internal migrants by installing efficient systems for facilitating migrant reintegration. The *Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021-2041*, also referred to as Vision 2041, considers climate change as a driver of future migration. It recognizes migration as a potential adaptation option for people living in the most vulnerable areas and includes policy responses to deal with both internal and international migration. In 2022, Bangladesh published its *National Adaptation Plan (2023-2050)* which recognises that Bangladesh will be one of the most adversely affected countries due to climate change and identified climate displacement as one of the adverse impacts of climate change.

The ***Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), 2009*** draws direct links between climate change and displacement. It identifies displacement as an adverse effect of climate change and is the first national strategy that aims at developing rights-based solutions for the millions of climate-displaced persons across Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is the first country that prepared a climate prosperity plan, known as the ***Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCP), 2021*** and thereby setting an example for other vulnerable countries. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan shifts Bangladesh's trajectory from one of vulnerability to resilience to prosperity (VRP). It aims to address climate-induced damages and losses by equipping vulnerable communities, industry and the government with optimized financing tools and models that will be key to embracing a new risk management paradigm especially for small businesses, vulnerable populations and the economy.

Over the past decade, the ***Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Employment*** has taken the lead in paying increasing attention to the welfare of migrant workers and the effective use of remittance inflows. Important steps were the enactment of the ***Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013*** and the ***Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016*** which was supported by the ILO. The main objective of the ***Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy*** is to ensure freely chosen employment abroad through safe and dignified migration.

While the Policy does not mention climate change or climate change-induced migration or displacement, the Bangladesh Parliamentarians' Caucus on Migration and Development published a paper in 2022 on policy recommendations on issues covered by the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy.

The recommendations are far-reaching and include the need for research to prepare a database of climate migrants, establishing a "Climate Migration Cell" under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, introducing training programmes for climate migrants and climate vulnerable populations and others.

The GoB drafted a ***National Reintegration Policy for Migrants*** that is expected to be adopted soon. Under the project "Application of Migration Policy for Decent Work for Migrant Workers", between 2016 and 2021, the ILO provided support to the GoB in developing the Policy jointly with IOM and UN Women. The objectives of the Policy are to enable the dignified and safe return of migrants and their effective reintegration into their communities and society more generally, to create opportunities for returnee migrants to acquire employable skills, skills recognition.

The *National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management*, adopted in 2021, aims to support internally displaced people as part of its *National Plan for Disaster Management 2021-2026* by measures including creating employment outside urban areas.

Recommendations

Create a cohesive database and information management system of climate migrants establishing a 'Climate Migration Cell':

Recommendation 1: Regular full labour force surveys should be conducted that include the informal economy and also collate information on the migration status of workers in the informal economy, including mobility between rural and urban areas. The ILO could play an important role in supporting the GoB's efforts to conduct such surveys at regular intervals, preferably every five years.

Recommendation 2: In terms of filling data gaps on internal migration, the GoB should collate and periodically update field-level data on internal labour migration. A comprehensive list of surveys and other available data sources on internal migration should be compiled. A database on internal migration should be developed and updated regularly.

Recommendation 3: The ILO could provide technical assistance to assess the functionality of the existing returnee migrant database to establish a well-functional and

digitized database which can be used across reintegration interventions. ILO could assess the performance of the existing returnee migrant database and provide technical assistance to improve the functionality of the database.

Increased protection for internal Migrants

Recommendation 4: Internal climate migrants have to be protected and the migration process has to be safe for all migrants including women and children. In receiving areas, migrants require access to decent employment opportunities. The ILO could focus on the protection of climate migrants at their place of destination where adhering to the ILO's international labour standards will ensure that the rights of migrant workers are fully protected.

Recommendation 5: Planning for orderly and well-managed climate mobility can serve as an effective adaptation strategy with positive development outcomes. Managing future migration flows within Bangladesh will require creating job opportunities away from already overcrowded cities like Dhaka. The ILO could support an initiative of value chain opportunities for business growth in areas outside major cities, and identify a pilot city to roll out skills and entrepreneurship training programmes for climate migrants.

Strengthening negotiation within international migration framework

Recommendation 6: The ILO's experience in labour migration governance puts it in a unique position to support the GoB in reviewing and revising existing and drafting new bilateral labour agreements (BLAs). The ILO could assist the GoB with labour market information systems and in establishing joint systems with destination countries. This will help countries examine opportunities to establish regular pathways for decent work from climate affected areas.

Recommendation 7: The GoB could ratify the main conventions dealing with migrant workers, namely C143 Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) and C97 Migration for Employment Convention (Revised).

Strengthening access to international migration opportunities

Recommendation 8: The ILO is well placed to support measures proposed by the GoB in the 8FYP and the Perspective Plan 2041 including training programmes, improving access to information and providing support for the full implementation of ILO's General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs to ensure fair recruitment processes and zero recruitment costs borne by the workers.

Recommendation 9: Impact analysis of migration in the context of climate change should cover those staying behind, including in light of social and gender equality issues so that these population groups can be adequately considered in future planning. ILO in conjunction with other development partners could conduct such a study to inform the GoB's planning in this regard.

Strengthening whole of government coordination approach

Recommendation 10: Building on its vast experience with the institutional strengthening of Labour Ministries in many countries, the ILO is well positioned to assist the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in Bangladesh to strengthen its coordination and collaboration with other Ministries by first determining the best mechanism to achieve better inter-Ministerial coordination within the next two years and then to implement this mechanism.

Recommendation 11: The Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 should be revised to broaden its scope and include climate mobility. The possibility of providing access to international labour migration opportunities for displaced Bangladeshis should be considered in the Policy. The ILO's extensive experience with providing technical assistance to develop and review national labour migration policies would be extremely valuable to the GoB, should the GoB decide to review the Policy.

The ILO should communicate this recommendation to the GoB and be ready to provide technical assistance as needed by the GoB.

Recommendation 12: When formulating the next national planning documents, there is an urgent need for Bangladesh to integrate climate mobility issues into these documents. ILO and IOM support the GoB in this effort and ensure that all national planning documents are in line with international frameworks related to climate mobility.

Recommendation 13: A National Displacement and Migration Policy in which climate change considerations are mainstreamed should be developed. The Policy should ensure the full protection of migrant workers and take account of gender and disability issues and the specific needs of vulnerable groups. The policy should be aligned with ILO's Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market.

Recommendation 14: A national strategy to provide comprehensive support to internal climate migrants should be developed. Such a strategy should be formulated following whole of government and whole of society approaches and should include social dialogue and engagement of the social partners e.g. employers and workers organization. The Reintegration Policy for Migrants which proposes similar support measures for international returnees should be considered.

The ILO is well positioned to take a leading role in terms of interventions to support access to decent employment and business opportunities through skills and entrepreneurship training and schemes to provide access to credit.

Recommendation 15: The GoB should consider developing and implementing a national policy on planned relocation from the worst affected areas within Bangladesh. The ILO could support this effort especially concerning developing and implementing interventions on labour market integration of relocated populations.

Recommendation 16: Displacement and labour migration have to be integrated into policies and plans aimed at addressing climate change. The ILO is well positioned to work alongside the GoB to consider the role of labour migration within climate mitigation and adaptation strategies and the issue of labour market integration of displaced people.

Recommendation 17: Human mobility issues have to be integrated into development planning as well as the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development cooperation interventions that have an environment and climate change focus. The ILO has started advocating for the integration of human mobility into development planning and interventions with donors and development partners.



Recommendation 18: Universal social protection should be available to all internal migrants and all returnee migrants. The GoB could address existing gaps in coverage by filling data gaps (see recommendations 1 to 3) and establishing social protection systems that include internal climate migrants. In addition, the GoB should negotiate bilateral social security agreements to ensure portability of social protection schemes.

Support development of green skills and green jobs

Recommendation 19: ILO has the technical expertise to promote green jobs and is well-positioned to bring together various actors in the economy to enhance the just transition in Bangladesh. Coherent strategy for the development of skills for green jobs should be formulated and put in place within the overall framework for human resource development. Skills development opportunities should be provided specifically to industries, regions, communities and workers whose livelihoods might experience the hardest impacts from climate disasters.

A re-skilling should occur through demand-driven customised skills courses for employment development. The ILO should initiate a dialogue with various stakeholders with the aim of providing technical assistance for skills development in selected locations.

Recommendation 20: Comprehensive empirical research on the current status and prospects of green job creation initiatives in Bangladesh are needed to identify current and anticipated future skills requirements for green jobs as well as the sources of skills supply. ILO is leading such research.

Strengthening capacity of tripartite Constituents

Recommendation 21: Continue to strengthen the capacity of tripartite constituents to enhance and adapt their services to contribute to the development of effective national expertise to promote climate change response to enhance the Just Transition in Bangladesh.