



World Council
of Churches

“Climate Refugees”

*People Displaced by Climate Change
and the Role of the Churches*

Edited by Sophia Wirsching,
Peter Emberson and Guillermo Kerber



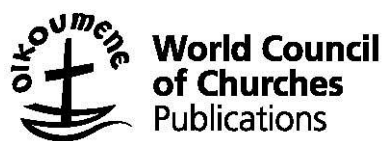
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A co-publication of Brot für die Welt, the Pacific Conference of Churches, and the World Council of Churches

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Contents

Preface	1
Chapter 1 - Protection and Reparations for "Climate Refugees": Imperatives and Options	5
Summary of Discussions	5
Terminology	8
Current Solutions and Regimes	10
Collective vs. Individual Rights	12
States' Obligations	13
Best Practices and Lessons Learned	14
Suggested Strategies for Further Action.....	16
Conclusion	20
Chapter 2 - Climate Change-Induced Displacement: What Is at Stake? A Climate Justice Perspective	23
Summary of Discussions	23
Conference Purposes	27
An Update on Climate-Induced Displacement	28
Bridging the Gaps Internationally.....	38
The Role of the Churches.....	43
Summaries from Working Groups.....	48
Questions for Individuals and Groups.....	53

Appendix: Conference Participants	55
International Conference “Protection & Reparations for ‘Climate Refugees’: Imperatives & Options”	55
International Conference “Climate Change-Induced Displacement: What Is at Stake? A Climate Justice Perspective”	57

Preface

Sophia Wirsching, Peter Emberson and Guillermo Kerber

Vulnerable communities in various parts of the world, especially in Africa, Asia, Central America and the Pacific, are continually confronted by the challenge of resettlement due to climate change. This is primarily due to increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather conditions, resulting in cyclones, hurricanes and floods, or the rise of sea levels.

For some years, climate-displaced people or “climate refugees” have found their way quite prominently onto the agenda of politicians, academia, media and civil society organizations all over the world. It is undeniable that environmental factors have a growing influence on the decision to move. Migration due to environmental causes or climate change may be voluntary or forced. It may be the result of a well-considered decision process or occur suddenly in response to weather catastrophes. In some cases, migration will be permanent; a formerly habitable land can become irreversibly damaged. In other cases, migration may last only for a period until the former livelihood can be rebuilt.

While the numbers of those who are or will be displaced by climate change are still uncertain, and estimations differ tremendously, it is obvious that the number of internally displaced persons and international migrants will rise substantially in the near and distant future. International responses to the issue tend to get entangled in defining and framing the phenomenon. Policy responses are still very rare.

It is becoming the trend to regard climate-induced migration as a security threat rather than a humanitarian challenge closely linked to aspects of vulnerability, development and justice. Questions pertaining to the legal and practical protection of those affected are rarely asked and even more rarely dealt with visibly. The exception to this was the Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement in the 21st Century, organized in Oslo in June 2011.

In an effort to listen to the requests coming from victims in regions affected by climate-induced displacement and to discern an effective response to their needs and rights, Bread for the World, the Pacific Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches decided to organize two international conferences. Both conferences included representatives from affected communities, countries and regions, the academy, the UN and governments, civil society, churches and other faith-based organizations. Case studies, presentations, panels and discussions during the conferences pursued the following outcomes:

- A deepened understanding of the issue, developed in consultation with experts on migration and providing recommendations for churches, church-based and civil society organizations working on climate-induced displacement.
- A shared knowledge on recent developments and links for coherent approaches between the various actors to enhance the protection of climate-induced displaced persons.
- An assessment of the topic's inclusion in different international processes and regimes, such as the United Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration.
- An identification of further ways to bridge the gaps in the international protection system.
- A strengthened collaboration between participants, including the development of an advocacy strategy.

The first conference took place in Chavannes de Bogis, Switzerland, in May 2010, with the title “Protection and Reparations for ‘Climate Refugees’: Imperatives and Options.” The conference, based on the testimonies of affected people, opened a discussion on the gaps in the humanitarian law system and international regimes. In the context of climate justice, normative needs for the adequate protection and compensation of climate refugees were formulated.

The second conference took place at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, in May 2012. Entitled “Climate Change-Induced Displacement: What Is at Stake? A Climate Justice Perspective,” the conference drew attention to often forgotten and perhaps more demanding aspects of climate change-induced migration in the context of climate justice. Case studies were presented and reflected upon. Building upon recent developments on this topic, the conference tried to highlight and connect academic and policy perspectives with experiences from the field.

This publication brings together reports from the two conferences and provides questions for further consideration and work at the local and national level for groups, congregations and interested readers.

Once again, we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to all the participants in the conferences for their testimonies, commitment and contributions. We hope this publication will help to advance the search for concrete and effective responses to the challenges faced by vulnerable populations affected by climate change.

Chapter 1

Protection and Reparations for "Climate Refugees": Imperatives and Options

Chavannes-de-Bogis, Switzerland, May 2010

Kasia Snyder, Theodor Rathgeber, and Stephen Humphreys¹

Summary of Discussions

Among the many concerns raised by the phenomenon of climate change, the likelihood of mass population displacement is among the most pressing and worrisome. For small island states such as Tuvalu, the reality of land loss is already apparent. As to the broader phenomenon of climate-related migration, even conservative figures are daunting. However, there has been relatively little substantive discussion of this crucial issue at the international level, and as of yet, there are no clear international policies addressing this problem of potentially immense magnitude.

There are a number of reasons for the relative lack of movement on this crucial topic.

First, there are no solid estimates of the numbers of likely migrants or refugees, and little certainty about affected populations or where they are likely to go. Available estimates range from hundreds of millions (according to the Stern Review) to a billion (Christian Aid). But all such estimates involve making choices about relevant timescales and climate scenarios, and predictions of the likelihood of credible mitigation and adaptation action.

¹ This report was drafted by Kasia Snyder, intern at the International Council on Human Rights Policy, and Theodor Rathgeber of the German Human Rights Forum. It was edited by Stephen Humphreys, London School of Economics. The Compendium of presentations made at the Conference is available online at: <http://archived.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p4/climate/Compendium%20final.pdf>.

There is a second reason for the tardy attention to this problem: mass migration, were it to happen, would signal the failure of policies to effectively deal with climate change—mitigation efforts will have failed, and adaptive funding or activities will have failed to materialize, leaving migration as the adaptation policy of last resort. Any new efforts to take mass migration seriously for these reasons may appear pessimistic or defeatist - such a discussion risks taking place in a vacuum. What is, in fact, the likely scenario for population displacement? The answer at present is: we barely know.

Third, climate change refugee cases are likely to prove extremely contentious in political negotiation. It may seem wiser for states to refrain from engaging the issue while they continue to grapple with so many other difficult sticking points and especially given the barely known and often unquantifiable issues surrounding climate change refugees.

Fourth, the bodies that would naturally be expected to think ahead on this issue—UNHCR and IOM—have failed to take the issue seriously, at least in public fora. Though these bodies do not lend legitimacy to the term “climate refugees,” they have not offered a credible alternative; they have dampened expectations of compensation even for those who have presented concrete cases for their need to flee their homes; and they seem more comfortable referring to climate change refugees in terms of internally displaced persons (IDPs), thus obscuring the likelihood of cross-border migration. Overall, they have failed to show leadership on a topic where they would appear the natural experts.

Now more than ever, it is vital to begin thinking through the policy implications of climate migration and climate refugees. As previously mentioned, some small island states are already preparing for the disappearance of their territories and are negotiating deals with other countries to take on their populations. Such conversations are by nature precarious and the international community as a whole should be paying attention; precedents set today are key for the future. While the small islands in question are generally inhabited by relatively small populations, in other parts of the world, large scale population moves are foreseeable. Bangladesh, for example, could lose 20 percent of its landmass if sea levels rise by 1m (as predicted by the IPCC for the end of the century).

In such a scenario, up to 20 million people may lose their homes and be forced to move. What will happen? Again, the answer at present is: we barely know.

With this in view, Bread for the World, the Pacific Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches organized a conference addressing “Protection and Reparation for ‘Climate Refugees’” on May 4-5, 2010 in Chavannes-de-Bogis, near Geneva. The goal of the meeting was to stimulate discussion between academia, civil society, governments, intergovernmental institutions and churches on the phenomenon of climate-displaced people, and to inventory the challenges and possibilities for effective response. The conference explored concepts of “climate refugees” and “compensation” as well as best practices and lessons learned from actions of response on national, regional and global levels.

In the first session, Prof. Frank Biermann presented his proposal for a *sui generis* regime for climate refugees under the UNFCCC, with comments from Ms Margit Ammer of the Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights and Mr Peter Emberson of the Pacific Conference of Churches. Three country case studies followed, focusing on Bangladesh, Mozambique and Papua New Guinea. The remainder of the conference was taken up by three panels that discussed the legal, humanitarian and political challenges facing climate refugees. These involved debates between representatives of the ACT Alliance, the United Nations University, Bread for the World, the World Council of Churches, the German Forum for Human Rights, Prodipan of Bangladesh and a member of the Bangladeshi parliament, the London School of Economics, the Mozambique Mission to the UN and global and regional church alliances.

Rather than providing a chronological account of these discussions, this report gleans and summarizes common themes under the following headings:

- Terminology
- A climate refugee regime (new or amended)
- Collective and individual rights
- States’ obligations (national and extraterritorial)

- Best practices/lessons learned (participation, transparency, ownership)
- Suggested strategies for further action (local, national, international levels)
- Conclusion

Terminology

The 1951 Refugee Convention (United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees), as amended by a 1967 Protocol, defines a refugee as follows:

“A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

The definition restricts coverage to those *persecuted* for their beliefs or their belonging to a particular group. It does not, as it stands, appear to cover climate refugees because it is difficult to consider climate change as targeted persecution in the ordinary sense, even though it has a human origin. Although victims may suffer due to their lack of resources, poverty or other forms of vulnerability, it is not clear that such circumstances amount to “membership of a social group.”

The 1951 Refugee Convention, then, does not appear easily applicable to climate change migration. Does this mean that the term “climate refugee” should be abandoned? The opinions of conference participants diverged on this point, with some feeling the term should be retained, as it carries the moral authority necessary to convey the seriousness of the situation. This was the particular view of representatives from countries that are expected to experience significant population displacement. Others held that if the main international organizations remain unwilling to adopt the term “climate refugees,” pursuing it is likely to absorb significant time and energy to little avail.

Other terms coming into general use are “Environmentally Displaced Persons” (EDPs) and “Climate Change Displaced Persons.” A number of participants voiced reservations concerning the focus on *displacement* inherent in all these terms. Such a focus is inherently limiting and excludes the pre and post stages of the displacement. All three terms also fail to include persons who, despite being affected or impoverished because of (or exacerbated by) the effects of climate change, choose not to leave. At this point, a further suggestion was made: the term “Climate Change Victims,” understood within a broader framework of climate change adaptation and stressing recent developments in International Human Rights Law on Victims’ Rights.

These discussions illustrated a struggle between two modes of thinking about labeling: one is based on legalisms (refugees, persecution, 1951 Convention), and the other prioritizes the humanitarian urge to make the victims’ fates known to the world and to recognize their status and rights so that they can be protected. And yet, these approaches are complementary rather than contradictory: victims presumably deserve protection whether or not they are displaced.

From a legal perspective, a specific issue arises when people are forced to cross borders due to climate change. Of course, there are also pressing issues for those forced to move within the borders of a given state (IDPs). Whereas international oversight of and assistance in such situations is indispensable, the relevant state does or should remain the primary actor in such situations, and is generally subject to clear human rights obligations under international law in any actions taken. However, the protection of persons forced to cross borders raises specific concerns when both state protection and international human rights law are weak, and voluntary documents such as the IDP Guidelines are less applicable.

If cross-border migrants are also unprotected by the 1951 Refugee Convention (which seems possible at the very least), then some other form of protection at the international level is urgently needed to safeguard the rights, needs and human security of persons displaced by climate change. From this perspective, it will be useful for policy-making to have a term referring specifically and clearly to cross-border displacement.

The term “Environmentally Displaced Persons” (EDPs) may not be adequate for this task, as its natural resonance with IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) will tend to downplay the degree to which such populations are likely to cross borders. Likewise, terms such as “climate migrants” appear to assume a *voluntary* aspect to movement which would not capture the degree to which movement, in these cases, is “forced.” The term “climate refugees” therefore remains a compelling one that can accurately capture the relevant aspects of the scenario. Another possibility is “forced climate migrants.”

At the same time, it is vital to draw attention to the wider effects of climate change and to ensure the needs of victims before, during and after displacement are addressed at the heart of adaptation policies. From this perspective, “Climate Change Victims” and “Climate Refugees” (or “Forced Climate Migrants”) might be regarded as two complementary terms.

What is presently clear is that, whatever the legal situation, the current guardians of the international refugee regime – UNHCR and (less officially) IOM – appear unwilling to regard the issue as coming within their ordinary remit. This does not, of course, mean that the term “climate refugee” should therefore be abandoned. Indeed, to the contrary: with the relevant policy space largely vacated by the key actors, others may need to step into the breach and, if so, forceful arguments and powerful terms will presumably be needed.

Current Solutions and Regimes

Much discussion focused on whether the current solutions and regimes are sufficient to deal with the problem.

The keynote speaker, Frank Biermann, appealed for a *sui generis* regime for climate change migrants based on an Optional Protocol to UNFCCC and emphasized that climate-change-induced migration will constitute an unprecedented crisis in human history to which old (current) approaches of dealing with problems will not be able to find answers.

The institutional development of the regime would be rooted in five principles concerned with resettlement, international assistance,

collective rights and international burden sharing. Such a protocol would call for an executive committee to manage the recognition, protection and resettlement of climate refugees. The committee could function under the authority of the Conference of the Parties (COP) (as in the Kyoto Protocol, through a discrete meeting of the parties (MOP)). The Montreal Protocol provides a potentially useful example of how such a committee can function. The committee's task would be to receive applications from countries with a foreseeable climate refugee problem and to seek solutions in advance in cooperation with other relevant states.

In order to avoid putting climate refugees in competition for financing with other climate change victims, a *sui generis* regime for financing was suggested. The operational aspects of a Climate Refugee Protection and Resettlement Fund could be linked with other financial mechanisms to increase efficiency; the governance of the Fund should be independent and stand under the authority of the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. Four principles would govern such a fund: a grant basis, the notion that funds would be "new and additional" to existing development disbursements, the principle that refugees needing relocation due to sea level rise would be fully reimbursed, and the creation of an open list of designated populations as "climate refugees in need of relocation."

In a similar vein, some argued that a new instrument with human rights elements should be created under the UNFCCC umbrella. Others pointed out that new legal instruments of any kind will be politically difficult to achieve, will take many years to negotiate and enter into force, and that the final outcome is any case unpredictable.

It was also argued that functioning regimes already exist to deal with the problem of internal displacement (i.e., IDPs/EDPs) and are supplemented by human rights obligations that need only be linked to climate change. However, it is clear that the IDP regime, which is not in any case very robust, will not provide adequate protection for climate refugees needing to cross borders.

In conclusion, the suggestion to push for an Optional Protocol or a similar new international instrument was welcomed as a long-term strategy. Although most participants agreed that such a process would be

time-intensive and unpredictable, it would also (as a minimum) ensure that the problem garnered international recognition commensurate with its urgency, and would alert the international community to the need for both interim and permanent measures to protect climate refugees.

Collective vs. Individual Rights

Climate change affects groups, communities and even nations. Yet it is the individual bearers of human rights whose rights are directly affected by the adverse effects of a changing climate. In this context, a recurring theme at the meeting concerned the extent to which forced climate migrants should be treated as collective or individual rights bearers. Some argued that a collective rights approach was necessary since climate change effects do not in fact target individuals; the issues (housing, settlement, emergency measures) arise in any case at the group level, and broader collective rights (such as rights to cultural autonomy) are also at stake in climate change. Indigenous groups have already pursued the collective rights aspects of climate change. Others pointed out that if rights are implemented collectively, there is a great risk of overlooking individual cases, particularly of those most vulnerable even within the vulnerable groups (i.e., women).

Perhaps the issue is not primarily between different kinds of right, but different kinds of remedial action. Remedies, compensation, rehousing and other measures are perhaps best undertaken at the collective level, but this need not involve an infringement upon the exercise of individual rights. When treating mass migration from climate change, one area where collective rights must be respected is in the preservation of the migrants' ways of life (rights to culture). This is especially crucial when their territories are at risk of disappearing entirely—a threat facing some Pacific islands. If an entire population is forced to move, international support is vital for ensuring their cultural ways are kept alive.

States' Obligations

According to international human rights law, each state holds human rights obligations towards all persons within its jurisdiction. In addition, it is often observed that certain extraterritorial obligations can be derived from human rights law provisions. Participants pointed out that some extraterritorial human rights obligations are apparently indicated in the ICESCR, Article 2(1) of which mentions an *obligation* for states to utilize available “international assistance” towards the fulfillment of the relevant rights. Subsequent interpretations of the Covenant, including by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, would appear to support this broad case, although states have been slow to accept any such duty as binding.

If state obligations are still evolving in the area of human rights, they are somewhat clearer in other areas of international law. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) in the UNFCCC recognizes that developed countries are obliged to take the lead and help other states in dealing with climate change. International law also generally recognizes state responsibility for transboundary harms, environmental and otherwise. These are several areas where the responsibility of states to address the likelihood of climate change migration may translate into a hard legal responsibility. How such responsibilities will play out when states are faced with the reality or inevitability of mass migration remains to be seen. But even where the legal case remains malleable, the moral and political cases remain compelling.

Participants identified the phenomenon of the securitization of the climate change migration issue as potentially problematic. Increasingly, governments frame climate migration as a defense concern. Participants noted how when rich country governments approach climate change displacement from a national security angle, their interest in solving it may drop—especially if it appears they will not be directly affected. In fact, climate migration is likely to be worst between poorer countries and climate change refugees are overwhelmingly likely to be poor and lack mobility over great distances. If national security is a superior concern to rich states, the poor and vulnerable displaced persons will be forgotten.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Three country case studies concretized the issues and helped identify a number of concerns that will need further refinement and elaboration if climate change migration is to be properly understood and treated. Each study involved resettlement following a loss of housing due to flooding or sea level rise, in the past (Mozambique), present (Papua New Guinea) and future (Bangladesh).

Throughout the discussions it was agreed that resettlements are a measure of last resort. The assumption that climate change gives rise to resettlement cannot be automatic; it might give governments a cover to resettle populations for other reasons. Rather, any case for climate change resettlement must be well-founded and unavoidable. If resettlement must take place, it should be closely monitored, international support should be forthcoming and may be vital, and international standards should be observed. Furthermore, the process must be owned by those being resettled—it requires a transparent consultation process, the availability of relevant information for stakeholders, the rehabilitation of climate refugees in their new location, and a consistent regard for traditional knowledge and local cultures.

The people of Bangladesh are among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts, with predictions over the next century reaching truly catastrophic proportions. According to the fourth IPCC assessment report, Bangladesh is expected to lose about 8 percent of its rice and 32 percent of its wheat productivity by 2050. A one-metre rise in sea level will put 20 percent of Bangladesh's landmass under water and inundate the whole of the Sundarbans National Park, the world's largest mangrove forest. Up to 20 million people are at risk. Saudia Anwer of Prodiplan Bangladesh argued that, given the unprecedented nature of this problem, the language of climate refugees must be adopted in order to motivate action and a system of redress or compensation for those suffering losses due to climate change must be put in place. Bangladesh will need to account for climate refugees in its National Adaptation Plans and Climate Change Strategy. It must also begin to seek international help in various ways, by preparing other countries to accept skilled- and semi-skilled migrant workers at a minimum and to accept

climate refugees. Significant attention must be paid to developing infrastructure and integrating relocation into development policies.

The Mozambique case study discussed the government's resettlement policy response to the floods of 2000. The policy involved the construction of new modern housing for flood victims from low-lying regions, who themselves also participated in the construction. Over time, however, the new housing was eventually abandoned. The project's relative lack of success was explained as being due a number of factors:

- Little consultation with the beneficiaries, who did not “own” the project
- Disregard for local knowledge
- Beneficiaries lacked access to agricultural land
- Disregard for people's livelihoods (distances from the workplaces were unsustainable)
- Lack of basic infrastructure (water, sewage, schools)
- Degraded environment of the resettlement area,
- Fear among beneficiaries of losing land in the fertile low-lying areas
- Lack of information.

In response to this presentation, a representative of the government of Mozambique noted that the challenge the government faced at the time was its primary duty (and that of every government) to protect life. This is the driving force behind resettlement efforts.

A third case study related to Papua New Guinea / Bougainville. The inhabitants of the Carteret Islands are at serious risk of submersion due to sea level rise from climate change and they may need new homes in future. Resettlement was discussed and general adaptation matters were taken in the Pacific region. A series of difficult questions arise when populations are faced with leaving behind the territories where they have lived for countless generations. This is especially the case for peoples

who hold strong or constitutive links to their land; this is common in many of the South Pacific islands. How can cultures and identities be preserved if people are required to leave behind their homes?

Suggested Strategies for Further Action

The discussions on further strategies for action concerning climate migration can be organized into three interdependent categories. Participants suggested a number of strategies for action for the NGO community on local, national and international levels.

Local Level

- People affected by climate disasters are themselves creative in finding ways to adapt. Further work is needed to define how this potential can be explored, organized and channeled.
- Big centralized humanitarian aid is often poorly targeted. More people could be helped if governments were committed to coordinating closely with civil society and local governments. This approach would also foster acceptance and ownership of the implemented policies by affected peoples.
- Work towards increasing local capacity and supporting communities and households. Educate and build information-sharing networks. Encourage greater engagement of the private sector with a focus on Corporate Social Responsibility. Work towards achieving balance between response, prevention and recovery strategies. Design “shadow strategies” and lobby for them with local and national authorities.
- Advocate for making people subjects and not objects of policies. Ownership of and participation in the process is crucial for achieving success. Victims need to be turned into agents of the process.

- Encourage collective action and a sense of community on the local level by:
 - Praying together, adopting a spirit of reference to creation and to one another
 - Speaking and acting together
 - Creating awareness, which is a catalyst for shared concern and action (workshops, media friendly information, dancing, storytelling)
 - Identifying the most vulnerable groups and providing platforms for them
 - Providing authoritative research
 - Lobbying in creative ways
 - Engaging the private sector
 - Knowledge-sharing on the grassroots level
 - Organization building, organizing civil society and channeling the power of many voices to create impact
 - Awareness building and trust building
 - Fostering dialogue in the research process and documenting community concerns.

National Level

- Engage the media proactively. Educate parliamentarians and support them in constructive motions. The protection of human rights is a catchy subject.
- Go to national authorities, representatives on the national level and decision-makers and let them know what works on a local scale. Connect them to on-the-ground experience and give them a clearer picture of who suffers and how it can be

prevented or remedied. Spearhead bottom-up action by bringing in actors “from the field” and giving a high profile to traditional local knowledge. Show how traditional and modern technologies can be combined with national strategies.

- Build national organizational networks. Develop a strategy to move forward in a coordinated manner. Identify leverage points and allies and work together towards a common goal.
- Build bridges between different policy communities. Approach policy communities to encourage them to determine what role they can play in solving the problem.
- Clarifying the terminology will help policymakers.

International Level

- Large humanitarian organizations often miss the link to local communities. Try to influence the agenda of the main humanitarian actors.
- Catalogue and pursue different options for acquiring a recognized status for climate change displaced persons. There was some discussion over whether the pursuit of a soft-law option was strategically smart—as it may be more easy to achieve than treaty law—or unwise, as states tend to agree to soft law instruments they can then evade with impunity.
- Explore the available routes for granting people a recognized status. Then prepare documentation and pursue campaigns that will convince states to follow a given route.
- Bring more attention to human rights in the climate change regime. This must be done with caution, as some states will consider human rights to be “poisonous” to negotiations. But it is worth raising the point that state parties to the UNFCCC are

also signatories to the human rights conventions and are bound by them.

- Climate change raises significant problems for the classic notion of the nation state. This is one of the reasons put forward by the participants not to pursue the “responsibility to protect” (R2P) as an option for managing it. Other reservations included arguments that R2P will not work as it applies only to genocide and other serious violations and it is still an emerging international law norm. Exert influence over the regional blocks through national decision-makers. This is particularly true for the SIDS block where decision-makers are close to the people.
- Be careful in choosing messages. When addressing forced displacement it will be important to remain cautious about potentially volatile issues such as compensation or human rights text. While adopting a pragmatic approach with the UNFCCC, it is also possible to pursue climate change in Geneva with the Human Rights Council. Instead of importing human rights onto climate change, import climate change onto human rights.
- Although human rights discussions may be volatile in the negotiating rooms, they can nevertheless be effective “in the corridors” by refocusing discussion on states’ obligations. Persistence and determination will be needed.
- Develop a strategy to develop and derive climate change victims’ rights from civil and political rights and to enhance their participation in the decision-making process. Explore how local communities can play a key role and have ownership over the response.
- Emphasize the importance of “vulnerable individuals” as well as, or rather than, “vulnerable states” in order to retain a human rights perspective.
- Form NGO partnerships in key countries. Develop fundraising strategies in connection with concrete adaptation needs.

- Climate change is a global problem, but we are not globally organized or represented; there is no global public, global media or global governance. Seek ways to remedy this situation. Civil society is important but pragmatically we need to link locally and globally. We need global information for global-level advocacy.
- Look into the role of social movements in transforming victims into agents of change.

Conclusion

Overall, conference participants primarily stressed the need for new thinking, for reform of the global governance system and for the nurturing of a “global public” able to represent and address the global public interest. Two approaches were postulated in the course of the meeting: first, a “visionary” approach with a new Optional Protocol to the UNFCCC as a possible goal; second, a “pragmatic” approach that explores all existing avenues for slow but sure progress in upholding human rights through the climate change process. Many participants saw an Optional Protocol as a good but far-fetched idea and stressed the need for solid interim measures. But it may also be necessary to keep an ideal “horizon” in view even while pursuing solid practical steps.

What is the role of the churches in addressing climate change refugees? The church can enhance the participation of local people(s), while pointing to human rights language and procedures and including complaint procedures and standard setting mechanisms, in order to ensure that victims become active stakeholders. Invoking human rights language means foregrounding protection for the people suffering from the impacts of climate change. Churches must raise the urgency of upholding victims’ rights on every relevant occasion. They must also be ready to rock the boat, especially when complacency about the suffering of climate change victims becomes the dominant societal feeling, as is frequently the case.

In addition, churches can develop their role as a platform of exchange and exposure and can reach out, for example, to members of parliament or parliamentary committees and members of local communities; they

can seek cooperation amongst existing civil society organizations dealing with climate change. In addition, the churches are well positioned to enhance social mobilization, resistance and empowerment among the suffering people and their supporters. For churches, addressing climate change should mean seeking justice.

From this perspective, it is important to remember that climate change is not just about law and legal instruments; it is also about making governments change their policies and concepts of development. The churches might therefore aim to identify “champions” among states and governments. Candidates might include, for example, the Arctic Council, the Pacific Islands Climate Change Cooperative (PICCC) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Climate change presents challenges on many levels, but it is above all a challenge to the imagination. In order to discern how immense population displacement can be avoided, we must first imagine a kind of world that will permit mass forced migration—and we must then imagine another kind of world. Not only do we need to imagine how to lower our carbon consumption, but we also need to imagine how we can help our fellow beings in other parts of the world adapt to climate change. What kind of adaptations are relevant for migration? Sea walls? Cities on stilts? New canal systems? We need to start constructing this future world now. But we also need to imagine what it will mean if we fail. Indeed, it seems increasingly short-sighted to assume we will avoid sea-level rise or manage adaptive measures given the tortuously slow progress of negotiations to date. We need to imagine that one day, millions of people will be on the move, and now is the time to start thinking about the appropriate way to manage this eventuality.

Chapter 2

Climate Change-Induced Displacement: What Is at Stake? A Climate Justice Perspective

Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Switzerland, May 2012

Julia Edwards, Guillermo Kerber and Sophia Wirsching

Summary of Discussions¹

Lessons learned from case studies. Case studies shared by conference participants from Bangladesh, India, the Sahel, Central America and the Pacific showed that climate change exacerbates vulnerability and increases risks of conflict and forced migration. By listening to their testimonies and stories we embarked on a journey; a journey that aimed to link different communities and networks already working to address climate change and its consequence of human displacement.

Climate change is occurring at a quicker pace than we had originally thought. Though the problem of coastal erosion is well known, glacial melts like those in the Himalayas, for instance, pose a serious threat to peace and security. While in the past we had to address events with low impact and high frequency or high impact and low frequency, from now on we are increasingly faced with the reality of high impact and high frequency events.

Internally displaced people (IDPs) are moving into cities and many cities are now becoming unsustainable. For instance, one of the most densely populated countries in the world, Bangladesh, has less gas emissions than Manhattan but still suffers some of the worst effects of these emissions on the globe. The survival of the country is at stake and climate change is number one on the national security agenda. When the land and resources are shrinking, what are people supposed to do? Not everyone can move. Some people will have to stay where they are or

¹ Based on the notes presented by Stephen Humphreys, London School of Economics, compiled almost entirely from comments and remarks made by participants.

move to yet another dangerous place. One disaster can easily wipe out the gains of fifty years of hard work.

Climate-induced displacement throughout the world. Bangladesh is not the only affected country. In India, the Lohachara Island in the Hooghly River, which once housed 10,000 people, has completely submerged. Temperature increases of about 1°C and a decrease in rainfall have already been documented in the Sahel area. Most people follow the rain and move north but indigenous people will rarely choose to leave their homelands. However, climate change events have a tremendous impact on the identities of the people affected; sadly, the fallout from this is often hardest on the poorer populations. The international community pays very little attention to the Sahel region because there is no mining or oil, and yet the region continues to be the source of problems for the North and the South. The international community is discussing how to best manage this crisis, but not how to resolve it.

Furthermore, no region in Africa is spared from the impact of climate change. In North Africa, winters are getting less cold and summers are getting warmer, with the result that it is more and more difficult for farmers to grow olives. Floods, heavy rains, droughts and rising sea levels are increasingly affecting West Africa. In 2010, thousands of people were affected by floods in Benin; 435 people died, 128,000 hectares of farmland were ruined and 12,000 tons of food stocks were lost. The populations of coastal villages in Ghana had to relocate due to coastal erosion. In East Africa, floods have increased in Namibia and Mozambique. In Somalia, 400,000 people fled to Dadaab in Kenya for reasons not connected to the war but to drought. Women are more affected than men by these disasters, as they have to walk far to collect firewood and children are being often forced to leave school to seek wood. Though Africa is rich in natural resources, climate change makes it even more difficult to manage the resources. If these trends continue, the whole of Northern Africa will become uninhabitable due to climate change. Climate change has broken the bases of life for sedentary peoples.

In the Pacific, 3,000 people had to be resettled from the Carteret Islands in Papua New Guinea due to coastal erosion. A village in the Fiji islands is moving inland and uphill. They have already approached the government for assistance. In Tuvalu, the rise of sea water and the lack of drinking water are affecting the identities of inhabitants who now have to learn how to resettle.

In Central America, the increasing occurrence of tropical storms due to climate change is making disaster risk reduction a key issue to be taken into account for preventing climate displacement.

International responses. In 2010, in a previous conference organized by the same organizations, churches and faith-based communities approached this topic using the term “climate refugees.” Now the commonly adopted term is “climate-displaced people.” At the conference, a number of representatives from international organizations explained how, legally speaking, environmental migrants cannot be considered “refugees.” Should churches and faith-based organizations follow this politically correct language when even the victims themselves use the term “climate refugees”?

At the Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010, the Cancun Agreements, Paragraph 14(f) recognizes the linkage between climate change and internally displaced persons. IDP Guidelines cover climate displacement, but implementation is a problem. The Guiding Framework or Instrument on Climate-Related Displacement discussed at the Bellagio Conference only covers people fleeing from sudden-onset events.

The basic question at hand is whether migration is good. There is a globalized international mobility of skills and labour. China will need 180 million workers over the next 18 years; 30 percent of the population of Switzerland is foreign born or the child of at least one foreign-born person and in the canton of Vaud, the figure rises to 40 percent. People are moving according to the basic laws of supply and demand and climate change is an added factor to this migration.

The key is that there is a choice involved in migration: people ultimately choose to leave their homes and are not forced to flee for their lives.

But, is there always a choice? How is forced migration being addressed? What short and long-term solutions are being explored?

International instruments are concerned with the status of people on the move: are they refugees, IDPs or migrants? The issue lies with people whose human rights are not protected by their home state because they have moved. It is a question of equality and humanity rather than status. Global governance continues to move in the wrong direction with regard to protection.

The decades when the reach and scope of human rights instruments were expanding appear to have ended. We seem to be moving in reverse by limiting the rights of the people.

When the Human Rights Council appointed an Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment rather than a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change there were legal implications. States do not want to hear about climate justice, and there has been a trend of diminishing expectations. International bodies are abandoning terms such as “climate refugees,” climate justice, compensation, restoration, etc. because at the international level there has not been a consensus on how to effectively address the causes of climate change; namely, to mitigate greenhouse gases (GHG). Given the inauspicious nature of the political environment, the approach has to be incremental and low-key, moving forward in small steps.

While international interest is only raised when borders are crossed, international assistance should apply from the moment people are uprooted. As the Precautionary Principle of the 1992 Rio Declaration and the UNFCCC states: we need to talk in terms of probabilities, risk and multi-causality rather than in absolute certainties and demonstrability. This is also the case with the problem of linking displacement to climate change.

New treaties are no longer considered by many to be the way forward. They take 10-15 years to negotiate, they wind up weaker than needed, states do not adopt them and they are very difficult to implement. Policy responses are upside down: instead of effectively addressing the impacts of climate change we are involved in the war on terror and billions of dollars are spent on arms while very little is spent on climate mitigation

and adaptation. We are seeing the door for a 2° Celsius target closing and we will see it close soon if action is not taken. A dollar spent now saves 4.6 dollars in a decade.

Indeed, the best form of adaptation is mitigation. A doctor who does not make the right diagnosis cannot provide the right cure.

The role of the churches. Churches are already involved in dealing with floods, climate displacement and conflicts by providing humanitarian assistance, but there is a need to move beyond this aid and pastoral care to enhance the voices of climate victims. The important role of churches is beginning to be recognized by communities, churches and ecumenical organizations. But churches cannot deal with this on their own. A space must be created where people can find ways to offer their own responses.

The Pacific region is like a laboratory: communities are small enough that we can see and know them. The churches are called to speak truth to power, based on stories and having church leaders lobbying government officials on issues that they often forget.

The need to find proper language for climate change victims was stressed by the various working groups. The group dealing with human rights reminded us that we are dealing with ethical and moral questions, not merely legal ones. The group dealing with protection reminded us that language is of the utmost importance in helping us to articulate our strategies and goals. The group on resettlement reminded us that the language of the grassroots is constantly being usurped by the language of policy institutions. So the question mentioned earlier remains critical: are these people refugees or are they migrants? What do we lose or gain by rejecting or adopting these different terms?

Conference Purposes

The conference “Climate Change-Induced Displacement: What Is at Stake?” was the second conference on the topic organized by Bread for the World, the Pacific Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. It took place at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, on May 22-23, 2012.

While the purpose of the first meeting in 2010 was to add a climate justice perspective to the displacement debate and to open a discussion on options and imperatives for the protection of and reparations for climate refugees in the system of humanitarian law and international regimes, the idea of the 2012 conference was to build on those experiences by giving new insights to the discussions. The conference was a follow-up of the process that started two years earlier, and focused on *case studies* from different regions concerning climate-induced displacement issues. The conference expected to achieve:

1. A shared *update* on work addressing climate-induced displacement at international organizations, academia, grassroots and civil society, and set in the wider context of migration, forced displacement and human rights;
2. An identification of further ways to *bridge the gaps* in the international protection system;
3. A focus on the *role of the churches* in regard to climate-induced displacement.

The following report details the main discussions and offers the case studies that were presented at the conference.

An Update on Climate-Induced Displacement

Over the past several years, it is becoming increasingly recognized that climate change will impact not only our physical and geological environments, but will also directly and profoundly impact people. Climate change already affects human lives, livelihoods, health and rights and further changes will only increase vulnerabilities and challenge peoples' capacities to adapt.

While reliable global and even regional figures are difficult to determine for mobility triggered by environmental factors, climate change is likely to increase both displacement and migration. The International Disaster Monitoring Centre, for instance, has estimated that from 2008 to 2010, between 15 and 38 million people were newly displaced by extreme, sudden-onset weather events each year – primarily by floods or storms.

Protection Frameworks for Climate-Displaced Peoples²

Two major events in 2011 set the agenda of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on climate and displacement: the Bellagio expert roundtable convened by UNHCR in February and the Nansen Conference on Climate Change and Displacement hosted by the Norwegian Government in June. Both were organized as part of UNHCR's 60th anniversary commemorations.

One of the most significant contributions of the Bellagio Expert Roundtable and the Nansen Conference was the clarification and achieved consensus amongst experts and key stakeholders regarding the applicability of international protection frameworks in regards to climate-induced displacement. Major protection concerns that would require increased attention in the coming years were also identified.

Given the *recognition of a significant normative gap with respect to climate-induced external displacement*, both the Bellagio Summary of Deliberations and the Nansen Principles recommended that states, in conjunction with UNHCR, elaborate a guiding framework or instrument and devise a more coherent and consistent response to the protecting the needs of peoples displaced due to sudden-onset disasters.

The language used here is quite important. The recommendation does not refer to a treaty or conventional instrument, but rather to a soft law document that provides a general framework clarifying which protection standards are applicable in these situations.

There is no question that slow-onset processes raise major protection concerns as well. Given the difficult question of causation, however, it was felt that in a first stage, an exclusive focus on external displacement from sudden-onset events would lead to more tangible policy results, because in these cases the trigger and causation is far more difficult to question.

² Based on the presentation made by Ms. Agnes Hurwitz, United Nations Development Programme, based on the work she was involved in while a Senior Research Officer at UNHCR, with focal point responsibility on climate change.

Case Study: Bangladesh and India

Based on the statement given by Hon. Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Member of Parliament and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change and Environment, Bangladesh, and the interventions by Mohon Kumar Mondal from the Local Environment Development and Agricultural Research Society - LEDARS-, Bangladesh and Mr Sukanta Chandra Behera, Action by Churches Together (ACT) India.

Climate-change-induced migration is not only to be expressed in figures. It also has a human face. While Bangladeshi people hardly contribute to global warming in terms of emissions, they are among those who are faced with the most negative climate change consequences. And this people facing the impacts are the least capable to adapt because of their poverty. The glacial melt in the Himalayas does have severe peace and security implications as the Himalaya is the fresh water supply for 800 million people.

Understanding the situation in Bangladesh means understanding that sustainable development of the country and its economy is impossible without addressing the root causes of climate change. A deep cut in emissions is, thus, crucial to control disaster.

Even the most conservative scientists have strengthened the discourse: Extreme weather hazards and patterns used to be reported by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as low impact, high frequency or high impact, low frequency, but now reporting is on *high* impact and *high* frequency events.

The Precautionary Principle (Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration, reflected in Article 3 of the UNFCCC) should be reaffirmed. “Parties should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures, taking into account that policies and measures to deal with climate change should be cost-effective so as to ensure global benefits at the lowest possible cost. To achieve this, such policies and measures should take into account different socio-economic contexts, be comprehensive, cover all relevant sources, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases and adaptation, and comprise all economic sectors.”

More than 50 million people live in poverty in Bangladesh and many of these live in marginalized fragile parts of the country, such as flood plains and river islands, or the coastal zones where cyclones are a major threat. The increasing trend in population growth means that, while disaster preparedness may have improved in many ways, an ever growing number of people are exposed to these environmental threats.

Continued investment into disaster risk reduction in disaster prone regions, including areas vulnerable to cyclones and storm surges, floods, river and coastal erosion and droughts is crucial. Especially is this true in areas experiencing recurring disasters or a combination of extreme events and gradual environmental degradation, leading to cumulative vulnerabilities.

Case Study: Bangladesh and India (cont'd.)

Forced Migration means that adaptation has failed. The capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, has received more than 25 million people in only 12 years. The city is low-lying and vulnerable. Vulnerability got even more intense with the poor people settling in the endemic slums. The growth of the cities is becoming unsustainable. On the other hand, there are also many people forced to stay. The many people living in absolute poverty are neither able to protect themselves against climate change consequences nor leave to the cities.

The majority of migration in which environmental factors play a role in Bangladesh is internal rather than international. Nonetheless, the possible causal impact of environmental degradation and change on cross-border migration is likely to increase, especially to India. To understand the overall picture, international migration has to be taken into account. But the connections between longer-distance and more permanent forms of international migration are less clear. Population growth, poverty and economic and other opportunities that flow from international migration will continue to make it an attractive option for many Bangladeshi people. Given that in the long-term climate change is likely to exacerbate many of these environmental vulnerabilities and place greater strains on already poor regions of Bangladesh, mainstreaming migration policies into adaptation strategies is as necessary as to support potential migrants from environmentally vulnerable regions, to the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities.

What was achieved? Obviously, the process was merely initiated and it is fair to say that it will take patience and sustained efforts to achieve any consensus around the need for a new normative instrument or standards on this question; we are simply not there yet. That said, both Bellagio and Nansen played a crucial role in clarifying the issues and gathering consensus amongst experts and some policy-makers on the importance of normative developments to address this question. Additionally, certain states took up this issue in the pledges made at UNHCR's Ministerial Meeting in December 2011, which closed the year of commemorations.

It is key that the work conducted and the policy achievements of the commemorations are followed through with and that sustained engagement on these issues continue, as this will be the only way to eventually succeed in strengthening the normative framework.

Environmental Migration, Vulnerability and Resilience³

Migration can also be a sign of empowerment, the search for a better life, and thus a strategy of adaptation to climate change. It is, therefore, not necessarily an indication of one's vulnerability to extreme events or to slow degradation. As an income diversification strategy, migration can build a population's resilience to climate change. According to a 2011 Gallup survey, one in ten people across the world say they will move because of the environment. Whether these people will actually leave is not the question; the question is how to best manage environmental migration in order to make it an informed, safe and voluntary choice.

Through work on the ground and with a membership of 146 states, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) observes a growing impact of climate change on livelihoods and human mobility. In 2011, IOM's membership approved the establishment of a Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism for both natural disasters and conflict emergencies, and devoted the International Dialogue on Migration to building capacities to address migration in the context of climate change. IOM's work to manage migration crisis situations through a comprehensive framework that also addresses forced migration due to natural disasters has continued in 2012.

In fact, *migration related to environmental change and degradation is one of the most ancient forms of human mobility.* However, awareness about migration in the context of climate change has reached the international agenda only in very recent years. One explanation is that environmental migration can be described as a multi-causal phenomenon, where environmental factors mix with other economic, social, cultural, demographic and political dynamics; thus making it difficult to disentangle the environmental factors from others.

Countries most vulnerable to climate change talked about migration in relation to climate change for the first time in the 2011 Dhaka Ministerial Declaration of the Climate Vulnerable Forum. Language on "migration, displacement and planned relocation" was integrated in the UNFCCC climate change negotiations text only in 2010. Paragraph 14F of the Cancun Agreements represents a turning point in terms of policy

³ Based on the presentation made by Ms Dina Ionescu, International Organization for Migration.

awareness of the topic. Practical solutions for further managing migration in the context of climate change can be found in the Programme for Loss and Damage of the UNFCCC. It acknowledges that extreme events, as well as slow-onset events, lead to loss of lives, cultures, ecosystems and territories and therefore can generate displacement.

The Hyogo Disaster Risk Reduction Framework for Action also provides tools to develop populations' capacities to be better prepared in case of disaster. Furthermore, the Global Framework for Climate Services can provide practical applications to help manage human mobility in the context of climate change. National Adaptation Plans represent a window of opportunity to support developing countries in their efforts to integrate human mobility into their adaptation planning. Existing migratory frameworks dealing with migration should include environmental and climate change considerations. Migration can be facilitated through safe legal migration channels at bilateral, regional and international levels. On the policy level, IOM considers that bilateral agreements could be used to facilitate temporary and circular labour migration schemes with environmentally vulnerable communities, particularly at less advanced stages of environmental degradation.

IOM's objectives in managing environmental migration are to prevent forced migration resulting from environmental factors. Where forced migration does occur, IOM aims to provide assistance and protection to affected populations, and to seek durable solutions to their situation. Migration is facilitated as an adaptation strategy to climate change.

IOM assisted 4.2 million people in 2010. Community stabilization is part of IOM's framework of response to prevent further forced migration. DRR activities have become an essential part of the stabilization and prevention process, in which IOM works together with governments and communities in order to build resilience to hazards. IOM's strategic interventions are grounded in the understanding that community involvement, including the use of local human resources and materials, is essential in order to stimulate local ownership and safeguard the long-term sustainability of the programmes.

Migration, Labour and Rights⁴

The topic of *climate-induced displacement should be addressed within a rights-based approach* looking at labour and rights. How can we understand the link between displacement and justice? To do so, it is important to take a look at the big picture of international migration and justice. Migration has been a reality since time immemorial. The same factors motivating migration in the past are present today, perhaps with even greater force. The movement of people over borders is a “natural response” in a globalizing world. Some 214 million people live outside their countries of birth or citizenship. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that almost half of these persons are economically active. This involves most working-age adults, taking into account that the global migrant population includes children and aged dependents.

As these numbers demonstrate, *migration today is essentially a labour issue*. Human mobility in response to labour demand has become a key feature in meeting economic, labour market and productivity challenges in a globalized economy. Migration serves as an instrument to adjust the skills, age and sectorial composition of national and regional labour markets. Migration provides responses to fast-changing needs for skills and personnel resulting from technological advances, changes in market conditions and industrial transformations. In countries of aging populations, migration offers the potential to replenish declining workforces by introducing younger workers and increasing the dynamism, innovation and mobility of workforces.

Migration is already making vast contributions to economic viability and growth in many countries. It is becoming one of the most important keys to regional integration and development, whether among European states in the EU or in the Southern Africa Development Community. These facts pose immense challenges for migration policy. It means that the economic contributions and the employment characteristics of migrants are central to labour markets and labour force composition in many countries. At the same time, it means that international labour standards are relevant to most migrants. It also means that questions of “decent work” are a fundamental daily preoccupation of most of the people who have crossed borders to work in another country. Finally, it means that

⁴ Based on the presentation made by Mr. Patrick Taran, Global Migration Policy Associates.

protection of migrant workers and their families from discrimination, xenophobia, abuse, exploitation and violence cannot be relegated to the periphery of state migration policies.

Though migration has been an essential ingredient for growth in many countries, unless it is regulated by appropriate laws and regulations it will entail a high cost in violations of individual rights, in social disruption, in lost or reduced productivity, and lost opportunities for economic growth and development. But global governance is not heading in the direction of increasing protection. On the contrary, migration is managed not necessarily as a feature of labour skills but as a problem of national security. This perception results in the existence of control and restriction regimes against global migration. It is therefore a serious challenge to win the hearts and minds of politicians and policy makers and to achieve successful policies for climate change migration and development. It is also necessary to set up an agenda that brings together experts from different domains. Environmental actors and climate change scientists, humanitarian and development agencies have to come together with representatives of migration institutions and actors and experts from the field of human rights and justice. There is a need for a broad systematic review of the literature as the basis for an inventory of process, as well as for events and networks to get all stakeholders on board. A solution for the challenges climate change displacement poses to the international community must have a strong migration specific component.

Climate Change, Human Rights and the Environment⁵

Labour rights are not the only rights affected by climate change and displacement. Recent developments within the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) led to the creation of a mandate for an Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Despite the fact that climate change is also an environmental issue, the HRC

⁵ Based on the presentation made by Ms Barbara Fontana from the Switzerland Mission to the UN institutions in Geneva, who introduced the Background Document for OHCHR-UNEP Joint Side Event “Human Rights at the Center of Sustainable Development - Honoring Rio Principle 1” United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 19 June 2012.

debates have treated human rights and climate change as a topic, and human rights and the environment as another distinct topic, which led to separate Council resolutions with the possibility of separate mechanisms to advance the respective linkages.

Climate change will affect the human rights to water, food and health, as well as others. The linkages have been recognized because both human rights and the environment are endangered by anthropogenic changes in the climate.

Over the last five years, *the Human Rights Council has adopted various resolutions on Human Rights and Climate Change.* On 28 March 2008, the Human Rights Council adopted its first resolution on “Human Rights and Climate Change” (Res. 7/23). The resolution recognized the threat that climate change poses to human rights and requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to conduct a detailed study on human rights and climate change. On 25 March 2009, the Council adopted Resolution 10/4 on “Human Rights and Climate Change” in which it, inter alia, notes that “climate change related impacts have a range of implications, both direct and indirect, for the effective enjoyment of human rights ...”; recognizes that the effects of climate change “will be felt most acutely by those segments of the population who are already in a vulnerable situation ...”; recognizes that “effective international cooperation to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ... is important in order to support national efforts for the realization of human rights implicated by climate change related impacts”; and affirms that “human rights obligations and commitments have the potential to inform and strengthen international and national policy-making in the area of climate change.”

At the HRC 18th Session in September 2011, the governments of Bangladesh and the Philippines introduced a resolution with a proposal to propel efforts towards a specific special procedure mandate with a seminar the following year. A number of countries—including Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the Maldives—also lobbied for a mandate on the environment in which the climate issue would be embedded. Many states directly affected by climate change feared, however, that this would dilute their concerns.

Case Study: Africa

Based on the presentation made by Ms Vivi Akakpo, All Africa Conference of Churches

The entire African continent is facing climate change consequences. Case studies from Benin, Ghana, Kenya and Somalia show that displacement, migration and relocation can be observed increasingly. It's not only indigenous people especially challenged by a changing environment, but also *women and children cope differently* with the consequences than men. Climate change poses a very serious threat to sustainable development. *Gender inequality* is reflected in vulnerability and responsibilities and in the ability to respond to climate change. Unless the gender aspect is addressed directly in climate policy, climate change will increase existing gender gaps.

In many African countries it is difficult for women to acquire the resources vital for adaptation to climate change, like land ownership and education. On the other hand, women have an important role in agriculture, food security, water supply and health care. Strengthening the position of women in these and other sectors would serve to prevent the impacts of climate change.

In Africa almost 80 percent of the food supply is managed by women. Strengthening the position of women and increasing their operating potential means adaptation to climate change. Women should be seen as active players who for their own part can promote both the mitigation of climate change and adaptation to it. Women are often responsible for collecting firewood and cooking. More efficient energy sources would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and would provide better and safer access to energy. Energy could also be generated for lighting, which would promote educational opportunities after sunset.

Changes of ecosystems, such as coastal erosion and land degradation, are also the outcome of *policies and human actions*. In the Horn of Africa for instance, the 2011 hunger crisis was actually not a suddenly arising and unexpected catastrophe. The areas worst affected were those already suffering from severe poverty for many years. The pastoralist way of life has been under pressure across the region for a long time, as their access to traditional grazing areas is restricted by settlement and poor policies. The situation in Somalia was marked by conflict and huge numbers of people displaced for many years. So while severe and repeated droughts certainly triggered the huge scale of the disaster, this crisis was also caused by people and policies. This dramatic example proves that actions and decisions are influenced by social, cultural, political and economic settings, and environmental changes in turn influence these settings. Causes and motives for migration and for the decision not to migrate overlap, and cannot be easily separated or assigned to a single element like climate change. On the other hand, those displaced by the consequences of climate change in Somalia searching for protection in the Kenyan Dadaab refugee camp could claim protection under the Geneva refugee convention as being refugees fleeing conflict.

In March 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 16/11 on “Human Rights and the Environment” and requested OHCHR to conduct a detailed analytical study on the relationship between human rights and the environment. This study found that, *while much progress has been made in understanding the relationship between human rights and the environment, several important questions remained.* These unsettled issues included: the need for and potential content of a right to a healthy environment; the role and duties of private actors with respect to human rights and the environment; the extraterritorial reach of human rights and environment; and how to operationalize and monitor the implementation of international human rights obligations relating to the environment. To address these questions, the report suggested that the HRC consider paying special attention to the relationship between human rights and the environment through its appropriate mechanisms, including through the possibility of establishing a special procedure on human rights and the environment.

On 22 March 2012, the HRC adopted by consensus the resolution (19/L.8 Rev.1) “Human Rights and the Environment,” which had seventy-two co-sponsors. The resolution welcomed OHCHR’s report and decided to appoint for a period of three years an “independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment”⁶ and encouraged the OHCHR to participate at Rio+20 in June 2012 in order to promote a human rights perspective.

Bridging the Gaps Internationally⁷

In 2011, some remarkable events for the improvement of protection for climate-change-displaced people have taken place.⁸ Through the Bellagio process as well as the Nansen Conference, humanitarian, development and environmental international agencies acknowledged the importance

⁶ Editors’ note: Prof John H. Knox, the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and the Environment presented his first report to the HRC in February 2013. See the report here: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-43_en.pdf.

⁷ A dialogue between Theodor Rathgeber, Forum Human Rights Germany, Margit Ammer, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, Vienna, and Stephen Humphreys, London School of Economics.

⁸ The following paragraphs summarize the intervention of Margit Ammer.

of building a *common system of cooperation* and the need for better coordination among themselves. Provisions made on migration and displacement in the Cancún Adaptation Framework will lead to better protection for climate-induced displaced people. Bellagio and Nansen officially acknowledged that *there is a legal protection gap for climate-displaced people*, but the *principles* elaborated by the participants are milestones in the protection debate:

- *shared responsibilities* to respond to the humanitarian impacts of climate change;
- *leadership and engagement* of local governments and communities, civil society and private sector;
- *regional frameworks* and international cooperation to enable cross-border movements;
- *increase* the local and national *capacity* to respond to disasters;
- *strengthen disaster prevention and preparedness*;
- *utilize existing legal frameworks* and protection regimes; and
- *a more coherent approach to protection* at the international level.

The discussion of the rights of climate-induced displaced persons has often focused exclusively on their lack of legal status. Though this issue remains of high importance, migration and displacement associated with climate change raises a whole range of human rights issues that have often been neglected. Human rights challenges arise before and after displacement. Human rights are also at stake long before displacement becomes inevitable, for instance in the context of adaptation measures.

A welcome trend is observed within UNHCR and other institutions to build on regional regimes and to create best-practice experiences for the protection of climate-displaced people. This trend contributes to achieving global solutions for the protection of climate-induced displaced people.

Climate-induced displacement is not something coming up in the future but *is a reality already now*.⁹ The gap between the international community's understanding of the dangers of climate change and the dearth of action taken to mitigate those dangers still is enormous.

⁹ The following paragraphs summarize the intervention of Stephen Humphreys.

Case Study: The Sahel

Based on the presentation made by Mr Mohamed Handaine, Chair of Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee, and Mr Dennis Hambro-Drotz, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), who introduced the study 'Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel' conducted by the UNEP in cooperation with the IOM, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations University and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, with technical input from the University of Salzburg's Centre for Geoinformatics.

Climate change poses threats and dangers to the survival of Indigenous communities in North Africa, even though they contribute the least to greenhouse gas emissions.

The Livelihood security study analyzed regional trends in temperature, rainfall, droughts and flooding over the past 40 years and their implications for the availability of natural resources, livelihoods, migration and conflict in seventeen West African countries from the Atlantic coast to Chad. The analysis detects *significant changes in regional climatic conditions*, including an overall rise in mean seasonal temperature from 1970 to 2006 of approximately 1°C, with a greater increase of between 1.5°C to 2°C observed in far eastern Chad and northern Mali and Mauritania. The study shows that the frequency of floods and the area covered by flooding have increased in parts of the region over the past 24 years, for example with large areas of southern Burkina Faso, western Niger and northern Nigeria experiencing up to 10 floods during this period.

An innovative mapping process has been applied to identify 19 climate hotspots where climatic changes have been the most severe and which warrant focused adaptation planning and other follow-up activities. Common to these hotspots is that they have been most heavily affected by flooding, although they have also experienced slow-onset changes, in particular in temperature and the occurrence of drought, and these varying conditions have affected the livelihoods of millions of people who depend on natural resources. The impacts of such changing climatic conditions on the availability of natural resources, combined with factors such as population growth and weak governance, have led to greater competition over scarce resources and to changing migration patterns in the region.

*Competition for fresh water, coastal resources and land among fishermen, farmers and pastoralists as well as new migrants is increasing, and in some cases leading to heightened tensions and conflict, most notably in the area surrounding Lake Chad. In combination with changing rainfall patterns, seasonal droughts have already contributed to changes in livelihoods. For example, there is a *shift to combining farming and livestock breeding* which is seen as a strategy to adapt to increasing climate uncertainties. Early movements south and towards the coast by pastoralists, as a result of changing climatic conditions, can result in increased competition for resources and the destruction of crops in the receiving areas, and lead to conflicts with farming communities.*

Case Study: The Sahel (cont'd.)

The increased frequency and severity of climate-related disasters as well as future sea-level rise, could lead to more permanent migration over time.

The frequency and severity of flooding has increased in the Sahel and West Africa, allowing for less recovery time for farmland and pastures between floods, resulting in increased risk of deaths, massive population displacement and of crop and cattle losses.

The data shows that areas affected by large-scale conflicts, particularly Chad and northern Niger, have also been affected by changes in climate. Although the study does not try to show any direct linkage between changes in climate and conflicts, people living in areas that have been affected by conflict can be considered as more vulnerable to the effects of changing climatic conditions, compared to more politically stable areas.

The relationship between climate change, migration and conflict remains complex, however, with climate change threatening the integrity of ecosystems that are already made vulnerable by a rapidly growing population. It is evident that this situation will exacerbate competition over natural resources and trigger further movements of people and new conflicts.

Importantly, the report provides recommendations for improving conflict and migration sensitivity in adaptation planning, investments and policies across the region. The key recommendations include:

- Adopt climate change adaptation *policies* and programmes that are *migration and conflict-sensitive* and that aim to *reduce livelihood vulnerability*, promote alternatives, and improve the availability and access to natural resources.
- *Promote regional environmental cooperation* in addressing climate change, migration and conflict, being aware that issues of climate change and migration are regional in nature.
- Root national adaptation policies in the "green economy" and *promote the creation of green jobs* and sustainable farming practices, in order to enhance food security and increase the resilience to climate stressors.
- Strengthen *preventive action, environmental diplomacy, rights to resources* and dispute resolution to take early action to defuse both imminent threats and broader instability.
- Prioritize *systematic data collection* and early warning systems. The systematic collection of climate data should be established and improved throughout the region, notably through the establishment of a comprehensive network of weather stations.
- Build *donor commitment to long-term engagement in the Sahel*. Addressing climate change impacts on livelihoods in the Sahel requires long-term financial commitment and improved coordination of investments.

Case Study: The Sahel (cont'd)

- Conduct *follow-up field assessments* in the hotspots identified using a livelihoods approach to determine how resource availability is changing, how livelihoods are being affected, and if incidences of conflict or migration are increasing, in order to inform adaptation strategies and interventions.

Further excerpts from *Livelihood Security: Climate Change, Migration and Conflict in the Sahel* offer context:

“The regional climate trends observed over the last 40 years in the Sahel show that overall temperatures have risen, droughts have been recurrent and severe, rainfall has generally increased, and floods have occurred more frequently and with more intensity. Changes in the regional climate are impacting issues linked to the availability of natural resources essential to livelihoods in the region, as well as food insecurity. Along with important social, economic and political factors, this can lead to migration, conflict or a combination of the two: Changes in climate most impact livelihoods that are directly dependent on natural resources, for example through a decrease in agricultural yields, the gradual unsuitability of traditional grazing grounds, or the drying of important water bodies.

“The migration and movement of people and livestock are an integral part of ancestral livelihood strategies in the region. However, migration also occurs as a result of traditional and non-traditional livelihoods no longer being viable, due to changes in the environment: Seasonal and circular migration can be considered as traditional adaptation strategies to climate variability in the region, offering opportunities for trade and the exchange of ideas. However, these traditional migration patterns are increasingly being replaced by a more permanent southward shift. In addition, the increased frequency and severity of climate-related disasters – such as floods and drought – could lead to more permanent migration over time.”

The nation of Palau embarked on a new legal initiative to bring emissions causing climate change under control. Climate change involves the international rule of law and warrants consideration by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Palau called for an ICJ advisory opinion on the obligations and responsibilities of states under international law to avoid transboundary harm caused by greenhouse gas emissions. An ICJ advisory opinion on climate change, in addition to having historic value, might have power to reshape positively the international approach to greenhouse gas emissions. Although it could not bind states to take specific action, an advisory opinion would define states' obligations and responsibilities with respect to emissions under international law. The advice could help develop new international norms of behaviour regulating transboundary harm caused by emissions

and could provide needed clarity on the principles according to which states can negotiate effective solutions.

*The human-rights-based approach should be the instrument to accelerate political processes.*¹⁰ A human rights approach identifies concrete violations of human rights and by doing so gets more public recognition. More media coverage and a greater focus on real human suffering, hardships, and fears would help to raise public awareness of the problem and encourage individuals to consider the true impact of western lifestyles and high energy consumption in the world's wealthiest regions. Better management of the economy, the introduction of disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures and insurance coverage of loss and damage are unlikely to be sufficient on their own to counter the threat posed by climate change. Only once it becomes clear that in some parts of the world the minimum requirements for a dignified existence are being violated – and this comes to be viewed as a criminal act as opposed to a mere misdeed – will there be sufficient momentum for an approach to negotiations aimed at true change.

The Role of the Churches

The Challenge

*Churches must be pointing to human rights language and procedures, including complaint procedures and standard-setting mechanisms, in order to ensure that victims become active stakeholders.*¹¹ Churches must take care of climate-change displaced people and must not hesitate to call them refugees as this might be the most suitable term for description. Churches are the most appropriate institutions to give this legally discussed problem the moral dimension it entails.

From this perspective it is important to remember that climate change is not just about law and legal instruments; it is also about making governments change their policies and concepts of development in the light of climate justice.

¹⁰ The following paragraph summarizes the intervention of Theodor Rathgeber.

¹¹ This section is based on an intervention by Theodor Rathgeber.

Climate change presents challenges at many levels, but it is above all a challenge to the imagination. In order to determine how to avoid immense population displacement, churches need first to imagine the kind of world that will permit mass forced migration, and churches must then imagine another kind of world.

Churches need to imagine not only how to bring down our carbon consumption but also how to help our fellow human beings in other parts of the world adapt to climate change. But churches also need to imagine what it will mean if the world fails.

Churches with the Uprooted

Vivi Akakpo (AACC) explained that churches do not minister to refugees because of their faith or nationality, because of their social or economic backgrounds, or because they are nice people. AACC and National Councils of Churches minister to refugees because they have suffered injustice and great loss. Until now the major part of the service provided to migrants and refugees is based on pastoral care. In the case of refugee crises, emergency aid is expressed through food items or blankets. In Africa there are hardly any migration laws, so churches often need to step in and protect migrants. But the relationship between climate change and migration is quite multifaceted, and more resources and commitment are needed to develop reactions on the challenges observed. *A clear task for churches will be to advocate with governments for taking their responsibility for protection of climate-change displaced persons.*

Peter Emberson (PCC) started by reminding participants that member churches in the Pacific came to address the issue of climate change displacement since the 9th General Assembly in Samoa in 2007. The objectives at that time were to have a clear theological basis and platform as to *why the churches are addressing climate resettlement and to respond to the urgency of the matter* through the establishment of a process-driven framework that would allow for contributions from the WCC Working Group on climate change as well as all other actors and partners of PCC. This process has led to the 10th General Assembly in the Solomon Islands in 2013 as a point of reference to further determine the next important steps for engaging the churches in a political dialogue on the resettlement of Pacific peoples.

As a direct consequence of climate-induced calamities, Pacific Church Leaders adopted in 2009 the so-called Moana Declaration on climate change and the imminent threat of forced relocation and displacement faced by Pacific peoples.

The PCC is following its objective of providing education on the impacts of climate change nationally and regionally as well as on the impacts of international policies on the environment. PCC creates awareness, lobbies and builds alliances on issues pertaining to resettlement of populations. Lobbying includes dialogue with Pacific government officials, in which churches advocate for a regional identity around solidarity, reciprocity and compassion.

The emphasis is on bringing the Pacific churches' concern and vision of human communities that take care of themselves and the environment, hence, exercising their responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation. PCC does conduct workshops at the national level with member churches on climate change impacts on their livelihood and resettlement within countries, and also works out strategies to counter the impacts.

Research on resettlement modeling is being conducted, taking into account the human rights, governance and economic impacts. The purpose of the research is to provide evidence on the need for populations to resettle. The results will be used as educational resource material for advocacy work conducted by regional inter-governmental bodies and national governments. It will also provide the basis for related work on human rights, governance and economic modeling.

Peter Emberson (PCC) further explained the *advocacy role* PCC is carrying on. On the international level, PCC is accompanying closely the Fiji government since 2009 in the UNFCCC process as counselor and advisor.

In the face of globally increasing variable weather and the recent spate of unprecedented heavy flooding domestically, Fiji has a strong interest in seeing positive and forward-looking outcomes achieved in the UNFCCC process generally. The Fiji delegation participates actively in the negotiations and also makes its voice heard through the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). A key demand of the small island alliance is

a second five-year commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, which currently binds 37 industrialized nations and the EU to reduce their carbon emissions to agreed targets by 2012, and a new parallel agreement for those with no current Kyoto obligations. In Durban the COP decided to launch a process to develop a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the UNFCCC applicable to all parties, through a subsidiary body under the Convention established and known as the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. AOSIS is strongly involved in making this process successful, despite the difficulties it faces.

Sydia Nduna, WCC Programme Executive for migration looked at the broader picture of churches and migrants. At a gathering of migrant churches in Geneva, it became clear that migrants are the life of the church. Talking about migrants means talking about the church. Migrants have given life to dying congregations, have shared spiritual gifts, and have helped to balance the faith and practice in the communities. There are about one hundred migrant churches in Geneva. Can their voices be heard, their visibility seen and their dignity upheld? In this journey, where is the church today? Are the churches going to see migrants as outside the church? There is a need to have a prophetic voice, a disturbing voice that shirks the norms. Will the church remain the same or will the church change? Looking towards the WCC Assembly in 2013, will these issues influence it? Are we going to be satisfied? What does the search for Christian unity in this context really mean?

We cannot ignore the contribution of migrants to the Christian churches and to faith. We cannot criticize the politicians if we do not challenge ourselves. Why should it bother me that the poor and the marginalized are the most affected? How do they participate? Where and how do they interact with the church? When in the book of Genesis Abraham was sitting and looked up and saw three men, three strangers, three migrants, he stood up and welcomed them. And the strangers gave Abraham and his wife, Sara, life and joy. We should be inspired by this and other stories of the Bible that teach us to welcome the stranger. Can we, as church, lift up our eyes, see the migrant, the stranger, also the climate refugee in our midst and welcome them? Can we open our churches to other traditions and cultures?

How do we as churches advocate for refugees, migrants and IDPs at the government and international levels? As churches we need to bridge practice and theory. We need to preach what we live, but to do so, we need to change our way of living as churches.

Protection Instruments in Europe

Based on the presentation made by Ms Margit Ammer, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, Vienna

At the European level, there is not yet a distinct instrument applicable for climate-displaced people searching for protection. The impact of climate change on migration is a relatively new topic on the EU agenda. In 2011, the European Commission organized a consultation on how to address the challenge of migration and climate change at EU level. The legal debate is unlikely to be solved at the international level in the near future, giving the EU an opportunity to be one of the pioneers in this field.

A working paper is being prepared which will be presented within the framework of a larger communication package on the EU's adaptation strategy. There are also concrete results from the Commission's expert consultation to be included: a consensus that most displacement takes place within the migrants' country of origin or neighbouring regions. Leading on from this, climate migration will remain as part of the EU development policy. This approach is combined with a commitment to prevent and minimize displacement through further adaptation policies integrated with disaster risk reduction and humanitarian aid.

Ammer stressed the importance of resettlement programmes that might be of particular relevance when looking at those who lack the necessary resources to migrate and might be trapped and without escape from climate change consequences. It is very likely that those who cannot migrate and thus fail to adapt to climate change consequences will grow larger. Large scale *resettlement programmes* seem to be a sustainable solution for those who would be left behind otherwise, and it would show *EU's commitment to take on responsibility*. Human rights of persons staying behind are often overlooked.

Summaries from Working Groups

Working Group on Climate Displacement and Human Rights

Coordinated by Felix Kirchmeier, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Yves Lador, Earthjustice

As the UNFCCC is currently insufficient to fully address the human rights impacts of climate change, the Human Rights Council has a responsibility to act. The effects on natural ecosystems, like severe changes in storm and weather patterns, temperature and sea level rise, are already impacting on human rights such as the Right to Water and Sanitation, the Right to Food, the Right to Adequate Housing or the Right to Development. Only an inclusive approach of a smooth adaptation and mitigation to the climate change outcomes can guarantee the full enjoyment of human rights. This approach also has to consider the developmental perspective to create a visible link to human rights, since developing countries and least developed countries are suffering the most from climate change consequences.

For those concerned with the human dimensions of climate change, it is not enough to rely on existing human rights obligations and their implementation mechanisms. Explicit human rights protections must be included in the UNFCCC framework. For each human right potentially or already affected by climate change, implications should be made explicit. It is also of utmost importance to define the contents of the States' obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the affected rights. To define those obligations and to carry out the analysis of the consequences of climate change on human rights, a global, urgent and coherent approach is needed, like the option of a single mandate holder. He or she could rely on the support of all treaty bodies, the cooperation of all other Special Procedures concerned, interrelate with the UNFCCC framework and consult at the field level by being closer to potential victims.

Two or three years ago, human rights were not even a part of the UNFCCC language. The establishment of a Working Group on Human Rights and Climate Change in the UNFCCC process has been already a big step forward, bringing the two topics together at a certain level. The

focus of a possible mandate should lie on the institutional level. The main part of the work is information management between different institutions about knowledge that already exists but in different forms. The institutional bodies at the global level tend to have a different language for the same topic, talking in parallel but not to each other. The parallel points should be brought together and be mainstreamed into human rights language at different bodies to shape a global view of all developments.

As referred earlier, in Resolution 16/11 (2011), the UN Human Rights Council requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct a comprehensive study on human rights and environment. The study examined the practice of states and UN organs as well as normative and jurisprudential developments. It concluded that the linkage between human rights and environment was well established and had received significant attention since the 1972 Stockholm Declaration.

To the RIO+20 negotiations the special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council urged states in an open letter to respect human rights. The letter contains three proposals as to how a double accountability mechanism can be established. First, the outcome document should integrate specific references to all human rights, which are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Second, it recommended to define the indicators and measures to evaluate implementation of the commitments emanating from the Rio+20 Summit through an inclusive, transparent and participatory process with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society. Finally, the letter calls on the proposed Sustainable Development Council to monitor, on the basis of agreed indicators, progress on the Sustainable Development Goals in a similar process to the Universal Periodic Review inaugurated by the Human Rights Council.

Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction in Central America

Coordinated by Rosa Maria Matamoros, CIETS, ACT Alliance

In the region, because of the increase in intensity and strength of tropical storms, namely hurricanes and floods, disaster risk reduction (DRR) is a key issue. DRR should be part of the capacity building of the churches as a response. But also in advocacy at the local and national governmental levels, DRR practices need to be taken into account.

In general terms, the discussion on climate displacement is not in a language coming from the grassroots and is not adapted to the situation there nor to the solutions. There is a need to strengthen the capacity of people at the local level to speak out. However, in the region there is a clear emphasis on a climate justice perspective. Following the “polluter pays” principle, it is stressed that those who created the problem are those who have to pay. But restoration is not even a question on the table. There should be holistic strategies and mainstream climate justice and sustainability.

Climate change is a global issue, although northern countries believe it is the problem of others. But in fact it is a threat for everybody.

In addressing forced displacement, there is a need to have a broad participation, especially from the affected populations. People who are affected should be included in the debate, look at the solutions, taking into account that from the culture of indigenous peoples, migration, displacement cannot be the solution.

Indigenous peoples are vital sustainers of to the many ecosystems in their lands and territories and help enhance the resilience of these ecosystems. In addition, indigenous peoples interpret and react to the impacts of climate change in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions that society at large can replicate to counter pending changes.

If, because of forced migration, one generation loses the knowledge of a given community or ethnic group, then the knowledge is lost. People need to have choices.

Working Group on Climate Resettlement in the Pacific

Coordinated by Julia Edwards, PCC and Margit Ammer, LBI

Involuntary resettlement, in which people are physically displaced and then relocated in a different place, is a complex process, which, if not properly planned and managed, with the full participation of affected people, can result in long-term hardship for the affected population.

PCC wishes to offer advice and accompaniment to its member churches as they support affected communities. Of all advocates involved in the resettlement task, the Church in the Pacific is physically as well as spiritually the closest to the community, and as such, it is ideally positioned to help allay fears and relieve anxieties among those affected.

To be in active solidarity with the peoples of Oceania, PCC needs to be aware of various accompaniment approaches, and to be able to offer suitable guidance where appropriate. Past resettlement schemes therefore offer a rich source of information on the relocation process, and also, on occasion, provide hope to island communities who face uncertain futures.

Preparations for eventual resettlement of Pacific communities must begin now rather than later. Education and the accompaniment of the churches on this issue is a priority. Education and accompaniment should be based on research on climate resettlement and related to issues of human rights, sovereignty and identity. Furthermore, a disaster risk reduction programme has to be put in place before resettlement takes place. With this in mind, PCC is working with the churches to ensure all communities continue to live in dignity and to the fullest.

The ecological crises brought about by climate change are directly linked on the one hand with poverty and wealth, and the growing inability of our environment to provide for basic needs like food, water, land and shelter. Hence, this programme closely works with the other PCC programmes on human rights, globalization and trade, good governance and leadership and ecumenism to assist the people of the Pacific in adapting, mitigating and resettling because of climate change.

PCC's work on climate change and resettlement involves field interviews with local communities facing possible displacement and those already

relocated as a result of historic events, which may or may not involve natural processes. Particular attention is paid to those most vulnerable within a community and to ensure that any adaptation measures are both applicable to and accessible for all those affected. Issues highlighted from past relocations help inform future resettlement proposals. Any relocation is an extremely complex process; affected communities are exposed to risks of severe economic, social and environmental hardship

Main Recommendations from the Working Groups

- *People-oriented policy making:* emphasize the ethical dimension of climate change; establish the links between issues, which is already happening in the case of adaptation.
- *Get the language right:* unfold the meanings of the terminology being used: displacement, migration, refugee, resettlement, relocation, etc.
- *Remember that prevention is better than cure:* insist on mitigation strategies. Strengthen early warning systems.
- *Advocacy:* faith-based groups need to enhance and give voice to people affected by climate change. Advocacy should be based on knowledge sharing, strengthening the knowledge of the communities affected.
- *Develop guidelines to address climate displacement:* to be drafted in understandable language, rather than abstract, normative language. Make an effort to have a broad distribution.

Questions for Individuals and Groups

1. Were you aware of the challenges of climate displacement?
2. Climate-displaced people or climate refugees? Why?
3. Role of the churches: What is your church doing on these topics (in congregations, locally, at national and international levels)?
What should churches do? Why?
4. How do case studies shared and the discussion held help your community, organization, church?

Appendix

Conference Participants

International Conference "Protection & Reparations for 'Climate Refugees': Imperatives & Options"

3-4 May 2010, Chavannes-de-Bogis, Switzerland

Abdelbaky-Harris, Jordana (International Organization for Migration (IOM), Switzerland)

Abramides, Elias C. (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Argentina)

Ahmed, Ghyas (Bangladesh Parliament Jatiya Sangsad, Bangladesh)

Ammer, Margit (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights, Germany)

Biermann, Frank (Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM), Netherlands)

Boncour, Philippe (International Organization for Migration (IOM), Switzerland)

Bruschweiler, Patricia (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Campeau, Christine (Caritas Internationalis, Switzerland)

Casey-Maslen, Marian (Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, Switzerland)

Emberson, Peter (Pacific Conference of Churches, Fiji)

Ferdausur, Rahman (Prodipan - Network on Climate Change, Bangladesh)

Ghazaryan Drissi, Ani (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Göbel, Katja (Pacific Information Centre (PIS), Germany)

Hirsch, Thomas (Bread for the World, Germany)

Humphreys, Stephen J. (London School of Economics & Political Science, United Kingdom)

Karakurt, Türkan (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) office in Geneva, Switzerland)

Kerber, Guillermo (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Kirchmeier, Felix (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) office in Geneva, Switzerland)

Narusova-Schmitz, Alina (International Organization for Migration (IOM), Switzerland)

Papazoglou, Christina (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Rathgeber, Theodor (German Forum for Human Rights (FMR), Germany)

Ryle, Jacqueline (National Council of Churches in Denmark, Denmark)

Saudia, Anwer (Prodipan - Network on Climate Change, Bangladesh)

Schade, Jeanette (Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development, Germany)

Schubert, Jonas (Bread for the World, Germany)

Schwarz, Rixa (Germanwatch, Germany)

Snyder, Kasia (International Council on Human Rights Policy (ICHRP), Switzerland)

Struck-Garbe, Marion (Greenpeace Germany, Germany)

Timms, Tori (Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), Switzerland)

Tungadza, Miguel (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mozambique, Mozambique)

Warner, Koko (UNU-EHS Institute for Environment & Human Security, Germany)

Windfuhr, Michael (Bread for the World, Germany)

Wirsching, Sophia (Bread for the World, Germany)

Yonetani, Michelle (Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, Switzerland)

Zalucky, Halyna (Independent Consultant, Belgium)

International Conference “Climate Change-Induced Displacement: What Is at Stake? A Climate Justice Perspective”

22-23 May 2012, Château de Bossey, Switzerland

Akakpo, Ehui Vivi (All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Regional Office, Togo)

Ammer, Margit (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Human Rights, Austria)

Bernard, Valériane (Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, Switzerland)

Campeau, Christine (Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), Switzerland)

Campos Garcia, Lusmarina (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva, Switzerland)

Chandra Behera, Sukanta (Synodical Board of Social Services, India)

Chowdhury MP, Saber H. (Chair All Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change & Environment, Bangladesh)

Cooper, Joshua (Hawaii Institute for Human Rights, United States)

Dhanjal, Sophie (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Deffenbaugh, Ralston (Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Switzerland)

Duchrow, Julia (Bread for the World, Germany)

Edwards, Julia (Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Fiji)

Emberson, Peter (Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), Fiji)

Fontana, Barbara (Federal Department for International Affairs
(DFAE), Switzerland)

Handaine, Mohamed (Association Amazighe et Environnementale,
Tunisia)

Hamro-Drotz, Dennis (United Nations Environment Programme
(UNEP), Switzerland)

Humphreys, Stephen J. (London School of Economics & Political
Science, United Kingdom)

Ionesco, Dina (International Organization for Migration (IOM),
Switzerland)

Hurwitz, Agnès (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) –
Democratic Governance Group, United States)

Kerber, Guillermo (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Kirchmeier, Felix (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) office in Geneva,
Switzerland)

Lador, Yves (Earthjustice, Switzerland)

Lim, Su Hyun (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Matamoros, Rosa Maria (Interchurch Centre for Theological and Social
Studies (CIETS), Nicaragua)

Mondal, Mohon Kumar (Local Environment Development and
Agricultural Research Society (LEDARS), Bangladesh)

Nduna, Sydia (World Council of Churches (WCC), Switzerland)

Peschke, Doris (Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), Belgium)

Ayala, Carlos Rauda (Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, Switzerland)

Rathgeber, Theodor (German Forum for Human Rights (FMR), Germany)

Salmon, Daniel (International Organization for Migration (IOM), Switzerland)

Schüle, Karl (Bread for the World, Germany)

Schulthess, Beatriz (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) & Indigenous Peoples Ancestral Spiritual Council, Switzerland)

Taran, Patrick (Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA), Switzerland)

Thajono, Budi (Franciscans International and Dominicans for Justice and Peace (FIOP), Switzerland)

Wirsching, Sophia (Bread for the World, Germany)

Vulnerable communities around the world are confronted by the challenge of resettlement due to climate change. Frequent, intense weather conditions cause cyclones, hurricanes and floods, as well as a rise in sea levels, forcing people to migrate. What can be done?

To listen to victims of climate-induced displacement and to discern an effective response to their needs and rights, Bread for the World, the Pacific Conference of Churches and the World Council of Churches convened two international conferences. They included representatives from affected communities, countries and regions; the academy; the UN and governments; civil society organizations; churches and other faith-based organizations. This publication offers reports of the conferences, which aimed at achieving:

- Deepened understanding of the issue
- Recommendations for churches, church-based and civil society organizations
- Assessment of the topic's inclusion in different international processes and regimes.
- Identification of further ways to bridge the gaps in the international protection system
- Strengthened collaboration between participants, including the development of an advocacy strategy.

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