



AFRICA REGIONAL MEETING ON CLIMATE DISPLACEMENT


The Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement Within States - the Peninsula Principles - were adopted by a group of international experts and legal scholars in 2013. This standard is the world's first policy framework designed to assist governments worldwide to secure the rights of people displaced internally by climate change. These principles provide a comprehensive normative framework, based on principles of international law, human rights obligations and good practice, within which the rights of climate displaced persons can be addressed.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Peninsula Principles.

They remain more relevant than ever for climate displaced persons everywhere.

KEY POINTS

- » African nations are ill-equipped to handle natural disasters, a reality harshly illuminated by the severe displacement following Cyclone Idai, which displaced **more than 600,000 people** throughout the continent.
- » **Less than 40% of Africans** have access to disaster early warning systems, leaving the vast majority vulnerable to natural disasters.
- » Food insecurity affects both humans and animals, further **exacerbating climate-induced displacement**.
- » By 2050, Lagos is slated to accommodate between **26 to 30 million individuals** despite its constrained land area, of which only half is arable.
- » The repercussions of Africa's climate displacement are reverberating in Europe; notably, Lampedusa, an Italian town, hosts **more refugees than its original inhabitants**, many of whom are climate displaced.
- » Worsening climate change is facilitating the emergence of **political unrest and instability** in many African countries.
- » Many parts of the Sahel region will **soon be uninhabitable** either due to extreme temperatures, prolonged droughts or plagues.
- » In 2011, Somalia had a famine that **displaced over 1 million people** and **killed more than 250,000 people**. The causes of this famine have been attributed to climate change.



On 11 October 2023 Displacement Solutions (DS) held the fourth of eight regional meetings to mark the 10-year anniversary of the Peninsula Principles and to explore innovative approaches to climate displacement around the world. This report provides a brief summary of the key themes of the discussions.

Africa's Climate Displacement Crisis

Scott Leckie (Director, Displacement Solutions) opened the meeting by highlighting the profound climate challenges confronting Africa, a region severely impacted by climate change, displacement, and migration amidst a backdrop of drought, desertification and rising sea levels. Escalating conflicts, the deterioration of democratic governance and impact of extractive industries further compound these adversities.

The global threat posed by climate change means that fundamental and deep changes will occur to the shape of our planet, including changed world maps to reflect disappearing islands and coastlines due to sea level rise, huge land masses becoming completely inhabitable due to desertification, and new mega cities in parts of the world which are now frozen.


Despite some initial responses to these challenges, the enormity of the crisis clearly requires more extensive preparation, planning, and proactive measures to mitigate the looming threats and manage rising displacement figures. Collective efforts to identify innovative solutions are called for.

Current Gaps

Ihhan Dahir (Institute for Security Studies) outlined some of the gaps in climate change action on the African continent, noting a misalignment of national laws, policies and strategies with the extreme urgency and extent of the climate crisis and need for adaptation action. National frameworks have not kept pace with increases in global efforts, and will require increased levels of technical expertise to implement. The majority of the conversation at the recent Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi was centred on incremental change, while the existential problems confronting the continent require larger transformative action. The pressing need for adaptation strategies demands a dual focus: addressing immediate concerns and at the same time envisaging longer-term large-scale strategies.

Early Warning and Disaster Preparedness

A number of participants pointed to the challenges across the continent in terms of disaster preparedness and response, among them a deficiency of early warning systems. Reports suggest that access to such systems is limited to less than 40% of African residents. There is an urgent need for better early warning and response systems.



Elizabeth Gulugulu (former Global South Focal point for the Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC) shared her experience of displacement caused by the 2019 Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe, a catastrophe that, according to the IDMC, displaced more than 600,000 people throughout Africa¹.

Cyclone Idai was “a wake-up call”. No early warnings were delivered to the regions that would be affected to enable people to prepare. Long after the cyclone struck, she described seeing climate displaced persons still housed in tents, a stark illustration of the lack of post-disaster adequate housing solutions. The absence of forewarning or post-disaster support illustrated the lack of policies and budget allocations for disaster preparedness and response. Given the insufficiency of resources to tackle such circumstances, continuous advocacy for enhanced preparedness is required.

Ilhan Dahir also noted that early warning is crucial for disaster preparedness but is not adequately addressed in strategies to deal with the climate crisis on the continent. This was most recently evident with storm Daniel in Libya in September 2023, where an early warning could have made a significant difference for the tens of thousands displaced, but “early warning is only as good as early response.” What is also needed is a strategy for implementation when early warning systems signal impending threats, starting with a plan of action to move people out of harm’s way.

Rural to Urban Migration – Creating Climate Resilient Cities


A number of participants discussed the trend of climate-induced migrations from rural to urban areas to escape adversities such as droughts, floods and rising sea levels, noting the challenges, as well as the opportunities, involved.

Ilhan Dahir noted that rural to urban migration severely strains urban resources and infrastructure, potentially leading to social unrest. Unpredictable seasons and increasing food insecurity are driving increasing climate displacement across the continent, and highlight the necessity of resilient urban planning to accommodate climate migrants. Despite the challenges, urbanization presents an opportunity for change, where governments can foster climate resilience by fortifying cities against climate change impacts and implementing sustainable urban expansion to accommodate new migrants.

Michael Omoniyi Bankhole (Lagos State Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources) highlighted the impact of internal and cross-border migration to Lagos. Latest forecasts indicate that in 2050 the Lagos population will almost double to 26 to 30 million, amidst increasing land scarcity. The government is investing in comprehensive climate risk assessments and other studies to understand Lagos’ topography and what new initiatives can be undertaken to cope with the influx of people. Green infrastructure and technology also need to be explored to address infrastructural challenges and promote sustainable urban development.

Nassim Majidi (Samuel Hall East Africa) talked about the ‘poverty trap’ climate change creates for displaced communities, often plunging them into a recurrent pattern of climate-induced displacement. The devastation encapsulates not only the loss of housing and property but extends

¹ IDMC, Tropical Cyclone Idai, 2020: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/GRID-2019-Disasters-Figure-Analysis-Idai.pdf>.



to the obliteration of subsistence and livelihood, particularly impacting those reliant on agriculture. As primary income sources disappear, often suddenly, individuals and whole communities are forced to relocate to urban centres, in search of better life opportunities and economic stability. Comprehensive strategies are required to break this destructive cycle and promote sustainable livelihoods and resilience among the affected populations.

She emphasised the importance of addressing displacement from an urban planning perspective to achieve more cohesive and sustainable integration of those displaced to cities. More action to bring together municipal town planning authorities and displaced communities together to promote the protection of their concerns should be undertaken.


Scott Leckie noted that consistent with the global trend of rural to urban migration which is typically to slums and informal settlements with significantly lower standards of living than the area of origin, these same processes will occur with respect to climate displacement, in particular when such movement occurs without any type of government intervention to assist those moving. Given the future prospect of hundreds of millions of people being forced to move to cities due to climate change impacts across the world, governments need to adopt measures that cleverly guide or induce people to move in ways that are sustainable. One example could be to promote resettlement in smaller towns rather than larger cities, backed by policies and resources to support those displaced, which would bolster local populations with new migrants that could then in turn have benefits for the local economy.

The Nexus between Climate Change, Migration, Violence and Development

Ilhan Dahir noted the complex relationship between climate change, violence, and development evident in regions where climate adversities exacerbate existing socio-political tensions. Drought conditions, for instance, can enable extremist groups to seize control of or recruit vulnerable communities, imposing additional hardships that undermine their ability to sustain livelihoods and remain in place. Concurrently, the depletion of vital natural resources triggers fierce competition for resources such as food and water, escalating conflicts and displacement.

For example, since the 2011 famine displaced over one million people and led to the deaths of over 250,000 people, Somalia has been experiencing more frequent and longer-lasting droughts. The worsening crisis has allowed extremist groups such as Al Shabab to take control of parts of the economic system, imposing levies and taxes on drought-affected communities, exacerbating their vulnerability.

In the Sahel region, climate change has worsened desertification and water scarcity, fuelling conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. While Sub Saharan Africa has always been a region with a high level of mobility, climate change has disrupted long standing migration patterns causing these groups to vie for scarce resources. Losses in water levels in Lake Chad has also led to resource conflicts, social unrest and the displacement of millions of people, allowing Boko Haram to take advantage of this instability.



Michael Bankhole also outlined how the problems facing Lake Chad and high deforestation rates in northern Nigeria have exacerbated competition for food and water and the Boko Haram insurgency. The insurgency in the north has also affected southern parts of the country, heightening insecurity regarding the safety of lives, properties, and food resources.

Impact on Youth and Women

Michael Kakande (The Resilient 40) noted the particular impact of climate displacement on young people, with huge numbers being pushed to look for survival elsewhere. Given that this is not a problem of their own making, there is a general sentiment of disenchantment among young people about the “uninclusive and unresponsive” nature of geopolitical world systems and the failure to address climate change. Young people feel marginalised by the current frameworks and are searching for alternative pathways to navigate around the system that overlook their concerns and aspirations. Africa’s youth population is a potential asset in combating insecurities that flow from climate displacement, yet the lack of future employment strategies threatens to usher in heightened insecurity.


Nassim Majidi referred to climate change displacement as a “threat multiplier” for women, elaborating on how it exacerbates existing gender disparities in relation to education, food security and gender-based violence. The evidence demonstrates what works globally, whether in Somalia or Afghanistan, are measures that are led by women who, often at the frontline as men leave earlier, spearhead adaptive responses that allow them to remain in place and avoid displacement. Through forming collectives and engaging in financing initiatives, women are often at the forefront of devising and implementing practical solutions such as housing upgrades or tree planting.

It is essential that women are supported to put in practice these kinds of initiatives. There are examples from Asia on how women are key communicators on the dangers of climate change and adaptation solutions. Action to support efforts to enable women to communicate with other women on these issues at the local level is required. Efforts to shift decision-making and resources to a local level to support community led efforts would also assist in better supporting women in this regard.

Sarah Rosengaertner (Global Centre for Climate Mobility) outlined the work of the GCM’s African Climate Mobility Initiative to research current climate realities at a continental level, how communities think about moving due to climate impacts and potential future scenarios. These findings are being used as the basis for work in hotspot areas that are most affected to develop interventions that will have a concrete impact on the ground.

Consultations are planned in Uganda which will aim to better understand the country’s context, policy and legal dynamics for identifying solutions, as well as Somalia and Niger, despite their more complicated political contexts.

Simultaneously, there are ongoing efforts to build alliances across regions in global conversations, such as the COP and the recent climate mobility summit held alongside the UN General Assembly, bringing together stakeholders from Africa, the Pacific, and Asia. The aim is to elevate climate mobility issues on global platforms, promoting a shared understanding and collaborative approach towards adaptation and loss and damage agendas.



Some innovative ideas that are being explored on how to push the envelope to advance policy and programs include the utilisation of data and modelling to inform decision-making at various regional, national or local levels. For example, the development of models fine-tuned to local contexts to provide real-time information to city officials, aiding in anticipatory action and better preparedness for climate migration. This includes exploring innovative solutions such as financial assistance for planned migration or incentivising remittances to bolster resilience ahead of disasters. Another example is information to support climate literacy, to make sure people have information as the bedrock for other actions.

Another area requiring innovative approaches are the huge issues of land and water. The ACMI has identified partner governments that are interested in the development of concrete pilot projects around how to address the intersection between land, water and climate mobility. Similarly, work is required on the development of green skills to identify which sectors and cities where concrete pilot projects could be developed. Climate action projects as a vector for sustaining peace (which also overlaps with jobs and water) is another area where creative solutions are being explored.

Funding

Michael Kakande emphasized the need to bolster inclusive services and systems for children and young people affected by climate disasters through adequate funding. There is a need for an accessible, substantial loss and damage fund to support critical areas like education, nutrition, and protection. The existing funding structures are inaccessible and require systemic change to ensure funds are readily available when needed, not only for preventive measures like early warning systems but also for responsive actions post-disaster.

Nassim Majidi highlighted the role of the Migration, Disasters and Climate Change initiative of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa (IGAD). This initiative is the first to be funded via a migration multi-partner trust fund in the region and provides a pathway to exploring different funding streams to support solutions to climate displacement. The programme is regional and seeks to strike a balance between regional level initiatives and local community involvement in evidence-based development. Examples include investments in renewable energy and waste management in Somalia, and exploring green economy, agroforestry, and climate-smart agriculture in Kenya. The initiative also seeks to facilitate alternative migration pathways for displaced individuals, extending beyond disaster preparedness to broader migration solutions.

Elizabeth Gulugulu emphasised the importance of securing equitable budget allocations for disaster preparedness by building resilient communities capable of better withstanding disasters, including to ensure affected communities have housing, land and the means to support their families.



Conclusion

This meeting brought together climate change experts and representatives of community organisations working with people who have direct experience of climate displacement in Africa.

The discussions covered a broad range of issues, from the complex nexus between climate displacement, violence and development, the increasing competition for scarce resources due to drought and desertification, and the challenges and opportunities of urban migration to cities. The need for significant investment to create better early warning systems as well as disaster preparedness and response mechanisms was repeatedly highlighted. The discussions also stressed the urgent need for accessible funding support that is crucial for effective strategies to address climate displacement.

Other issues that were highlighted included the importance of youth and women-led actions to the success of climate displacement advocacy and adaptation efforts, and the need for innovative strategies and concrete projects to address crucial issues that are inextricably intertwined with climate displacement such as land, water and jobs to create climate resilience.

While the challenges of climate displacement in Africa are very considerable, the issue is becoming increasingly recognised as a key element of broader climate change adaptation strategies and this provides new opportunities for innovative action and projects. New action in support of climate affected persons and communities is urgently needed.

Please check out www.displacementsolutions.org for all of the latest information on this project and all other activities by DS and its partners and associates.

Participant Biographies



Elizabeth Gulugulu

Elizabeth Gulugulu is a dedicated environmentalist who is passionate about climate justice. She is an MSc candidate in Biodiversity Conservation who is highly experienced in youth mobilization and research in sustainable solutions. She is formerly the Global South Focal Point for the Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UNFCCC . She has an interest in the interlinkages of biodiversity conservation and agriculture, sustainable farming, building resilient communities, climate action, youth empowerment, and women’s empowerment through advocating for sustainable projects including renewable energy use and agroecological practices.



Ilhan Dahir

Ilhan Dahir is a Senior Researcher focusing on climate risk and human security at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). She is a writer, analyst, and policy advisor with experience providing advice to governments and multilateral organizations. Before ISS, Ilhan worked at the Stimson Center in Washington DC as an expert in the Protecting Civilians and Human Security program, and co-organiser of the Atrocity Prevention Study Group. Ilhan previously worked at the International Peace Institute’s (IPI) Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations, and the African Union Mission to the United Nations as a consultant researcher in New York. She holds two Master’s degrees from the University of Oxford where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar.



Michael Omoniyi Bankhole

Bankole Michael Omoniyi holds the position of Deputy Director and Head of the Climate Change & Environmental Planning Department at the Lagos State Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. Bankole’s expertise on environmental issues, particularly on climate change, is evident through his involvement in various initiatives and programmes. He has actively participated in several C40 programmes, including the groundbreaking C40 Deadline 2020 Climate Action Planning programme (CAP). His involvement showcases his commitment to advancing climate action and planning on an international scale for Lagos State.



Michael Kakande

Michael Kakande is a passionate certified climate reality leader and climate induced migration expert, mobilizing youth to lead on nature and climate. He is the Founder & Chairperson of The Resilient40 (R40), an African Youth partnership towards climate resilience on the African continent.



Nassim Majidi

Nassim Majidi is the co-founder and Executive Director of Samuel Hall. Specialising in return migration, Nassim has published more than twenty academic and policy articles on migration issues, and she teaches a graduate course on Refugees & Migration as part of Sciences Po Lille's Conflict and Development Programme. Based on her knowledge of migration actors, she has developed strategic programming initiatives, national policies on migration, and monitoring reviews that have had a lasting impact. She is also a Research Associate at the African Centre for Migration and Society at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University, USA.



Sarah Rosengaertner

Sarah Rosengaertner currently serves as the Lead for Knowledge and Practice of the Global Centre for Climate Mobility (GCCM) where she oversees the efforts of the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative (ACMI) and the Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative (GCCMI), as well as the development of the GCCM's Global Knowledge Hub with the Columbia University Climate School. Sarah is a Fellow at the Zolberg Institute for Migration and Mobility at the New School and an Adjunct Lecturer at Columbia University's School for International and Public Affairs. She previously held advisory roles with several foundations, universities, and UN organizations, including the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Migration, Peter Sutherland, focused on improving cooperation on, and the governance of, international migration. Sarah holds degrees in political science from the Free University in Berlin and Sciences Po Paris.



Scott Leckie

Scott Leckie is the founder and Executive Director of Displacement Solutions. He is an international human rights lawyer, academic, author, social entrepreneur, environmentalist and recognized as one of the world's leading global housing, land and property (HLP) rights experts. He has worked in more than 80 countries on various human rights matters. He is the world's most widely published author on HLP themes, having written more than 200 books, articles and substantive reports on these issues.