



Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)

## Capacity Building Workshop in South America: “Migration, Environment and Climate Change”

Santiago de Chile, 28-30th October 2014

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first regional capacity building workshop for government representatives on “Migration, Environment and Climate Change” took place in Santiago de Chile between the 28-30th October 2014. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment of Chile, in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In total 45 participants took part in the workshop, from the governments of countries in South America including; Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. The participants also originated from a wide range of Ministries, including Ministries of Environment, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Health.

IOM trainers, experts, and strategic partners from International Organizations took part in the training including: the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR); the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); as well as academic organizations and civil society including; The University of Neuchâtel in Switzerland; The Latin American Association for Population (ALAP); and the South American Network for Environmental Migration (RESAMA).

The workshop represented the first workshop of its kind for government officials in South America, its principle objective was to facilitate technical dialogue regarding environmental and climatic factors as drivers of migration and mobility in the region, as a means of creating recommendations which will serve policy and decision makers.

In South America the links between environmental degradation, climate change and migration are becoming more relevant. There are significant differences within South America in terms of the scale and nature of fast and slow onset disasters, whose severity has been increased by climate change and environmental degradation; in terms of social and economic vulnerabilities; and of the capacity of countries and communities to adapt to a changing climate. This issue was analyzed from various angles including a theoretical and conceptual perspective, legal, and public policies, Human Rights, within a regional framework and with specific cases presented from South America.

During the event, the complex relationship between migration and environmental factors was analyzed, including displacement, resettlement and relocation linked to natural fast onset and slow onset disasters, which create a gradual transformation in the environment. It was underlined that climate change by itself is unlikely to be the direct cause of population displacement. However, climate change may increase and aggravate existing vulnerabilities making it difficult for individuals to access livelihood options. In addition changes in the environment and climate change are factors that impact on migration in the region. Special reference was made to the level of urbanization in the region (more than 83%), inequality in wealth distribution and poverty, which impact on conditions of vulnerability.

During the workshop different interventions and work sessions took place. In these sessions the participants highlighted how changes in the environment and climate change are increasingly affecting South America.

Although it was stressed that the majority of migration flows in the region are internal in nature, and take place within the context of national legislation, it was recognized that it is necessary to develop more advanced legislation when migrants cross international borders. The need for prevention measures and institutional strengthening during humanitarian interventions was stressed to protect new victims of natural disasters and changes in the environment.



Even though it was highlighted that the majority of these flows are internal and take place within the context of national legislation, it is necessary to develop more advanced legal frameworks to protect migrants when they cross international borders. It was also underlined that there is a need for prevention and institutional strengthening in relation to the provision of humanitarian assistance towards new migrants who are victims of disasters associated with natural hazards and with transformations in the environment.

During the regional workshop various interventions and practical sessions took place. The importance of the contribution made by the various participants and trainers during the workshop created the basis to make some recommendations and general observations which will continue to help in the design of measures regarding Migration, Environment and Climate change.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND GENERAL REFLECTIONS<sup>1</sup>

### Promote a better understanding of the complex relationship between migration, environment and climate change

- Undertake new research, promote interdisciplinary research and generate scientific information systems regarding environmental migration in order to better predict the effects of climate change on migration, and understand the nature, type and duration of movements associated with environmental factors and disasters.
- Promote a common understanding of concepts and terminology regarding migration linked to environmental factors and climate, so as to create increased awareness and better understanding<sup>2</sup>.
- Recognize the complex relationship between migration, environment and climate change. At the same time, recognize that migration is the result of an interrelationship of other factors such as economic, social and cultural factors, and that migration is unlikely the result of climate change alone.
- Recognize the importance of the knowledge of the local communities affected by environmental changes and especially value the traditions and ancestral knowledge of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples.
- Emphasize that environmental migration affects all sectors of society and may have a particular impact on vulnerable groups, such as the sick, elderly, women and children; which may present special difficulties and risks for those who can migrate or who are unable to migrate, potentially leading to trapped populations.
- Strengthen the generation and dissemination of knowledge regarding the health risks associated with climate change and appropriate responses to this phenomenon. Consider the relationship with aspects of human displacement and migration.

### Strengthen public policy with a focus on migration, environment and climate change

- Recognize that population mobility is closely related to the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social development and environmental protection) as articulated in the Post 2015 Agenda for

<sup>1</sup> The recommendations expressed correspond to the different opinions and proposals made by the participants during the workshop and do not necessarily reflect IOM's position nor that of the Government of Chile, partners or other participants.

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the Glossary of IOM Concepts "Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Evidence for Policy (MECLEP)" [http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=47&products\\_id=1430](http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=47&products_id=1430)



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Development, and therefore, continuous efforts in eradicating poverty and reducing inequality are required to ensure sustainable development.

- Sustainable development in the region will be possible when the following policies are strengthened; territorial governance, climate change mitigation, urban planning, education, sustainable land management, poverty reduction, adaptation, mitigation and management of disaster risk, social policy, asylum policy, immigration policies, the mobilization of the diaspora and humanitarian and civil protection, among others, with a focus on migration, environment and climate change.
- For this to take place it is necessary to; strengthen institutional and inter-institutional mechanisms, interagency coordination, create interdisciplinary partnerships and factor in the participation of civil society, ensure the strengthening of administrative policy frameworks to establish and protect the rights of environmental migrants.
- Integrate migration into adaptation strategies, and disaster risk management planning at various levels of government, through the development of nationally appropriate methodologies and participatory approaches.
- Establish clear roles and responsibilities for different actors at different levels of government and society, respecting the autonomy and established mechanisms of coordination and cooperation. Mainstream a gender perspective in the development of local public policies, ensuring the participation of women as decision makers and ensuring that gender considerations are institutionalized.
- Increase information and access to international financing instruments to link migration concerns to the environment and climate, such as Adaptation Fund of the UN Framework Convention, as well as other funding sources such as the UN Centralized Emergency Fund and the Green Climate Fund, among others. Provide links with private sector sources of funding and other non-traditional funding sources.

#### **Ensure the rights and promote mechanisms to protect migrants and those displaced due to environmental reasons**

- Recognize that all migrants, as bearers of rights, are protected by international norms and standards regardless of their immigration status.
- Underline that the term refugee to describe those fleeing environmental pressures is not strictly appropriate in the current international context, while recognizing that it is necessary to promote protective mechanisms to ensure assistance and protection for people affected by the changes in the environment and by climate change.
- Develop at national level, policies to protect those displaced by environmental and climatic factors and consider adopting regulations to protect them. Respect and guarantee human rights and give special attention to indigenous peoples.
- Promote the use of mechanisms, according to the country, to facilitate access to residency or use of humanitarian visas for international migrants displaced by disasters, and establish eligibility criteria.

#### **Increasing interlinks between Human Mobility, Resilience, and Disaster Risk Management**

- Understand that migration can be considered as a factor that reduces risk or increases it, depending on the context, depending – among other factors – on the efforts to manage human mobility.
- Strengthen capacities, including community-based capacities and strategies to plan for, respond to and prevent disasters associated with natural hazards; as well reducing hazard vulnerability, increasing the resilience of the communities at risk and increasing adaptive responses, including through mobility-based strategies.



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- Provide disaster displacement scenarios, both nationally and internationally, and include them in the risk management policies and systems for civil protection.
- Decrease the vulnerability of populations to the impacts of climate change so that fewer are forced to migrate or face displacement.
- Promote national, bilateral and international contingency plans which factor in prevention and risk management and mobility.
- Promote local, provincial, national and regional commitments on establishing budgets for prevention and risk management, promoting comprehensive, long-term solutions.
- Recognize that urban areas and cities in South America are affected by various gradual onset environmental changes, especially changes in water availability and general scarcity of natural resources. As the cities of the region are located in areas vulnerable to climate hazards where inequality, poverty and informal settlements exist, this can cause major difficulties for adaptation.

#### Promote actions for adaptation to slow-onset disasters and slow processes of environmental change

- Increase understanding regarding the complex links between mobility and slow-onset processes of environmental change such as desertification, land degradation and drought.
- Consider that migration can provide a positive opportunity and can be a possible adaptation strategy.
- Focus efforts on areas that are particularly important for the interaction between migration and environmental change, particularly in dry land areas, low-lying coastal areas, and mountainous regions.
- Promote incentives-based mechanisms for sustainable land management (SLM) to prevent areas from becoming uninhabitable, increase livelihood opportunities through the harnessing of remittances, and diaspora resources as a contribution to the communities of origin to increase resilience and facilitate adaptation in the face of environmental and climate change.
- Adopt an operational framework and corresponding indicators for the institutionalization of Environmental Health Surveillance, as a means of facilitating health protection and promotion, disease prevention, as well as adaptation towards pollution and environmental changes that affect human health.

#### Linking migration, environment and climate change with regional and global processes

- Continue to promote the international agenda on migration linked to environment and climate change, and continue to implement the various measures within the framework of international processes such as: the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the post-2015 international framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA2), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the post-2015 Development Agenda, and the new strategic agenda that will be generated in the framework of the Global Humanitarian Summit, among others.
- Recognize the importance of regional integration and cooperation mechanisms including UNASUR, MERCOSUR and CELAC and promote the inclusion of migration linked to the changes in the environment and climate change in these agendas, as well as in existing regional and bi-regional processes, such as the South American Conference on Migration (SACM), and the existing EU-LAC Dialogue, among others.