



alongside sharing of best practices related to climate adaptation. Approaches to address loss and damage should also be explored further in the case of the Maldives.

- In the Maldives, migration patterns are distinct from the other two countries. Mobility occurs mainly in two sectors—tourism and fishing—and on a seasonal basis. Those engaged in the tourism industry are entitled to annual leave once a year, whereas those engaged in fishing are away for months at the time. Usually men migrate, and women are left behind. International migration was not discussed in depth in the study.

#### Nepal

- In Nepal, migration and climate change has been included as a cross-cutting issue under the thematic area of livelihoods and governance of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process. This will explore mid to long-term adaptation strategies to address migration in the context of climate change. At the same time, the government is also preparing a strategy paper on migration, environment and climate change.
- While in Bangladesh, there are provisions for rehabilitating people affected by the impacts of climate change such as riverbank erosion, in Nepal these situations are dealt with on a case by case basis by the National Disaster Management Authority. There is need to develop a holistic approach to programming to assist communities affected by both sudden and slow onset events of

environment, disaster and climate change.

- IOM's three key objectives (preventing forced migration due to climate change; providing assistance to people displaced by climate change; and facilitating migration as an adaptation strategy) are relevant in the context of Nepal.
- The challenge of attribution in the context of environmental migration is a methodological challenge that is difficult to address. More data is required to draw more robust conclusions.

#### REGIONAL STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (MECC) IN SOUTH ASIA

A regional strategy framework is recommended to address migration related to climate change and environmental degradation in line with commitments made at the regional level through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Action on Climate Change and at the global level through the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which entered into force on 4 November 2016.

#### KEY STRATEGIES

##### 1. Enhance Data and Research:

- Development of a comprehensive database on climate change and environment induced displacement/migration for effective policy decisions at the regional level.
- Conduct assessment studies on migration,

environment and climate change on all countries of South Asia.

- Collect, assess and exchange environmental migration data at the national level where feasible.
- Support national level research, monitoring and evaluation of environmental migration.

##### 2. Improve awareness and understanding on the links between climate change, environmental degradation and migration at the regional level:

- Organize a regional level dialogue or seminar, conference on MECC engaging both the research community and policymakers.
- Strengthen information exchange related to climate change, environmental degradation and migration among South Asian countries between governments and non-government actors.
- Conduct a bilateral/multi-lateral joint awareness/advocacy campaign through the support of the media on MECC.
- Enhance donor harmonization to create synergies among the stakeholders in this field.

##### 3. Capacity building for government agencies and relevant stakeholders

- Conduct capacity building activities for national partners, government organizations,

The full report “**Assessing the Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia**” is available at IOM Online Bookstore: <https://publications.iom.int/books/assessing-climate-change-environmental-degradation-and-migration-nexus-south-asia>

Watch video titled “**Under a Changing Sky-The effects of Climate Change on South Asia**” at <http://www.iom.org.bd/audio-video-gallery/?page=1>

#### International Organization for Migration (IOM)

House 13/A, Road 136, Gulshan-1, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh  
 Phone: +880-2-55044811 - 13 | Fax: +88-02-55044818 - 19, Email: IOMDhaka@iom.int  
 Website: www.iom.org.bd, www.iom.int

regional level organizations whose mandates include either climate change, environmental degradation or migration issues.

- Encourage and support governments to design climate sensitive social protection measures.

##### 4. Strengthen regional coordination

- Improve coordination among government agencies dealing with climate change, environmental degradation and migration issues to implement effective regional-level adaptation strategies. This may be through a technical working group to initiate discussions on how to address climate change, environmental degradation and migration within the region.
- Development of South Asia Strategy to plan and implement climate change, environmental degradation and migration related actions at the regional level. This will include a mapping of existing initiatives (such as under SAARC) to identify entry points for regional collaboration.
- IOM and other donors provide support to strengthen national coordination in order to support vertical collaboration.



## Regional Dissemination Meeting: “Assessing the Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia”





The Regional Dissemination Meeting on “Assessing the Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia” was held in Dhaka on 15 January 2017, against the backdrop of the increasing recognition of climatic factors affecting human mobility. The meeting organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) brought together more than 70 representatives from the Governments of Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal; development partners; NGOs/CSOs and the media.

The meeting was organized as part of the regional project, funded by the IOM Development Fund, which aimed at assessing the climate change, environmental degradation and migration nexus in South Asia. It was inaugurated by Mr Istiaque Ahmad, Honourable Secretary in Charge of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of Bangladesh. Dr Nurul Quadir, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Bangladesh; Mr. Ahmed Waheed, Director, Climate Change Department, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Maldives; Mr Ram Prasad Lamsal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Population and Environment, Nepal; and Mr Sarat Dash, Chief of Mission, IOM Bangladesh were also present at the opening the session.

The Honourable Secretary in Charge, Mr. Istiaque Ahmad launched the report “Assessing the Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia” which was based on field research in the three countries and includes model plans of action delineating country-specific actions to address environmental migration. The findings of the report were presented by the researchers Mr. Golam Rabbani (Bangladesh chapter); Ms. Fathimath Shafeeqa (Maldives chapter); and Mr Khem Shreesh (Nepal chapter). The meeting also provided an overview of a Regional Strategy Framework which includes broad recommendations based on the assessment.

## OVERVIEW

Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal face adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. At the same time, migration, particularly from rural to urban areas, is an increasing trend in recent years in all three countries. Bangladesh and Nepal are countries of origin of less skilled international migrants while Maldives is identified as the destination for migrants from both Bangladesh and Nepal. However, all three countries are also destination countries for skilled

migrants originating from within the region.

Bangladesh is exposed to a range of hazards including variations in temperature and rainfall, drought, cyclones and storm surges, floods, water logging, salinity intrusion and sea level rise. Some other environmental hazards including pollution of surface water, ground water, deforestation, freshwater scarcity, declining ground water, earthquakes, landslides, epidemics also affect lives and livelihoods across the country. In the Maldives, people face temperature rise, cyclones and storm surges, salinity intrusion, rainfall variation, coastal erosion and sea level rise. Temperature rise, changes in rainfall patterns, drought, floods and heat waves affect the people of Nepal. To add to this, poverty exacerbates disaster vulnerability in all three countries.

Sudden onset events such as floods, cyclones and storm surges, and slow onset events such as sea level rise (SLR), salinization, changing temperature and rainfall patterns are exacerbated by climate change and may result in displacement and migration of people living in affected areas. Other natural hazards such as earthquakes and tsunamis and environmental degradation due to freshwater scarcity, declining water resources, pollution of surface water and epidemics also contributes to migration in the three countries. In fact, climate change and natural hazards affect natural resources which are the basis for livelihoods of rural communities. Furthermore, basic services including freshwater supply, access to health, food, and energy are critically affected as seen in all three countries in the last decade.

The relationship between climate change and migration is complex and may be indirect. The decision to migrate depends on a number of social, economic, environmental and political factors. Non-climatic factors in the three countries affecting the migration decision include poverty, land ownership, access to basic services, employment, and household size. Though at present non-climatic factors dominate the rationale for migration in the perception of those affected, climate change and

environmental degradation already plays an important role and will gain importance in the decision making process for migration.

All three countries have clearly acknowledged the need to develop policy instruments to address climate change at the national, sub-national and local level. Bangladesh developed the “Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan” in 2009. In the Maldives, the “Maldives Climate Change Policy Framework” identified institutions to initiate actions to address climate change. Finally, Nepal developed the “Climate Change Policy” in 2011 to address impacts of climate change in the country.

While Bangladesh’s climate change policy and strategy recognizes climate migration and calls for solutions, related policies in Maldives and Nepal do not reflect this critical nexus of migration and climate change. The Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MODMR) in Bangladesh also developed “National Strategy on The Management of Disaster and Climate Induced Internal Displacement (NSMDCIID)” which has relevance to the migration, environment and climate change nexus. Specific institutional arrangements to address environmental migration does not exist in any of the study countries yet.

## OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Robust data collection on environmental migration should be undertaken and measures implemented in areas of origin to minimize forced migration due to climate change. Data collection should cover both on internal and international migration, with a focus on the former given that most movement due to climate change will be within borders.
- Governments and other relevant stakeholders should ensure that existing policies (for example, related to registration of migrants) are effectively implemented prior to creating new policies, frameworks or mechanisms.
- Government capacity to address environmental

migration should be enhanced, and is of critical importance in the Regional Strategy Framework.

- Advocacy efforts for further research should be targeted towards donors in order to support a comprehensive evidence-based policy/framework.
- Programmes should be designed keeping in mind the differentiated vulnerabilities of men, women, and children and between people who “voluntarily” migrate or are displaced.
- Services such as water, health, education should be widely provided in origin areas that are affected by climate change. These should be of good quality and cost effective, as this will ensure that people will not migrate due to the lack of services.
- IOM should take steps to disseminate the assessment study to ensure that this data can feed into relevant migration and climate change policies.

## COUNTRY SPECIFIC DISCUSSION POINTS

### Bangladesh

- There is an institutional and policy gap related to the migration, environment and climate change (MECC) nexus. While the Ministry of Expatriate’s Welfare and Overseas Employment is responsible for matters related to international migration, it is unclear if internal migrants, or those affected by climate change fall within its mandate. In Bangladesh, four different ministries work on MECC from different perspectives, necessitating collaboration to address the issue in a cohesive manner. The role of the Ministry of Land should be acknowledged as it plays a critical role in relocating those displaced by riverbank erosion.
- The government also needs to bring together all administrative levels, i.e. - from the union to the city corporation level and at the same time, focus on both destination and origin regions. The city corporation has an important role to play vis-à-vis the integration of migrants. Similarly, as many internal migrants working in cities are employed by the private sector, it would be crucial to



engage private sector stakeholders to address the MECC nexus.

- There is a need for further in-depth research covering a larger sample size in order to understand the extent of MECC trends identified by the study. Future research should also look at the level of access to social safety nets and social protection programmes (such as cash for work and food for work) for migrants and affected populations in order to determine their impact on migration. This would provide evidence for policymakers to design climate sensitive social protection programmes.
- Analysing transboundary issues, in the context of migration and climate change is also important. Issues like salinity intrusion may occur due to actions taken by neighbouring countries and therefore this angle also needs to be considered.

### Maldives

- Climate change is an important challenge in the Maldives and needs to be urgently addressed, but this is affected by limited finance and capacity.
- Community perceptions on climate change need to be surveyed as this is critical to understand whether migration occurs due to climate change or other factors.
- Mitigation measures implemented to address the risks and challenges need to be context specific.
- Awareness raising programmes are a first step to building resilience and should be undertaken

