

Regional Conference on Environmental Migration and Disaster Displacement for Caribbean Civil Society Organizations

Conclusions and Civil Society's Key Messages on Human Mobility and Climate Change



Under the French-funded project *Caribbean Component: Implementing Global Policies on Environmental Migration and Disaster Displacement at the Regional level*, the Regional Conference on Environmental Migration and Disaster Displacement for Caribbean Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) gathered 21 CSOs from 9 Caribbean countries on 29 February and 1 March 2024 in Paramaribo (Suriname) to provide a space to share knowledge, exchange experiences and best practices and build synergies in order to further strengthen CSOs capacities and engagement on the nexus between human mobility and climate change.

TOPIC 1: DATA AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT ON MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

1. There is a glaring lack of data when it comes to climate mobility, and mostly for vulnerable groups, including migrants, women, LGBTQ+ people, persons with disabilities and indigenous communities.
2. Research can be used to engage with all key stakeholders, including civil society, in order to successfully address climate-induced migration, increase livelihoods and resilience, and reduce poverty.
3. It appears crucial to promote evidence- and data-based policies, and CSOs are a key player in data collection and analysis, as they can be the interface between governments and vulnerable communities, thus helping to obtain an accurate view of certain realities. CSOs can engage with communities through, amongst others, awareness campaigns on data, breaking down language barriers and the creation of targeted questionnaires.
4. The event helped to highlight the need for a gender-sensitive and socially inclusive approach to ensure that data is disaggregated to include various aspects of intersecting vulnerabilities, including gender, age, indigenous status, poverty and disability, all in relation to climate change and natural hazards, and across groups, sectors and agendas.
5. CSOs can support data and knowledge management on migration, environment and climate change, but challenges remain, such as the need for capacity building on data, lack of finance capacities, and the creation of platforms that gather data and make data more accessible.

TOPIC 2: GOVERNANCE, GLOBAL DISCUSSIONS AND CSO PARTICIPATION ON CLIMATE MOBILITY

1. When it comes to CSO engagement in frameworks linked to human mobility and climate change, it is important to recognize the valuable work of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society. Attendees called for more visibility and recognition of the efforts of CSOs in implementation and policy.

2. To overcome challenges in terms of CSO engagement in global discussions on human mobility and climate change, such as equal geographical and sectoral representation and coordination among stakeholders, multiple ways were identified to strengthen and improve collaboration and partnerships in order to leave no one behind:

- Eliminate barriers to stakeholder participation, including structural, gender, linguistic, physical and technological barriers;
- Provide space for all stakeholders to ensure active, free, informed and meaningful participation and engagement in migration governance and decision-making processes;
- Enhance the capacities of partners to ensure meaningful participation in established consultation mechanisms;
- Ensure all voices are included and amplified.

3. CSOs play an important role in putting different agendas together for a coordinated response to climate-induced migration, such as food security, water management, gender, disability, agriculture, etc.

4. Access to information is crucial for the transparency and accountability agenda. Without access to information in forms that are easily understood, civil society will not be able to fully engage in decision-making processes and hold decisionmakers and institutions to account, which is, amongst others, framed in the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement).

TOPIC 3: DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND URBANIZATION IN CONTEXTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND DISASTERS

1. The Caribbean region faces internal migration from rural to urban areas, and from one parish to another, and most of the cities are in high-risk areas to climate change impacts. Therefore, cities should be better prepared to face environmental disasters, and in doing so, should be more inclusive, taking migration and vulnerable groups into account in their planning. CSOs are essential actors in designing and delivering disaster risk management responses and urban planning, and particularly in reaching the most excluded communities. As such, CSOs can help in identifying the needs of individuals and communities in order to leave no one behind.

2. In terms of disaster preparedness, a community-based approach should be favoured which will help individual and community ownership, and CSOs are well-placed actors to strengthen the community involvement in disaster risk reduction plans.

3. Empowering local actors, including civil society, will help in driving tailored responses and solutions for the benefit of all. CSOs can improve performance and reduce risk by strengthening governance, accountability and learning, as well as drilling disaster risk financing.

4. Overall, recommendations for strengthening disaster preparedness in urban areas were identified:

- Setting up focal points in local communities,
- Building capacities of grassroot community members,
- Empowering municipal authorities on disaster preparedness to plan proactively, anticipate seasonal hazards, create hazard mapping, etc.
- Establishing district or parish specific emergency responses,
- Documenting and archiving best practices to help future planning.

TOPIC 4: CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES TO VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION AND DISASTER DISPLACEMENTS

1. Climate change, environmental degradation and disasters affect communities and individuals differently. Gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, amongst others, generate different levels of vulnerability. Consequently, vulnerable groups are greatly impacted and affected by climate change and disasters due to structural inequalities and barriers in access to endowments, economic opportunities and agency.

2. Through amplifying and representing the voices and specific needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups, civil society can help in integrating a vulnerability approach across the comprehensive disaster management cycle to address climate mobility and disaster displacements through:

- Involving vulnerable groups in strategy development and planning,
- Understanding the differential impact and the inequality of risk in the preparedness phases,
- Managing evacuation and shelters,
- Undertaking robust post-disaster assessments that are responsive to vulnerable groups,
- Targeting response, relief and recovery efforts while entering the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase.

3. There is a need for active inclusiveness, which means that proactive action is necessary in order to make the principle of inclusiveness a reality, which means, amongst others, that any law and policy reforms to enhance inclusivity must be accompanied by public campaigns.