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України

# POLICY BRIEF ON MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE: UKRAINE



APRIL 2022



## POLICY BRIEF ON MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE: UKRAINE

Climate change impacts have generated and perpetuated vulnerability through displacement and involuntary migration from extreme weather and climate events.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, movement of people, growing inequality, and urbanisation are increasing the future risk to climatic hazards.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that safe and orderly movements of people within and between countries can also create opportunities to manage risks posed by climate change.<sup>3</sup> The issues related to migration in the context of climate change have also been recognised within the proceedings of the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change<sup>4</sup>, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030<sup>5</sup> and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration<sup>6</sup>.

It is important to note that since the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, major attacks have been reported across the country, resulting in widescale destruction of infrastructure, loss of life, and displacement. The war in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic is negatively affecting the preparedness and adaptation of the country to climate change. The progress made on the achievement of the Agenda 2030 goals is likely to be heavily impacted by the war, leading to a setback.

Over the past decade, social, economic, and political factors have been recognized as the main drivers of migration in Ukraine. Environmental factors rarely act in isolation. They do influence other drivers of migration. The impacts of climate change such as droughts, forest fires, and floods can adversely affect the well-being, food security, and water security. Furthermore, the environmental impacts of the current war in Ukraine

due to military operations near nuclear reactors, radioactive waste disposal sites, refineries, and chemical plants continue to compound the environmental risks<sup>7</sup>. Widespread damages to civilian infrastructure have also eroded adaptive capacities necessary to manage the threat posed by climate change. This will, in turn, increase the risk of disaster displacement, increase the threat posed by environmental shocks and stressors on migrants in vulnerable situations as well as 'trap' some people in environmentally hazardous areas.

The information and analysis presented in this policy brief are based on mapping Ukrainian policy, legislation, and strategies on environment, climate change, disaster risk reduction, agriculture, rural development, urban development, gender and migration, as well as interviews with experts. The analysis of about 100 policies, laws, and strategies showed that the linkages between migration, environment and climate change are scarcely reflected in policy, legislation, and strategy documents. Most of the research was conducted prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is reflected in the findings and lessons learnt below.

Based on these findings recommendations have been developed to better address migration in the context of climate change in the Ukrainian policy sphere. The recommendations include supplementing and clarifying several legal norms, enhancing research, data and risk analysis to avert, minimize and address disaster displacement, address migration-related issues as well as to strengthen the whole-of-government approach to ensure synergy and coherence. In addition, we recommend greater cooperation between the state and civil society, raising the awareness of civil servants and the public about the migration, environment

<sup>1</sup> IPCC 2022. The Summary for Policymakers. Working Group II Report. Sixth Assessment. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change . Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> IPCC 2022. Chapter 8 Poverty, Livelihoods and Sustainable Development. Working Group II Report. Sixth Assessment. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

<sup>4</sup> The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change has a Strategic Work Stream on Migration, Displacement and Human Mobility. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/wim-excom/areas-of-work/migration-displacement-and-human-mobility>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations General Assembly 2015 The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. Resolution A/Res/69/283. Available at: <https://www.preventionweb.net/files/resolutions/N1516716.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. Resolution: A/RES/73/195. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/451/99/PDF/N1845199.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>7</sup> A digest of the key consequences of Russian aggression for the Ukrainian environment. Available at: <https://mepr.gov.ua/news/39161.html>



and climate change nexus, and learning from the experiences in other countries.

## Key findings and lessons learnt

- Before the war, Ukraine was starting to develop the whole-of-government approach for addressing migration in the context of climate change.
- Most policies, laws and strategies on environment, climate change, agriculture, rural development, urban development, gender, and migration do not recognise the interlinkages between migration, environment and climate change.
- The mainstreaming of migration in the context of climate change is the most advanced in the disaster risk reduction domain. The policies, laws and strategies include planned evacuation and planned relocation of people from disaster zones.
- According to the Ukrainian legal framework, migration induced by natural and man-made hazards may be grounds for a foreigner or a stateless person to obtain temporary protection in Ukraine. In addition, international and Ukrainian law prohibits the forced return of foreigners and stateless persons to countries where their lives or health, safety or liberty are threatened. Thus, a number of laws on migration reflect awareness of the linkages between migration and climate change.
- Legislation on internally displaced persons (IDPs) recognizes that disasters induced by natural hazards may be one of the reasons for increasing numbers of IDPs. However, there were no mentions of climate change in the documents.
- The mapping showed that newer documents, in contrast to older ones, featured the issue of migration, environment, and climate change nexus more. This indicates a gradual increase in awareness of society and decision-makers.
- The expert interviews showed that the understanding of the interlinkages between migration and climate change were limited among national experts. Those who recognised a connection, tended to envisage it through a humanitarian lens and thereby, consider as a challenge to the asylum system. Some also foresaw an increase in transitory migration. The collection and analysis of relevant statistics and studies were not deemed a priority.
- Some experts pointed to the use of remittances and earnings from employment abroad to overcome and manage the negative effects of disasters induced by natural hazards. The experts also noted some changes in attitudes towards environmental issues due to experience gained while staying abroad.
- If the Government of Ukraine were to reconsider its views on the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), an opportunity would present itself in regards of introducing more comprehensive language on averting, minimizing and addressing disaster displacement and issues around migration. The implementation of the GCM could provide an additional impetus to take into account the impact of climate change on migration in Ukraine.
- Planned evacuation and planned relocation are part of policy tools to avert, minimize and manage the risk of disaster displacement in Ukraine. However, unlike the Sendai Framework, the policies, laws, and strategies are yet to recognize that knowledge, skills and capacities of migrants can also contribute to the resilience of communities and societies.
- The analysis indicates that the mainstreaming of migration in the context of climate change into national and sub-national policies, laws, and strategies, which has been recommended to the parties by the Task Force on Displacement of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, has been limited.



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