

# Towards Concrete Action for Water: Enhancing Cooperation on the Migration, Climate Change and Water Nexus

Japan Society, New York

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## Background

Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of sudden-onset hazards as well as leading to rainfall variability, heatwaves, protracted drought, and glacial melt. According to the Sixth Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), approximately half of the world's population currently experiences severe water scarcity for at least some part of the year due to climatic and non-climatic drivers (IPCC, 2022)<sup>1</sup>. Pre-existing inequalities are further amplified by water-related hazards, especially for those living in hazard-prone areas and relying on primary sector livelihoods.

Addressing the migration-water nexus is essential in the context of addressing migration in the context of climate change. Between 2001 and 2018, 74 per cent of all disasters were water-related (UN Water, 2020)<sup>2</sup>. Of the 30.7 million displaced due to disasters in 2020, 14 million occurred in the context of floods, 14.6 million in the context of storms and 320,000 in the context of droughts (IDMC, 2021). The potency for the climate to drive internal migration could reach as high as 216 million by 2050 without concrete climate and development action as was noted in the World Bank's Groundswell reports (World Bank 2021, 2018). Changes and variability in precipitation patterns were seen as the most potent driver in many cases. Further, the Ebb and Flow report underscored that the absence of water has a greater impact on migration than an abundance of water (World Bank, 2021).

At the same time, migration could enhance climate change adaptation in several ways, such as by providing an opportunity for livelihood diversification, leading to the adoption of climate-smart practices and technologies, evacuating people to safer locations ahead of disasters, ensuring better use of pastures, relocating people from fragile areas, etc. For example, migrants helped their families procure irrigation technologies (Trans Re, YEAR)<sup>3</sup>.

From a gender perspective, the water-migration nexus is of particular interest, at several levels of intervention. Women generally act as water purveyors (Miletto et al. 2017) and men tend to migrate more than women in crises related to food, water, and climate (Meeks, 2018), out-migration of men leads to a double burden on women (Jobbins et al. 2018; O'Neil et al. 2016). Staying behind, women not only have to keep on holding their household responsibilities (e.g., water collection, child-rearing, etc.) but as well now take up the burden

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGII\\_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report-2020>

<sup>3</sup> Trans|Re Project: Building Resilience through Translocality – Climate Change, Migration and Socails Resilience of Rural Communities in Thailand. <http://www.transre.org/>

of men's previous responsibilities (e.g., farming, etc.) to generate income (Anderson et al. 2016). In the case where women and men are equally likely to migrate, their post-migration conditions may differ. Particularly, women migrants face specific water-related challenges, including water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH, UNU INWEH).

Water is a catalyst for achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Global Compact for Migration, New Urban Agenda, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The outcomes of the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar in March 2022 recognised "the urgent need to pay more attention to water issues in the rural world, as a means of reducing inequalities, creating opportunities for youth and women, fostering development, generating employment and optimally tackling the causes of national and international migrations". However, there is still limited integration of the migration, climate change and water nexus in many regional and national policy frameworks. The Water Action Decade 2018-2028 provides an opportunity to advance this agenda by highlighting that addressing the migration, climate change and water nexus requires an action-oriented, inclusive and cross-sectoral approach.

Diverse stakeholders (e.g., policymakers from different sectors, local governments, civil society, academics, etc), increasingly recognize water action cannot be addressed in silos. Neither can migration in the context of climate change. Building upon the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar and the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Sharm El-Sheikh, it is important to continue mobilising stakeholders at the 2023 UN Water Conference in New York for the integration of migration perspectives into Water Action Agenda and its consideration in the promotion of the Blue Deal, as governments renew, and develop new commitments ahead of the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The proposed side event in New York aims to discuss the role of global partnerships in developing actions to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change and issues around migration.

#### Event Information

This side event will be co-organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank. It will be a moderated panel discussion with panelists from Azerbaijan, Brazil, Tajikistan, Senegal and the World Bank Group sharing their experiences and good practices. The Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, with only about 1000 m<sup>3</sup> of water available per capita per year, and it is estimated that this will drop to about 800 m<sup>3</sup> per capita per year by the year 2050. The renovation of *Kahrizes* (an underground water system) is providing safe water to internally displaced persons. Sabesp is Sao Paulo's State Water and Sanitation Utility Company that serves more than 28 million people in the State, mainly concentrated in the metropolitan region of Sao Paulo, which faced a major drought in 2014-2015. The Government of Tajikistan is the host of the Dushanbe Water Process and has mainstreamed migration in its National Strategy on

Climate Change Adaptation. As the host of the last World Water Forum in March 2022, the Government of Senegal made migration to be one of the Forum's priorities, stressing its importance for rural development. The World Bank's Groundswell Reports on Internal Climate Migration consider water availability as one of the main factors shaping migration patterns, and the World Bank's reports on water, migration and development, Ebb and Flow Volumes 1 and 2, highlight the defining role of water in influencing the development trajectory of nations as well as the interplay between water security and migration. The panel discussion will be followed by a Question & Answer segment with the audience. The total duration of the event will be 90 minutes.

#### Confirmed Panelists

1. Mohamed C.B.C Diatta, Coordonnateur of the Unit for Monitoring, Promotion and Valorization of the Recommendations of the 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, Government of Senegal.
2. Qurbonzoda Abdullo Habibullo, Head, Agency for Hydrometeorology, Committee for Environmental Protection, Government of Tajikistan.
3. André Salcedo, Chief Executive Officer, Sabesp (Sao Paolo's WSS utility), Sao Paolo.