

Written evidence for the International Development Committee

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This written evidence comes from researchers at the University of Exeter funded by UK public funds, including from FCDO, on adaptation and resilience to climate change. The evidence specifically addresses the following items in the climate change inquiry Terms of Reference:

The extent to which the Government's work to date on climate change and development has taken the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the needs of low-and-middle income countries and vulnerable groups into account;

The potential of COP26 to address these remaining challenges effectively and the steps the Government needs to take if COP26 is to succeed in tackling them.

Background

1. The threats of climate change to the economies, people and ecosystems of countries worldwide are well established. Drivers of risk include sea-level rise, storms, increasing air and sea surface temperatures, ocean acidification, and changing rainfall patterns. These are in turn likely to impact the ecosystems on which populations depend, including coastal erosion and inundation, salinization of fresh water, fisheries, and agriculture, affecting vulnerable populations in resource-dependent economies. Further impacts on various key economic sectors could be significant, effectively disrupting livelihoods and changing economies. Either adapting practices and economic activity in place, or migrating to other places are overlapping and complementary responses to the pervasive effects of climate change. Migration is recognised in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Hence the purpose of this evidence is to highlight the importance of incorporating mobility and migration into strategies to enhance resilience in the context of COP26.
2. Climate migration is 'the movement of a person or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change, are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a State or across an international border' according to the International Organisation for Migration.¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) most recent comprehensive report in 2014 also highlights that climate change affects society and economies in ways that are likely to amplify involuntary and unplanned migration and displacement.
3. Our research at the University of Exeter, as part of global efforts, shows that climate change is reshaping the comparative advantage² of regions and hence driving migration flows, principally toward urban areas. Over the long term, for example, coastal populations could move from low-lying areas and small island states. And in the short-run, large numbers of

¹ <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/environmental-migration-1>

² Adger, W.N., Crépin, A.S., Folke, C., Ospina, D., Chapin III, F.S., Segerson, K., Seto, K.C., Anderies, J.M., Barrett, S., Bennett, E.M., Daily, G. et al., 2020. Urbanization, Migration, and Adaptation to Climate Change. *One Earth*, 3(4), 396-399.

people are already displaced from their homes, at least temporarily, by extreme weather events that will change in terms of their frequency and intensity.

4. There is a wide range of drivers that play a fundamental role in the migration decision-making process in general, and in migration outcomes specifically. People migrate for multiple reasons, to improve their economic situation, to be close to friends or family, for political or safety reasons, or to remove themselves from environmental or other threats, and such migration often happens within the borders of countries and to rapidly urbanising areas³.

The extent to which the Government's work to date on climate change and development has taken the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the needs of low-and-middle income countries and vulnerable groups into account;

5. The discourse of migration in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects the global political tensions surrounding the issue of migration at the time of its negotiations. Thus, the 2030 Agenda frames migration as a temporary and unplanned phenomenon that needs to be managed from an economic and often labour-related perspective (SDGs 10 and 17) , rather than as an inherent and longstanding part of sustainable development and social transformation⁴.
6. Our research has suggested principal areas for the Government's work to support UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this context. One means of support is to make cities safe and sustainable for new migrant population. This effectively reflects *SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*.
7. Our DFID-funded study of migrants' lived experience⁵ in moving to cities, for example, charted how urban planners need to make destinations safe and resilient for new populations by engaging with migrants in deliberative processes. This exercise effectively integrates perspectives and lived experiences of migrant urban populations into policy processes potentially leading to more effective, sustainable and legitimate solutions for rapidly urbanising cities in low-and-middle income countries.
8. By deliberately focusing on SDG11, the UK Government would promote human security of migrants in precarious urban settings. Exposure to environmental stress in cities is likely to be impacted by climate change. Evidence from UK funded research suggests that the human security and wellbeing of migrants in informal settlements are impacted by economic, social and environmental dimensions. Moreover, the results⁶ point to the centrality of environmental risks themselves, and their interaction with other elements of precarious lives and health outcomes.

³ Adger, W.N. et al., 2020. Urbanization, Migration, and Adaptation to Climate Change. *One Earth*, 3(4), 396-399.

⁴ Adger, W.N., Boyd, E., Fábos, A., Fransen, S., Jolivet, D., Neville, G., De Campos, R.S. and Vijge, M.J., 2019. Migration transforms the conditions for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 3(11), e440-e442.

⁵ Siddiqui, T., Szaboova, L., Adger, W.N., Safra de Campos, R., Bhuiyan, M.R.A. and Billah, T., 2021. Policy Opportunities and Constraints for Addressing Urban Precarity of Migrant Populations. *Global Policy* 12(S2), 91-105.

⁶ Adger, W.N., Safra de Campos, R., Siddiqui, T., Franco Gavonell, M., Szaboova, L., Rocky, M.H., Bhuiyan, M.R.A. and Billah, T., 2021. Human security of urban migrant populations affected by length of residence and environmental hazards. *Journal of Peace Research*, 58(1), 50-66.

9. In addition, migration is an effective adaptation strategy to climate change.^{7,8,9} as first identified through the Government Office of Science major Foresight Report of 2011.¹⁰ In the context of low-and-middle income countries, the added benefit of migration as a significant pathway out of poverty demonstrates the importance of promoting rather than suppressing migration: as recognised in policies of the Department for International Development, as well as by international organisations, such as the World Bank.¹¹

The potential of COP26 to address these remaining challenges effectively and the steps the Government needs to take if COP26 is to succeed in tackling them.

10. Migration represents a major transformation of the lives of those involved and has been transformative of societies and economies globally. Climate change is likely to reshape and alter migration flows worldwide, yet the role of migration as potential force for sustainable development remains understated. COP26 therefore represents an opportunity to highlight 1) how migration contributes to sustainability if it increases well-being and reduces inequality and environmental burden and 2) how to promote policies for sustainable development that incorporate migration. Our UKRI-funded international consortium research suggests pathways through which migration may affect sustainability¹².
11. There is a growing impetus to recognize climate-related risks and contemplate moving people from vulnerable areas. Planned relocation decisions will become more salient with projected climate changes in coastal and lowland regions. However, based on our research¹³, there are significant challenges around implementing resettlement: political legitimacy, fairness and engagement with communities. COP26 provides the international community an opportunity to ensure that communities in low-and-middle income countries are consulted, compensated, and get to say themselves their preferences for relocation and what is at risk from moving.
12. As migration has the potential to be an effective household strategy to cope with climate change and poverty, it follows that reducing barriers to voluntary and planned movement could represent a major step to support vulnerable populations in low-and-middle income countries.

⁷ Adger, W.N. et al., 2020. Urbanization, Migration, and Adaptation to Climate Change. *One Earth*, 3(4), 396-399.

⁸ Adger, W.N., Arnell, N., Black, R., Dercon, S., Geddes, A., and Thomas, D., 2015. Focus on environmental risks and migration: causes and consequences. *Environmental Research Letters*, 10.

⁹ United Nations - Framework Convention on Climate Change 2016. Report of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts. Marrakech.

¹⁰ Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change 2011. Final Project Report. The Government Office for Science, London.

¹¹ Murrugarra, E., Larrison, J., and Sasin, M., 2011. Migration and Poverty : Toward Better Opportunities for the Poor. *Directions in Development*. World Bank: Washington DC.

¹² Franco Gavonell, M., Adger, W.N., de Campos, R.S., Boyd, E., Carr, E.R., Fábos, A., Fransen, S., Jolivet, D., Zickgraf, C., Codjoe, S.N. and Abu, M., 2021. The migration-sustainability paradox: transformations in mobile worlds. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 49, 98-109.

¹³ Mortreux, C., de Campos, R.S., Adger, W.N., Ghosh, T., Das, S., Adams, H. and Hazra, S., 2018. Political economy of planned relocation: A model of action and inaction in government responses. *Global Environmental Change*, 50, 123-132.