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Partnership Dialogues

Inputs from the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

(Carteret Islands. Copyright: Mohammed Muse)

Oceans contribute to sustainable development and sustainable ocean-based economies, including poverty eradication, food security, livelihoods and decent work. Yet, the impacts of climate change are threatening the oceans, by contributing to rising the sea levels and exacerbating ocean acidification, bleaching of coral reefs, and increasing global water temperatures. All these impacts are detrimental to affected communities and individuals' livelihoods, wellbeing, health, safety and food security.

These dimensions are intrinsically linked to the migration of people – whether forced or voluntary – as they can have **direct and indirect impacts on the decision and/or the necessity to migrate.** Taking into account migration issues in the ocean debate allows to look at the social and human consequences and place the people at the center of the discussions.

The term "migration" is used broadly in this submission and refers to different types of movement: forced forms of migration such as displacement and relocation of populations and voluntary forms of migration.

Theme 3: Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification

a) Status and trends

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has noted several times that climate change is expected to **increase population displacement**[1], in particular in developing countries and the poorest communities, and **especially in coastal areas and low-lying islands.** Climate change-related modifications that affect the global ocean – notably ocean acidification - have direct consequences on island and coastal populations, and their repercussions go beyond these regions; the environment, economy and livelihoods of many communities worldwide are likely to be affected. This is turns impacts the migration patterns of affected communities as well as the daily lives of communities receiving migrants.

Migration and displacement linked to the impacts of climate change on the ocean and the degradation of marine ecosystems are **already a reality** in many regions throughout the world.

Different types of threats to oceans can impact the migration of people in different ways

The rise of sea levels causes coastal erosion, which results in loss of arable land and water reserves due to salinized soil and groundwater. Coastlines have been receding and floods intensify during spring tides or severe storms; these extreme weather events tend to increase and threaten many rural and urban coastal communities. These events regularly cause the **displacement of large numbers of people**[2] (between 2008 and 2015, 21.5 million people on average have been newly displaced annually within their own countries due to weather related hazards, principally floods and storms).

In addition, sea level rise is expected to have long term impacts on migration. The majority of world metropolises are located on coasts – including in South Asia and South East Asia; and the challenges faced by Small Island Developing States (SIDS) affected by coastal erosion, salinization and loss of land are also well known. Consequently, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 40 million people living[3] in major cities are threatened by submersion; **whilst sea level rise poses an existential menace to some SIDS threatened by complete disappearance.** In these conditions, it is likely

[1] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2014 Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Working Group II Contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [C.B. Field, V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea and L.L. White, eds.]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York.

[2] http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2016/2016-global-report-internal-displacement-IDMC.pdf p 25

[3] Nicholls, R.J. et al. 2008 Ranking Port Cities with High Exposure and Vulnerability to Climate Extremes: Exposure Estimates. OECD Environment Working Paper 1. OECD Publishing, Paris

that migration will represent an adaptation strategy for many people who will be forced to leave uninhabitable areas and that relocation of populations might occur. These risks call for urgently developing a better understanding of what potential migration scenarios might unfold, and for a serious reflection around potential anticipatory measures.

Furthermore**, threats to marine biodiversity** and their impacts on livelihoods also **impact the movement of people**. Economic activities, such as fishery or tourism, experience productivity loss in many regions. The least developed countries are generally the most impacted; their coastal infrastructures are more fragile (many are located in areas affected by tropical storms), and populations' subsistence is usually highly linked to fishery. For some countries, such as SIDS, the entire economy is threatened. Other countries face increasing migration of coastal populations looking for safety and alternative livelihoods inland. As a result, traditional communities may be confronted to radical change to adapt to major disruptions in their living conditions, including migration. This phenomenon can cause a loss of cultural and identity landmarks, a feeling of insecurity, and erosion of traditions and indigenous knowledge. Yet, for some communities, migration might be the only solution to escape the nefarious effects linked to marine biodiversity threats.

In that respect, in IOM assessment studies[4] conducted in the Asia-Pacific region small scale fishers and the fisheries sectors were identified as sectors of concern in relation to migration. In Cambodia, fishermen reported that distress migration had begun amongst fishing villages as a means to offset the declining livelihood options prompted by low fish stocks linked to changing climate. In Bangladesh and Maldives, coastal populations reported that migration was used as a way to adapt to a changing climate. In Fiji, participants of focus group discussions highlighted the dependence of households on fishing for household consumption and income, and challenges to access fishing resources might impact the necessity to migrate.

These different phenomena affect the migration of people in different ways. **Forced displacement** of populations due to floods or coastal erosion has already occurred in many countries. Some governments (for instance in Viet Nam, Mauritius, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea) have started the **planned relocation** of some vulnerable populations. Preemptive forms of **voluntary migration** can also be an individual or collective strategy for communities whose livelihoods mainly depend on threatened marine resources. For instance, in Senegal, the loss of halieutic productivity pushes coastal populations to migrate to cities to find new sources of income.

b) Challenges and opportunities

[4] Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia, IOM (2017) (http://www.environmentalmigration.iom.int/assessing-climate-change-migration-nexus-south-asia)

The oceans and migration nexus remains understudied

Questions of migration linked to oceans are gaining increasing visibility, for instance, at the 2016 UNFCCC COP22 in Marrakesh, several thematic events on Oceans[5] included a migration dimension. The issues of oceans, and especially the linked to livelihood and food security, is also getting increasingly discussed within migration policy fora. However, there is a need to elevate this issue and better understand the mobility dimensions linked to threats to oceans and conservation and sustainable use of marine ecosystems.

Protecting and sustainably managing ocean resources is key to provide solutions to migration challenges linked to ocean threats

A more sustainable management of natural marine resources and the implementation of ecosystem protection and restoration projects along with disaster risk reduction initiatives, climate change adaptation policies and creation of alternative jobs can contribute to reducing the vulnerability of oceans resources and communities that depend upon them, thereby reducing instances of forced migration and allowing people to remain where they are. Conservation, restoration and sustainable management of ocean ecosystems (including seagrass beds, coastal wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs), notably through relying on indigenous know-how, can also contribute to protecting the communities who depend upon them, reinforce their livelihoods and prevent forced migration.

In cases where the migration of people is inevitable, such as when land erodes due to sea-level rise, planned and facilitated migration schemes can be put in place in order to protect affected individuals and communities, including communities who receive migrants.

Current global policy dialogues offer a moment of opportunity to take action on the ocean and migration nexus

The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and more generally, the overall **Sustainable Development Goals** framework, provide an opportunity to bring visibility and promote action on issues related to environmental and climate migration, including issues specifically related to migration and oceans.

The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement acknowledges the need to protect the rights of migrants when taking action on climate change and mandates the creation of a Taskforce on displacement to provide recommendations to avert and minimize displacement due to climate change. In addition, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), through its Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss and Damage, implements a five year programme of work on issues related to

[5] http://www.environmentalmigration.iom.int/human-mobility-cop22

migration and climate change. At the 2016 COP 22 in Marrakesh, several events focused on the link between oceans and migration.

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), expected to be adopted in 2018, represents a strategic and significant opportunity for the international community to progress in terms of the overall international migration governance and management through inter-governmental dialogue, identification of existing migration policy good practices and state commitments on migration; and within that framework, anchor the environmental and climatic dimensions, including the link to oceans, in the international migration governance agenda.

The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A) Pathway document adopted in 2014 makes several references to migration and contains a number of commitments relevant to migration, in particular in relation to climate change, disaster risk reduction, sustainable economic growth with decent work for all and oceans and seas.

In all these frameworks, there is space to include climate, oceans and migration dimensions in concrete actionable commitments and means of implementation.

c) Existing partnerships

• Are many existing partnerships covering the theme of the dialogue? Are there identified gaps in coverage? • Who are the main actors involved in existing partnerships? • Do we know how well existing partnerships are performing? What have been success factors? What are the main challenges identified with existing partnerships? • Have successful partnerships on the theme been narrowly focused in scope, or more holistic, encompassing several related areas?

IOM and the Ocean and Climate Platform (OCP)[6] decided to combine their efforts in order to address the growing challenge posed by climate change to oceans and the degradation of marine ecosystems, in terms of human migration impacts. This innovative partnership focuses on three key areas of collaboration: (a) improving the understanding and awareness of the interactions between these three phenomena; (b) undertaking joint advocacy in key policy processes at the international, regional and national levels; and (c) developing new solutions, building capacity and supporting the implementation of projects and programmes at the regional, national and local levels, in order to address key issues around ocean and marine ecosystem change, climate change and migration and provide solutions for vulnerable communities. This partnership is one of the first to focus solely on the migration dimensions of oceans and marine ecosystems, and it has succeeded in bringing increasing visibility to a little known topic.

[6] The Ocean and Climate Platform was established from an alliance of non-governmental organizations and research institutes, with support from the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission on June 10th 2014 during the World Ocean day. It is the international Ocean and Climate think tank, gathering over 70 organizations for the purpose of highlighting scientific expertise and supporting ocean and climate issues advocacy before politicians, decision-makers and the general public.

In addition, IOM is working with the newly created Ocean and Climate Initiatives Alliance[7]; a new initiative seeking to drive a momentum for concrete action and solutions and federate existing initiatives on issues related to climate and ocean. Within that framework, IOM brings its migration expertise to ensure that the human consequences are kept at the center of the debate

IOM supports the follow-up to the SAMOA Conference through its role in the New York based Inter-agency and Consultative Group on SIDS (IACG), an informal consultative mechanism at the working level. As part of its contribution to the follow-up to the SAMOA Conference, IOM has added its Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Evidence for Policy (MECLEP)[8] project to the SIDS Action Partnership Platform. The project aims to look at how migration, displacement and relocation benefit or pose challenges for adaptation to environmental and climate change. This includes a focus on policy options on voluntary and forced migration, and their potential benefits and risks.

d) Possible areas for new partnerships

• Given challenges, opportunities and gaps, how could new partnerships help with implementation? • What actors would need to be involved for new partnerships to succeed? • What would be critical success factors?

Supporting the development of inclusive and strategic partnerships will be key to develop the evidence base as well as policy and programmatic responses. The multi-causal nature of climate and environmental migration in related to the ocean requires building upon the expertise of different United Nations agencies, other non-governmental partners and the migrant communities themselves. The promotion of collaborative efforts would allow maximizing limited resources and ensuring that relevant technical expertise is leveraged.

e) Guiding questions for the dialogue

1. Understanding the issues at stake: What are the linkages between migration, climate and environmental change and oceans? What are the impacts at international, regional, national and local levels? What are the gaps in knowledge?

[7] http://www.ocean-climate.org/?p=4066

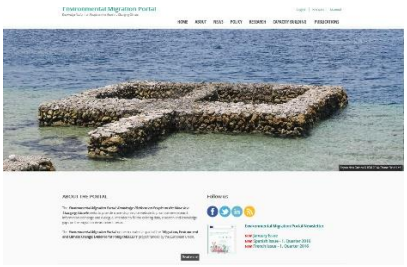
[8] MECLEP is a three year international partnership project (2014-16) funded by the EC and managed by IOM with a consortium of 6 research partners. The project focuses on 6 case study countries around the world including 4 SIDS countries Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea and Kenya and Viet Nam. These countries were chosen to illustrate how different forms of mobility, migration, displacement, and relocation may affect the environment and adaptation to climate change.

2. How to respond to these challenges: What are the current initiatives and best practices, drawn from different communities of practices that can inform action? How to finance action?
3. Enhancing partnerships and policy coherence: What are the entry points in global and regional policy dialogues to tackle oceans and migration issues? What are the possible entry points at the national level? What partnerships are necessary to ensure coherent and comprehensive responses?

For more information:

IOM Infosheet on Oceans, Environment Climate Change and Human Mobility (http://www.environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/default/files/publications/MECC%20Infosheet%20Oceans_7Nov2016.pdf)

IOM Environmental Migration Portal : www.environmentalmigration.iom.int



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