

Planning for the future

Using scenario planning to improve the understanding and management of climate-induced migration

People in many regions of the world are already directly affected by rising sea levels, more frequent extreme weather events, droughts and other impacts of climate change. Scientists believe that for many people, these climate-related developments constitute a reason for seeking somewhere else to live, either within their own country or in surrounding regions.

Governments and regional organisations in the countries affected are therefore developing new approaches and measures to cope appropriately with the migration, displacement and planned relocation induced by climate change. The German Government, represented by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), supports its partners in this process. Since 2017, the Global Programme Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH has been supporting both national and regional partners in the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Philippines and, since 2020, also in East and West Africa in preparing better for climate-induced migration.

One method it uses is scenario planning. This is an instrument for forecasting that aims to take account of many and diverse possible futures. Using this method, future scenarios can be developed systematically and transparently. The scenarios not only demonstrate how a hypothetical situation may arise in the future but also identify variants and alternatives. They also identify the opportunities for various actors to influence the process at each stage.

GIZ's Global Programme Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change uses the method with its partners in the Caribbean, Pacific and the Philippines to address their thematic focuses in its own context. In the Caribbean, for example, three workshops

were organised jointly with the Commission of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) involving participants from different management levels in various divisions within the Commission, such as environment, health, social affairs, justice and regional integration. Participants also included representatives of the OECS Member States, who generally meet only rarely as a group. The workshops encouraged the participants to share their knowledge and to learn together about climate-induced migration, both within the OECS Commission and between the Commission and its Member States.

The participants developed scenarios for climate-induced migration in the OECS region for the year 2025 and graded these according to their plausibility. On the basis of these scenarios, they then formulated ideas and discussed how they could prepare themselves for an uncertain future and what the next steps might be. One finding from all three workshops was that OECS Member States' resilience to climate risks and their awareness of climate-induced migration both have a major influence on the direction in which a scenario develops. The participants therefore regarded their political coordination in establishing and expanding these capacities as a key prerequisite for improving regional resilience to climate risks. Otherwise, these risks would pose an enormous challenge to individual states left to cope on their own.

Building on these findings and with support from the GIZ project, the OECS Commission has developed a Strategic Plan 2020-2023: Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change (HMCCC) for the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission, which was launched in April 2020. One of its objectives is to strengthen regional mechanisms to ensure fair and effective management of climate-induced human mobility.



Participants from the Caribbean are developing scenarios for climate-induced human mobility at a 'foresight planning'-workshop.

Pg 2: Coast of Dominica, two years after hurricane Maria



Dr. Dorothea Rischewski

Head of Global Programme
Human Mobility in the Context of
Climate Change (HMCCC)

dorothea.rischewski@giz.de

Working with scenario planning

There are several techniques for creating scenarios and several tools for scenario-based strategy development. Although individual methodological steps can vary, the fundamental approach is generally similar and consists of three phases.

1. Research: First of all, the topic (such as climate-induced migration in the OECS region) and the time-frame (in this case, 2025 as the end-point) are defined. In an extensive assessment of the current situation, participants establish the basis for constructing the scenarios. They engage in a brainstorming exercise to identify up to 50 political, social, economic, technological and other factors that potentially influence the scenario. Participants then define the factors that are especially important in creating exploratory scenarios. At one of the workshops in the Caribbean, for example, regional integration and socio-economic development, mobility patterns and public awareness of climate change and climate-induced migration were identified as particularly relevant factors.

2. Foresight: Participants define several 'raw' scenarios using a combination of assumptions. It is essential that the participants formulate explanations of why a certain combination of assumptions is plausible for the future. A comprehensive description of the possible scenario is then developed, along with a timeline. For the OECS states, raw scenarios were developed which were given the headings 'Desperate actions', 'Everything going according to plan' and 'Restricted by integration fatigue'. Although the intention was not necessarily to develop best- and worst-case scenarios, the participants formulated one relatively positive scenario and two more negative scenarios for climate-induced migration in 2025.

3. Strategy: Once the scenarios have been completed, they are being assessed by the participants. They evaluate the opportunities and risks of each scenario and develop strategies for managing each individual case. They also identify possible options that are helpful not only in relation to individual scenarios but under all potential conditions. This approach provides a solid basis for all the scenarios created and is useful in tackling uncertainties. One option for the OECS, for instance, would be to set up a resilience fund that could prevent a downward spiral of infrastructure destruction through disasters, economic recession, shrinking financial capacities and regional disintegration.

Participants gain valuable insights from carrying out the exercises in a scenario workshop that usually lasts several days. They acquire relevant knowledge, new perspectives and different – and sometimes contradictory – views on the topic in question. The attendees explore alternative futures and interpret them. They generate initial ideas about managing uncertain trends. And, not least, they develop a proactive approach to challenging and sometimes frightening ways ahead.

The Global Programme Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change

The Global Programme Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change operates in the Caribbean, East Africa, the Pacific, the Philippines and West Africa. It works with national governments, researchers and experts from climate and migration organisations to develop and implement new approaches for climate-induced migration. It also supports exchange processes between partners and disseminates the knowledge gained via international meetings and platforms.

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Global Programme Human Mobility
in the Context of Climate Change
Friedrich-Ebert Allee 32 + 36
53113 Bonn, Germany
Phone +49 (0) 6196 79 - 0
Fax +49 (0) 6196 79 - 1115
klimamigration@giz.de
www.giz.de

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Jasmin Remlinger: page 2

Text

Ute Lange

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