

Where Mobility Meets the City: Local Responses to Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change

Case Studies from the South-South Dialogue Series on Gender-Responsive and City-Centric Approaches to HMCCC

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Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

Preface **1**

1 Setting the Scene **2**

2 Selected Case Studies from the Dialogue Series **4**

2.1 Integration of City-Centric Approaches into National Policy Processes: Kampala's Case 4
2.2 Community-Based Responses to Climate Mobility and Urban Conflict: Moundou's Case 7
2.3 Human Mobility and Urban Flood Risk: Dakar's Case 9
2.4 Managing Landslide Risk and Planned Relocation: Kegalle District's Case 11
2.5 Gender-Responsive and Socially Inclusive Responses to Climate-Related Migration in Urban Settings: Freetown's Case 13
2.6 Monitoring Gender and Social Inclusion in the Context of Climate-Related Urban Migration: Jaipur's Case 15
2.7 Localising Climate Mobility Data for Early Warning and Municipal Planning: Mzuzu's Case 18

3 Cross-Cutting Learnings **20**

List of Acronyms

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CERI	Climate Exploitation Risk Index
CFAR	Centre for Advocacy and Research
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
EU	European Union
FCC	Freetown City Council
GCF	Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HMCCC	human mobility in the context of climate change
ICAD	Initiative for Climate Action and Development
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
LKR	Sri Lankan rupee
MMC	Mayors Migration Council
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NBRI	National Building Research Institute (formerly NBRO)
NBRO	National Building Research Organisation
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDRSC	National Disaster Relief Services Centre
NGO(s)	Non-governmental organisation(s)
PROGEP	Storm Water Management and Climate Change Project
RLVMMP	Reduction of Landslide Vulnerability by Mitigation Measures Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	United States dollar
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene



Preface

Every year, disasters and the adverse effects of climate change force millions of people to leave their homes. Cities and local authorities are increasingly at the centre of this challenge. Addressing human mobility in this context touches on many policy and action areas, from preparedness, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation to response and risk-informed development. Data and evidence cut across all these areas and are essential to promoting inclusive and participatory approaches to integrated policymaking, action, and support on the ground. How do we build a better understanding of what is essentially a very complex phenomenon, and how do we make sure it reaches those who act on it?

The work of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), and the Nansen Initiative before that, sits at the interface between research, evidence, data, and analysis on the one side and public policies, frameworks, planning, and responses on the other. A key task for us has always been to translate evidence, knowledge, and practical experience into relevant policies, action, and support.

Since I started working in this space, there has been a persistent call for more and better data to inform decision-making, including for cities and local authorities. How many people are displaced, why, and where are they moving to? What are their protection needs and the risks they face? What obstacles stand in the way of solutions to their displacement? We have made significant progress in the last decade, but gaps persist, especially regarding four key aspects.

First, we need to consider what type of data makes sense at which level. At the global level, a bird's-eye view helps to identify larger trends for advocacy and global priority-setting; but local authorities and municipal planners need data that is disaggregated and context-specific, including age, gender, and diversity lenses to understand and address intersectional vulnerabilities. This is where we must invest more going forward.

Second, human mobility is shaped by a variety of factors that influence its outcomes and how it affects people. Moving can be positive, even lifesaving, and support risk reduction, adaptation, or resilience-building, but it can also undermine human rights, development, and resilience.

Understanding these factors better is especially relevant for policymakers, local authorities, and municipal practitioners, who need to incorporate these considerations into urban development to make it sustainable and risk-informed.

Third, we need a more rigorous conceptual grounding of various forms of human mobility in the context of climate change, and to recognise different data and protection needs related to migration, displacement, planned relocation, and immobility.

Fourth, we need to consider the data needed at different stages of the "mobility cycle" and the vulnerabilities of those affected. Averting and minimising displacement, or planning for it, requires a better understanding of the risks people face, including better risk models, while addressing its impacts requires different data again. Important gaps also remain regarding protracted disaster displacement and solutions, and the obstacles to achieving them. This will require more longitudinal studies that track displacement over time and the scaling up of local risk modelling.

Moreover, and of particular relevance to this publication, it is difficult to think about public policy and urban planning on human mobility without means of implementation such as financial resources, normative frameworks (including financial literacy and inclusion), capacity-building with local practitioners, peer exchange, and technological exchange. These enablers help turn data and informed decision-making into impactful action at the municipal level. Cities need such data to identify who is moving or at risk of moving, so that they can plan settlements, infrastructure, and public services accordingly. We need to close the gaps and strengthen capacities at all levels to collect these types of data, including for smaller-scale disasters, and get a better picture of what we know and do not know about this complex and intersectional issue.

The cities featured in this publication show what becomes possible when such knowledge is combined with local commitment and exchange between peers.

Atle Solberg
Head of Secretariat
Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)



1 Setting the Scene

Climate change shapes the patterns of human mobility in many ways. When drought empties a village or a flood washes away a home, people rarely move far. Most stay within their own country, and more and more head for the nearest city (Clement et al., 2021). Some people migrate to diversify their income or to escape slowly worsening conditions such as heat, drought, land degradation or rising sea levels, often seasonally or in stages (Huber et al., 2026). Others are forced to flee sudden disasters: in 2025 alone, close to 30 million disaster displacements were recorded, of which almost all were weather-related (IDMC, 2026). Where risk becomes too severe to live with, whole communities may have to consider relocating in a planned way, voluntarily and as a last resort (Huber et al., 2026).

Climate change rarely acts alone. It works as a risk multiplier, interacting with poverty, insecure land tenure, gender inequality and conflict to shape who can move safely, who must move under distress and who cannot move at all (Huber et al., 2026). Without ambitious climate and development action, up to 216 million people could become internal climate migrants by 2050 (Clement et al., 2021).

For local authorities, this is not an abstract problem. Cities are destinations for people on the move, places from which residents are displaced when floods or landslides strike, and increasingly the sites of planned relocation themselves. Mayors and city officials must reduce disaster risk in their own jurisdictions, receive migrants and displaced people from neighbouring regions, find safe land when settlements have to be moved, and plan housing, services, and jobs for growing populations (Ekoh, 2023). Yet institutional mandates are fragmented, data systems remain insufficient, and funding for mobility-related measures is hard to access, particularly at the subnational level where responses must ultimately be implemented (Huber et al., 2026; Ekoh, 2023).

Less than 10% of the climate finance committed from international climate funds reaches the local level (Soanes et al., 2017), and less than 0.2% specifically targets locally led climate action (Treichel et al., 2025). Cities need an estimated USD 4.5 to 5.4 trillion a year to build and maintain resilient infrastructure while current financing stands at merely USD 831 billion (UN-Habitat, 2024).

Urban areas are dynamic places, constantly reshaped by people arriving, leaving, and moving within them. They are usually the first places to absorb people on the move: labour migrants looking for work, families leaving drought-hit farmland, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), who rarely stay in camps but settle with relatives, in rented rooms or in informal settlements (Earle, 2023). The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) estimates that at least 42% of IDPs live in urban areas (Turmena et al., 2026), and the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement expects most IDPs to settle permanently in towns and cities (United Nations, 2021). This puts cities on the frontline: they deal with the consequences of climate mobility long before national systems or humanitarian funding arrive, and long after emergency response ends. Recognising this, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is preparing its first Special Report on Climate Change and Cities, scheduled for approval in March 2027, which will also consider how urbanisation, migration, displacement, and planned relocation shape urban climate risks and responses (IPCC, 2024).

Secondary cities deserve particular attention in this regard. A significant and growing share of migrants, refugees and IDPs settle not in capitals but in smaller and secondary cities (Turmena et al., 2026). In Africa, two-thirds of people moving to urban areas by 2040 are expected to settle in intermediary cities (AfDB & Cities Alliance, 2022).

Around 1.1 billion people worldwide live in informal settlements, a number projected to grow by a further two billion by mid-century, mostly in secondary cities (UN STATS, 2023; Turmena et al., 2026). These cities often have the fewest staff, the weakest data, and the least access to finance, partly because governments and development partners tend to favour primary cities (Roberts, 2014). Early, well-planned action there can make a significant difference.

Climate mobility is not gender neutral. Existing inequalities shape who can move safely, who remains exposed, and who benefits from adaptation and recovery. Women and other marginalised groups have unequal access to land, finance, and decision-making processes while facing greater exposure to gender-based violence, exploitation and unpaid care burdens (Merkel, 2026). Only around a quarter of women worldwide hold legal documentation for the land they occupy (Turmena et al., 2026), and women often stay behind when men migrate, forcing women to carry farming, care work, and debt alone (Merkel, 2026). In many cases, women are the actors who sustain households, run informal markets, and mediate disputes in receiving neighbourhoods. Effective responses therefore go beyond meeting differing needs and instead address the norms, power relations, and resource inequalities behind unequal mobility outcomes (Merkel, 2026).

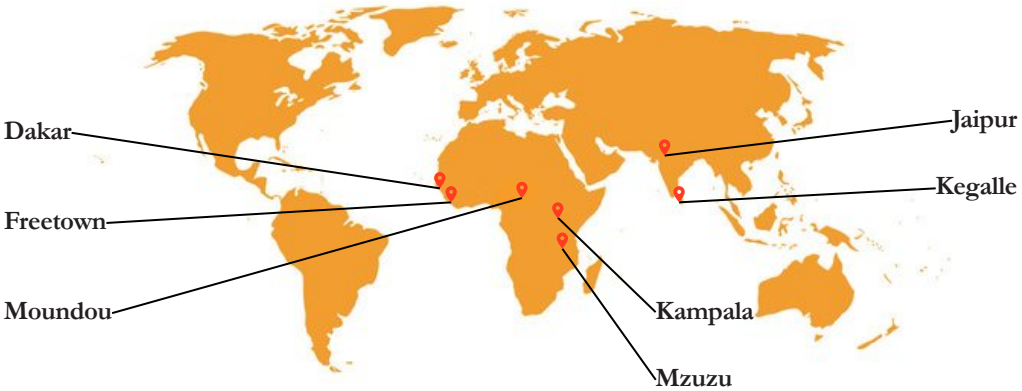
Cities are not merely places where displaced people and migrants arrive and settle. Newcomers actively contribute to urban economies and social life, for example, through cooperatives and livelihood initiatives (Turmena et al., 2026). Cities are ecosystems of services, markets, and networks that can help people rebuild their lives (United Nations, 2021), make migration a safe and positive adaptation strategy, and ensure that relocation, where unavoidable, happens with dignity and agency.

Many of the most relevant solutions are developed by cities themselves, and structured exchange between them accelerates learning and helps avoid repeating costly mistakes (Huber et al., 2026). The South-South Dialogue Series was created to make this knowledge visible and to let practitioners learn directly from each other.

Organised by Clima Trust (formerly SLYCAN Trust) and the GIZ Global Programme on Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change – commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – the South-South Dialogue Series presented a virtual peer-learning format on gender-responsive and city-centric approaches to human mobility in the context of climate change (HMCCC). The series connected municipal practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and international partners from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Each dialogue focused on one theme:

1. Integrating City-Centric Approaches into National Policy Processes
2. Security and Conflict Sensitivity
3. Voluntary Planned Relocation in Urban Areas
4. Gender and Social Inclusion
5. Data Management and Informed Decision-Making

The factsheets in this publication condense a selection of the cases presented from Kampala (Uganda), Moundou (Chad), Dakar (Senegal), Kegalle District (Sri Lanka), Freetown (Sierra Leone), Jaipur (India) and Mzuzu (Malawi). This publication complements the *Cities on the Move* publication, which highlights some of the cases also presented during the Dialogue Series (voluntary planned relocation in Hargeisa, Somaliland, and locally owned data management in Tanay, Philippines). The factsheets are meant to inspire city practitioners, show what is possible with limited resources, and encourage direct contact between cities.





2.1 Integration of City-Centric Approaches into National Policy Processes: Kampala's Case

Climate Mobility Context

Across Africa, climate change is increasingly recognised as a major driver of migration, displacement, and planned relocation. In 2024, close to 20 million people were internally displaced in sub-Saharan Africa, 8 million due to disasters (IDMC, 2025). Similarly, migrants and refugees have been rising across the continent (UN, 2025), with climate change contributing significantly, and mostly expected to head towards urban areas. This places cities at the centre of climate mobility dynamics, including those in Uganda.

As the capital and largest city of Uganda, Kampala is home to 1.7 million night-time residents (4.2 million at daytime) and has one of the fastest rates of urban population growth in Africa and the world (OECD et al., 2025), experiencing higher rural-to-urban migration connected to climate-related livelihood losses and cross-border inflows. As of mid-2025, the city hosts over 157,000 refugees and asylum seekers (over 59% being women and children), most of them self-settled across Makindye, Central, Rubaga, Kawempe, and Nakawa divisions.

While this dynamic brings people and labour to Kampala, it also creates persistent challenges for the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and for those arriving, such as: limited access to affordable housing and rapid response during emergencies, as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene services; frequent flooding and drainage failure; competition for informal jobs; and tensions between arriving and host communities. Furthermore, climate hazards, particularly floods and heat stress, worsen vulnerabilities in informal settlements such as Bwaise, Kisenyi, Katwe, and Kinawataka, where both refugees and low-income residents live in high-risk environments.

"How can we strike the right balance between ensuring essential services for refugees already present in the city while also managing migration patterns in a way that does not unintentionally incentivise secondary movements? These challenges underscore the importance of strategic coordination, long-term planning, and sustainable resourcing."

Pascal Mugisha
Supervisor Human Settlement,
KCCA

Migrants and refugees moving to Kampala are mainly looking for employment opportunities and services: over 51% of urban refugees work in informal enterprises (food vending, trading, boda-boda transport, and retail). Therefore, it is essential for the KCCA to develop robust frameworks that integrate mobility considerations into urban planning and management, and to widen policy processes on human settlement, climate change, adaptation, livelihoods, and resilience-building.



Approach

The KCCA has adopted a holistic, city-centric, and resilience-focused approach to climate-related human mobility with four major pillars to develop intervention:

1. **Climate-smart livelihoods and skills development**: Supporting refugees and host communities to generate income, build resilience, and enhance food security by strengthening opportunities for employment and livelihood generation, and skill development and training.

2. **Inclusive service provision and social protection**: Providing refugees with access to city-managed health centres, public schools, and job matching.

3. **Urban planning, human settlement management, and climate change adaptation**: Understanding the nexus between these areas and design evidence-based actions on climate-related displacement (e.g., storm water management), social safeguards, risk-sensitive planning, and mitigation measures, aligned with Uganda's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP).

4. **Policy frameworks and institutional development**: Aligning work in Kampala with Uganda's refugee protection policies (2006 Refugee Act and 2010 Refugee Regulations) as well as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the Uganda Refugee Response Plan and the National Development Plan IV, inter alia.



As policy integration, the Kampala City Emergency Response Plan 2025-2030 has been developed as an operational guide for managing city emergencies, connected with Uganda's National Land Policy (2013). This reinforces disaster management by ensuring that land use planning accounts for disaster risks in areas prone to landslides, floods and droughts, and supports institutional coordination to respond to land-related emergencies (KCCA et al., 2025).

The KCCA also works with other cities across Uganda (e.g., Arua, Gulu, Mbale, Mbarara, Fort Portal, Jinja, and Hoima) under frameworks such as the Uganda Local Governments Association, the National Urban Forum, and the UGCities4Resilience Network. These collaborations support the alignment with Uganda's CRRF and its NDC and NAP, improving knowledge-sharing and joint planning.

Impact to Date

The KCCA has begun developing a Refugee and Migration Settlement Ordinance to guide city-level management, coordination, and integration. Additionally, the city is establishing Migration/Refugee Management Desks in the divisions of Makindye, Central, Rubaga, Kawempe, and Nakawa to strengthen case management and improve service referrals. Furthermore, Kampala is exploring to upgrade and expand trading spaces to better accommodate migrant and refugee entrepreneurs, and ensure their access to livelihoods and economic participation.

Funding

Kampala mostly receives funding from: own-source revenue generation, fiscal transfers from the central government via the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and external aid. In 2026, KCCA has ongoing funding from the World Bank under the Greater Kampala and Metropolitan Urban Development Program, and the African Development Bank under the Kampala City Roads Rehabilitation Project (both funding infrastructure development: roads, drainages, and markets).

Learnings

Although policy encourages refugees to remain within their designated settlements, where services and resources are planned to meet their needs, their high influx and continuous turnover obliges the city to plan for them. In this case, enhanced urban support systems can attract additional movement, not driven by vulnerability but by the benefits associated with being in the city.



For specific questions and further inquiry on the case study, please contact Mr Pascal Mugisha at: pmugisha@kcca.go.ug



2.2 Community-Based Responses to Climate Mobility and Urban Conflict: Moundou's Case

Climate Mobility Context

In Chad, rapid rural-to-urban migration driven by drought, land degradation and resource scarcity is reshaping cities such as Moundou. The resulting influx of people strains urban infrastructure, contributes to informal settlements with limited access to services, and heightens social tensions – particularly between host communities, displaced populations and refugees.

Moundou, Chad's economic capital and second-largest urban centre, is a major destination for agricultural labour, mainly in the agricultural sector (Mbaipago et al., 2022; IOM, 2022). The influx of rural populations fleeing degraded farmland has fuelled rapid and unplanned urban growth. Within this context, women play a central role in sustaining households, managing informal markets, and mediating neighbourhood disputes.

"As places of vulnerability but also of creativity, our future stability will be determined in our cities. By placing security, conflict sensitivity, and gender equality at the heart of our responses, we can transform these challenges into opportunities for resilience and social cohesion."

Alhadj Tchoroma Adoum Soumain
National Coordinator and member of the National Assembly, Chad

Approach

The response in Moundou has focused on strengthening community dialogue, inclusive resource management and local conflict prevention - with particular attention to the participation of women, youth and local authorities in building social cohesion and resilience. Key interventions include:

- **Mixed committees** of local authorities, women's associations, and youth leaders, responsible for managing water points and preventing conflicts.
- **Training** in mediation and climate change, using a gender-sensitive approach and documented in municipal reports, field surveys and local testimonies.
- **Urban micro-projects** such as community vegetable gardens and women's cooperatives, to strengthen economic and social resilience.

Key stakeholders

- **Local authorities:** Moundou Town Hall and the municipal technical services approved joint committees and facilitated access to infrastructure, providing institutional legitimacy.
- **Community associations:** Women's and youth groups mobilised residents, organised initial meetings, and proposed shared management rules, securing community buy-in.
- **Technical partners:** GIZ and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provided methodological and financial support, supplying the tools and expertise to structure and strengthen the committees.

Impact to Date

Joint water management committees: Mixed men's/women's committees established in outlying neighbourhoods led to a 35% reduction in reported water-point conflicts by 2023. In Ngolo, equitable water distribution helped prevent clashes between displaced and host families.

Training and local mediation: Thirty women leaders were trained in social mediation and conflict management, easing tensions between displaced and host populations – particularly over market garden plots. In Moundou Nord, a dispute over well access was resolved through local mediation, avoiding the need for security force intervention.

Women-led urban micro-projects: Women's clubs launched soap and eco-friendly brick production, giving 15 women a regular income and strengthening their role in family and community life. In the Dombao neighbourhood, soap production has helped fund the education of 20 children and reduce families' economic dependence.



Learnings

Climate mobility is also an urban issue, not just a rural one. Displacement strains urban infrastructure but also drives local innovation - housing cooperatives, community water management systems, and sustainable transport. Cities must build the capacity to integrate mobile populations and strengthen their resilience.

Women are strategic actors in resource management and mediation, not just victims of climate impacts. Their role in managing natural resources and preventing conflict is central to resilience outcomes – projects with strong women's participation in local governance tend to be more sustainable. This participation should be institutionalised through targeted training and inclusive management committees.

Urban security and climate resilience are inextricably linked. Unaddressed resource tensions – over water, land or energy – can escalate into conflict, especially in informal settlements. Resilience policies should integrate community mediation mechanisms, dialogue spaces between authorities and displaced populations, and stronger social protection systems.

This factsheet is also available in French.

For specific questions and further inquiry on the case study, please contact Mr Alhadj Tchoroma Adoum Soumain at: alhadjtchoroma@gmail.com





2.3 Human Mobility and Urban Flood Risk: Dakar's Case

Climate Mobility Context

Worsening environmental conditions – water scarcity, reduced pasture availability, shifting harvesting seasons – are driving population movements across Senegal and fuelling tensions between farmers and pastoralists (Rigaud et al., 2021). Many rural residents fleeing droughts and poverty have settled on Dakar's outskirts, often in flood-prone zones more hazardous than those occupied by long-term residents increasing their exposure to insecurity and environmental risks (Schaer, 2015; Agder et al., 2014; Foresight, 2011).

The World Bank reports that floods have displaced more than 300,000 people in the Dakar region since 1989. Dakar's peri-urban areas face serious flooding almost every wet season (Ward et al., 2020). Despite these risks, Dakar remains the main destination for internal migrants in Senegal (Rigaud et al., 2021).

"Urbanisation is getting exponential in Africa, with nationals migrating internally to cities or having transboundary movement of people to urban settings. Conflicts are arising because of this. Informal settlements have started to grow as well, mainly in drought-affected areas that are actually flood-prone."

Antoine Faye,
Former Chief Resilience Officer, City of Dakar

Approach

Recent programmes in Dakar have aimed to mitigate flood risks, with particular emphasis on IDPs and those who have returned to their communities of origin following displacement. This includes a community-based disaster risk reduction programme launched in the region (IOM, 2024).

Efforts have also focused on nature-based solutions for both residents and migrants, such as encouraging agroecological practices among migrant workers in the agricultural sector (IOM, 2024).

Impact to Date

- More than 63,000 people reached through flood-risk awareness and resilience activities.
- Improved drainage and flood management infrastructure now protects approximately 900 hectares and benefits over 150,000 people.
- Flood governance has increasingly shifted towards integrated and participatory approaches combining infrastructure investments, community engagement and nature-based solutions.



Funding

Dakar – home to 20% of Senegal's population – generates 68% of national gross domestic product (GDP) and receives a third of the country's remittance flows, which represent 9.1% of GDP (Ministry of Finance and Budget - Senegal, n.d.; Ionesco et al., 2017; Rigaud et al., 2021).

Key infrastructure investments include the Storm Water Management and Climate Change Project (PROGEP), a stormwater and climate adaptation programme funded by the World Bank, Global Environment Facility and Nordic Development Fund. PROGEP's first phase (2012–2020) totalled USD 121.3 million; PROGEP2 (2021–2029) is budgeted at USD 318.1 million (World Bank, 2021; World Bank, 2023). Dakar's climate plan was developed with the European Union (EU) and German development cooperation support (Ekoh, 2024).

For specific questions and further inquiry on the case study, please contact Mr Antoine Faye at: antoinefaye1@gmail.com.

Learnings

Act early and use evidence: Proactive and evidence-based action on current and future mobility trends is crucial for policymakers to ensure prosperity, as well as inclusive and sustained economic growth in Dakar and emerging hotspots – including comprehensive coastal zone planning that combines green and grey infrastructure where appropriate (Rigaud et al., 2021). When needed, localised relocation should be based on anticipation and dialogue with affected communities as in Bargny (SLYCAN Trust, 2025; MEDD-DEEC, 2022).

Link understanding of risks to policy – but expect cost barriers: In Dakar, local actors' understanding of the links between coastal risk and human mobility contributed to the inclusion of coastal management in the city's climate action plan, including coastal protection infrastructure to help mitigate climate-related out-migration. However, this remains a low priority due to implementation costs (Ekoh, 2024).

Sustain reform beyond project timeline: While PROGEP shifted institutional understanding of climate risk in urban planning, lasting governance reform requires both institutional design and sustained political commitment to embed new practices in routine systems (Omoyeni, 2026).

Address data gaps. Data on migrants and displaced populations in Dakar remains incomplete, as documentation typically relies on migrants voluntarily approaching authorities (Ekoh, 2024).

This factsheet is also available in French.





2.4 Managing Landslide Risk and Planned Relocation: Kegalle District's Case

Climate Mobility Context

Sri Lanka is highly vulnerable to climate-related disasters, particularly landslides caused by heavy rainfall and changing weather patterns, exacerbated by deforestation and improper land use. Around 20% of the country's land is susceptible to landslides, especially in central and hilly districts like Kegalle (SLYCAN Trust & NBRO, 2023; Chinthaka et al., 2023). Disasters regularly lead to loss of lives, displacement, destruction of houses and infrastructure, disrupted livelihoods, and long-term (non-)economic losses, placing significant pressure on municipalities and local authorities.

Kegalle's vulnerability became evident during Cyclone Ditwah, which made landfall on 28th November 2025 and triggered heavy rainfall, flooding, and landslides. Post-cyclone, initial large-scale collective sheltering evolved into dispersed and protracted displacement patterns, as damaged roads and ongoing hazard exposure hindered safe returns. Until April 2026, between 8,033 and 36,060 individuals within Kegalle District remained displaced (IOM, 2026; DMC, 2026). These prolonged displacement patterns and uncertainties regarding their scope create additional challenges for local authorities to support displaced populations and their recovery.



Approach

Reduction of landslide risk and vulnerability: Cyclone Ditwah highlighted the vulnerability of many settlements in Sri Lanka. Between 2019 and 2025, the National Building Research Organisation (NBRO), now the National Building Research Institute (NBRI), implemented the Reduction of Landslide Vulnerability by Mitigation Measures Project (RLVMMP), with 16 measures in Kegalle District (AIIB, n.d.; NBRO, 2025). Furthermore, the National Disaster Relief Services Centre (NDRSC) is implementing the Resettlement of Displaced People Due to Landslide Threats and Landslides project (2017-2028), which aims to provide 15,025 disaster-resilient housing units for families in high-risk areas (824 in Kegalle District) (NDRSC, 2021; MFPED, 2025).

Resettlement programme: NBRO produced maps classifying areas by risk level to support in-situ adaptation in lower-risk areas while facilitating resettlement out of high-risk areas. The Government of Sri Lanka identified safer land for relocating families in Kegalle and provided monetary support to those affected (CFE-DM, 2024). Households receive cash grants in instalments to build their own houses, conditional on complying with prescribed standards. When renovation of a partially damaged house is not possible, 5 million Sri Lankan rupee (LKR) (USD 15,000) may be granted to beneficiaries (NBRO, 2026).

Community awareness in disaster-prone areas: Launched in 2023, the Community Awareness and Preparedness on Disaster Management programme aims to provide information about potential hazards to the population in local settlements. In the first year, 16 trainings and awareness creation programmes reached a total of 3,000 public officials and community members (DMC, 2023).

Impact to Date

As of April 2026, the government provided LKR 2 million (USD 6,000) per household to 36 families with fully or partially destroyed houses (SLSC Sector Sri Lanka, 2026). Nationwide, the inhabitants of around 25,000 houses likely need relocation out of high-risk "red zones" declared post-disaster (DMC/NPD, 2026). This highlights the need for well-planned and equitable relocation and restoration of safe living conditions.

However, resettled community members fear the potential loss of passive income, increased expenses for food and transportation, reduced access to clean water, limited work opportunities, and difficulties accessing education, healthcare, or religious places. Limited resources and availability of safe land continue to pose challenges to addressing these concerns.

Funding

The RLVMMP project was funded by the Government of Sri Lanka and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), with a budget of USD 101.3 million for mitigation actions in 128 sites (NBRO, 2025). The Resettlement of Displaced People Due to Landslide Threats and Landslides project had a domestic budget of LKR 500 million for 2025 (USD 1.5 million), with LKR 1 billion (USD 3 million), LKR 2.8 billion (USD 8.5 million), and LKR 2 billion (USD 6 million) allocated for 2026-2028 respectively (MFPED, 2025a; MFPED, 2026). The World Food Programme provided LKR 3.5 million (USD 11,500) for the Community Awareness and Preparedness on Disaster Management programme (DMC, 2023).

"During Cyclone Ditwah, 1,200 landslides were recorded, affecting 20 of the 25 districts of Sri Lanka, and displacing thousands of people. The ongoing resettlement programme by the government is gradually relocating thousands of families that live in high-risk areas, expected to be completed in 2 years, and applying the "Build-Back-Better" approach to improve the resilience of infrastructure (guaranteeing safer households), following appropriate land development and offering resettlement alternatives to families needing to relocate due to house damage or living in high-risk areas."

Chinthaka Rathnasiri
Director of Human Settlement, Planning and Training Division, NBRI, Sri Lanka

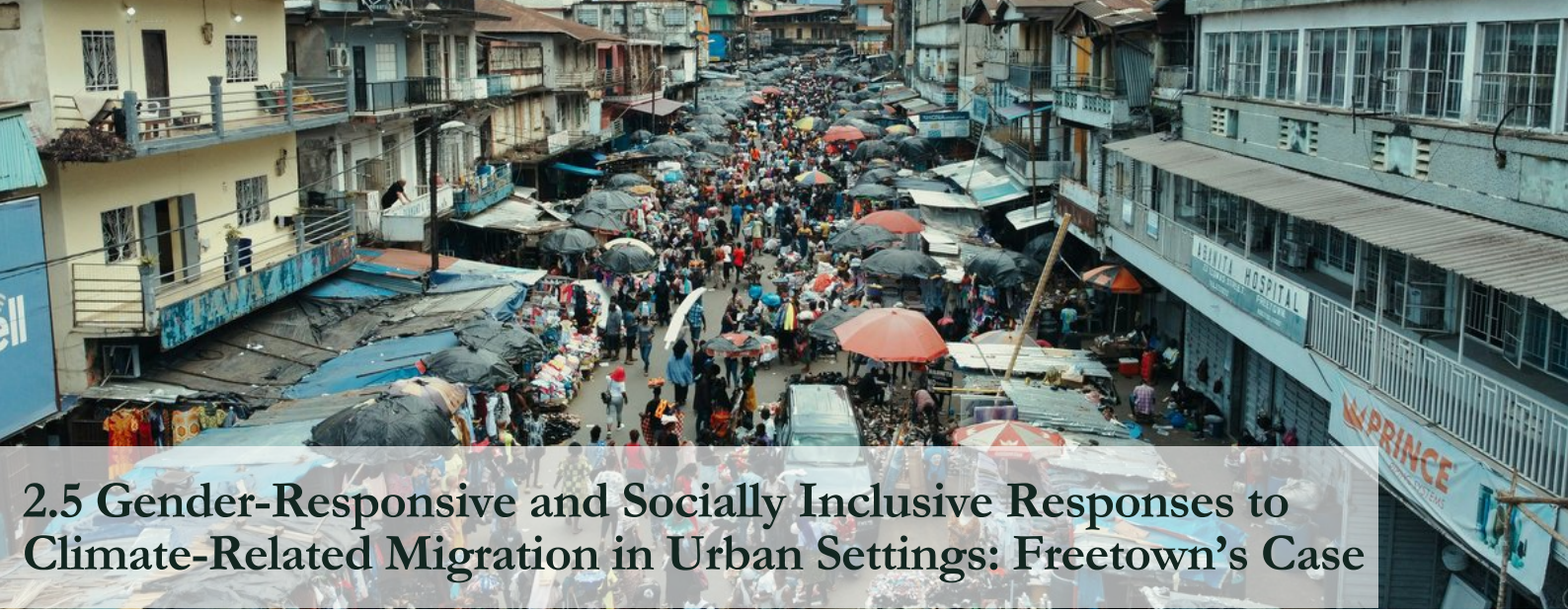
Learnings

Displacement and return in Kegalle District are shaped by environmental risk, livelihood pressures, infrastructure damage, and institutional factors creating intersectional vulnerabilities. Even as IDPs resume daily life, they navigate displacement, constrained return, and continued exposure to multidimensional risks driven by structural constraints, like housing damage, tenure insecurity, and continued environmental conditions (IOM, 2026). Comprehensive relocation efforts must thus also address the structural and environmental conditions that have created vulnerability in the first place.

Health and nutrition conditions remain fragile in most affected districts. Displacement increases disease risks, worsens sanitation quality, lowers dietary quality, and restricts access to care. In Kegalle District, damaged facilities, long travel distances, and inadequate WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) services exacerbate vulnerabilities (UN Sri Lanka, 2026). Access to sanitation and healthcare, food and nutritional security, as well as their connection to agricultural livelihoods and home gardens, must therefore be included in broader risk management and resettlement frameworks.

Scaling up shelter repair and transitional housing remains essential for settlements with partially damaged structures, alongside long-term support for livelihood recovery (IOM, 2026). Clearly communicating new ministerial decrees and cabinet decisions post-emergency events also remains crucial, as unclarities remain regarding eligibility and support amounts for affected households and individuals (SLSC Sector Sri Lanka, 2026).

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2.5 Gender-Responsive and Socially Inclusive Responses to Climate-Related Migration in Urban Settings: Freetown's Case

Climate Mobility Context

In Sierra Leone, climate change is accelerating rural-to-urban migration, while increasing the vulnerability of those arriving in rapidly expanding cities, creating a compounding cycle of climate and social risks (World Bank, 2023). As the primary destination for rural-to-urban migration, Freetown is particularly exposed to these intersecting pressures. The city faces rising sea levels, coastal erosion, flooding, and landslides (FCC & C40, 2022). Urban expansion and deforestation have exacerbated the urban heat island effect, flooding and landslide risks (Sam-Mbomah et al., 2025). In 2017, extensive reliance on informal settlements in precarious areas contributed to a landslide that killed more than 1,000 people (WEF, 2023). Freetown's largely informal and labour-intensive economy is highly vulnerable to extreme heat and humidity: over 90% of working hours occur outside of climate-controlled conditions, threatening productivity, incomes, and health (Climate Resilience Center, n.d.; World Bank, 2023).

These risks are unevenly distributed, with greater impacts on vulnerable groups, including women and children, particularly in informal settlements. Displaced women and girls face heightened risks of violence and discrimination, alongside increased responsibilities for food, water and childcare during disasters (RWI, 2023). Migrant women, the majority of informal traders across Freetown's markets, are especially vulnerable to climate-related economic and health impacts (MMC, 2025).

Recognising these realities, Freetown City Council (FCC) treats climate-related rural-to-urban migration and informal settlement growth as features of the city to plan around rather than against. FCC aims to improve conditions and opportunities for migrants and transform informal settlements into assets for shared prosperity, making migration a choice rather than a necessity (MMC, 2025).

Approach

- FCC has been implementing the Transform Freetown agenda since 2018 and launched the Climate Action Strategy in 2023. Both aim to improve climate resilience and livelihoods through inclusive, participatory approaches focused on women, youth, migrants and residents of informal settlements.
- To address land degradation associated with rural-to-urban migration and urban expansion, FCC launched Freetown the Treetown in 2020. This nature and community-based initiative links reforestation, settlement upgrading, and landslide and flooding risk reduction. It thereby provides green jobs, capacity-building and opportunities for participation in urban planning for women and youth in informal settlements.
- The Freetown Waste Micro-Enterprise project, launched by FCC in 2019 and expanded with support of the Mayors Migration Council (MMC), links waste management to the creation of green jobs and livelihood opportunities for migrant youth in informal settlements, enabling business creation while contributing to public health.

- Launched by FCC in 2025, the Climate Resilient Market Hub aims to make Freetown's markets more climate-resilient, circular, and inclusive for migrant women. It introduced technologies that convert waste into energy to power refrigerators and provides training to strengthen livelihoods and incomes while reducing emissions.

"Over 90% of businesses in Freetown's 42 markets are women-led, and most of these are migrant women. Heat stress causes spoilage of goods, leading to economic losses and health risks. The strategy of the city is to get a Climate Resilient Market Hub where a complete circular loop system provides sustainability to the efforts these women undertake."

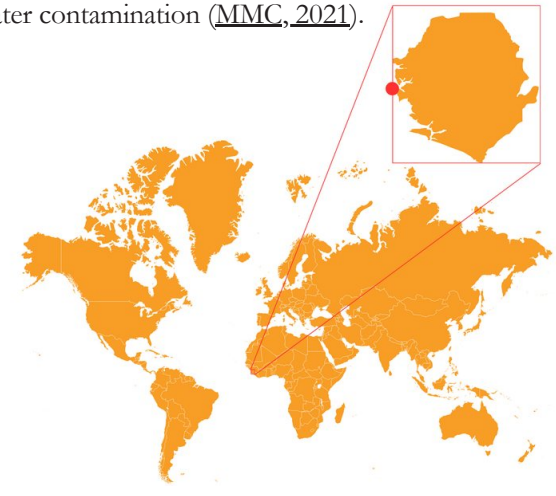
Andruga William
Former City Adviser on Waste and Methane, FCC

Impact to Date

- As part of the Transform Freetown agenda and the Climate Action Strategy, FCC aims to create 120,000 green jobs for women and youth by 2028 (MMC, 2025). While recent data is not yet available, the Strategy commits to better reporting and evaluating demographic indicators for migrants, informal workers, and co-benefits such as health and job creation (FCC & C40, 2022).

- Thanks to the Freetown the Treetown Initiative, 977,000 trees were planted, and the city committed to planting an additional 4 million by 2028 to reduce the urban heat island effect and prepare for continued urban expansion (FCC, 2024). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported the participation of 92 returned migrants during the tree planting and donation campaign, enabling community involvement and participation in local initiatives (IOM, n.d.).

- The Freetown Waste Micro-Enterprise project employed 240 youths from informal settlements in green jobs. Of those, 75% were migrants and IDPs and 30% were women. The project further improved waste collection services, sanitary conditions, and reduced water contamination (MMC, 2021).



Funding

- The Freetown Waste Micro-Enterprise project was initially funded by the EU and IOM and expanded in 2021 through the MMC's Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees (GCF). FCC also contributed directly, covering 50% of the tricycles purchased for the expansion (FCC, 2022). The participating beneficiaries repaid 80% of the cost of the waste collection tricycles. The success of this project unlocked an additional USD 1.5 million investment to expand the project and finance future activities (MMC, 2021).

- The Climate Resilient Market Hub is also funded through an MMC GCF grant, awarded in 2025, and it builds on complementary investments, including the African Urban Heat Resilience Grant Program by Climate Resilience for All for heat-resilient market infrastructure (MMC, 2025; HERA, 2025).

- Freetown the Treetown is financed by a network of partners and funders, including the World Bank, Catholic Relief Services, and United Nations Development Programme (Freetown the Treetown, n.d.).

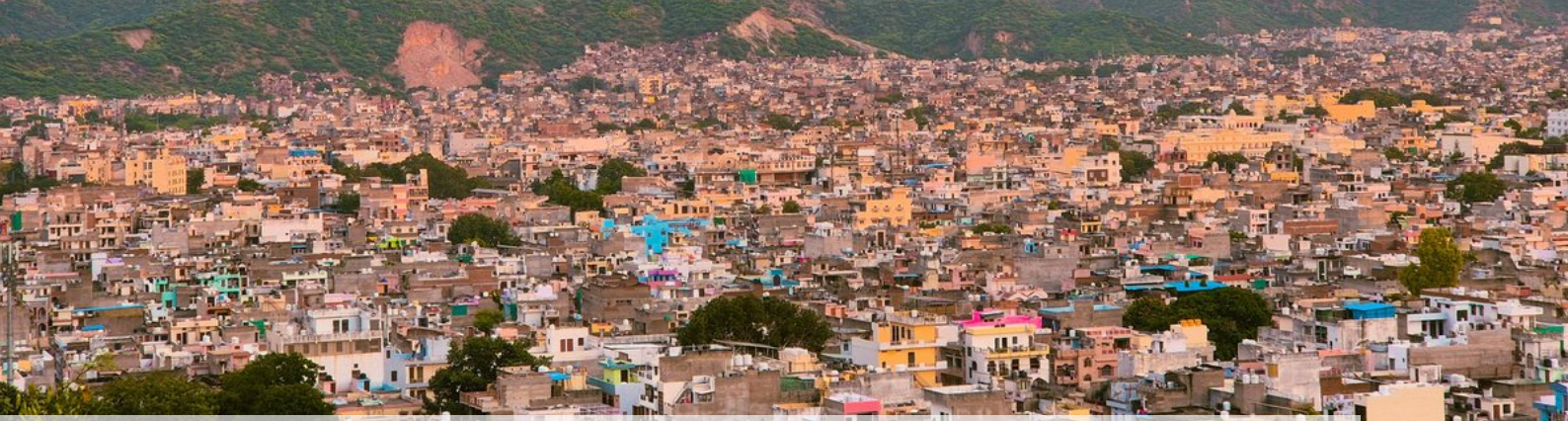
Learnings

- Freetown the Treetown's participatory urban greening and settlement upgrading approach shows the value of working with informal communities and is designed to mitigate the risks of gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents often associated with slum upgrading (Schoonman and Bockarie, 2026).

- Freetown's experience shows that inclusive climate resilience initiatives cannot substitute for the mandate, data, and tools local authorities need to govern land use and manage the city's growth (Flint, 2022).

- Embedding gender and migrant inclusion directly into livelihoods infrastructure – markets, waste systems, green jobs – can be more durable than treating inclusion as a separate track from climate adaptation. Because the same women and migrant workers who power Freetown's informal economy are also those most exposed to climate risk, resilience investments that strengthen their livelihoods directly deliver adaptation and inclusion gains at once.

For specific questions and further inquiry on the case study, please contact eugeniakargbozt@gmail.com, andrugan@gmail.com or augustine.kamara85@gmail.com.



2.6 Monitoring Gender and Social Inclusion in the Context of Climate-Related Urban Migration: Jaipur's Case

Climate Mobility Context

Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan, is one of northern India's fastest-growing urban regions. Its population is currently estimated at 4.5 million with annual growth rates around 2.4% (Population Census Data, 2026; MacroTrends, 2026). Much of the growth is fed by rural-to-urban migration, and climate stress is a recognisable driver of it. As a regional commercial hub, Jaipur serves as an attractive destination for migrants from neighbouring rural areas seeking better prospects, thereby accelerating urbanisation (Vaishnav et al., 2024).

Drought is a statistically significant driver of rural-to-urban movement: a state-representative study found that almost one third of the analysed households in Rajasthan reported drought as a reason for migration (Bharadwaj et al., 2022). Water scarcity compounds this pressure in an already arid region. Jaipur's groundwater table has fallen by 25 metres in the last decade (Rukshar et al., 2023), and one model projects that by 2028, 58% of Jaipur district's population will live in areas where groundwater lies below 60 metres — a threshold associated with acute scarcity (Mondal, 2024). This development will likely lead to further migration movements.

The effects of climate stress are sharply gendered: household stress correlates with higher rates of crime against women, and girls face earlier school dropout and a higher risk of early marriage (Bhardwaj, 2026). At the same time, the benefits of urbanisation, such as improved job and education opportunities, often do not reach women and girls equally. Additionally, women in origin communities who stay behind bear a disproportionate and largely invisible burden: they manage households, agriculture, and childcare alone during male absence, with reduced income and no compensatory support.

Migrants arriving in Jaipur typically settle in the city's informal settlements – roughly 65 recognised slum areas under the Jaipur Development Authority, some of which are slated for relocation or upgrading under the city's post-2015 urban renewal push (Choudhary et al., 2024). This matters for protection: relocation can improve housing and services, but it can also disrupt the informal networks that new arrivals – especially women – rely on for safety. This is the gap Suraksha Lens is designed to address.

Approach

The South Asian Institute of Crime and Justice Studies developed the Suraksha Lens, a community-driven climate risk intelligence platform and early warning system, operating across India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, built around a "people-first" approach. This means that it takes into account household circumstances, intersectional vulnerabilities and exploitation, community inputs, and existing informal networks of protection. It is built to identify, connect and act on exploitation risk signals before harm occurs – shifting protection from response to prevention. It rests on three pillars:

- **Intelligence**: Continuously synthesising climate data, socio-economic indicators, and community-level signals to answer where risk is emerging.
- **Activation**: Structured protocols that connect frontline workers, NGOs and government agencies, answering who responds and how.



- **Capacity** – Community Safety & Evidence Leaders programme: Community-based actors build digital and evidence-generation skills and gather hyperlocal, qualitative data on how climate stress, displacement, migration and household decisions actually unfold. This creates a community-generated data layer that can complement existing government and institutional datasets, so communities can interpret and act on risk themselves.

The Suraksha Lens does not operate in isolation – it sits alongside other efforts addressing related pressures in Jaipur. For example, the Jaipur Municipal Corporation partnered with the NGO Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) to design and deliver gender-inclusive, accessible community toilets in the Jawahar Nagar slum, a climate-exposed informal settlement (CFAR, n.d.). The wider CFAR programme aimed to deliver climate-resilient and socially inclusive WASH facilities in 125 informal settlements in Jaipur between 2018 and 2024 (CWAS, 2025).

"Climate risk in Jaipur is clearly gendered and migration functions less as a choice than as a coping strategy, as households face water scarcity linked to climate pressures (increasing women's unpaid care work and is associated with domestic violence), land selling to fund children's education, and adoption of rising debt."

Ntasha Bhardwaj
Founder, South Asian Institute of Crime and Justice Studies

Impact to Date

Suraksha Lens operationalised its approach through the Climate Exploitation Risk Index (CERI), a composite 0–1 risk metric that links climate hazard, exposure and socio-economic vulnerability indicators to identify geographic areas where climate-related exploitation risks may be emerging. For Jaipur, CERI provides an analytical layer that can help connect climate information with social vulnerability and prioritise areas for further investigation and community-led response. Jaipur's overall score of 0.58 indicates that risk stems from the convergence of multiple pressures rather than any single driver. Additionally, Jaipur East has been identified as the highest-priority sub-district, directly informing recommendations for child-protection programming and early-warning activation there (Bhardwaj, 2026).

Many WASH committees in Jaipur now include members from transgender communities, persons with disabilities, and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes groups (which are historically disadvantaged communities who receive constitutional protections), ensuring a more inclusive governance framework. Moreover, about 25% of the services in Jaipur's settlements were upgraded to be climate-resilient, for example through raised toilet pits and resilient hand pumps that address waterlogging and flooding (CWAS, 2025).

Funding

- Suraksha Lens was initially developed and piloted with approximately USD 50,000 during its first year. Unlike a conventional project with a fixed implementation budget, it is developed as a social-impact entrepreneurship model, with resources supporting continued development, community implementation, technology, research, and scaling. It is now being expanded across its pilot geographies, with a blended sustainability approach combining partnerships, external support, and future earned-income opportunities.

- The WASH project involving CFAR as partner of Water for Women Fund received USD 4 million from the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the financial year 2021/2022 (Water for Women, 2023).



Learnings

- **Intersectionality matters:** Poor women from marginalised communities face layered, compounding vulnerabilities that require differentiated programming, not one-size-fits-all responses.

- **Strengthen, don't duplicate:** The persistent gap is "last-mile" access, as people often do not know what support exists or cannot reach it. Strengthening and accelerating existing local systems, rather than replacing them, should be the priority to ensure that support reaches those who need it most.

- **Community-generated data can strengthen climate intelligence:** Existing climate and administrative datasets can identify broad patterns of hazard and vulnerability, but hyperlocal community evidence can help explain how these risks translate into changes in mobility, livelihoods, household decision-making and access to services.

- **Risk intelligence should connect to action:** Data systems are most useful when they help local actors identify emerging risks, prioritise attention, and strengthen existing response mechanisms rather than functioning as stand-alone dashboards.

For specific questions and further inquiry on the case study, please contact Ms Ntasha Bhardwaj at: communications@saicjs.com.





2.7 Localising Climate Mobility Data for Early Warning and Municipal Planning: Mzuzu's Case

Climate Mobility Context

Mzuzu City, the capital of Malawi's Northern Region, is experiencing rapid urbanisation and the highest intercensal growth rate in the country at 5.4% (NSO, 2019). Rural-to-urban migration is a major contributor to these trends (Riley & Crush, 2023; Riley et al., 2018). Major cities in Malawi, including Mzuzu, have suffered flooding and drought, for example in 2014 and 2016 (UN-Habitat, 2022). Flooding is a recurring issue in poorly drained areas in Mzuzu (e.g., Masasa, Chibanja, Chiputula, Mzilawaingwe, Chibavi East and West, Mchengautuba West and Zolozolo East and West), often resulting in displacement, as well as property and infrastructure damage (Mzuzu City Council et al., 2024). Additionally, floods and dry spells in the rural districts of Karonga, Rumphi and Chitipa have pushed households to Mzuzu in search of improved livelihoods. Many new arrivals settle in informal settlements with limited tenure security, increasing pressure on water, housing, land and health services.



Despite this, city planning and disaster response in Mzuzu have historically relied on fragmented data from national agencies, with limited real-time, disaggregated data on human mobility and climate risk at ward level. A 2024 study by the Initiative for Climate Action and Development (ICAD) on mainstreaming human mobility into Malawi's NAP process identified three data gaps in Mzuzu (ICAD, 2024):

- **No city-level mobility data:** The City Council lacked data on who is moving to Mzuzu, from where, and why. This limits targeted service delivery.
- **Delayed hazard information:** Communities in flood-prone wards received warnings 24 to 48 hours late, after damage had already occurred.
- **Gender-blind data:** Women, youth, and persons with disabilities were disproportionately affected by displacement but were under-represented in municipal databases.

Approach

From 2024 to 2026, ICAD piloted a data management approach in three wards of Mzuzu: Masasa, Zolozolo and Mchengautuba. The approach had three components:

- **Community Climate and Mobility Monitors:** Training of 30 community monitors (10 per ward, 60% of whom are women) covering 200 households per ward and around 2,600 people in total. The community monitors collect monthly data on rainfall, flood points, new arrivals, shelter conditions, and service gaps using simple tools. Data is validated with Area Development Committees and Ward Councillors and plans are in place to engage city stakeholders, the private sector and academia.

- Mzuzu City Climate Mobility Dashboard: ICAD is mobilising partners to support the development of a dashboard that will aggregate community data with weather data from the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services. The dashboard, which is currently in its planning phase, will provide monthly maps of flood hotspots and migration trends to inform the City Disaster Risk Management Committee. Additionally, findings will be passed to the national level to inform policy and decision-making. ICAD is advocating for climate mobility to be mainstreamed in the 2026/2027 Mzuzu City Development Plan, using data from the pilot.

- Gender-Responsive Data Protocols: Introduction of data collection protocols that capture gender, age, disability, and reason for movement. This allows the city to plan targeted interventions, for example safe spaces for women in evacuation centres.

"Without timely, localised, and gender-disaggregated data, decision-making on relocation, infrastructure, and social protection remains reactive. In this context, ICAD is working with Mzuzu City Council to scale this model to all 14 wards and integrate it into the City's Climate Change Management and Disaster Risk Reduction Plans."

Gift Richard Maloya
Migration Governance and Climate Mobility Expert, ICAD

Funding

To date, ICAD's work has been implemented through internal resources and volunteer monitors. Additional resources are required to fully operationalise the city's climate mobility dashboard, sustain monthly hotspot and mobility mapping, and cover other project needs.

Impact to Date

- **Faster response:** During the January 2025 floods, early alerts from community monitors enabled timely community action and pre-positioning of relief to affected areas.

- **Policy uptake:** Data and lessons from Mzuzu inform ICAD's ongoing input to Malawi's NAP process (including through a briefing note on climate mobility in urban informal settlements that is under development and draws on evidence from Mzuzu).

- **Community ownership:** Community-collected information is now discussed in various development meetings with different stakeholders and the City Council, leading to visible actions and follow-ups on matters such as drainage clearing and planning. Community monitors are recognised as trusted focal points, fostering increased proactive information sharing from residents. This feedback loop has strengthened trust, accountability, and ownership.

Learnings

- **Community-generated data works:** Local data collected by communities is timelier and more actionable for municipal decision-making than national datasets alone.

- **Link data to budget and planning:** Data only drives action when it is linked to City Council planning cycles and budget lines.

- **Gender and inclusion need explicit protocols:** Without them, mobility data will miss the most vulnerable.

For specific questions and further inquiry on the case study, please contact Mr Gift Richard Maloya at: gift.icad@gmail.com.



3 Cross-Cutting Learnings

Across very different contexts, the dialogues pointed to a shared set of lessons for cities.

Plan with mobility, not against it. Climate mobility is an ongoing and long-term reality for many urban areas. Cities that accept this reality can plan housing, services and land use ahead of need instead of reacting to crises. For example, Freetown treats rural-to-urban migration and informal settlement growth as features to be considered in urban planning. Kampala plans for more than 157,000 refugees and asylum seekers living in the city, complementing the national settlement approach.

Good data is the foundation, and it is often still missing. Planning is more responsive when it is informed by reliable, disaggregated, and locally relevant data that considers mobility pathways from origin to destination areas. Community-generated data can help close the gap: for example, in Mzuzu, alerts from community monitors enabled timely community action. Tanay (featured in the *Cities on the Move* publication) suggests that data is used most effectively when linked to planning cycles and budgets.

Women and marginalised groups are actors, not only beneficiaries. Women, youth, migrants, and other marginalised groups hold knowledge and networks that can make urban responses more effective. This potential is more likely to be achieved when they have a real say and inclusion is built into infrastructure, markets, and governance rather than run as a separate track. In Freetown, where migrant women run most market businesses, resilience investments target their livelihoods directly, and in Mzuzu, 60% of community climate and mobility monitors are women.

Relocation is more than a new house. Voluntary planned relocation should be considered as a last resort that may reshape people's entire lives. In Kegalle, resettled families feared losing income and access to water, schools, health care, and places of worship. Hargeisa (featured in *Cities on the Move*) suggests that relocation is more likely to succeed when livelihoods, secure tenure, and social ties move with people and it is clearly communicated who is eligible.

Social cohesion is part of resilience. Competition over water, land, housing and informal jobs can create tension between host and arriving communities. How well these groups get along shapes how well a city copes with change. Community mediation, dialogue spaces and shared resource management can help prevent conflict. In Moundou, mixed water committees with women's associations and youth leaders contributed to a 35% drop in reported water-point conflicts.

City action needs national backing and lasting institutions. Cities can lead, but their action is more likely to last when backed by national policies, clear mandates, and institutions that outlive individual projects. Kampala links its emergency response and refugee work to national land, refugee, and climate policies, while Dakar's experience suggests that reform needs sustained political commitment beyond project timelines.

Strengthen existing systems before building new ones. Many cities already have services, committees, and community networks that can respond to climate mobility, but these often fail to reach those most in need. Jaipur highlights persistent last-mile access gaps and suggests that strengthening existing response systems and informal protection networks can be more effective than creating parallel structures.

Small, visible results can unlock larger finance. Access to finance remains one of the biggest constraints for cities, but early, demonstrable successes can help attract further funding and build political support. Freetown's waste micro-enterprise project unlocked an additional USD 1.5 million, and Hargeisa went on to fund the relocation of 40 more households from its own budget.

Taken together, these learnings show that cities are not only on the frontline of climate mobility but also at the forefront of practical solutions. The approaches presented in this publication are not blueprints: each grew out of a specific political, social, and institutional context, and many are still evolving. Still, they show what becomes possible when cities plan ahead, work with both the people who arrive and those who host them, and are supported by national frameworks, adequate resources, and lasting partnerships. The factsheets were produced to inspire practitioners to adapt these ideas to their own contexts and to connect with the colleagues behind them. Continued exchange remains key to turning individual experiences into shared knowledge and making mobility a choice rather than a necessity.





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