



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 fueling 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 internally displaced persons 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 approx. 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.





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, localized 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](#)).

Funding

Dakar – home to 20% of Senegal's population – generates 68% of national 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, GEF and Nordic Development Fund. PROGEP's first phase (2012–2020) totaled USD 121.3 million; PROGEP2 (2021–2029) is budgeted at USD 318.1 million ([MICLAT, 2023](#); [Municipal Development Agency, 2024](#)). Dakar's climate plan was developed with EU and German development cooperation support ([Ekoh, 2024](#)).

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