

Final Conclusions working group 6: Climate Change and Migrations

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CONTEXT: Causes and consequences of climatic migration

Climatic migrations happen in the context of the developmental pattern associated with the capitalist system. In one hand, this pattern enables the states and transnational entities to overexploit natural resources and to degrade the environment, forcing persons and families to emigrate. A good example of this situation are massive projects that utilize basic resources like soil, fauna, and local flora (like mining and dams), and that happen with the permission of governments.

Several different places of the planet are turning into ejecting zones as a consequence of climate change, this situation forces the displacement of people because of the shortages in the regular supply of food and water, as well as the increase in the frequency and severity of floods, or storms, or on the contrary of droughts.

In the other hand, the developmental pattern of capitalism is benefited by the overexploitation of immigrant labour. Even though this overexploitation situation is shared by the economically impulsed immigrants, those who we would consider climatic immigrants are a byproduct of the degradation of the planet, situation that forces them to look for new places to live. Among the main environmental causes that determine migration we find: climate change (desertification, deforestation, soil degradation, water contamination, hurricanes or floods) and human-generated disasters (industrial accidents, radioactivity and many others)

Both situations imply violations to human rights of migrant people, and the worsening of inequity; mainly in the southern countries; their population is forced to move with dramatic impacts in the environment in the places that receive them too, closing a mean rights violation cycle.

First of all, people's right not to migrate and to stay in their own territory is being violated, hence the fact that degradation of their own territories is generating the abandonment of rural communities, where occasionally only elders are left. Second, in the cities, the ones that migrated rely on low wages and exploitation conditions, with their right to a dignifying job violated, making the poverty levels even worse and therefore denying the access to basic rights like household, health and education. This reality is most times boosted by persons trafficking networks, which can turn people into merchandise. Third, through the militarization of borders, and the criminalization of migrants, abuses against them are institutionalized and high levels of discrimination are generated, this as a matter of fact, eventually turns into another obstacle for the access to all of their rights. Fourth and last, the developmental pattern of capitalism, is imposing migration to people from their own land, this violates the basic right to move freely.

At a global scale, migration that is imposed by climate causes increases the pressure over basic services, damaging economic growth and increasing the risk of conflicts. Furthermore, climatic migration contributes to the unmeasured growth of cities where millions of people live; and where migrants will live in poor and not privileged zones, with scarce and deficient drinking water services and limited access to economic, social and cultural rights. Some other consequences of forced migration induced by climate causes are the chaos in production systems (this affects farmers, indigenous peoples, folk-fishers among many others) and the weakening of the internal market. Aside the loss of “human capital”, in the form of work force and education investment, migration contributes to an even worse limited economic opportunities scenario, which will generate future migration as well. Besides the evictions itself, this stands for many people to lose bonds with their ancestral knowledge and customs, given that these are related to their territory, and while being force to lose this bonds they will have to adopt a completely different way of life. The great-scale displacement of people may rearrange the ethnic maps of many different countries, shortening the distance between groups that once lived separated, and forcing them to compete for the same resources.

We must take notice that this situation is even worse for specific groups of the migrating population; this is the case of indigenous women, children, and youth.

As summary, environmental degradation and climate change reach nowadays a critical level, turning internal and international migration into one of the main consequences. In spite of only being provided with an approximation, according to some projections in 1995 there were 25 million climatic migrants, today it is estimated that there are 50 million, and projections for 2050 go anywhere from 200 to 1000 million people to be displaced because of situations derived from climate change. This will provoke supplies to be scarcer, e.g. water and food, as well as the increase of the frequency and severity of floods and storms, this entire scenario will worsen the cycle in which climatic migrants will find themselves with no shelter unless we start acting now.

Facing these considerations, the definitions that try to reflect these realities are as follows:

- **Climatic refugees:** Those people whose are forced to evacuate their territory because of climate change. If there is no international right, particularly in the Geneva statutes, it is necessary to insert this category so that the countries assume their responsibilities when it comes to this situation. This consideration is in the same line as the one stated by Jean Ziegler, special rapporteur in the right to food on his 2007 report, where he states that there is little to none difference between a person that is facing death because of famine and a person that is threatened by arbitrary execution to their political convictions. He proposed the creation of a legal instrument to protect these people, acknowledging them as famine refugees, and providing them with the right to temporary protection and no forced return, with the intention for them not to be returned to a country where hunger and famine threaten their lives.
- **Forced migrants:** Those people who are forced to migrate not only because of climate change related reasons, but also because of economic factors. The term climatic migrant narrows the problematic leaving out workers that have been forced to leave their countries because of working reasons and may distract of the underlying structural

reasons as a global phenomenon. The term “forced migrant” will oppose the one from a migrant that moves freely.

- **Climatic displaced people**, those who were forced to displacement because of climatic reasons, both inside and outside their own countries. There is a need to create a legal status to protect those who find themselves in this situation, due to the lack of international recognition of the people in displacement, aside from the ones that migrate or ask for refuge.

PROPOSAL

1. We demand all international covenants, both the ones that are subscribed in the frame of the UN through complimentary protocols or alternate amendments, and those subscribed in other instances, e.g. ALBA, UNASUR, Comunidad de los estados de Latinoamérica y Caribe, to contemplate the definition of climatic migrants ⁽¹⁾, both for people as for communities, in a fashion that all the states of the world glimpse the rights of these people in their definitions and considerations.
2. There must be a design of global and local policies to face climate change, that incorporates and respects democratic participation of all of the countries, and a wide participation of peoples and territories involved in the defense of their communities and the rights of Mother Earth.
3. We demand political, economic, social and cultural patterns, in which the right move and displace freely is respected, also a pattern that respects the right not to migrate and not to be displaced by force, recovering the ancestral technologies and cosmovision when to build a pattern of development framed in peoples’ vision of living well, that implies respect and harmony with Mother Earth, patterns that should oppose to “developmental” and extractivistic practices of the capitalistic world system, that determine poverty, inequity, misery, deterioration of Mother Earth and migration.
4. The promotion of a human rights treaty for climate migrants, recognized and applicable at a global scale, one of binding character and therefore claimable. So that climatic migrants have the same rights and obligations as the citizens of the country of destination.
5. The creation of an international instance or institution of the peoples that promotes permanent research on current political, social, cultural and economic situation of climatic migrants.
6. To demand the creation of an economic fund, funded mainly by the countries on the center of capitalism and huge transnational corporations, that are held main responsible for climate change, destined to meet the needs of both internal and international climatic migrants. This fund will be administrated by de Climatic justice Court, or by another instance constituted by the peoples and communities affected by climate change; there must be a respect for the principles of differentiated responsibilities of the countries, according to the size or seriousness of the damage caused.
7. As an international policy, technology transfer must be generated from the capitalist countries as part of the recognition and honor to their historical climate debt, this technology must be compatible with the rights of Mother Earth and must encourage food and energy sovereignty, as well as other economic alternatives that have communities and their harmonious relationship with Mother Earth as their axis.

8. Creation of a People's commission for the monitoring and follow-up of the agreements on climatic migration adopted by this World peoples' conference on climate change and rights of Mother Earth.
9. Support for the constitution of an International Consciousness Court to denounce, make visible, document, judge, and punish the violations to the rights of migrants, refugees, and displaced people, in their own countries, while in transit, or in destination.
10. The respect for the right to previous consultation and free consent of the communities, which as a consequence of natural disasters are forced to migrate or to displace from their original territory. The right of communities and peoples not to migrate or displace unfairly and forcedly from their territories by eviction or plundering means exerted by States, transnational corporations and other armed actors.

⁽¹⁾ The term climatic migrant, is also a figure in which the terms climatic displaced, climatic refugees, or forced migrants are included
