



# Regional IOM Bulletin Special Edition: “Migration, Environment and Climate Change”

**IOM**  
Regional Office for South America



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## Key aspects of migration, environment and climate change



*“The melting of glaciers is among the most visible effects of climate change in South America.”*

© Daria Mokhnacheva 2008

It is an important year for South America in terms of Climate Change: In December Peru is home to the COP20, and in November Venezuela will chair the "High Level Ministerial Meeting" Pre-COP. Furthermore, the relationship between climate change and migration will become more important for South America, requiring greater attention in the coming years.

The impact of climate change and environmental degradation could become a migration driver. Such impact of climate change and environmental degradation does not only exacerbate the level of pre-existing vulnerability, but also diminishes individual capacities for adaptation, thereby forcing individuals to migrate.

Significant differences exist within South America regarding the scale and nature of sudden and slow onset disasters exacerbated by climate change and environmental degradation, economic and social vulnerabilities, as well as the ability of countries and populations to adapt to a changing climate. The ability of countries and populations to adapt to the changing climate varies from country to country. While identifying and supporting those displaced by climate change requires a rights-based response to protect these individuals.

Countries in South America are in the process of developing and adopting policy instruments to reduce risk and associated socio-economic impacts, including integration of immigration and human rights perspective into national climate change policies. Recognizing the complex relationship between climate change, environmental factors and migration is the first step in order to act appropriately from the operational point of view, at local, national and regional levels.

## Training Workshop

**"Migration, Environment and Climate Change  
in South America"**  
**28-30 October 2014, Santiago de Chile**

The Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Chile, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), will implement a capacity building workshop for government officials and experts in South America regarding migration, environment and climate change.



The workshop will take place at the Hotel Fundador in Santiago de Chile between 28 and 30 October, 2014. To facilitate technical dialogue on migration, environment and climate change, in order to prepare experts in the region on these issues. A number of strategic partners have collaborated on the design and implementation of the modules including: UNCCD, UNISDR, UNESCO, PAHO, University of Neuchatel in Switzerland, the American Network for Environmental Migration (RESAMA), and the Latin American Population Association (ALAP).



You can follow the workshop [@IOM\\_MEEC](https://twitter.com/IOM_MEEC)

### Training background for officials in South America:

**The Ministry of Environment of Ecuador (MAE) and IOM organize a workshop to discuss the impact of migration on climate change**



On 27 August, 2014, the Ministry of Environment of Ecuador organized the first "Workshop on Migration, Environment and Climate Change" in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration. Representatives from several institutions of the Government of Ecuador actively participated in this workshop.

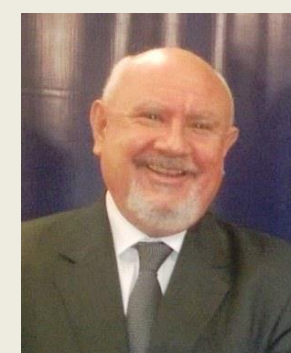
This is the beginning of a process to improve understanding of the complex relationship regarding migration, environment, climate change and adaptation; and to strengthen planning in Ecuador, to develop tools that facilitate the incorporation of migration as an adaptation strategy in national climate change policies.

## Migration, Environment and Climate Change: an issue of regional importance in South America

Two regional events that will take place in South America this month, reconfirm that migration caused by environmental factors and climate change is gaining more importance for the region: the inclusion of this issue by the representative of Chile in the XIV South American Conference on Migration (SACM); and the implementation of a regional training workshop for officials, organized by the Ministry of Environment of Chile with IOM.

The Fourteenth South American Conference on Migration (SACM XIV) will take place in Lima from 16 to 17 October to review the immigration policies of the continent. The SACM a Regional Consultative Process on Migration in South America serves as an informal and non-binding space among the representatives of the states.

The issue of environmental migration was first introduced and discussed by the representatives and delegates from South American countries in the Tenth SACM in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2010. The representatives recognized the need to "manage strategic



alliances in order to expand the understanding on this subject; promote the exchange of good practices by governments; and to promote the elaboration of a common position on the issue”.

**Diego Beltrand**  
Regional Director,  
IOM Regional Office  
in South America

The XIV CSM, takes place this October, aims to raise the issue of migration related to environmental and climate change in the region, recognising the importance that the Conference of the Parties (COP20) to be held in Lima from 1 to 12 December.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile together with IOM will organize the first regional training workshop on Migration, Environment and Climate Change between the 28-30<sup>th</sup> October in Santiago de Chile. This regional workshop aims to facilitate technical dialogue on these issues, in order to prepare experts in the region, and will include the participation of officials from ministries of environment (and homologue entities) and other related agencies working on environmental and migration issues

The issue of environmental migration and climate change is still relatively new to the region, and the analysis of the consequences of environmental change as a possible factor driving migration should be continued. At the same time, comprehensive development policies should be designed to reduce risks, promote adaptation and enable resilience. IOM has accompanied the countries of the region to develop such activities to ensure protection and provide assistance to people affected by climate change, so that migration can take place within the framework of respect for human rights, and for the benefit of all.

## Environmental migration in South America: a focus on slow-onset disasters

Recent years have witnessed a growth in the number of disasters at the global level such as droughts, earthquakes, extreme temperatures, floods, landslides, storms, and volcanic eruptions. This context provides for an increase in the number of displaced persons caused by sudden onset disasters including hurricanes, as well as slow-onset processes such as droughts.

According to forecasts for South America by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC), the temperature in regions such as the Amazon Basin will increase up to 6 °C by 2100. Furthermore, severe droughts and extreme rainfall is forecasted, with differences within the region (IPCC, 2014).

Individuals in South America are already being affected by humanitarian disasters, some exacerbated by climate change, such as incessant rains, floods, droughts, and hailstorms. The floods in 2010 in Colombia, the earthquake in 2010 in Chile; the floods in 2012 in Peru, associated with the Niña; floods and landslides in the south of Brazil at the end of 2013 and Sao Paulo in 2014, have led to incidents of temporary displacement.

In some parts of South America, migration has traditionally been a way to deal with phenomena such as droughts or floods, especially in the rural areas of the coastal region and in some parts of the Andean region. Migration is a way of survival in times of poor harvest to diversify resources and livelihoods. However the consequences of climate change in some areas are already affecting the population and could do so further, especially in areas with rural populations.

It is expected that the effects of climate change will exacerbate slow-onset events, implying lower productivity of crops, soil degradation, and an increase in the melting of glaciers that will affect vulnerable populations, such as those of the mountainous regions where livelihoods are still heavily dependent on the use of natural resources. Such changes in the natural environment, and the way of life, could be detrimental in terms of food safety and the availability of water, public health, and it could be responsible for an increase of environmental migration in the long term.

These changes require planning and a response to migration influenced by environmental change, encouraging the development and livelihood options, planning of rural development, focusing on the areas of protection, addressing integration and mitigating social tensions and conflicts.



**Elizabeth Warn**  
Regional Specialist in  
Migration and Development

## Agenda and main activities

### Agenda:

- **28-30 October 2014:** Regional Workshop on "Migration, Environment and Climate Change in South America," Ministry of Environment, Chile and IOM. Santiago de Chile, Chile.
- **26 November 2014:** High-level Panel on "Human Mobility, Environment and Climate" IOM, 10th Meeting of the IOM Council, Geneva, Switzerland.
- **1-14 December 2014:** COP20 in Lima, Peru. A delegation from IOM will participate. [More information.](#)
- **2015:** Workshop on "Migration, environment, climate change and development," for academics, to be organized by IOM and ALAP.

### IOM will participate in the III International Congress on International Environmental Law at the University of Unisantos, Brazil

On 28-31 October 2014, IOM will participate in and support the "III International Congress on International Environmental Law". IOM will participate in the roundtable "global environmental governance: challenges and prospects", providing a focus on the governance of migration and the challenges related with the inclusion of environmental migration.

The Congress is organized by the Catholic University of Santos (UniSantos) and by the Judiciary of the State of Sao Paulo, with the support of the UNHCR-Brazil, Caritas Archdiocesan of Rio de Janeiro and Caritas Archdiocesan of So Paulo, the Federal Government of Brazil, through CONARE. The objective of this event is to formulate an academic declaration on forced migration in the context of the discussions relating to Cartagena + 30.



## Promoting the development and mainstreaming of the migration perspective in national climate change policies in Colombia

On October 25 of this year a project initiated in order to generate public policy initiatives in response to the interaction between migration, environment and climate change in Colombia.

Colombia is particularly vulnerability to the effects of the climate change and climatic variability, which can be seen, from the glacial melt in mountain areas to sea-level rise on its Atlantic and Pacific coasts, as well as floods, droughts and landslides across the country.

The project, funded by the IOM Development Fund (IDF), will be implemented over a period of one year. It will include the creation of diagnostic tool to understand the links between migration, environment and climate change. This tool will allow for development of actions in the territory according to local needs, and differential approaches. The project will address, at an initial stage, the construction of a public policy on climate change in Colombia, and mainstreaming environmental migration into the climate change adaptation strategy. The project will also provide for technical legal inputs that will contribute to the development of the Law on Climate Change in the country.



Photo: IOM Bogota, 2013, by Elsa Garcia

## IOM and ALAP in 2015: Seminar on human mobility, climate change and sustainable development

Within the framework of a cooperation agreement signed between ALAP and IOM, a seminar on human mobility, climate change and sustainable development will take place in 2015, for academics in South America.

The issue of migration linked to environmental factors and climate change is gaining more importance in the region, specifically due to the intensity and the visibility of humanitarian disasters intensified by climate change, such as heavy rainfall, flooding, drought and hailstorms. However there is little research on the subject in comparison with other regions of the world.

This topic, which is becoming more relevant in the region, needs to be studied and debated adequately in order to obtain in-depth understanding to establish accurate understanding in this area.

## IOM is working with the World Metrological Organization: Cities, migration and climate change in South America

In the next IOM Council, the World Metrological Organization will participate in its new status as an Observer. To celebrate this new stage of collaboration, IOM contributed to the development of the article: *"The impact of climate change; migration and cities in South America,"* for the next newsletter of the WMO.

The article was developed in collaboration between IOM and an Argentine scientist Susana Adamo, who is an Assistant Professor at the University of Columbia in the U.S. and an expert on population issues and climate change.

The article can be downloaded [here](#) (in English) and will soon be available in Spanish and French.

## IOM Speaks about Climate Change and its impact on human migration in Colombia

On September 14th, Elsa García of OIM Colombia took part in the “Voces Unidas” (United Voices) program (a UN radio broadcast in Colombia), in a session dedicated to the climate change its links with migration. Representatives of the FAO, Department of Agriculture and Rural development, and the Organization E3 (Economy, Ecology and Ethics) also participated. [More information can be accessed here.](#)

## COP20 and IOM in Lima, 1-12 December 2014

IOM will participate in the "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change", COP 20, which will take place in Lima, Peru on 1-12 December, 2014. The COP20 is the Twentieth Conference of the Parties and is organized by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a UN agency that has been organizing annual conferences since 1995. The objective of this conference will be to consolidate the final agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. IOM will be present in several parallel events and will lead an exhibition area of the UN under the thematic focus 10, entitled "resilient communities and livelihoods".

Since the COP14, which took place in 2008 in Poznan, Poland, IOM along with other agencies and organizations has contributed to the preparation of the COP through the development of submissions. For example, in August 2014, IOM together with UNU-EHS, UNHCR, NRC/IDM and others provided its inputs to the Program of Nairobi on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

IOM is an observer organization in the United Nations Framework Convention (UNFCCC), which was adopted in 1994.

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