

IOM Costa Rica: Risk Management and the Nexus of Migration, Environment, and Climate Change

November 2023



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REPORT OBJECTIVE

To promote the work carried out by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on mobility and climate change, as well as recent initiatives on disaster risk management.

CONTEXT

Climate change poses a critical challenge for all countries today and Costa Rica is no exception. The effects of climate change and environmental degradation are evident in Costa Rica, which has already suffered severe losses due to extreme hydrometeorological events. For example, the 2014-2016 drought leveled significant impacts on productivity, and storms like Hurricane Otto and Tropical Storm Nate also wrought meaningful destruction.¹ The country's geographic position in Central America, its climate, and seismic conditions expose it to a high risk of disasters.² To illustrate this reality with figures, from 2000 to 2018, Central American countries recorded 261 disasters caused by natural and anthropogenic phenomena, **affecting more than 20 million people.**

The National Adaptation Plan identifies migrant populations — not only environmental migrants — as vulnerable communities to the impacts of climate change. However, integrating human mobility into the framework of climate action requires a more in-depth approach that encompasses the different aspects of the relationship between human mobility, the environment, and climate change.³

IOM Costa Rica works at the intersection of migration, the environment, and climate change through programs aimed at strengthening the capacities of local governments and communities to address environmental migration drivers in the country. Additionally, IOM Costa Rica promotes a risk management strategy that recognizes the increased vulnerability of certain migrant populations to climate change while leveraging the knowledge and capabilities of these migrants to implement effective climate responses.

¹ Climate Change Directorate; Ministry of Environment and Energy (2022). National Climate Change Adaptation Plan of Costa Rica, 2022 - 2026. San José, Costa Rica. 204pp.

² International Organization for migration. (2022). Strategic Plan for Costa Rica, 2022 - 2026. San José, Costa Rica.

³ International Organization for Migration, 2022. Human mobility in disaster contexts, environmental degradation and climate change in Costa Rica: Analysis of evidence and policies. San José, Costa Rica.

FEATURED PROJECT: CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FOR COMMUNITIES AND HOUSEHOLDS IN RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS DRIVING MIGRATION IN COSTA RICA

This project, with the support of IOM's Development Fund, aims to contribute to strengthening the capacities of local authorities and communities to address the drivers of environmental migration in Costa Rica. To this end, the first phase of the project includes gender-focused diagnostic assessments of the social and climatic context in the cantons of Los Chiles and Puerto Jiménez. Subsequently, an awareness campaign including workshops encourages dialogue on the risks associated with climate change and the adaptation options to mitigate them. The action includes the development of gender-sensitive Community and Household Climate Change Adaptation Plans. Finally, the planned adaptation strategies in these plans will be tested with prior capacity development in Los Chiles and Puerto Jiménez.⁴



The climate change adaptation project has the potential to impact approximately **2000 people in Los Chiles and 9789 in Puerto Jiménez.**

The project has worked in collaboration with individuals from the communities, public institutions local commissions, and the service provider, including La Ruta del Clima.⁵

The project stemmed from a collaborative process involving workshops with the community to understand their needs related to climate change adaptation and awareness. These workshops have revealed a key lesson learned: it is crucial to communicate with affected communities within a framework of development, not just climate change adaptation.

RISK MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES IN COSTA RICA

*"No community is free from the possibility of a harmful event severely affecting it, including the risk of losing many human lives. Earthquakes, cyclones, floods, landslides, explosions, volcanic eruptions, famines, droughts, armed conflicts, terrorist acts, epidemics, and pandemics are examples that confirm this. Simultaneously, millions of people worldwide are affected by disasters every day or are in great danger of experiencing them."*⁶

When we discuss disaster risk management, we refer to a set of measures aimed at limiting the likelihood of damage occurring. In addition to the high risk of catastrophes in Central America, the region is considered a crucial migratory corridor with intra-regional migration, migration to North America, return migration, and extra-regional migration, as well as increased mobility due to tourism.

⁴ The project is currently in the diagnostic phase, carried out by the NGO called "La Ruta del Clima" (The Climate Route) and involves different public institutions, local governments and community members with a gender-sensitive perspective, local governments and community members with a gender-sensitive perspective.

⁵ Public institutions include MAG, DINADECO, UNED, UNA, UCR, SINAC, Municipality of Los Chiles.

⁶ "Guide for risk management from the community level with emphasis on the inclusion of migrant populations in Costa Rica," 2021.

In times of emergency, migrants have specific care needs related to their access to different resources, capacities, and networks. Therefore, emergency situations affect the lives of migrant populations in different ways. IOM has identified 12 vulnerabilities that migrant populations may experience during emergencies, which are listed below:

SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES OF MIGRANTS

Source: IOM, 2016



To promote the inclusion of migrant populations in risk management, foster resilience, and reduce gaps between communities, IOM – through the Western Hemisphere Program – has been organizing capacity-building workshops in Heredia and Coto Brus with the support of the United States.

Recently, IOM has developed an "Awareness Strategy to Promote the Participation of Migrant Populations in Disaster Risk Management" with the Disaster Risk Management Table (MGRD, for its initials in Spanish), which has been implemented in the indigenous territory of La Casona and is expected to be implemented in a community in Los Chiles. Additionally, plans are underway to hold the Municipal Risk Management Encounter next year.

Emergency preparedness is an **invaluable opportunity to leverage the knowledge and experience of migrant individuals, involve them in community life, and make them co-responsible for locally designed responses** to risk management.

THE CADRI ALLIANCE: AN INTERAGENCY COORDINATION MECHANISM

The Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) is a global partnership of United Nations agencies that contributes to the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals by providing countries with a mechanism to mobilize and share multidisciplinary knowledge to reduce climate and disaster risk. **18 international organizations and agencies are partners in the CADRI Alliance.**⁷



⁷ "Home." CADRI, www.cadri.net.

Specifically, CADRI aims to enhance countries' capacities through initiatives in governance, implementation, financing, information, and technologies.⁸ IOM plays a significant role in the alliance, not only as a founding member but also through its work in Costa Rica, which has contributed to the inclusion of vulnerable populations (including migrants), a gender perspective, and human mobility in the recommendations for improving the recovery subsystem developed by the National Emergency Commission (CNE).

NATIONAL FORUM ON HUMAN MOBILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN COSTA RICA: CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Following the 2022 initiative, IOM is organizing a National Forum on Human Mobility and Climate Change for 2024 through the Western Hemisphere Program. IOM is coordinating this activity in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Energy—the leading authority in climate change—the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Emergency Response (CNE), the Municipality of Heredia, and the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

LINKS TO KEY FRAMEWORKS

IOM's work aligns with the UN in Costa Rica's Framework for Cooperation **Group Four Results**, which is "Stronger Together in Adversity." Group Four focuses on ensuring that individuals, communities, institutions, and territories are resilient, capable of building a systemic response that generates sustainability and security against the multitude of risks and the multiple and complex systemic crises of global and local scope that feed into each other, exacerbating their negative impacts on people and the planet. The three fundamental principles of this initiative are: risk education for events, adaptation and mitigation against climate change, and integrated response to systemic crises.

All initiatives contribute to IOM's Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment, and Climate Change 2021-2030.⁹ IOM's initiatives aim to achieve **Sustainable Development Goals** six (clean water and sanitation), seven (affordable and clean energy), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), and 15 (life on land).

The climate change and risk management projects undertaken by IOM Costa Rica support both global and national objectives. This programming supports, for example, Goal Two of the Global Compact for Migration, which seeks to minimize adverse and structural factors that force people to leave their country of origin. In its national strategy, IOM Costa Rica commits to "studying the interaction between climate change, environmental degradation, disasters, and human mobility in Costa Rica, and increasing resilience to related risks." Finally, outside the framework of IOM, these initiatives support the Costa Rican government in contributing to emergency responses and development through institutional strengthening, thus promoting governance in addition to the aforementioned sustainability goals.

As a whole, this programming supports sustainability objectives at the local, national, and international levels, while aiming to make migrants an essential part of prevention and response to emergencies caused by climate change.

⁸ IOM, Sep 2023. CADRI Alliance: Support for Capacity of the Recovery Sub-System. San José, Costa Rica.

⁹ IOM, 2023. Institutional Strategy on Migration, Environment, and Climate Change 2021-2030.

<https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11411/files/documents/IOM%20MECC%20Strategy%20BRIEF%20EN.pdf>