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# Funding Climate Mobility Projects

## Key Players and Strategies for Growth

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## Executive Summary

As the scale and costs of climate change and environmental disasters grow, so do their impacts on migration and displacement. Exactly how climate change can trigger human mobility is complex, as a growing body of evidence shows, but failing to anticipate and prepare for climate mobility comes with high costs. Tackling climate mobility—whether responding to and rebuilding after disaster displacement, preparing cities and host communities to accommodate climate-driven inflows, or relocating entire households and communities—will require significant, well-designed investments. International donors are starting to commit funding for climate mobility programs, though it falls far below global needs. As such, it is critical to understand where the funding is coming from, how it is being used, and how to grow the pot of funds available for climate mobility solutions.

Development funding for climate mobility has increased and comes from a growing number of sources. One study found that funding for climate mobility projects has increased rapidly since 2017 (and averaged a combined total of USD 270–310 million each year between 2002 and 2022, although this likely includes projects with only tangential links to the topic). Many of the most active donors are bilateral government funders, which have more flexibility to test out new approaches: Germany's flagship climate mobility program has worked in multiple low- and middle-income countries and regions since 2017, while the European Commission has launched the largest program on climate mobility (a 100 million euro program in Southern Africa). Others have become active more recently, such as the United States, which prioritized this issue between 2021 and 2024, and Switzerland, which approved a climate mobility program in 2024. Others have smaller investments but take innovative approaches, such as Canada's leveraging of its climate finance envelope for climate mobility projects and the UK launch of pilot projects tackling the links between climate mobility and security.

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Multilateral funders, such as multilateral development banks (MDBs) and global climate and migration funds, are newer to the climate mobility field but hold immense promise in financing programs at scale. Some MDBs have strategies or internal approaches that integrate climate and migration

issues, including the African Development Bank and European Investment Bank, and many fund programs with some climate mobility elements. Still, none have dedicated policies specific to this issue. Global climate funds, such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, have similarly made some investments in climate mobility projects, but these remain rare. While multilateral funders can make much larger investments than most bilateral ones, they are more strictly demand driven: they generally do not propose projects but instead select among projects proposed to them by governments and other stakeholders in low- and middle-income countries. Those partner governments usually prioritize other issues, such as infrastructure or jobs investments, over climate mobility.

As more donors grow interested in working on climate mobility, they can learn valuable lessons from others with more experience on this issue. For potential donors, the first step is generally convincing senior leadership within governments and institutions that climate mobility issues are worth funding. Aside from the fact that climate mobility can pose immense costs for partner governments and communities, some officials have pointed to evidence that climate change can amplify other migration drivers and eventually lead to international migration (and therefore, that building resilience so people are not forced to move can reduce risks of cross-border movement). Others have leveraged the fact that climate mobility, while a new topic for most donors, does not require reinventing the wheel: donors often have extensive experience in climate adaptation or migration management, which they merely need to bridge, rather than creating an entirely new funding portfolio.

Once donors are ready to fund climate mobility programs, they will begin from different starting points. Some start with high-level political strategies, such as the United States' 2021 *Report on the Impact of Climate Change on Migration*, which laid out how the U.S. government planned to tackle this issue. Others begin internally, enhancing knowledge within their organization and building bridges between migration and climate change teams. Similarly, some donors such as Germany and Switzerland have started with large global programs, while others have piloted small projects to test the waters. And instead of new programs, others still have found ways to integrate climate elements into existing mobility programming (e.g., expanding programs because climate-related displacement is growing) or vice versa. Each donor takes a different approach, for reasons including their internal priorities and bureaucratic set-up, the amount of funding available, and the political motivations behind engaging on this issue. Understanding how each approach fares, and what its trade-offs are, is critical as new donors step into this space and as more funding becomes available for climate mobility initiatives.

Ultimately, scaling up climate mobility funding and ensuring its effectiveness will require more cooperation among donors and with partner governments. Stronger coordination among donors could help expand the funding roster, reduce the risk of duplication, and unlock larger investments through collaboration between bilateral and multilateral funders. Donors could also co-invest in a better information and evidence ecosystem, not only sharing data and modeling on climate mobility to help design programming but also evaluating their own programming and more systematically sharing best practices. And finally, greater cooperation is needed to align the climate mobility interests of high-income donors with the pressing challenges faced by low- and middle-income partner countries. Through this coordination, donors and partner countries can jointly unlock more effective, scaled, and locally driven programming to address climate mobility.

# 1 Introduction

Internal and cross-border movement linked to climate change creates sizeable humanitarian and development needs, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and acute challenges for migrants, refugees, other displaced people, and host communities. In response, governments and other donors in high-income countries have started funding climate mobility programs. These can include helping people adapt to climate change, enabling them to move away from climate-impacted areas, and supporting migrants and their host communities after they move. While donors have long dealt with displacement driven by disasters, climate change can worsen extreme weather events such as storms and pose slower-onset threats such as desertification and sea level rise, which directly and indirectly force people to move. The growing scale and complexity of climate-related mobility thus requires a paradigm shift in global funding for responses.

Over the past five years, and especially since 2023, climate mobility has begun to enter donors' political agendas and funding priorities. The number of donors with large programs to respond to climate mobility has grown, from arguably only Germany in 2017 to at least five governments or other donors with significant political and financial investments in 2024 (and many more that have smaller pilot programs or are actively exploring this issue). The scale of these programs has started to increase, including a new 100 million euro program launched by the European Commission. And importantly, these are programs intentionally addressing the nexus of climate change and migration, rather than just indirectly supporting climate mobility goals.

This growth does not meet the scale of the problem, however. The annual need for climate adaptation finance in low- and middle-income countries is estimated at USD 215–387 billion.[1] An additional USD 128–937 billion is estimated as necessary to respond to the losses and damages associated with climate change.[2] Even without including the finance needed for climate mitigation (to cut emissions), the costs of adaptation and addressing loss and damage already far outweigh the global goal set at the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 29), led by high-income countries, of reaching USD 300 billion in climate finance annually by 2030.[3] Similarly, the two primary annual appeals for humanitarian and development support for refugees and other migrant communities—issued by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM)—total USD 18.8 billion for 2025.[4]

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Still, interest in climate mobility among donors is growing, even as many face stagnating humanitarian and development budgets and the need to tackle ever more complex global challenges.[5] Low- and middle-income countries' governments are also facing immense challenges related to climate change or migration and displacement, even if these partner governments may not connect or prioritize such issues as they seek to raise funds from donors. This creates a global opportunity to lock in concrete long-term investments in climate mobility initiatives. Seizing this opportunity can help ensure growing donor funds best meet the needs of climate-affected, vulnerable communities in low- and middle-income countries.

This issue brief provides an overview of how development funders are responding to climate mobility issues, highlights key entry points for donors interested in engaging on this issue, and outlines common barriers donors have faced—plus strategies deployed to overcome these challenges. It is based on a multi-year Migration Policy Institute (MPI) partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, which has supported a Donor Community of Practice on Climate Mobility that includes representatives from donor governments, philanthropic foundations, and multilateral development banks interested in climate mobility work.[6] Insights from this community of practice have been supplemented by interviews with government officials and other donors. This brief seeks to enable donors, practitioners, and partner governments to collaborate, grow the pot of funding on climate mobility, and accelerate effective, coordinated, and inclusive funding.

## 2 The State of Play on Climate Mobility Funding

Since at least 2017, donors have launched a number of programs to tackle climate mobility, with varying budgets, geographies, and objectives. Most funders already have existing portfolios on climate action (supporting climate adaptation and mitigation in low- and middle-income countries) and on migration and displacement (supporting people on the move and their host communities), but it is only recently that they have intentionally bridged these two areas of work. Funding for climate mobility can generally be clustered under three strategic goals: some programs improve climate adaptation to prevent forced climate-related displacement; others help prepare people to move (e.g., through awareness raising, developing regular migration policies, planned relocation projects); and others still support migrants and host communities to boost integration, social cohesion, and climate resilience after people move.[7] All three objectives are critical to managing climate mobility, and each requires significant funding.

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The international community has two main avenues for providing development assistance for climate mobility: bilateral cooperation and multilateral funding.[8] Bilateral funding comes from governments or government entities that directly support partner countries and communities, either financing the partner governments themselves or funding the activities of organizations such as UN agencies and civil-society actors. The scope and scale of the funded programs vary, and donors have wide latitude to prioritize their preferred issues in cooperation with partner governments. Multilateral funding, on the other hand, can be much larger in scale, but it often has less flexibility and is harder for partner governments to access. Comprising two distinct mechanisms—multilateral development banks (MDBs) and multilateral funds—multilaterals often work with large loans or through blending investment loans with grants or concessional finance (which have more generous terms). They are more strictly demand driven, in that partner governments typically propose projects and investments to the MDBs and funds, not the other way around. And for loans via the MDBs, there is generally a more complicated approval process since, unlike grants, loans must be paid back. Donor governments have a hand in both funding streams: they direct their bilateral development funding while also contributing to, or holding shares in, multilateral mechanisms. This allows them to provide direct funding for their priorities while joining others in funding larger, more expensive, and highly technical initiatives.

Specifically tracking spending on climate mobility across these streams is difficult. There is no systematic methodology for doing so, not least because the diversity and breadth of programs that address, at least tangentially, climate mobility make it hard to determine what to include. Few programs specifically aim to support "climate migrants" as target beneficiaries, and since climate factors tend to amplify and overlap with other traditional drivers of migration, it is impractical to distinguish between people moving because of climate change from those moving for economic, security, or other reasons.[9] Instead, climate mobility programs work at the nexus of these two sectors. They generally fall under climate adaptation and resilience programs (which often include migrant communities or help prevent forced climate displacement) or under migration and displacement programs (which often have climate-related elements, from training migrants for jobs in the green economy to harnessing remittances to respond to extreme weather events). Such interventions may not be described or reported as responding to climate mobility, and thus may not be captured by efforts to track climate mobility funding. Nevertheless, one study by researchers at the University of Maine has attempted to quantify this body of funding using data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee. The researchers estimated that an average USD 270–310 million in public bilateral funding was used annually between 2002 and 2022 for projects related to climate mobility, with annual funding rapidly increasing from 2018 (USD 177 million) to 2022 (USD 1.025 billion).[10]

Accurately assessing the scale, quality, and distribution of funding to respond to climate mobility matters for donors, partner governments, implementing agencies, and local communities alike. This knowledge would help project implementers and partner governments align and prioritize investments in project planning and internal capacities, help them access potentially promising forms of funding, and ultimately, help communities dealing with climate mobility challenges access the funding they need to effectively respond to these challenges.

This section analyzes key trends and factors that differentiate donor models of climate mobility funding, distributed both bilaterally from governments and through multilateral funding mechanisms. It is based on a qualitative assessment of large international development and humanitarian programs funded to tackle climate mobility, interviews with donors, and a series of dialogues convened by MPI with donors and financiers. It focuses primarily on where major donors self-report their funding as climate mobility funding and seeks to supplement coarse quantitative assessments, while recognizing that this is an incomplete picture and biased toward the largest donor countries and those with the most established climate and migration portfolios.

## *A. Bilateral Government Funding*

Bilateral donor government funding for low- and middle-income countries has been the core of responses to climate mobility. Humanitarian donors have long engaged in climate mobility work, notably around disaster response, recovery, and preparedness, though development donors, despite being newer to this field, play a critical role as well.[11] Governments have used development funding to establish programs and pilot projects, primarily through grants often managed or implemented by large UN agencies, as part of intentional efforts to integrate their climate and migration programming.

Several governments and government entities have made key advances in leveraging bilateral funding for climate mobility programming. These are:

- **Germany** was a first mover on climate mobility funding, exploring the issue as early as 2012.[12] In 2017, coinciding with COP 23 hosted in Germany, the government launched its flagship program addressing climate mobility: the 10 million euro Global Programme Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change (HMCCC), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ). Phase 1 of the program (2017–23) ran in the Philippines, Fiji, the Caribbean, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region in East Africa.[13] Phase 2 (2023–27) deepens work in Fiji and the Philippines and adds a new geographic focus in West Africa.[14] Building off Phase I, BMZ has funded or is exploring similar work outside the HMCCC program, including in Bangladesh, IGAD, and Madagascar.[15]

- The **United States** became a leader among climate mobility donors following a 2021 landmark White House report on climate migration, although the Trump administration has, since taking office in January 2025, retreated from global engagement on humanitarian and development funding, including on climate mobility issues.[16] Under the previous administration of President Joe Biden, the State Department adopted a new climate mobility approach, several agencies invested in forecasting and evidence, and the government enhanced efforts to strengthen international protection in the context of climate change across key migration routes.[17] The State Department dedicated funding specifically for climate mobility, such as a soft-earmarked USD 5 million contribution to the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (see Section 2.B.) for programming on climate mobility and funding for UNHCR to operate small climate resilience pilot projects. During this period, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) also incorporated climate considerations into other programs, such as those focused on durable solutions for displaced people in Somalia and urban climate resilience in Indonesia.[18] However, as the Trump administration aims to dissolve USAID, dramatically reduce funding for development programming, and retrench from global climate action, U.S. global leadership on climate mobility is unlikely to continue.

- The **European Commission** is launching the largest climate mobility program globally: the 100 million euro Regional Responses to Climate Displacements in Sub-Saharan Africa (RE2CLID). The program, implemented by IOM and spanning eight countries in Southern Africa, supports communities affected by disaster displacement or at risk of displacement related to climate and environmental impacts.[19] This program builds on earlier EU investments, such as a 3 million euro program to strengthen risk modeling and government capacities in the Pacific, as well as a set of smaller, innovative pilot projects[20] and lessons from integrating climate resilience elements within earlier EU funding to tackle the root causes of migration in Africa.[21] Reflecting an important step toward achieving the scale of support needed in partner countries, RE2CLID is complemented by smaller programs in Southeast Asia and other selected regions.

Other governments have come to the climate mobility portfolio more recently, mobilizing substantial monetary and/or innovation resources to help advance the field. These include:

- **Switzerland** has only recently become a funder on climate mobility. After multiple years of internal capacity-building and learning, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) approved in late 2024 a 12-year global program on climate change and human mobility in sub-Saharan Africa.[22] This funding aims to support the African Union Commission and the Economic Community of West African States Commission to strengthen internal coordination and gender-sensitive policies on climate mobility, as well as funding research in West Africa to feed into operational interventions at the local level.

- While the **United Kingdom** in 2011 developed the earliest government-led report reviewing the evidence and raising awareness of the climate mobility challenge,[23] the government only began funding on-the-ground programming on this issue in 2024. Managed by the migration team at the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, the government has used its Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund to launch relatively small (GBP 1 million) pilot projects in Chad, The Gambia, the Philippines, and Southeastern Europe.[24] Additionally, through its climate team, the government is funding an initiative to increase the resilience of refugees and host communities in Jordan.[25]

- **Canada**'s funding on climate mobility is limited but innovative. In 2022, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funded research and data collection with IOM in Mexico.[26] Building on this, IRCC has leveraged CAD 3 million from Canada's International Climate Finance Fund to support IOM and the Rainforest Alliance to address environmental drivers of migration in Southern Mexico.[27] As the first climate mobility program funded with climate finance, rather than the country's development or humanitarian funding, it reflects significant internal effort to align migration and development programming with the strict requirements for counting funding as international climate finance. IRCC also funds an initiative led by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Eastern and Southern Africa to analyze child displacement trends and develop risk projections to help governments and humanitarian actors better protect at-risk children.[28]

Other countries are also active on climate mobility issues. France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has funded multiple small projects, especially in West Africa and on "green reintegration"—connecting returning migrants with green jobs and opportunities in sustainability and climate action.[29] Norway supports the Platform on Disaster Displacement's pilot project to help partner governments better understand and prepare for displacement linked to climate-related loss and damage.[30] Denmark is funding its first project to enhance climate mobility data and policies in North, East, and West Africa.[31] New Zealand has co-financed activities to prepare for planned relocation in the Pacific.[32] And Italy's 2024 Mattei Plan has a core focus on green energy and jobs in Africa as a means of reducing migration to Europe.[33] Such initiatives are important, albeit sometimes one-off, and present an opportunity to grow the field of donors robustly engaged on climate mobility—as is engagement of other governments that are interested in this issue but have yet to begin concretely funding climate mobility programs.

As the number of government donors funding climate mobility programs grows, they diverge in important ways. First, there is a set of governments with dedicated capacities, strategies, and/or priorities on climate mobility: under the Biden administration, the United States had at least a dozen officials for whom climate mobility was part of their responsibilities, and many other governments have at least dedicated staff with formal responsibility for this issue. Many governments, however, may lack an official with a specific climate mobility focus. Second, government donors vary in the size of their financing. The largest climate mobility program (from the European Commission) is worth 100 million euros, while most others are worth much less than that (the GBP 1 million UK pilot projects, for instance). Finally, governments have varied thematic priorities: Denmark primarily funds work on climate and displacement in fragile and conflict contexts;[34] Norway's funding is mostly humanitarian or focused on loss and damage; French activities so far have developed a niche in connecting climate and migrant reintegration activities; and German and Swiss programming has a strong gender element and focus on cities. This diversity can be useful, as it allows donors to test different approaches and types of interventions, but it will be equally important to connect the lessons learned across governments to ensure the most promising approaches are scaled to meet partner-country needs.

## B. *Multilateral and Global Funding*

Bilateral government funding is important, but often this support is channeled through or is vastly smaller than financing provided by multilateral instruments and institutions. MDBs can contribute much larger sums than governments alone by leveraging public grant or concessional funding and blending it with much larger loans to the public or private sector in partner countries. In 2022, for example, MDBs provided nearly USD 100 billion in global climate financing, of which nearly USD 70 billion went to low- and middle-income countries; in contrast, high-income countries bilaterally contributed or mobilized USD 41 billion.[35] And of the USD 300 billion annual goal for climate finance led by high-income countries, agreed upon at COP 29 in 2024, it is estimated that at least USD 120 billion will be from MDBs.[36] This MDB finance, alongside funding coming from the global climate funds (such as the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, or planned for the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage), is a critical source of support for climate mobility action; however, these mechanisms are diverse and diffuse, and therefore difficult to track.

MDBs' scale also comes with tradeoffs that can make it difficult for them to work on topics such as climate mobility. Because they work predominantly with loans, this funding must be repaid, making them less able to work in debt-distressed countries, fragile contexts, or with local partners. This complexity also makes them less agile or able to explore new issues. Thus, MDBs traditionally work through projects with a clearer return on investment, through public-sector investments (for instance, in infrastructure or strengthening health and education systems), or through supporting economic growth and private-sector development. Some climate mobility projects, such as humanitarian aid for disaster-displaced people or capacity development support for the creation of new migration pathways, are not well-suited to MDB investments. However, others—especially projects to build climate resilience and prevent climate-related displacement, to develop green skills and jobs, or to strengthen infrastructure and services in host communities—may fit better within MDBs' traditional programs.[37]

To date, MDBs have made some progress in financing solutions to climate mobility:

- The **World Bank** is the largest multilateral funder in the climate and development space. Their existing portfolio funds extensive programming on climate resilience; has increasingly funded programming on refugee responses (including through the Window for Host Communities and Refugees, a pot of money within the bank's International Development Agency that offers grant funding and low-interest loans to low-income, refugee-hosting countries); and is strengthening its work on migration following the publication of a World Development Report on this issue in 2023.[38] Their research teams have started to bridge the climate and migration sectors, focusing extensively on climate mobility forecasting and modeling, both at the global level as well as in specific countries and regions (such as Niger).[39] However, this research focus has not been reflected in the bank's actual programming and there is no institutional approach that guides its work on climate mobility.

- The **European Investment Bank** is one of the largest funders of climate action and helped finance the European response to the 2015–16 migration and refugee crisis. Building on this experience, the bank has worked to approach its engagement on climate mobility more strategically, including a specific section on climate mobility in its 2021 *Climate Adaptation Plan*.[40] Internally, the bank has a well-developed operational approach to migration, and in 2022 they commissioned MPI to conduct an evidence review and assist them in considering how their internal processes and targets could enable better tracking and incentives for financing projects on climate mobility.

- The **Interamerican Development Bank** (IADB) has also considered how to tackle climate mobility, led primarily by their Migration Team, although with the involvement of their Climate Change and Sustainable Development Team. Some of IADB's existing operations indirectly address climate mobility; for instance, the Contingent Credit Facility for Natural Disaster and Public Health Emergencies provides financing for extraordinary public expenditures in the first months after a natural disaster. While not specific to mobility, this funding can help reduce post-disaster displacement pressures.[41]

- The **African Development Bank** takes a holistic approach to mainstreaming climate resilience and migration and displacement. In particular, the bank's efforts to address displacement focus on reducing fragility and comprise part of its broader strategy to address fragility, which explicitly recognizes that climate change can undermine fragile societies and therefore contribute to displacement. While there is growing interest in climate mobility from the bank's partner governments and potential for the bank to respond using existing funding envelopes (such as the Transition Support Facility, which offers more flexible, generous funding to prevent and respond to disasters, displacement, and other crisis situations), the bank does not have a policy or strategy focused specifically on the nexus of climate and mobility issues.[42]

- While the **Asian Development Bank** (ADB) has researched climate mobility for more than a decade,[43] over the past three years it has paid particular attention to financing disaster displacement solutions. Its technical assistance, in partnership with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, has conducted national consultations, published public research reports, and plans to issue guidance for ADB staff on how they can engage partner governments to finance disaster displacement responses. The bank has also identified existing ADB projects with implications for disaster displacement, from its flexible financing to support disaster response to efforts to build migrant-inclusive, climate-resilient infrastructure for refugees from Myanmar (also known as Burma) in Bangladesh, and it is calling for a shift away from disaster response and toward investing in prevention and resilience.[44]

Similar to MDBs, global funds offer a still largely untapped financing source for climate mobility programming. The global climate funds, namely the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, Adaptation Fund, and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, disbursed roughly 1.66 billion in climate finance in 2023[45]—these funds, however, have made few investments in climate mobility. On the other hand, the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund is much smaller (with contributions totaling USD 57 million as of the end of 2023) but has made climate a clear priority.[46] This reflects a common feature of the donor field: migration donors see climate mobility as a priority far more than climate donors do. Still, there are promising signs this may change:

- The **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** was established by the Paris Climate Agreement to help low- and middle-income countries to reduce emissions and support climate resilience. Numerous projects in the GCF's USD 16 billion portfolio cite migration and displacement as part of their logic; however, only one—a USD 40 million coastal adaptation project in Tuvalu—specifically addresses internal displacement, the most prevalent form of climate displacement.[47] In addition, the fund has 15–20 unfunded concept notes or funding proposals related to displacement. Despite not having an overarching strategy on climate mobility, the GCF did sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with UNHCR at COP 29, which would leverage UNHCR's experience working in fragile contexts to help the GCF deliver climate financing.[48]
- The **Global Environment Facility (GEF)** includes funds that focus on the lowest-income countries, adaptation through technology and innovation, and supporting enhanced climate change data and reporting.[49] The facility has begun to incorporate migration and displacement in some of its funds, such as the Special Climate Change Fund, a special trust fund that has received nearly USD 400 million since its inception. Some of the fund's projects address mobility as one area within a broader intervention, such as the USD 57.1 million project on strengthening the resilience to climate risks of post-conflict recovery and development in Sri Lanka, which includes programming on the resettlement of internally displaced persons.[50]
- The **Adaptation Fund** finances climate change adaptation projects in low- and middle-income countries, such as conservation efforts, adaptation and resilience training, and infrastructure developments. The fund, which has committed roughly USD 1.25 billion since 2010, does not have a mobility-specific strategy; however, it does have some displacement-related programming in the Middle East.[51]
- The **Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD)** was operationalized in 2023, and as of December 2024, donors had pledged USD 741 million to help vulnerable countries respond to the damage caused by climate change.[52] Unlike the other funds, the FRLD specifically includes migration

and relocation issues in its mandate. It is expected to fund projects to respond to climate-related forced displacement and facilitate planned relocation. While the fund is not yet dispersing resources, a key question will be whether partner countries will make mobility a priority in their applications for FRLD funding. Another is how quickly and effectively the FRLD's resources will get to partner countries and local communities.[53]

- The **Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (M-MPTF)** supports the implementation of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. Unlike the climate funds above, the M-MPTF funds UN agencies, rather than partner countries, and those agencies may be more likely to request climate mobility funding. Despite being a migration-focused fund, climate change is an explicit priority for the Steering Committee, and donors have contributed funds in expectation that they will go to climate mobility projects. Of the M-MPTF's 24 current programs, 6 focus on climate mobility, and an additional 29 climate-focused programs are in the pipeline.[54]

Multilateral funds, for all their strengths, also face structural, financial, and logistical issues in funding solutions to climate mobility. They are driven by partner-country demand, waiting to receive project proposals for funding. If partner countries do not request climate mobility programming, the funds cannot address the topic. The funds also have cumbersome, lengthy proposal and approval processes, taking years and significant resources to develop. This makes proposing innovative approaches to new areas such as climate mobility riskier. The FRLD takes a different approach to most, in that its Santiago Network on Loss and Damage will provide technical assistance and funding for climate-vulnerable countries to develop proposals.[55] As of November 2024, one country (Vanuatu) had requested support from the Santiago Network. Key issues moving forward are whether more countries will ask the network for assistance and whether the network can support these countries' inclusion of displacement and mobility within their proposals for loss and damage funding.

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Complex administrative requirements have the added effect of limiting who can receive multilateral funding. These funds can rarely directly support local organizations, which cannot typically meet these requirements, and instead generally work with UN agencies and national governments, which have much greater capacity. Lack of local access to funding, especially if the alternative is nationally or internationally led programs that lack strong local buy-in and partnerships, can result in programming that is not sensitive to local needs and priorities, and as such, that is less effective. This is especially important in climate mobility programs, in which local needs are so highly context-specific (see Box 1).[56]

**BOX 1**
**Philanthropy's Role in Funding Climate Mobility Initiatives**

Private philanthropic organizations have, with a few key exceptions, not yet made climate mobility a central funding priority, even if they are active on either migration or climate issues. Among the exceptions are the Robert Bosch Stiftung, which has funded pilots and research on this issue and helped launch the Global Centre for Climate Mobility, successfully raising the political profile of climate mobility issues in Africa and globally. Others, such as the IKEA Foundation, have integrated climate resilience into their existing funding for organizations supporting refugees and displaced people.

Philanthropy, across issue areas, plays an important role in fostering innovation and exploration of new fields. In the climate mobility realm, it has successfully funded projects that have helped solidify the field. As other bilateral and multilateral donors begin stepping into this space, the role of philanthropy (especially larger foundations) may shift toward more intentionally piloting innovative projects in the Global South that other donors could help sustain and scale and toward filling in gaps on topics such as remittances or labor pathways that governments are just beginning to explore. One particular area ripe for philanthropic innovation could be finding ways to leverage private finance and insurance solutions (such as parametric insurance, which pays out once a disaster hits a pre-agreed level of severity, or anticipatory funding, which is distributed before disasters hit). Philanthropy could also take on a capacity-building role, especially for local actors and organizations, particularly those that may struggle to access public funding or that need longer-term, flexible funding to help build their own knowledge, staffing, and capacities on this issue.

Sources: Robert Bosch Stiftung, "Solutions to Displacement Linked with Climate Change," accessed January 10, 2025; Robert Bosch Stiftung, "Environmental Migration in Coastal Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa," accessed January 10, 2025; Global Centre for Climate Mobility, "About GCCM," accessed January 10, 2025; IKEA Foundation, "How We Are Working on Global Transformations for People and Planet," updated March 18, 2024; Lawrence Huang and Camille Le Coz, *Engaging Local Communities for More Effective Climate Mobility Programming* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2024).

# 3 Lessons Learned for Climate Mobility Donors and Partners

While the climate mobility field remains relatively new, and examples of on-the-ground development programming are limited, the approaches that do exist provide critical lessons for how to generate successful projects as well as overcome many key challenges. As the field grows and more actors seek to stand up their own climate mobility programming, they should build on the existing knowledge in the field and collaborate with more experienced actors.

The first step for donors to begin funding climate mobility work is getting senior leadership to approve and prioritize this issue among the myriad other global challenges. As political interest in climate mobility grows, and especially as it emerges as a key issue for partner countries, donors have an incentive to demonstrate that they are global leaders well-placed to respond. The arguments, messages, and evidence that will persuade senior officials to get on board with these efforts vary across contexts; however, MPI interviews with donors that have successfully made this case underscore a few principles and strategies for success:

- **Meeting partner needs.** The core mandate of government and multilateral funders is to meet the needs of partner countries by helping them address humanitarian, socioeconomic, development, or other challenges. Climate mobility is increasingly pressing among these challenges, as the costs of climate shocks worsen and the humanitarian needs of climate-displaced people grow. As partner governments develop policies and programs to help their communities respond to climate mobility, they will need international funding to help them do so (see Box 2). By funding such programs that respond to partner-government priorities and needs, donors can maximize the relevance of their assistance.

- **Managing risks of climate-related migration.** Development funders have increasingly supplemented traditional narratives around growth and supporting the most vulnerable with narratives around preventing irregular migration by combatting its root causes, sometimes in a good faith effort to maintain development funding. Notably, Italy's Mattei Plan includes strong language around climate and disasters driving migration and aims to significantly increase investment in resilience and clean energy in African countries in order to reduce migration to Europe (although the scope and specifics of funding tied to the Mattei Plan are still being developed).[57] While the logic of deterrence has helped convince many senior and political leaders to care about climate change and migration, it can also backfire, prompting governments to demonize migrants or rely on security, externalization, and border controls alone.[58] There is thus a fine line to be walked between being fact-based (e.g., recognizing that most climate mobility is internal or intra-regional), avoiding inflaming tensions, and ensuring that funding does not only go to addressing climate-related root causes of migration.

- **Building on existing programming and expertise.** Most bilateral and multilateral donors are already implementing programs

**BOX 2**
**Supporting Partner Countries' Interests in Climate Mobility Financing**

Even though low- and middle-income countries face immense climate mobility challenges, some donors, especially multilateral funders, encounter challenges in engaging partner governments on climate mobility issues and especially in turning this political attention into concrete proposals for funding to the MDBs and multilateral funds. Some of this disconnect occurs because it is partner-country governments' treasuries and climate departments that lead engagement with MDBs and the climate funds, and those ministries may not be as aware or willing to prioritize climate mobility issues as migration departments. Other issues, such as jobs, growth, and infrastructure may receive more attention—especially because climate adaptation projects may not have immediate financial returns in the same way as jobs programs, for example, or because migrants and refugees might benefit instead of the country's citizens.

Nonetheless, donors can help partner governments to articulate and prioritize climate mobility needs, for instance through technical assistance and additional, grant-based funding. This requires consistent, long-term engagement with partner governments across ministries to understand their needs, however complex, and a commitment to cooperation that enables partner governments to set their priorities and ensure that migrants and displaced people are not excluded.

Sources: Lawrence Huang, Ravenna Sohst, and Camille Le Coz, *Financing Responses to Climate Migration: The Unique Role of Multilateral Development Banks* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2022); Christelle Cazabat, Steven Goldfinch, and Faisal Abdul, *Harnessing Development Financing for Solutions to Displacement in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change in Asia and the Pacific* (Geneva and Manila: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Asian Development Bank, 2024); participant comments at Donor Community of Practice on Climate Mobility meeting, organized by the Migration Policy Institute, December 2024.

that relate to climate mobility—for example, climate resilience programming that reduces displacement risk and support for migrants who have moved at least partly because of climate issues. Of the donors MPI researchers interviewed for this project, many began internal conversations on climate mobility by reviewing their existing programs, and some have found a significant portfolio of such programs that they could bring together more coherently or build on. By understanding how existing funding supports climate mobility goals, donors have been able to argue that scaling up climate mobility funding would take less effort than setting up a new stream of work.

## The Building Blocks of Climate Mobility Programming

Once donors have the support of political leadership, they have taken different approaches to exploring what types of climate mobility activities to fund and how to do so. This section highlights four common building blocks for effective donor action. It should be noted, however, that the sequencing and necessity of these building blocks will differ between governments due to the varied organizational structures and political dynamics that underpin how priorities are set.

### Political Engagement and Policy Planning

A first step to driving action is sometimes a political document, messaging, or strategy that sets the direction for the relevant development funding streams. For example, when the Biden administration took office in the United States in 2021, it issued an executive order followed by a flagship report that made specific government commitments on funding and policy changes (both immediate actions and potential areas to explore).[59] This provided direction for U.S. funding decisions and set the expectation that the United States would be a global leader on climate mobility.

Other countries have taken less high level but nonetheless similar approaches, including having ministers or senior leaders give speeches on climate mobility or address global climate or migration conferences (such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development or annual COPs). This raises awareness within the government and signals to its partners that this is a priority, which in turn drives further action. This is especially important because multiple agencies or departments within a government are often involved in funding climate mobility action—including, for example, foreign affairs, development, humanitarian, and environmental—and getting them all to proactively collaborate requires a strong signal and prioritization from leadership.

### Internal Capacity-Building and Coordination

In most donors, the teams thematically focusing on migration and climate are siloed from each other, with separate staff, mandates, and pots of funding. This hinders communication, cross-pollination of ideas, and the ability to launch funding and programming. Among the most active donors interviewed for this study, the migration teams typically engaged the climate teams first and have sometimes found pushback: climate teams often have other priorities or see migration teams as trying to tap into their resources, and they may worry about migration issues, especially planned relocation, diverting funds from other climate priorities.

Some donors have found that internal coordination mechanisms and working groups can help bridge these silos. For example, SDC launched an internal learning journey, co-run by its migration and climate teams, to build capacity and interest in the intersection of these issues. This process helped launch SDC's new global program on climate mobility, led to the development of guidance for SDC staff on this issue, and fostered interest in related programming across staff.[60] The United States sought in recent years to overcome silos through a National Security Council-convened interagency policy committee and action plan.[61] Interagency efforts have proven difficult, but such coordination is an important step toward engaging other agencies such as labor, finance, and disaster response, which may be less involved or knowledgeable about tackling climate mobility issues than humanitarian or development agencies. Such coordination mechanisms, however, struggle if they are not institutionalized with strong leadership and funding (ideally from both migration and climate teams); the alternative is often personality-driven initiatives that are vulnerable to staff turnover, which is common within government bureaucracies.

## Pilot Projects and Flagship Initiatives

When development agencies have sufficient funds and flexibility, they can launch small-scale pilot projects targeting climate mobility issues, which may be seen as having greater risk and higher degrees of difficulty. Pilot projects are generally low-stakes investments in potentially untested programming areas, meaning there is greater leeway for setbacks and an appetite for risk-taking. The projects can help development actors refine their approaches to climate mobility, identify challenges, and scale programming effectively. Pilot projects may be most effective in generating a larger strategy when they are coordinated: by launching several pilots under the same theme or methodology, development actors can compare the results across contexts and approaches to help build the portfolio later on. Examples include the United Kingdom's pilot programs under their Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund and the EU Lives in Dignity Grant Facility, both of which have funded small climate mobility projects and are deliberately meant to fund riskier ventures.[62]

*Pilot projects are generally low-stakes investments in potentially untested programming areas, meaning there is greater leeway for setbacks and an appetite for risk-taking.*

In other cases, donors have planted their stake in climate mobility by launching flagship projects, with larger budgets that often cover an entire region or work globally, testing a range of activities that can be tailored to partner countries while nevertheless fitting under a global framework or methodology. For example, by launching its global HMCCC program, Germany was able to run several pilot programs that were then either renewed or spun off into standalone bilateral programs (see Section 2.A.). Other global or regional programs are being launched by the Swiss government and the European Commission. These large-scale programs not only test different interventions to determine which best supports local communities, but they also help to raise the profile of this issue within the donor organization, bring good practices to global and regional dialogues, and raise awareness among other donors and members of the public about why this issue should be a priority.

## Mainstreaming and Evidence Building

Other donors still have looked to mainstream climate mobility issues, integrating them into broader portfolios of work instead of or alongside launching dedicated programming. This is especially helpful in donor institutions where officials have not had the funding for standalone programs. Instead, as the United States did between 2022 and 2024, they have worked with country missions to identify countries in which they could tweak mobility programs to respond to climate-related displacement (e.g., expanding a program in Somalia to accommodate higher inflows of climate-displaced people) or tweak climate resilience programs to respond to mobility issues (e.g., ensuring migrants are included within resilience programming in Asian coastal cities that receive notable inflows of climate-related migration).[63] Such mainstreaming efforts can lead to organic growth on these issues within an institution, providing managers with greater ownership of the shared portfolio and potentially insulating it from shifting political priorities.

A persistent challenge to effective mainstreaming and programming is inadequate evidence, not only in terms of anticipating the risks of climate mobility but also, critically, what types of solutions are most likely to be successful. While one-off programs can invest in bespoke research to help design their interventions, integrating climate issues into migration programming (or vice versa) in a more systematic way depends on having reliable evidence that is easily accessible and usable by donor officials across sectors. Some donors have started to develop tools that highlight climate-related challenges and needs at the national level and that can be used during program design.[64] On the other side of the program trajectory, while some donor are conducting or commissioning project evaluations,[65] these are not common—and even where they do occur, donors and implementers rarely design programs with the most robust impact evaluations in mind from the beginning. This makes it hard to properly quantify the impact of such programming, and leaves donors without the type of consistent, reliable, and actionable data they could use to make the case for more programming and to confirm they are funding the most impactful interventions. Nevertheless, the data that do exist provide some basis for donors to begin piloting programming, and greater investments in data collection and well-designed evaluations would likely help catalyze further funding.

# 4 Conclusion and Recommendations

The field of climate mobility funding is growing rapidly, but still new and contending with stagnating development assistance torn between multiplying priorities, not least of which is rising displacement. While some donors have led the way in funding relatively large or innovative climate mobility programs, others are just developing their portfolios. And in some, such as the United States, political transitions threaten to upturn past work on this issue. As a result, over the next few years, the field will need better evidence, cooperation, and learning across donors—and especially between donors and their partner countries. The previous sections of this brief offer insights into what donors can do alone, within their own countries, to build interest in funding climate mobility work and to kickstart programming, as well as identifying a set of common challenges and mitigation strategies. In most cases, however, these challenges cannot be overcome by one donor alone. Strengthened cooperation across donors, whether bilateral or multilateral and whether public, private, or philanthropic, could have a catalytical effect on partner countries' ability to tackle the dual challenges of climate change and human mobility.

Specific recommendations for donors include:

- **Strengthening coordination and partnerships between donors:** Donors have lots to learn from each other, notably from donors such as the European Commission, Germany, and the United States that have at different points been global leaders on climate mobility. At a minimum, donors should exchange honest lessons and challenges in order to help new actors in this field get up to speed quickly. This could happen in informal settings, as was done during the community of practice convened by MPI for this project, or through more formal presentations at international events such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, which would also help introduce officials to their counterparts in other institutions. At best, donors could explore co-funding opportunities, as Germany and Switzerland have done through the HMCCC program,[66] as well as options for aligning their programming in specific high-priority regions. Achieving this level of cooperation, however, may be difficult due to the compressed timelines for starting these projects and complexities inherent to working across bureaucracies.

- **Complementing bilateral and multilateral funding:** There is huge untapped potential for bilateral government donors to work with MDBs and multilateral funds on climate mobility. These have, to date, been largely siloed—the government officials responsible for MDBs or the climate funds are generally not the same officials responsible for climate mobility, although some donors have tried to build bridges between these silos. At a minimum, bilateral government donors can signal to multilateral entities that climate mobility is a priority. At best, bilateral donors and MDBs can combine financing, as they have in the International Development Agency's Window for Host Communities and Refugees, since MDBs can take grant funding and blend it with loans and other financial products to offer much larger funding pots. Exploring a trust fund or similar mechanism for bilateral funders to leverage MDB finance could enable a bold global effort to tackle climate drivers of displacement and improve the climate resilience of communities at risk of displacement, people on the move, and their host communities.

- **Investing in the information and evidence ecosystem:** Until donors have comprehensive evidence—both on how climate change affects migration and on the effectiveness of various programmatic responses—their funding will not be distributed optimally, and they will not have the data they need to showcase the impact of this funding (and make the case for more). At minimum, donors should evaluate their funding and share those evaluations publicly. At best, one or more donors could put up significant funding for a consortium, observatory, or similar research initiative to develop climate mobility modeling, early warning systems, and local-level action research. While this modeling will never be perfect, given the complexity of climate impacts and migration decision-making, and would take massive resources to do robustly, methodologies continue to advance and a consortium of academic and government experts dedicated to improving forecasting of climate mobility could offer an invaluable resource.

- **Cooperating to engage and support partner countries' capacities and policies on climate mobility:** While this issue brief has focused on the role of development donors, their responsibility is ultimately to help partner countries anticipate, prepare for, and manage climate mobility. And while partner countries frequently make political statements on climate mobility and are starting to develop policies, this interest is not resulting in concrete requests for funding from the climate funds and MDBs. This gap emerges from partners' pragmatic need to finance projects in other pressing issue areas, but there are ways to ensure the financing they request considers climate mobility needs as well (e.g., ensuring climate adaptation finance requests include migrants and refugees). At minimum, donors should consistently and meaningfully engage partner governments in the design and prioritization of programming within their society. At best, donors should work together to support partner governments, not least because multiple donors tend to work in the same country. A coalition of bilateral and multilateral donors in each country, following the lead of the partner government, may be better able to provide the technical support and capacity-building to help partners clarify how their climate mobility goals can be financed—and to meet those needs.

By taking these steps, development donors can expand the ecosystem of climate mobility programming: strengthening relationships between key actors, experimenting with the types of interventions they can co-design with partner countries, and establishing best practices for working at the climate–migration nexus. The more concrete, successful climate mobility programs emerge, the easier it will be to elevate this issue on the international political agenda and raise both public attention and further financial investment. But getting to this point will require sustained commitments to grow the field—commitments that must outlast shifts in political priorities and become embedded within the fabric of institutions.

*By taking these steps, development donors can expand the ecosystem of climate mobility programming.*

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