

The Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Report Great Caribbean Shifts

Enabling Positive Adaptation Journeys
in the Greater Caribbean



Global Centre for
Climate Mobility



Greater Caribbean
Climate Mobility Initiative
Enabling People Positive Adaptation Journeys



United Nations
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The Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative, led by the Global Centre for Climate Mobility and the Association of Caribbean States in close collaboration with UN partners and the World Bank, aims to build a shared evidence base on climate mobility and to chart a common course of action.

The Great Caribbean Shifts report presents current climate mobility realities and future trends through 2050, combining data from 14 communities across six countries with advanced modeling projections, using a spatial general economic equilibrium model.

Key Messages: Present Realities & Future Projections

1 The Greater Caribbean is facing a high-stakes transition.

The Greater Caribbean faces growing threats from climate impacts like rising temperatures and sea levels, along with more frequent disasters such as hurricanes and floods. These impacts are hurting livelihoods, forcing people to move, and putting pressure on government budgets. The region faces the highest economic costs of disasters globally, and rising debt is making it harder to achieve sustainable development and adapt to climate change.

2 Communities are already suffering from climate change impacts.

Climate change challenges traditional livelihoods, cultural practices, and mobility patterns. Extreme and erratic weather disrupts people's lives. High levels of stress, mental and physical ailments are widespread. The ravages of disasters, altering the environment and tearing communities apart, leave people with a profound sense of loss and dislocation.

3 Yet people have no desire to leave home.

Place attachment is strong across the region. People are ready to press for their right to stay even in the face of disasters. This is particularly true of older generations and Indigenous people. Mobility can be a strategy to defend home, if it is temporary and enables households to rebuild and adapt.

4 Climate mobility is experienced as a forced uprooting.

Permanent migration and relocation undertaken to escape the impacts of climate change are experienced as forced, and sometimes traumatic. The loss of home threatens people's social bonds, culture and heritage. As whole communities face displacement, it is critical to develop frameworks that ensure relocation in dignity.

5 Future climate impacts could force more movement but also suppress it.

Extreme temperatures and disasters will be the chief drivers of climate displacement in the region, while sea-level rise will push people to relocate from some coastal areas. Yet as economic opportunities dry up because of climate impacts, almost as many people will be discouraged from moving.

6 Women and young people will be at the forefront.

Women are more likely to be displaced due to climate impacts but also face a higher chance of immobility. Both could leave them more vulnerable and exposed to risks in the future. Young people are most likely to cite climate change as a reason for wanting to move; they are also projected to dominate climate mobility to the US and other destinations outside the region.

7 Rural areas and nature-based communities will suffer the worst effects.

Climate impacts will most severely affect rural economies, leading to an increase in poverty and displacement. Coastal areas are projected to suffer worse economic damage than inland areas and to lose population. Large cities with more diversified economies will be the main destinations of climate mobility in the region.

8 The Greater Caribbean can lead from the front.

Communities across the region are already adapting and designing their own solutions. Governments have begun to recognize climate mobility as a policy challenge and are using existing instruments to protect people. By forging a common agenda, the region can lead by example and press for new frameworks and international norms to create safe and dignified climate mobility pathways.

9 Cooperation is needed to adapt, protect, and harness climate mobility.

The region is suffering from a crisis that is not of its making. International solidarity and institutional reforms will be critical to address loss and damage, support community-led adaptation, and protect the right to stay. By working together, the region can harness the movement of people for climate resilient development.





Key Figures & Projections

Climate Injustice: Greater Caribbean countries have contributed less than 5% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. Contributions from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are even more negligible at 1%. Yet, the Greater Caribbean is deemed one of the most climate-vulnerable regions. Populations in its small island states face some of the highest risk of disaster displacement in the world.

A Lived Reality: 75% of those surveyed have witnessed the impacts of climate change in their lives. Negative psychological and physical health effects are the most frequently reported symptoms of climate change. 40% of respondents indicated that sudden and slow-onset climate impacts would play a role when considering future migration.

Gender Matters: Climate vulnerability is higher for women. For instance, 10% more women than men reported that they would like to move but find themselves unable to. Female respondents were also 12% more likely to cite negative health effects from climate change than male respondents.

Losses Grow: By 2050, warming above 2°C could lead to a 20% drop in GDP per capita across the region. Some low-lying areas could see declines of close to 50%. An additional 2.5 million adults could be pushed into poverty, predominantly in rural areas.

Population Shifts: Up to 8.2 million people in the Greater Caribbean are projected to move permanently due to the impacts of climate change by 2050. More than 60% of people who move due to climate impacts will stay within their countries; less than 30% will move outside the region. Over 75% of all projected climate mobility will be out of coastal areas.

Climate Drivers: By 2050, approximately 80% of climate displacement will be due to rising temperatures and disaster impacts. Sea-level rise will be a key mobility driver in some low-lying countries, such as the Bahamas, Suriname, and Guyana.

Immobility Risks: By 2050, over 6 million people in the Greater Caribbean region could be deterred from moving as economic conditions in potential destinations worsen. Without support for adaptation, they could face increasing climate risk.

Key Actions: Towards a Positive Transition in the Region

1 Adapt Locally: Enable Local Planning and Capacities for Adaptation

People across the region face mounting threats to their homes, health, culture and livelihoods.

When climate impacts are experienced as random and unpredictable, they are paralyzing. However, with the right information and time to plan, communities can have agency and choice.

Governments must provide clear policies and set expectation horizons based on continuous risk monitoring to inform and guide community decisions. By seeking out information, participating in risk monitoring, and organising collectively, communities can play an active role in designing their adaptation journeys.

International solidarity and improved access to finance are critical to support local and national adaptation planning and action.

2 Protect Rights: Protect the 'Right to Stay' and Support Relocation in Dignity

Climate impacts are undermining people's "right to stay" in the places they call home. **To prevent immobility from becoming a trap, governments have a duty to help communities make informed decisions to stay or move.**

When movements happen out of desperation or in the midst of disaster, those displaced are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. **Governments must develop policies and agreements that provide for safe and dignified climate mobility pathways across borders.**

Clear procedures and safeguards are needed to support communities that are ready to pursue planned relocation, whether within their country or internationally.

3 Act Together: Address Loss & Damage, Harness Mobility and Build Consensus

Collective action in the region is needed. The Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative mobilizes regional and international actors – from governments and intergovernmental organizations to academia and expert institutions to business, civil society and the grassroots – to develop **a common understanding, narrative and agenda for action on climate mobility** in the region.

Access to knowledge, rights, and resources is key to ensuring people's ability to adapt in place or relocate with dignity. **Governments must plan for mobility and enable people to participate in decisions about their future.**

Countries throughout the region can harness climate mobility to adapt and develop under the strain of climate change through investing in resilience and strong institutions.

By working together around a shared agenda in regional forums, Greater Caribbean countries can better promote their common priorities on the global stage. The region can lead in pushing for structural reforms that unlock more resources for climate adaptation. It can help advance a global norm on protecting people's right to stay. And, it can lead by example in establishing safe, orderly, and dignified pathways for those who are forced to move due to climate change.





Agenda for Action

Guided by three core tenets – Adapt Locally, Protect Rights & Act Together – the GCCMI recommends an Agenda for Action with seven key actions to prepare for climate mobility. Anchored in regional precedents, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, the Agenda for Action outlines concrete measures to advance each of the seven Actions. It calls on Greater Caribbean leaders across sectors and levels of governance, stakeholders, and international partners to:

- 1 Ensure Access to Climate Risk Information**

- 2 Enable Positive Adaptation Journeys**

- 3 Protect the 'Right to Stay' & Support Relocation in Dignity**

- 4 Advance Rights-based Climate Mobility Responses**

- 5 Respond Collectively to Loss and Damage**

- 6 Integrate Climate Mobility into Regional Development Strategies**

- 7 Strengthen International Solidarity with the Region**

In support of the above Actions, the GCCMI will continue to work with regional Champions, build coalitions, and nurture the climate mobility policy ecosystem in the Greater Caribbean region to advance people-centered, locally led, and well-planned solutions at the intersection of migration governance, climate action, and sustainable development.