# KENYA CLIMATE MOBILITY COUNTRY PROFILE



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UN MIGRATION

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Cover photo: Caption: Ekuwom was displaced from his home and now lives in Namon village along a migratory route. Uncertain about his family's future, he is determined that his children will pursue education and careers beyond pastoralism, hoping they will one day return to support communities like his. Photo: IOM / Muse Mohammed 2023.

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# GLOSSARY

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| Adaptation | In human systems, adaptation refers to the ways societies adjust their behaviour, institutions and infrastructure to actual or expected climatic conditions in order to reduce harm or make use of potential benefits. In natural systems, it describes how ecosystems adjust to prevailing climate and its effects, sometimes supported by human interventions to prepare for expected climate change (IPCC, 2022). |
| Adaptive Capacity | The ability of systems, institutions, humans and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities or to respond to consequences (Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 2005 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| Asylum Seekers | Persons who seek international protection and whose claim to refugee status has not yet been finally determined by the country where the claim is lodged (IOM, 2019). |
| Climate Change | A change in the state of the climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forces such as modulations of the solar cycles, volcanic eruptions and persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or land use. Note that UNFCCC, in its Article 1, defines, for the purpose of that Convention, climate change as 'a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods'. UNFCCC thus makes a distinction between climate change attributable to human activities altering the atmospheric composition and climate variability attributable to natural causes (IPCC, 2021 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| Climate-Related Migration | For the purposes of this profile, climate-related migration has been used as an umbrella term to refer to the 11 human mobility dimensions identified in the UNFCCC Technical guide on integrating human mobility and climate change linkages into relevant national climate change processes (UNFCCC, 2024). The term encompasses human mobility triggered, driven or influenced by climate change. |
| Cross-Border Displacement | Displacement where people are forced or obliged to move across an international border in the context of disasters, adverse effects of climate change and/or other crises (IOM, 2021). |
| Diaspora | International migrants and refugees or descendants of migrants and refugees whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country (IOM, 2019 adapted and cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| Disaster | A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society at any scale, resulting from hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, and leading to significant human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts (UNGA, 2016). |
| Disaster Displacement | Refers to situations where people are forced or obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of a disaster or in order to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard. Such displacement results from the fact that affected persons are (i) exposed to (ii) a natural hazard in a situation where (iii) they are too vulnerable and lack the resilience to withstand the impacts of that hazard. It is the effects of natural hazards, including the adverse impacts of climate change, that may overwhelm the resilience or adaptive capacity of an affected community or society, thus leading to a disaster that potentially results in displacement (adapted from Nansen Initiative, 2015b and cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| Displacement | The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-induced disasters. This may refer to forced movements within a country (internal displacement) or across international borders (cross-border displacement) (adapted from UNHCR E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |

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| **Durable Solutions** | Situation in which displaced persons no longer have specific protection or assistance needs linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination related to that displacement, through return, local integration or resettlement (IASC, 2010). |
| **Environmental / Climate Migration** | Movement where environmental degradation and/or climate change factors significantly influence the decision or need to move, whether within a country or across borders, and whether temporary or permanent (IOM, 2021). |
| **Environmental Degradation** | The reduction of the capacity of the environment to meet social and ecological objectives and needs. Degradation of the environment can alter the frequency and intensity of natural hazards and increase the vulnerability of communities. The types of human-induced degradation are varied and include land misuse, soil erosion and loss, desertification, wildland fires, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, mangrove destruction, land, water and air pollution, climate change, sea level rise and ozone depletion (UNISDR, 2009 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Exposure Hazard** | The presence of people; livelihoods; species or ecosystems; environmental functions, services, and resources; infrastructure; or economic, social, or cultural assets in places and settings that could be adversely affected (IPCC, 2022a cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Hazard** | The potential occurrence of a physical event, phenomenon or trend – whether natural or human-induced – that can cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, as well as damage or loss to property, infrastructure, livelihoods, service provision, ecosystems and environmental resources (IPCC, 2022). |
| **Human Mobility** | A descriptive term that is increasingly used under the UNFCCC processes to collectively refer to the three forms of population movement set out under paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Agreement: (i) Displacement – the primarily forced movement of persons; (ii) Migration – the primarily voluntary movement of persons, (iii) Planned relocation – the process of settling persons or communities in a new location. Note: In other contexts, the term 'human mobility' is used by some to refer to other movements such as tourism, to emphasize inner-urban movements, or to refer to commuting and other temporary or short-term movements of persons for employment-related purposes (UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Internal Displacement** | Situation in which people are forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence for reasons such as conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations or disasters, but remain within their country's borders (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1998). |
| **Internal Migrant** | Any person who moves or has moved within the borders of a State to establish a new temporary or permanent residence, or who is unable to return to their previous place of residence following displacement. In this context, the term refers mainly to forms of movement that are primarily voluntary in nature (IOM, 2019). |
| **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** | Described in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human- induced disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (ECOSOC, 1998 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Just Transition** | Greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind. A Just Transition involves maximizing the social and economic opportunities of climate action, while minimizing and carefully managing any challenges – including through effective social dialogue among all groups impacted, and respect for fundamental labour principles and rights. (ILO, n.d. cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Labour Migration** | Labour migration is defined as covering both migrants moving within the country and across international borders. This choice is also justified by the significant number of persons moving within the same country for work purposes who sometimes face the same barriers or challenges faced by international migrants, such as discrimination and difficulties in integration. Although such challenges may be greater for migrants moving across borders they are not totally absent also for internal migrants (IOM, 2019 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |

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| **Loss and Damage** | Negative effects of climate change that occur despite mitigation and adaptation efforts, including both economic and non-economic losses from sudden-onset events and slow-onset processes (UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Migrant Worker** | A person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national" (UNGA A/RES/45/158 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Migrants and Just Transition** | A just transition requires bespoke actions within a common framework, centred on the interest and dignity of migrant workers and based on international labour standards. Well-managed and rights-based labour mobility and adaptation strategies can provide opportunities to increase resilience and adaptation, avoid the loss of assets and livelihoods and improve the skills base in receiving countries and in home communities when migrants return" (ILO, 2022a cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Migrants in Vulnerable Situations** | Migrants in vulnerable situations' are thus persons who are unable effectively to enjoy their human rights, are at increased risk of violations and abuse and who, accordingly, are entitled to call on a duty bearer's heightened duty of care (OHCHR and Global Migrant Group, 2018 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Migration** | Movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either within a State or across an international border, for any duration and for a wide range of reasons (IOM, 2019). |
| **Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC)** | Field of policy and practice focusing on the interactions between human mobility and environmental change, including climate change, disasters and environmental degradation, and on how to manage related risks and opportunities (IOM, 2021). |
| **NAP** | The national adaptation plan (NAP) under the UNFCCC is a statement of what is known and prioritized for a given time period, to guide planning and inform implementation of actions to reduce vulnerability, manage climate risk and build resilience to climate change. The NAP was created under Decision 1/CP.16, and initial guidelines for formulation of NAPs were adopted in Decision 5/CP.17. (UNFCCC, 2024) |
| **NDCs** | The Paris Agreement (Article 4, paragraph 2) requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve. Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions (UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Pastoralism** | Livelihood and land-use system based on extensive livestock production, characterized by mobility of herds and common or shared use of rangelands and other natural resources (FAO, n.d.). |
| **Planned Relocation** | Planned relocation in the context of disasters or environmental degradation, including when due to the effects of climate change, is a planned process in which persons or groups of persons move or are assisted to move away from their homes or place of temporary residence, are settled in a new location and provided with the conditions for rebuilding their lives (adapted from Brookings, Georgetown, and UNHCR, 2015 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |

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| **Refugee** | According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 'refugee' applies to any person who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UNGA A/CONF.2/108). 'Refugees' within wider regional definitions – under the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, or the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees – encompasses people who are compelled to leave their countries in the context of events or circumstances "seriously disturbing/disturbed public order", including climate change impact or disasters (Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama, 1984, Organization of African Unity, 1969). The need for international protection arises because they are unable to avail themselves of the protection of their own country against these threats. For example, people may be refugees under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees where they are fleeing conflict or violence, which may in some cases be caused or exacerbated by the effects of climate change or disaster, rendering the State unable or unwilling to protect them (PDD and UNHCR, 2023 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Transhumance** | Seasonal movement of livestock (and often herders) between different grazing areas, usually between lowlands and highlands, to optimize pasture and water use over the year (FAO, 2024). |
| **Trapped Populations** | Populations inhabiting areas of high risk and thus vulnerable to environmental shocks and impoverishment who want to flee or migrate but are unable to do so. Note: the notion of trapped populations applies in particular to poorer households who may not have the resources to move and whose livelihoods are affected, or to people whose freedom of movement is limited for other reasons (adapted from Foresight, 2011 cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |
| **Vulnerability** | The propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts and elements, including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt (IPCC, 2022a cited in UNFCCC, 2024). |

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| AFDB | African Development Bank |
| CHIRPS | Climate Hazards Group InfraRed Precipitation with Station data |
| EM-DAT | Emergency Events Database (The International Disaster Database) |
| EMS | Emergency Management Service (as in Copernicus EMS) |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| IDP/IDPs | Internally Displaced Person / Internally Displaced Persons |
| IDMC | Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| MECC | Migration, Environment and Climate Change |
| NDC/NDCs | Nationally Determined Contribution(s) |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OECD-DAC | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| USD | United States Dollar |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The country profile compiles the existing data and knowledge on the Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC) nexus for Kenya. The profile provides information to the practitioners and policymakers on the current situation, identifies information gaps and identifies priorities for action. It is designed to be aligned with the UNFCCC submission processes by compiling existing information on climate change impacts that can be used to develop evidence-based policy and action.

Kenya faces acute climate mobility challenges. Droughts, prolonged dry spells and recurrent flooding have reduced agricultural productivity. Severe drought alerts between 2014-2026 have strained national government and the humanitarian community, especially in the context of the recent funding cuts. Women are disproportionately affected by these impacts with greater responsibility of feeding children and families.

In response to climate shocks, Kenya has recorded a cumulative total of over 2.7 million internal displacements between 2008 and 2024, with many affected populations living in informal sites prone to disaster (IDMC, 2026).. Affected populations work in the second and third sectors, with little opportunities for regular and alternative livelihood. Refugees and IDPs live in difficult conditions with limited WASH facilities, increasing protection risks for women and girls, including exposure to exploitation and trafficking.

Kenya's policy architecture, anchored in its Climate Change Act (2016), National Climate Change Action Plan (2018-2022), Kenya National Adaptation Plan (2015-2030), National Disaster Risk Management Policy (2017) and Kenyan Climate-smart Agriculture Strategy (2017-2022), provide an increasingly solid foundation for integrating human mobility into climate action. However, policy and planning responses are yet to systematically incorporate climate-related human mobility in design and implementation across areas, including pastoralism and transhumance. Adaptation, labour migration and disaster risk reduction need clearer mainstreaming of mobility considerations to reduce repeated displacement, improve protection in settlements and enable safer, durable relocation options.

Bridging these gaps requires coordinated data systems, stronger local capacities, and policy coherence across environment, social protection, and migration portfolios. The profile identifies priority measures, including:

- Development of a national data framework on climate mobility to standardise climate trigger and tagging, and disaggregating by sex, age, region and duration.
- Implementing gender-sensitive livelihood intervention programmes to diversify household incomes beyond pastoralism and agriculture.
- Promoting the recognition of labour migration and diaspora contributions as enablers of adaptation action.

Through these actions, Kenya can leverage human mobility for resilience and inclusive climate action.



In Kenya, droughts, dry spells, floods have depleted agro-productivity and exacerbated food insecurity. Photo: IOM 2023.



Located in East Africa, Kenya is a country rich in natural beauty with plains, escarpments, hills, and mountains. Photo IOM / Alexander Bee 2022.




Map of Kenya source: World Atlas

Located in East Africa, Kenya is a country rich in natural beauty with plains, escarpments, hills, and mountains. Kenya's nature-based tourism industry is also a major land user, with wildlife protected areas covering 8.2% of the land area (Kenya Country Profile, 2026; The World Bank, 2021). However, 85% of the land area is classified as a fragile arid and semi-arid ecosystem (The World Bank, 2021).

Given the rich topography, the temperature in the country is varied. The country's northern and north eastern areas are generally hot and arid while the central highlands are cooler and become increasingly arid.

Little seasonal variation in temperatures has been observed throughout the country, with average temperatures ranging between 18°C at the higher elevations to 26°C along the coast (The World Bank, 2021). According to ILO (2024), heat stress is projected to deplete labour productivity in agriculture and outdoor-based sectors.

Kenya experiences short rains in October to December and the long rains in March to May. However, due to climate change impacts, precipitation levels are becoming unpredictable and erratic (The World Bank, 2021). Kenya's climate trends since the 1960s reflect the country's striking regional diversity: northern areas have generally become wetter, while southern areas have trended drier — a pattern shaped by Kenya's varied geography and the uneven reach of its seasonal rainfall systems. At the same time, extreme rainfall events have increased in frequency and intensity in some parts of the country, while aridity and drought conditions have worsened in others, all of which reflect different expressions of climate change across a geographically diverse country with varying climate pressures.

Since 2000, prolonged droughts have become more frequent, (Kenya Country Profile, 2026), with severe episodes in 2008, 2010, and 2016 each triggering major humanitarian emergencies. Most recently, below-average rainy seasons between 2020 and 2023 contributed to the most severe drought in at least four decades across the Horn of Africa, with serious consequences for communities across Kenya and the wider region (WFP, 2023). Moreover, the early weeks of 2026 are already experiencing drought conditions (USDA, 2026). The largest impact of drought is on pasture lands, particularly affecting the north-west and the areas along the coast (Ministry of Land, 2026). This has contributed to land degradation, desertification and failed crop production (Reach, 2026). Early-warning projections estimated that more than 3 million people require humanitarian assistance between November 2025 and May 2026 (ibid).

Meanwhile, intense rainfall occurs in various regions including the Coastal area, Central areas including Nairobi, the Western Highlands, Rift Valley, Lake Victoria Basin, South-eastern lowlands and Northeastern regions (The Red Cross, 2026). Between 2002-2024, 71 flash floods and riverine floods have been recorded leading to 2567 fatalities and affecting 34.8 million people in total. (EDMA, 2026). These days, floods are common occurrences during both the long and short rainy seasons.

## B. THE MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE NEXUS

According to the IPCC sixth assessment report (2022), "*there is increased evidence that climate hazards associated with extreme events and variability act as direct drivers of involuntary migration and displacement and as indirect drivers through deteriorating climate-sensitive livelihoods (high confidence)*". Moreover, the report states that the impacts of climatic drivers on migration interact with social, political, geopolitical and economic drivers.

The links between migration and climate change are multidirectional. Human mobility also shapes climate change and climate action, for example, through migrants' contribution to the green economy, and diaspora investment in climate planning. Hence, it is important to unpack all possible impacts of the varied forms of climate-related mobility.

### 1. Internal displacement

Kenya has been experiencing internal displacement due to combined and overlapping factors, including conflict, floods, storms, and earthquakes (KNCHR, 2026). Even after the Kenyan government declared a drought emergency in September 2021, there was no systematic monitoring of internal displacement yet, making estimates highly conservative. However, IDMC (2026) estimates that over 2.7 million people have been internally displaced in Kenya from 2008 - 2024 due to hazards and disaster. Out of this, 2.4 million displacements were caused by floods, 316,000 from droughts, 6,000 from storms, 720 from wildfire, and 62 from earthquakes (IDMC, 2026). In addition to sudden-onset processes, pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in arid and semi-arid regions severely are travelling longer in search of water and pastures due to droughts and dry spells, with some forced to relocate, largely within Kenya in search of alternative livelihood opportunities (GIZ, 2026).

The number of IDP camp sites fluctuate with displacement waves and there is evidence of harsh IDP camp living conditions. For example, during the 2008 drought crisis, over 300 IDP camps were opened with many sources confirming abduction of children, violence against women, and violence by gangs (Brookings, 2024). Additionally, IDP camps encounter resource constraints, for example the IDP camp in Maai Mahiu hosting 700 families has no basic tents, running water, electricity or protection (Agape Volunteers, 2026).

In addition to camps, some IDPs live with families, relatives and informal settlements. According to IOM DTM's (2025) household survey, 134,456 people had been internally displaced across Mandera. 64% of the respondents indicated that they would not return to their area of origin even if conditions improved, indicating that many might deem recovery in those areas as impossible. This is consistent with findings stating that populations residing in flood and drought prone areas are susceptible to internal displacement (KNCHR, 2026). However, 86% of the respondents stated that they did not have the means to return even if the option was presented to them. This provides some evidence to suggest that protracted and cyclical internal displacement occurs in Kenya. More data including climate change impacts in the IDP camps, and insights on return & reintegration to places of origin are needed.

Gendered impacts of displacement remain largely underreported: women, girls, and gender-diverse people face exposure to gender-based violence in camps and informal settlements (GIZ, 2026). Moreover, as primary caregivers during displacement, they face disproportionate care burdens while facing reduced access to reproductive and mental health services.

### 2. Migrants in vulnerable situations

Kenya is an important destination and transit country for irregular migrants in the East Africa region, considering the country's relative economic and political stability, (MMC, 2023; MGSOC, 2017). People arriving regularly come from Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan and from other countries such as Eritrea, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. Aside from claiming asylum in Kenya, irregular migrants take the Southern migration route towards South Africa and towards the north. It is reported that migrants with irregular documentation status and limited access to protection services make them vulnerable for exploitation by smugglers and traffickers along migration routes (Crawley et al, 2024).

Kenya is a source, transit and destination country for children, men and women. Climate variability, especially prolonged drought and extreme rainfall events, have increased vulnerability to trafficking in persons in the country, mainly due to food insecurity and livelihood loss (US State Department, 2024). Malinowski and Schulze (2017) found that droughts in Kenya, deplete livelihood and food availability, causing severe effects on vulnerability to trafficking. Moreover, there is also evidence of refugees being victims of sex trafficking and forced labour (USA.gov, 2026).

The erratic and intense climate patterns have led to higher numbers of movements into urban informal settlements. In Kenya, 54.7% of the total population live in informal settlements (MDPI, 2020). Some reports suggest that during and after droughts and floods, internal migrants, displaced persons and landless people may reside in sites with limited access to WASH facilities that significantly increases their exposure to subsequent hazards (UN-Habitat, 2020). Schmidt and Maina (2025) explored the lives of rural-urban migrants in informal settlements in Nairobi's eastern high-rise areas. Both men and women migrants were severely affected with the lack of job opportunities to provide for their family and children and the precarity in their living conditions, with women experiencing gender based violence and increased caring responsibilities (GIZ, 2026). More evidence is needed to understand how migrants in vulnerable situations are not only exposed to hazards, but are also affected indirectly by the disruption of livelihood opportunities, and a lack of basic services (MMC, 2024).



Climate variability, especially prolonged drought and extreme rainfall events, have increased vulnerability to trafficking in persons in the country, mainly due to food insecurity and livelihood loss. Photo IOM / Moses Otunga 2023.

## 3. Cross-border displacement

In Kenya, most climate-related migration occurring from contexts of slow-onset and sudden-onset processes is internal, from rural to urban areas. However, there is some evidence to suggest that communities relying on pastures for livestock and food engage in temporary cross-border movement as a coping mechanism to climate shocks (Climate Refugees, 2022; Schrepfer, 2014). This is especially true in the Kenya-Somalia border region where temporary cross-border mobility for grazing takes place. Moreover, there is also some evidence of people from neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia coming to Kenya for grazing (UNHCR, 2012).

However, there are incidences of cross-border displacement into Kenya in the context of climate change impacts. UNHCR (2022) found that severe droughts, intertwined with conflict and environmental factors displaced 1,102 Ethiopians, 41,517 Somalis, 15,879 South Sudanese and 68,884 from other nations into Kenya in 2022. Due to extreme drought and water scarcity, women and girls are making long journeys in search of water (ibid).

Similarly, IOM's DTM (2025) data reports 2,466 migratory movements in the first quarter of 2025 (January–March) in and around Eastleigh, Kangemi, the Roysambu–Thika Road, and Athi River. No climate triggers were mentioned but 79% of the movements were due to economic hardship and 1% due to food scarcity. However, "economic hardship" may conceal climate-related drivers, as drought and flood-induced livelihood collapse affects income loss, rising food prices and reduced labour demand. Therefore, it is indeed possible that climate impacts such as droughts and food scarcity from neighbouring regions have - to apparently rather minor degree - resulted in a large number of cross-border movement into Kenya. A more systematic use of climate triggers and tagging is required to elicit the data.

## 4. Refugees (in-country)

Kenya is among the largest refugee host countries in the world, with 857,065 refugees and asylum seekers in 2026. This represents a 2.7% increase from the previous year (UNHCR, 2026). A large number of refugees and asylum seekers come from Somalia (61%), South Sudan (25%), Democratic Republic of the Congo (8%) and Ethiopia (5%), fleeing the conflict, food insecurity and flooding impacts (UNHCR, 2026). Conflicts in other neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia and Burundi are increasing the number of refugees in Kenya. It is difficult to identify any displacements directly as a result of climate change impact, but climate change can be seen as a threat multiplier, depleting agro-productivity, food scarcity and intertwining with resource constraint and conflict (MMC, 2025). For example, recent evidence from the Horn of Africa drought (2020–2023), described as the worst in at least four decades, shows that cross-border displacement into Kenya increased as households exhausted local coping strategies (UNHCR, 2024).

There are two main refugee camps in Kenya: Dadaab and Kakuma. However, some refugees leave the camps and live in urban informal settlements. Somalis largely reside in Dadaab refugee camp and have nearly spent over 3 decades in the location due to political and climate factors in their countries of origin (HIAS, 2026). On the other hand, South Sudanese fleeing political wars reside in Kakuma refugee camp (NRC, 2026).

The refugee camps are located in areas highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as extreme temperature rise. Additionally, basic necessities are not met in camps and there is evidence of domestic violence and girls selling sex to buy sanitary pads (USCRI, 2025). The recent humanitarian funding cuts have exacerbated conditions in the refugee camps. For example, WFP (2025) has reduced food assistance, contributing to food insecurity and increasing the risk of malnutrition among refugee populations. Access to clean water remains a significant challenge in the refugee camps, which rely on underground water that is affected by climate change, poor rainfall, and old water reticulation systems (UNHCR, 2026).

Refugee camps in Kenya (especially Kakuma) are known for entrepreneurship (Betts et al, 2019). Refugees are allowed to own shops, food markets within the camps. 60% of the shops are owned by refugee men (ibid). Despite constrained resources in the camp, refugees prefer to stay in the camps as opposed to settlement areas even if lands are provided. This is predominantly because of social networks in camps and access to some basic services (Betts et al., 2018).

There are examples of climate action projects being implemented in the refugee camps. For example, 'Greening the Blue' project, provided access to affordable, reliable, and clean energy through market-based approaches for cooking fuel, and clean lighting, as well as promoting energy efficiency through awareness raising among the population. Moreover, efforts to improve water system efficiency and to enhance rainwater harvesting by constructing water pans and dams are being prioritised (UNHCR, 2026). The impacts of these projects are yet to be seen.

## 5. Pastoralism and transhumance

Given that 80% of the land in Kenya is arid, with millions depending on livestock for food, especially in northern Kenya (Nyariki and Amwata, 2019), the pastoral economy valued over USD $1.1 billion represents 13% of the national GDP in Kenya (Nyariki and Amwata, 2019; ILRI, 2025). Livestock production contributes up to 70% of employment and more than 90% of household income in predominantly pastoral areas, underscoring the centrality of traditional livestock movement to food security and local economies (ILRI, 2024).

The northwestern part of Kenya, together with the southwestern parts of Ethiopia, southeastern parts of South Sudan and northeastern Uganda comprises the Greater Karamoja Cluster, where seasonal livestock movements are used to access pasture and water during dry spells and drought cycles (FAO, 2019).

Men often leave rural homes with livestock to search for pasture and water, leaving women alone to care for children and manage households under increasingly precarious conditions. This separation increases women's vulnerability, including exposure to gender-based violence and limited access to livelihood opportunities (Wafula et al., 2022).

In some contexts, transhumance has contributed to community tensions and resource-based conflicts (IOM, 2022; Marchant et al., 2017). Pastoralists' natural resource base has been eroded, jeopardising their traditional livelihoods and intensifying resource-based conflicts, ultimately resulting in unsafe (and forced) population movements to urban areas (Kibugi and Lanyasunza, n.d.). Moreover, worsening drought conditions, which in turn affect land degradation, combined with other issues such as natural resource depletion have posed challenges for pastoral communities (Fox et al, 2025). Aside from climate change impact, armed robbery and violence have been noted in pastoral mobility pathways, enhancing the vulnerability of pastoral communities (IDS, 2022).

The Government of Kenya seeks to promote pastoralism by conducting livestock route mapping, with the consideration of migration corridors, grazing areas, water points, markets and infrastructure that underpin livestock mobility (ILRI, 2025). Additionally, international organisations are also supporting pastoral projects, for example the Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) project, together with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD), convened a three-day national livestock route mapping forum in Nairobi in May 2025.

Some adaptive strategies of pastoral communities have been noted against droughts for livelihood diversification to green jobs and technical skills acquisition, for example through increased investment in fisheries (Nyariki and Amwata, 2019). Fishing is growing rapidly in the pastoral areas, especially from rivers, natural lakes and other artificial aquaculture systems such as ponds. Moreover, pastoral communities are selling manure to diversify their food intake (Nyariki and Amwata, 2019). This is contributing towards climate-friendly agro-practices as manures promote carbon capture and storage.

A Labour Market Assessment (LMA) with high representation of households depending on pastoralism (60%, n=42) was conducted in Mandera County through the support of IOM, World Vision and OSDA (2025). LMA showed high unemployment levels, particularly through a combination of fluctuating climate patterns, low education levels, gender norms and lack of capital for business expansion. Against this backdrop, expanding Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) and access to enterprise development capital has been suggested. On TVET specifically, the construction section, while one of the largest sectors in Mandera East, has no specialised training pipelines, representing a missed opportunity for climate adaptation for pastoral communities (RACIDA and IOM, 2025).

## 6. Labour migration

Extreme weather events have led to heat stress, droughts, land degradation, crop failures, and food insecurity in Kenya. Consequently, this undermines traditional livelihoods for agricultural and pastoralist communities. Women lack economic opportunities given the disruption of farming land and sufficient pastures (Climate Refugee, n.d.). Within limited opportunities, women and girls are forced to travel further and wider in search of water, exposing them to gender-based violence along the way (ibid).



Labor migration patterns are diverse, involving both cross-border movements to neighboring countries. @ IOM / Alexander Bee 2024

There is strong evidence of migration from rural to urban areas in search of employment (Filho et al, 2023). A case-study in Marsabit Town highlights the double disadvantages encountered by ex-pastoral communities who migrate due to severe drought and heat stress. After losing their livelihood and livestock in their place of origin, ex-pastoralists reside in informal houses with little access to living space and health care, performing worse in wellbeing outcomes than non-migrant counterparts (Duijne, 2024). They rely on casual labour work and thus their internal migration can be considered to be more of a coping strategy than an adaptive one.

While many young people aim to move to Nairobi or bigger cities, there is evidence of rural-rural labour migration in Kenya (Serraglio et al, 2025). This may be due to the associated costs with moving in bigger cities or preference to work in secondary or tertiary sectors in smaller areas.

There is scarcity of data on how climate change impacts might be affecting cross-border labour migration. According to ILO's (2019) labour migration thematic report, over 327,000 people emigrated from Kenya by 2019. It is estimated that top destinations include the Arabian Gulf (38,400), the USA (29,300), East African countries (21,600), and Europe (20,400). IOM's (2020) migration snapshot data confirms these findings. More than half (56 per cent) were reported to have emigrated for employment-related reasons, thus classified as international labour migrants (ILO's, 2019).

In terms of climate change-related migration into Kenya, there is data on displacement and refugee context. According to ILO (2019), only 1.2% immigrants or foreign-born working population reside in Kenya. These populations largely come from East Africa (71%). However, specific tagging of climate drivers into labour decision-making is not available. This underscores the need for greater and systematic tagging of labour migration decision-making with the consideration of climate change impacts.

## 7. Diaspora

Kenya has one of the largest diaspora groups in Africa. The numbers are estimated to be 540,466, although the number could be much higher (Afford, 2025). Top locations include the USA (210,991), the UK (137,817), Australia (30,123), Canada (25,245).

The number of remittances has been exponentially growing in Kenya. In 2024, USD 4,945 million was sent, which signifies 18% increase from USD 4,190 million in 2023 (Central Bank of Kenya, 2025). According to IFAD (2021) Kenyan migrant workers send on average USD 200 or USD 300 home every one or two months. The remittances represent 15% of what they earn on average, and what they send can make up as much as 60% of a household's total income in their country of origin.

There is limited data on how the remittance is being used. IOM (2024) states that remittance is being used in local adaptation efforts, for example improving food security, and climate resilience, especially during disasters. A case-study with 211 Kenyan diaspora members showed that a large portion of the remittance is sent to support basic needs, with only under 25% for saving or long-term investments (Temba et al, 2021). Moreover, women tend to send money more often than men. A 2018 Commonwealth survey highlighted strong interest among the diaspora in investing in Kenya, while also identifying barriers such as limited access to information, high remittance costs, trust concerns and complex business processes (Commonwealth, 2018).

## 8. Planned relocation

The Government of Kenya's Shirika Plan aims to create more integrated urban spaces for refugees and to promote better refugee-host spaces. Moreover, multi-stakeholder consultations confirm that relocation without proper planning might disrupt social networks and lead to heightened vulnerability in Kenya (Cities Alliance, 2026). Planned relocations work well with investment in core public infrastructure (ibid).

This is exemplified from the case study of Tana River, an area within coastal Kenya that is repeatedly affected by severe floods, causing deaths and disruption to schools, hospitals and basic services (CW, 2026). The county government moved households from low-lying floodplains to higher, consolidated settlements, known as newly built "eco-villages". However, these efforts provoked strong criticism and debate.

Due to funding cuts, 220 households were left behind living without electricity and WASH facilities. Those relocated returned when climate conditions improved to work in farmlands before being displaced due to severe flooding. According to NGO reports, unless relocation efforts provide land tenure, alternative livelihood opportunity, and deliver provisions for sufficient water, health and education services, relocated households risk being pushed into precarious non-farm work or urban marginality rather than promoting resilience (GSMA, 2022).

## 9. Migrants and Just transition

The transformation of further areas of life and the economy towards climate neutrality requires a socially just approach by leaving no one behind. This includes ensuring the participation of migrants, refugees, diaspora, women, disabled populations and other groups who have historically had less participation in climate discourse and programmes. Kenya has adopted a policy instrument that links decarbonisation with the just transition ambitions (ETIP, 2023). However, as of now, it is not yet clear how the just transition will be implemented beyond the consultations and possible improved outcomes of people in the margins. As it is a topic newly being integrated in policy-levels, the AfDB, has been actively hosting capacity building sessions with Kenyan policymakers, among other African nations, to discuss a comprehensive inclusion of just transition frameworks (AfDB, 2024). However, there is rarely any discussion or projects focusing on the just transition in the Kenyan context. Examples, for instance from Uganda, where refugees are engaged in tree plantation activities, are not publicly available in the Kenyan context (DCA, 2023).

In the context of debates on Just Transition, it is important to recognize that women and girls, especially among migrants, IDPs and refugee-hosting communities, face disproportionately exclusion (Women's Refugee Commission, 2015). A gender lens will need to be applied to ensure a just transition.

## 10. Displacement due to climate change mitigation/adaptation measures or projects

The Government of Kenya has introduced development projects in the Northern part of the country for the construction of transport routes, military camps, and geothermal explorations (Lind et al. 2020; Lind 2018; Mosley and Watson 2016). This has resulted in many private land-owners to fence their territories for compensation (Akall, 2021). For pastoral communities who rely on available pastures in the context of drought, this is leading to disruption in livelihood, food insecurity, and overall resource conflict among pastoral and land owner communities.

Similarly, indigenous communities residing near Lake Bogoria were displaced by land conservation measures in the 1970s (Climate Refugees, n.d.). Despite a favorable judgment by the African Commission, the issue remains unresolved, with many communities still living on the periphery of Lake Bogoria. This has contributed to cyclical displacement, increased human-wildlife contact, and heightened protection risks for women, including exposure to exploitation (ibid).

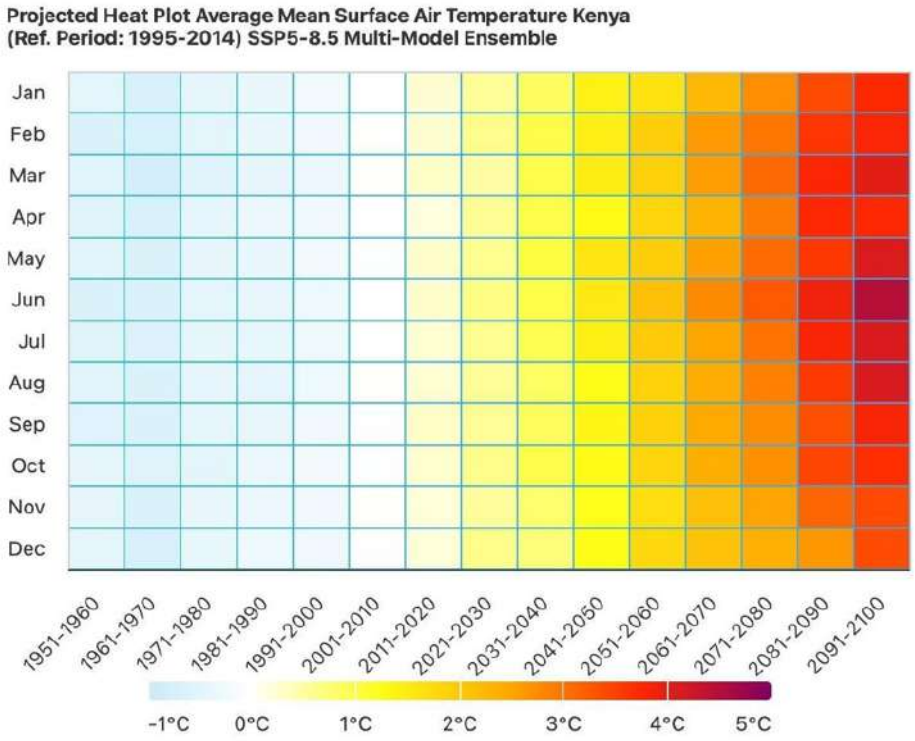
## 11. Trapped populations

The concept of 'trapped populations' captures how individuals who are forcibly immobile face compounded risk, and highlights the critical need for locally grounded, inclusive resilience strategies (IOM, 2025). The Kokwa community in Kenya consists of more than 2,000 indigenous residents that live near a rising lake with limited access to basic services. Many women and girls have been reported to give birth on local wooden boats while enroute to the hospital. The livelihood of the community largely depends on fisheries, which is negatively affected by drought and flooding. While the community faces repeated displacement, they have little means to relocate with depleted livelihood that prevented them from pursuing migration as an adaptive, or at least, a coping strategy (OHCHR, 2023).

Wanjiru (2025) argues that in the Kenyan informal settlement context, there also exists "ambivalent immobility" where there are mixed aspirations about moving and staying. While informal settlements want to improve their access to services, they refrain from moving due to social connections developed in those spaces. This underscores a need for a holistic relocation support which considers the non-disruption of social networks among trapped populations.



Trapped populations face compounded risks and need locally grounded and inclusive resilience strategies. @ IOM / Alexander Bee 2022




Historical and Projected Average Mean Surface Air Temperature by month in Kenya : Source Climate Change Knowledge Hub (2021)

IPCC's national profile (2015) states that aggregate temperature in Kenya will raise the global average, together with highly uncertain rain variability. More recent data from the World Bank (2025), confirms that average temperature in Kenya will likely increase by 2-3 degrees by 2050, a significant increase from previous years, relative to the 1995–2014 baseline period. Extreme heat combined with high humidity is projected to occur mostly in northeastern regions during peak humid months (March-May). This will have severe consequences on health, labour productivity, agriculture, and livestock stress (ibid).

Water stress is likely to remain a major concern, with heightened evaporation rates and extreme droughts already affecting irrigation and pasture availability (Barteit, 2025). However, there are ongoing waste resource management projects within the National Water Master Plan 2030. This will likely reduce some of the water scarcity-related pressures (Deltares, 2019). Subsistence farmers and pastoral communities are estimated to experience disproportionate effects given they already rely on limited pastures and lands (European Commission, 2023). It can be expected that increase in temperatures and food scarcity will exacerbate resource competition on grazing lands with farmers.

In terms of the impact on human mobility, the effects of severe drought, depleted agroproductivity and resource constraints will increase pressures for migration. International and internal rural-urban migration is likely to increase as an adaptive solution, where the importance of financial and non-financial remittance will be valuable. Given the poor conditions in informal areas and a lack of labour market opportunities, there might be a greater need for livelihood-focused planned relocations or emergency disaster displacement, from drought prone neighbourhoods. Moreover, pastoral communities will require enhanced mobility routes for livestock (IGAD, 2026). Especially the poorest and most vulnerable, may become "trapped populations" if depletion of resources due to climate change is not addressed. These dynamics illustrate how climate change will not only challenge Kenya's development but also significantly shape future migration and displacement patterns.

## D. POLICY ANALYSIS



There is an untapped potential to focus on other migration spectrums to improve the lives of climate vulnerable groups. @ IOM / Moses Otunga 2023

This section looks at the key policies of Kenya and assesses how enabling an environment they create for action.

Kenya has been a signatory of the Paris agreement since December 2015, with its first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in July 2015. The country has made two NDC submissions i.e. in 2020 and 2025, focusing on cross-sectoral mitigation and adaptation targets including agriculture, water infrastructure, energy and disaster risk management.

A review of key national policy instruments in Kenya (see box 1) reveals that climate change and human mobility priorities appear in parallel tracks. For example, Kenya's updated NDC (2031 - 2035) focuses on cutting down emission rates by 35% business as usual levels while strengthening cross-sectoral adaptive measures and institutional roles. There is some recognition of human mobility interaction with climate change in relation to internal displacement, but there are no displacement management packages discussed. Similarly, there are two mentions of climate mobility due to severe droughts, but there are no further descriptions of concrete actions based on them.

Meanwhile, Kenya's Global Compact for Migration implementation review largely focuses on the migration context, including ethical recruitment, anti-trafficking and remittance. Climate change is treated as a contextual risk exacerbated mainly in terms of internal displacement. However, there is no concrete mention of other types of climate (im)mobilities including the just transition, planned relocation, trapped population and these might contribute or preclude climate adaptation or coping mechanisms. That said, it is important to note that recent policy developments signal a growing recognition of internal climate displacement due to heat stress, drought, and flood. There is an untapped potential to focus on other migration spectrums to improve the lives of climate vulnerable groups, including harnessing remittance and diaspora expertise in national climate action.

## Box 1: Key national policy instruments in Kenya

**National Climate Change Response Strategy (2010)**

One of the first climate-related strategies with focus on disaster displacement and rural-urban migration in relation to extreme droughts and flooding in coastal regions.

**National Livestock Policy (2015)**

Framework for revitalising the livestock sub-sector, improving productivity, and aligning sectoral policy with Vision 2030 and broader economic recovery goals.

**Climate Change Act (2016; amended 2023)**

The act focuses on developing climate change resilience and low carbon development with the development of Climate Change Fund into mitigation and adaptation strategies

**Kenyan Climate-smart Agriculture Strategy (2017-2022)**

National framework to develop drought and flood resistant agriculture across value chains and investments with minimal greenhouse gas emission rates.

**National Climate Change Action Plan (2023 - 2027)**

Builds on the previous National Climate Action Plan (2018-2022), with enhanced focus on 8 priority actions: Disaster Risk Management; Food Security and Nutrition; Water, Fisheries and the Blue Economy; Forestry, Wildlife and Tourism; Health and Human Settlements; Manufacturing; Energy and Transport; and Children and the Youth. . Rural-Urban migration and displacement have received some attention as vulnerable groups.

**Kenya National Adaptation Plan (2015-2030)**

Provides a medium- to long-term adaptation roadmap across sectors (agriculture, water, health, infrastructure) and identifies priority actions to build resilience to climate shocks that drive livelihood mobility.

**National Disaster Risk Management Policy (2017)**

Emphasises establishment and strengthening of Disaster Management institutions, partnerships, networking and main streaming Disaster Risk Reduction in the development process so as to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups to cope with potential disasters.

**National Emergency Response Plan (2020)**

Sets out national contingency, coordination and response procedures for floods, droughts and other hazards that cause short-term displacement and require inter-agency action.

**Kenya Review of the Global Compact for Migration Implementation**

Voluntary assessment of GCM goals with the recognition of climate change as a threat multiplier. Climate change and human mobility are largely perceived as separate issues with limited funding to address them.

**Kenya's updated Nationally Determined Contributions (2025)**

The revised NDC focuses on the reduction of greenhouse emissions by 35% in the business as usual case, while focusing on adaptation priorities in agriculture, water, and disaster risk reduction.

## Available Data in Kenya

This section looks at the key data gaps and needs to support evidence-based action in Kenya. There are several relevant datasets allowing for an analysis of issues related to migration, environment and climate change interlinkages in the Kenyan context to support evidence-based planning and action.

International organizations provide useful and readily available data on human mobility and climate change that can be utilized in Kenya. IOM's DTM provides frequent, sub-national data on various movements (these include survey data, hazard-related information and information on the reasons/motivational factors of movements). Moreover, UNHCR data provides relevant information on refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs in Kenya. IDMC provides additional analytical information on internal displacement stocks and new movements with event-based (conflict- or disaster-related) analytics. Additionally, the Kenyan Meteorological Department and the Knowledge Platform for Drought Risk Management provide some national climate context, more so in the context of drought.

The international disaster database EM-DAT contains data on over dozens of disasters that has happened in Kenya over the last decades and also provides basic information on the affected populations. Many remote sensing-based and other climatological or environmental datasets are also available (Copernicus EMS, CHIRPS, etc.) which can provide information on specific hazards and climatological trends to support analysis of the migration, environment and climate change nexus.

In addition, national datasets (e.g. census or living standard surveys) and data sets provided by UNOCHA's Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) can complement these with sectoral and hazard-related information.

The below table maps data that is already available in Kenya:

**Table 1: Available Data relevant for the MECC context in Kenya**

| Title | Description | Link |
|---|---|---|
| IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) – Kenya | Mobility Tracking rounds (IDP/returnee figures, demographics), Event/Emergency Tracking for rapid shocks, Solutions and Mobility Index and Flow Monitoring for corridor movements; Surveys | https://dtm.iom.int/kenya |
| UNHCR Operational Data Portal – Kenya | Refugee/asylum statistics, situation updates and partner-coordinated snapshots (incl. IDP references). | https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/ken |
| IDMC (Country profile & GRID) | Standardized stocks and new movements for conflict- and disaster-related internal displacement; country page with time-series and methods. | https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/kenya/ |
| Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) – Kenya | Multi-agency repository of crisis datasets (admin boundaries, sectoral 3/4W, assessments, exposure layers). | https://data.humdata.org/dataset/cod-ab-ken |
| Copernicus EMS Rapid Mapping | Official rapid-mapping activation pages and downloadable flood footprints/maps for major events. | https://mapping.emergency.copernicus.eu/search/?q=kenya |
| CHIRPS rainfall time series | Long-run gridded rainfall dataset for trend and drought/flood context analysis. | https://data.humdata.org/dataset/ken-rainfall-subnational |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| GloFAS – Global Flood Awareness System (Copernicus EMS) | Global river-flood forecasts and data access useful for hazard timing/severity and early-warning overlays. | https://global-flood.emergency.copernicus.eu/ |
| Kenya Meteorological Department | Data on overall national climate context, evolving landscape and policy priorities. | https://meteo.go.ke/publications/?#results |
| Knowledge Platform for Drought Risk Management | Data in the context of early drought warning and impact. | https://knowledgeweb.ndma.go.ke/Public/Resources/Default.aspx?ID=7 |

## Data Gaps in Kenya

However, there are several key data gaps and limitations, which hinder action. Currently hazard (meta) data on climate triggers and hazards are not harmonised. Different institutions/organizations tag hazard types differently, making comparison of data complicated.

Moreover, it is hard to distinguish the duration of displacement and explore protracted and cyclical forms of internal displacement. While insights from small-scale household surveys from the northern region of Kenya demonstrate cyclical displacement of communities, this has not been actively monitored across regions. Moreover, existing data are seldom disaggregated by gender and age, which serves to conceal the disproportionate effects of climate change on women, girls and young children.

The link between rural-urban/rural-rural and cross-border labour migration and climate change impacts are seldom made across policy and programmes. While climate policy documents focus on droughts and depletion of pastures, the focus on transhumance and cross-border transhumance corridors are seldom considered.

There is considerably less recognition of migration as an adaptive or coping mechanism in the context of climate change. For example, labour migration surveys seldom capture remittance frequency, patterns and how it supports adaptive/ coping mechanisms. Evidence on the inclusion of refugee, migrants and vulnerable groups in the just transition framework or in the green economy is difficult to navigate.

The table below maps recommended tools to address data gaps:

**Table 2: MECC-related data gaps and proposed actions for selected dimensions of human mobility in the context of Kenya**

| Dimension of Human Mobility | Gap | Action | Data Source(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Internal displacement | Systematic monitoring of IDPs including displacement duration, categories (inclusive of slow- onset processes), gender impacts. | Set up a household panel tracking and survey income, housing, services, etc. on a regular basis | IOM DTM; IDMC; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (census and household surveys); UNHCR |
| Internal displacement | Hazard/disaster tagging & information limitations | Establish a National Climate Mobility Data Framework / Mobility Data Hub and add standardized "climate trigger" and displacement duration fields· | IOM DTM; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics; UNHCR |
| Migrants in vulnerable situations | Limited evidence on the living conditions of migrants and IDPs in (informal) settlements. | Operationalize short household surveys focusing on socio-economic/ livelihood context, WASH, services, specific risks and settlement characteristics | Kenya National Bureau of Statistics; IDMC; IOM |
| Cross-border displacement | Longitudinal hazard/disaster tagging & information | Mainstream climate stressors tagging in displacement context, focusing on socio-economic/ livelihood context, WASH, services, specific risks and settlement characteristics | IOM DTM, UNHCR, Kenyan department of Refugee Services and Immigration. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Refugees | Little evidence on long-term climate impacts in hosting areas and WASH conditions | Add/elaborate on a "climate module" in relevant monitoring/ study activities | UNHCR |
| Pastoralism and transhumance | Empirical gaps on adaptive practices for agro-pastoralists and their evaluations. | Elaborate on mobility mapping and combine this analysis with livestock and market surveys | FAO; World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA); IGAD |
| Labour migration and remittances | Generally limited evidence on remittance inflows and use | Link data of bank/ mobile money transfers to disaster/hazard information and timelines | Central Bank of Kenya; World Bank |
| Labour migration and remittances | Limited evidence regarding disaster-related internal labour mobility (incl. gendered dynamics, remittances flows) | Add a "mobility module/household roster with additional mobility information" to the relevant household and surveys | Central Bank of Kenya; World Bank |
| Labour migration | Limited evidence on cross-border/ seasonal/ circular migration | Add a "mobility module/ household roster with additional mobility information" to relevant households and surveys; link data of bank/ mobile money transfers to disaster/hazard information and timelines | Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (household surveys); Central Bank Kenya mobile network operators (aggregated mobility/ transaction data under privacy safeguards) |
| Diaspora | Limited evidence on remittance use, skills transfer and post-disaster support | Link data of bank/ mobile money transfers to disaster/hazard information and timelines; conduct a comprehensive diaspora mapping | IOM (diaspora mapping); World Bank; UNDESA |
| Planned relocation | Limited monitoring on long-term socio-economic outcomes of relocation | Create comprehensive quantitative and qualitative accompanying studies in panel design that capture important information about those being relocated before, during and after relocation (livelihood characteristics, organisation of relocation, etc.). | IOM DTM; World Bank (project and evaluation data) |

## Addressing the Gaps

Establishing a household panel that tracks income, housing services, and protection regularly could help distinguish repeated from protracted displacement, measure recovery trajectories, and better understand protection risks. Moreover, the creation of a National Climate Mobility Data Framework, Mobility Data Hub or integration of such functions to existing structures, with standardized climate triggers and displacement duration fields could harmonize event tagging and enable the linking of displacement data with official disaster-loss records.

To improve information on the impacts of climate change on camps and settlements, creating rapid assessment surveys in IDP and refugee camps, as well as informal settlements is suggested. The survey should capture climate impacts such as damage to shelters, WASH conditions, income/livelihood loss and opportunity, and reintegration needs, disaggregated by gender, age and duration of stay.

To support the resilience of pastoral and agropastoral communities, conducting research on their coping adaptive practices, gathering regional best practices in livelihood diversification and evaluating livelihood interventions of past projects (including fisheries) using OECD-DAC criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability).

To understand the long-term impacts of planned relocation efforts, including mitigation of cyclical displacement, longitudinal household survey assessing movement flows, livelihood opportunities and climate change impact on residing locations should be evaluated.

To clarify the timing and role of remittances in climate adaptation, linking bank and mobile money transaction data to hazard timelines could reveal how remittances respond to disasters and whether they support household recovery. Adding mobility modules to national household surveys could capture internal labour mobility patterns, including gender dynamics, destinations, and duration, and align them with hazard periods. Comprehensive diaspora mapping could provide insights into remittance flows, skill transfers, and contributions to climate recovery efforts.



Adding mobility modules to national household surveys could capture internal labour mobility patterns, including gender dynamics, destinations, and duration, and align them with hazard periods. @ IOM / Muse Mohammed 2023

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This country profile analysed 11 dimensions of human mobility intertwined with climate change in the Kenyan context. The analysis found that Kenya is advancing its climate ambitions through policy and planning responses. However, human mobility considerations are not sufficiently integrated into these frameworks.

Kenya's arid climate, frequent drought and hot spells exacerbate food security and livelihood opportunity, increasing mobility pressures for adaptation and survival. In some cases, this leads to forced immobility and being trapped in precarious conditions. On the other hand, labour migration, remittance and the just transition frameworks, which can benefit from human mobility remain largely untapped.

To address these gaps, Kenya could establish a national climate-mobility data framework aligned with IPCC and UNFCCC indicators, starting with a baseline of existing sources and a central, disaggregated data hub. Additionally, WASH needs to be scaled in IDP reception areas via mobile units, and early warning systems to mitigate displacement impacts. Given the country's reliance on pastures and livestock, strengthening pastoral resilience through GIS pasture monitoring, solar water, drought-tolerant forage, herd tracking and livelihood diversification would be critical. And lastly, the country has the opportunity to prioritize mobility-sensitive resilient urban planning and include displaced people in green job training and just transition policies. Labour migration, remittances and diaspora resources can be leveraged for climate finance and recovery and coordination. Details of these suggestions, including entry points and priority level can be found below (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Recommendations for different dimensions of human mobility**

| Dimension of Human Mobility | Recommendation | Lead/relevant institutions | Explanation | Priority based on the need on the ground as per above discussions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Several | Development of a national data framework on climate mobility, aligned with IPCC and UNFCCC indicators, including climate-related displacement flow monitoring | IOM, IDMC, World Bank, Government of Kenya | Kenya could develop a comprehensive national data framework on climate mobility that is aligned with IPCC and UNFCCC indicators. This should begin with a baseline assessment of existing data sources (e.g. IOM-DTM, IDMC, national statistics/census data, etc.) and the establishment of a central data hub or integration to existing data structures, with data disaggregated by gender and age as much as possible. Standardized hazard tagging, displacement duration fields and disaggregation (internal/ cross-border, sex, age, location) would improve comparability and policy use and could be the basis for enhancing early warning capacities. | HIGH |

| Dimension of Human Mobility | Recommendation | Lead/relevant institutions | Explanation | Priority based on the need on the ground as per above discussions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Internal Displacement | Expansion of WASH systems in IDP reception areas | Government of Kenya, WHO, IOM | WASH systems in IDP sites should be scaled up through mobile units and surge health teams that can quickly respond to new displacements. At the same time, investment in permanent facilities is crucial to bridge the gap between short-term emergency response and long-term integration. | HIGH |
| Pastoralism and Transhumance | Introduce climate-smart pasture and livestock monitoring and provide | FAO, IGAD, IOM, Kenyan Ministry of Agriculture | Channel flows into resilient housing and diversified livelihoods; include migration indicators in climate-finance strategies. | MEDIUM |
| Planned Relocation & Labour Migration | Planned relocation with WASH and livelihood support interventions | Government of Kenya, IOM, UNHABITAT, UNHCR | The establishment of clear guidelines and procedures for planned relocation available for displaced and trapped populations should be promoted. Planned relocation should be designed in close consultation with and consent of affected communities, particularly in consideration of their network and social needs. Targeted measures such as climate-smart agricultural trainings, vocational training, and clear land tenure arrangements should secure livelihoods. To prevent returning to high-risk areas, incentive schemes such as housing subsidies or microcredit should be introduced. | HIGH |
| Migrants in vulnerable situations | Promotion of a mobility-sensitive resilient urban planning (i.e. resilient infrastructure in urban informal settlements with high migrant rates) | Government of Kenya, UNHABITAT, World Bank, UNDRR | Urban planning in Kenya should integrate rural-urban mobility dynamics by prioritizing resilient infrastructure in informal settlements with high migrant populations. Such approaches could reduce disaster risks, strengthen social cohesion, and ensure that urban growth supports both displaced persons and host communities. | HIGH |

| Dimension of Human Mobility | Recommendation | Lead/relevant institutions | Explanation | Priority based on the need on the ground as per above discussions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Migrants and just transition | Integration of mobility into Just Transition policies (e.g. inclusion of IDPs in green jobs and training) | Government of Kenya, ILO, IOM, World Bank | Green job training and employment in renewable energy sectors, with a focus on youth and women in displaced communities, can help turn mobility into a pathway for social inclusion. Refugee entrepreneurship, already prevalent in some camps, demonstrates the feasibility of just transition interventions by highlighting refugees' willingness and capacity to participate in economic activities. | MEDIUM |
| Labour migration | Strengthening the role of labour migration and remittances in climate finance and adaptation strategies | IOM, World Bank, Government of Kenya | As labour migration and remittances are important financial "lifelines" in climate adaptation, national climate finance strategies could integrate migration flows more systematically, while financial products such as green bonds or savings schemes could channel remittances into efforts to create more resilient infrastructure and diversified livelihoods. These steps are best pursued in the medium term. | MEDIUM |
| Diaspora | Incentivising channelling of diaspora resources (remittances and skills transfers) to improve climate resilience and support disaster recovery efforts (short and long-term). | Government of Kenya, IOM, UNCDF | The Kenyan diaspora should be enabled to further participate in resilience building and recovery efforts by providing tailored incentives for resource pooling for community reconstruction or through reducing the costs and improving the infrastructure of remittance sending. Platforms where diaspora skills and professional networks are utilized can be developed or existing ones strengthened. | Medium |

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