

Draft Technical Guide on Averting, Minimizing and Addressing Non- Economic Loss and Damage in the Context of Human Mobility

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Disclaimer: This Guide is an information product prepared by the co-leading organizations under the Task Force on Displacement. It does not represent the views of the Conference of the Parties or the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, or of Parties, and does not constitute an agreed interpretation of the Convention, the Paris Agreement or decisions adopted thereunder.

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Contents	3
1. Introduction.....	5
What this Guide helps to do	6
When to use this guide.....	6
Scope and limitations	8
Methodology	9
Structure.....	9
2. Key concepts and frameworks	9
2.1 Climate change and human mobility.....	10
2.2 Unpacking human mobility.....	11
2.3 Human mobility settings and populations affected by NELs in the context of human mobility.....	13
Communities in places of origin	13
People on the move.....	13
Relocated and displaced communities	14
Host communities	14
Equity and differentiated impacts	15
2.4 Categories of NELs associated with human mobility in the context of climate change....	16
2.5 Averting, Minimizing and Addressing NELs	20
Averting NELs	20
Minimizing NELs	20
Addressing NELs	21
2.6 Existing legal and policy frameworks and guidance.....	21
The value of human rights-based approaches	24
3. A Step-by-Step Approach to Assessing NELs in the context of human mobility	25
Step 1. Understand the human mobility and climate context	28
Step 2. Identify current or anticipated NELs	30
Step 3. Assess response needs	32
4. Responding to NELs associated with human mobility	36
4.1 Principles for designing responses.....	37

4.2 Defining response objectives and identifying appropriate approaches	38
4.3 Determining the relevant response instrument	39
4.4 Identifying costs, financing and implementation options	40
4.5 Assessing, selecting and co-designing responses	41
4.6 Monitoring	42
5. Conclusion	42
Annex I. Guiding questions for Step 1: Scoping the NELs assessment	43
Annex II. NELs Inventory Template	46

1. Introduction

Climate change and disasters are increasingly influencing human mobility around the world. Sudden-onset hazards such as floods, storms and wildfires, as well as slow-onset events and processes such as sea-level rise, land degradation, glacial retreat and salinization, can undermine the safety, security and habitability of places where people live. As a result, people may become displaced, may choose to migrate, or may need to relocate as a measure of last resort. Others may remain in situations of increasing risk because they choose to stay or lack the resources or opportunities to move.

Human mobility can generate significant non-economic losses (NELs) – a broad range of losses that are not easily quantifiable in financial terms or commonly traded in markets¹. NELs may affect individuals, society or the environment¹ and encompass losses and damages related to culture, identity, health and psychosocial wellbeing, social cohesion, and local knowledge. These losses may emerge before movement occurs, during movement, or after movement has taken place. NELs can affect people who move, but also those who remain in places of origin, or host communities in places of destination.

Recognizing and responding to NELs in relation to human mobility is essential for designing policies and programmes and financing approaches that can avert, minimize and address loss and damage. While NELs may be difficult to quantify, the measures required to avert, minimize and address them can often be identified, prioritized and costed, thereby providing a practical basis for policy development, programme design, investment planning and climate finance. Integrating the interconnections between NELs and human mobility is important to ensure that responses address the full range of losses and damages experienced by people and communities in the context of climate change. Many NELs concern aspects that are essential to human dignity, well-being, and the effective enjoyment of human rights. Effective responses therefore require approaches that combine available evidence with meaningful participatory processes, recognize diverse experiences of loss, and are tailored to the specific environmental, social and political contexts in which human mobility and associated NELs occur.

While tools and guidance exist related to assessing climate risks, vulnerability and the needs of populations in different human mobility contexts, there is comparatively little specific guidance on understanding and assessing NELs associated with human mobility or how provisions to respond to them may be integrated into policy, planning and access to finance and support for implementation. This guide seeks to address this gap by providing a practical framework for identifying, assessing and responding to NELs associated with human mobility in the context of climate change. It brings together existing knowledge and emerging practice to support policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders in recognizing NELs, strengthening evidence and assessment, designing context-appropriate responses, and informing policy, planning, financing and implementation.

¹ <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/constituted-bodies/WIMExCom/NELs>

What this Guide helps to do

This Guide seeks to support users, including governments in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, as well as other relevant local, national and international stakeholders, to move from recognition of NELs to practical action.

It is intended to help governments and other stakeholders to:

- Understand NELs associated with human mobility;
- Assess NELs associated with human mobility;
- Strategize, plan for, and prevent NELs related to human mobility;
- Respond to NELs associated with human mobility.

By strengthening the evidence base on NELs associated with human mobility, the Guide seeks to support governments and other stakeholders in articulating needs for technical assistance, capacity building, policy development and alignment, and finance. It aims to help users develop evidence-based responses and identify opportunities to access and effectively utilize support available through mechanisms identified under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including the Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (the Santiago Network) and the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), as well as other funding arrangements.

It draws on a wide range of existing international guidance and tools from within and outside the UNFCCC, and has been developed to complement other technical guides produced by the Task Force on Displacement (TFD) in helping to execute the work of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM ExCom), including:

- The Technical Guide on accessing financial resources aiming to avert, minimize and address the impacts of displacement associated with the adverse effects of climate change², and;
- The Technical Guide on integrating human mobility and climate change linkages into relevant national climate change processes.³

When to use this guide

This Guide is relevant in contexts impacted by slow-onset events and processes such as increasing temperatures, land degradation, desertification, glacial retreat, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and salinization, as well as by extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, storms, landslides, heatwaves and wildfires. In line with current scientific understanding, the Guide recognizes that climate-related hazards and their impacts may interact, compound and cascade, and that their effects vary across contexts and populations depending on multiple factors such as the exposure, vulnerability, adaptive capacity of people, their assets and the natural environment in specific contexts.⁴

² See https://unfccc.int/technical-guide-on-accessing_financial_resources

³ See <https://unfccc.int/technical-guide-on-integrating-human>

⁴ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S.

The Guide can be used when displacement, migration or planned relocation are anticipated (“before”), when climate impacts are already contributing to human mobility (“during”), and when displaced people, migrants, relocated communities, and host communities are impacted or at risk from climate shocks and stressors (“after”).

Before, During or After Movement	Use the Guide to:
Before	- Identify and assess current and potential NELs among populations at risk of displacement, populations considering migration or considering planned relocation; - Inform planning, prevention and response measures to avert, minimize and address NELs, including: - o Preparedness for foreseeable displacement, including in rapid-onset crisis situations where life-saving evacuations are needed, or in slow-onset crises such as under drought conditions; - o Planning for and implementing planned relocation as a measure of last resort; - o Supporting safe, informed, and dignified migration as adaptation where appropriate; - o Ensure inclusion of NELs arising from human mobility in relevant policies and plans related to climate action and disaster risk reduction.
During	- Identify NELs arising due to displacement, migration or relocation processes; - Minimize the risk of further NELs through protection, safeguarding or risk reduction measures; - Implement risk reduction measures, including, for example protecting family unity, cultural ties and social networks; - Promote participation, inclusion and social cohesion throughout mobility processes.
After	- Assess and address NELs identified as particularly significant by displaced people, migrants, relocated communities and host communities, including NELs that may emerge or become more pronounced over time; - Ensure NELs are considered in durable solutions and in processes to advance the inclusion and integration of migrants, refugees, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in their places or countries of origin or through settlement elsewhere; - Support psychosocial wellbeing, cultural continuity, knowledge transmission and social cohesion;

The Guide can be applied in a range of policy, planning, resource mobilization and implementation processes, including but not limited to, the integration of NELs and responses related to human mobility in:

- The development of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and their implementation;
- Development and strengthening of national response systems;
- National loss and damage assessments and reports;
- Planned relocation processes.

The Guide can also support users to:

- Identify and articulate technical assistance needs related to non-economic losses and human mobility, including for submission through the Santiago Network and other technical assistance mechanisms;
- Develop evidence-based funding proposals including or focused on NELs and human mobility for the FRLD, in accordance with its Governing Instrument and the access modalities approved by its Board, and other funding sources;
- Strengthen the justification for financial and technical support by structured documentation of non-economic dimensions of loss and damage;
- Develop policy and plans in the context of post-disaster/crisis recovery and rehabilitation.

Scope and limitations

The Guide is intended as an accessible, non-prescriptive and practical resource rather than a prescriptive blueprint or all-encompassing framework. Recognizing the diversity and context-specific nature of NELs, it seeks to provide a practical foundation that can be adapted and built upon in different policy and operational contexts.

As a global document, it does not seek to reflect the full diversity of contexts, perspectives and specific considerations that may arise at the intersection of NELs and human mobility. Instead, examples have been included from different regions, countries, and human mobility contexts.

The Guide recognizes that NELs and human mobility are interconnected in multiple ways. NELs may contribute to or result in human mobility; human mobility may itself give rise to or exacerbate NELs; and, when undertaken safely, voluntarily and with appropriate support, human mobility can also help avert or minimize NELs. To remain clear and practical, the Guide focuses on the latter two dimensions and does not seek to comprehensively address situations in which NELs may themselves contribute to or result in displacement, migration or planned relocation.

Whilst the focus of this Guide is on NELs, it is important to recognize that non-economic impacts are often closely interconnected with economic losses and damages in the context of human mobility. The loss of land, homes or livelihoods, for example, may influence decisions to move while also resulting in losses related to social cohesion or cultural practices.

The Guide builds on established guidance, approaches and tools from relevant areas of practice and expertise, including existing knowledge products produced or shared under the WIM and best practice from human mobility responses outside the Convention. The Guide therefore serves as a complementary module that can be incorporated into existing assessment

and planning processes to ensure that NELs associated with human mobility are adequately considered in policy development, programme design and financing decisions.

Methodology

The methodology for the Guide's development included desk review of relevant literature, policy frameworks, technical guidance and existing tools; analysis of key UNFCCC-related materials including produced under the WIM ExCom; semi-structured interviews and roundtable discussions with key informants from governments, international organizations, and civil society; analysis of case studies relating to human mobility in the context of NELs; and written inputs from national focal points on loss and damage and other experts engaged in climate change and mobility policy processes.

Structure

The Guide is organized around a practical process for understanding, assessing, and implementing measures to avert, minimize and address NELs associated with human mobility in the context of climate change.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides the conceptual foundation for the Guide. It introduces seven categories of NELs relevant to human mobility as identified through the analysis conducted for this Guide and explains how communities in places of origin, people on the move, relocated communities, and host communities may experience NELs in distinct ways.

Chapter 3 presents a practical framework for assessing NELs associated with human mobility. It provides a 3-step approach to scoping the human mobility context, identifying NELs and devising response needs.

Chapter 4 focuses on translating identified NELs response needs into practical action, including through integration into existing policies, plans and programmes and the development of new projects and programmes where appropriate. Chapter 4 also considers the costs and financing required for implementation.

The chapters are interconnected and intended to be used as part of a structured process for understanding NELs, identifying priorities and translating assessment findings into action. Each section can also be used independently or as part of a broader assessment and planning process, depending on the user's objectives, stage of policy or programming, and overall needs.

2. Key concepts and frameworks

This chapter provides the conceptual foundation for the Guide. It explains key concepts and frameworks related to human mobility and NELs that underpin the assessment methodology and response options presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

It considers:

- How climate change influences human mobility;
- The different forms and contexts for human mobility;
- Populations affected by NELs and differentiated groups among them;
- Different categories of NELs associated with human mobility;
- An Avert-Minimize-Address framework in the context of human mobility and NELs and;

- Existing legal and policy frameworks and guidance.

Together, these concepts provide a structured framework for understanding, assessing, and responding to NELs associated with human mobility.

2.1 Climate change and human mobility

Climate change influences human mobility in multiple ways. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, storms, heatwaves and wildfires, as well as slow-onset events such as sea-level rise, land degradation, glacial retreat and salinization, are undermining the immediate safety and security and long-term habitability of places where people live. These impacts can increase the risk of displacement and other forms of human mobility, particularly for people and communities already experiencing social or economic vulnerabilities,⁵ including people living in displacement or who have migrated.

Tens of millions of people are internally displaced from their homes each year as result of weather-related events.⁶ Climate impacts can affect people's ability to remain in place, and shape decisions about whether, when, where to and how to move, including through migration or planned relocation as a measure of last resort. In certain circumstances, migration undertaken in a safe and voluntary manner may support adaptation by helping households diversify income sources and reduce exposure to climate risks. At the same time, people who move may face new or heightened vulnerabilities in places of destination, as existing vulnerabilities may persist or be compounded by new risks, including limited access to housing, livelihoods, services, social protection and rights.⁷ Where climate-related hazards and impacts repeatedly affect communities, they may also contribute to seasonal or repeated displacement and, amplify other drivers of displacement⁸ and, in some cases, to protracted displacement situations.

At the same time, not everyone is able to move. Economic constraints, limited access to information or services, social obligations, attachment to place, legal barriers and other factors may prevent people from moving despite increasing climate risks. In such circumstances, people may become “trapped” in places where they are increasingly exposed to climate-related hazards and impacts.

⁵ IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, 3056 pp., doi:10.1017/9781009325844.

⁶ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2024). *2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2025). *2025 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). (2026). *2026 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)*. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/>

⁷ Szaboova, L., Adger, W. N., Safra de Campos, R., Maharjan, A., Sakdapolrak, P., Sterly, H., Conway, D., Codjoe, S. N. A., & Abu, M. (2023). *Evaluating migration as successful adaptation to climate change: Trade-offs in well-being, equity, and sustainability*. *One Earth*, 6(6), 620–631. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2023.05.009>.

⁸ <https://www.unhcr.org/media/no-escape-ii-way-forward>

The relationship between climate change and human mobility is therefore complex. Mobility drivers, situations and outcomes are shaped not only by environmental conditions but also by social, economic, cultural, and political factors that influence people's vulnerabilities, capacities, and choices.

Recognizing how climate change influences human mobility is important because different mobility pathways can result in different experiences of loss and damage and may require different policy and operational responses.

2.2 Unpacking human mobility

Human mobility is used as an umbrella concept encompassing a diverse range of forms, drivers, and experiences for people moving in the context of climate change. Within the work of the UNFCCC and the Warsaw International Mechanism, human mobility is understood to encompass *displacement*, *migration* and *planned relocation*.⁹ The Guide also considers the relationship of human mobility to immobility where relevant, recognizing that some people remain in locations exposed to climate-related hazards either by choice or because they face barriers to moving, even while others leave.

For the purpose of this guide:

Displacement

Displacement describes the movement of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence.¹⁰ This movement can be driven by a variety of factors, including the impacts of climate change. Displacement may refer to forced movements within a country (internal displacement/internally displaced people) or across international borders (cross-border displacement/cross-border displaced people who may in specific circumstances include refugees).

Migration

Migration describes the primarily voluntary movement of people away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border (international migrants) or within a State (internal migrants) for a variety of reasons that may be linked to the impacts of climate change.¹¹

Planned relocation

Planned relocation is understood as a measure of last resort when home areas have become, or are becoming, unsafe to live in and communities or groups of people 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.¹²

⁹ Set out under paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Adaptation Framework (Source: UNFCCC, 2010)

¹⁰ Technical Guide on Adaptation. Adapted from UNESCO, 1998.

¹¹ IOM, 2019

¹² Technical Guide on Adaptation. Adapted from UNHCR, 2015.

Immobility

Not all people move in response to climate risk. Some choose to remain in place because of cultural, social or economic ties, while others may be unable to move due to financial, legal, social or physical constraints. Remaining in high-risk locations may therefore also result in NELs.

It is important to recognize that in practice, displacement and migration may sometimes be difficult to distinguish from one another. Human mobility takes place along a spectrum of agency, choice and constraint. At one end, people may have little or no realistic option to remain without facing immediate risks to life or serious harm and may be forced or obliged to move. At the other end, people may anticipate climate risks and have the choice and means to migrate as a way of maintaining or strengthening their resilience. For example, as dry or rainy seasons shift and intensify, some members of a farming household, or the entire household, may choose to migrate seasonally or permanently to diversify household income or access alternative livelihoods, while another may move only after livestock, crops or income have been severely affected, leaving limited safe or viable options. In other circumstances, people may remain because they lack the resources or ability to move, despite increasing risks. Between these situations are a range of circumstances in which people may move with some degree of choice, while also facing significant constraints, risks or pressures. The extent to which people are able to exercise agency can vary over time and across different forms and circumstances of mobility. NELs may arise across this spectrum, and their nature, scale and significance will differ depending on the circumstances and conditions under which movement takes place, and who is affected.¹³

Patterns of movement also continue to evolve with changing situations over time, as people may move in stages, may move repeatedly, and might experience changing degrees of choice and constraint. For example, migration may be followed by displacement when climate impacts intensify, and planned relocation may follow a period of repeated evacuation and/or displacement. Moving might be temporary for some displaced people and migrants, whereas for others it is of more permanent nature, either by intention or due to a lack of options to return safely and with dignity. At the same time, displaced people and migrants often find themselves in situations where they continue to be exposed to adverse climate impacts, and disproportionately vulnerable due to factors associated with their displacement or migration. For example, displaced people and migrants may settle in informal or underserved areas where they remain exposed to climate hazards and where limited access to secure housing, livelihoods, documentation, social protection and essential services can constrain their ability to prepare from or recover from further climate impacts. Moreover, the status and legal identity of displaced people and migrants affects their access to assistance and services that may be available to others living in hosting or receiving areas.

NELs are likely to be greater when people have little choice or highly constrained agency, are moving under conditions of severe distress, face threats to their human rights, have few

¹³ IPCC. (2022). *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Chapter 7: *Health, Wellbeing and the Changing Structure of Communities*, Section 7.2.6 “Observed Impacts on Migration” and Cross-Chapter Box MIGRATE “Climate-related Migration.” Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844>.

resources and little access to assistance, are not adequately consulted or able to participate in decision-making, or find themselves stuck in highly vulnerable situations and dislocated from their homes and social networks for extended periods of time.

2.3 Human mobility settings and populations affected by NELs in the context of human mobility

Human mobility takes place across multiple locations, including places of origin, destination, and the pathways in between. Mobility can alter social, cultural, economic and environmental conditions in each of these locations. Consequently, NELs may extend beyond the people who move and people or communities living in places of origin, transit, temporary refuge, or in destination areas may experience NELs associated with the displacement, migration or planned relocation of others. This can include changes to social networks and social cohesion, cultural practices and identity, and relationships with the environment.

Communities in places of origin

Human mobility can generate significant changes in places of origin. When population movements occur at scale, communities may experience the loss of social networks, local knowledge, leadership structures and cultural practices. Out-migration, displacement or planned relocation may also contribute to demographic change, reduced labor force, weakened institutions, reduced access to services and the erosion of community cohesion and identity. At the same time, communities that remain may experience non-economic losses associated with uncertainty, separation from family members, changing relationships with place, and the gradual transformation of cultural landscapes and ways of life.

In Northern Ghana, migration related to climate change has been associated with changes in social relations and community support systems in places of origin. A noticeable decline in social cohesion was found, with respondents in the study attributing this to increasing climate-related migration and a shift to market-based relations.¹⁴

People on the move

During movement, displaced people or migrants may experience a range of NELs throughout their flight or journey. These can include, for example, increased exposure to gender-based violence or human trafficking, the loss of access to services when identity documents are lost or destroyed, the disruption of social support networks, the separation of dependents from carers including people with specific needs due to disabilities, illness and children from their parents or guardians, psychosocial distress, and disrupted access to education and cultural practices. These NELs may arise alongside, or as a consequence of other protection and human-rights risks, and may be particularly significant where movement is prolonged, occurs under conditions of crisis or distress, and involves marginalized groups.

¹⁴ Lindegaard, L. S., & Jarawura, F. X. (2026). Losses and damages to social cohesion: social and material impacts linked to climate-related mobility in West Africa and the Sahel. *Climate Policy*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2026.2645653>

The nature and severity of NELs experienced often vary along the continuum of agency and constraint, the duration and nature of movement, as well as the availability of adequate support and protection mechanisms are available.

During the movement process, people may face risks that give rise to NELs. Refugees and migrants moving across the Sahara towards the Mediterranean, with climate and environmental factors among the drivers influencing mobility, may face severe protection risks along these routes, including sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation, human trafficking and forced labor.¹⁵

In Central America, climate change impacts in the Dry Corridor are contributing to migration and shaping the context in which people move. During migration journeys, women and girls can face heightened risks of gender-based violence. World Bank research found that two in ten migrant women and girls reported experiencing gender-based violence, including sexual, physical and psychological violence, while crossing the Darién jungle.¹⁶ Such experiences can result in non-economic losses, including loss of safety and dignity, psychological distress, fear and a diminished sense of security.

Relocated and displaced communities

Both planned relocation and displacement can result in NELs. These may include the loss of cultural heritage, identity, traditional livelihoods, governance systems and attachment to ancestral lands and territories. For displaced communities, such losses may occur suddenly and under conditions of distress. In the context of planned relocation, communities may have greater opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and prepare for movement, but NELs can still arise where relocation processes do not adequately involve affected communities and due to the disruption of ties to places, cultures, and social systems

In Fiji, communities permanently relocated due to risks from climate-related hazards reported psychological distress and a diminished sense of belonging despite remaining within customary land boundaries.¹⁷

Host communities

NELs may also affect host communities receiving displaced people, migrants or relocated populations. Population movements can alter social dynamics, create pressures on public services and community resources, and affect perceptions of identity, belonging and social cohesion. For example, increased competition over land, water or other shared resources may strain relationships between host and arriving communities, weaken social cohesion, and affect

¹⁵ IOM, Mixed Migration Centre, UNHCR (2024) On this Journey, No One Cares if You Live or Die: Abuse, Protection and Justice Along Routes Between East and West Africa and Africa's Mediterranean Coast. Volume 2. IOM, MMC, UNHCR, Geneva. <https://publications.iom.int/books/journey-no-one-cares-if-you-live-or-die>

¹⁶ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and Office of the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (REDESCA), *Poverty, Climate Change and ESCER in Central America and Mexico, in the Context of Human Mobility*, OEA/Ser.L/V/II. Doc. 158, 28 July 2023. Kerf, M., Contreras-Urbina, M., Aguilera, A. I., Padron, E., & Muñoz Burgos, C. X. (2023, 6 June). *Migrant women and girls in Central America risk their lives in search of a better future*. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/latinamerica/migrant-women-girls-search-better-future-central-america>

communities' sense of identity and belonging.¹⁸ In some contexts, these pressures may contribute to tensions or conflict, which can in turn further disrupt social relationships, cultural practices and community wellbeing. Population movements can also place additional pressure on land, water, ecosystems and other natural resources in areas of arrival, particularly where resources and governance systems are already under strain.¹⁹ At the same time, mobility can create opportunities for cultural exchange, new forms of social organization and strengthened community resilience when managed in an inclusive and equitable manner.

In Manica, Mozambique, host communities noted that the presence of internally displaced people (due to cyclones) further exacerbated existing water scarcity.²⁰ In Cabo Delgado, pre-cyclone, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the host community connected daily through farming, local markets, schooling and recreational activities. As per a testimony from a host community member in Ntocota: "we have learned many things from the displaced, we did not know how to water lettuce, onions".²¹

Equity and differentiated impacts

NELs are not experienced equally. An intersectional perspective is important when averting, minimizing or addressing NELs in the context of human mobility, since people's experiences may be shaped by multiple, overlapping factors and forms of vulnerability, discrimination or marginalization. The nature, severity and duration of NELs may therefore vary depending on individual and collective circumstances, as well as the social, economic, cultural, environmental and institutional context. Factors that may shape experiences of NELs include, for example:

- Geography
- Socioeconomic status
- Livelihood
- Gender
- Age
- Minority status
- Marginalization
- Displacement
- Disability
- Legal or migration status
- Access to education, services, rights and social protection²²

These factors may intersect and compound one another. For example, an older person with a disability who is displaced may face different risks and constraints than those faced by other displaced people and members of community hosting them. Taking an intersectional approach

¹⁸ *Social Cohesion and Forced Displacement : A Synthesis of New Research (English)*. Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099715001032324376>

¹⁹ See for example: SIPRI, *Climate Change and Violent Conflict in West Africa*, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2022/3, February 2022. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/sipriinsight2203_ccr_west_africa_0.pdf

²⁰ IOM 2026, forthcoming. *Climate Change, Displacement and Social Cohesion: Understanding relationships between IDPs and Host Communities in Cabo Delgado and Manica, Mozambique*.

²¹ Ibid

²² UNFCCC, 2015, WIM ExCom Initial Two-Year Workplan, Action Area 1. Legal or migration status and access to education, services, rights and social protection added to list contained in action area 1.

can help to identify differences within and between affected populations, rather than treating groups as homogeneous.

Governments and other relevant stakeholders may therefore wish to apply an equity and inclusion lens when assessing and responding to NELs.

Illustration in text box: Children and youth

Children and youth may experience different NELs than adults due to their developmental stage, dependence on caregivers and public services, and limited influence over decisions about whether, when or where to move. For children and youth, displacement, migration and planned relocation can disrupt education, social relationships, community ties and psychosocial well-being during critical periods of their development. Such dynamics have for example been documented in Kenya,²³ where climate-related losses have disrupted education, well-being, protection and social networks for children and youth. These impacts can have long-term consequences for well-being, identity, learning and future life opportunities, highlighting the importance of child-sensitive approaches to assessing and addressing NELs in human mobility contexts.

Illustration in text box: Women and girls

Women and girls may experience different NELs than men and boys due to gendered roles and responsibilities, unequal access to resources and decision-making,²⁴ and existing social and structural inequalities. In the context of displacement, migration and planned relocation, mobility can disrupt their livelihoods, caregiving responsibilities, education, social networks, cultural identity and protection, while also increasing exposure to gender-based violence and other forms of insecurity. Across the world, these dynamics have affected women's and girls' safety, well-being, livelihoods, access to services and community support systems.²⁵

These impacts can have long-term consequences for economic security, health, empowerment and social inclusion, highlighting the importance of gender-responsive approaches to assessing and addressing NELs in human mobility contexts.

2.4 Categories of NELs associated with human mobility in the context of climate change

Climate change, human mobility and NELs are closely interconnected. Their relationship is dynamic and multi-directional rather than linear: climate impacts can lead to both economic

²³ UNICEF 2025. Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in Kenya.

<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/4696/file/Kenya%20CLAC%20Report%20FINAL.pdf.pdf>

²⁴ Cissé, G., R. McLeman, H. Adams, P. Aldunce, K. Bowen, D. Campbell-Lendrum, S. Clayton, K.L. Ebi, J. Hess, C. Huang, Q. Liu, G. McGregor, J. Semenza, and M.C. Tirado, 2022: Health, Wellbeing, and the Changing Structure of Communities. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1041–1170, doi:10.1017/9781009325844.009.

²⁵ UN Women 2023. Ensuring safe and regular migration for women and girls in the context of climate change. Accessible at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/Policy-brief-Ensuring-safe-and-regular-migration-for-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change-en.pdf>

and non-economic losses, which may influence human mobility. Human mobility itself can also create new losses, exacerbate existing ones or, when undertaken in a safe, dignified and well-managed manner, help prevent or reduce certain NELs.

In this context, NELs can:

- Contribute to pressures or decisions to move, often alongside economic losses and damages;
- Emerge or be exacerbated as a consequence of displacement, migration or planned relocation;
- Interact with economic losses and damages before, during and after movement;
- Affect people who move, those who remain behind and host communities; and
- Persist long after movement has occurred, sometimes across generations.

To support understanding of NELs associated with human mobility, the table below presents examples of categories of NELs that may be relevant across different countries, communities and mobility contexts. These categories draw on existing literature, frameworks, guidance and consultations undertaken for the development of this Guide. They are selected based on their specific human mobility dimension. Some NELs, such as biodiversity and ecosystem loss, are therefore not captured as a standalone category, but may manifest through several human, cultural, social or livelihood dimensions.

The categories are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive and are not mutually exclusive.

NELs Category	Description
Loss of cultural heritage, identity and sense of place	This category refers to losses associated with cultural heritage, cultural practices, languages, traditions, spiritual values, identity and connections to places of cultural, historical or ancestral significance. It includes both tangible heritage, such as sacred sites, cultural landscapes and monuments, and intangible heritage, such as customs, rituals, oral histories, traditional practices and ways of life. In the context of human mobility, these losses may occur when displacement, migration or planned relocation in the context of climate change disrupt people's relationships with places, communities and cultural practices. The loss of access to ancestral lands, sacred sites, burial grounds, cultural landscapes or traditional livelihoods can affect cultural continuity and people's sense of belonging and identity. These losses may be particularly significant for communities whose cultural identity and well-being are closely connected to specific territories, landscapes or ecosystems.
Loss of indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge	This category refers to the loss, erosion or reduced transmission of Indigenous Knowledge, traditional or local knowledge systems that support cultural continuity, environmental stewardship, livelihoods and adaptation to changing conditions.

	Human mobility in the context of climate change may disrupt the intergenerational transfer of knowledge related to ecosystems, land management, agriculture, fishing, pastoralism, weather forecasting, disaster preparedness and cultural practices. Knowledge may become more difficult to apply when communities move to different environments or when ecological conditions change beyond historical experience. The loss of Indigenous Knowledges and the knowledge of local communities can also reduce adaptive capacity and resilience, weaken cultural identity and adversely affect social cohesion.
Loss of nationality	This category refers to the loss of nationality as a NEL – or risks that displaced people and migrants may become stateless, with potential intergenerational impacts on children.²⁶ For example, official documents may be lost or destroyed during displacement or migration with specific difficulties in accessing civil registration systems to replace them. The loss of proof of legal identity affects access to human rights and essential services, which may, in turn, amplify vulnerabilities and result in cascading NELs. The safeguarding of nationality is further tied to questions of statehood when State territory may be lost or become uninhabitable under the projected effects of climate change, such as through the impacts of sea level rise on low-lying atoll countries. There is growing recognition under international law for the continuity of statehood in these circumstances.
Loss of political participation, governance and access to justice	This category refers to loss of access to information, consultation and participation regarding decisions affecting their lives, representation, trust in institutions, and access to justice. Displacement, migration and planned relocation may reduce opportunities for populations to participate in decisions that influence their lives and futures. Mobility can also weaken traditional governance systems, alter patterns of representation, and affect relationships between communities and public institutions. Where affected populations are excluded from planning and decision-making processes, there is a risk that responses may fail to reflect community priorities, rights and values. Meaningful participation and inclusive governance are therefore important components of efforts to avert, minimize and address non-economic losses.
Loss of social cohesion, family ties and stability	This category refers to losses affecting social relationships, trust, solidarity, community networks and social institutions. Displacement, migration and planned relocation may separate families, weaken community structures and disrupt systems of mutual support

²⁶ UNHCR and the Peter McMullin Centre for Statelessness. “Global Recommendations on Nationality and Statelessness in the Context of Climate Change” (2026)

	and collective action.²⁷ At the same time, population movements can alter social dynamics in destination areas, with the potential to create tensions over resources, services, land or representation.²⁸ Strong social cohesion is an important source of resilience during climate-related crises. Its erosion can affect well-being, recovery processes, adaptive capacity and the ability of communities to respond collectively to future risks.
Loss of health and psychosocial wellbeing	This category refers to impacts on physical and mental health and psychosocial well-being. Climate change and human mobility may contribute to physical and mental health impacts, including illness, injury, stress, grief, anxiety, depression, trauma, uncertainty and feelings of loss. These impacts can arise from exposure to disasters, displacement, loss of homes and livelihoods, family separation, cultural disruption and concerns about the future. Challenging living environments such as informal settlements on the outskirts of cities may increase risks to physical and mental health, including through exposure to disease and inadequate access to healthcare as well as exposure to violent or abusive behavior.²⁹ Physical and mental health and psychosocial impacts are often interconnected with other forms of non-economic loss, including the loss of social networks, identity, cultural continuity and place attachment. While experiences vary considerably, such impacts can persist long after movement has occurred.
Loss of physical and personal safety, protection, dignity and equal treatment	This category refers to impacts on safety, security and dignity due to exposure to violence, exploitation and discrimination. For example, displaced women and children may face heightened risks of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, child labor and violence during or after movement, in host families and communities or in collective shelters. Displaced people and migrants may experience discrimination through being singled out for harm, denied access, unable to assert their rights, or otherwise disadvantaged on the basis of their sex, age, disability, color,

²⁷ See Balzter et al., 2023; McNamara et al., 2021b; Albert et al., 2018; Nand et al., 2024.

²⁸ For evidence on conflict arising from accessing water, fodder or pasture, see for example: IOM & Mountain Partnership. 2024. *Human mobility in mountain areas in a changing climate*. Rome, FAO and IOM. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/d8d2268f-4c1a-436a-8cb8-5fe94f566bf5>

²⁹ Cattaneo et al. 2009; Gruebner et al. 2011, 2012; Mberu et al. 2015 in Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Chandra, A. & McNamara, K.E. Stories of loss and healing: connecting non-economic loss and damage, gender-based violence and wellbeing erosion in the Asia-Pacific region. *Climatic Change* **176**, 157 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03624-y>

	language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin or other status. ³⁰
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Although presented separately, different types of NELs are often interconnected, with some becoming more severe over time and some potentially difficult or impossible to reverse. A single climate-related event may also result in multiple forms of NELs at the same time. For example, the loss or degradation of culturally or spiritually significant places, combined with the gradual weakening of community connections as younger generations move away, may create anxiety, distress and a sense of loss that influences decisions about whether relocation or other forms of mobility are needed.

The seven categories of NELs provide the analytical framework for assessing NELs associated with human mobility.

2.5 Averting, Minimizing and Addressing NELs

The previous sections have shown that NELs may arise before, during and after various forms of mobility including displacement, migration, planned relocation or situations of immobility, can affect a wide range of populations and often have long-lasting consequences.

Recognizing these losses is only the first step. Governments and other stakeholders also need to determine how they can respond. Within the UNFCCC process, responses to loss and damage are commonly understood through the concepts of Averting, Minimizing and Addressing loss and damage.³¹ Together, these concepts provide a useful framework for considering how action can be taken at different phases of human mobility.

Averting NELs

Averting NELs refers to measures that aim to avoid or prevent conditions that may lead to human mobility related NELs. This includes actions that reduce vulnerability, strengthen resilience, and support people to remain safely in place.

Examples may include disaster risk reduction, adaptation, protection of cultural heritage, and measures that strengthen social cohesion and local adaptive capacity. By reducing exposure and vulnerability, such measures can help prevent potential NELs.

Minimizing NELs

Minimizing NELs refers to measures that can reduce the scale, severity or duration of NELs when human mobility is likely or unavoidable.

³⁰Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2018). *Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters*. IASC. <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/meeting-humanitarian-challenges-urban-areas/documents-public/iasc-operational-guidelines-protection>

³¹ See UNFCCC. 2015. *Paris Agreement*. FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1. Article 8. And UNFCCC. 2018. *Report of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts – Recommendations of the Task Force on Displacement*.

This is particularly relevant in contexts where communities face increasing climate risks, resulting in displacement or planned relocation. Measures to minimize losses may include preparedness planning, community participation in planned relocation planning, protection of cultural and community assets, and safeguards designed to reduce the chance of specific NELs (such as psychosocial stress and cultural continuity) arising during mobility processes.

Migration may itself serve as an adaptation strategy, enabling people to anticipate and respond to climate risks while maintaining and strengthening resilience. In such cases, measures to minimize NELs can include supporting migration that is safe, informed, voluntary, and dignified.

The objective of minimizing NELs is not necessarily to avoid mobility, but to ensure that mobility occurs in ways that reduce disruption to people's lives, rights, identities and social relationships.

Addressing NELs

Addressing NELs refers to measures that respond to losses that have already occurred and can no longer be avoided.

This includes actions that support displaced people, migrants, relocated populations, host communities and others affected by NELs. Measures may include psychosocial support, restoration of social networks, legal assistance, and facilitating meaningful participation in political processes.

Over the medium to long term, addressing NELs may involve supporting durable solutions including local integration, or settlement in alternative locations, while helping communities to rebuild social, cultural and institutional foundations that have been disrupted by human mobility.

Understanding how NELs can be averted, minimized and addressed provides the foundation for the practical assessment and response framework presented in the following chapters.

2.6 Existing legal and policy frameworks and guidance

Responses to NELs in the context of human mobility may be guided by a range of legal and policy frameworks and guidance developed in relation to different human mobility contexts. While they do not all explicitly address NELs, they contain principles, protections and experience from extensive practice that can help avert, minimize and address losses associated with human mobility.

UN or UN-endorsed examples that provide knowledge and expertise relevant in the context of averting, minimizing and addressing NELs associated with human mobility include³²:

³² References to the instruments and guidance listed below are without prejudice to their respective legal status, to the positions of Parties with respect to them or to their applicability to States that are not party to them, and do not constitute an endorsement thereof.

- UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration³³ - Provides principles and objectives relevant to ensuring that migration takes place in a safe, orderly and dignified manner, including measures that can help minimize disruption to family unity, social networks, cultural identity and access to rights and services.
- IOM Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Guidelines³⁴ - Provide practical guidance for protecting migrants during crises, including through preparedness, emergency response and recovery measures that can help reduce risks of family separation, psychosocial distress, loss of documentation and disruption of social and economic ties.
- UN Global Compact on Refugees³⁵ - Provides a framework for predictable and equitable responsibility sharing and for supporting refugees and host communities, including approaches relevant to reducing prolonged displacement and supporting inclusion, livelihoods, services and social cohesion.
- Practical Toolkit: International protection for people displaced across borders in the context of climate change³⁶ - Supports States and practitioners in identifying protection options for people who cross international borders in the context of climate change and disasters, helping to reduce protection-related risks and associated NELs.
- Nansen Initiative Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change³⁷ - Provides recommendations for preventing and addressing displacement across borders in disaster and climate contexts, including measures relevant to protection, preparedness, admission, stay, and durable solutions.
- UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement³⁸ - Establishes a rights-based framework for preventing arbitrary displacement and protecting and assisting IDPs, including with respect to family life, cultural identity, livelihoods, property, community ties and durable solutions.
- IASC Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters³⁹ - Provides a practical framework for integrating protection concerns into disaster preparedness, response and recovery, helping to identify and address risks to rights, dignity, family unity, housing, livelihoods and community life.

³³ United Nations General Assembly. (2018). *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*. A/RES/73/195. United Nations. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/73/195>

³⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2016). *Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative*. IOM. <https://micicinitiative.iom.int/>

³⁵ UNHCR (2018), *Global Compact on Refugees*. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-compact-refugees-booklet>

³⁶ Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (CGRS), University of California College of the Law, San Francisco (2017), *International Protection for People Displaced across Borders in the Context of Climate Change: A Practical Guide*. <https://cgrs.uclawsf.edu/our-work/publications/international-protection-people-displaced-across-borders-context-climate>

³⁷ Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), *Our Response*. <https://disasterdisplacement.org/the-platform/our-response/>

³⁸ United Nations Commission on Human Rights (1998), *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2. <https://docs.un.org/en/e/cn.4/1998/53/add.2>

³⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2010), *IASC Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters* <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/meeting-humanitarian-challenges-urban-areas/documents-public/iasc-operational-guidelines-protection>

- IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons⁴⁰ and its related Analysis Guide, indicators library and question bank⁴¹ - Provides tools for assessing progress towards durable solutions and identifying barriers, including those related to safety, access to services, social cohesion and participation, which can help identify and address NELs that persist following displacement.
- Guidance on Protecting People from Disaster and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation⁴² - Supports rights-based and participatory approaches to planned relocation, including attention to cultural, social, economic, and psychosocial considerations that can help minimize NELs associated with planned relocation.
- UNHCR/PMCS Global Recommendations on Nationality and Statelessness in the Context of Climate Change⁴³ - Addresses risks to nationality and legal identity arising in the context of climate change, including for people affected by sea-level rise and other climate impacts, helping to prevent or address NELs related to nationality, identity and access to rights.
- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the compendium Words into Action on disaster displacement⁴⁴ - Provides guidance for reducing disaster displacement risk and addressing the impacts of displacement across the disaster risk management cycle.
- ILO conventions and recommendations as applicable to migrant workers employed in countries other than their own, including people who have migrated or been displaced in the context of climate change⁴⁵ - Provide standards relevant to protecting workers' rights, social protection, decent work and access to remedies, thereby helping to reduce losses associated with exploitation and loss of social and economic security.

Different regions have also developed specific frameworks and guidance such as:

- The Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility and Implementation Plan (2025-2030)⁴⁶ – Provides a regional framework for addressing climate-related human mobility,

⁴⁰ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2010), *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/other/iasc-framework-durable-solutions-internally-displaced-persons>

⁴¹ Inform Durable Solutions (UNHCR/IDMC), *Resources on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*. <https://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/resources/>

⁴² UNHCR, Brookings Institution and Georgetown University (2015), *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change through Planned Relocation* <https://www.refworld.org/policy/opguidance/unhcr/2015/117656>

⁴³ UNHCR and Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness (f2026), *Global Recommendations on Nationality and Statelessness in the Context of Climate Change*.

⁴⁴ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*; and UNDRR, *Words into Action: Disaster Displacement – How to Reduce Risk, Address Impacts and Strengthen Resilience*. https://www.undrr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/58821_wiadisasterdisplacement190511webeng.pdf?startDownload=true

⁴⁵ See explanation in “Mapping Human Mobility (Migration, Displacement and Planned Relocation) and Climate Change in International Processes, Policies and Legal Frameworks”, IOM, 2018. WIM Task Force on Displacement Activity II.2 knowledge product.

⁴⁶ Pacific Resilience Partnership (2025), *Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility: Implementation Plan 2025–2030*. <https://pacificresiliencepartnership.org/pacific-regional-framework-on-climate-mobility-implementation-plan-2025-2030/>

including migration, displacement and planned relocation, with approaches that can help protect cultural identity, community cohesion, and connections to land and place.

- Pacific Guidance on Internal Planned Relocation – Provides practical guidance for rights-based and community-centered planned relocation, including consideration of cultural, social, environmental and psychosocial impacts that may otherwise result in NELS.⁴⁷

These frameworks are particularly relevant because many NELs associated with human mobility are closely linked to the enjoyment of human rights, including rights related to culture, identity, participation, education, family life and self-determination. They also reinforce the importance of protecting affected populations throughout the mobility continuum, including in places of origin, during movement, and in areas of destination or relocation.

This list is illustrative rather than exhaustive and the specific legal and policy context will vary across regions and countries. These frameworks can nevertheless help governments and other stakeholders design responses that are inclusive, participatory and responsive to the diverse forms of loss experienced by affected individuals and communities.

The value of human rights-based approaches

Human rights-based approaches may provide holistic, legally grounded principles and standards to guide the identification, assessment and responses to NELs in the context of human mobility. In the context of climate change, human mobility and NELs a human rights-based approach means ensuring that the identification, assessment and responses to NELs:

- Are grounded in universal, “non-economic” principles, such as human dignity and non-discrimination, as well as in universally accepted human rights that are held by people affected;
- Help to reduce exposure to cascading forms of non-economic loss and damage during displacement, planned relocation and migration, such as through the increased exposure of women and children to exploitation and violence or loss of documentation needed to access assistance and services;
- Help identify relevant needs and interests of people related to human mobility and associated NELs. For example, human rights law provides for the freedom of movement and the right to choose one’s place of residence, thus underpinning IDP’s choice to return to their homes or settle elsewhere in the country in safety and with dignity;
- Are attentive to different vulnerabilities, capacities and experiences, and avoid reinforcing existing inequalities;
- Are informed by the meaningful participation and inclusion of affected populations, including groups that may face barriers to such participation or are at risk of being excluded.

EXAMPLE: Including attention to NELs in planned relocation processes⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Pacific Resilience Partnership (2026), *Pacific Guidance on Internal Planned Relocation*. <https://pacificresiliencepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Pacific-Guidance-on-Internal-Planned-Relocation.pdf>

⁴⁸ UNHCR, Brookings Institution and Georgetown University (2015), *Guidance on Protecting People from Disasters and Environmental Change through Planned Relocation*. Accessible at: [Guidance on Protecting](#)

Where planned relocation is necessary, international guidance stresses that relocation can itself create significant harms and calls for specific recognition of NELs.

A human rights based approach in such contexts includes ensuring meaningful participation and community leadership as central requirements; protecting rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples, with particular attention to Indigenous Peoples, older people, women, people with disabilities and displaced people with insecure land tenure; safeguarding culture, identity and social networks, and monitoring outcomes over the long term, including non-economic aspects such as safety and protection, social cohesion, wellbeing and mental health, and community satisfaction with outcomes.

The overarching principles set out in the Pacific Guidance on Internal Planned Relocation⁴⁹ for example ground relocations in the rights of affected communities to decide if, when and how relocation occurs, “based on their own values, lived experiences, and knowledge systems”; recognizing the protection of human rights; preserving culture, cultural heritage and identity, and dignity; and avoiding the loss of citizenship or legal status, barriers to accessing social services, land rights or political participation, and upholding formal ties and safeguarding of their identity as citizens of their home country.

3. A Step-by-Step Approach to Assessing NELs in the context of human mobility

Building on the concepts introduced in Chapter 2, this chapter provides a practical framework to help governments and other stakeholders systematically identify NELs in the context of human mobility and identifying response needs.

The step-by-step approach presented in this chapter is intended to be applied in conjunction with climate risk assessments, vulnerability assessments, human mobility assessments and other relevant sources of evidence that provide the information needed to understand climate hazards, exposure, vulnerability and human mobility dynamics.

Assessing NELs is a critical step in understanding the full impacts of human mobility in the context of climate change and, as such, in enhancing understanding of the full impacts of climate-induced loss and damage. It can also help inform appropriate and effective policy responses, planning processes and financing decisions.

[People From Disasters and Environmental Change Through Planned Relocation.pdf](#) and UNHCR, Georgetown University and IOM (2017), *A Toolbox: Planning Relocations to Protect People from Disasters and Environmental Change*. Accessible at: [planning-relocations_toolbox_split-version.pdf](#)

⁴⁹ Pacific Resilience Partnership (2026), *Pacific Guidance on Internal Planned Relocation*. Accessible at: [Pacific-Guidance-on-Internal-Planned-Relocation.pdf](#), 2026

The Chapter proposes a three-step assessment framework, supported by suggested questions, methods and tools that can be adapted to different contexts.

Step 1. Define the assessment context. Identify the relevant human mobility setting and establish the scope of the assessment.

Step 2. Identify current and anticipated NELs. Identify what has been lost or is at risk of being lost, who is affected, and the nature and significance of the identified NELs.

Step 3. Identify response needs. Determine the broad response needs arising from the assessment and whether responses should seek to avert, minimize or address NELs.

Together, these steps provide a basis for translating NELs into action, including through the integration of NELs in policies, projects and programs (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Final visual to be added – illustrative visual below will be updated based on feedback/final version

STEP 1. DEFINE THE ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

Identify the relevant human mobility setting and establish the scope of the assessment



1. WHEN?

Assessment setting

Identify at what point in the mobility process the assessment is being undertaken.



BEFORE MOVEMENT

Communities are at risk of climate-related displacement, migration or planned relocation.



DURING MOVEMENT

Displacement, migration or planned relocation is taking place.



AFTER MOVEMENT

Ongoing impacts are experienced by mobile populations, host communities and/or communities remaining in places of origin.



2. WHAT?

Form of mobility

Identify the form(s) of mobility relevant to the assessment context.



DISPLACEMENT

Movement that is forced or obliged, within a country or across international borders, due to climate-related impacts or other factors.



MIGRATION

Movement that is primarily voluntary, either across an international border or within a State.



PLANNED RELOCATION

An organized process in which persons or groups move away from areas at risk and are assisted to settle in a new location.



3. WHO?

Affected populations

Identify the population group(s) for whom NELs may be experienced.



COMMUNITIES REMAINING IN PLACES OF ORIGIN

Communities that remain in areas of origin may experience losses related to social cohesion, identity, local knowledge, cultural heritage and changing community dynamics.



DISPLACED PERSONS

People who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence.



MIGRANTS

People who move away from their place of usual residence on a primarily voluntary basis.



RELOCATED COMMUNITIES

Communities that have undergone planned relocation to a new location.



HOST COMMUNITIES

Communities receiving displaced persons, migrants or relocated populations.

STEP 2. IDENTIFY CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED NELs

Identify what has been lost or is at risk of being lost, who is affected, and the nature and significance of the identified NELs.



1

Loss of cultural heritage, identity and sense of place

Loss of cultural heritage, identity, language, traditions, sacred sites, place attachments and sense of belonging.



2

Loss of indigenous knowledge and local knowledge

Loss of indigenous knowledge, traditional and local knowledge, practices, innovations and environmental knowledge.



3

Loss of nationality

Loss of nationality resulting in statelessness and associated impacts on the enjoyment of rights and access to services.



4

Loss of political participation, governance and access to justice

Loss of political participation, governance, voice and representation, and access to justice and legal protection.



5

Loss of social cohesion, family ties and social stability

Loss of social cohesion, trust, mutual support, family ties, community relationships and collective action.



6

Loss of health and psychosocial wellbeing

Loss of physical and mental health, psychosocial wellbeing, dignity and overall quality of life.



7

Loss of physical and personal safety, protection, dignity and equal treatment

Loss of safety, protection from violence and abuse, dignity and equal and non-discriminatory treatment.

STEP 3. IDENTIFY RESPONSE NEEDS

Determine the broad response needs arising from the assessment and whether responses should seek to avert, minimize or address impacts.



AVERT

Prevent or avoid potential NELs from occurring.



MINIMIZE

Reduce the severity or likelihood of NELs.



ADDRESS

Respond to NELs that have already occurred.



KEY MESSAGE

NELs are experienced differently depending on when the assessment is undertaken, the form of mobility involved, and the population group concerned. Considering these three dimensions ensures a comprehensive, and context-specific understanding of non-economic losses associated with human mobility in the context of climate change.

Step 1. Understand the human mobility and climate context

Purpose

The first step establishes the context for the assessment by identifying the human mobility situation and dynamics and defining the scope of the assessment.

Approach

First, identify the relevant human mobility context or contexts in the targeted location, considering whether NELs may arise before, during or after movement, as outlined in Chapter 2.

- Before movement occurs, where climate impacts may increase the risk of displacement, migration or planned relocation.
- During displacement, migration or planned relocation, where NELs may arise throughout mobility processes.
- After initial movement has occurred and, where displaced people, migrants, relocated communities, host communities and communities remaining in places of origin may experience continuing NELs.

Then, consider the nature of the movement and the human mobility options available to affected populations, including the extent to which movement is forced, constrained or voluntary.

- Displacement;
- Migration;
- Planned relocation.

Thirdly, identify which human mobility-affected populations will be included in the assessment. These may include:

- Communities remaining in places of origin;
- Communities at risk of displacement;
- Internally and/or cross-border displaced people;
- Internal and/or international migrants;
- Relocated communities;
- Host communities.

Then, describe their profile, including age, gender, and other key characteristics.

Finally, establish:

- Whether the assessment focuses on current NELs, anticipated NELs, or both;
- Available sources of evidence and data.

Methods and data sources to inform Step 1 include:

The assessment should build, where possible, on existing climate risk assessments, displacement assessments, migration analyses, planned relocation processes and other relevant national or local evidence.

Before movement occurs, relevant data could include:

- Climate Risk Assessments and Climate Vulnerability Assessments to identify climate hazards, exposure, and vulnerability;
- Socio-economic and livelihood data, including data on livelihood dependence on land, water and natural resources, and income, poverty and employment, to assess mobility capacity;
- Historical migration and displacement patterns;
- Disaster displacement data and risk modelling,

During movement, relevant data could include:

- Disaster displacement and emergency management records;
- Human mobility tracking, flow monitoring;
- Displacement and migration tracking;
- Planned relocation/settlement records, including communities identified for planned relocation, relocated households, receiving locations;

After movement has occurred:

- Longitudinal mobility and population data;
- Qualitative and participatory data, including interviews and focus group discussions, particularly with communities and groups whose experiences may not be captured/included in quantitative data.

Examples of relevant human mobility tools include the Global Displacement Risk Model of the International Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), as well as IOM's Risk Index for Disaster Displacement and UNICEF and IDMC's forward-looking analyses to quantify child displacement and project future risks linked to climate-related hazards.

Illustration: Internal Displaced Person (IDP) Profiling⁵⁰

The Joint IDP Profiling Service helps governments, humanitarian actors and others to collect and analyze displacement situations to support solutions to displacement. Profiling exercises can be relevant at the onset of a crisis, in protracted displacement situations and in the context of long-term recovery. It uses mixed methods to consider different causes and patterns of displacement, and who displaced populations are, where they live, and what their protection and humanitarian needs are compared to host communities, which may include climate-linked NELs. The improved availability and quality of data on IDPs supports better understanding of an IDP population and specific vulnerable groups within it. This may improve the quality of advocacy and programming, including NELs related needs, and lead to better resourced and more targeted means to protect and assist displaced populations and their hosts.

⁵⁰ [About profiling - JIPS - Joint IDP Profiling Service](#)

Illustration: The Risk Index for Climate Displacement⁵¹

The Risk Index for Climate Displacement (RICD) is developed by the International Organization for Migration's Climate Mobility Innovation Lab. The RICD helps governments and partners anticipate climate displacement by integrating macro-level hazard, exposure, and vulnerability data with micro-level, people-centered insights. It generates composite risk scores and identifies displacement risk hotspots and priority areas to inform the targeting of responses. Methods like the RICD show how improved data and foresight can support efforts to avert and minimize both economic and non-economic loss and damage before it occurs, enabling quick and targeted investments in at risk communities.

Output - Scoping Report

The findings from Step 1 can be summarized in a scoping report describing:

- The human mobility situation(s);
- The scope of the assessment;
- Affected populations;
- Geographic coverage; and
- Key sources of evidence.

A list of guiding questions to inform the scoping report can be found in Annex II.

Step 2. Identify current or anticipated NELs

Purpose

The second step identifies and assesses the NELs experienced or anticipated within the selected human mobility context. The objective is to understand what people value, what has been lost or placed at risk, who is affected, and how losses may evolve over time.

Approach

The assessment may be structured around the seven different categories of NELs presented in Chapter 2. Because many NELs relate to what individuals and communities value, the assessment should first seek to understand the values, relationships, practices, and places that are important to affected populations, before determining how these have been affected or put at risk. Identifying them requires engagement with affected communities and consideration of local values and priorities.

The assessment should:

- Consider anticipated NELs (ex ante): losses that may occur under future climate and human mobility scenarios. Understanding future risks can help identify opportunities to avert or minimize NELs.

⁵¹ <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/CMIL-AP/RICD>

- Consider current NELs (ex post): losses that have already occurred as a result of climate impacts and associated human mobility processes. Understanding current losses can help identify needs for recovery, support, and relevant measures to address NELs.
- Recognize that the different categories of NELs are often interconnected. For example, displacement from ancestral lands may simultaneously affect cultural identity, social cohesion, mental wellbeing and Indigenous knowledge systems.

Methods and data sources to inform Step 2 include:

Whilst the value of NELs is difficult to capture in monetary terms, or through quantitative approaches, a range of qualitative and participatory methods can be used to identify, understand, and document these losses. These approaches are particularly important for NELs associated with human mobility since many impacts, such as a loss of sense of place, cultural identity, social cohesion, traditional knowledge or psychosocial well-being, are deeply context-specific and may not be captured through other methods. Such approaches include:

- **Community consultations:** including structured discussions with affected communities to identify what people value, what has been lost or is at risk of being lost, and how these impacts relate to mobility.
- **Focus group discussions:** separate or mixed discussions with different groups can reveal how NELs are experienced differently across a community.
- **Participatory mapping:** working with communities to map places, resources, relationships and areas of significance, to identify how climate impacts and mobility have affected them. This could include mapping sacred sites, grazing routes, communal spaces or traditional migration routes that have become inaccessible or disrupted by climate hazards.
- **Key informant interviews:** interviews with people who have specific knowledge of the community or the human mobility process, including traditional leaders, local authorities, elders, teachers, religious leaders, community organizations or migration officials. Such interviews can help identify longer-term changes that may not be immediately visible, such as the erosion of traditional governance systems, changes in community relationships or loss of local knowledge.
- **Cultural mapping exercises:** identification and documentation of tangible and intangible cultural assets, practices and places that are important to a community. This could include mapping customary practices or places associated with collective memory
- **Storytelling and oral histories:** documenting individual and collective experiences of climate change and human mobility over time.
- **Participatory timelines:** communities can identify major climate events and related human mobility. Such a timeline could for example show how successive or prolonged climate hazards first led to seasonal migration, followed by displacement and the gradual erosion of social and cultural connections to the place of origin.
- **Community-based photography or other visual methods:** community members can document places, practices or objects they consider as important to enable the capturing of losses that are difficult to describe through conventional more structured surveys.

These approaches help ensure that assessments reflect the values, priorities, and lived experiences of affected communities that may otherwise remain invisible.

Suggested Output: NELs inventory

The findings from Step 2 can be summarized in a NELs inventory. The purpose is to systematically document the main NELs that have been identified for the human mobility context and populations of the assessment.

A template for a NELs inventory can be found in Annex II.

Step 3. Assess response needs

Purpose

The final step translates the assessment findings into broad response needs. Once NELs have been identified and documented, the assessment should consider how populations affected by NELs in the context of human mobility are already responding to these impacts, and what is needed to avert, minimize or address the identified NELs.

The priority in this step is to identify what is already being done, what is working, what is insufficient, and what affected populations identify as needed. The purpose is not yet to select a particular intervention, but to identify the broad change or support that is required. The development and selection of specific responses is addressed in Chapter 4.

Approach

1. Understand existing responses and capacities

First, it is important to assess if and how affected populations are already responding to or coping with NELs associated with human mobility, including the strategies, resources and capacities they draw upon. Such an exercise could examine:

- What people are already doing to avert, minimize or address NELs – for example, maintaining social and cultural connections after displacement, adapting traditional practices, or efforts to preserve cultural knowledge;
- What enables these responses, including social networks, community institutions, local governance, and support from government or other actors;
- Which responses are effective and sustainable, and which might be short-term or have adverse effects;
- Who is able to respond and who is not, with particular attention to vulnerable or marginalized groups; and
- Where external support is required to strengthen responses.⁵²

⁵² For examples of local responses to NELs by communities in Bangladesh, see for example: van Schie, D, Ranon, RJK, Mirza, AB and Anderson S (2022) Local responses to climate-related non-economic losses and damages: A case study in Burigoalini and Gabura Unions, Southwest Bangladesh. IIED, London. <https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2022-10/21161iied.pdf> and: van Schie, D., & Ranon, R. J. K. (2024). *Autonomous responses to non-economic losses in northcentral Bangladesh*. United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS). <https://unfccc.int/documents/637761>

Understanding these existing responses is important for identifying what additional support is required and for avoiding interventions that duplicate, undermine or displace locally appropriate approaches.

Illustration: A pastoralist community facing drought may already respond by adjusting migration routes or temporarily moving livestock. An assessment can determine which of these strategies help protect valued cultural practices and social relationships, which are becoming less viable as climate hazards increase, and where support can strengthen them without undermining traditional systems.

2. Identify gaps and broad response needs

Next, identify the gap between existing responses and what is needed to avert, minimize or address the NEL. Key questions include:

- What is working?
- What is insufficient or becoming less viable?
- What barriers prevent people from responding effectively?
- What additional capacities, resources, or services are needed?
- Which existing community capacities or institutions could be strengthened?
- How do affected communities define an effective response?

A useful way to summarize the findings is to connect each identified NEL to the existing response, gap and broad response need. For example:

In box/highlighted:

NELs: Loss of political participation, governance and access to justice due to displacement

Existing response: Displaced people participate in local decision-making through community representatives.

Gap: Displacement can separate people from the governance structures and institutions in their places of origin, while barriers in places of displacement, including lack of documentation, unfamiliar administrative systems, discrimination or limited representation, can make it difficult to participate meaningfully in decision-making or access justice.

Response need: Strengthened and inclusive mechanisms for displaced people to participate in decision-making and governance, maintain links with relevant institutions in places of origin, and access justice and grievance mechanisms including through accessible information, documentation and legal assistance.

The response need should describe the broad change or support required, rather than a specific intervention.

3. Characterize the response need using the Avert-Minimize-Address framework

The Avert–Minimize–Address framework, introduced in Chapter 2, can be used to characterize the response need. The objective is to determine whether the priority is to prevent and anticipate NELs, minimize the severity or consequences of a loss that cannot be avoided, or address a loss that already occurred.

Averting NELs

Where NELs are anticipated, response needs may relate to preventing losses from occurring where possible. In the context of averting NELs in the context of human mobility response needs may include:

- Stronger climate resilience and adaptation;
- Conditions that enable safe, voluntary and informed migration as an adaptation option where appropriate;
- Protection of cultural sites and places of significance;
- Preservation of Indigenous and local knowledge systems and languages;
- Identifying gaps or inconsistencies in nationality laws and weaknesses in civil registration systems, including birth registration;
- Protecting ecosystems that underpin identities, livelihoods and cultural practices;
- Improved information and early warning to support decisions about mobility;
- Maintenance of community institutions and social networks.

Minimizing NELs

Measures to minimize NELs can include those relating to reducing the severity, duration or consequences of NELs and maintaining continuity, dignity and wellbeing throughout the human mobility process.

Response needs may include:

- Continuity of social networks and community cohesion in the context of planned relocation;
- Continued access to education, healthcare and essential services;
- Enabling access to civil registration to replace lost identity documents;
- Protection and continuity of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge in the context of relocation, with respect for FPIC in the case of Indigenous Knowledge;
- Continued cultural, family and community connections;
- Access to psychosocial and mental health support;
- Access to safe, informed and voluntary mobility pathways where appropriate.

Addressing NELs

Where losses have already occurred, responses may relate to addressing their impacts and support long-term wellbeing, dignity and resilience. Although many NELs cannot be fully restored, their consequences could be alleviated through inclusive and culturally appropriate interventions.

Response needs may include:

- Rebuilding of community institutions and networks;
- Cultural revitalization and knowledge transmission;
- Restoration of culturally significant places and ecosystems where possible;
- Strengthened local governance structures;
- Social inclusion, belonging, and community cohesion;
- Access to rights and services;
- Access to livelihoods and economic opportunities in receiving locations;
- Long-term mental health and psychosocial support
- Opportunities for remembrance and recognition;

- Community healing and reconciliation processes, where appropriate.

TIP: Response needs should be assessed for both current and anticipated losses. In human mobility contexts, early action can often prevent NELs from becoming more severe, widespread or irreversible.

TIP: Response needs may arise before, during or after movement, and a single NEL may require action across more than one stage. For example, protecting cultural continuity may require measures before planned relocation, during the relocation process and after people have settled in a new location.

Possible methods to inform Step 3

A combination of qualitative and participatory methods can be used to identify existing responses and response needs. These may include:

- Community consultations, participatory assessments and workshops to identify NELs, existing responses, priorities, unmet needs and community-defined solutions;
- Focus group discussions to explore differences in response needs between groups, including women, youth, older people or Indigenous communities
- Community-led prioritization exercises
- Participatory mapping to map NELs, mobility patterns, and existing response mechanisms, this could reveal places or groups where support is available, and where it is lacking
- Household or individual surveys to collect systematic information on coping strategies, access to support and preferences for different response options

These methods should, where possible, be combined with the findings of Step 1 and 2 and with existing assessments and data.

Suggested Output:

The findings from Step 3 could be summarized in a Response Needs Summary that links identified NELs to:

- Existing responses – what people and institutions are already doing;
- Gaps and barriers – what is insufficient, becoming less viable or is preventing effective responses;
- Broad response need – the change or support required
- Avert, minimize or address - the principal purpose of the response need;
- Mobility stage – whether the needs arise before, during and/or after movement and,
- Community priorities – how affected people define an appropriate response.

A simplified overview of the elements to include in a response needs summary could look as follows:

NEL	Existing response	Gap/barrier	Broad response need	Avert / Minimize / Address	Mobility stage
Loss of social cohesion following planned relocation	Community networks and collective activities continue informally	Relocation weakens community institutions	Support for maintaining community networks and collective institutions	Minimize / Address	During / after movement

4. Responding to NELs associated with human mobility

Building on the assessment process presented in Chapter 3, this Chapter provides guidance on translating identified response needs into appropriate practical action to prevent, minimize or address NELs. It supports governments and other stakeholders in moving from identifying what needs to be addressed to determining what can be done, how responses can be delivered, and what resources and arrangements are required for implementation. Responses should build on existing capacities, response strategies, and community priorities and could involve policy measures, programmes, investments, or a combination thereof.

Because NELs are diverse, interconnected and highly context-specific, no single intervention is likely to be sufficient. Effective responses may require a combination of measures implemented across different sectors, levels of governance and timeframes. It is therefore important to also consider responses to NELs as part of broader efforts relating to climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, human mobility, development planning and community resilience.

This Chapter supports governments and other stakeholders to:

- Identify appropriate response objectives, approaches and instruments;
- Identify the resources and financing required for implementation;
- Integrate responses into relevant policy, planning and implementation processes; and
- Assess, select and co-design responses with affected communities and relevant stakeholders.

4.1 Principles for designing responses

The design and implementation of specific interventions should be guided by a number of overarching principles.

People-Centred

Responses should reflect the priorities, values and lived experiences of affected people and communities.

Rights-Based

Responses should respect, promote and consider applicable obligations on human rights, the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and should ensure non-discrimination, participation and accountability.

Context-Specific

There is no universal solution for NELs. Responses should reflect local cultural, social, political and environmental conditions.

Participatory

Affected communities should participate meaningfully in identifying, designing and implementing responses.

Inclusive

Responses should address the different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of affected people, including those who may face barriers to participation or access to assistance, and should be attentive to gender, age, disability and other relevant factors.

Do No Harm

Responses should avoid creating new losses, increasing inequalities or undermining existing coping mechanisms.

Forward-Looking

Responses should address current losses while also accounting for and where possible reducing future risks

Particular attention should be given to ensure that responses:

- Respect local values and priorities;
- Promote equity and inclusion;
- Strengthen community agency;
- Support long-term resilience and well-being;
- Do not disadvantage certain groups or reinforce existing inequalities.

4.2 Defining response objectives and identifying appropriate approaches

The first step is to translate the response needs identified through the assessment process of Chapter 3 into clear response objectives and identify approaches that could achieve those objectives.

A response need describes what requires attention, while the response objective defines the change that the response seeks to achieve. A response approach describes the broad way of achieving that objective.

Response objectives should be grounded in the priorities and values identified by affected communities and should reflect whether the aim is to prevent, minimize or address the identified NEL. They should describe the intended change without prescribing a particular intervention already.

At this stage, approaches should be considered as possible pathways to achieving the objective. They should build on existing community strategies and capacities wherever possible. The overarching objective is not necessarily to introduce a new intervention, but to determine where existing responses can be strengthened, adapted or complemented.

Response approaches can target the people, assets, practices, relationships, institutions and enabling conditions associated with the NELs. They may, for example:

- Protect people, cultural heritage, knowledge systems and places from further impacts;
- Restore or rehabilitate what can be restored;
- Support recovery, wellbeing and social cohesion;
- Rebuild community institutions and networks;
- Support cultural revitalization and knowledge transmission;
- Restore culturally significant places and ecosystems where possible;
- Strengthen access to rights, services and participation; and
- Provide appropriate forms of assistance, recognition or redress where losses cannot be restored.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive and may need to be combined. For example, supporting pastoral mobility in response to drought-related NELs could involve protecting migration routes, strengthening local agreements over access to land and water, supporting knowledge transmission, and facilitating safe mobility where movement becomes necessary.

The following example illustrates how a response need identified through Chapter 3 can be translated into an objective and potential response approaches:

Response need: A community that has been relocated because of recurrent flooding is experiencing loss of attachment to place, disruption of social networks and reduced opportunities to maintain cultural practices associated with its place of origin.

Response objective: Enable the relocated community to sustain social cohesion, cultural identity and meaningful connections to places of origin, while strengthening belonging and wellbeing in the relocation site.

Potential approaches: Support cultural revitalization and the continuation of cultural practices; strengthen social networks and community-based support; create culturally

meaningful community spaces in the relocation site; facilitate connections with places of origin where feasible and desired; and strengthen participation in decisions affecting the relocated community.

The potential approaches can then be assessed and co-designed with affected communities and relevant stakeholders, before determining the most appropriate policy, programme, investment or combination of instruments through which they can be delivered.

4.3 Determining the relevant response instrument

Once the potential response approaches have been identified, consider which policy, programme, investment instrument or combination thereof could be used to deliver them. The choice of the instrument(s) should be based on the response need and the most appropriate way of addressing it.

The response may be delivered through one or more of the following instruments:

- Policy measures – may be appropriate where responses require changes to legislation, regulations, institutional arrangements, planning frameworks, social protection, public services or resource governance.
- Programmes – may be appropriate where a response requires a coordinated set of activities over time, across sectors or across locations. For example, a cultural revitalization programme could combine knowledge documentation, intergenerational learning, support to cultural practitioners and community activities.
- Finance - may be appropriate where responses require dedicated resources for ecosystem restoration, services, livelihoods or other interventions.

In many cases, an effective response will require a combination of these instruments. For example, addressing loss of cultural knowledge following displacement could involve incorporating cultural protection into planning, establishing a knowledge-transmission programme, restoring cultural spaces and providing flexible support for community-led activities.

Where possible, responses can be integrated into existing planning, policy and budget processes. Relevant entry points may include:

- National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions;
- Disaster risk reduction strategies;
- Migration, refugee, internal displacement and other mobility policies;
- Urban and regional planning;
- Social protection systems;
- Cultural heritage strategies;
- Indigenous-led planning processes;
- Loss and damage strategies;
- Planned relocation frameworks;
- Local government planning and budgeting processes.

Illustration:

*Timor Leste, in its NDC 3.0 “commits to integrating human mobility into loss and damage frameworks, ensuring that the economic and non-economic costs of displacement are addressed, and that affected communities have direct access to support and funding.” The NDC makes the connection between displacement, psychosocial wellbeing, a sense of security and identity. The NDC also identifies proactive measures such as the mapping of displacement hotspots, developing relocation strategies, exploring measures for social protection for displaced populations, and targeted support for populations unable to move.*⁵³

Illustration:

*Bangladesh’ NDC 3.0 recognizes the need to reduce displacement risks and lists addressing non-economic losses as a strategic pillar for proposed loss and damage activities. This includes the development of “a national framework for identifying, assessing and valuing NELs (e.g. loss of cultural heritage in the Sundarbans, loss of indigenous knowledge due to displacement)”. Another strategic pillar is dedicated to human mobility and planned relocation and lists as potential activities, the development and piloting of national guidelines for the dignified, voluntary, and safe planned relocation of communities from high-risk zones.*⁵⁴

Integrating NELs responses into existing processes can help align them with national priorities, strengthen institutional ownership and facilitate access to established sources of finance.

Regardless of the selected instrument(s), affected communities may be best placed to shape and, in some cases, lead implementation.

4.4 Identifying costs, financing and implementation options

Once a response has been selected and (co-)designed, the next step is to determine the resources, financing, institutional arrangements and partnerships required to implement it.

The financing process should distinguish between the cost of responding to NELs and the value of the NELs themselves. While the full value of many NELs cannot be monetized, the actions required to prevent, minimize and address losses can often be identified and costed. The purpose of costing is to estimate the resources required to implement a response, not to assign a monetary value to the NEL itself.

Costing should take account of the activities, resources, technical capacities and timeframes required to implement the selected response, including recurrent or longer-term costs where relevant.

Practical tool: costing human mobility related loss and damage (in text box)

IOM, with La Ruta del Clima, developed a costing tool to support governments and other stakeholders in estimating the financial needs associated with responding to climate-related human mobility and loss and damage. The tool can support assessment of economic and non-

⁵³ Government of Timor-Leste (2026), *Timor-Leste NDC 3.0*. Accessible at:

<https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2026-06/Timor-Leste%20Updated%20NDC%203.0.pdf>

⁵⁴ Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (2025), *Bangladesh’s Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0)*. Accessible at:

<https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2025-09/Bangladesh%20Third%20Nationally%20Determined%20Contribution%20%28NDC%203.0%29.pdf>

economic impacts associated with disaster displacement and planned relocation. The tool does not seek to assign monetary value to the NELs themselves. Rather, it can help identify and structure the costs of measures required to respond to their impact. It could therefore support the translation of identified response needs into costed measures, informing policy and response planning, programmes, investment plans and funding proposals.⁵⁵

Financing needs identified through this Guide could be used to develop funding proposals and articulate financing requirements to relevant funding sources, including the funding arrangements and mechanisms established under the Convention and the Paris Agreement.⁵⁶

Depending on the nature, scale and eligibility of the response, potential financing sources to avert, minimize and address NELs in the context of human mobility may include:

- Climate adaptation and resilience finance;
- Funding arrangements and mechanisms for addressing loss and damage, including the FRLD;
- Disaster risk reduction, preparedness and recovery financing;
- Migration and human mobility financing;
- Bilateral and multilateral funding sources;
- Humanitarian finance, where relevant; and
- Philanthropic sources.

Different sources could be combined or sequenced where appropriate, particularly if responses cut across prevention, preparedness, recovery and development.

Financing arrangements should be accompanied by clear implementation arrangements, including the institutions and partners responsible for delivery, required technical and institutional capacities, timeframe, eligibility, coordination mechanisms and any policy or regulatory changes needed.

Where responses are community-led, financing mechanisms could provide accessible, flexible and appropriately timed resources and enable communities to determine how these resources can best support locally identified priorities.

4.5 Assessing, selecting and co-designing responses

Once the objective, possible approaches, relevant instruments, and financing options have been identified, they should be considered together to determine the most appropriate response package.

Consider:

- Effectiveness in preventing, minimizing or addressing the NEL;
- Alignment with community priorities;
- Cultural appropriateness;
- Feasibility;
- Equity and inclusion;
- Potential unintended consequences;

⁵⁵ <https://lac.iom.int/en/costing-tool-funds-ctf>

⁵⁶ The UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement recognize the need for financial support for activities to address loss and damage. In decisions 1/CP.28 and 5/CMA.5, Parties urged continued and enhanced support for activities addressing loss and damage.

- Responsiveness to changing climate and mobility dynamics;
- Sustainability;
- Institutional and policy alignment; and
- Availability of appropriate financing.

The process should be undertaken with affected communities and relevant stakeholders, rather than as a purely technical exercise. Co-design can help validate proposed responses, incorporate local and Indigenous knowledge, identify risks and safeguards, clarify roles and responsibilities, and ensure that responses build on rather than undermine existing community strategies and capacities.

Where several measures are appropriate, communities and relevant stakeholders can work together to determine whether they should be implemented individually, sequentially or as a combination. The final response can then be developed into an implementable intervention, specifying the objective, target populations, activities, geographic scope, responsibilities, costs, financing arrangements, safeguards and monitoring arrangements.

4.6 Monitoring

Responses should be monitored not only to determine whether the response objective is being achieved, but also whether they are contributing to the intended outcomes.

Monitoring can consider:

- Whether the NEL is being prevented, minimized or addressed;
- Whether valued cultural, social or environmental assets are being protected or restored;
- How affected communities perceive the response;
- Whether different groups are experiencing different outcomes;
- Whether new or unintended NELs are emerging; and
- Whether changing climate impacts or mobility patterns require the response to be adjusted.

Because NELs and human mobility dynamics can evolve over time, responses should be adaptive. Participatory monitoring and periodic review can help determine whether responses should be adjusted, expanded, replaced or discontinued.

5. Conclusion

NELs are often deeply rooted in people's relationships with place, culture, identity, livelihoods, and social networks. In the context of human mobility, climate change can intensify losses related to these dimensions, while mobility itself can both help people cope with change and create new risks and losses. Understanding these dynamics is essential to ensuring that responses do not focus only on what can be measured in economic terms but also address what people value and may struggle to recover when it is lost.

This Guide provides a practical approach for identifying, assessing and responding to NELs associated with human mobility. It emphasizes that there is no single response that will be appropriate in every context. Effective approaches should be context-specific, participatory,

inclusive and guided by the principle of do no harm, while recognizing the rights, capacities, priorities and needs of affected people.

Responding to NELs does not necessarily mean preventing mobility. In some circumstances, safe, orderly and dignified mobility may be an important adaptation and resilience strategy. Responses can help avert, minimize or address NELs before, during and after movement: before movement, by strengthening preparedness and adaptive capacity; during movement, by protecting rights, safety, and dignity; and after movement, by supporting integration, durable solutions, and/or the restoration or continuation of cultural practices, knowledge, identity and community ties. This way, responses can help people adapt to changing circumstances while reducing the risk that mobility itself creates or exacerbates NELs. Importantly and if possible, responses should be built on strategies or measures that affected people and communities are already taking themselves, rather than replacing or undermining existing coping strategies, capacities and institutions.

Ultimately, addressing NELs in the context of human mobility is about putting people, their dignity and what they value at the center of climate action. By making these losses more visible and systematically considering how they can be averted, minimized or addressed, policymakers and practitioners can support responses that are more equitable, locally grounded and responsive to the realities of people experiencing human mobility in the context of climate change.

Expanding knowledge and practice on NELs in the context of human mobility is also important for developing a more complete understanding of loss and damage. Strengthening evidence, approaches and practice at this intersection can help ensure that responses to climate change and loss and damage reflect the lived experiences and priorities of affected people and communities, and support action that is timely, context-specific and grounded in dignity.

Annex I. Guiding questions for Step 1: Scoping the NELs assessment

The following questions can be used to support Step 1 of Chapter 3. They are intended to help users define the geographic, temporal and thematic scope of the assessment, identify the relevant forms of human mobility and affected populations, and establish the available evidence base. The questions are illustrative and can be adapted to the relevant national or local context.

1. Identify the human mobility setting(s)

First, identify one or more of the human mobility settings in the targeted location introduced in Chapter 2.

Before movement

Where climate impacts may increase the risk of displacement, migration or planned relocation.

Key questions

- Is the assessment focused on populations before movement occurs?
- Which climate hazards or environmental changes may increase the likelihood of displacement, migration or planned relocation?
- Which geographic areas are most at risk of future mobility?

- Which populations are most exposed to these risks?
- Are there populations that may be unable to move despite increasing climate risks?

During movement

Where NELs may arise throughout displacement, migration or planned relocation.

Key questions

- Is the assessment focused on people who are currently moving?
- What mobility pathways (including transit locations) are being considered?
- What non-economic losses may arise during movement?
- Are mobility patterns temporary, seasonal, circular or permanent?

After movement

Where displaced people, migrants, relocated communities, host communities and communities remaining in places of origin may experience continuing NELs.

Key questions

- Is the assessment focused on post-mobility experiences?
- Which places of origin, destination and host locations will be included?
- Are NELs being assessed among communities remaining in places of origin as well as mobile populations?
- How may NELs evolve over time following movement?
- Are NELs emerging or changing as mobility becomes prolonged, repeated or permanent?

2. Identify relevant climate hazards and drivers

Second, identify the relevant climate hazards and drivers.

Key questions

- Which climate hazards, slow-onset processes or environmental changes are affecting or may affect the area?
- What are the current and projected trends?
- Which populations, livelihoods, ecosystems, cultural assets and places are exposed?
- How may these climate and environmental changes influence decisions or constraints around whether, when and where people move?
- Are there populations that may be unable to move despite increasing climate risks?
- What existing climate risk, vulnerability or adaptation assessments can inform the assessment?

3. Determine the relevant form(s) of human mobility

Next, determine the principal form(s) of human mobility relevant to the assessment.

- Displacement
- Migration

- Planned relocation

Key questions

- Which form(s) of human mobility are relevant to the assessment?
- Are multiple forms of mobility occurring simultaneously or sequentially?
- Is mobility primarily internal or cross-border?
- What are the circumstances and degree of choice associated with the movement and is it voluntary, constrained, forced or planned?
- How do different forms of mobility influence the types of NELs experienced?

4. Identify the affected populations

Fourth, identify which populations will be included in the assessment. Different populations may experience different types of NELs, even within the same mobility setting.

These may include:

- Communities remaining in places of origin;
- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- Cross-border displaced people
- Migrants;
- Refugees;
- Relocated communities;
- Host communities.

Key questions

- Which population groups will be included in the assessment?
- Are multiple population groups being assessed?
- Are particular groups being prioritized because of heightened exposure or vulnerability?
- Are women and girls, children and youth, older people, people with disabilities or Indigenous Peoples expected to experience distinct NELs?
- How do experiences differ across population groups?

5. Establish the temporal scope and evidence base

Then, establish:

- Whether the assessment focuses on current NELs, anticipated NELs, or both; and
- Available sources of evidence and data.

Key questions

- Is the assessment focused on current NELs, anticipated future NELs, or both?
- What time horizons will be considered?
- What quantitative and qualitative data are available?
- What existing studies, assessments, monitoring systems or community knowledge can inform the assessment?
- What existing climate risk, displacement, migration, planned relocation or NELs assessments are available, and how can they inform the assessment?

- What important data or evidence gaps and uncertainties remain?
- How might these gaps or uncertainties affect the assessment?
- Which stakeholders or knowledge holders should be consulted?

6. What existing climate risk, displacement, migration, relocation or NELs assessments are available?

Key questions

- What existing climate risk, displacement, migration, planned relocation or NELs assessments are available, and how can they inform the assessment?
- What data and evidence are available, and what important gaps or uncertainties remain?
- How might these gaps or uncertainties affect the scope, findings or confidence of the assessment?

Annex II. NELs Inventory Template

The NELs inventory provides a structured approach for documenting NELs in the context of human mobility identified during the assessment. It records what has been lost or is at risk, who is affected, and how the loss relates to climate impacts and human mobility.

NELs are often interconnected. A single climate event or mobility process may result in multiple losses, and the same NELs may affect different groups in different ways. The inventory should therefore be completed with sufficient flexibility to capture these differences.

The completed inventory provides the basis for Step 3, including identifying existing responses, assessing gaps and identifying broad response needs.

	Human mobility setting	Form of human mobility	NELs category	Description of NELs	Climate/mobility driver	Current/anticipated	Who is affected and how?	Interconnected NELs
	Before/ During/ After movement	Displacement/ migration/ planned relocation						

Legend for inventory template:

Field	Guidance
Human mobility setting	Identify whether the NEL arises before, during or after movement. More than one can be selected if needed.
Form of human mobility	Identify displacement, migration or planned relocation.
Population(s) affected	Identify the population(s) experiencing or at risk of NELs, including communities remaining in places of origin and host communities.
NELs category	Select one or more of the seven categories described in Chapter 2.
Description of NEL	Describe specifically what has been lost, disrupted or placed at risk.
Climate / mobility driver	Record the relevant climate hazard, slow-onset process, and/or mobility process contributing to NELs.
Current / anticipated	Indicate whether the NELs have already occurred, is anticipated, or both.
Who is affected and how?	Record how different groups experience NELs, including differences related to age, gender, disability, Indigenous identity or other relevant characteristics.
Interconnected NELs	Note other NELs that are linked to the primary identified loss.