

PEOPLE MIGRATION LINK TO CLIMATE CHANGE

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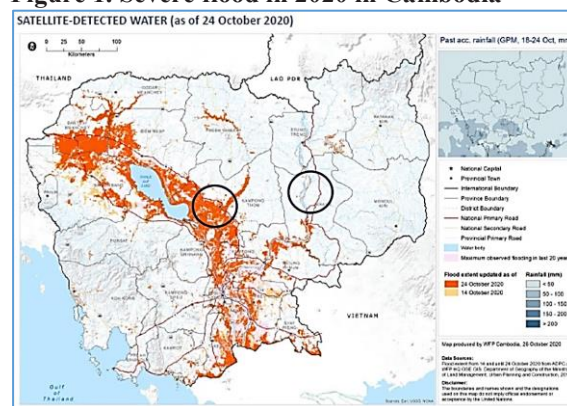
1. INTRODUCTION

This policy brief reflects to research study on people migration link to climate change which is addressed on the interrelations between impacts of climate change on livelihood resources and people migration in the study areas¹ in Tonle Sap plat plains and Mekong River. It focuses on major factors influencing people livelihood and migration, then, it assesses the needs of local people and communities and suggests actions and measures, and recommendations on the ways forward for addressing the identified impacts and improving local livelihood alternatives.

2. EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON LIVELIHOODS DEPENDANT RESOURCES

In last decades, Cambodia has been severely affected by climate change such as more frequent drought and flash flood combining with heavy rain and storms. Due to low adaptive capacity, Cambodia is ones among the most vulnerable countries to climate change which created challenges for the economic development, the environment and livelihood dependent resources, particularly, the livelihoods of people living in Tonle Sap plat plain, upper and lower Mekong River, and Tonle Sap and Bassac Rivers. For example, in 2020, flood affected 19 provinces of more than 2,000,000 people, killed 42 people, directly affected 800,000 people, and caused 14,300 households evacuate to safe areas².

Figure 1. Severe flood in 2020 in Cambodia



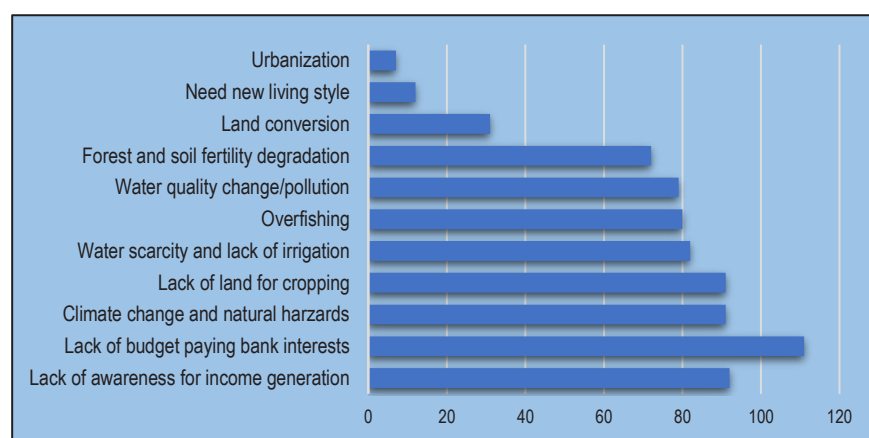
(OCHA 2020)

Note: ○ Study Areas

3. FACTORS LINKED TO PEOPLE'S MIGRATION

In 2018, World Bank reported that climate change could force 143 million people to

Figure 2: People's perception on causes of people migration



(KII 2021)

¹ Four communes in Kompong Thom province represents of Tonle Sap plat plain, and three communes in Kratie province where locate along the Mekong River as the targeted groups consist of local villagers, local communities, local authorities (village leader or commune councils), women and youths, vulnerable and ethnic minority groups, local NGOs and CBOs, relevant provincial departments. In addition, desk review is also important documents to support and reflecting on this study. Key Informants (KIs) are selected from this targeted groups, and from national level (Climate Change and Environment Experts).

² OCHA (2020), Cambodia Floods Response Plan. Available on line (accessed 13 Feb 2021). UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

migrate internally by 2050³. Notably, migration is an important trend across Southeast Asia. In 2020, Ministry of Environment (MoE) revealed that people migration is one among notable impacts caused by climate change, especially severe flood, drought and storms⁴.

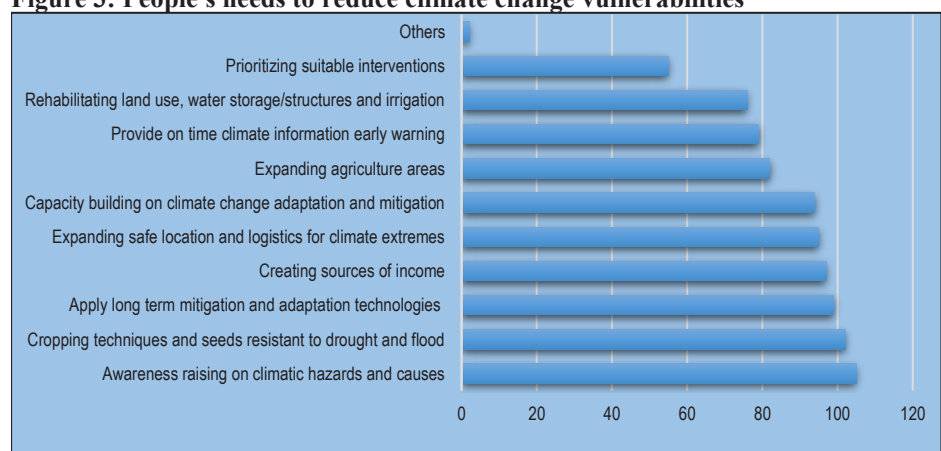
Data in Figure 2, collected from Key Informant Interview in study areas (KII 2021), reflects that there are some factors associated with people migration. For instant, lack of budget to pay bank loan or interest is reported as a major linked to local people migration, following by lack of awareness to diversify income, and deficient farmland for cropping. Also, insufficient irrigation system; declining fish catch, and soil fertility issues are seen as the main causes. Many households face with crops lost due to flood or prolong drought, water sources scarcity, low soil fertility, low price of agriculture products, imbalance of expense and income which make them unable to solve bank loan (used for investing in agriculture and other businesses). Some households increase the cropping shifts, diversify their cropping, fishing and/or move to forest areas for collecting NTFPs, work in economic land concession areas, and migrate to urban areas like Phnom Penh and foreign countries to find jobs to get income for paying bank loan and improving living standard.

4. LOCAL PEOPLE’S NEEDS AND EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS

To cope with the above challenges, farmers need the concerned institutions to: rehabilitate irrigation infrastructure, provide good rice seeds, and help them create ecotourism areas inside or nearby their communities for improving living and income. Furthermore, they need relevant institutions help them to improve awareness on creating community market and cropping techniques such as pesticide and fertilizer use, soil/land and water management, seed selection of both long and short-life seeds, and so on. Fighting against Covid-19 pandemics, is also their urgent need since it has been impacting their livelihoods seriously.

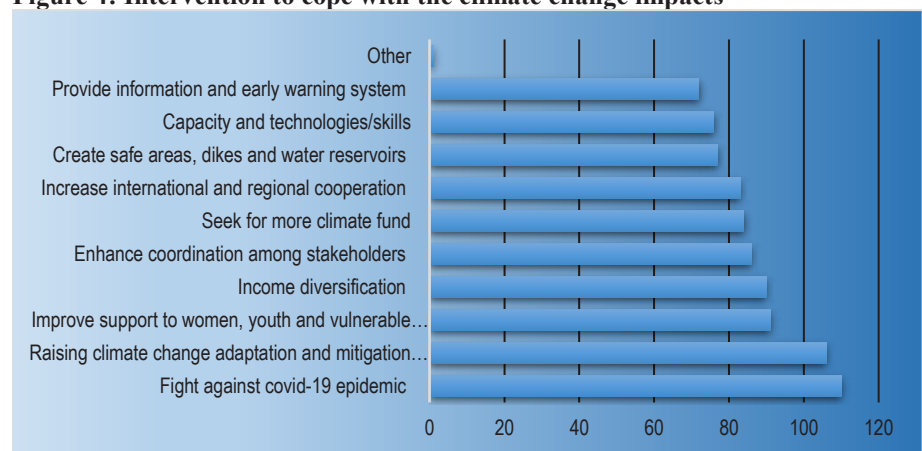
In response, relevant government institutions at national and sub-national levels as well as development partners including NGOs have been working actively on: building capacity and raising awareness of local people and communities on climate change adaptation and mitigation; and increasing and improving the support to women, youth and vulnerable groups since they are the most vulnerable

Figure 3: People's needs to reduce climate change vulnerabilities



(KII 2021)

Figure 4: Intervention to cope with the climate change impacts



(KII 2021)

³ Kumari, R., Kanta, Alex, d. S., Bryan, J., Jona, s. B., Viviane, C., Kayly, O., Jacob, S., Susana, A., Brent, M., Silke, H. & Amelia, M. (2018), *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*. Washington, DC. Available on line (accessed 22 Jul 2021). World Bank.

⁴ The Conference on "Climate change and its impact on Cambodia", hold in Phnom Penh on 12 Aug 2020, Available online (accessed 3 Sept 2021). Press OCM. Office of the Council Ministers. Phnom Penh. Cambodia.

to the climatic impacts. They are seeking measures to: diversify the income of the local people through stakeholder's collaboration; look for climate fund and interventions from relevant agencies, private sectors, NGOs and development partners, and from international and regional cooperation; expand more safe areas, embankment and water reservoirs for cropping and domestic use. Moreover, they have continuously built local capacity on water and agriculture management and development, and timely provided them weather information and early warning system.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Number of activities, regulation and policies have been issued and applied to help improve people livelihoods against impacts and risks resulting from climate change and other related issues. Yet, the following activities and measures are purposely developed to further strengthen adaptation capacity of local community to cope with future climatic impacts and weather stressors in order to improve their skill, income and livelihood.

Improve People Capacity and Awareness on Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation

Strengthen awareness on climate change adaptation and resilience of the most vulnerable communities. Furthermore, encourage communities to apply Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) by enhancing ecosystem functions and services for flood and drought protection and management, and expand climate-smart farming systems to safeguard the agriculture product in the context of climate change.

Continuously identify and provide suitable interventions on climate adaptation and mitigation to ensure that the actual needs of local people and communities are timely provided at the right locations of various geographical landscapes. Also, help improve local communities on physical infrastructures support with the close coordination and collaboration among government, private, local authorities, NGOs and development partners to overcome the challenges caused by climate change impacts.

Protect and Rehabilitate Livelihood Supported Resources and Environment

While climate change threatens seriously on natural resources and environment, suitable measures shall be taken into account to protect and rehabilitate livelihood supported resources that majority of local communities rely on for their livelihoods.

Build local people capacity on natural resources protection and conservation, and engage them to participate in forest/flooded forest management and reforestation and fisheries and aquaculture development and management, to ensure that their livelihood supported resources and environment are well protected, healthy and productivity.

Build Local Capacity on Smart Agriculture and Increase Extension Services

Farmers can certainly learn from each other after seeing better benefit or result of new agriculture techniques/methodologies (e.g. application of new climate resilience varieties, cropping techniques). Then, more efforts shall be paid on building capacity of farmers on smart and resilience cropping techniques so that farmers are able to apply.

Furthermore, particular attention shall be made on improving agriculture extension activities with effective coordination of public and private extension system because it will timely, effectively and directly provide agriculture outreach and extension service to local farmers.

Improve Water Management and Development

Equitable and sustainable utilization and allocation of water, especially during water shortage, is potentially important. Then, it is significant to enhance awareness and techniques of local water operators and communities, especially famer water user communities on operation and maintenance of irrigation system and its infrastructures such as weirs, canals, spillways, water gates, flood protection dikes so that they can manage and allocate water effectively.

Empower local farmers to protect water sources (rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and so on) for agriculture and livestock, domestic and sanitation, environment and other uses. In the meantime, the collaboration with local farmers and private sector shall be enhanced to ensure water availability for agriculture activities and domestic consumption, and to protect local communities from severe flood or droughts.

Enhance People Capacity on Income and Livelihood Diversification

Income diversification is vital important for local people. It is worthy, then, to raising awareness of local farmers on non-farm economic activities and introduce them livelihood alternatives strategies and planning so that they aware of all possible and flexible ways to generate or get incomes not only from agricultural production but also from non-farm economic sectors.

Farmers shall be trained on how to further invest from their potential income generation, employment opportunities, improved skills, capacity and awareness. They should also learn on self-development including technical and professional skills, experience and willingness to transform into best practice and skillful people which in turn they can better get income and improved livelihoods.

Raise People Awareness on Safe Migration

Climate change and people migration is a multisectoral concern, then, the coordination among relevant public institutions, development partners, civil society and private sector shall be enhanced to seek suitable solution to minimize adverse impacts while facilitating and convincing safe migration. In addition, best practices and principles on climate migrant shall be identified and assimilated in the relevant policies or legal frameworks activities since this would also safeguard people migration and healthy environment.

Figure 5. Women work in a Garment Factory in Phnom Penh⁵



Safe migration supports the healthy living and working condition of migrant workers, provides positive benefit to migrant people and to the country, and increases the value and income of the local or internal labour forces. Thus, it is significant to regularly conduct Safe Migration Campaigns at sub national, especially community level so that people are well understood before they migrate to find jobs locally or abroad. These activities would particularly prevent and protect rural young and inexperienced women migrants from any forms of risks while ensuring that migration will provide positive benefit to the people and to the country.

Strengthen Capacity and Skill of Migrant Labour

Keep on promoting and strengthening technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in order to improve and increase the education, skills, effectiveness income and safety of migrant workers, and regularly organizing the National Campaign on TVET at provincial and community level to raise awareness of women, men, youth and indigenous people. Particular efforts shall be made to encourage them to participate in such technical and vocational trainings.

Provide particular protection, supports and services (health care, basic skills, vocational training, etc.) to rural women, youth and ethnic minority groups so that they can live comfortably and work safely as migrant workers; and identify mechanism for protection and empowerment of rural migrant workers to work effectively to improve their livelihood and contribute to the social and economic development of the country.

⁵ The photo was taken by author during report preparation, 2021