

Special Issue Guest Editors' Note

Climate Change, Mobility, and Food Systems in Africa: Intersections, Vulnerabilities, and Pathways to Resilience

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The papers in this Special Issue cover a range of geographies, themes, and methods, but converge on a shared insight: that climate change is profoundly shaping food systems, forms of human mobility, and household food security. Across the African continent, accelerating climate change is transforming weather patterns, intensifying extreme weather events, creating urban heat islands, and eroding land and water resources. These shifts are reinforcing existing inequalities and socio-economic divides, affecting where people live, how they access food, and the types of mobility and immobility they engage in. Doomsday scenarios about climate catastrophe, famine, and mass migration have increasingly given way to more nuanced views in which both the capacity to move and the factors that constrain movement are seen as livelihood strategies for resilience and adaptation. While climate change and food insecurity are increasingly recognised as drivers of internal and international migration, migration is a key strategy that redistributes risk and resources and can mitigate food insecurity. Therefore, the analysis of climate change and food insecurity as migration drivers needs to be leavened with the lived experiences, responses, and strategies of those most affected.

The traditional FAO definition of food security focuses on four dimensions: availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability. This definition has recently been expanded to include the added dimensions of agency and sustainability. However, both traditional and revisionist definitions exhibit a sedentary bias. Local and long-distance mobilities constitute the neglected seventh dimension of food security. The mobility of people, money, and food is an essential and dynamic interlocuter mediating the impacts of climate change in various ways. The climate change-migration-food security nexus in Africa should also be viewed as an interconnected system shaped by governance, social structures, and cross-border and internal flows of people and resources. Making sense of the dense web of interconnections and feedback loops is a basic precondition for mapping pathways to resilience and more nuanced and effective governance responses than hitherto.

This Special Issue brings together a complementary set of empirical, conceptual, and review-based contributions that illuminate the multiple pathways through which climate change, migration, displacement, and food systems shape each other in Africa. By weaving together evidence from multiple countries and disciplines, we can sow the seeds of a new governance approach that abandons the institutional and policy silos between migration, food security, and climate change. The impacts of climate change are no respecters of national borders, re-organising mobility and reshaping food security, labour markets, and rural-urban links. As climate impacts increase in severity, the African continent is experiencing new configurations of displacement, internal migration, rural-urban links, and transnational flows. However, these dynamics are imperfectly understood, empirically fragmented, and insufficiently integrated into policy and development planning.

The papers in this Issue span Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria, and the continent at large, offering multi-scalar evidence on household experiences, gendered vulnerabilities, national policy gaps, urban food system transformations, and transnational diaspora finance channels. The first two papers position diaspora finance and migrant networks as a crucial, though marginalised, enabler of climate change resilience that can complement faltering formal climate-finance mechanisms and flow directly to households that are most affected. In her paper on *Diaspora Finance: A Pathway to Strengthening Climate Resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Eunice Annan-Agrey provides a birds-eye view of the range of diaspora financial contributions to climate resilience and adaptation in Africa. Her discussion of diaspora investment, knowledge transfer, and remittances shows that these are underutilised resources that can significantly support climate mitigation and adaptation of ordinary people in marginal environments. She shows that global government-to-government climate finance is increasingly unreliable, making diaspora contributions an important alternative for resilience-building.

The next paper by Perfect Mazani on *Resilience, Solidarity, and Remittances: Driving Economic Growth and Development in Africa* focuses on diaspora solidarity networks and how remittance flows function as informal insurance mechanisms that can strengthen resilience for migrants in South Africa and their family members in different countries across borders. She shows that these networks provide additional social, economic, and climate-related coverage and concludes that incorporating migrant solidarity structures into national and regional climate adaptation strategies could enhance cross-border resilience.

Climate change is driving internal migration and hyper-urbanisation across the continent as households in marginal rural environments search for viable translocal livelihoods. Mobility and translocality are shown across several contributions to be central adaptation strategies that redistribute risk but can generate new forms of vulnerability in destination areas. The paper by Lawrence Kazembe and Ndeyapo Nickanor on *Internal Migration, Climate Adaptation, and Food System Resilience in Namibia* examines how climate-induced rural to urban migration is reshaping food systems in that country. However, while migrants can escape rural climate stressors, they face new urban challenges such as unemployment, precarious livelihoods, and food insecurity. Adaptive strategies such as informal trading and rural-to-urban food remitting help to shore up both urban and rural food security. The study argues for policies that recognise that internal migration is an adaptation strategy and the need to strengthen the governance of informal and urban food systems.

The next paper by Victor Koswana on *The Influence of Climate Change on Migration Patterns, Displacement, and Food Insecurity in KwaZulu-Natal* reviews how the 2022 KwaZulu-Natal floods intensified internal displacement, increased food insecurity, and exposed deep socioeconomic vulnerabilities. He argues that climate shocks disproportionately harm poorer communities that lack adequate resilience and disaster preparedness. The paper calls for stronger adaptation strategies, emergency management systems, and proactive policies to address recurring climate-related migration pressures.

The following two papers focus on one of Africa's most climate-vulnerable countries. Ines Raimundo et al. challenge the dominant assumption that highly exposed communities will inevitably relocate when climate risks escalate. Their paper entitled *Mozambique Challenging the Paradigm 'I'm Not Leaving Here Nobody's Taking Me Away': Vulnerability, Migration and Food*

Insecurity shows that although episodic floods, droughts, and cyclones produce complex cycles of forced displacement, many vulnerable households resist resettlement because of poverty and fear of losing their livelihoods. They conclude that resettlement policies often do not support longer-term resilience and may even exacerbate food insecurity. Thus, migration alone cannot build climate resilience and urgent reform of Mozambican disaster-management and food-security policies is needed.

In her complementary paper -- *Navigating Climate-Related Displacements: Insights from Cyclone Idai in Mozambique* – Naomi Sunu shows that Cyclone Idai produced large-scale internal displacement in Mozambique and revealed systemic weaknesses in disaster preparedness, coordination, and recovery planning. She argues that reactive emergency responses and resettlement deepened pre-existing vulnerabilities and hindered a durable recovery. The paper reinforces the call for strengthened early warning systems, proactive displacement frameworks, and climate-resilient planning in order to mitigate the impact of future climate disasters.

As a group, the Namibia, South Africa, and Mozambique case studies demonstrate that climate-related displacement and internal migration are not an inevitable outcome of extreme weather events. They are in fact co-produced by governance structures, institutional incapacity, reactive disaster-management practices, and the faulty design of food and social protection systems. Against this backdrop, gender is a cross-cutting axis of vulnerability and resilience in the climate-migration-food nexus in the next two papers.

Gracious Maviza et al. deploy an intersectional lens in their paper on *Women's Lived Experiences in Climate-induced Internal Displacement in Zimbabwe*. Food-driven relocation following Cyclone Dineo intensified gendered inequalities in access to food, land, and water. Women were also frequently excluded from decision-making about resettlement. The paper successfully foregrounds women's agency by documenting their adaptive strategies to sustain households and manage food, land, and water. In terms of policy, they advocate for gender-transformative approaches that treat women as central actors in climate adaptation and not as silent and passive victims.

Stanley Egenti and Mulugeta Dinbabo's paper on *Gendered Spatial Vulnerability to Food Insecurity in Nigeria* constructs a Food Security Vulnerability Index using nationally representative survey data to reveal stark, spatially clustered, and gendered patterns of food insecurity. They argue that women face systematically higher risks than men, with particularly acute vulnerability in the southern zones where structural, gender, and ecological factors intersect. Together, these papers go beyond generic invocations of climate vulnerability to more precisely map how gender, space, and social structure shape resilience and adaptive capacity.

The intersections and feedback loops between climate change, food insecurity, and internal migration are a central theme of this Special Issue. In the final paper on *Continental Perspectives on Internal Climate Migration*, Bernard Owusu et al., therefore, provide an overview of the existing state of knowledge and thinking on climate change impacts and internal migration in Africa. They synthesise two decades of scholarship on how diverse climate events, such as droughts, floods, heatwaves, sea-level rise, and land degradation, primarily drive short-distance movements within national borders. The review disentangles different forms and durations of mobility and shows how migration and food security outcomes are mediated by gender,

ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and the characteristics of marginal environments. It also identifies the main geographic and thematic blind spots in existing research. They call for stronger and more coherent policy frameworks that integrate internal climate migration into climate-adaptation, disaster-risk-reduction, and food security planning across the continent.

In summary, Africa's climate crisis is fundamentally a mobility crisis in which internal migration, displacement, and cross-border flows are key adaptation strategies for households navigating environmental and economic shocks. At the same time, adaptive capacity is shaped by gender and social hierarchies, and policies that overlook these intersecting inequalities will reinforce vulnerability. Effective disaster management therefore requires a shift from reactive responses to anticipatory planning. Diaspora resources are emerging as an underappreciated pillar of climate finance and resilience that can flow directly to the most affected. And across the continent, as the papers in this Special Issue show, informal systems play a central role in crisis response and resilience and often outperform formal institutions. Taken together, the papers argue that Africa's future resilience requires reimagining climate governance, strengthening local adaptation capacities, and bridging formal and informal systems of mobility, finance, and food security.

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