



# Migration, Resettlement and Climate Change in Viet Nam

Reducing exposure and vulnerabilities to climatic extremes and stresses through spontaneous and guided migration

Ha Noi, March 2014

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By the United Nations in Viet Nam

25-29 Phan Boi Chau, Hanoi, Viet Nam

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and stresses through spontaneous and guided migration



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# FOREWORD

**V**iet Nam is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Many Vietnamese men women and children are very vulnerable and exposed to climatic extremes such as storms and floods and their consequences, such as river bank erosion and landslides. The challenge of climate change is growing and climate change adaptation is now critical in both the short and the long term.

The Vietnamese authorities have several strategies to reduce exposure to climatic extremes and related environmental pressures, including resettlement of households. Many people are also choosing themselves to change their livelihood strategies because local economic and environmental pressures are high, and some pressures are increasing as a result of climatic changes. Migration is one livelihood strategy that is playing an important role in reducing local exposure and vulnerability and increasing economic opportunities.

This paper presents analysis of the importance of resettlement and migration in the context of climate change adaptation, and provides some policy recommendations.

The United Nations believe that lessons about good development practice must be applied to policies and actions that are currently being formulated and implemented to support adaptation to climate change impacts as well as mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.

This discussion paper shows how reforming and strengthening resettlement policies and practices as well as migration related policies and regulations could add up to an important part of a policy framework for climate change adaptation, with a focus on some of the most vulnerable households, men, women and children in Viet Nam.

We hope that this paper will support policy dialogues as well as programming in Viet Nam, in order to strengthen climate change action and ensuring sustainable human development of the country.



**Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Numerous people contributed to this policy discussion paper, in many different ways. We cannot mention all here, but the most important contributions were from the following people.

Koos Neeffjes (UNDP) led the formulation of the concept note in 2010, managed the formulation of some of the intermediary products including the analytical framework (2010), commented on field research plans and write up (2011-12) and various drafts of this policy discussion paper (2013), and did the final edit of this paper.

Several staff and managers from UNDP, UNFPA and IOM Viet Nam as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and rural Development (MARD) commented on the concept note and the analytical framework (2010).

Ian Wilderspin (formerly of UNDP, now American Red Cross) contributed to the concept note and analytical framework, managed the field research contracting, planning and reporting (2011-12), and commented on several drafts of this policy paper (2013).

Valerie Nelson (Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich) wrote the analytical framework in 2010, including an initial literature review.

Jane Chun (PhD candidate, University of Oxford) and Le Thanh Sang (Southern Institute of Sustainable Development) conducted key informant interviews (also with Do Phu Hai), planned and implemented the field research, and reviewed secondary literature (2011 and 2012). Jane Chun also peer reviewed the first draft of this policy discussion paper.

Irene Dankelman (University of Nijmegen / IRDANA) formulated the first draft of this policy discussion paper based on the field research report and proceedings of an IOM-supported workshop at Can Tho University, undertook the literature review, and conducted additional workshops and key informant interviews.

Jobst Koehler (IOM), Nguyen Chi Quoc (IOM consultant) and IOM Program Team led on the IOM/UNDP/Can Tho University Workshop on Climate Change Adaptation and Migration in the Mekong Delta at Can Tho University (2012). Nguyen Chi Quoc (IOM consultant), together with Amida Cummings (IOM), drafted the workshop proceedings and peer reviewed the first draft of this policy discussion paper.

Ho Long Phi (Centre of Water Management and Climate Change, Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City) and Pham Xuan Phu (An Giang University) also peer reviewed the first draft of this policy discussion paper.

Ta Thi Thanh Huong (UNDP) helped conduct some key informant interviews and workshops, wrote additional text, and edited the final draft of this policy paper, as informed by peer reviewers of the first draft, other comments, and additional literature.

Key informant interviews were undertaken with many people (2011-2013), including: Tran Dinh Dung (MARD); Nguyen Van Bong, Phung Thi Dinh, Tang Minh Loc and Pham Khanh Ly (MARD, Department of Economic Cooperatives and Rural Development); Nguyen Huu Phuc and Dang Quang Minh (MARD, Disaster Management Centre); Vu Van Tu (MARD, Department of Dyke, Flood and Storm Management); Provasch Mondal and Vu Minh Hai (Oxfam); Vo Hoang Nga and Nguyen Bui Linh (UNDP); Nguyen Ngoc Quynh (UNFPA); Nguyen Thi Yen (CARE); Nguyen Viet Khoa and Nguyen Cong Thao (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences).

Many other people commented on the field research plans and report as well as different drafts of the policy discussion paper, verbally in various workshops as well as in writing, including Florian Forster, Jobst Koehler, Nathalie Bougnoux and Katherine Fleischer (IOM); Bui Viet Hien (UNDP); Veronique Marx (UNFPA); Dinh Vu Thanh, Le Hoang Anh, and Pham Thi Dung (MARD, Office of Climate Change).



Most of the above and many others participated in workshops, e.g. on field research methodology; on initial research findings; on initial recommendations (2011-2013); and on social aspects of climate change adaptation (December 2013). They included many government officials, staff of NGOs, as well as UN and other international development partners in addition to those mentioned above.

The fieldwork involved numerous interviews with men and women in the rural and urban research sites. Their names are too many to mention here, but they were essential for the analysis and recommendations in this paper.

We are very grateful for all the above contributions. However, the responsibility for any errors in this text remains with the main authors and final editors of the paper.



# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CCFSC</b>	Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control
<b>CCVI</b>	Climate change Vulnerability Index
<b>CTU</b>	Can Tho University
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>GSO</b>	General Statistics Office
<b>HCMC</b>	Ho Chi Minh City
<b>IDMC</b>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
<b>IMHEN</b>	Institute for Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>MARD</b>	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
<b>MOC</b>	Ministry of Construction
<b>MOET</b>	Ministry of Education and Training
<b>MOF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>MOFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MOJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>MOLISA</b>	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
<b>MoNRE</b>	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
<b>MPI</b>	Ministry of Planning and Investment
<b>MPS</b>	Ministry of Public Security
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NTP-RCC</b>	National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN DESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>WEDO</b>	Women’s Environment and Development Organization

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## i. Introduction

This policy discussion paper explores the linkages between climatic changes, migration and resettlement in Viet Nam, and relevant policies. It aims to outline the main lessons on migration and resettlement in relation to climatic stresses, and to recommend policy directions and key actions to strengthen resilience in both sending and receiving areas in the coming years and decades.

This paper is based on a wide range of studies and publications with a global and country-specific perspective including field research in the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh City, interviews with key stakeholders across the country, and analysis of legal frameworks.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes that climate change impacts combined with rapid population growth in areas exposed to climatic hazards, are likely to result in greater displacement in future, and permanent relocation of populations may become increasingly necessary (IPCC 2012). The IPCC also identified the Mekong Delta as one of three 'extreme' global hotspots in terms of potential population displacement as a result of sea level rise (IPCC 2007). Viet Nam faces serious climatic stresses, now and in the future, with major impacts on the economy, lives and livelihoods, and threatening vulnerable groups such as people living in poverty, women, children and elderly, ethnic minorities and people living with disabilities.

## ii. The climate change – migration and resettlement nexus

Migration dynamics depend on economic constraints or opportunities, social networks, political context, and environmental stresses, including climatic stresses. Mobility is often understood as a potentially beneficial strategy for vulnerable households, to cope with and reduce exposure to hazards. Over the last two decades, the nature and scale of environmental migration has begun to change. Climate change exacerbates climatic shocks and other environmental stresses that make it more difficult for people to survive where they are. Climate change is expected to make the world hotter, rainfall more intense, and result in more extreme weather events such as droughts, storms and floods. Climatic changes are increasingly recognized as drivers of migration across the world.

Economic and livelihood stressors are direct drivers for migration, with environmental factors acting on top of the primary drivers of migration. Research in Long An and Dong Thap provinces showed that environmental stress on livelihoods is high, and '(...) two of the top three reasons for migration cited by migrants is poor livelihoods and income in sending areas' (Chun and Sang 2012). In Quang Tri Province the main reasons for migration were also economic, but environmental factors including extreme weather contributed to crop failures and deteriorating livelihood conditions and indirectly impacted on migration decisions (Hai 2012). Poor fishers in Ca Mau province are facing fish stock decline and harsh weather, and they improved their livelihood resilience through diversification, outmigration, intensification, collaboration and specialization (Ha 2012).

Environmental degradation is often provoked by unsustainable forms of development and exacerbated by climate change, and can thus be an important push factor of migration. But the relationship between climate change and migration is highly complex. Migration can be a coping strategy which contributes to income diversification and enhances capacity of households and communities to cope with the adverse effects of environmental and climate change stresses. It also can be a long-term adaptation strategy, especially in responding to slow-onset climate change phenomena and environmental degradation.

Government-promoted relocation is an important instrument to stabilize livelihoods of people in disaster prone areas in Viet Nam. This includes the 'living with the floods program', where residential clusters and areas along dykes in the Mekong Delta are the core areas for relocation, improving living conditions and providing stable livelihoods for flood affected people. Social-economic vulnerabilities, exposure, and climate related events interact and determine disaster risks. Resettlement programs aim to reduce the exposure of

local communities to disasters, i.e. relocation of people living in unsafe conditions. Reducing the exposure may however not always lead to the reduction of vulnerabilities, which should be addressed through improved income and education opportunities.

There is growing evidence that migration can enhance resilience of individuals and communities, and can represent a good livelihood diversification and adaptation strategy. There is also evidence in Viet Nam that resettled people migrate onwards, to seek job opportunities and better living circumstances. But overall, the outcomes of migration and resettlement could be positive or negative. They could create new opportunities and livelihoods and increasing resilience, but also create new vulnerabilities, for example as poor migrants settle in urban areas with low quality drainage, flood protection and water supply, as well as high costs of living.

The degree to which climatic stress is a driver of migration depends also on the nature of the hazard. Tropical cyclones, storms, and floods may result in temporary displacement, but are often not a reason for people to migrate. Slow-onset climatic phenomena, such as repeated drought, desertification, coastal erosion, and sea level rise, tend to affect a large number of people, impact on livelihoods and may trigger permanent migration. Climatic shocks may cause people to migrate temporarily, as a livelihood diversification or coping action. However, in cases of irreversible changes, for instance due to sea-level rise, migration can become permanent and may require relocation.

### **iii. Lessons from Migration in Viet Nam**

The population was 86 million people according to the 2009 Census, of which 6.6 million migrated in the five years prior to the census. The census excludes most seasonal and temporary (returning) migrants as well as unregistered movements so the total number of internal migrants is probably much higher. Ha Noi's population included 20 percent registered migrants in 2009, and in Ho Chi Minh City it was even one third. Migrants are working mainly in transportation; hospitality; domestic work; manufacturing; and construction; whilst many urban migrants are self-employed. Migrants remit substantial finance to relatives in sending areas and sometimes receive food assistance from sending areas. Men send more remittances than women, but their incomes are higher and the remittances are just 10 percent of men's income, while women's proportion is 17 percent.

There are several push and pull factors causing migration. According to Chun and Sang (2012) the main drivers of migration in Viet Nam are a lack of steady employment and low income in sending rural areas, whereas family reunification and higher incomes in cities are pull factors. Ownership of housing and/or productive land in rural areas restrain outmigration.

According to Viet Nam's Constitution all citizens have equal rights, including migrants, such as the right to work, education, health care, and freedom of movement and residence. The Labour and Residence laws confirm this with detailed regulations. However, the Household Registration System (ho khau) determines a household's access to social services and utilities, land and housing. The rules of the system were relaxed since the 1990s, but it continues to create barriers for non-residents (including migrants) to access essential services and basic rights. There are four categories of households based on their registration status, ranging from permanent registration to temporary registration, but many people migrate temporarily to cities without registration. Unregistered migrants and some temporary migrants particularly lack access to some services. But cities approach migration in different ways: HCMC provides better access to housing, whilst there are more restrictions regarding migrants in Ha Noi, also as per the Law on the Capital of 2012.

Many migrants are relatively young, unmarried and single. Women tend to migrate at slightly younger ages than men and make up the majority of migrants as there is a high demand for female workers in industrial zones. Men work more in construction, whereas there are more women as domestic workers or factory workers. A recent study in southern Viet Nam suggests that female migrant factory workers may be subject to gender-based violence, from their partners as well as from individuals in the community as they are living away from the protection of their families and lack social networks in the migrant housing areas.

The impact of migration on children can be significant as they face fragmentation of their families, interruption of their education and disruption of social networks. Boys are mainly working in physically demanding sectors such as coal picking or fishing, or in drugs sales and trafficking, while girls often do domestic work, and some end up in the sex industry. Many youth are not registered, work long hours, are paid very little, and/or suffer from physical and mental stress and abuse.

Migration of a family member impacts on those left behind, including the elderly and many (middle-aged) women, who may have to look after the children of migrants, and work the fields. Policies and practices tend to favour the Kinh group over ethnic minority groups, for example regarding access to land in migration to for example the Central Highlands. Housing conditions for migrants in urban areas are often troublesome. Temporary and unregistered migrants face job insecurity; and jobs rarely provide health insurance, unemployment benefits, sick leave, or maternity leave. Migrants tend to be less skilled than residents, which is a likely reason for the slightly lower average incomes of migrants compared with residents, especially women migrants and migrants from ethnic minority groups. And language can be a barrier for ethnic minority migrants in urban areas.

Viet Nam's female and male migrants form a dynamic labour force, fuelling the country's economic development. But the multidimensional character of poverty of migrants in urban areas is obvious, including their limited access to social services and social protection structures. Furthermore, there is no central government agency responsible for social protection of spontaneous migrants so their specific challenges and needs frequently fall between the cracks.

#### **iv. Lessons from Resettlement in Viet Nam**

Government-managed resettlement has a long history in Viet Nam. Contemporary resettlement programs are diverse and include resettlement of people in disaster-affected areas, among several other groups. This is a form of addressing exposure and vulnerability to flooding, and other forms of environmental degradation (e.g. river bank erosion).

A substantial body of policy documents relates to resettlement efforts to reduce exposure to climate related and other environmental stresses, notably since 1996. In particular after disastrous flooding in the Mekong Delta in 2000, the Living with Floods Program was implemented as an adaptation strategy and this program was renewed several times since then, to relocate people living in unsafe conditions. This includes construction and improvement of residential clusters and dykes. Residential dykes are raised areas along rivers, canals, and ditches, where small boats can be moored; residential clusters are areas with groups of houses on raised land with access to basic facilities.

A significant number of residential clusters with basic infrastructure have been established and households were relocated. According to the Implementation Plan of the National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response, and Mitigation of 2009, by 2015 another 130,000 households should be relocated, of which around 70% from flooded areas in the Mekong River Delta. Households will also be relocated from the Northern mountainous areas, because these areas face frequent flash floods, mudflows and landslides; from the Red River Delta, because of riverbank and coastal erosion; from the Central Highlands, because of floods; and from the South Eastern region, which faces flooding from the Dong Nai River and Sai Gon River. A resettlement program for sampan people (living on boats) has also been promoted in Thua Thien Hue Province, aimed at settling the sampan people on land. There were almost 1,000 sampan households living in Tam Giang Lagoon in 2009, and more than 400 on the Huong River. By 2010, 555 households in Tam Giang Lagoon and 343 households in Huong River had been resettled (Thua Thien Hue 2010).

The outcomes of resettlement are however somewhat mixed. Exposure to climatic extremes and other environmental stresses is usually strongly reduced. Living conditions in resettlement areas are often reported to be better and access to public services is often improved, with better access to water and electricity, healthcare and education. In several cases social relations were strengthened. However, vulnerability and resilience depend on social economic conditions, in particular access to livelihoods. Settled households in Tam Giang Lagoon have no access to agricultural land and there is limited land available for settlement, but settlement opened opportunities for livestock raising, wage labour, and providing services. Resettled people in the Mekong Delta need more time to travel to their fields or fishing grounds due to increased distances. Animal-husbandry is often an important income source in the Mekong Delta, but this is banned in residential clusters. Furthermore, for example dyke residents in Long An complained about housing conditions.

The loan-centred approach of the resettlement programs, e.g. for house foundations and construction, cause problems of repayment by poor and near-poor households in the Mekong Delta. In Tam Giang Lagoon, sampan households moving onto land received a Land Use Certificate which opened opportunities to access credit, but banks are not always willing to help people who had repayment difficulties early on. In Dong Thap and Long An, resettled households were often pushed deeper into debt because of loans for the housing foundation and construction as part of the resettlement programs.

The process of resettlement itself can also be problematic, with weak planning, lack of financial accountability, limited community participation and lack of transparency and inconsistencies with support grants and loans for housing. Grassroots Democracy legislation provides an important avenue for practicing participation at the local level in resettlement schemes, meaning that affected people should officially be informed, they should discuss, be consulted, monitor and inspect local projects. This legislation has not been widely applied in resettlement processes in the Mekong Delta.

## **v. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The nature and scale of migration in Viet Nam has begun to change as climate change exacerbates rapid- and slow-onset shocks and gradual environmental degradation. Particularly the co-occurrence and combination of different climatic hazards can pose risks for people's livelihoods and health, including chances of epidemics.

Migration and guided resettlement may bring many challenges, and can exacerbate vulnerabilities of migrants and/or those left behind. Migration and government managed resettlement can also be important climate change adaptation strategies to reduce risks as households move to safer areas, reducing exposure to climatic and other environmental extremes and stresses. However, the outcomes of migration and resettlement depend strongly on employment opportunities and access to services in receiving areas or new settlements.

Resettlement programs have weaknesses in planning, transparency, financial accountability, and community participation, whilst resettled people sometimes face debt, and lack of employment and income generation opportunities. They also often lack in-depth gender analysis, which is important in climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and resettlement. The current policy framework has disincentives for migration, which shows a lack of recognition for migration as an opportunity for the country, receiving areas, families and individuals.

Migration and resettlement can increase economic growth and wellbeing, and climate resilience of local rural people, migrants and those staying behind. However, migration and resettlement only have minor presence in the development debate and agenda. There is an urgent need to promote the mainstreaming of climate change, migration and resettlement issues in relevant development policies and strategies.

Below are four general recommendations, related to which a number of action points are also suggested, along with the agencies who might take primary and secondary responsibility:

- 1. Strengthen and reform relevant policies to enhance the effectiveness of mobility, migration and resettlement for increasing climate change resilience of Viet Nam's communities and population.**
  - (a) Reform legal frameworks affecting spontaneous migrants, specifically the household registration system, to fully ensure the equal rights of migrants as per the Law
  - (b) Apply Grassroots Democracy legislation and principles to all resettlement programs
  - (c) Mainstream concrete migration and resettlement actions for enhancing climate change adaptation into national and local policies, strategies and plans.
- 2. Reinforce national and provincial programs to enhance living conditions and livelihood options and resilience of migrants, resettled people, sending and recipient communities.**
  - (a) Improve identification of communities and (groups of) households that are particularly exposed to climatic hazards.
  - (b) Develop and reinforce resettlement programs to reduce exposure as well as vulnerability to climatic hazards in priority regions such as the Mekong Delta and Central Viet Nam.
  - (c) Develop action plans in receiving areas to ensure that migrants and poor and vulnerable residents get climate information; have legal status; and can access housing and services.



- 3. Strengthen institutional capacities and operational processes to ensure social protection of migrants and resettled people in the context of climate change.**
- (a) Enhance institutional capacity in departments at central and local levels in order to improve support to migrants and resettled people in dealing with climatic hazards.
  - (b) Strengthen capacities of mass organizations to act on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and protection of the rights of migrants and resettled people
  - (c) Improve coordination and communication on climate change adaptation, migration and resettlement between institutions responsible for household registration, social protection & services, climate change, disaster risk management and resettlement.
- 4. Increase knowledge and understanding on the nexus of climate change, mobility, migration and resettlement and the position of migrants in Viet Nam; and build awareness around this.**
- (a) Support scientific research and analysis on climatic extremes and disasters and the relationship with migration as well as the role of resettlement.
  - (b) Develop social-economic future scenarios in the context of increasing climatic shocks and stresses, to inform climate change adaptation and social-economic policies and plans.
  - (c) Research climate resilient livelihoods, adapted to specific situations in Viet Nam, and develop recommendations for scaling-up of successful pilots and tests.
  - (d) Increase popular awareness on the importance of migration and resettlement in climate change adaptation and related rights, plans, opportunities, and early warning.
  - (e) Assess how adaptation actions agreed under the UNFCCC can benefit Vietnamese communities, women and men.
  - (f) Strengthen the sharing/exchange of research findings and experiences on the role of mobility, migration and resettlement for climate change resilience and adaptation.

# I. Introduction

Migration and resettlement play an important role in the lives and livelihoods of individuals and communities as well as the development of Vietnamese society as a whole (UNFPA 2007). In the context of more and more intense climatic changes, migration and resettlement are actual and potential climate change coping and adaptation strategies. This policy discussion paper explores the linkages between climatic changes, migration and resettlement in Viet Nam, and relevant policies.

The aims of the paper are to outline the main lessons on migration and resettlement in relation to climatic stresses, and to recommend policy directions and key actions to strengthen resilience in both sending and receiving areas in the coming years and decades. The paper should inform policy makers as well as practitioners at national, regional and local levels, about the actual knowledge base with regard to climate change adaptation, migration and resettlement.

This paper is the result of a research and dialogue process with the following hypothesis: 'in order to increase climate resilience and to create opportunities for continued poverty reduction and sustained human development in Viet Nam, especially in Mekong Delta, Viet Nam must improve conditions of and eliminate restrictions on and disincentives for the mobility of people' (UN Viet Nam 2010a). Three forms of human mobility are of particular importance in this context: displacement due to disasters, migration- as a proactive or reactive response to climate change, and resettlement/relocation as a long-term government response to climatic hazards (UN Viet Nam 2012). For example, the September-October 2011 flooding of the Mekong delta caused the displacement of 200,000 people (IDMC 2012, page 21).

Human migration and displacement has entered into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations (Warner 2011). Paragraph 14f of the Cancun Adaptation Framework 'Measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation related to national, regional and international climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate' is part of a list of practical adaptation actions (UNFCCC 2011).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX)*, concludes that climate change impacts, including less predictable monsoons, changing rainfall patterns, significant temperature rises and more intense tropical cyclones, combined with rapid population growth in areas exposed to such hazards, are likely to result in greater displacement in future. In some cases, the permanent relocation of populations may become increasingly necessary (IPCC 2012).

The Asia and the Pacific region is highly exposed to climatic changes and is the global area most prone to environmental risks, both in terms of the absolute number of people and the volume of economic assets affected (IPCC 2007). The IPCC 2007 assessment identified the Mekong Delta as one of three 'extreme' global hotspots in terms of potential population displacement as a result of sea level rise. By 2050, as many as one million people risk being displaced in the Mekong Delta (Nicholls et al. 2007, page 327), if no major action is taken.

Viet Nam already faces serious climatic stresses and will continue to face those in the future, including mean temperature rises, changing rainfall patterns, drought and flooding, salinization and sea level rise, as weather extremes are intensifying. Climatic changes are expected to signify substantially more environmental change – with major impacts on Viet Nam's delta regions, its mangroves, riverbanks, forest areas and land productivity, and will form a major challenge for the economy and society. Climatic changes will predominantly impact negatively on people's lives and livelihoods, increasing vulnerabilities and threatening human security, particularly of vulnerable groups such as people living in poverty, women, children and elderly, ethnic minorities and people living with disabilities.

Many figures point to the very high risks from climatic changes that the country faces in social, economic and environmental ways. With an overall Long-Term Climate Risk Index (CRI) score of 23.67, the country ranked 6<sup>th</sup> on the climate risk index for the period 1992–2011 (Harmeling and Eckstein 2012). Maplecroft's Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI) classifies 7 cities at 'extreme risk', facing the most risk from the onset of climate change, out of a list of 50 that were chosen for their current and future importance to global business,

and Ho Chi Minh City was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> (Maplecroft 2013). According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC 2013), with over a million displaced people in the period of 2008-2012, Viet Nam ranked 17<sup>th</sup> of 82 countries with the most displacement by natural disasters.

This paper is based on a wide range of studies and publications, with a global and country-specific perspective. It builds particularly on the research study of Jane Chun and Le Thanh Sang (2012) and on the Proceedings of Workshop: Climate Change Adaptation and Migration in the Mekong Delta (IOM, CTU and UNDP 2012), organized by Can Tho University (CTU), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and supported by IOM and United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Furthermore, it is informed by workshops in 2011 and 2012, interviews with different stakeholders between 25-28 February 2013 and by a workshop on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 in Ha Noi.

This policy discussion paper is focusing on the relationship between climatic changes, migration and resettlement in Viet Nam. The nexus between climate change, migration and resettlement is explored in chapter II. Chapter III and IV provide information and lessons learned about the situation of internal migration and government resettlement programs in Viet Nam. The legal frameworks and the related institutional landscape in Viet Nam are highlighted in these chapters too. The final chapter presents conclusions and recommendations for policy adjustments as well as some practical actions.

## II. The climate change – migration and resettlement nexus

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'The vast majority of displacement is triggered by climate and weather-related hazards (98 per cent in 2012; 83 per cent over five year).'

'The risk of displacement is expected to rise in line with global trends that increase the risk of disaster' (IDMC 2013, page 6 and page 8)

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### The mobility, environmental degradation and climate change nexus

Mobility is the product of several converging factors, of which climate change is one. In other words, many factors explain migration dynamics, which may include economic constraints or opportunities, social networks, political context, etc. Moreover, factors fostering mobility are not only numerous but also intertwined. In many cases, identifying the 'primary' cause of migration is probably impossible, as different causes may mutually reinforce each other (Piguet et al. 2010, page 9). Warner (2013) classifies three types of mobility, including displacement, migration, and planned relocation.

Mobility is often understood as a common and potentially beneficial adaptive response and strategy for vulnerable households, and can be a significant strategy to cope with and reduce exposure to hazards. Economic and livelihood stressors are often the more direct drivers for migration (Chun and Sang 2012; CTU, IOM and UNDP 2012). Often environmental factors act on top of other general societal drivers of migration, such as rural-urban disparities in quality of life, employment and education opportunities, and the pace of change in social and family traditions, gender roles and age distribution (ADB 2012). 'The perception of the environment hindering livelihoods may be meaningful given that two of the top three reasons for migration cited by migrants is poor livelihoods and income in sending areas' (Chun and Sang 2012). Analysis of 188 surveys of rural and 200 surveys of resettled households in Long An and Dong Thap provinces showed that all groups of respondents reported the highest percentages for the 'a lot' of impact of environmental stress on the livelihoods of their households (Chun and Sang 2012).

The environment has always been a driver of migration, as people flee to survive natural disasters or, faced with harsh and deteriorating environmental conditions, move to seek opportunities elsewhere. Over the last two decades, the nature and scale of environmental migration has begun to change, and climate change exacerbates rapid- and slow-onset climatic shocks and stresses and other environmental degradation. According to some policy statements, up to 135,000 households will be relocated for environmental reasons in Viet Nam by 2015 (Zetter 2011, page 38). The reality of climate change adds new complexity and urgent dynamic to this nexus (IOM 2012, page 64).

The case studies in Box 1 give some insights in the nexus of environmental degradation, climate change and mobility in Viet Nam.

Climate change, as such, does not directly displace people or cause them to move but it exacerbates the frequency and intensity of natural disasters and other environmental stresses that make it more difficult for people to survive where they are (IOM 2009a; IOM 2009b, page 14-15; Nelson 2010). IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report in 2007 showed that climate change is likely to raise the risk of humanitarian emergencies and trigger population movements as a result of increasingly intense weather events, sea-level rise and accelerated environmental degradation, including coastal erosion and desertification (IOM 2009a, page 15). Climate change is expected to make the world hotter, rainfall more intense, and result in more extreme weather events such as droughts, storms and floods. These changes, in turn, will likely result in further population movements (IOM, 2009b, page 14-15). In other words, climatic changes are increasingly recognized as growing drivers of migration across the world (ADB 2012; Foresight 2011). For example, in 2008, extreme weather events displaced 20 million persons, compared to 4.6 million people displaced within their own countries by conflict and violence over the same period (IOM 2009a, page 11). According to the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), storms, floods and droughts have increased threefold over the past 30 years (IOM 2009b).

## BOX 1. CASE STUDIES ON MOBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN VIET NAM

**UN Viet Nam study in Long An and Dong Thap:** in the case of a group resettled to a residential cluster in Long An province, environmental factors played a minor or indirect role in households' decisions to move, whereas in a dyke group in Dong Thap province, households were 'somewhat' to 'very likely' to have moved because of environmental stress (Chun and Sang 2012).

**Oxfam-UN study in Quang Tri Province:** Climate change or environmental change was not identified as a significant push factor, and the reasons for migration were mainly economic conditions. However, environmental factors – including extreme weather – contributed to crop failures and deteriorating livelihood conditions. Climate change thus had a clear indirect impact on decisions around migration, in the form of impacts on livelihood security (Hai 2012).

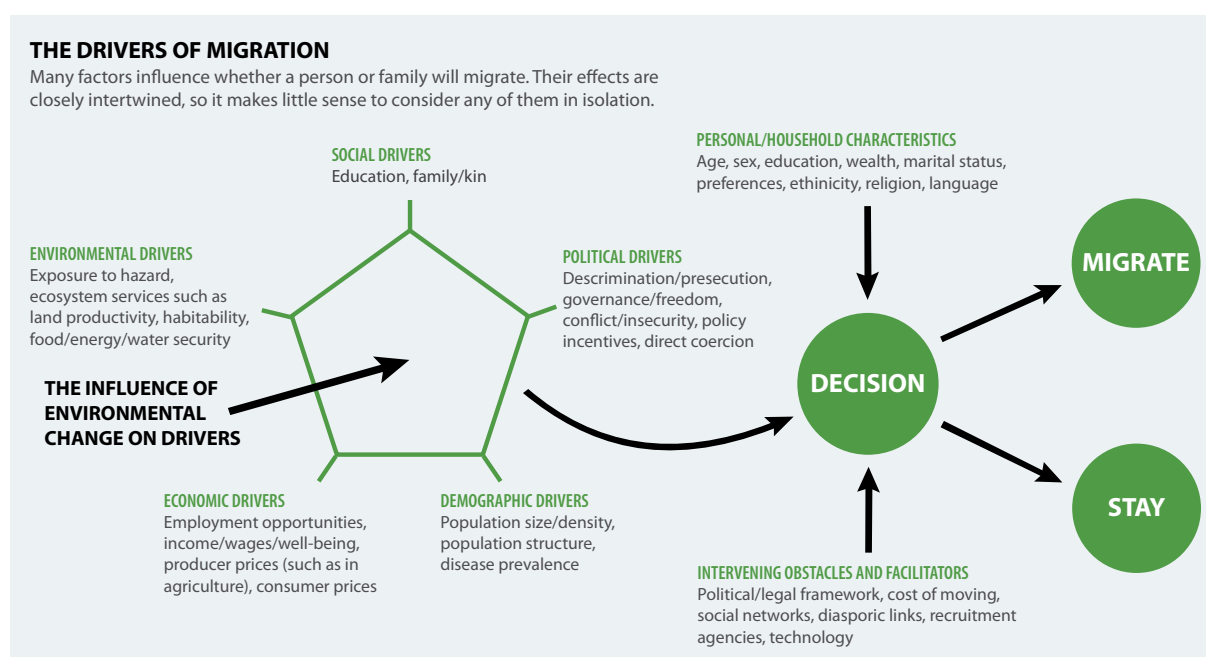
**CARE in Dong Thap:** Dong Thap province experiences less predictable weather conditions, including increased rain variability, with rainy seasons starting earlier and lasting longer, and an increase in total rainfall and extreme weather events. This has major impacts on livelihoods, particularly of vulnerable landless households. One coping strategy is the selling of labour, next to getting external help, reducing food consumption, increasing income, and reducing expenditures. Migration, particularly to industrial areas and to HCMC, was ranked as the 5th coping strategy by the households, with flooding and lack of farming land as important triggers (Thao 2012; Personal communication 2013<sup>1</sup>).

**Can Tho University:** A study in Ca Mau province focused on fishery livelihoods and adaptation. As small scale fishers in that area are extremely poor, they are seriously exposed to the threats of fish stock decline, harsh weather and dangerous conditions. These fishing communities built their livelihood resilience through diversification, outmigration, intensification, collaboration and specialization (Ha 2012).

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication, 26 February 2013, with Mr. Nguyen Cong Thao (researcher), Mr. Nguyen Viet Khoa (researcher) and Ms. Nguyen Thi Yen, CARE International, Ha Noi.

The relationship between environmental and climate change and migration is often complicated by the multifaceted associations with other factors, such as population growth, poverty, governance, human security and conflict. In most cases, environmental and climate change factors are not the only drivers of migration. Especially in cases of slow-onset environmental degradation, decisions on whether to stay or move and where to go are intrinsically associated with individual, cultural, social, political and economic factors (IOM 2009a, page 19). Figure 1 shows how drivers of migration are diverse and interact with each other: environmental factors can be direct, but they also interact with other drivers of migration. The combination of those factors, together with personal characteristics, obstacles and facilitators, encourage or discourage movement and migration.

**Figure 1. The Drivers of Migration**



(Source: Black et al. 2011)

Environmental degradation occurs when these processes negatively affect livelihoods and the ecosystem services a community depends on. Exacerbated by climate change, these phenomena are often also provoked or aggravated by unsustainable forms of development. These processes have a medium- to long-term impact on existing livelihood patterns and systems of production and may trigger different types of migration (IOM 2009a, page 17). In other words, in most cases, environmental drivers which can be in the form of natural disasters or environmental degradation, can play an important role as push factors of migration (Warner 2010), especially when they are combined with the effects of climate change. But there is no uni-linear causal relationship between climate change and migration, and climate-induced migration is a highly complex and contested issue, as environmental factors are intertwined with social and economic factors as multiple causes of mobility and migration (Foresight 2011; ADB 2012).

## Development implications: migration and resettlement as climate change adaptation

The concept of vulnerability plays an important role in understanding the linkages between migration and climate change. Migration can heighten or lessen an individual's vulnerability. Migration can be a coping strategy which contributes to income diversification and enhances overall capacity of households and communities to cope with the adverse effects of environmental and climate change stresses (IOM 2010, page 12). It also can be an adaptation strategy, especially in responding to slow-onset climate change phenomena and environmental degradation. Households with more diverse assets and access to a variety of adaptation options can use migration in ways that enhance resilience. Those households which have the least access to such options, for example with very limited livelihood diversification, no land, and little education often use internal migration as survival strategy (Warner 2013). In some cases of mismanagement or weak management, migration, and forced migration in particular, can also lead to new and greater vulnerabilities for migrants and communities of origin and destination (IOM 2012, page 65).

Warner (2013, page 767) classifies four broad profiles relevant to the use of migration in response to weather variability and livelihood insecurity. These profiles represent a spectrum, with households within a profile being closer to one or the other of the profiles on either side:

- 1. improving their resilience:** These households use migration as one of a variety of adaptation strategies, for example moving seasonally to non-agricultural jobs in large cities;
- 2. surviving but not flourishing:** These households often move seasonally to other rural areas as agricultural labourers;
- 3. a means of gaining security as a erosive coping strategy:** These household often move during a difficult period for basic needs; and
- 4. 'trapped population':** These households cannot easily use migration to adapt to negative impacts of climate and environmental stressors.

Government-promoted resettlement certainly plays an important role with regard to climate-induced migration in Viet Nam. Resettlement/relocation is a government instrument to stabilize livelihoods of people in disaster prone areas in Viet Nam (SR of Viet Nam 2007<sup>2</sup>). One of the largest programs of its kind is the 'living with the floods program', where residential clusters and areas along dykes in the Mekong Delta are the core areas for relocation, improving living conditions and providing stable livelihoods for flood affected communities. Investment to construct residential clusters and dykes is for example one of the seven main objectives of the Decision No. 173/2001/QD-TTg on 'socio-economic development of the Mekong Delta region in 2001-2005'.

Figure 2 shows how vulnerabilities, exposure and weather and climate events interact and determine disaster risks, as well as the need for adequate responses in the field of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management. Resettlement programs aim in particular to reduce the exposure of local communities to disasters, i.e. relocation of people living in conditions deemed unsafe, e.g. to higher ground (residential clusters and dykes) on with access to basic infrastructure in the Mekong Delta is improved. Exposure is a necessary, but not a sufficient, determinant of risk (IPCC 2012, page 69). Reducing the exposure may not lead to the reduction of vulnerabilities, unless measures are taken to also address the underlying causes of vulnerability such as income and education. Resettlement may in fact increase the vulnerability

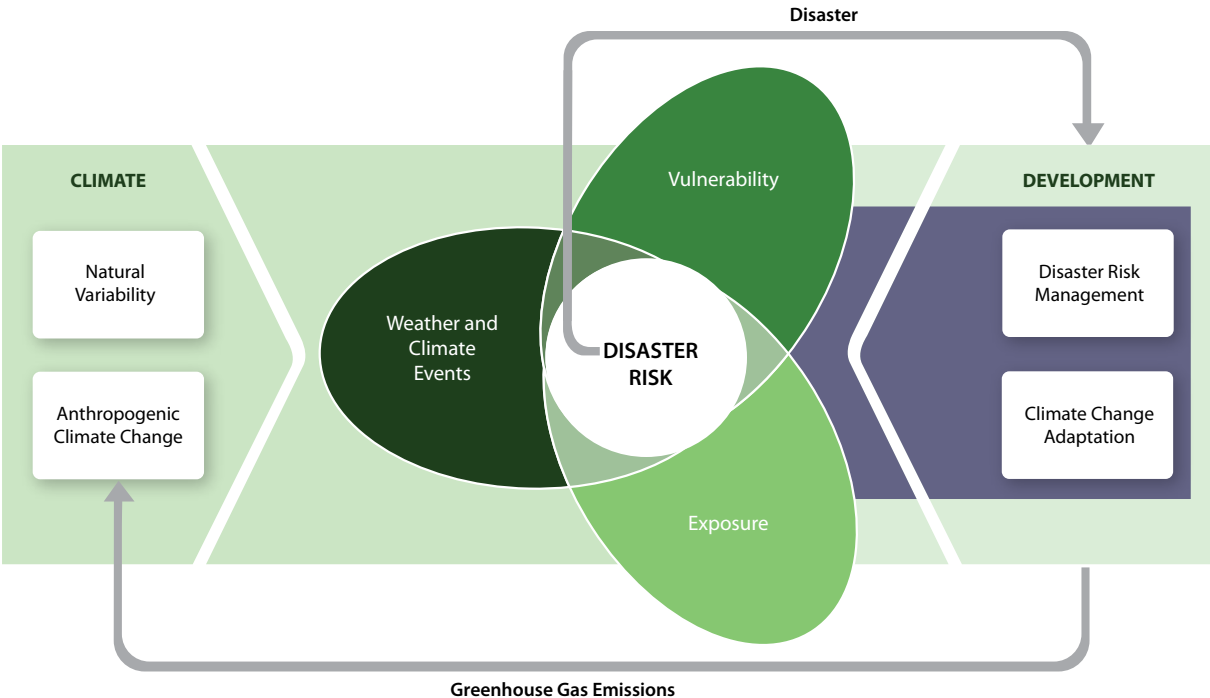
2 This is included as specific objective 2 d) in the 'National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020'.



of households, e.g. with an increase in unemployment (Xe and Dang 2006) resulting from a lack of job opportunities in residential clusters, and poor quality of houses and infrastructure (Danh and Mushtaq 2011). The residential clusters and dykes programs in the Mekong Delta is discussed further in Chapter IV.

Migration is still largely perceived as a negative consequence of environmental change and is often seen as a failure to adapt to a changing environment. However, there is growing evidence that suggests that migration can enhance resilience of individuals and communities, and can represent a logical and legitimate livelihood diversification and significant adaptation strategy, especially in early stages of environmental degradation, as it is reducing reliance on the environment of livelihoods and helping to reduce vulnerabilities. There is also evidence in Viet Nam that resettled people may migrate to yet other places, i.e. that resettlement and migration both occur, as people seek job opportunities and better and safer living circumstances (CCFSC 2012; CTU, IOM and UNDP 2012; Chun and Sang 2012; IOM 2010, page 12).

**Figure 2. The interaction of climate, disaster risk and development, and how disaster risk management and climate change adaptation can reduce exposure and vulnerability to weather and climate events and thus reduce disaster risk.**



(Source: IPCC 2012)

The two-way connection between migration and the environment can also result in a vicious circle and lead to new and greater vulnerabilities for migrants and communities of origin and destination. If inadequately managed, large-scale movements can lead to overexploitation of natural resources and further destruction of peoples’ livelihoods in the host environment. This may, in turn, provoke further migration and displacement, in addition to creating tension with the receiving communities (IOM 2009a).

Overall, the outcomes of migration and resettlement for resilience could be positive or negative, creating new opportunities and livelihoods and increasing resilience, particularly for the better off, more wealthy migrants, but also creating new vulnerabilities for poor or vulnerable migrants. Poor migrants often settle in urban or peri-urban areas with high costs of living, as well as low quality drainage and flood protection infrastructure, whilst during floods critical services such as clean water supplies are often severely disrupted. Rapidly expanding urban settlements will continue to face severe climatic risks and their resilience is at stake due to their location, high population densities, informal settlements, and concentrations of solid and liquid waste (Tanner et al. 2008). Climate-induced mobility might become one of the major issues that government have to consider in their adaptation policies (Costa et al. 2013).

## Climate induced mobility: a complex typology

Throughout human history, migration has always been one of the ways that people have applied to adapt to environmental change (IOM 2009b). Climate change reinforces existing migration patterns, rather than creating new ones. The degree to which climatic stress is an important driver of migration depends also on the nature of the hazard (Chun and Sang 2012). Rapid-onset climatic phenomena, especially extreme events, such as tropical cyclones, storms, and floods, tend to capture the media headlines and may result in mass temporary displacement, but are often not a reason for people to migrate. Slow-onset climatic phenomena, such as repeated drought, desertification, coastal and soil erosion, and sea level rise, tend to be less dramatic and therefore attract less attention than rapid-onset phenomena. However, slow-onset phenomena tend to affect a large number of people, impact on livelihoods and may trigger different types of migration, including permanent migration. It is one of the main drivers of climate change induced migration and resettlement (Laczko and Aghazarm 2009; Chun and Sang 2012). For example, over the last 30 years, twice as many people have been affected by droughts as by storms (1.6 billion compared with approximately 718 million) (IOM 2009b, page 5 and page 14-15).

**Figure 3. Typology of climate-related disasters in Viet Nam**

Weather or climate-related			
	Meteorological	Hydrological	Climatological
Rapid-onset	Tropical storms, cyclones	Floods, flash floods, landslides	Extreme temperature, heat waves
Slow on-set		Sea-level rise, coastal and soil erosion	Drought, desertification

(Source: IDMC 2013<sup>3</sup>)

3 This figure is based on the table 1.1 of the IDMC 2013. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. 2013. *Global Estimates 2012: People displaced by disasters*. IDMC, Norwegian Refugee Council.

Several types of climate-induced mobility are classified based on different levels of coercion (voluntary or forced); levels of preparedness (proactive or reactive); and duration (long-term or short-term) (Gemenne 2009). Mobility is often a response taken at the household level to diversify income streams and to secure livelihoods (Foresight 2011, page 12).

Any climatic phenomena may cause the affected populations to leave their homes at least temporarily, whilst return is often feasible in the long run. In the early and intermediate stages of climatic stresses and shocks, migration can represent a logical and legitimate livelihood diversification option. It is an adaptation strategy for affected populations to help them cope with the effects of climate change. In this context, migration is likely to be temporary, circular or seasonal in nature. However, in cases of irreversible changes, for instance due to sea-level rise, migration can become permanent and may require relocation of affected populations (IOM 2009a, page 18).

Warner (2010) analyzed how rapid- and slow-onset climatic phenomena lead to environmentally ‘forced’ or ‘voluntary’ migration based on the possibilities of alternative livelihoods in impacted areas or the socioeconomic and physical recovery of impacted areas. However, a clear distinction between ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ instances of environmental migration is often difficult to make. Therefore, environmentally-induced migration is best understood as a continuum, ranging from clear cases of forced to clear cases of voluntary movement, with a grey zone in between (Hugo 1996; IOM 2009c, page 5).

# III. Lessons from Migration in Viet Nam

Human mobility, or migration, is as old as human history, also in the territory of Viet Nam. Economic reforms (doi moi of 1986) and the consequent rapid economic development and decrease of poverty would likely not have been achieved without substantial mobility (Anh 2006). The 2009 Population and Housing Census (MPI 2009) counted a population of 85,789,573 people, with 6.6 million internal migrants (persons who migrated in the five years prior to the census). Of those internal recorded migrants about 50 percent moved within provinces and 50 percent migrants across provinces. The census defines a migrant as someone who has a different place of residence at the time of the survey compared to a designated date five years prior to the survey. Such a definition does not count those who migrated within the five years period but returned home before the census date, including seasonal and temporary (returning) migrants and unregistered movements (UN Viet Nam 2010b, page 13). Therefore the total number of internal migrants is not known, but probably much higher (UN Viet Nam 2010b, page 23).

The proportion of migrants in urban areas is quite large. For example Ha Noi's population included 20 percent registered migrants in 2009, and in Ho Chi Minh City it was even one third of the total population (Haugton et al. 2010<sup>4</sup>). Migrants in the urban areas are likely to work in the service sector, including transportation (e.g. taxi drivers, motorbike taxis 'xe ôm'); the hospitality industry; domestic work; manufacturing; construction; and a significant proportion of urban migrants is self-employed. There are substantial amounts of financial assistance remitted by migrants to relatives in sending areas as well as food assistance from sending areas to migrants (UNDP 2009). Overall, men in Viet Nam send more remittances than women, but on average, the money sent represents 10 percent of men's income, while women's proportion is 17 percent (UNFPA 2007).

The role of environmental factors and particularly climatic change in driving migration is highlighted in chapter II. Although individual and household motivations for migration are rarely one-dimensional and incorporate a range of factors, the vast majority of internal migrants in Viet Nam migrate for economic reasons (GSO and UNFPA 2006, page 23). There are several economic factors pushing rural to urban migration, including loss of farmers' bonds to land (due to decollectivization) and commercialization and mechanization of agriculture, resulting in a loss of employment opportunities. On the other hand, urban economic zones, with growing industry, service and technology sectors and foreign direct investment, particularly cities such as HCMC and Ha Noi and surrounding areas are important pull factors for rural to urban migration (Anh 2006; Chun and Sang 2012). In general the standard of living in urban areas is perceived to be better compared to rural sending areas. However, more financial means are needed for consumption these days because particularly younger people are attracted to items such as mobile phones, laptops and computers and motorcycles. Chun and Sang (2012) identify two main drivers of migration in Viet Nam: (a) lack of (steady) employment, and (b) low income in sending rural areas. Joining family is also a reason for migration. Existing social networks are vital in determining if a person migrates or not. Also the fact that incomes in cities are higher than in rural areas attracts many migrants into the cities and southern provinces. Ownership of housing and/or of productive land – which is of great cultural significance – are important factors that restrain (permanent) outmigration. People and households who own land and/or a house are less likely to take up migration as a strategy, and more likely to return to their home and land should they migrate (Chun and Sang 2012).

## Rights and legal context

John Wilmoth, Director of UN-DESA's Population Division, New York: 'Migrants whose rights are well respected are best able to participate in the broader process of social and economic development in their host and origin societies. On the other hand, migrants who have an irregular legal status are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation...' (in: DESA News, Vol.17, no.04, April 2013)

According to the **Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam** (amended on November 28, 2013), all citizens, including migrants, have equal rights, including the right to work, education, health care, and freedom of movement and residence. 'Citizens are entitled to freedom of movement and residence inside the country, of

<sup>4</sup> In this report another definition of migrants was followed than the one of the General Statistics Office (GSO); it is based on registration, instead of the duration of more than 5 years.

departure for and return from foreign countries. The implementation of these entitlements is in accordance with the laws' (Article 23). Also the **Labour Code** abolishes officially all overt restrictions to movement.

The **Household Registration System** (ho khau) is one of the most important factors determining a household's access to social services and utilities, and their access to land and housing. Prior to the 1990s migration was strictly controlled by the government through the household registration system and employment policies, i.e. spontaneous movement was discouraged and migration from rural to urban restricted (Anh et al. 2003). In the 1990s the rules of the system were relaxed to allow greater mobility to meet labour demands, and although this greatly enabled movement, it continues to create barriers for non-residents (including migrants) to access essential services and basic rights (Anh 2009). A distinction is made between four categories of households based on their registration status, ranging from permanent registration to temporary registration, as follows:

KT1: Residents (including both non-migrants and migrants) with permanent household registration at place of current residence.

KT2: Intra-district migrants who have permanent household registration in the province/city of current residence.

KT3: Migrants who do not have permanent registration at the place of current residence but have temporary registration for 6-12 months with the possibility of extension

KT4: Migrants who do not have permanent registration at the place of current residence but have temporary registration for 1-6 months.

However, many people migrate temporarily to cities without registration. According to the Government regulation, any Vietnamese citizen residing in a place outside of their permanent residence for 30 days or more must register and receive KT4 status through the police. To obtain this a letter of release from district or commune authorities in their place of permanent residency is needed, and proof of job or school enrolment at place of destination must be provided. Commonly migrants are unable to secure permission from either end, and once outside the system it is difficult to get in again (UN Viet Nam 2010).

Unregistered migrants and a sizable portion of temporary migrants have a precarious legal position and lack equal access to essential rights and services. They are kept invisible, were not included in censuses and their existence is often ignored. This involves both short-term migrants and some who have been living for extended periods of time with an unregistered status (Pincus et al. 2008).

The Law on Residence (2006, effective in 2007), determines that every citizen has the right to choose their area of residency without any employment preconditions; however, its implementation at local level remains inconsistent. Formally this Law reduced the number of residence categories to just two – temporary and permanent, and it should have eased conditions for obtaining permanent residency. However, there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that the Law is applied inconsistently by local authorities across the country due to lack of guidance and differing interpretations of the law, causing a lot of confusion (Pincus et al. 2008; UN Viet Nam 2010b).

A recent trend has emerged of strengthening restrictions for migrants to register their residence in large cities, such as HCMC and Ha Noi, restricting them to obtain permanent residency. However, Ha Noi and HCMC approach migration in different ways. HCMC has made some important improvements over the past years, including better access to housing (particularly in industrial areas) and pensions, and adjusting the criteria for residence, although overall the position of the original residents is still better. In Ha Noi, on the other hand, there are more restrictions regarding migrants; and the recently adopted Law on the Capital (2012)<sup>5</sup> that lays out the construction, development and management of Hanoi intends to prevent the uncontrolled immigration into urban areas.

5 Law no. 25/2012/QH13 which came into effect on 1 July 2013. It mentions in Article 19 that 'The residents in the capital shall be managed according to the scale, density, and structure in the overall planning for the capital's construction.' Citizens are eligible for the registration of residence in the urban areas in cases prescribed by the Law on Residence, and for those who have temporarily resided in the urban areas for at least 3 years, owned or rented houses from official organizations and businesses. Registration for residence for those residing in leased houses requires formal approval.

## Social differentiation and vulnerabilities

The Report on Urban Poverty Assessment in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City (UNDP 2010) indicated that most migrants are relatively young: approximately 72% of migrants in Ha Noi are aged from 15 to 39. According to the 2004 Viet Nam Migration Survey (GSO and UNFPA 2006), about 42 percent of migrants are unmarried and single; almost 38% of respondents moved with their families. The 2004 inter-censal survey of Ho Chi Minh City showed that women tend to migrate at slightly younger ages than men, and that the number of female migrants is increasing (Anh 2006). Women make up 53% and 59% of the total migrants in age groups 15-19 and 20-24, respectively (UNDP 2010). Overall feminization of migration takes place, 53% of migrants are female (UNDP 2010). There is a high demand for female workers, so that the number of women moving to urban areas and industrial zones has begun to exceed the number of men.

Gender is an important determinant when it comes to migration, but also intersects with other aspects, such as wealth and status, age and ethnicity, play a role in this context. Types of labour differ between male and female migrants: men work more in construction, whereas there are more women as domestic workers, cheap factory workers or exchanging labour with other households (Nelson 2010). In many countries there are serious risks for migrant women of abuse, poor labour rights and isolation (UNFPA and WEDO 2009). A recent study suggests that female migrant factory workers are subject to gender-based violence, from their partners as well as from individuals in the community (Steibelt 2009). The study noted that much of this vulnerability stems from the fact that they are living away from the protection of their families and lack social networks, including a lack of social cohesion in the migrant housing areas (Steibelt 2009). Many women in the study reported that their partners were unemployed, underemployed or in insecure and precarious jobs, which contributed to spiralling tensions in the home. It was suggested that increased job opportunities for men would help reduce economic strain on the family and domestic tensions. Another determining factor is the location of women's place of work and their accommodation: many live in remote and isolated areas which are cheaper than safer housing near main roads or markets (UN Viet Nam 2010b).

The impact of migration on children can be significant: they are affected by displacement, fragmentation of their families, interruption of their education and disrupted social networks. Health effects can also be significant, e.g. through the outbreak of communicable diseases (Nelson 2010). Overall there is little evidence of the exact number of children under 18 years of age who are themselves independent migrants. The 2003 Survey and Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY) (UNICEF 2003) showed that living away from home at least one month is experienced by approximately one-third of female youths (under 18 years of age); this is slightly lower for male youth. Forty six percent of the youth moved away to earn money. Of the rural youth 50.5 percent lived away for at least one month, while this was 31.2 percent for urban youth (UNICEF 2003). Boys are mainly working in physically demanding sectors, such as coal picking or fishing, or in drugs sales and trafficking, while girls often do domestic work, and some end up in the sex industry (ILO Viet Nam 2010). Many of these youth are not registered, work many hours per day, and are paid very little or not at all. Many youth suffer from physical and mental stress and abuse.

Migration of a family member has impacts on those left behind, including the elderly. Sometimes communities of sending areas have to look after the children of migrants, and to ensure that the migrant's land is not reallocated. This puts an extra burden on those left behind. Outmigration of men increases the number of female headed households in sending communities, one of the reasons of the feminization of small scale agriculture. These processes put higher burdens on women left behind, who often have limited access to key livelihood resources (UN Viet Nam 2010b). On the other hand, where social structures and roles change, some suggest this might open up new opportunities with more autonomy for migrating women and those staying behind as gender roles might change (Paris et al. 2009). Such progress on gender equality is by no means a given, but rather requires further social change.

Policies and practices tend to favour the Kinh group over ethnic minority groups. For example, with a rapid in-migration of lowland Vietnamese or Kinh (the largest of 54 ethnic groups) and of northern mountain people of different ethnicities, the ethnic composition of the Central Highlands in Viet Nam has changed substantially over the past 40 years. The ethnic minorities who lived in the area had to secure their livelihoods often by moving into more marginal areas, where they are more exposed to climatic variations and poorer soils (Winkels 2008). A World Bank report showed that Kinh migrants had better access to land compared to minority migrants. Sixty seven percent of minority ethnic migrants had to clear their own land after migration, while sixty two percent of the Kinh had money to purchase their own land (World Bank 2009, page 236). Limited access to markets and business opportunities, lack of credit and less developed technical skills also disadvantaged the ethnic minority migrants compared to Kinh migrants. Furthermore, tensions



arose between in-migrating groups, because of diverse ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds. Migrant insecurity increases by remoteness, inadequate governmental investment, resource pressures, protracted lack of legal recognition of land titles, and restrictions on access to public services for migrants who have not been registered (Winkels 2008).

## Living conditions of migrants

Although overall migrants perceive their move as an essential step in sustaining their livelihoods, and that of their families, migration also poses many challenges for them. Housing conditions for migrants in urban areas are often troublesome: many live in crowded boarding houses without basic facilities and infrastructure. Box 2 summarizes the living conditions of migrants in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City, from the Urban poverty assessment in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City in 2010.

### BOX 2. LIVING CONDITIONS OF MIGRANTS IN HA NOI AND HO CHI MINH CITY

The average living area per person in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City is 17 square meters/person; whereas more than 61% of migrants have an average living area under 6 square meters/person and one third of migrants are living in space that amounts to less 4 square meters/person. Poor housing conditions are widespread among migrants. Only 8.7% of migrants own their dwellings, so more than 90% of migrants are living in rented housing, temporary shelter, construction sites or in workshops. More than 30% of migrants in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City need to buy water from cans or bottles. Most migrants use electricity provided by the national grid; however only 51% of migrants have a direct connection to the grid, 17.6% share a meter with other households, and 31.5% do not connect directly but use electricity through other households, which usually costs more than having a direct connection. The research in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City showed that for any given age, a lower proportion of migrants attend school than do residents. Similarly, the proportion of migrants with health insurances is 43.4% while this proportion for residents is 66.2% and just 53.6% of migrants children have health insurance compared to 85.5% for residents (Haugton et al. 2010).

Many migrants face job insecurity, although migrants working in the industrial zones often have labour contracts. Employment without contracts, particularly of temporary and unregistered migrants, means that the labour code and regulations are easily violated, for example that workers are susceptible to early dismissal, or that they are engaged in risky and dangerous jobs (UN Viet Nam 2010b, page29-30). In Ha Noi and HCMC, approximately 60 per cent of migrants are working without a formal contract. However, it should be noted that it is not a problem only for migrants, but also for local residents in Ha Noi and HCMC (55%) (Haugton et al. 2010). Such jobs rarely provide benefits such as health insurance, unemployment benefits, sick leave, maternity leave, or vacation leave. Only Vietnamese employees who work under labour contracts with a definite term and contract of three months are entitled to join compulsory social insurance according to the Social Insurance Law (No 71/2006/QH11).

Migrants tend to be less skilled than residents. Among migrants in Ha Noi and HCMC, 76% lacked professional training, compared to 60% for residents; and only 10% of migrants had any college education, compared to 25% for residents (Haugton et al. 2010). This is a likely reason for the slightly lower average incomes of migrants compared with residents. Women migrants and migrants from ethnic minority groups appear to be at a particular disadvantage and earn much less on average than non-migrant women as well as male migrants and non-migrants. Language can be a barrier for ethnic minority migrants moving to urban areas (GSO 2004; UNFPA 2007).

Overall the multidimensional character of poverty of migrants in urban areas is obvious. It is not just income poverty that determines the difficult lives of migrants in cities, but especially other dimensions of deprivation, inequality and vulnerability, including limited access to social services such as health care and education, water and sanitation, and hazardous environmental and physical conditions. Vulnerability is not only the result of behavioural and situational factors, but also because of limited access to reproductive health services and inadequate access to information (UN Viet Nam 2010b, page36). Nevertheless, in recent years the Government has recognized the vulnerability of migrant and mobile populations, for example to HIV infection in the National Strategy on the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS (2010-2020) and the Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control.



Millions of migrants have moved from rural areas towards cities in search of work. Many of these women and men form a dynamic labour force, fuelling the country's economic development. Spontaneous migration can be seasonal, temporary or more permanent. Motivations for migration are never one-dimensional, but they incorporate a range of factors, with the vast majority of migrants moving because of economic reasons, caused by deteriorating livelihoods and lack of employment opportunities in rural sending areas, and the perception of better living standards in urban areas.

Internal migration is often an engine of economic development, and although migrants usually perceive their move as an essential step in sustaining their livelihoods and that of their families, migration also poses many challenges. Migrants generally do not receive the same level of administrative and legal support as permanent residents, who have lived in one place for more than five years. Although according to the amended Constitution of Viet Nam (2013) all citizens have equal rights, and the Law on Residence (2006) determines that every citizen has the right to choose their area of residency, existing frameworks and practices related to the Household Registration System and urban regulations, hinder the equal rights and social protection of internal migrants. This is reflected in less job security, lower wages, poor housing conditions, limited access to social services, including health care and education, and social exclusion. In particular children, women and elderly, as well as ethnic minorities, are vulnerable to exploitation.

The current legal and administrative structure for social protection does not cover spontaneous migration, and such movements are largely discouraged, in particular as the *ho khau* system creates a barrier for the protection of migrants (Duong et al. 2011). No legal framework exists that protects spontaneous migrants. Institutionally, there is no government agency responsible for social protection of spontaneous (internal) migrants. This means that their specific challenges and needs frequently fall between the cracks (Hanh 2013).

# IV. Lessons from Resettlement in Viet Nam

## Resettlement programs as a response to climatic disasters

This chapter focuses on resettlement for environmental reasons. Government-managed resettlement is a typical form of mobility in Viet Nam, with planned movements since 1961 in the North and since 1975 throughout the country. In this history of planned migration and resettlement, millions were resettled from densely populated areas to remote and sparsely populated areas (Anh 2006). After 1975, the Vietnamese Government organized large flows of planned migration from Northern areas to Southern cities and rural areas (Duong and Hong 2008, page 397).

Contemporary resettlement programs are diverse. Resettlement is targeted to people in disaster-affected areas, highly disadvantaged areas, border areas (for national security reasons), areas for special development (e.g. construction of dykes or hydroelectric dams), as well as households located on islands, people with nomadic lifestyles, and people living in protection forest areas (Chun and Sang, 2012). People are also encouraged to move to certain industrial areas with labour needs. Specifically, resettlement policies are a form of addressing exposure and vulnerability to flooding, and other forms of environmental degradation (e.g. river bank erosion). This is addressed in particular through construction and improvement of residential clusters and residential dykes, notably in the Mekong Delta, which have already been mentioned in Chapter I (UN Viet Nam 2010b, page 22).

Residential dykes refer to raised areas along rivers, canals, and ditches, where small boats can be moored, and historically have been the most popular type of location for houses in the Mekong Delta. Residential clusters refer to areas where houses are clustered in groups on raised land. According to government documents, a residential cluster has a size of two to three hectares; is for 100 to 200 households; is adjacent to rice fields; is suitable for habitation and livelihood activities; and has access to basic facilities and infrastructure (clean water, schools, and health clinics). Residential dykes provide less land than clusters, but marginal lands near dykes enable households to cultivate home gardens and raise livestock to increase household income. (Fforde et al. 2003; Danh and Mushtaq 2011; Chun and Sang 2012)

**Figure 4. A residential dyke in Long Thuan commune, Hong Ngu district, Dong Thap Province**



(Photo taken by Jane Chun 2011)

The government policies summarized in Box 3 relate to this specific resettlement program in the Mekong Delta as well as other resettlement efforts to reduce exposure to climate related and other environmental stresses. In 1996, the first policy to develop residential clusters and dykes in the Mekong Delta was introduced, including a loan program supporting poor farmers to raise housing foundations and to build houses on stilts. However, the number of loans stayed limited, and repayment rates after five years were only 5-10%. Loans were often used for other purposes, such as household purchases or the paying off of other loans and debts. After disastrous flooding in the Mekong Delta in 2000, the Living with Floods Program was implemented as an adaptation strategy, moving toward mitigation of the negative impacts of flooding (Dan and Mushtaq 2011).

### BOX 3. POLICIES AND PLANS RELATED TO RESETTLEMENT

Decision No 99/TTg, 09/02/1996 on long-term orientation and the five year plan of 1996-2000 for development of irrigation, transportation and construction in rural areas of the Mekong River Delta regulated the program of developing traffic and building up residential clusters of the Mekong delta.

The Land Law (2003) and the amended Land Law (2013) form the legal framework for individual ownership of land. The State has ultimate authority on all land use planning, recovery, and allocation: 'Land belongs to the entire-people ownership with the State acting as the owner's representative' (Article 4). This means that the State determines who is entitled to own land, who the proper use of land entails, and what they are to use it for. It means also that resettlement in new areas is an issue regulated by the Government. Article 43 says that: 'the agencies which organize the elaboration of land use planning must gather comments of the people', but decisions at central level may override those of the more local provincial, district, and the commune level.

The Law on Residence (2006) 'provides for citizens' right to freedom of residence in the territory of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; the residence registration and administration order and procedures; the rights and responsibilities of citizens, households, agencies and organizations regarding residence registration and administration. Residence means a citizen's living at a place in a commune, ward or township in the form of permanent residence or temporary residence' (Article 1)

Decision No 173/2001/QĐ-TTg of November 6, 2001 on the 'Socio-economic Development of the Mekong Delta Region in the 2001-2005 Period': One of the seven objectives of the Decision is the development of residential clusters and dykes and the efforts to improve living conditions and provide stable livelihoods for people in disaster prone areas.

Decision No. 1548/2001/QĐ-TTg of December 5, 2001, focused on investment to heighten foundations for the residential cluster / dyke construction in deeply flooded areas of the Mekong Delta in 2002.

Decision No. 105/2002/QĐ-TTg of August 2, 2002 on policies towards households in flooded areas that get loans with deferred repayment to purchase houses in residential clusters and along dykes in Mekong river delta provinces.

In 2003, the Government issued Decree 190/2003/QĐ-TTg 'on migration policies for realization of population planning and relocation for the period 2003-2010', which aimed to arrange and settle the population in areas which take advantage of potential labour migration and existing land resources. The Decree also intended to develop the fishery industry, forestry and agricultural production, to provide employment, increase income, and to alleviate poverty. It is explicitly mentioned that one objective was to minimize spontaneous migration. Protection would be provided mainly physically through basic infrastructure.

Decision no.193/2006/QĐ-TTg on: 'Approving the Program on population distribution in natural disaster- and special difficulty-hit areas, border regions, areas inhabited by free migrants, and important and very important areas of protective forests and strictly protected zones of special-use forests for the 2006-2010 period, and orientations up to 2015'.

In 2009, Decree 69/2009/ND-CP dealt with land use planning, land price, land confiscation, compensation, support and resettlement. And Decision 52/2012/QĐ-CP from 2012 focuses on job creation and vocational training for labourers whose agricultural lands have been confiscated.

The National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change (2008), outlining government responses to climate change, mentions under 'specific objectives' the displacement and management of people living in areas susceptible to harmful or dangerous environmental change. Governmental climate change adaptation strategies also include dyke construction. But further mention to migration and resettlement is not made in climate related policies.

The National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 (2007), mainly addresses sudden onset climate events. Its 'specific objectives' mention: 'Complete the relocation, arrangement and stabilization of the life for people in disaster prone areas according to the planning approved by authorized agencies. Up to 2010 manage to relocate all populations from flash flood and landslide high-risk areas and dangerous areas to safe places'.

The development of residential clusters and dykes to improve living conditions and provide stable livelihoods for people in disaster prone areas, was one of the seven objectives of Decision No. 173/2001/QĐ-TTg on the 'Socio-economic Development of the Mekong Delta Region in the 2001-2005 Period'. This involved the relocation of people living in conditions deemed unsafe in various areas of the Mekong Delta to residential clusters (which must be higher than 0.5-1.0 meter above the 2000 flood level). Decision No. 1548/2001/QĐ-TTg of 2001 elaborated on investment to heighten foundations for the residential cluster / dyke construction in deeply flooded areas of the Mekong Delta in 2002. Decision No. 105/2002/QĐ-TTg was issued in 2002 on policies towards households in flooded areas that get loans with deferred repayment to purchase houses in residential clusters and along dykes in Mekong Delta provinces. Decision 1151/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister in 2008 approved a supplementary project (Phase II) under the program to build flood proof residential clusters and houses in seven provinces in Mekong Delta. The Living with Floods Program is the largest government-driven program to stabilize livelihoods of people living in disaster-prone areas. In the Mekong delta a significant number of flood-prone residential clusters have been established and households relocated. The ongoing building and enhancement of residential clusters and dykes with basic infrastructure will continue to be an important strategy in response to the changing environment.

There is also a wider legal framework for resettlement with a range of related policies and programs at national and provincial levels, such as the Land Law (2003; amended in 2013) and related Land Code, several Decrees and other policies. According to the Implementation Plan of the National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response, and Mitigation to 2020 (CCFSC 2009), by 2015 another 130,000 households should be relocated because of environmental reasons, of which around 70% will be relocated from deeply flooded areas in the Mekong River Delta. Households will also be relocated from the Northern mid-land and mountainous areas, because these areas face frequent flash floods, mudflows and landslides; from the Red River Delta, because of riverbank and coastal erosion; from the Central Highlands, because of floods; and from the South Eastern region, which faces flooding from the Dong Nai River and Sai Gon River. The National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change (2008) only indirectly mentions displacement of people living in vulnerable situations and the construction of dykes as objectives.

Beside the residential clusters and dykes in the Mekong Delta, a resettlement program for sampan people (living on boats) has also been promoted. For example, in Thua Thien Hue Province, the resettlement policies aimed at settling the sampan people on land began after a historical typhoon in 1985, which killed 604 people with another 98 missing, and injured 234 people (CECI 2003a). Initially, the National Assembly provided direction to the Provincial People's Committee to design a policy framework promoting the resettlement of the sampan people (CECI 2003b). Guided by provincial policies, district authorities developed their resettlement plans. According to the Thua Thien Hue authorities, there were almost 1,000 sampan households living in Tam Giang Lagoon in 2009, and more than 400 sampan households on the Huong River. By 2010, 555 households in Tam Giang Lagoon and 343 households in Huong River had been resettled (Hue 2010).

## Challenges and opportunities

The outcomes of relocation and resettlement are mixed: resettlement programs have the potential to increase resilience and security of vulnerable households. Exposure to climatic and other environmental extremes and stresses is usually strongly reduced. Living conditions in resettlement areas are often reported to be better, because of safer and better housing and protection from environmental and climatic hazards. One of the major advantages of resettlement is improved access to public services, which has been observed in all three examples on the Mekong Delta in Box 4. Overall social conditions and quality of life were improved because of better access to water and electricity supply, healthcare and educational services, and road networks. The main purposes of the resettlement program are generally achieved, i.e. to protect the community from environmental shocks and stresses and to improve living conditions. However, exposure is not the only determinant of risk, and vulnerability and resilience depend on many social economic conditions, in particular access to livelihoods. Differences are perceived amongst provinces and between residential clusters and dykes. For example, in the study of Chun and Sang (2012), dyke residents in Long An complained that housing conditions had remained the same as before resettlement, and in some cases was worse compared to cluster residents.

In Tam Giang Lagoon (see also Box 5 with examples from Central Viet Nam), settled households have no access to agricultural land and there is limited land available for settlement, but the resettlement is seen as providing access to better education and non-fishing activities. The resettlement is also helpful in strengthening local social networks of villagers as they establish a new village (DaCosta and Turner 2007), reduce the gap with the land-based community, re-integrate into a land-based society, and create opportunities to participate in different social organizations (Huong 2010). Similarly, in Long An province (see Box 4), respondents reported improvements in happiness and relationships with family members, friends and neighbour (Chun and Sang 2012).

While the resettlement processes have many benefits, resettlement has also created challenges. It is clear that after resettlement, due to increased distances people need more time to travel to their agricultural fields or fishing grounds. This was one of the reasons for some sampan households in Thua Thien Hue to return to live on boats and do fishing, so the sustainability of the programs was undermined. However, in many cases, opportunities and challenges are mixed and based on different approaches and circumstances. For sampan communities, resettlement opens opportunities for non-fishing activities such as livestock raising, wage labour, and providing services, or in other words for diversifying their livelihood activities. It is different for farmers in the Mekong Delta, where animal-husbandry is usually a main income source, besides rice production, but this is banned in residential clusters (Xe and Dang 2006). There are few job opportunities for those who are living in the residential clusters (Danh and Mushtaq 2011).

An important concern is that the loan-centred approach of the resettlement programs, e.g. for foundations and house construction, which causes problems of repayment by poor and near-poor households. Debt is a common aspect of rural lives, often built up because of daily survival needs, for example by borrowing small amounts from neighbours for food or for buying fertilizer, pesticides and seeds on credit from brokers and traders at the start of a cropping season (Chun and Sang 2012, page 37). In Tam Giang Lagoon, for many sampan households, moving onto land and getting a Land Use Certificate opened opportunities to access credit from Government banks, using it to increase their income through investment. However, banks are not always willing to help the settled villagers, especially those who borrowed before and ran into repayment difficulties early on. In many resettled villages, government's financial support for resettlement came after the construction had been completed (DaCosta and Turner 2007); whilst some households suffered from outstanding loans, which made it more difficult to get further credit for livelihood development. Similarly, in Dong Thap and Long An, resettled households were often pushed deeper into debt because low-interest loans were granted to households for the housing foundation and housing construction as part of the resettlement programs (Chun and Sang 2012 page 37). Resettlement needs financial resources and investments if it is not to lead to further impoverishment or harm (de Sherbini et al. 2011).



**Figure 5. Sampan resettled households in Dinh Cu village, Phu An Commune, Phu Vang District, Thua Thien Hue Province**



(Photo taken by Ta Thi Thanh Huong 2005)

**Note:** These pictures show how poor sampan households were resettled in Dinh Cu village, Phu An commune, Phu Vang District, Thua Thien Hue Province. Although these households are resettled, they are still exposed to hazards, e.g. floods.



#### BOX 4. RESETTLEMENT CASE STUDIES MEKONG DELTA

**(1) An Giang and Can Tho provinces:** A survey conducted in 28 residential clusters (accounting for 30% of the total number of residential clusters in the two provinces), including 281 'inside' households and 81 'outside' households showed that the resettlement program caused changes in the structure of employment. After coming to the residential clusters, the unemployment rate increased to 5.6% (this combines an increase of 5.8% in non-agricultural activities and a decrease of 12% in agricultural activities). The income per household was mostly unchanged, but the structure of income sources changed. Off-farm incomes increased significantly while on-farm incomes, including employment activities, decreased. Animal-husbandry activity is commonly a main income source, besides rice production, of farmers. Before resettlement, more than 50% of households were involved in animal-husbandry activities. These activities, however, are banned as per regulations of residential clusters. A positive outcome of the resettlement is the improvement in social conditions and access to public services. In particular, school enrolment increased quickly in all educational levels. Rates of children going to kindergarten and primary school increased from 46% to 96% and 67% to 94%, respectively. The percentages of households having access to electricity and clean water supply increased from 26% to 84.7% and 12% to 68%, respectively (Xe and Dang 2006)

**(2) Tan Chau District, An Giang Province:** There were some advantages to living in the resettlement clusters. Living conditions were better and the quality of life was improved. People no longer had to move away when the flood arrived and could go out to find jobs without worrying about flooding affecting their children and the elderly. Basic living conditions were ensured with easy access to water and electricity supply, healthcare and educational services, and road networks. All respondents who were resettled were very satisfied with living conditions in the residential cluster. However there were also disadvantages. First, it took more time to getting to work outside the residential clusters. Some sold their agricultural land because of the long distance to work. Second, there were no job opportunities for those who were living in the residential clusters. Third, for the poor, incomes had not increased and, in some cases, had even decreased due to extra expenditures for water and electricity bills which they did not have to pay before. Fourth, they were not allowed to raise animals around their houses or inside the residential clusters. Finally, the quality of house construction was poor and infrastructure in the residential clusters was not completely built. For example, the toilet system did not work. The water discharge system did not function well during the flood, leading to inundation in many areas in the residential clusters (Danh and Mushtaq 2011).

**(3) Long An and Dong Thap:** Research was conducted in one residential cluster and one residential dyke in Vinh Tri commune, Vinh Hung District, Long An Province and two residential dykes in Long Thuan commune, Hong Ngu district, Dong Thap Province. In the interview of 200 resettled survey respondents, almost all agreed that houses in the resettlement areas were safer and better in quality, except a large percentage of dyke residents in Long An complained that housing condition had remained the same/ was worse compared to the cluster residents. Most respondents in Long An saw improvement in availability of jobs and income levels, whereas dyke residents in Dong Thap felt that these aspects had not changed. Access to clean water had much improved in residential clusters but had worsened in residential dykes in Long An, because of the water discharged from the canal was used for domestic purposes. Other social services such as health care, education, transportation and public services improved across all sites, as well as overall quality of life (Chun and Sang 2012).

The process of resettlement itself can also be problematic, with lack of proper planning, lack of financial accountability, and limited community participation (CTU, IOM and UNDP 2012). Other problems were lack of transparency and ambiguity regarding the process of resettlement planning and implementation, e.g. inconsistencies with support grants and loans for housing construction. In some cases inconsistencies in loans for moving and housing construction were reported, especially in Dong Thap. Environmental assessments are usually not conducted prior to construction in resettlement areas (Chun and Sang 2012).

The Grassroots Democracy legislation, as outlined in Directive 30-CT/TW (1998), and Decrees 29/1998/ND-CP and 79/2003/ND-CP, provides an important avenue for strengthening democracy and participation at the local level. According to these guidelines people at commune level should officially be informed, discuss, be consulted, monitor and inspect local projects. In some parts of the country the Grassroots Democracy Decree has enabled valuable contributions of people to (local level) infrastructure projects and public facilities. But the principles do not appear to have been widely applied in resettlement processes including the residential dykes and residential cluster program in the Mekong Delta. This may be due to limited commitment to the process by local leaders and lack of training and skills, precedent, incentives, financial resources, etc. On the other hand, grassroots democracy has helped decentralize some of the work of the central and provincial authorities, and has achieved a change in leadership style, making it more participative (Nhut 2004).

**Figure 6. Construction of resettled area in Thuy Dien village, Phu Xuan commune, Thua Thien Hue Province**



(Photo taken by Ta Thi Thanh Huong 2006)

#### **BOX 5. RESETTLEMENT CASE STUDIES CENTRAL VIET NAM**

**(1) Oxfam/UNDP study in Quang Tri province:** positive outcomes of resettlement were that in the resettlement area people felt more secure on the farm, with fewer disasters and a better economic situation. Local ethnic minority groups had gained knowledge from new arrivals, and women's income had improved significantly. Negative effects were: lack of support and information from the resettlement program, reduction in quality of education and healthcare, much poorer living conditions. Some women reported a greatly increased workload, and there were difficulties with local transportation, limited opportunities for socialization and exchange, and the emergence of social conflict (Hai 2012).

**(2) The resettlement of sampan communities in Tam Giang lagoon, Thua Thien Hue Province:** In-depth research was conducted in Thuy Dien village with around 150 households. Thuy Dien village, once a sampan community, has gradually resettled on land since 1995. The village has no access to agricultural land and limited access to residential land. The resettlement provided access to education and non-fishing activities. The resettlement also helped to strengthen local social networks of villagers as they established a new village, reduced the gap with the land-based community, and re-integrated into a land-based society. While the resettlement process has resulted in many benefits, it also created many challenges. For example, sampan people did not have strong non-fishing related skills, which are needed for activities such as animal raising and food processing. Another difficulty in the resettlement process was linked to the government's financial support which came only after the construction had been completed. Some households suffered from outstanding loans, which made it more difficult to get credit. Some sampan households found it inconvenient to live on land and returned to live on the water and do fishing. Households who had returned to sampans, but who wanted to return to dwelling on the land again faced even more difficulties; government funding was discontinued, there was even greater land scarcity in the resettlement areas and there were even higher construction costs. (Huong 2010).

# V. Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions

The environment has always been a driver of migration. Over the last two decades, the nature and scale of migration in Viet Nam has begun to change as climate change exacerbates rapid- and slow-onset shocks and gradual environmental degradation. Particularly the co-occurrence and combination of different climatic hazards can pose risks for people's livelihoods and health, including chances of epidemics. This is problematic for vulnerable rural people and communities, including women and men, children, young and elderly people, and ethnic minorities; and in urban contexts the problems are often more complex.

Migration and guided resettlement may bring many challenges, and can exacerbate vulnerabilities of migrants and/or those left behind. But migration, especially in early stages of environmental degradation, could help reducing reliance on environmental resources for livelihoods and reducing climatic risks and related vulnerabilities. Spontaneous migration and government managed resettlement can also be important long term climate change adaptation strategies. However, the outcomes of migration and resettlement depend especially on social-economic conditions such as employment opportunities as well as access to services in receiving areas or new settlements.

Resettlement programs intend to relocate individual households and small communities to safer areas, reducing exposure to climatic extremes and also slow-onset environmental stresses. However the outcomes of these programs are mixed. On the one hand, they help in protecting people from disasters, e.g. in reducing loss of life in the Mekong Delta during floods such as those in 2000, 2001 and 2011. On the other hand, the process of resettlement is sometimes problematic with lack of proper planning, lack of transparency and financial accountability, and limited community participation, whilst resettled people sometimes face problems such as lack of services, debt, lack of employment and income generation opportunities and support. Particularly important for the outcome of resettlement projects are the approach, including the degree of consultation and participation in decision making. They also often lack in-depth gender analysis, which is important in climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and resettlement. Resettlement programs should be gender-responsive, and women's empowerment and participation in decision-making processes, including those related to resettlement, should be promoted as an integral part of resettlement processes.

Moreover, the current policy framework has disincentives for migration. These disincentives are not always strong enough to stop people migrating whilst many people are successful migrants despite obstacles. Nevertheless, it shows a lack of recognition for migration as an opportunity for the country, and for receiving areas (especially cities), families and individuals, and instead sees migration as a problem. But migration is a driver of future development and industrialization of the country and it could help to increasing resilience to climatic shocks and stresses of the general population.

Migration and resettlement are important for Vietnamese society as a means to increase economic growth and wellbeing, and for increased climate resilience of local rural people, migrants and those staying behind. However, migration and resettlement only have minor presence in the development debate and agenda, particularly in the context of climate change. There is an urgent need to promote the mainstreaming of climate change, migration and resettlement issues in relevant development policies and strategies.

## Recommendations

The following are four general recommendations, related to which a number of action points are also suggested, along with the agencies who might take primary and secondary responsibility:

### **1. *Strengthen and reform relevant policies to enhance the effectiveness of mobility, migration and resettlement for increasing climate change resilience of Viet Nam's communities and population.***

- (a) Reform legal frameworks affecting spontaneous migrants, specifically the household registration system, to fully ensure the equal rights of migrants as per the amended Constitution and the Law on Residence, including rights of non-registered migrants and non-permanent migrants to access health care/insurance and local education, and direct access to water and electricity supply. (Ministries and provincial/municipal departments, including MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, MARD/DARDs, MPI/DPIs, MOIT/DOITs, and others; with advice from research institutions, mass organizations, NGOs, international development partners)
- (b) Apply Grassroots Democracy legislation and principles to all resettlement programs, ensuring people's access to information, participative planning, participative budgeting/auditing, and participative monitoring of the resettlement programs (UNDP 2006). (Ministries and provincial/municipal departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, MPI/DPIs, and others; with mass organizations and NGOs)
- (c) Mainstream concrete migration and resettlement actions for enhancing climate change adaptation into national and local policies, strategies and plans, including national and provincial Social Economic Development Plans, as well as a National Adaptation Plan<sup>6</sup>; regional climate change adaptation plans<sup>7</sup>; and action plans on Disaster Risk Management (DRM), urban development, education, social protection, and ethnic minority development. (Ministries and provincial/municipal departments, including MPI/DPIs, MARD/DARDs, MONRE/DONREs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, CEMA; mass organizations; NGOs).

### **2. *Reinforce national and provincial programs to enhance living conditions and livelihood options and resilience of migrants, resettled people, sending and recipient communities.***

- (a) Improve identification of communities and (groups of) households that are particularly exposed to climatic hazards and from where exposed and vulnerable households may be resettled, especially through collaboration between Resettlement Programs and the National Plan on Community Based Disaster Risk Management for 6,000 at-risk communities. (Ministries and provincial/municipal departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, and others; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners)
- (b) Develop and reinforce Resettlement Programs to reduce exposure as well as vulnerability to climate related hazards such as (eroding) river banks, coastal zones, and flood-prone areas in rural and peri-urban areas in priority regions such as parts of the Mekong Delta and Central Viet Nam, and increase resilience of households and social cohesion of communities, ensuring: (i) comprehensive climate change vulnerability assessment; (ii) clear responsibilities and accountability for resettlement at local level to ensure transparency and consistency and improvement of lending practices for houses (e.g. moving support and loans for housing might be given directly to households instead of contractors); (iii) full application of Grassroots Democracy regulation<sup>8</sup> in planning and monitoring of resettlement Programs (including financing and disbursements); (iv) gender analysis and gendered programming; (v) comprehensive access to services; and (vi) enhanced livelihood opportunities. (Ministries and

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6 National Adaptation Plans are recommended under the UNFCCC. A Vietnamese NAP is recommended though not yet decided, especially to guide spatial planning and public and private large scale investment decisions. It should be complementary to existing national climate change policies and local action plans.

7 Regional adaptation plans are also proposed for key regions though not yet decided. One example is the Mekong Delta Plan (SR of Viet Nam-Netherlands, 2013), that may be used as the basis for a regional climate change adaptation and water resources management action plan.

8 Directive 30-CT/TW (1998), Decree 29/98/ND-CP, Decree 79/2003/ND-CP.

provincial/municipal departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, MOET/DOETs, MOH/DOHs, and others; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners)

- (c) Develop migrant support action plans in receiving areas to ensure that migrants (permanent, temporary/seasonal or pontaneous), as well as poor and vulnerable residents in receiving areas are provided with appropriate information on climatic risks; have legal status and voting rights locally; are supported in sustaining their livelihoods; have decent housing (enable self-improvement of houses); have full access to water supply, electricity, health care (including health care insurance), child care and education services. Take explicit steps to guarantee the safety, social protection and equal rights of female migrants (UN Viet Nam 2010b). (Ministries and provincial/municipal departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, MOET/DOET, MOH/DOH, and others; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners)

**3. *Strengthen institutional capacities and operational processes to ensure social protection of migrants and resettled people in the context of climate change.***

- (a) Enhance institutional capacity in ministries and departments at central, provincial and local levels in order to improve support to migrants and resettled people in dealing with climatic hazards, through for example human resource development (training) and additional budget and infrastructure for expanded capacity. Stronger institutional capacities are needed on e.g. social protection of migrants in receiving areas; climate change vulnerability assessment; gender analysis and gendered programming in both migration and resettlement; and the use of participatory approaches in resettlement programs. (Ministries and provincial/municipal departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, MOET/DOETs, MOH/DOHs, and others; colleges / training organizations; international development partners)

- (b) Strengthen capacities of mass organizations, such as the Farmers Union, Youth Union and the Women's Union, to act at the local level on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and protection of the rights of migrants and resettled people, through for example human resource development (training). (Mass Organizations supported by colleges / training organizations; NGOs; international development partners)

- (c) Improve, promote coordination and communication on climate change adaptation, migration and resettlement between ministries, departments and institutions responsible for household registration, social protection & services, climate change, disaster risk management and resettlement, by reinforcing existing coordination mechanisms on those topics. (Ministries and provincial/municipal departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, MOET/DOETs, MOH/DOHs, and others; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners)

**4. *Increase knowledge and understanding on the nexus of climate change, mobility, migration and resettlement and the position of migrants in Viet Nam; and build awareness around this.***

- (a) Support scientific research and analysis on climatic extremes and disasters and the relationship with mobility and migration as well as the role of resettlement. This should include gender-differentiated data on migration and resettlement. Also analyze formal information (including statistical data and censuses), and address both permanent and temporary migration.<sup>9</sup> (Research institutions; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners; with ministry and local leaders and departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, and others)

- (b) Develop realistic, scientific social-economic future scenarios in the context of increasing climatic shocks and stresses, particularly at a regional scale, to inform climate change adaptation and social-economic policies and plans. (Research institutions; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners; with ministry and local leaders and departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, and others)

- (c) Research climate resilient livelihoods, including climate-smart agriculture, livestock raising, aquaculture, and other alternative livelihoods, adapted to specific situations in Viet Nam, and

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<sup>9</sup> A phenomenon that is not yet measured by the General Statistical Office.



develop recommendations for scaling-up of successful pilots and tests. (Research institutions; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners; with ministry and local leaders and departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, and others)

- (d) Increase popular awareness on the importance of migration and resettlement in climate change adaptation and related rights, plans, opportunities, and early warning, through e.g. TV documentaries and newspaper articles (the media; ministries and local departments including MARD/DARDs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, and others; research institutions; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners).
- (e) Assess how adaptation actions agreed under the UNFCCC can benefit Vietnamese communities, women and men who are exposed and vulnerable to climatic shocks and stresses, in relation to the Nairobi Program of Action and the Adaptation Framework, including the 'Warsaw international mechanism for loss and damage associated with climate change impacts'. This would include studying the potential role of the insurance and finance sector in reducing vulnerabilities of migrants and resettled people, as well as relatives in sending areas. (Research institutions; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners; ministry and local departments including MARD/DARDs, MOF/DOFs, MPI/DPIs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, and others).
- (f) Strengthen the sharing/exchange of research findings and experiences on the role of mobility, migration and resettlement for climate change resilience and adaptation, through websites and in dialogues and workshops (Research institutions; mass organizations; NGOs; international development partners; with ministry and local leaders and departments, including MARD/DARDs, MOHA/DOHAs, MOC/DOCs, MOLISA/DOLISAs, and others)



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