

ACTION ON CLIMATE MIGRATION

AIMS

Students will:

- identify some general reasons that people migrate and some reasons specific to a changing climate
- trace the root causes of climate migration, considering the influence of the Global North
- recognise that migration intersects with and contributes to inequality
- develop a sense of empathy for migrants, and explore and promote ways to better integrate new arrivals to Ireland

ACTIVITIES

Students will:

- Brainstorm a list of the reasons that people move and connect them to a changing climate
- Respond critically to images relating to climate change and migration
- Do a '5 Whys' root cause analysis of climate migration
- Read collaboratively about the experience of climate migrants
- Hold a moving debate on climate migration and inequality
- Critically review suggestions for action

MATERIALS

Action on Climate and Migration presentation
 HO1 - Climate migration picture pack
 HO 2 - Moving stories

TIME

These activities are arranged here in sets of 3x45 minute lessons. They can also be used individually as part of other lessons.

JUNIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM



Geography

- 2.6 - examine the causes and implications of climate change
- 3.2 - investigate the causes and consequences of migration

CSPE

- 2.5 - examine case studies or personal testimonies of people experiencing poverty or inequality from different contexts and countries and how they are working to overcome this
- 2.9 - analyse one global issue or challenge, under the following headings: causes, consequences, impact on people's lives and possible solutions

NOTE TO TEACHERS

- When exploring this topic, be mindful that you may touch on topics that are sensitive. Check who is in the room and adapt lessons accordingly.
- Always try to link the local to the global and prevent 'othering' of people or places.
- Discuss with your students what language is appropriate to use when discussing 'rich' and 'poor' countries. See the glossary on p. 4 for a discussion of terms.

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LESSON ONE

HOW CLIMATE DRIVES MIGRATION

Why do people move? - 10 minutes

- Ask: **What are some of the reasons that people might move between cities or to a different country?**
- Students make a list or write reasons on Post-its.
- Collect these reasons from the board. Arrange them into categories; social, political, economic, and environmental.
- Review the concepts of **forced and voluntary migration**. Which of the reasons they identified were forced? Which were voluntary?
- Distinguish between migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. [This article](#) presents this information in a way that is accessible to Irish young people.

Climate and movement - 20 minutes

- Students work in groups of 4-5. Give each group a copy of **Handout 1 - Climate Migration Picture Pack**. Project **Slide 2**.
- Ask each student to choose one image they find interesting or that raises important questions for them. Students discuss the photos using the questions on **Slide 2**.
- Project **Slide 3**. Students discuss the photos they chose in their groups using these questions.
- Take full-class feedback. What were the challenges they identified?

5 Whys - 15 minutes

[Watch here for a video explanation](#) of the activity.

- Project **Slide 4**.
- Use one of the challenges identified in the previous activity, or offer one of the following problem statements:
 1. Migrants often move because their home has become uninhabitable; however, there is no definition of a climate refugee in international law ([UNHCR, 2023](#))
 2. In the 21st century, national borders have become harder, more reinforced and more fortified ([migrationpolicy.org](#))
 3. Women and children are 14 times more likely to be killed by climate disasters ([CARE, 2020](#))
- Students write the problem statement at the top of the paper, and discuss why this is. They should formulate their response as a single sentence. This will be the second problem statement.
- Students take the new problem statement, and ask "Why is that?". They should formulate their response as a single sentence.
- Repeat the previous step until students have asked "Why...?" five times. This may be a root cause of the problem. Students share their root causes with the class.

Closing Discussion

- There is no internationally recognised definition of a 'climate refugees'. Should there be? Why? Why not?

Reflection - 5 minutes

- Use **Slide 7** after each lesson on climate and migration to reflect on student learning.

LESSON TWO

THE EXPERIENCE OF CLIMATE MIGRANTS

Moving stories - jigsaw reading - 25 minutes

- Students work in groups of 4. Give each group a set of **Handout 2 - Moving Stories**. These are narratives from real people who have moved for reasons connected to the climate. Give students some time to read.
- Students share their story with the rest of their group. Limit them to one minute each to prevent them from reading verbatim.
- Project **Slide 5**. Students compare and discuss their articles using the questions on **Slide 5**.
- Take feedback on the discussions.

Migration and inequality - 15 minutes

Moving debate

- Students stand in a line in the centre of the room.
- Read one of the motions below. Students move to the left side of the room if they agree, and the right side if they disagree.
- Each of these motions can be used to start a larger classroom discussion. Articles linked underneath offer reading for further research and deeper debate.

Motions

- People who migrate due to climate change are mostly in countries in Asia and Africa.

An element of truth, but wealthy countries (e.g. the UK, the US) also experience extreme weather events that displace people. However, they can often draw on greater resources to migrate.

- People who migrate due to climate are those with the least financial resources.

Largely untrue; migration requires financial resources that aren't available to the very poor.

- Women displaced by disasters face an increased risk of gender based violence, including domestic violence and sexual violence.

True; they also have less access to financial and social resources that prevent them from migrating in the first place

- Countries in the Global North with higher GDP spend more money on strengthening borders than on climate aid.

True.

- Migrants cost money when they arrive in countries in the Global North.

While it's true that systems like Direct Provision cost the state money, there is evidence to suggest that reducing barriers to migration could increase national and world GDP.

LESSON THREE

ACTION ON CLIMATE AND MIGRATION

Climate and migration quotes - 15 minutes

- Project the quotes on **Slide 6**. Give students time to read them.
- Ask:
 1. According to these quotes, what is the best course of action?
 2. What do these different futures look like?
 3. Which world would you like to live in?
 4. What power do you have to shape the world in this way?

Suggestions for action projects

- Research and present on one of the communities from the session. What challenges do they face?
- Create an artistic piece in school inspired by these discussions
- Interview someone who has recently arrived in Ireland. What motivated them to leave home? What challenges did they face along the way?



GLOSSARY

AVOIDING STEREOTYPING WHEN COMPARING COUNTRIES

Every society in the world has a mixture of people with access to different levels of material and social resources. For this reason, we need to choose words carefully when comparing countries. The language we use can 'other' and reinforce stereotypes - or they can challenge these ideas. Here are some terms used to discuss countries - bear in mind that none of these are considered 'perfect'. It might be worth discussing all these terms with students and agreeing meaning.

rich / poor	In any country, everyone has differing levels of access to resources. This doesn't mean that any one country is 'rich' or poor - many of the wealthiest countries have very high poverty. The definition of 'poor' is often associated with wealth, and doesn't consider one's wellbeing.
Global North / Global South	This framing makes assumptions about countries income, population, infrastructure and relative marginalisation. Many countries in the Global North have benefitted from years of extractive colonial practices to build their economies at the expense of their colonies, a process that has continued under capitalist globalisation.
First world / Third world	This framing comes from the Cold War, when Western-aligned countries were the 'First World', Soviet-aligned countries the 'Second world' and others were the 'Third World'. Beside the fact that it's politically irrelevant, it also refers to outdated stereotypes.
Developed / Developing	This framing is problematic for several reasons. The meaning of 'developed' can vary depending on the metric used to measure it. Also, is it fair to suggest countries like Ireland are completely 'developed' and have nothing left to improve? Or that other countries need to catch up to our development, in the same way?

HANDOUT 2

MOVING STORIES

NYAMDULAM

Nyamdulam and her family had been herders in Zavkhan Province, in remote north-west Mongolia for Nyamdulam's whole life. In Zavkhan Province, Nyamdulam's family had over 300 head of livestock including sheep, yack, camels, cows, and horses. Zavkhan province was heavily affected by the harsh dzuds* of 1999 and 2001. Like many families in the region, Nyamdulam and her family lost the bulk of their livestock in those two years. They struggled to recover and continued to lose livestock in each subsequent year. In 2007, the last of their livestock died.



"After we lost our livestock, we moved to the soum (sub-region) center, trying to collect salt to make a living. Most of the people in our soum were also affected by the dzud, and lots of other families were doing the same. We weren't earning enough to cover our daily needs.

In 2010, we made the decision to move to Ulaanbaatar. We had no choice but to move, it was a very difficult decision. Once we arrived, it was difficult to settle down. We didn't know people; we didn't know how life in Ulaanbaatar worked, or how to find a job. We had been herders our whole lives. Everything was different.

We came here with the whole family, including my sisters and two brothers. We lived in a small dormitory, with a shared living space. I found work keeping the coal heaters in the dormitory going throughout the night, my mother was working as an apartment guard and cleaner. Living in the public dormitory for two years, we didn't register our new residence with the local authorities, so the children couldn't go to kindergarten.

My brothers did not like living here. They moved back to the countryside to find work herding other people's animals for a salary. Now it's only the women and children here. Things are much better for us now. We know many people and understand how life works. I'm a senior officer at the Khorro (local government) and all of my children are in school.

In Zavkhan, there are lakes and very nice mountains. We miss our winter camp, and our autumn camp. It was very difficult to move. Now our dream is to have our own yard and own ger."

*dzud is a cyclical slow onset event that is unique to Mongolia, characterized by a summer drought in which the growth of fodder is slow, followed by an unusually cold, snowy or icy winter.

Adapted from <https://iamamigrant.org/stories/mongolia/nyamdulam>

SELENA

Selena is a local of one of the Carteret islands, a small cluster of islands located in the Pacific with a combined landmass of a little over 0.5km². She was born on one of the tiny islands before moving to the nearby mainland where she did her studies. She was partway through her studies at the University of Technology in Lae when she was faced with the difficult decision to return home due to the fact that her family no longer had money to provide for her education.



Despite having to return to her small island, life has been calm over the last several years.

“Life here on the island is so much simpler. Here, all we have to do is go fishing, harvest coconuts and other foods. That’s it.”

However, for Selena and many living on the Carteret islands, they are aware that this small Pacific paradise will not last forever. The Carteret islands have been largely affected by climate change over the last several decades. In particular, the islands have been slowly shrinking due to coastal erosion.

“When I was a little girl, this island was much bigger, the coastline stretched more than 20 meters into where the sea is today.”

Selena now lives with her grandchildren and husband on Heune – an island smaller than a football field. Originally, it was connected to a nearby island before coastal erosion separated them in the 1960s.

“I knew that my home was shrinking and understood what was happening but many on the island did not. There were groups of people who came a long time ago to try and educate us on the greenhouse effect but many were still confused until IOM came and explained coastal erosion to us.

Many are afraid now that there won’t be any more places for them to live. Some tell us we only have five more years left to live here and others have said as many as 10. Some people have already made the transition to the mainland including my children who live in the city of Buka.

I know that when the day comes for us to move to the mainland that we will have to adapt. Life in the cities is different. Even life in rural areas on the mainland is different from here. Here, the land is very easy to grow fruits and vegetables on without much effort and difficulty. I had an aunt here who grew a banana tree a decade ago and it still stands today. Land on the mainland is much more difficult to grow food from. You must put much more hard work into getting the same results.”

As her home continues to get washed away in the sea, Selena knows that she will likely have to make the move in her lifetime.

“We have to adapt, because we have no choice.”

Adapted from <https://iamamigrant.org/stories/papua-new-guinea/selena>

KELSEY LAHR

When I was a college sophomore, a significant portion of my campus burned down. A fast-moving fire began on the ridge above the school, in Santa Barbara, California, and swept down the hillside in an instant.

That smoky night I spent trapped in a school gym was in 2008. In the years since, we've seen a dramatic increase in fast-moving, high-intensity fires. I've been evacuated three times from various parts of California, and I've been put on evacuation warning a dozen times more. Every summer, I kept my passport, Social Security card, and external hard drive in a go bag by the door in case I needed to get out fast.



The last time I was evacuated, during the 2018 Ferguson Fire in Yosemite National Park, I knew I had had enough. I'd loved living in California—I was born and raised in the Golden State. But huddling next to my air filter in my cabin in Yosemite, as the fire spewed noxious smoke just a few miles down the road, I reflected on the string of fires that had put me in similar situations in recent years. I finally realized: This is no way to live. In the wake of the Ferguson Fire, I didn't just muse about moving due to climate change. I started planning my escape. And then I packed my bags and left.

Although relocations can be difficult, it requires a certain level of privilege to be a climate change migrant in America right now. Most of the people I spoke with are relatively free to move around, without the ties of children or home ownership, and with enough money to afford to relocate. For homeowners, parents, or people living paycheck to paycheck, it's harder to pack up and move.

I researched climate change impacts occurring now, and those projected for the future. I already knew I wanted out of the fire- and drought-prone West. Coastal areas, which are at risk of sea-level rise and hurricanes, were also out. I landed on Western North Carolina, in the Appalachian Mountains, safe from most extreme climate events like hurricanes and fires—for now.

Meanwhile, my family back on the West Coast is feeling the apocalypse. My parents can't go outside due to the unhealthy air quality. Two sets of my cousins in Oregon have been evacuated, and my sister is on evacuation warning. I feel deeply for my friends and family. But more than anything, I feel relieved—I got out just in time.

Adapted from <https://slate.com/technology/2020/09/climate-change-migration-happening-now.html>

Hindu Oumarou Ibrahim

Firstly, let me introduce you to my community, the “Peul Mbororo”. We are nomadic farmers by tradition, depending on the land. We rely heavily on natural resources for our own survival and that of our animals.

Indeed, climate change is not a new phenomenon for my community. For several years now, we all have observed and noticed the gradual changes in the environment, rainfall patterns, natural resources and biodiversity. But recently, the pace of change has quickened and now more than ever our activities are disrupted.



Given our dependence on natural resources, we feel that we are direct victims of climate change. We are now forced to migrate over long distances and to areas where we never used to venture. In order to survive we will either have to abandon our lands or stay away from our usual locations. Migration has now become an inevitable method of adaptation for us. However, it does not come easy as we are facing several conflict factors. Let me illustrate our experience with a few examples:

Part of my community living in the south of the country, in Eastern Mayo Kebbi, is exclusively made up of cattle breeders. Ten years ago, due to lack of water and pasture for their animals, they were forced to leave Daralsalam and migrate to another place called Gournoida. With increased migration to Gournoida, the city has expanded, leading to serious land issues between communities.

Another part of my community practices nomadism, covering distances of 700 kilometres, and currently migrates to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These groups do not comprehend the colonial system of borders and find themselves obliged to cross frontiers to survive, find water and pasture. Consequently, conflicts between them and the natives of DRC have arisen over natural resources and land.

And then border controls take advantage of our own ignorance about our rights, and although we are Chadian cattle breeders, they regularly accuse us of illegally exporting livestock when in reality we are going to the border to water the animals in the large rivers bordering Cameroon (Logone and Chari). Sometimes, because we do not possess identification papers, we are taxed as if we were undocumented migrants in our own country.

This “climate change migration” has other grave consequences for us: we are experiencing more and more child kidnappings and demands for ransom by bandits because the paths we venture on are unsafe. We are robbed of everything, even of what we value the most, our children. It is as if the livestock thieves we used to encounter had not already stolen enough, our money and our animals; now they are also attacking our children.

We have no choice. As a means of survival for us and our animals, we are forced to continuously migrate despite all the risks involved. This is our form of adaptation. We have always mastered it, but if nothing is done to ensure the safety of our space and activities, we risk, one day, being forced to abandon our way of life and join the swelling ranks of the unemployed in the city.

Adapted from International Organization for Migration (2012). Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration (18).