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Climate (Im)mobility in Urban Contexts: From Recognition to Action

Susan S. Ekoh

Summary

There is an increased recognition of human mobility responses to climate change among policy-makers and stakeholders. At the global level, the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration (GCM) highlights this intersection of climate change and migration. In addition, follow-up processes to the Paris Agreement highlight human mobility outcomes from climate impacts. This policy brief argues that while there is a recognition of climate migration at the international and national levels, implementation at the sub-national level where pertinent migration is happening, is far from adequate. At the national level, Ghana and Senegal have signed on and engaged in follow-up processes of the GCM and the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, they have in different ways highlighted climate migration as a key policy area. For Senegal, there is a mandate to include climate change and migration along with three other priority areas for all development plans in the country. On the other hand, Ghana's national migration policy identifies climate change as a key area for policy attention. These reflect recognition of climate change and human mobility as a policy issue at the national level. However, there appear to be gaps in the implementation of these mandates and policy frameworks locally. Hence, there is a need to further investigate the patterns, weaknesses and strengths of climate (im)mobility strategy implementation at the sub-national level.

This policy brief presents insights based on case studies of two West African cities, Accra and Dakar, which are relevant to urban climate (im)mobility governance because human mobility patterns are well established internally and from countries in the West African region, as are the influences of climate change on these mobility patterns. Because cities attract migrants, they offer insights into sub-national climate (im)mobility governance. It is, however, important to note the difficulty of isolating climate change as a driver of human mobility since it interacts with several other drivers (Black, Bennett, Thomas, & Beddington, 2011; Ekoh, Teron, & Ajibade, 2023). Regardless of the drivers of

human mobility, city authorities have a responsibility to support their resident populations, and with increasing climate threats, they have a duty to support climate adaptation and resilience building within the city. This policy brief outlines three major challenges associated with addressing the human mobility dimension of climate change locally, under existing frameworks and agreements:

- (1) City authorities have limited competencies in governing migration, including climate-induced migration.
- (2) Cities have limited resources and capacity to adapt to climate change and the associated (im)mobility dimensions.
- (3) At the local level, human mobility and climate change are mostly treated as separate issues in the absence of an integrated policy framework on climate (im)mobility.

The recommendations in this policy brief are addressed to national governments, local authorities and donors; they highlight how to move from global and national recognition to action so that cities/local authorities are better prepared to support migrants:

- A whole-of-government approach is necessary at all levels to address the crosscutting issue of climate change and human mobility. This should be part of a new or updated national migration policy that gives local authorities/cities a clear role to play in human mobility and climate change.
- National governments and donors need to support local authorities and non-state actors, such as non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, with funding and investment in capacity building towards the design and implementation of climate (im)mobility strategies.
- Urban action plans should clearly reflect climate (im)mobility strategies given current trends and projections of increased mobility towards cities like Accra and Dakar.

Introduction

In Africa, estimates show that 44 per cent of the population lives in cities (UNCTAD, 2021). Climate change contributes to migration of people to cities (see Adri & Simon, 2018; Chawla, 2017), but also from cities (see Hauer, 2017) and within cities (see Ekoh et al., 2023). Accra and Dakar are both experiencing rapid urban growth brought on by migration from within and outside their respective countries. Climate change impacts contribute to

the movement of people towards Accra and Dakar. Migrants are attracted to these cities because of perceived economic opportunities and access to basic services. From the lens of climate (im)mobility governance, city authorities have the responsibility to provide access to shelter, health, education, security and livelihood opportunities for their inhabitants. Likewise, city authorities are responsible for reducing vulnerabilities to climate change among vulnerable groups, including migrants.

Figure 1: Strategies to address climate (im)mobility in urban contexts



Note: Support here refers to the provision of basic social services, access to social protection, financial and economic inclusion, etc.

Source: Author

This policy brief analyses how local authorities and stakeholders deal with climate change and human mobility in Accra and Dakar, including barriers involved in climate (im)mobility governance in these cities. Climate (im)mobility governance here refers to actions, activities, institutional frameworks and stakeholder involvement in addressing human mobility within the context of climate change. In the urban setting, this includes

the interaction of stakeholders as well as efforts geared towards building climate resilience for migrant communities. Climate (im)mobility governance in the urban context also includes the involvement of migrant communities in urban climate action, addressing climate-related displacement and supporting the voluntary relocation of affected people to avoid trapped situations (see Figure 1).

Policy gaps in localising human mobility and climate change

Global agreements and frameworks for climate change and migration are operationalised at the city level through local action and development plans. These plans align with national frameworks, which often connect to global processes and policy documents, like nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. However, the climate action plans of Accra and Dakar barely feature the crosscutting issue of climate change and human mobility. For example, in line with the Paris Agreement and Senegal's NDC, the city of Dakar developed a climate action plan with financial assistance and technical support from a variety of international partners and networks, including C40 Cities, the Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoMSSA), the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the European Union (EU), and other organisations (City of Dakar, n.d; City of Dakar, 2020). But while Dakar's climate action plan illuminates mitigation and adaptation priorities, it does not explicitly address the nexus of climate change and human mobility. In the document, coastal risks are identified, displacement is acknowledged and vulnerability reduction is mentioned, but the document falls short of detailing actionable steps targeted towards people who migrate or are forcibly displaced by climate change. Accra's case is similar: their climate action plan (2020-2025) was developed with technical assistance from C40 Cities, local partners, and financial support from the BMU and Cities Alliance (Accra Metropolitan Assembly, 2020). The plan recognises rural-urban migration as well as risks from flooding and sea level rise, but it does not directly engage with climate (im)mobility as a topical issue. In addition, the development of both cities' climate action plans included consultative processes with diverse stakeholders to define priority areas for the cities. One of such priority areas in both cities is coastal protection. Although not explicitly linked to climate (im)mobility, coastal restoration has the potential to mitigate displacement of coastal populations.

Figure 1 illustrates climate (im)mobility strategies that cities need to adopt.

In addition, neither Accra nor Dakar have local migration policies, partly because migration is regarded as the responsibility of the national government. However, these cities engage on migrant issues when they arise without having a clear local policy on migration. This applies especially in basic service provisioning. For example, Accra has collaborated with non-state actors such as People's Dialogue on Human Settlements, Slum Dwellers International and others on a slum upgrade project for informal settlements in Accra. Likewise, the social welfare department of Accra supports vulnerable groups, like women, children, and persons with disabilities, and some recipients have been migrants. However, there is burgeoning interest in local migration governance and its intersection with climate change. In 2019, Accra collaborated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on a pilot study of the application of migration governance indicators locally. This process identified strengths and gaps that exist in migration governance within the city, including the lack of local strategies on climate migration as a cross-cutting issue. In Dakar, a recent study by the Mixed Migration Centre looked at migration patterns, migrant vulnerabilities and governance in the city (Mixed Migration Centre, 2023). Although the scope of the study did not cover climate change as a driver of migration in Dakar, the study highlights elements of Senegal's National Migration Policy that include preventing and managing internal displacement linked to disasters.

Results were disseminated to stakeholders in Dakar, including government actors and civil society.

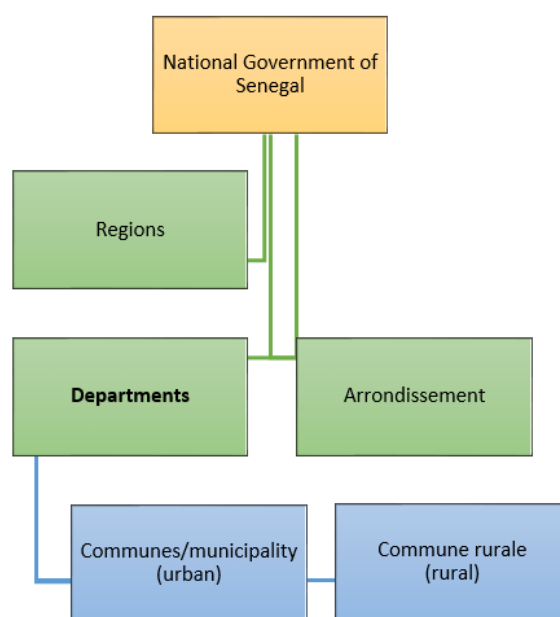
Strikingly, Senegal's National Migration Policy exists as a document but is not formally adopted unlike Ghana's national migration policy, which is officially adopted (see: Mixed Migration Centre (2023) and Dimé & Jaji (2023)).

Decentralisation challenges, including limited coordination on climate change and human mobility

In both cities, units that deal with climate change and migration issues operate separately and do not currently coordinate activities on this cross-cutting issue. Generally, this limited horizontal coordination at the sub-national level suggests a minimal understanding of migration as a form of adaptation. At the same time, minimal vertical coordination on activities of climate change and human mobility activities from the national level to sub-national levels also contributes to limited action by city authorities. Although both Ghana and Senegal have decentralisation policies (see

Figs. 2 and 3 for government structures), limited resources and capacities on transferred competencies hinder sub-national governments. In Senegal, funding for decentralisation occurs through financing sources such as the Fonds de Dotation de la Décentralisation (FDD, Decentralisation Endowment Fund) and the Fonds d'Équipement des Collectivités Locales (FECL, Local Authorities Equipment Fund) (Dickovick, 2003; Sané, 2016). Similar to Senegal, Ghana's national government contributes a minimum of 5 per cent of the State's total revenue to sub-national governments through the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF) (Ayee, 2008; Republic of Ghana, 1992). These funds are insufficient, so sub-national governments complement them with donor funds and internally generated revenue (Ayee, 2008; Sané, 2016).

Figure 2: Government structure of Senegal



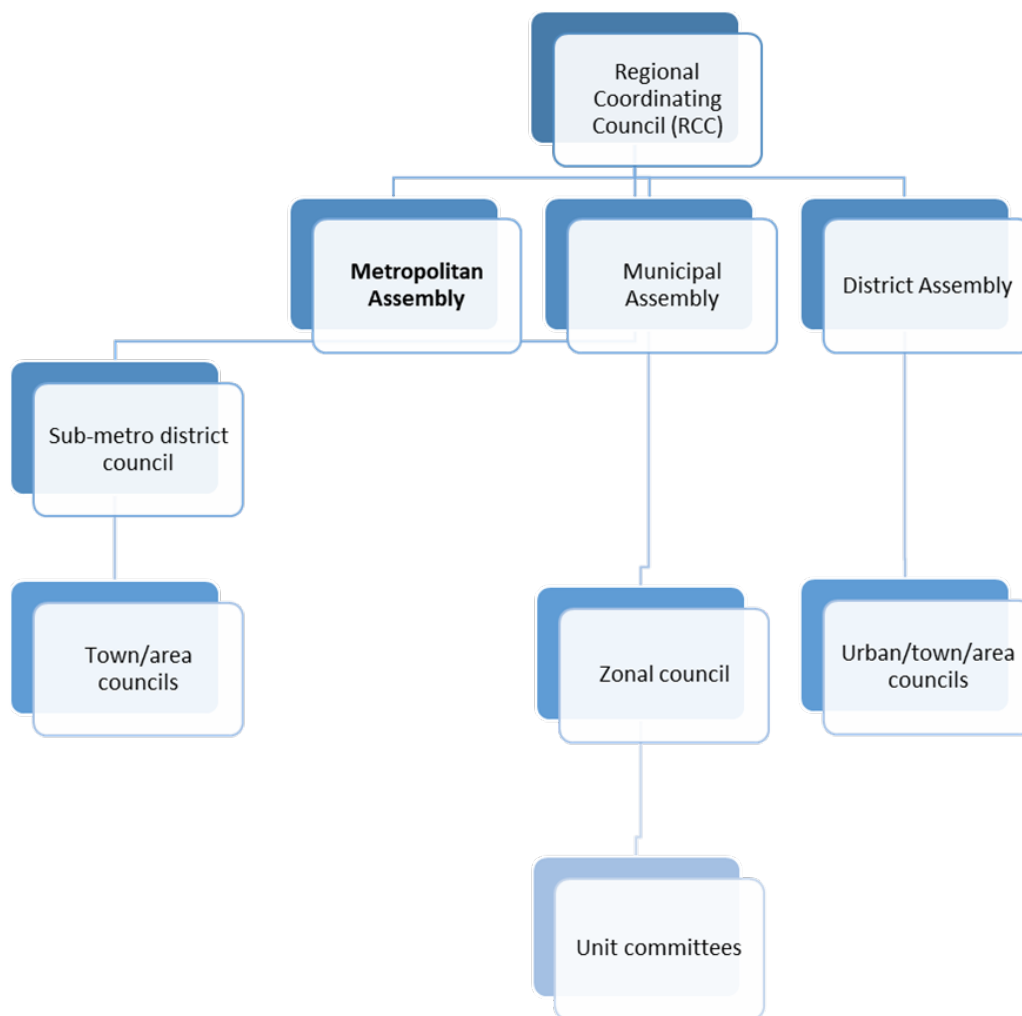
Note: The City of Dakar is an urban commune under the Dakar Region.

Source: Adapted from Sané (2016) – CC BY 4.0.

In Senegal for example, although there is emphasis on climate change and migration as priority areas, activities and funding are mostly initiated at the national level. Some bilateral and multilateral partnerships exist on climate migration between the Government of Senegal, the EU and Spanish Cooperation. In Ghana and Senegal, the

IOM has commissioned projects on climate change and human mobility, for example, their climate migration project looks at establishing sustainability initiatives and rural-livelihood support for return migrants. However, city authorities are minimally engaged in the design of these programmes.

Figure 3: Government structure of Ghana



Note: The Accra Metropolitan Assembly represents the city of Accra.

Source: Adapted from Ayee (2008).

Progress through direct funding to cities on climate change and human mobility

Recent progress on climate migration in Accra has emerged from direct engagement with cities through city networks. The Mayors Migration Council is one of such networks that collaborates with cities on climate change and human mobility. For example, in cooperation with C40 and the Platform on Disaster Displacement, the Mayors Migration Council has encouraged cities to sign a call to local action for migration and refugees. Through this call to action, cities pledge commitments that touch on the nexus of climate change and migration. Accra is one of the cities

that put forward a call to action to reduce the climate vulnerabilities of migrants. Specifically, Accra’s local action targets migrants engaged in the informal waste sector. Through this process, Accra has connected climate migration with waste management, which emerged as a priority area in their climate action plan. Accra is also a grantee of the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees (GCF) by the Mayors Migration Council and its partners; this fund supports cities in addressing climate migration (see Mayors Migration Council, 2022). It is recommended that these types of direct engagement with cities and funding streams be expanded to enable broader responses to climate change and human mobility.

Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, several barriers exist within both cities that stifle efforts to address climate change and human mobility.

Lack of vertical and horizontal coordination

While state authorities communicate the necessity to engage with local authorities on migrant issues, in practice, engagement is limited. To address this gap, national governments must engage with local authorities and non-state actors on plausible areas for the governance of climate change and human mobility. New or updated national migration policies in Senegal and Ghana should give local authorities/cities a clear role to play in human mobility and climate change. In addition, horizontal coordination of human mobility and climate change as a crosscutting issue is paramount for action. Presently, units focused on the issues at the city level work separately, and this is ineffective.

Limited engagement with local actors

Local actors have first-hand knowledge of the vulnerabilities that migrants face and already address some of these challenges as they arise. The focus of international organisations and actors in development cooperation with national governments alone, on migration, is insufficient to address peculiar challenges at the local level. Coordination with actors at the national and sub-national levels to support migrants in cities is necessary.

Limited funding and capacity of city authorities

Funding needed by local authorities and non-state actors on climate (im)mobility must transfer from the top to the bottom for effective implementation. Funds from national governments and internal revenues are insufficient for cities, while existing partnerships on climate change and human mobility are mostly concentrated at the national level. There is a need for more funding opportunities that target cities, for example, GCF, to push action on climate change and human mobility. Donors, through their role in supporting the translation of global frameworks/agreements into local policies and implementation, can fill funding gaps on climate change and human mobility at the sub-national level. Donors can support the inclusion of climate (im)mobility strategies into local action and development plans albeit from a bottom-up approach. Funding should also target the implementation of climate (im)mobility strategies at the sub-national level.

Limitations of urban climate action plans

Existing urban action plans have not sufficiently provided a roadmap to address climate (im)mobility. Further engagement and knowledge production is needed to bring climate (im)mobility forward as a priority area and to encourage local policy development in this sphere.

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