



Lessons Learned from U.S. Climate Migration Efforts

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Former president Joe Biden’s administration issued an executive order (EO) in February 2021 that acknowledged the potential impacts of climate change on migration trends and called for a report on the issue, with an emphasis on implications for U.S. national security. These are the lessons from those efforts for potential use by foreign governments, U.S. state and local governments, and future U.S. administrations pursuing related initiatives.

Lessons to Inform Future Efforts

There are several actions that a government at any level—national, state, or local—can take to develop a climate migration policy and supporting programs. These include:

- Use a signaling vehicle (such as an EO) to communicate to agencies or ministries that the government is prioritizing this issue and identify an “honest broker” (like the National Security Council) to coordinate efforts.
- Have clarity on how the issue should be approached—through a climate or migration lens—and clearly communicate that to provide necessary direction at the outset.
- Establish a cross-functional team with expertise in migration, climate science, and multilateral financing with dedicated staffing and funding resources.
- Include relevant budget agencies from the outset.
- Require regular whole-of-society consultations, with civil society, international organizations, the private sector, and subnational government representatives.

- Engage with legislative leaders on key issues such as funding, immigration law, and geopolitical interests.

Recommendations and Actions

- Balance recommendations between what is achievable in the present political climate and the priorities of the moment.
- Introduce realistic solutions reflecting the global nature of climate migration strategies, such as helping people stay where they are, facilitating internal movement within countries, and promoting the creation of regional mechanisms. Different solution options may require significantly more spending.
- Understand areas of overlapping needs to better coordinate and target efforts.
- Develop a whole-of-government communications and resourcing strategy. A consistent climate migration vocabulary will ensure that stakeholders are aligned and that external messaging resonates with the public.

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