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Where the Rain Falls: Innovative study unravels relationship between climate change, food insecurity and migration in the Global South

Doha, 28 November 2012 — At the 18th UN-Climate Change Conference, the findings of an innovative comparative study confirm that rainfall variability and food insecurity are key drivers for human mobility. The empirical research – carried out by CARE International and the United Nations University in eight countries in Asia (Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Viet Nam), Africa (Ghana, Tanzania) and Latin America (Guatemala, Peru) – revealed that migration is an important risk management strategy for vulnerable households. Land scarce households trying to cope with food insecurity send migrants during the hunger season to find food or money to buy food. Migration is often temporary and seasonal, if migrants are successful, but can be permanent if options cannot be found to deal with rainfall variability and rural food insecurity. The research is based on a 1,300 household survey and participatory research sessions involving 2,000 individuals. It further models future migration in Tanzania under different rainfall scenarios from 2014–2040.

“Our evidence-based research shows that rural people perceive climate changes happening today in the form of rainfall variability. The changes in timing, quality, quantity and overall predictability of rainfall affect households’ risk management decisions, including migration”, stated **Dr. Koko Warner**, scientific director of the “*Where the Rain Falls*” project from the **United Nations University**. “Even though we have seen that the levels of food insecurity vary across the sites, migration decisions were more closely linked to rainfall in places where the dependence on rain-fed agriculture was high and local livelihood diversification options were low. When we look into the future, our modelling results for Tanzania show that migration from vulnerable households could double over the next 25 years under the most extreme drying scenario”, she added.

“The communities that participated in the *Where the Rain Falls* research have tenuous livelihoods, and as the impacts of climate change increase – like floods or droughts or shifting seasons and rainfall patterns – they move closer to the edge of crisis,” continued **Tonya Rawe**, senior policy advocate for **CARE USA**. “They need real policy and practice solutions today, at all levels, including here in the UNFCCC. As impacts increase, households grow more vulnerable and have less capacity to adapt, potentially leading to more migration driven by hunger, undertaken as a last resort, and further increasing vulnerability”, she concluded.

Kevin Henry, *Where the Rain Falls* project coordinator for **CARE France**, continued, “this nuanced understanding of how climate factors affect migration decisions can help shape both policies and adaptation investments that ensure that, whatever strategies households use, including migration, will contribute to increased resilience to climate change”, he explained at the launch event in Doha, today. “If national and global policymakers and practitioners do not act quickly – both to mitigate global warming and support rural communities to adapt *in situ*, food insecurity and emigration from areas most negatively affected by climate change are likely to grow in the coming decades, with all the humanitarian, political and security consequences that entails”, Kevin Henry underscored.

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Background

The research is one of the first empirical efforts to explore how poor households use migration as a risk management strategy in the context of climate stressors and food insecurity. The findings of the study reveal how rainfall variability and food insecurity affect migration decisions (modelling), who is migrating (four household profiles), when they migrate, where they are headed, and what they are searching for (food and livelihoods). The *Rainfalls* study represents a key next step in research to understand in greater detail how climatic stressors interact with society today, and how households adjust behavior to manage these challenges and survive. The study findings are based on field based research, including data from over 1,300 household surveys and participatory community research involving 2,000 individuals in villages vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

One of the most distinctive features of the project is an **Agent-Based Migration Model**, which uses the research data to forecasts possible migration patterns under different rainfall scenarios from 2014-2040. This model was applied to the **Tanzanian** case.

The *Rainfalls* study report lays out a suite of **policy and practice solutions** – concrete actions for policymakers and practitioners – to support these households, to enable them to withstand climatic shocks, to build resilient livelihoods, and to access migration as a way to enhance resilience.

Furthermore, the *Rainfalls* project will build on the significant research data to develop **community-based adaptation activities in India, Peru, Tanzania and Thailand** to help vulnerable households adapt to the impacts of climate change. These community-based adaptation activities will take place over the course of 2013 and 2014.

About

The research project « *Where the Rain Falls : Climate Change, Food and Livelihood Security, and Migration* » (« *Rainfalls* ») was undertaken in partnership between [CARE International](#) and the [United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security \(UNU-EHS\)](#), with the financial support of the [AXA Group](#) and the [John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation](#). Original maps for the project were developed by the [Center for International Earth Science Information Network \(CIESIN\)](#), a unit of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

Available information

- Global Policy Report (Full Report and Summary)
- Case Study Reports on Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Peru, Tanzania, Thailand, Viet Nam
- Research Protocol (Research Methodology)
- Fact sheet
- Policy Video

All material available at: www.wheretherainfalls.org or **visit us** at the **UN University booth in Doha** to receive hard copies!

Contacts

Kimberly Bennett, Communications Coordinator, “Where the Rain Falls” project, CARE France;
bennett@carefrance.org

Dr. Alice Fišer, Head of Communications, Institute for Environment & Human Security, UN University;
fiser@vie.unu.edu