THEME 3: GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN CONFLICTS RELATED TO MIGRATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN MADAGASCAR

RECOGNIZING MIGRANT WOMEN HAVE RIGHTS TO INCREASE THEIR RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

● Summary

This report explores the critical links between climate change, migration and the recognition of migrant women's land rights. It highlights the vulnerabilities linked to land tenure insecurity and proposes recommendations for strengthening their climate resilience. Based on a case study of migrant women from the south of Madagascar, particularly the Androy region, and an analysis of existing policies, this report advocates reforms legal in land tenure, which are sensitive to climate change and the vulnerability of the peasant population, as well as inclusive community actions.

● Introduction

Climate change, migration and land conflicts are interconnected in an increasingly complex global context. Climate change leads to extreme phenomena such as drought, floods and storms, directly affecting natural resources, particularly agricultural land and water sources. However, the most vulnerable are the most affected, in particular women, children, the elderly and small-scale farmers. This is driving many people to migrate in search of more stable living conditions, often to urban areas or regions less affected by disasters. Worldwide, the Internal Displacement Report[1] records 31.8 million people displaced within their own country due to climate change. Furthermore, according to the *World-Groundswell 2021* report by the World Bank, climate change could force up to 216 million people to migrate within their own country by 2050.

This migration generates tensions, particularly in areas of high biodiversity value or land where resources are already limited. Land conflicts often arise when displaced populations compete with local residents for access to land and resources. These tensions exacerbate social and political conflicts, making the management of land and migration even more delicate. These three factors form a vicious circle in which climate change fuels migration, which in turn generates tensions over access to land, amplifying the risk of conflict.

A human rights-based approach to climate change adaptation and resilience efforts, emphasizing the importance of focusing on communities' land rights, so that climate change policies and programmes should be adopted to take into account the difficulties faced by local populations and contribute to their economic development. If these policies and programmes were more sensitive to these requirements, they would help to minimise the phenomenon of migration. Land policies should also promote and support equitable access to land, water and various natural resources so that they are key elements of climate resilience and a brake on the phenomenon of climate migration.

Madagascar has a wide range of bioclimatic zones, from humid to sub-arid. However, climate change is exacerbating certain living conditions for local populations, leading to a phenomenon of migration that mass is common in certain regions of the country. Migration is a common phenomenon in Madagascar, particularly in the south. Various types of migration have been identified, including migration due to natural disasters (often temporary in the eastern part of the island) and migration for socio-economic reasons due in particular to climate change (drought in the southern part of the island). The gender perspective on conflicts linked to migration and climate change in Madagascar highlights the specific inequalities faced by

[1] International Displacement Monitoring Center - Global Report on Internal Displacement 2023

women in this context. Migrant women are particularly affected by gender norms and structural discrimination. They are both victims and key players in the adaptation and migration processes, but their needs and contributions are often invisible. Recognition of the rights of migrant women and promotion of their roles in the management of natural resources and in decision-making processes are a guarantee of the effectiveness and inclusiveness of solutions to climate change. A gender approach to managing migration and climate change can not only improve women's resilience, but also strengthen communities as a whole.

It should be noted that Madagascar has not yet implemented a comprehensive migration policy that provides a coherent framework for population movements, whether immigration or emigration. The relevant laws are scattered across several texts, some of which are old, and do not always respond to contemporary challenges, such as economic or climatic migration. The absence of a coordinated migration policy makes the management of these movements more complex, particularly in terms of housing, income-generating activities and social measures for displaced populations.

Issue: Malagasy migrant women face cultural obstacles in gaining access to land ownership, natural resource management and production, thus reducing their ability to adapt to the consequences of climate change. Not only do they lose their cultural identity and roots in the migration process, but they are also forced to adapt to the situation because migration is forced and unsupervised.

- **Research question and methodology**

The aim of this study is to identify the challenges linked to women's land rights, particularly migrant women. The specific case study proposed on migrant women from the Androy to Menabe region will enable us to analyse the impact of climate change and migration on women in terms of land and economic resources (agriculture, livestock, etc.) in order to propose possible solutions to improve recognition of these rights.

The methodology used to draw up this report is as follows:

— Review of the literature and collection of secondary data :
  - Compilation of existing studies on the impacts of climate change in the Androy Region.
  - Analysis of socio-economic, climatic and demographic data available from local, national and international institutions.
  - Analysis of national and local policies and programmes through interviews with government officials and representatives of technical and financial partners (TFPs).

— Semi-structured interviews: interviews with ministry officials, experts from related bodies, international organisations and women from various socio-economic groups to gather their personal experiences, perceptions and strategies for dealing with climate impacts.

● Results: presentation of the case study

Androy, the birthplace of migrants

Androy is one of the Madagascar's 24 regions located in the extreme south of the country (coordinates geographical: latitude: between 24°13' and 25°24' South; - longitude: between 45°20' and 46°26' East). The regional capital, Ambovombe, is around 1,000 km from the .

country's capital. The majority ethnic group in the region is the Antandroy, with a population of 1,116,346, 52.10% of whom are women (MinSan, 2024). The region covers an area of 19,538 km2, or 3.33% of the country's total surface area, with a density population of around 57 inhabitants per Km². In general, over 90% of the population live in rural areas, and there are livestock rearing and agriculture. main activities The region has a climate sub-tropical with two distinct seasons: rainy from November to March and dry from April to October.

Over the last decade, the region has been increasingly affected by drought caused by climate change, with the rainy season getting shorter, rainfall and rainfall decreasing drastically and the "Tiomena" phenomenon, or increased sandstorm, making its presence almost permanent. These two factors (drought and Tiomena) are devastating the population's agricultural and livestock systems.

A significant decline in agricultural yields has been observed over the years. The fall in food resources is exacerbating poverty, food insecurity and gender injustice. Communities (men, women and children) are being forced to resort to copying mechanisms such as migration to areas more productive such as Menabe, Boeny, Sofia and Diana.

Overview of gender issues in the Androy Region:

The region of **Androy** in southern Madagascar is **deeply rooted in ancestral customs** and oral traditions, which strongly influence social organization, family structure, and marriage practices.

Two key cultural elements stand out[2]:

- **Teny ifampierana** – This refers to **negotiated or shared speech**, used during **family discussions or community decision-making**, especially in marriage arrangements or conflict resolution.
- **Kabary** – A **traditional oratory practice**, kabary is used during **important public events**, including weddings, funerals, and community meetings. It is a formal way of conveying social values, history, and collective wisdom through the voices of elders or community leaders.

These forms of communication **legitimize social practices like polygamy**, especially when supported by elders or clan leaders. In many cases, kabary and teny ifampierana act as **cultural frameworks** that maintain traditional norms despite contradictions with national laws.

As far as gender justice is concerned, :

- Polygamy is not a taboo subject and is often observed in rural areas.

The community permits arranged marriages, particularly for young girls as young as 12 to 14 years old, perpetuating a cycle of gender inequality and limiting their access to education, opportunities, and autonomy over their own lives. Child marriage is also rooted in customary practices to strengthen family alliances or reduce economic burdens.

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[2] R**azafindrakoto, Mireille and Roubaud, François (2010).** "Governance and development in Madagascar: the legitimacy deficit." *African Development Review*

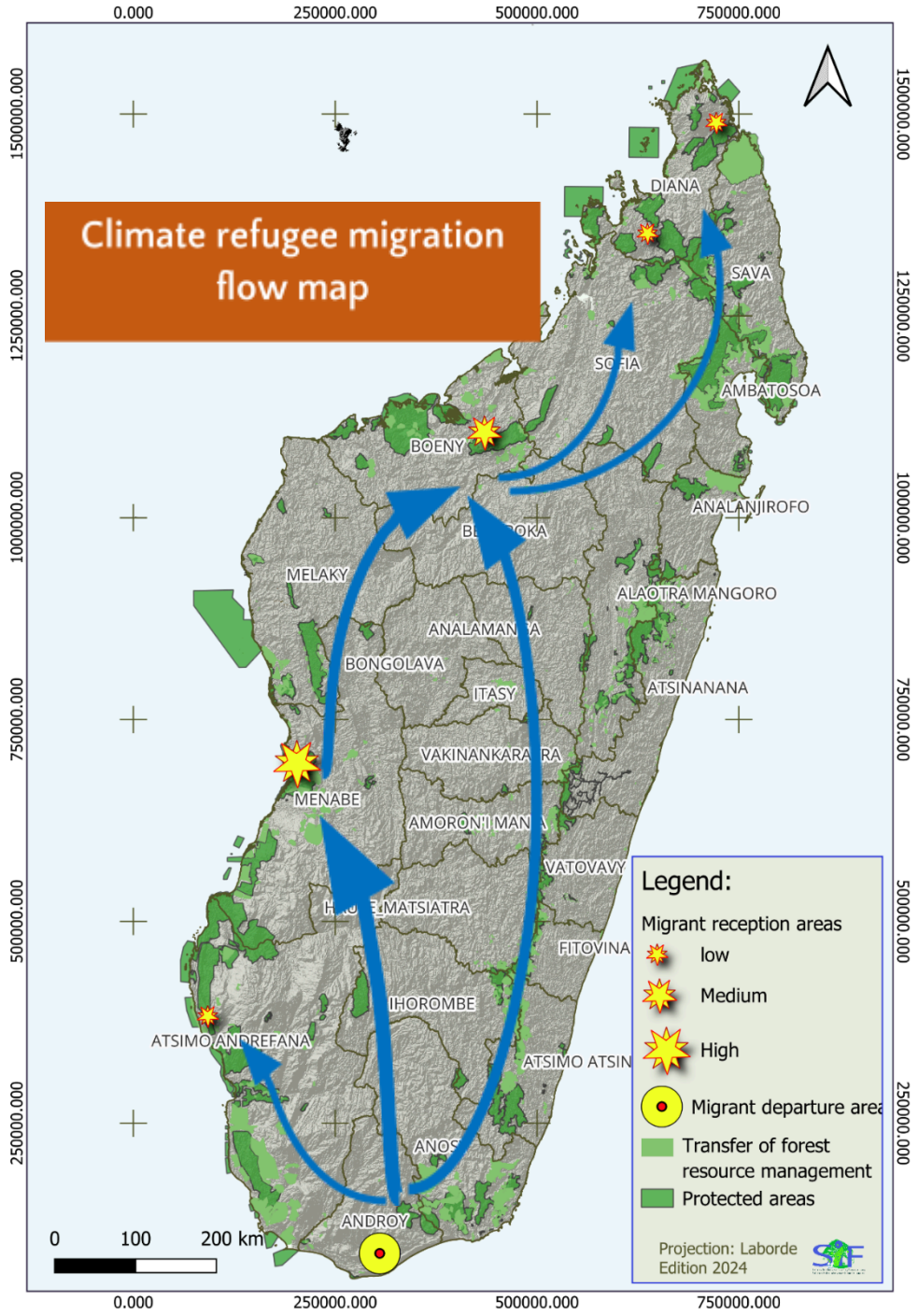
In Androy, polygamy is embedded in traditional customs, where men may marry multiple wives as a sign of status, often leading to economic strain and unequal distribution of resources within families.

This often results in limited access to education, early pregnancies, and long-term gender inequality.

- As a general rule, women have total responsibility for the upbringing and care of their children.
- Women are primarily responsible for domestic duties, including child-rearing, cooking, water collection, and maintaining the household. Their work is vital for daily survival, especially in harsh, drought-prone environments.
- Women actively participate in subsistence farming, especially growing cassava, maize, and sweet potatoes. Their activities include growing food crops, rearing poultry, petty trading and selling fish (in case of the fishermen's wives). Some women engage in informal trading of goods in local markets to support their families.
- Customary law prohibits women from inheriting land and livestock. If their husband die, they have no legal rights.
- In addition to farming, men are responsible for rearing small ruminants and cattle. Men typically handle tasks related to herding, agriculture, and trade, and their economic contribution is closely tied to their social standing[3].
- All decisions are taken by the man within the family. He is the head of the household and primary decision-maker[4].

[3] **USAID Madagascar (2020).** *Gender Analysis Report*

[4] **INSTAT Madagascar (Institut National de la Statistique), UNFPA & UNICEF (2021).** *Enquête sur la Violence Basée sur le Genre à Madagascar*



This map illustrates the displacement of populations affected by climate change in the Androy Region, who migrate usually to dry-climate regions with high biodiversity values, such as the dry forest in the Middle-West, West, North and North-East of Madagascar, and also to protected areas PAs()

This migration is encouraged by the extreme living conditions of the population: depletion increased of resources, famine, malnutrition, extreme poverty and above all the TIOMENA phenomenon (sandstorm) amplified by the drought which makes almost impossible. agricultural production in the region According to a study carried out by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) - Displacement Traking Matrix, between 2019 and 2022 - on the total population of the 20 Communes of the southern region of the Grande Ile is estimated

at 680,545, the total number of displaced individuals is 90,219, or 13% of this total population. Of these, 3 Communes have significant proportions of displaced population, including the Commune Rurale d'Ebelo (63.60% or 12,858 displaced), the Commune Rurale d'Imongy (54.95% or 14,000 displaced) and the Commune Rurale de Behara (17.94% or 6,187 displaced). It should be noted that the data presented in the report IOM-Displacement Tracking Matrix Madagascar 2022 are not disintegrated data. This gender gap data exacerbates the problem, as it hinders effective monitoring of women's migration, making it difficult to put in place responses appropriate to the challenges they face. However, following a study carried out by SIF in 2024 in the Androy Region on : "Study and analysis of women's resilience to the effects of climate change in the Androy region", it was observed that women migrate less than men, i.e. around one woman in every 3 migrants. In many cases, men migrate alone, leaving their wives and children behind. The latter are then left alone to provide for their households, sometimes until their husbands return, or hope to be able to join him later, depending on his decision. These frequent situations contribute to the rising number of female-headed households in the southern region of the Big Island. Migrants leave for several localities in the south of Madagascar and then join their families in the west, mid-west, north-west and north of the country, often carrying out illegal activities (charcoal-burning, slash-and-burn farming, logging, hunting, etc.) in protected areas and community-managed zones of high biodiversity value.

This form of climate-induced migration creates tensions between migrants and local populations, particularly regarding access to resources in host areas. The main point of contention revolves around access to land and, more broadly, to resources—a particularly sensitive issue for migrant women. It is important to highlight that many women, left behind by their husbands who remain in their home villages, are forced to bear the full responsibility of their households and children. As a result, they find themselves in extremely vulnerable conditions, with insufficient means to meet their basic needs. According to a study carried out by the Solidarité des Intervenants sur le Foncier (SIF) in the Menabe Antimena protected, located in the Menabe region in the Mid-West, covering an area areas of 210,312 ha, more than 20,000 migrants have been identified, living and working in illegal activities (slash-and-burn farming, illegal logging, charcoal burning, hunting, etc.) in this PA, which is an area with potential tourism and is home to threatened species of flora and fauna.

Antandroy women (from Androy) in society and migration zones

The Menabe region, in the west of Madagascar, is a major point of arrival for internal migratory flows, particularly because of its natural resources and agricultural potential. A significant proportion of migration to the Menabe comes from the Androy region, which is severely affected by chronic drought and food insecurity. Women migrants from this region seek economic opportunities in the Menabe, where they often settle in marginal agricultural areas or protected areas. Mostly from the Androy region in southern Madagascar, these women do nothave free access to their land, where cultural norms reflect gender inequality, speaking more of the complementarity of men and women than anything else. Traditionally, men are the head of the family and make decisions important for the household, particularly in matters of land management. This authority often extends to clan affairs and community decisions, particularly at fokonolona (village assemblies), where the men play a leading role in discussing collective affairs. Antandroy women are in charge of domestic chores, such as cooking, running the house and looking after the children. They also play a crucial role in agriculture, particularly in the cultivation of fields (maize, manioc, sweet potatoes), which complements pastoral activities. When they arrive at the migration sites, they receive no support or supervision, as the migration is clandestine. They have to adapt to the local culture, leaving their cultural identity behind for a while to blend in better with the landscape.

However, these migrations have had significant socio-economic and environmental impacts:

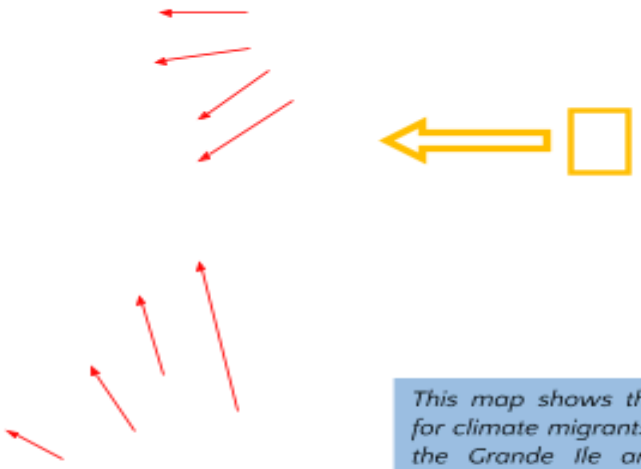
- The unsustainable exploitation of resources, notably through practices such as slash-and-burn agriculture, illegal logging in protected areas, and the unlawful occupation of land, causes social conflicts between migrants and local communities, as well as the degradation of ecosystems, particularly protected areas. In this case study, we will look at the Menabe Antimena Protected Area (APMA).
- Access to land is a source of tension, with destructive farming practices exacerbated by a lack of clear legal frameworks for migrants. Migrant women are particularly vulnerable due to patriarchal norms and a lack of legal recognition.

Relocation of migrants to a new migration zone in the Menabe region

In 2019, during the implementation of the knowledge management part of the Conservation and Communities Project, SIF, as a member of the consortium, worked in the Menabe Region (one of the Programme's two intervention zones) in western Madagascar, to help preserve the APMA, which is subject to enormous clearing pressure due to the need for land for cash crops (groundnuts, maize, etc.).Various analyses suggest that one of the major pressures exerted on this protected area is the presence of migrants who cultivate within the prohibited zones (hard core). One of the recommendations of the RIS, following the completion of the socio-foncier diagnosis in the APMA in 2019, is the relocation of migrants, hence the creation of the Bezeky land reserve, another locality in the same Menabe Region. This "Bezeky" migration zone is intended for migrants who are victims of the climate. Part of the rural municipality of Analaiva, District of Morondava, Menabe Region, the Bezeky site straddles the two municipalities of Befasy and Analaiva.

Bezeky is 93 km from the town of Morondava, with geographical coordinates Lon: 44° 33' 0" E and Lat: 20° 29' 0" S.

During the implementation of the Programme, SIF made a major contribution to the remote sensing and selection of this reserve, in particular by developing a set of criteria to ensure that the chosen location was viable. It also helped set up the Comité régional d'opérationnalisation des réserves foncières et de l'agriculture durable (CRORFAD), a coalition of multi-party and sectoral players (central and local government, TFPs and CSOs) responsible for ensuring the effective establishment of the Menabe Land Reserve at Bezeky. Following various lobbying and advocacy efforts, the land reserve was officially declared by the Government of Madagascar in March 2023 as a site for migrants living in and around the APMA, who are considered to be exerting pressure on the PA



This map shows the reception areas for climate migrants from the south of the Grande Ile around APMA, and following the intervention of SIF through a socio-foncier study and spatial analysis, an area dedicated to the relocation of migrants has been proposed as a land reserve to the Comité régional d'opérationnalisation des réserves foncières et de l'agriculture durable (CRORFAD).

This official decision is the result of a long-term effort by CSOs specialising in land issues, led by SIF.

Migration to the land reserve was initially conditional on the complete development of the dedicated area, bearing in mind that a family is made up of an average of 10 people. In order to select these families, awareness-raising activities were carried out in the villages concerned:

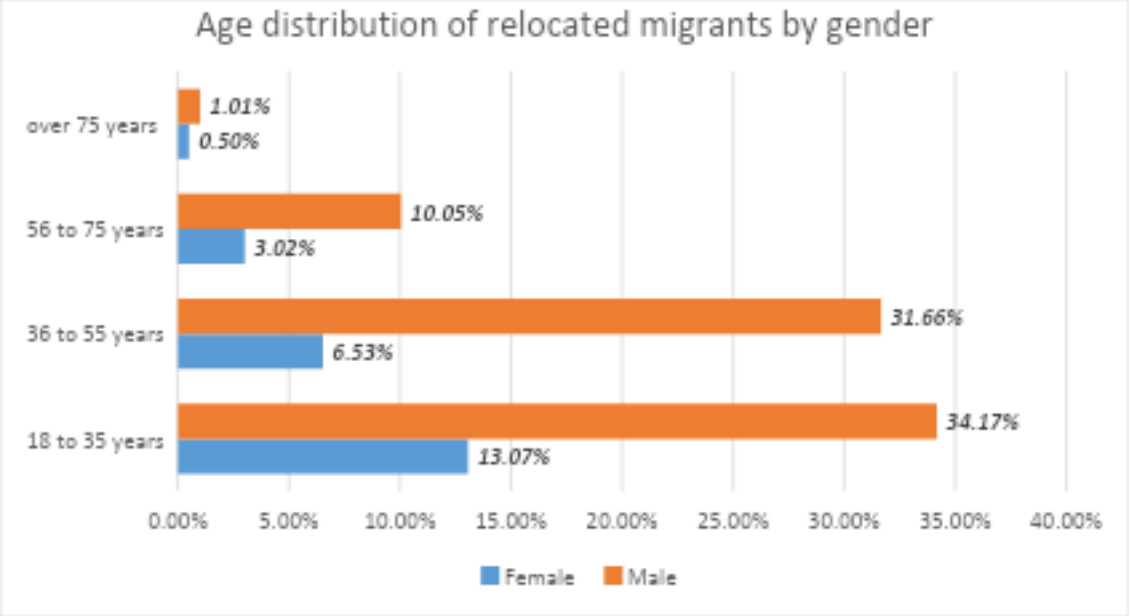
- A person from the same tribe as the majority migrants has been recruited to ensure that the negotiations go smoothly.
- On the basis of the data provided by the SIF during the socio-property analysis carried out beforehand, to identify all the communes concerned and to carry out a pre-descent to talk about the project to the people from the territories concerned and, above all, to consult the traditional chiefs
- The traditional chiefs then talk to their clans/communities and decide on the group's position.

During this process, we observed that women and youth are often marginalized, with only the elderly and men actively participating and making decisions. In meetings, women tend to gather separately, choosing to sit apart, thus forming a subgroup distinct from the main group. This phenomenon reflects a society strongly dominated by men and the elderly, and also highlights a lack of self-confidence among women. They hear what is said, but cannot express their opinions in public or take part in decision-making. We can see that customary practice (from the south of the country) remains deeply rooted within the community, where the elders and men continue to play a central role by voicing their opinions and making decisions. This tradition persists, despite their changed situation as climate migrants, where male authority in decision-making remains. That said, women should not be underestimated, as they can influence their men outside the public arena.

Internal migration in the Menabe is motivated by the search for fertile farmland and economic opportunities. However, women and young migrants face double or even triple discrimination as migrants, as young people and as women. Patriarchal norms limit the economic empowerment of women and young people. And yet, according to the census, most of the plots of land concerned are used for farming, and women are primarily responsible for direct use of the land.

Second phase of the relocation of migrants in the Menabe region

According to official data from the report of USAID Mikajy Programme (CCP Programme Implementation Section), 119 households were relocated to the Bezeky site. Of these households, 46 were women (23.12%).



According to the Menabe Governorate data, of the 119 people from households that actually accepted relocation, the majority were young people aged between 18 and 35, accounting for 47.24%, with 34.17% of men and 13.07% of women. For the group 36-55 age, the proportion is 38.19%, made up of 31.66% men and 6.53% women. The older age group accounts for 14.57%, with more men than women. Youth migrants, under the age of 35, are the most eager to start a new life by changing direction, making up 48.24% of all migrants. Among them, only 14.07% are young women. Due to the low number of migrating women and the deep-rooted customary practices, men remain the primary decision-makers. Women follow the decisions made and build their own form of resilience in response to the challenges they face.

This situation is mainly explained by the gradual degradation of the environment. Although the South has always been dry and arid, about thirty years ago, people didn't have to travel long distances to access clean drinking water. Today, that's no longer the case — such long treks have become necessary, as drought, once seasonal, has now become a permanent condition.

After all the steps taken, some four years after the relocation project began, only three households, including one with a female head of household, have actually moved because of the lack of facilities, infrastructure and sustainable livelihoods for all. Potential backers of the project did not pursue it. Then the CRORFAD stopped their mission. In the end, the local traditional chiefs did not support the project, and gave no instructions as to what should happen next. They felt they were not sufficiently involved in the process. Hence the minimum number of actual migrants.

Basically, the establishment of a land reserve is necessary for each region in order to reconcile the sustainable management of natural resources, livelihoods and fundamental human rights on access to resources and especially to land. However, it is crucial to take into account the opinions of women and young girls, even if it means setting up women-only discussion groups, which would be a key factor in the success of the project as it would help the project designer

to consider women's needs. A gendered approach to all stages of the project should also be put in place to ensure the project's success once again

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● Conclusions

The involvement of women in joint decision-making processes is essential to the establishment and operation of the land reserve for climate migrants and, above all, to ensure recognition of land rights for migrant women. This requires a change in customary practices encouraged by the influence of traditional and opinion leaders. It is essential to ensure greater involvement of women in the decision-making process relating to sustainable land management. By challenging certain traditions, these leaders can play a key role in empowering women, facilitating their active participation in decision-making and promoting more inclusive and balanced land management. Such developments will not only strengthen women's rights but also promote more sustainable and equitable management of resources land.

In the case of the migration of the population surrounding the APMA to the Bezeky land reserve, the operation did not go exactly as planned, due to the lack of support from the funders for infrastructure and facilities, and the lack of support from the traditional chiefs. In addition, the predominance of customary practices rather patriarchal did not help. The gender approach was not respected throughout the process. Women were not taken into account, or even excluded. All these facts led to indecision about relocation, both among complete families and among families with women as heads of household. The group preferred to stick to the environment in which they had become accustomed to living after their first migration.

Recognizing migrant women's land rights is a crucial step toward enhancing their resilience to climate change. Ensuring the success of migrant relocation efforts requires a gender-sensitive approach and the implementation of several key measures:

- A dedicated legal framework should be developed to guide the relocation of migrants, rooted in international conventions and the respect for human rights, within a clear legal and political structure.
- Inclusive dialogue processes must be established, involving not only local authorities (at municipal and regional levels) but also religious and traditional leaders, as well as women's associations, to ensure broad-based support and ownership.
- A national inter-ministerial coordinating body should be created to oversee and streamline the relocation process.
- It is essential to support migrants in the development of infrastructure and basic services to ensure the long-term success of their resettlement.
- For true socio-economic integration, vocational training programs tailored to local needs (e.g., agriculture, crafts, digital skills) should be introduced. These should be complemented by the creation of social cooperatives or income-generating initiatives that bring together both migrants and host communities.
- A holistic approach is needed—one that includes investment, community support, and reforms in traditional and religious norms—to transform the role of women in climate adaptation. Continued engagement with traditional and religious leaders is key to overcoming resistance to gender-inclusive policies. Equally important is the inclusion of women in decision-making and consultative bodies, given their vital role in sustaining livelihoods.

- Promoting inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders—regardless of gender—is essential to establishing lasting social cohesion and reconciling differing interests. Both migrant and host communities must be prepared for the realities of climate change and its irreversible consequences.
- Engaging host communities through awareness-raising and dialogue helps prevent conflict and supports harmonious coexistence, particularly among women.

To truly co-create sustainable solutions and respond to the needs of all affected groups, it is vital to organize community forums that actively involve women and ensure their voices are heard.