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**Regional Climate-related Mobility Governance in Southeast Asia**  
The Role of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this thesis is to study how human mobility in the context of climate and environmental change is governed at a regional level in Southeast Asia, with the regional intergovernmental organisation ASEAN, as a case study. Through a policy review of ASEAN policies on climate, migration, disaster risk reduction and development this study finds that the climate-environment-mobility nexus is not adequately addressed in ASEAN's policy realm. Secondly, through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) this study found that the multifaceted dynamics of climate-related mobilities as well as ASEAN's political and organisational structure limits cross-collaboration to govern climate-related mobilities at a regional level, in Southeast Asia.

**Key Words:** ASEAN, climate-related mobility, regional governance

**Word count:** 14560

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## ACRONYMS

<b>AADMER</b>	ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response
<b>ACCI</b>	ASEAN Climate Change Initiative
<b>AEC</b>	ASEAN Economic Community
<b>AHA Centre</b>	ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management
<b>AMS</b>	ASEAN Member States
<b>ASCC</b>	ASEAN Socio Cultural Community
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association for Southeast Asian Nations
<b>ASOEN</b>	ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment
<b>APSC</b>	ASEAN Political-Security Community
<b>AWGCC</b>	ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>KIIs</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index

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## DEFINITIONS

**Climate-related mobilities** is defined and used as a concept that “pays attention to the multiplicity of climate change-related human mobility (involving immobility, relocation, circular mobility, etc), its embedding in ongoing patterns and histories of movement, and the material and political conditions under which it takes place” (Boas et al. 2022:3366).

**Climate mobility regimes** are defined as “interconnected sets of socio-economic and political relations consisting of different types of actors, that frame, manage, and regulate the nexus between mobilities and climate change in a particular manner (Paprocki 2018), resulting in particular modes of governing of climate mobilities.” (Boas et al. 2022:3371).

**Displacement** refers to “the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.” (IOM 2019:55)

**Governance** is limited to the political inclusion of laws, policies, institutional roles, and responsibilities to manage climate-related mobilities (Martin 2010).

**Highly skilled migrant worker** refers to “a migrant worker who has earned, by higher level education or occupational experience, the level of skill or qualifications typically needed to practice a highly skilled occupation.” (IOM 2019:91).

**Human Mobility:** umbrella term covering all aspects of movements (and non-movements) of people, including mobilities like internal and international migration, relocation, circular migration, displacement, immobility, etc. (de Haas 2021).

**Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** refers to “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” (IOM 2019:109).

**Immobility** refers to people who have the desire to stay in place and people who has the desire to move but do not have the ability to do so due to constraints (Zickgraf 2019).

**Irregular migration** refers to “movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination.” (IOM 2019:116).

**Low-skilled migrant worker** refers to “a migrant worker whose level of education, occupational experience, or qualifications make them eligible to practice a typically low skilled occupation only.” (IOM 2019:126).

**Planned relocation** refers to “in the context of disasters or environmental degradation, including when due to the effects of climate change, a planned process in which persons or groups of persons move or are assisted to move away from their homes or place of temporary residence, are settled in a new location, and provided with the conditions for rebuilding their lives.” (IOM 2019:157).

**Seasonal migrant worker** refers to “a migrant worker whose work, or migration for employment is by its character dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed only during part of the year. (IOM 2019:154).

**Slow and Sudden onset events:** “**Slow-onset events and processes** include sea level rise, ocean acidification, desertification, salinization, land and forest degradation, biodiversity loss and glacial retreat. Slow-onset events and processes unfold gradually through cumulative changes over longer time frames. **Sudden-onset disasters** can be associated with meteorological hazards such as tropical cyclones, hurricanes, or typhoons; hydrological hazards such as floods and mudslides; and geophysical hazards such as tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic activity. They unfold rapidly, and often unexpectedly, and can cause extensive damage within a short period of time. Slow and sudden onset hazards may overlap and cannot always be clearly distinguished from one another.” (UNICEF 2022:7).

**Temporary migration** refers to “Migration for a specific motivation and purpose with the intention to return to the country of origin or habitual residence after a limited period of time or to undertake an onward movement.” (IOM 2019:213).

**Undocumented migrant** refers to “a non-national who enters or stays in a country without the appropriate documentation.” (IOM 2019:223).

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

While it is challenging to differentiate climatic and environmental factors from the overlapping socio-political, economic, and demographic motives that shape human mobility,<sup>1</sup> it cannot be disregarded that climate and environmental changes are having impacts on human mobility (IPCC 2022b). Southeast Asia is one of the regions most affected by climate change (ibid.). Moreover, countries within Southeast Asia are among the most hazard-prone countries in the world (IDMC 2022). The impacts of climate and environmental change such as floods, droughts and sea-level rise will hamper the livelihoods of millions of people and trigger displacement<sup>2</sup> and shape other forms of mobilities in the region (ibid.). This is not only due to its geography and high population density, but also due to social, political and economic factors that turn hazards, such as floods and droughts, into disasters (Ribot 2014).

The relations between climate and mobilities are inevitably political (Vigil 2022a), where regional and national governance<sup>3</sup> can either enable or act as a barrier to safe and equitable mobility for all people in the context of climate and environmental change. Regional migration governance in Southeast Asia is weak compared to other regions and implementation has remained modest at best (Lavenex & Piper 2022; Rother 2022). While many regional intergovernmental organisations across the world have adopted inclusive free movement regimes, the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)<sup>4</sup> has only adopted selective mobility regimes for highly skilled migrant workers<sup>5</sup> (Cristani et al. 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> I use **human mobility** as an umbrella term covering all the different forms of movements (and non-movements) of persons, including mobilities like internal and international migration, relocation, circular migration, displacement, immobility, etc. (de Haas 2021).

<sup>2</sup> **Displacement** refers to "the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters." (IOM 2019:55)

<sup>3</sup> For practical reasons, I limit **governance** to the political inclusion of laws, policies, institutional roles, and responsibilities to manage climate-related mobilities (Martin 2010).

<sup>4</sup> ASEAN is a regional intergovernmental organisation in Southeast Asia, consisting of ten member states: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam (ASEAN 2020).

<sup>5</sup> **Highly skilled migrant worker** refers to "a migrant worker who has earned, by higher level education or occupational experience, the level of skill or qualifications typically needed to practice a highly skilled occupation." (IOM 2019:91) while **low-skilled migrant worker** refers to "a migrant worker whose level of education, occupational experience, or qualifications make them eligible to practice a typically low skilled occupation only." (IOM 2019:126).

Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge on how current policies within ASEAN address the linkages between the climate-environment-mobility nexus. The few studies that have been done have shown that climate-related mobilities<sup>6</sup> is an under-discussed policy issue in ASEAN, that no cooperation exists on that matter and that national policies among ASEAN member states remain fragmented (Cristani et al. 2020; Marthin & Budiman 2020; Petz & Rum 2020). Petz and Rum (2020) has suggested that provisions at ASEAN-level, such as a regional framework, could provide a foundation for its member states to develop comprehensive national laws and policies. Two of the latest migration declarations, the 2019 ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration and the 2023 ASEAN Declaration on The Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations, can be a potential step forward, as they acknowledge a connection between disasters, climate change and human mobility (ASEAN 2019, 2023). Hence, there exists vital knowledge and policy gaps in addressing climate-related mobilities at a regional level in Southeast Asia. Given the recent recognition of climate-related mobilities in ASEAN declarations it is of utmost importance to address this gap.

## 1.1 Purpose and aim

The purpose of this thesis is to study how human mobility in the context of climate and environmental change is governed at a regional level in Southeast Asia, with the regional intergovernmental organisation ASEAN, as a case study. By analysing climate, migration, disaster risk reduction and development policies within ASEAN, the aim is to first understand how current policies respond to climate-related mobilities. The second aim, through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) is to identify what challenges and opportunities there exist to engage with climate-related mobilities at a regional level, in the case of ASEAN. Thus, the research questions I aim to answer in this thesis are:

- How does environmental and climate change impact mobility patterns in Southeast Asia?
- To what extent is the climate-environment-mobility nexus addressed in policy realms in ASEAN?

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<sup>6</sup> I define **climate-related mobilities** as a concept that “pays attention to the multiplicity of climate change-related human mobility (involving immobility, relocation, circular mobility, etc), its embedding in ongoing patterns and histories of movement, and the material and political conditions under which it takes place” (Boas et al. 2022:3366).



- What are the potential barriers and opportunities to address climate-related mobilities at ASEAN-level and why do they exist?
- What are the potential avenues for further engagement?

## 1.2 Outline of thesis

In the next section I present a literature review covering: (1) the climate-environment-mobility nexus in Southeast Asia, (2) a discussion of the concept's evolution in academia and its governance challenges and (3) the institutional context of ASEAN and its policy fields related to the climate-environment-mobility nexus. Thereafter, I introduced the theoretical framework of a wicked problem and how I use it to analyse climate-related mobility governance in ASEAN. Next section, I explain the methodology, including a policy review and semi-structured interviews, along with limitations and ethical considerations. Thereafter, my findings are presented and analysed based on the three dimensions of a wicked problem outlined in the analytical framework. In the discussion I summarize the findings and explores climate-related governance prospects in ASEAN. Finally, I conclude the thesis by revisiting the aim and research questions in this study.

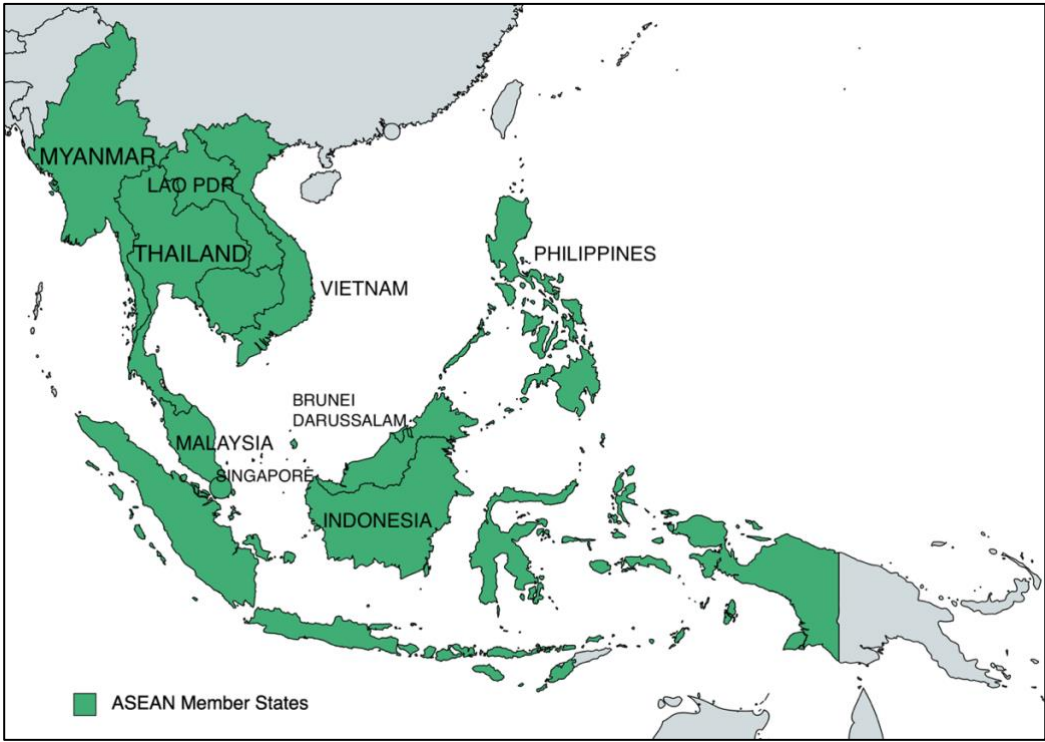
## **2. BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this section I cover relevant literature and previous research to position and conceptualise this study. First, I provide an overview of the multifaced human mobility dynamics occurring in the context of climate and environmental change in Southeast Asia. Second, I delve into the main academic and public debates concerning the climate-environment-mobility nexus and its governance implications. Lastly, I briefly describe ASEAN's institutional context and detail the most relevant policy domains connected to climate-related mobilities.

### 2.1 Southeast Asia: Human Mobility in the Context of Climate and Environmental Change

Southeast Asia, a region heavily affected by climate change and disasters, experiences a wide range of climate-related hazards, including floods, storms, tropical cyclones, droughts, extreme temperatures, and sea-level rise (Islam & Khan 2018; UNESCAP 2020; IPCC 2022a). With 10 out of 11 countries in Southeast Asia being members of ASEAN (see Map 1), this overview

focuses on the ASEAN Member States (AMS) (Islam & Khan 2018).<sup>7</sup> The Asia-Pacific region is recorded to have the most disaster displacement in the world (IDMC 2022). Within Asia-Pacific, Southeast Asia accounted for almost 31% of the total disaster displacement in the region in 2020-2021 (ibid.). However, it is not only the geography and high population density but also social, political and economic conditions that turn hazards into disasters (Ribot 2014).



Map 1. ASEAN Member States  
Source: Author’s own work.

Southeast Asia is home to vulnerable groups, including the poor and marginalized, that are disproportionately affected by climate change, especially those dependent on natural resource-based livelihoods (Islam & Khan 2018; IPCC 2022a; Pereira & Shaw 2022).<sup>8</sup> Table 1. captures some of these dynamics across the AMS. Countries like Brunei Darussalam and Singapore rank very high on the Human Development Index (HDI) and have small territories and populations concentrated to urban areas (Islam & Khan 2018; UNDP 2022). Both countries have little climate risk and a high capacity to manage it (Islam & Khan 2018). Cambodia, Lao PDR, and

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<sup>7</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> country in Southeast Asia, Timor-Leste is in the process of becoming a member state. In 2022, Timor-Leste was granted observer status and ASEAN has endorsed a roadmap outlining steps for Timor-Leste to join (Arunmas 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Natural resource-based livelihoods include activities such as agriculture, fishing and forestry (Islam & Khan 2018).

Myanmar are in the medium HDI category and have a large share of their population dependent on natural resource-based livelihoods (see Table 1). These countries have a high vulnerability to climate change and a low management capacity (ibid.).

Table 1. Human Development Index, Climate Vulnerability & Adaptation Readiness in AMS

Country	HDI Score (2021) <sup>a</sup>	HDI Rankings (2021) <sup>b</sup>	Agriculture, forestry, fishing share of GDP (% 2022)	ND-GAIN rankings (Scores for 2021) <sup>c</sup>	
				Vulnerability <sup>d</sup>	Readiness <sup>e</sup>
Brunei Darussalam	0,829	51 <sup>st</sup>	1,1	76 <sup>th</sup>	44 <sup>th</sup>
Cambodia	0,593	146 <sup>th</sup>	21,9	132 <sup>nd</sup>	159 <sup>th</sup>
Indonesia	0,705	114 <sup>th</sup>	12,4	103 <sup>rd</sup>	102 <sup>nd</sup>
Lao PDR	0,607	140 <sup>th</sup>	14,6	117 <sup>th</sup>	136 <sup>th</sup>
Malaysia	0,803	62 <sup>nd</sup>	8,9	49 <sup>th</sup>	54 <sup>th</sup>
Myanmar	0,585	149 <sup>th</sup>	20,3	140 <sup>th</sup>	178 <sup>th</sup>
Philippines	0,699	116 <sup>th</sup>	9,5	121 <sup>st</sup>	135 <sup>th</sup>
Singapore	0,939	12 <sup>th</sup>	0,0	59 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Thailand	0,800	66 <sup>th</sup>	8,8	102 <sup>nd</sup>	62 <sup>nd</sup>
Viet Nam	0,703	115 <sup>th</sup>	11,9	128 <sup>th</sup>	93 <sup>rd</sup>

**Notes:**

a) HDI is a “composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living” (UNDP 2022:276). The HDI ranges from 0.000-1.000, different development groups are categorized: Very High <sup>3</sup> 0.800, High 0.700-0.799, Medium 0.550-0.699, Low <0.550.

b) The HDI Ranking ranges from 1<sup>st</sup> Country with the highest HDI to 191<sup>st</sup> lowest HDI.

c) The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index measures a total of 181 countries.

d) The Vulnerability ranking means that a country is less vulnerable (in terms of exposure sensitivity and ability to adapt) to climate change the higher the rank is.

e) The Readiness Ranking means that a country is more able to leverage investments and convert them to adaptation actions the higher the rank is.

**Sources:** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2022), ND-GAIN (2022) World Bank (2022)

Although most climate-related migration and displacement is internal, international migration occur more often in regions, such as Southeast Asia, where there is a long history of international labour migration (Wrathall et al. 2022; Capaldi 2023). The complex nature of movement in Southeast Asia has grown significantly in the last 20 years, where people have migrated in search for better livelihood opportunities and an increasing number have been fleeing persecution (Capaldi 2023). Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are typical countries of destination for international migration while Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam are typical countries of origin (IOM 2021;

Capaldi 2023). Following, I provide snapshots of the multifaceted impacts of the climate-environment-mobility nexus in Southeast Asia.

Although an extraordinary event, the Indonesian government's decision to relocate its capital from Jakarta due to environmental collapse has received a lot of media attention, as it showcases a first example of systemic mass migration planned in response to climate change (Van de Vuurst & Escobar 2020). Another well-established public discourse in Southeast Asia is mass displacement due to extreme weather events (Elmhirst et al. 2017). For instance, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, the country-wide flooding in Thailand including its capital Bangkok in 2011, and the 2013 Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines has circulated in world's media (ibid.). Resulting in massive displacements and disruptions to livelihoods of millions of people in Southeast Asia (OECD 2018; IDMC 2022).

The environment-conflict-mobility nexus is also present in the region, particularly with the Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar, where climate change-related disasters exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities that hinder people to cope with disasters (Vigil et al. 2022).<sup>9</sup> In Viet Nam, the government actively tries to support its population to adapt to climate-related disasters through planned relocation<sup>10</sup> programs (Chun 2015), which have had varied results.<sup>11</sup> A study in the Tam Nong and Ngoc Hien districts in Viet Nam found that relocation programs can lead to further displacement when people struggle to adapt in the designated relocation area due to environmental deterioration such as floods, limited access to fish and land, coupled with societal challenges (Miller et al. 2022).

Moreover, development-induced displacement is prevalent in the region, and sometime occur under the pretence of climate mitigation and adaptation policies (Boas et al. 2022; Vigil et al.

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<sup>9</sup> Rohingya communities were rendered stateless by the previous military government, and are in an extremely vulnerable situation in terms of disasters as there is a lack of evacuation plans for internally displaced Rohingya communities and the restriction placed on their freedom of movement affects their ability to cope with disasters (Vigil et al. 2022).

<sup>10</sup> **Planned relocation** refers to “in the context of disasters or environmental degradation, including when due to the effects of climate change, a planned process in which persons or groups of persons move or are assisted to move away from their homes or place of temporary residence, are settled in a new location, and provided with the conditions for rebuilding their lives.” (IOM 2019:157).

<sup>11</sup> The results of the relocation programmes depend much on factors such as if the relocation site provides improved infrastructure, such as safe houses, schools, and health clinics and if communities are either able to maintain their livelihoods or have the opportunity to diversify their income strategies (Collins et al. 2017; Zickgraf 2019a; Entzinger & Scholten 2022).

2022; RWI 2023). In Myanmar, Borras et al. (2020) found that climate politics has been used to legally sanction land grabs by corporate and political elites. Similar incidents can be seen in Cambodia and Lao PDR; where economic land concessions for flex crops such as sugar cane and monoculture plantations of rubber take away land from local communities, having negative impacts on local people and the environment (Baird & Fox 2015; Vigil 2022b). These incidents has several implications on mobility dynamics, some people stay and take up employment in plantations, others engage in rural outmigration across the border in search for alternative livelihood opportunities and it may also drive in-migration of labourers to the plantations (Barney 2012; Baird & Fox 2015).

Furthermore, hydropower is viewed as a viable climate mitigation strategy in Southeast Asia, seen as a suitable alternative to fossil fuels and a solution to the region's growing energy demand (Soukhaphon et al. 2021). However, the development of hydropower dams cause displacement and involuntary relocation of local communities, mostly ethnic minorities, and threatens livelihoods and well-being throughout the region (Manorom 2018).<sup>12</sup> There are also transboundary dimensions to hydropower development as the investment and consumption of electricity from Lao PDR's more than 61 hydropower dams (as of February 2019) are many times international from Thailand, China and Viet Nam amongst other (Tran & Suhardiman 2020; Soukhaphon et al. 2021). Moreover, the ecological and social impacts of hydropower dams, such as loss of fish, riverbank gardens, ecotourism and deteriorating land of agriculture have a transboundary and cumulative character on communities downstream in the river deltas (Soukhaphon et al. 2021).<sup>13</sup> There are also evidence that the negative socio-ecological impacts of dam development instigate rural out-migration where people, especially youth, seek waged labour and other livelihood opportunities in urban areas (Manorom 2018; Soukhaphon et al. 2021).<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, communities in the Tonle Sap area in Cambodia, which are very impacted by climate change including floods and droughts, typically engage in seasonal labour migration<sup>15</sup> both internally and internationally to adapt income opportunities aligned with

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<sup>12</sup> In Viet Nam, 16,206 households were displaced by the development of the Son La Dam, the Nam Theun 2 Dam in Lao PDR displaced 6,200 indigenous people, the Pak Mun Dam in Thailand displaced 248 households and the Lower Sesan 2 Dam in Cambodia displaced over 5,000 people (Manorom 2018).

<sup>13</sup> For instance, hydropower development in Lao PDR have been reported to impact downstream communities in Cambodia and Thailand (Soukhaphon et al. 2021).

<sup>14</sup> For instance, people, especially youth, impacted by the Pak Mun Dam in Thailand migrated to cities like Bangkok and Chon Buri in search of alternative livelihood opportunities (Amabel & Parlee 2020).

<sup>15</sup> **Seasonal migrant worker** refers to "a migrant worker whose work, or migration for employment is by its character dependent on seasonal conditions and is performed only during part of the year. (IOM 2019:154).

seasonal flood variations and dry periods (Nuorteva et al. 2010; Middleton et al. 2013; Oeurng et al. 2019).

Slow-onset events and processes<sup>16</sup> are also proven to impact livelihood and mobility dynamics in Southeast Asia. In Shan State and in the Central Dry Zone of Myanmar climate change-induced crop failures caused by droughts result in temporary migration,<sup>17</sup> especially of young people, to work as wage labour in construction and/or agricultural work elsewhere in rural or urban areas in Myanmar or internationally (Barbon et al. 2017; Zin et al. 2019). Additionally, a study from Thailand and Viet Nam showed that droughts can cause immobility<sup>18</sup> as well, since the negative impact on people's socioeconomic status can increase poverty traps which reduces the ability for people to engage in rural mobility (Quiñones et al. 2021). Furthermore, the combination of drought and saltwater intrusion in coastal provinces in Viet Nam and long-term soil and water degradation in the Philippines has shown to impact the sustainability of people's livelihoods negatively and influenced their decision to move or stay (Ayeb-Karlsson & Uy 2022; Tran et al. 2023).

Ayeb-Karlsson and Uy (2022) make an important contribution by emphasising the occurrence of immobility in later stages of the migratory process. They found that people can become 'trapped' within the international labour mobility process due to horrific migration experiences (ibid.). These individuals, lacking savings, accept bad work conditions and face risks of labour- or sexual exploitation, physical and mental abuse, and human trafficking (ibid). Additionally, some have already experienced climate-related loss and damages before going abroad (ibid.). In fact, reports from Cambodia reveal that drought-afflicted families from agricultural villages tend to migrate, often through unsafe and illegitimate migratory channels due to limited materials and financial resources, making them vulnerable to abuse and exploitative labour

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<sup>16</sup> “**Slow-onset events and processes** include sea level rise, ocean acidification, desertification, salinization, land and forest degradation, biodiversity loss and glacial retreat. Slow-onset events and processes unfold gradually through cumulative changes over longer time frames. **Sudden-onset disasters** can be associated with meteorological hazards such as tropical cyclones, hurricanes, or typhoons; hydrological hazards such as floods and mudslides; and geophysical hazards such as tsunamis, earthquakes, and volcanic activity. They unfold rapidly, and often unexpectedly, and can cause extensive damage within a short period of time. Slow and sudden onset hazards may overlap and cannot always be clearly distinguished from one another.” (UNICEF 2022:7).

<sup>17</sup> **Temporary migration** refers to “Migration for a specific motivation and purpose with the intention to return to the country of origin or habitual residence after a limited period of time or to undertake an onward movement.” (IOM 2019:213).

<sup>18</sup> **Immobility** refers to people who have the desire to stay in place and people who has the desire to move but do not have the ability to do so due to constraints (Zickgraf 2019b).

conditions (IOM 2016; Oudry et al. 2016; Brown et al. 2021). Thus, people involved in human mobility in the context of climate and environmental change not only face hardships at place of origin, but also risk precarious situations on the move.

Furthermore, climate change impacts not only affect people at origin but also at destination. Low-income migrants in mega-urban regions like Metro Manila often reside in risky flood-prone areas, making them more susceptible to floods (Sajor et al. 2017). Similarly, in Thailand, both internal and international migrants, mainly from neighbouring countries (Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR) often reside in informal settlements in urban and peri-urban areas (Phongsathorn 2011). These settlements are situated in disaster-prone regions with inadequate housing and limited infrastructure and social support due to their illegal nature (ibid.). Consequently, they face various climate, environmental, and disaster-related vulnerabilities, hindering their capacity to cope with floods and other calamities (ibid.).

To summarise, these are only snapshot from some of the AMS, but they still provide an overview of the multitude and severity of climate-related mobilities in this region. The region's pre-existing inequalities, socio-economic disparities, and political actions significantly shape the impacts of climate and environmental change on human mobility within and across borders. Understanding and addressing these complexities are difficult but crucial to developing effective policies and responses to climate-related mobilities in the region.

## 2.2 Understanding the Complexities of the Climate-Environment-Mobility Nexus

Climate-related mobilities is not a new phenomenon (Vigil 2022a). People have always moved during times of droughts, floods, and other climatic and environmental events (ibid.). However, the climate-environment-mobility nexus attracted significant attention in early 2000s when the 'alarmist' discourse entered academic and public debates (Boas et al. 2022). Revolving around the idea of "climate refugees" the narrative suggests that climate change would lead to mass migration and pose a threat to receiving societies (ibid.), resulting in governance measures involving top-down repressive approaches, restricting borders, and limiting migration (Bettini 2013; Boas & Wiegel 2021). A decade later, the discourse faced criticism for making incorrect assumptions about climate impacts directly causing cross-border international migration (Boas et al. 2022). It also failed to consider that mobility is influenced by complex and multi-casual

interplay of socio-economic, political, and environmental factors that are interconnected and cannot be isolated from one another (Black et al. 2011; Boas et al. 2022; Vigil 2022a).

In response, the "migration-as-adaptation" discourse emerged from scholars and migration and development organisations (Boas et al. 2022). It views migration as a legitimate individual and household adaptation strategy, where migrants self-manage their situation through remittances (Bettini et al. 2017). However, this discourse also faced criticism, for shifting responsibility away from states to individuals and potentially leading to neoliberal policy responses (ibid.). Furthermore, evidence indicates that migration is often maladaptive (Vigil 2022a). Many individuals who move in the context of climate and environmental change start their migration journeys in vulnerable positions (ibid.). As a result, they often find themselves facing precarious working and living conditions at destinations and often do not improve the well-being of themselves or of their left-behind family members (Boas & Wiegel 2021; Vigil 2022a).

Moreover, the climate-environment-mobility nexus encompasses various forms of movements beyond climate refugees and seasonal labour migration that are dominating in these discourses. An increasing body of empirical evidence shows the plurality of mobilities in the context of climate and environmental change, including, short-term displacement, long-distance migration, relocation, rural-to-urban mobility, seasonal mobility and development-induced displacement and immobility (Boas et al. 2022; RWI 2023). Thus, as I acknowledge that conceptualisations are not neutral and has implications for policy development (Vigil 2022a), I define climate-related mobilities in this thesis, as a concept that:

“pays attention to the multiplicity of climate change-related human mobility (involving immobility, relocation, circular mobility, etc), its embedding in ongoing patterns and histories of movement, and the material and political conditions under which it takes place” (Boas et al. 2022:3366).

Although I acknowledge that a multitude of actors, ranging from national governments, NGOs, UN agencies, journalists and scientists are all part of creating climate mobility regimes (Boas



et al. 2022),<sup>19</sup> I have chosen to limit this study to understand a specific mode of governance, namely, ASEAN. Therefore, when I refer to governance, I limit the inclusion to laws, policies, institutional roles and responsibilities to manage climate-related mobilities (Martin 2010).

Many of the challenges in governing climate-related mobilities derives from its complex nature as a multi-causal phenomenon where environmental factors cannot be isolated from other factors that shape mobilities (Warner 2010; Black et al. 2011). Thus, the uncertainties about impacts of environment and climate change on human mobilities (Martin 2010) makes governments hesitant to engage in policy responses when there are no direct figures or measurements of the matter (Vlassopoulos 2010). This also makes climate-related mobilities hard to conceptualise. As mentioned, discourses and terminology like “climate refugees” are not neutral and shapes policymaking. The conceptualisation may have implications for what kind of mobilities are being addressed and how they do so in policy responses (Warner 2010). Besides, the range of the definition also impacts which authority and institutions bears responsibility for the policymaking (Vlassopoulos 2010).

Partly due to the challenges with conceptualisation, there exist no international legal framework that comprehensively address climate-related mobilities (Martin 2010). Proponents of the ‘alarmist discourse’ argued for including climate refugees as an additional type of persecution in the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention (Ferris 2017). However, it was turned down as refuge advocates and experts feared it would weaken the Convention (ibid.). Similarly, there exist no international migration law that specifically address climate change and environmental factors (Martin 2010). In fact, most established bodies of laws to protect migrants applies to economic migrants (Warner 2010; Ferris 2019). However, non- binding rules provide somewhat further policy guidance but not in a comprehensive manner (Warner 2010).<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the lack of a legal definition leads to an institutional and normative vacuum (Piguet et al. 2011).

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<sup>19</sup> Boas et al. (2022:3371) defines **climate mobility regimes** as “interconnected sets of socio-economic and political relations consisting of different types of actors, that frame, manage, and regulate the nexus between mobilities and climate change in a particular manner (Paprocki 2018), resulting in particular modes of governing of climate mobilities.”

<sup>20</sup> Among these are the the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Cancun Adaptation Framework, The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, The Nansen Initiative, etc., for a full overview see (Stojanov et al. 2021:214–217).

Additionally, the governance of climate-related mobilities is often managed within a country’s borders as well as within ministerial lines (such as environment ministry, agricultural ministry, labour ministry, disaster management, immigration services, etc.) (Vlassopoulos 2010; Warner 2010). Disaster management institutions may be appropriate for responding to the emergency of a sudden-onset disaster (Warner 2010). However, addressing other forms of climate-related mobilities related to slow-onset events, such as coastal erosion and sea level rise, may require a broader institutional landscape, including ministry of agriculture, water and development agencies, amongst other. (ibid.). Despite the need of their involvement, these institutions may not have the mandate to address human mobility issues (ibid.). Hence, there exist institutional gaps. Silos of institutional management needs to be surmounted as a multi-sectoral approach is needed to comprehensively address the full spectrum of climate-related mobilities (Vlassopoulos 2010; Warner 2010). Consequently, there exists a multitude of challenges of governing climate-related mobilities, I provide a summary in Table 2.

Table 2. Challenges of governing climate-related mobilities

<b>Challenge(s)</b>	<b>Description(s)</b>
Uncertainty	The inherent uncertainties of climate-related mobilities makes governments hesitate to engage in policy action.
Conceptual issues	Due to the multicausality of the phenomenon it is difficult to conceptualise and agree upon a problem definition that guides policymaking.
Lack of international legal frameworks	The lack of international legal frameworks results in an institutional and normative vacuum that could be used to support policymaking at sub-international levels.
Multi-sectoral approach	There is a need to involve a range of institutions to comprehensively address climate-related mobilities. However, these institutions may not have the mandate to address the issue within the current institutional set-up.
Silo-isation	To effectively address the issue, sectors need to collaborate and work beyond their silos of institutional management.

Source: Author’s own work.

Addressing the complexities of governing climate-related mobilities, lacks a straightforward solution. Scholars propose various ways to improve governance in this area. Some suggest creating new global frameworks for mobility in the context of climate and environmental change, but progress in this direction seems unlikely due to conceptual issues at the very least (Piguet et al. 2011; Ferris 2017). Others emphasise the importance of a platform for policy dialogue to understand climate change impacts, livelihood potential and mobilities, where

countries can share experiences of policy responses already in use to respond to environmental stressors (Warner 2010). In the absence of legal frameworks and norms, scholars propose utilising existing policy instruments, adapt and broaden them to tackle the multifaceted challenges of the climate-environment-mobility nexus (Piguet et al. 2011). As such, climate change adaptation, natural resource management, disaster risk management, development and social policy can address the underlying causes of climate-related mobilities (Warner 2010; Piguet et al. 2011). This approach can reduce the need for people to move out of harm's way by reducing the risk of hazards and providing livelihood opportunities (ibid.). It can also provide people with the capacities needed for those who want to move in search for other opportunities (Piguet et al. 2011). Additionally, the improvement of appropriate refugee, internal displacement and migration policies at large would benefit those moving in the context of climate and environmental change (ibid.).

In fact, one of the most prominent suggestions for regional policy is the development of regional protocols for free movement of people (Ferris 2017; Huckstep & Clemens 2023). This approach proves useful as it sidesteps some of the dilemmas of conceptualising climate-related mobilities as migrants would not have to justify the cause of their mobility (ibid.). Other regional suggestions involve consolidating regional understandings and practices in disaster management and climate change adaptation to provide guidance on internal and intra-regional movement in the context of climate and environmental change (Ferris 2017). An often overlooked aspect, in my opinion, is that many climate and environmental changes factors related to mobilities often result from transboundary issues such as river delta management, desertification, and climate change (Warner 2010). Given its transboundary nature, addressing this issue requires transboundary solutions, where I think regional organisations such as ASEAN should take a more active role.

### 2.3 Regional governance in Southeast Asia - the role of ASEAN

Exploring the role of ASEAN, which was founded in 1967 with the aim to stabilise the region and bring peace and economic growth (Yazid & Septiyana 2019; Pereira & Shaw 2022). The intergovernmental organisation has adopted a unique approach, focusing on enhancing regional cooperation in areas of common interest without supranational integration (Fornalé 2018). Often referred to as the 'ASEAN way' the political culture revolves around norms of state sovereignty, consensus, and non-interference, characterised by informal and non-legalistic

governance through soft instruments and non-binding agreements (Fornalé 2018; Lavenex & Piper 2022; Rother 2022). In 2003, the Bali Concord II organised the regional process into three pillars: the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Political–Security Community (APSC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) (Fornalé 2018). The pillars are further divided into different thematic divisions, where most relevant policy areas to climate-related mobilities fall under the ASCC (see Figure 1).

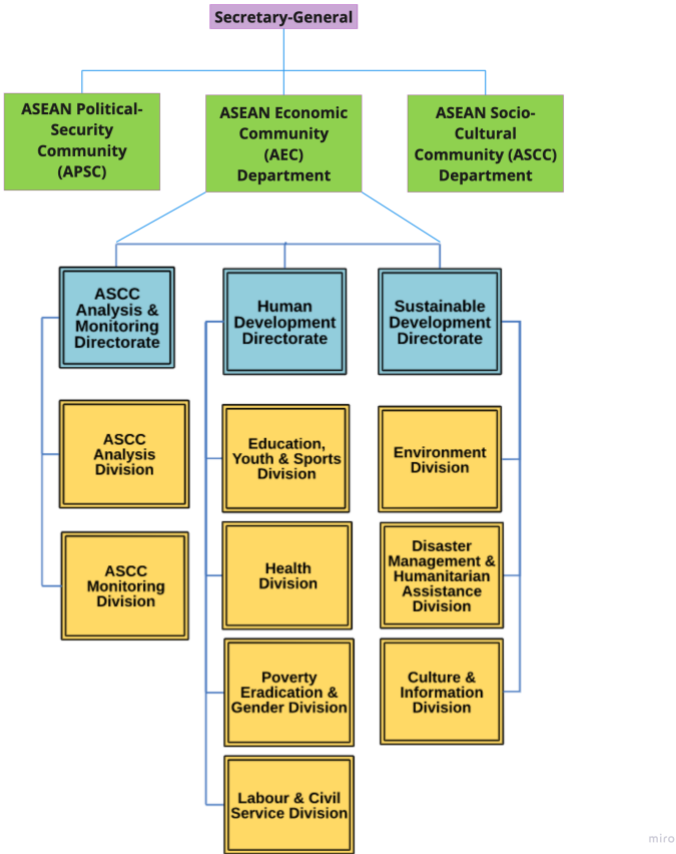


Figure 1. ASEAN Secretariat Organisational Structure  
 Source: Author’s own work, adjusted from (ASEAN 2022c)<sup>21</sup>

Concerning mobility, ASEAN's consideration of migration as a policy issue for regional governance took decades (Rother & Piper 2015). While progress has been made, fragmentation remains and implementation has been modest (Lavenex & Piper 2022; Rother 2022). Migration trends and policy attention in ASEAN follow economic opportunity and labour migration, where both AMS of origin and destination rely on the labour and remittances of migrant workers (Petcharamesree 2016). Be that as it may, there exist important gaps within this narrow

<sup>21</sup> For a complete overview of ASEAN Secretariat Organisational Structure see (ASEAN 2022c).

area as well. For one, ASEAN makes distinctions between highly skilled and low-skilled migrant workers (Rother 2022). The mobility of highly skilled migrant workers falls under the key priorities of AEC while low-skilled migrant workers falls under the ASCC, thus, they are bound to different regulations and agreements (Fornalé 2018; Rother 2022). Policy development for low-skilled migrant workers has been fraught with political tension between AMS (Rother 2022). Abuse and exploitation of migrant workers are common occurrences in the region; hence, the 2007 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers was considered a significant achievement (ibid.). However, it took another decade for the declaration to turn into a formal agreement (ibid.). The drafting process was delayed due to disagreements between countries of destination and origin (ibid.). Wherefore, the 2018 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers turned into a non-binding agreement. It leaves gaps, particularly for the many undocumented migrant workers in the region, as it applies only to regular migrants (Lavenex and Piper 2022). Beyond labour migration, other mobility issues, such as statelessness, conflicts, environmental degradation, and development-induced displacement, shape movements in the ASEAN region and it is questionable if there is any policy or approach in ASEAN that address this (Petcharamesree 2016). The situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs)<sup>22</sup> and refugees, including the Rohingya conflict and instability in Myanmar, presents challenges, but ASEAN lacks a comprehensive regional policy on this matter (Yazid & Septiyana 2019; Petz & Rum 2020).

The disaster risk domain in ASEAN has been considered a prime example of deepening regional cooperation (Petz 2014). The key regional policy, the 2005 ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) has been acclaimed as:

“among the world’s best practice: progressive, comprehensive, and, unusually for a disaster instrument, legally binding.” (Simm 2018:116)

AADMER includes several mechanisms for implementation, such as a rolling work programme usually updated every five year and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian

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<sup>22</sup> **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** refers to “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” (IOM 2019:109).

Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), the main operational engine responsible for the implementation of the agreement (Petz 2014; di Floristella 2016; Simm 2018). The emergence of regional collaboration in disaster management is interesting, given ASEAN's traditional commitment to non-interference in internal affairs and emphasis on state sovereignty (Muhammad & Surwandono 2016). The mutual interest for joint action can be seen as a functional necessity, as all AMS face increased exposure to and all suffer either directly or indirectly from disasters (di Floristella 2016). Moreover, some scholars emphasise the event of the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 as a landmark for ASEAN's disaster management (Petz 2014; di Floristella 2016; Muhammad & Surwandono 2016; Simm 2018). The severity of the tsunami's impact, affecting four out of ten AMS,<sup>23</sup> created a sense of urgency and served as a catalyst for regional law reform in ASEAN (Petz 2014; di Floristella 2016; Simm 2018). In addition, the AHA Centre's formal mandate to address 'natural disaster management' can be seen as less politically sensitive, allowing for involvement in domestic affairs without provoking controversy on the non-interference principle (Suzuki 2021). However, while disaster risk management is seen as a successful policy area ASEAN does not directly address climate change-induced displacement in their policies (Petz & Rum 2020).

Environmental issues were added to ASEAN's agenda in 1977, with responsibility falling on the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) and its working groups (Elliott, 2012). Over the years, progress was made in identifying eleven areas of regional importance for environmental cooperation in the ASCC (ibid.). However, ASEAN's action on environmental issues remains limited, critics argue that ASEAN's environmental work only addresses repeated issue cases such as transboundary haze pollution, peatland management, and heritage parks (Marthin & Budiman 2020). For instance, haze became a high-alert issue in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia itself in 1997-1998 and short thereafter the binding 2003 ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution entered into force (Elliott 2012; Suzuki 2021). However, it took about 13 years for complete ratification and cooperation moves slowly, mostly due to Indonesia's limited capacity and willingness to implement the agreement (Marthin & Budiman 2020; Petz & Rum 2020; Suzuki 2021). In the climate change sphere, ASEAN issues joint statements involving heads of state and governments since 2007 and established the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI) and ASEAN Working Group on

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<sup>23</sup> Indonesia was worst hit by the Indian Ocean Tsunami, but fellow AMS: Thailand, Myanmar and Malaysia also suffered (Simm 2018).

Climate Change (AWGCC) in 2009 (Pereira & Shaw, 2022). The ACCI facilitates coordination, capacity building, and technology transfer, while the AWGCC focuses on sectoral climate change issues and inter-sectoral cooperation (Petz & Rum, 2020). In summary, Marthin and Budiman (2020) argue that ASEAN has climate mitigation instruments, but it lacks direct documents addressing environmental-induced migration.

The literature review reveals policy gaps in various domains for addressing climate-related mobilities in ASEAN. Political tensions arise due to unevenly experienced effects and differing perceptions among AMS, as observed with migration and haze, while disaster management has been successful due to widespread impacts that threatens all AMS to some extent (Quayle 2013). Moreover, there exists a research gap on climate-related mobility governance in ASEAN. There is mainly two studies addressing this topic, one solely focused on climate-induced displacement in ASEAN (Petz & Rum 2020) and one examining the discourse of climate migration within the policy-making of ASEAN (Marthin & Budiman 2020). Hence, I argue that this thesis makes an important contribution by conducting a comprehensive analysis of ASEAN policy domains related to the climate-environment-mobility nexus and doing so with a wider climate mobility lens.

### **3. THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

The use of wickedness theory as a theoretical framework was chosen as it “enables scholars to bring together academic and organizational and societal concerns.” (Noordegraaf et al. 2019:280). Thus, the theoretical framework allows for taking in to account the multicausal dynamics of climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia, the complex dynamics of governing climate-related mobilities as well as unpacking ASEANs organisational context. In the next section I provide an overview of wickedness problems and in the following section I illustrate how wickedness theory will be used as an analytical lens for the analysis in this thesis.

#### **3.1 Wicked problems**

Wickedness theory first derived from Rittle and Webber’s (1973) early work on urban planning, where they categorized some of the problems as ‘wicked’ based on the ten following characteristics (see Table 3).

Table 3. Rittel and Webber’s (1973) Ten Characteristics of a Wicked Problem

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.</li> <li>2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule.</li> <li>3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad.</li> <li>4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.</li> <li>5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a “one-shot operation”; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly.</li> <li>6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan.</li> <li>7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique.</li> <li>8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.</li> <li>9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution.</li> <li>10. The planner has no right to be wrong.</li> </ol>
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Source: Rittel and Webber (1973:161–166)

Since then, multiple conceptualisations of a wicked problem have surfaced (Noordegraaf et al. 2019). What all of them have in common is to underline how major societal challenges often are intangible due to uncertainty and political features of societal issues and offers creative strategies for dealing with them based on enhancing networks, trust, and learning (ibid.). One way to simplify the definition of a wicked problem is to distinguish it from a simple and a complex problem by examining the definition and solution to a problem (see Table 4) (Klasche 2023). A simple problem has the characteristics of that the problem definition and solution is easily and clearly defined (ibid.). A complex problem, however, is easy to define but the solution to the problem is not clear or at least contested (ibid.). While a wicked problem has no clear definition and also no clear understanding of a solution to the problem (ibid.).

Table 4. Types of problems and how they are characterised

Type of problem	Definition of the problem	Solution of the problem
Simple	Clear	Clear
Complex	Clear	Undefined/contested
Wicked	Undefined/contested	Undefined/contested

Source: Author’s own work, adjusted from Klasche (2023)



Both climate change and migration are issues that has been termed wicked and been attractive to analyse through this analytical lens due to the complex, large and interconnected dynamics that characterizes these two issues (Powers et al. 2018; Noordegraaf et al. 2019). Since climate-related mobilities occurs at the nexus of these two complex and interwoven challenges, it, indeed, can be termed a wicked problem (Powers et al. 2018). As I have illustrated in the previous section climate-related mobilities fits the description of a wicked problem as it can be summarized as:

“highly uncertain, value-laden and disputed, simultaneously affecting multiple temporal and spatial scales, governance levels, policy fields and socio-economic contexts.” (Hoffmann et al. 2023:2)

Hence, I argue that wickedness theory is a useful tool for analysing regional climate-related mobility governance in Southeast Asia and it will be used to unpack what this particular wicked problem constitutes of in this context. However, wickedness theory is not free from criticism. In fact, wickedness theory has an inherent paradox: “[t]he more we frame problems in terms of wickedness, both academically, politically, or publicly, the more we generate obstacles for identifying insights for addressing with wicked issues” (Noordegraaf et al. 2019:295). Problems gets removed for daily practice by the grandiosity of the issue so actors are instigated to in-action rather than tackling the issues (ibid.). However, in this thesis I attempt to avoid this paradox by first gaining a comprehensive understanding of climate-related mobilities and then situate it in the context of ASEAN, I will also try and provide insights for how it can be addressed based on policy suggestions from the literature review.

### 3.3 Analytical Framework

I have chosen to structure the analytical framework based on Head and Alford’s (2015) three tenets of what a wicked problem generally is associated with, namely; scientific uncertainty, institutional uncertainty and social pluralism (see Table 5 for a summary). The analytical framework will be used to structure the analysis (Section 5). First, scientific uncertainty refers to the fact that a wicked problem derives from many causes and does not have one single root cause, is constantly changing and consist of complex social interactions with many ways to interpret them, which makes it difficult to provide reliable knowledge (Powers et al. 2018; Klasche 2023). Thus, fragmentation and gaps are common (ibid.). Second, institutional

complexity involve that wicked problems usually spans over multiple related subsets of issues that are crosscutting policy domains and levels of government (Weber & Khademian 2008). Consequently, there is no natural or political location within the institutional structure and processes for the problem to gain attention and be dealt with (Noordegraaf et al. 2019). Thus, this tenet focus on the context of interorganisational cooperation and multilevel governance (Head & Alford 2015). The third tenet focuses on the manifold interests and values of stakeholders involved in this problem (ibid.). Turnbull and Hoppe (2019) make an important contribution here in tying these three tenets together by criticising an essentialist understanding of wicked problems (see Noordegraaf et al. 2019). Instead of focusing on the problem itself, they argue that the wickedness rests in a political distance that is expressed in ideas, interests, institutions, and practices between policy workers involved in this problem (Turnbull & Hoppe 2019). Hence, wickedness cannot be separated from the policy workers dealing with the problem. Instead, wickedness should rather be perceived as:

“a rhetorical device designed to evaluate a problem and achieve a practical effect, e.g. to justify lack of progress, or to call for more attention to, and resources for (see Noordegraaf et al., 2016), a problem.” (Turnbull & Hoppe 2019:10)

Table 5. Key tenets of a wicked problem

<b>Scientific uncertainty</b>	<b>Institutional complexity</b>	<b>Social pluralism</b>
<p>“Fragmentation and gaps in reliable knowledge” (Head &amp; Alford 2015:716).</p> <p>“Wicked problems have many causes, ongoing processes of spiraling change, complex social interactions, multiple interpretations” (Kolko 2012 see Powers et al. 2018)</p>	<p>“The context of interorganizational cooperation and multilevel governance” (Head &amp; Alford 2015:716).</p> <p>Wicked problems usually spans over multiple related subsets of issues that are crosscutting policy domains and levels of government (Weber &amp; Khademian 2008).</p> <p>There is no natural or political location within the institutional structure and processes for the problem to gain attention and be dealt with (Noordegraaf et al. 2019).</p>	<p>“Multiple interests and values of stakeholders” (Head &amp; Alford 2015:716).</p> <p>Wickedness is in the distance on ideas, interests and institutional complexity between the policy workers dealing with such a problem: ‘a policy problem might be termed “wicked” by a policy worker because achieving even incremental progress in its normative and factual questions is difficult, frequently because distances between the relative parties remain large and conflictual’ (Turnbull &amp; Hoppe 2018: 10 see Noordegraaf et al. 2019).</p>

Source: Authors own work.

## 4. METHODOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Ontological and Epistemological Stance

I adopt an interpretive ontological and epistemological stance, recognizing reality as socially constructed where meaning, values and beliefs creates multiple interpretations of the world (Goodwin 2011; Browne et al. 2019). Hence, I argue that understanding how climate-related mobilities are interpreted is crucial, as it influences actions taken to address the issue. Therefore, I apply a ‘Socio-Causal’ analytical frame that rest on the assumption that mobility outcomes are generated by social vulnerability *preceding* the climatic or environmental events rather than an ‘Environmental-Drivers’ frame that see migration as a direct function of an environmental shock that a social system is exposed to (Cottier et al. 2022).

### 4.2 Research design

I selected a qualitative research design based on an institutional approach as the issue of climate-related mobilities is inevitably political (Vigil 2022a) and tied to the institutions that are governing in Southeast Asia. I consider the design to be a case study design, as I in this study provide a detailed exploration of how ASEAN as a regional intergovernmental organisation in Southeast Asia is governing this issue (Bryman 2012). A case study is “an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a ‘real life’ context.” (Simons 2009:21). In this study I examine a particular institution, ASEAN, by using multiple sources of information (ranging from observations, interviews, documents, reports and policies) and across different policy domains to identify opportunities and challenges for ASEAN in addressing climate-related mobilities (Bryman 2012). The intent also aligns with the primary purpose of a case study, as I hope to generate knowledge for ASEAN and stakeholders engaging with the organisation that can inform policy development on this issue (Simons 2009).

### 4.3 Research Method(s) and Data

For this study, I combined several in-depth qualitative approaches, drawing from my personal experiences and observations during a 6-month internship at a research and policy organization working in the field of the climate-environment-mobility nexus. Additionally, I conducted a

comprehensive literature review to identify gaps in the existing literature and to position my study within the broader research field. To gather primary data, I conducted a policy review and semi-structured interviews with thirteen key informants (KIIs).

The aim with conducting the policy review was to provide a contextual overview of to what extent the climate-environment-mobility nexus is addressed in regional policies in Southeast Asia. I examined a selection of policy documents from ASEAN, including declarations, consensus, agreements as well as one research report on climate change and one on migration produced by ASEAN. I identified relevant ASEAN policies through findings from my literature review and additional searches on ASEAN's website. In total, I analysed 21 policy documents (see Appendix A for a complete list of policies). Based on the findings in the literature review, I decided to limit the selection of ASEAN policies to the fields of development, climate change, environment, disaster, and migration. The review aimed to understand the extent to which concepts such as "climate change", "environment", "migration", "displacement", "relocation", "resettlement", and "mobility" were mentioned. This allowed me to assess the interconnections between policy domains and determine whether the climate-environment-mobility nexus is adequately addressed within ASEAN's policy framework.

Considering I want to understand how ASEAN manages the climate-environment-mobility nexus, I decided to complement the review of policy documents with semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders to get an understanding of ASEAN's institutional settings by unfolding different perspectives, interpretations, and interests. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to address specific dimensions of my research questions while at the same time provide room for the study participants to offer new insights and meaning to the topic under study (Galletta 2013). Since climate-related mobility governance in ASEAN is a relatively understudied field that covers many policy domains, the semi-structured interviews allowed for the flexibility needed to explore different avenues of the research field (*ibid.*).

To identify information-rich cases relevant to climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia, I employed a purposive sampling strategy (Patton 2014). I sought out stakeholders with specific experiences in policy domains linked to climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia, such as migration, climate, environment, disaster management, and displacement. Moreover, I aimed to include participants with experience of engaging with or within ASEAN to gain insights into the institutional workings of the organization. The sampling process relied on established

contacts from my two internships: one at the development cooperation section of the Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok and the other with the Stockholm Environment Institute Asia Centre based in Bangkok. Additionally, some interviews led to a snowball sampling effect, as interviewees referred me to additional information-rich participants (Patton 2014). To complement the sample, I also personally reached out to other stakeholders that I identified as relevant.

The semi-structured interviews covered a diverse range of participants, including staff from various UN agencies, regional networks, civil society organizations (CSOs), representative from the ASEAN Secretariat, and academic and professional experts (see Appendix B for list of interviewees). These interviewees brought expertise from different policy domains, such as disaster risk management, environment, displacement, labour, and migration, offering valuable insights into the complex governance of climate-related mobilities in the region. Most interviews were conducted online through Zoom- or Teams-meetings, between end of May to end of June 2023.

A general interview guide (see Appendix C) was drafted for the semi-structured interviews, which supported me in facilitating the interviews in a systemic and comprehensive manner, by making sure that the same basic lines of questioning are followed with each interviewee (Patton 2014). The questions in the interview guide were developed to cover certain topics and themes informed by the findings from the literature review and the questions were formulated and structured in a way to understand and cover the whole policy process. The development of the interview guide was an iterative process of refinement (Bryman 2012). I made smaller adjustments to the guide for each interviewee, to situate the interview guide in the experience and expertise of the interviewee (Patton 2014). Moreover, the guide was adjusted based on new information and lines of thoughts I discovered by earlier interviewees that could be taken up and presented to later interviewees in order to improve the line of questioning (Bryman 2012).

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

Upon finalising the data collection, I transcribed the interview recordings using Otter transcription software. The data analysis was conducted manually without any software assistance. I adopted a reflexive thematic analysis approach, allowing me to identify patterns and themes in the data (Byrne 2022). This analysis was based on my own interpretation of the

interviews, theoretical assumptions, and analytical skills (ibid.). I followed Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-phase analytical process: (1) familiarizing myself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing potential themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report.

While I recognise that a inductive (data-driven) or deductive (theory-driven) analytic process is in a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Braun & Clarke 2021), some stages of the analytical process were more data-driven while others were more theory-driven. Thus, I would claim that I used a inductive-deductive logic process for my analysis (Creswell 2013). The generation of initial codes was mainly inductive being grounded in data rather than pre-determined from the conceptual framework (Braun & Clarke 2021; Byrne 2022). Codes could be labelled “lack of data”, “slow-onset mobility”, “disaster risk reduction” or the name of a specific policy. To identify common codes and potential themes across the data set, I created individual mind-maps for each interview. The potential themes were then reviewed deductively, considering commonalities from the literature review. Codes from the interviews were systematically organized into a matrix based on these themes. Finally, I used a deductive-driven approach to finalize the themes and grouped them under the analytical framework’s three overarching categories of a wicked problem: Scientific Uncertainty, Institutional Complexity, and Social Pluralism. Throughout the analysis, I revisited the original transcripts, codes, research findings, and theoretical conceptualization in an iterative process until the report was completed.

#### 4.5 Limitations of the study

The research process has some limitations, and it is important that I address these to understand the results and how they can guide future research. An important remark is that the policy review is not an exhaustive analysis of ASEAN policies but a focused review of specific policies domains. Hence, other policies on for instance Human Rights, Trafficking, Women and Children may include references to the climate-environment-mobility nexus that are not covered by this study. Furthermore, the policies under review were not analysed in-depth. The selected keywords might have missed some conceptually relevant details. Nevertheless, I intended to provide an overarching view rather than a detailed analysis of the nexus in ASEAN policies.

Another limitation relates to the study's scope and the sampling of interviewees. The study would have gained by interviewing ASEAN representatives from several divisions. However, my attempts to interview representatives from the Environment Division, Labour & Civil Service Division, Human Rights Division and the Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance only resulted in an interview with one representative from the Environment Division. Additionally, the study could have benefitted from including interviews with government representatives from AMS as ASEAN is very much driven by the initiatives of its Member States. However, considering the vastness of the topic in terms of policy domains and the number of AMS, it was not feasible to cover all of it in this study. Future studies should consider encompassing a larger scope of representation within ASEAN and its Member States.

Due to the complexity of climate-related mobilities, several inherent issues related to this topic remained unexplored in this thesis. The study's focus on regional governance of climate-related mobilities, specifically within the institutional boundaries of ASEAN. Notably, the study excludes the institutional workings of national and local level governance in Southeast Asia, as well as the role of other actors, such as CSOs, involved in the governance of climate-related mobilities at the regional level. Another significant limitation is that the study did not adequately emphasise the daily experiences of people that are impacted by human mobility in the context of climate and environmental change. Moreover, the study did not explore how pre-existing inequalities, such as age, gender, race, class, ability, and education, are being addressed in the policy context of climate-related mobilities in ASEAN. These aspects should be considered in future policy development and research.

Finally, the results from this study cannot be generalised to other regional intergovernmental organisations, as the context in Southeast Asia differs significantly from other regions. The results can neither be generalised to each country, it is rather an overview of the regional context in Southeast Asia. Still, the study provides a starting point to understand the regional governance of climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia.

#### 4.6 Ethical Considerations and Positionality

Since social science is a social phenomenon, this study is embedded in a political and ethical context (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2009). Hence, I am aware that my questions, examination, and interpretation can either reinforce or challenge existing social, political, and ideological

conditions (ibid.). Therefore, I have accounted for my ontological and epistemological stance, which I derive from interpretative studies. Moreover, it is considered that a researcher's positionality as regards to class, nationality, age, gender, socio-economic status, amongst other, shapes the 'data' and what becomes considered as knowledge (Madge 1993). Thus, being self-reflexive, I recognize that my positionality as a young feminist researcher with a western-European background influences my research approach (Tracy 2010). Additionally, conducting my thesis project during an internship at an international research and policy organization in the region may impact both my role as a researcher and how I am perceived in the field (Hammett, Twyman, and Graham 2014). My connection to the organisation may have been an advantage to gain access to some of the KIIs in this study, while those connections may have affected the answers, I have received from the KIIs as well. Despite this, I clarified for the participants that their involvement was solely for informing the thesis project.

Throughout this project I have followed Lund University Masters in International Development and Management Ethical Guidelines. As informed consent is central to ethical research, I provided the participants with a consent form to sign before the interview or obtain oral consent during the interview due to time constraints. Before starting the interview, I ensured the participants confidentiality, anonymity, and their option to withdraw from the study at any time. Most interviewees agreed to record the interviews for note-taking purposes, which I later transcribed and deleted.

## **5. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

The findings from the policy review and the semi-structured interviews have been consolidated into the analytical framework's three tenets of a wicked problem, in order to understand the multiple dynamics that climate-related mobility governance in ASEAN entails.

### **5.1 Scientific Uncertainty**

Along the lines with the findings in the literature review, the interviewees acknowledged that there exists evidence of climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia. However, they reiterated, but in various way, the presence of uncertainties regarding reliable knowledge on the climate-environment mobility nexus in Southeast Asia (KII 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12). Several KIIs (1, 3, 9) pointed out fragmentation of data, with limited accessibility beyond research centres (according



to KII 1) and insufficient government-owned data, particularly in their specific context (according to KII 3 & 9). This lack of comprehensive data hampers government's capacity to act and inform policy development effectively (KII 3 & 9). The challenge of tracking mobility was also mentioned (KII 4 & 5), especially when climate or environmental factors are involved (KII 5), as it is hard to separate the motifs of mobility and understand whether people are moving due to climate change-induced environmental degradation, seeking better education opportunities, improved income in urban areas, or other factors (KII 4).

One key difficulty is to establish a clear causal connection between mobility and some element of climate or environmental change (KII 5), as mobility is associated with and often intertwined with other cultural, social, and economic aspects (KII 4). For instance, as KII 4 mentioned, degradation of natural resources can be part of the reason to loss of income that may affect an individual's choice to move for better income opportunities. However, it is hard to derive if this is indeed a consequence of climate change and environmental degradation that are increasing the mobility within the region (KII 4). In summary, one of the informants expressed:

“Establishing attribution or causality between climate change and displacement, which is a huge issue. And we're never going to go to the root of them.” (KII 10)

Consequently, it is hard to explain to policymakers and even to the beneficiaries (KII 10). KII 3 illustrated this with an example from north coastal Java, in Indonesia. They observed that people were moving because of subsistence and threats to their livelihoods linked to drought and other climate conditions (ibid.). However, the government did not really enact that movement with climate conditions (ibid.). The government would see it as ‘migrants’ that moved because they do not have a place to live anymore, partly because the Indonesian statistics bureau do not have a specific typology for climate-related mobility (ibid.). So KII 3 found it challenging to get the government to act on climate-related mobilities as they would claim that they do not have climate-related mobilities in their country since they do not have the data to back it up (KII 3). This is also in line with my observations, that governments in this region mainly sees numbers on climate-related mobilities as reliable data, although there exists evidence of climate-related mobility in the region through qualitative research. KII 5 made an important remark, just because we do not have data does not mean that we do not know what the problem is, just that we cannot as easily quantify it. In fact, based on their experience,

sometimes we wait for some number to come before we act although we know that some action could be taken (KII 5).

Informants also claimed there are fragmentations in reliable knowledge concerning different forms of climate-related mobilities. Traditionally, understanding movement in context of the environment has been in relation to sudden-onset events like floods, typhoons or earthquakes that cause people to move (or be displaced) in a very visible way (KII 5). There is an awareness that slow onset events and processes influence human mobility and that it will likely continue to happen in the future (KII 9). However, several informants (KII 3, 5, 9, 12) claimed that there is a knowledge gap on the interconnections between slow-onset processes and human mobility:

“The complexity of movement in the context of slower onset hazard processes, is a looming issue, because there's a knowledge gap and like an institutional kind of responsibility gap, I think, across the region.”  
(KII 12)

These mobilities are usually connected to a more cumulative result of these kinds of slow-onset processes (KII 10). Consequently, it makes it even harder to understand, disentangle and engage with these kinds of movements (KII 5). In fact, people that are moving may often not make the connection that climate change might be a underlying cause for the move:

“So, you can see people slowly moving out, but not recognizing that, you know, that climate is the response to, climate is posing a challenge to the movement of people from one place to the other” (KII 1)

Another fragmentation expressed by the informants is between internal and cross-border movement in the context of climate and environmental change. Many informants reiterated the dominating view that most climate-related mobility occurs within countries (KII 1, 4, 5, 9, 12). KIIs (1 & 8) shared the view that eventually there might be more stepwise migration, for instance, from a coastal area or inland area towards a big city as a first step for international migration (KII 8). In addition, KII 12 highlighted that there exist capabilities for managing internal mobility along with statistics on internal displacement in the context of sudden onset hazard events. However, there is a knowledge gap about people moving across borders (KII 3, 5, 9, 12), be it in the context of slow or sudden onset processes, which results in a political

vacuum as we do not have an idea of the scale of these kinds of movements (KII 12). KII 1 also raised the question whether climate-related mobilities becomes a problem for ASEAN as a regional intergovernmental organisation when the movement is mostly internal or when there is no significant transnational movement. However, KII 9 mentioned there could still be value in the sense of knowledge sharing between countries and that there is still the potential for cross-mobility in the future, so it still should be part of the equation.

The various forementioned aspects on climate-related mobilities and the uncertainty in reliable knowledge is also closely related to the challenges to come up with a problem definition for climate-related mobilities. It is challenging to decide upon what you can categorise as climate-related mobilities and how you categorise that into a policy (KII 3). It all depends on how you define the word (KII 1). Thus, we have to be mindful about putting labels such as economic migrant or environmental migrant (KII 3). Not every movement has to have a label, rather the opposite. For instance, there is a danger to label something as low wage labour migration and assume that it is voluntary and protected movement without understanding that some of it might have forced elements to it, be it climate change impacts or other factors (KII 5). Hence, KII 5 thought that this kind of silent mobility that we do not deem having a climate element attached to it is one of the greater challenges within this nexus.

Moreover, there are not only issues in defining the problem, but there are also issues with finding solutions to the problem, as there are many aspects to take into consideration.

“I mean, even if you design a project on climate induced displacement, how many of these activities will you be able to actually say is specifically addressing climate induced [displacement]?” (KII 10)

There are many aspects to take into consideration if ASEAN were to make a policy on climate-related mobilities, one would have to understand the climatic and environmental factors and its interconnections to human mobility in a very heterogenic region (KII 10). Additionally, it is challenging to define what makes an intervention into a climate-related mobilities intervention. For instance, interventions such as crop insurance for farmers, or responsive social protection measures for when a disaster comes (KII 10 & 4), is meaningful from a climate-related mobility perspective but also from a livelihood, poverty reduction and climate change adaptation perspective (KII 10). So, the solution to the problem is not clear-cut either, as there are many

avenues where interventions can have knock-on effects for people in a climate-mobility context, for instance, making migration governance better (KII 5) or addressing the impact climate change has on fisheries (KII 9), although there might not be a direct visible climate-mobility component to it. In a way the solutions for climate-related mobilities may not necessarily change what is needed practically but that the implications it has is needed to be considered in those conversations (KII 9).

## 5.2 Institutional complexity

The literature review illustrated that, climate-related mobilities spans across many policy domains and there is no exemption for the regional level in Southeast Asia. Since climate-related mobilities is an undiscovered policy concern in Southeast Asia it does not have a natural or political location within the institutional structure of ASEAN. Thus, a first step to understand the institutional conditions of climate-related mobilities in ASEAN was to review existing policies. The result showed that there is little recognition of the climate-environment-mobilities-nexus within policy documents in ASEAN (see Appendix D for the policy review).

In the development policies, terminology on climate, environment and mobility occurred, but seldom in conjunction (see Appendix D).<sup>24</sup> In the 2016 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, migrant workers were mentioned as a vulnerable group that should have increased social protection “in Times of Climate Change-related Crises, Disasters and other Environmental Changes” (ASEAN 2016:16) but other than that there was no mention on the connections between the two. The same applies to the disaster policies, most did not include any terminology on mobility (see Appendix D). Regarding policies on climate change, the 2022 ASEAN Joint Statement on Climate Change to the 27th Session of the Conference of Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP-27), did not mention any human mobilities (ASEAN 2022a). However, the 2018 ASEAN Multi-sectoral Framework on Climate Change did mention migration but rather in a negative way (and not specifically related to climate change) as rural to urban migration might put the region’s food availability at risk due to decline of labour force in the agricultural sector (ASEAN 2018b).

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<sup>24</sup> Development policies include the 2015 ASEAN Community Vision and the 2016 ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint, see Appendix A, for a comprehensive list of policies.

Moreover the guiding policy on migrant workers, the 2018 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (hereafter referred to as the ‘Migrant Workers Consensus’ or ‘the Consensus’), does not make any reference to climate or environmental changes (ASEAN 2018a). In fact, most migration policies are completely lacking references to climate and environmental change, except for two of the latest declarations (see Appendix D). The 2019 ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration notes:

“with deep concern the millions of children worldwide who are displaced from their homes, including by conflict, poverty, disaster, climate change, and environmental degradation, experience exploitation, deprivation and discrimination on their journeys within and across borders, and acknowledging the need for mechanisms to ensure the protection of their rights and access to services in all regions of the world, including the ASEAN region;” (ASEAN 2019:1)

The 2023 ASEAN Declaration on The Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations (hereafter referred to as the ‘Migrant Workers in Crisis Declaration’ or ‘the Declaration’) also provides some recognition to the climate-environment-mobility nexus by outlining the risk landscape in ASEAN, which is increasingly complex because of multi-layered natural hazards and interconnected economies that are aggravated by the impact of climate change and human mobility amongst other factors (ASEAN 2023). It is noteworthy that natural disasters qualify as a ‘crisis situations’ this declaration aims to ensure protection to migrant workers and their families in (ibid.). Still, the declaration is non-binding and, like the ‘Migrant Workers Consensus’ that only covers documented migrant workers, there are no mentions of undocumented migrants, or any other type of mobilities, in this declaration (ibid).

In addition to the policy documents, ASEAN has published two key reports. Both reports open some initial discussion on climate-related mobilities in the region. The 2021 ASEAN State of Climate Change Report states some benefits with free mobility, like economic and cultural benefits (ASEAN 2021). However, internal migration in the context of climate change is portrayed as a potential vulnerability and problem, that can increase pressure on natural resource degradation and many migrants settle in areas vulnerable to disasters and sea level rise (ASEAN 2021). The 2022 ASEAN Migration Outlook, however, acknowledges that

environmental factors (along with other factors) could drive future intra-ASEAN migration and that:

“it is possible climate change can influence migration from these countries to other less vulnerable AMS.” (ASEAN 2022b:35)

To summarise the policy review, policies on climate-related mobilities in ASEAN is still lacking and much more is needed for ASEAN and its member states to properly recognise climate-related mobilities in the region. Instead, I turn my focus towards understanding the existing policy domains and what challenges and opportunities there are to integrate climate-related mobilities across the domains.

The fact that climate-related mobilities requires cross-sectoral work is in itself a challenge, but what makes it into a problem is that ASEAN seems to have limited capacity to collaborate across sectors and have a rather siloed approach (KII 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 13). The organisational structure of ASEAN is very bureaucratic (KII 9) and built on three pillars that does not know each other (KII 7). Thus, this “pillarisation” can cause problems for a policy issue if it is divided across pillars, as with the distinction between highly skilled and low-skilled migrant workers (KII 8). Even so, collaboration between divisions within the same pillar is also a challenge as sectors tend to work in silos where one sector is working on their own and other sectors are working on their own (KII 13). As one interviewee described it:

“Working in silos, I think, for my, for my experience, at the end of the day, we love working in silos, right? Because we love to have this kind of ownership, like for us to have that specific footprint. But then again, I think (...) the most important thing is for these different silos, to talk to each other, and then to collaborate, and then to make that silo as transparent as possible” (KII 3)

The 'Migrant Workers in Crisis Declaration' is a striking example. The Declaration proceeded out of the COVID-19 experience, as many migrant workers and their families were disproportionately affected by the pandemic in Southeast Asia (KII 2). Furthermore, there was a push for the declaration to include other types of crisis situations such as environmental disasters, climate change and political conflict (KII 2). In the end, health emergencies and

natural disaster was termed crisis situations in the declaration, along with the possibility for ASEAN member states to determine other crises when such crises occur (ASEAN 2023). As the declaration spans over policy domains, the ambition was to involve different relevant ASEAN bodies in the policy development (KII 2). Consultations for the declaration and guidelines for its implementation (that is currently under development) were held in December 2022 and March 2023 (ILO 2022, 2023). Many ASEAN sectoral bodies were successfully involved, ranging from the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management to ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health Development (ibid.).<sup>25</sup> However, there were no climate or environmental body involved (KII 2).<sup>26</sup>

Even if relevant sectors are involved in the consultation, the question is if their involvement is meaningful or if it rather is to fulfil some sort of requirement of cross-sectoral work (KII 13). As stated, sectors tend to work by themselves, and even with cross-sector initiatives, one division has to lead the coordination of the implementation (KII 13). For the 'Migrant Workers in Crisis Declaration' the ASEAN Labour Ministers Meeting with the support of the ASEAN Senior Labour Officials Meeting were tasked with the implementation (in cooperation with other relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies and organs) (ASEAN 2023). So even if the environmental bodies would have been involved in the consultation it does not change the fact that the labour sector is responsible for the implementation (KII 2). Still, the informant hopes that the declaration, by creating a link between crisis situations and mobility can inspire national stakeholders to start cross-sectoral cooperation (ibid.). However, the following up and implementation of the declaration seems weak as there are no hard commitments for anybody (ibid.).

Another informant criticised the declaration for portraying disaster and climate change only as the cause of the crisis situations without comprehensively understanding the issue (KII 3). For instance, the declaration does not really solve the issue of understanding if people are moving in response to slow-onset climate processes (KII 5). One informant thought this was partly because the most prevalent discussion about mobility in ASEAN happens through the lens of the 'Migrant Workers Consensus', which makes the 'Migrant Workers in Crisis Declaration'

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<sup>25</sup> For full list of representatives involved in the consultations see (ILO 2022) and (ILO 2023).

<sup>26</sup> Environmental bodies such as ASOEN or the AWGCC were not part of the consultations.

caught between two stools, as it just talks about labour migrants in crisis (ibid.), where many other mobilities in the context of climate and environmental change are left out.

This relates to the mandate of different organisational bodies, as one informant emphasised, policy workers are quite focused on their core work and core deliverables (KII 2). Thus, the issue area has to be within the mandate and roles that are expected of the different agencies for them to act on it (KII 4). This can be further illustrated in ASEAN's disaster domain. Many informants agreed with the findings from the literature review, that "ASEAN has a pretty established disaster management mechanism" (KII 11). Thus, informants considered the response to disaster displacement in Southeast Asia as quite advanced (KII 3, 12). KII 10 claimed that there are to some extent structure and procedures in place to deal with mobility in the disaster context. Within disaster risk management there is a firm focus on what to do with displaced people in an emergency and (s)he thought the region had become good at tackling that as for instance pre-emptive evacuation has seen a lot of progress in the region (ibid.).

However, the cross-cutting role and mandate is also lacking in the disaster policy domain. Informants stated, there exists connections between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in the AADMER Work Programme 2021–2025 but exempt from that the AADMER Work Programme 2021–2025 and the AHA Centre's operational documents rarely discuss issues related to climate and environmental change (KII 3). Hence, perspective is limited to seeing climate change and environmental issues as something that might increase the frequency or exacerbate certain hazards but not really linking and connecting the dots within the climate-environment-mobility nexus (ibid.). In addition, there is limited provisions to anything like cross-border mobility (KII 12). Thus, in the current AADMER Work Programme 2021-2025 there is not really any capacity for managing climate-related disasters (KII 6). This is further illustrated, within the AHA Centre, as it is only mandated to work with natural disasters. Usually, the AHA Centre do not get involved in conflicts, displacement from conflicts as well as climate change, since it is not part of its formal mandate (KII 6). They also do not have a mandate to respond to haze as it is considered a man-made disaster (ibid.). However, the mandate can be expanded by the AMS if they want to (ibid.).

However, the challenges associated with cross-sectoral work is recognised by the organisation, and they try to explore ways to efficiently work together on crosscutting issues (KII 13). One important ASEAN initiative, done jointly with IOM, is the ASEAN Migration Outlook Second



Edition (hereafter referred to as the ‘Migration Outlook’ or ‘the Outlook’). The Migration Outlook is considered a good opportunity to start a conversation on climate-related mobilities in the ASEAN-region as it is the focus area of the study (KII 9). Moreover, the report will be an ASEAN publication and owned by ASEAN (ibid.), which addresses one aspect of the knowledge fragmentation regarding climate-related mobilities. One informant hoped the Outlook will:

“provide sort of a very broad overview of the links between migration and climate change, covering all the different forms of human mobility that can play into it and all that, how the different hazards sort of interact, and all the different elements of it. So, presenting both the displacement side of things, but also migration and labor migration, in particular, maybe planned relocation, just to try and be able to start having that broad conversation that is not just focused on, you know, displacement, for example.” (KII 9)

Challenges with addressing climate-related mobilities is not only limited to working horizontally across sectors and policy domains but also vertically between different levels of government, involving multilevel governance. In fact, informants think that much of the gaps in cross-sectoral coordination in ASEAN relates to the fact that inter-sectoral coordination is not happening at the national level either (KII 2 and 3). One other informant stated:

“The problem might not be the ASEAN, ASEAN itself, but the governments themselves. Because you can't bypass the governments and go to ASEAN straight. You have to deal with your government first.” (KII 1)

Much of this is shaped by how the organisation is organised:

“ASEAN does not do anything by default. It's all consensus, which means everything that is done has to be unanimous.” (KII 7)

KII 13 emphasised that the ASEAN Secretariat mainly has a coordinating role and that its mandate is based on the Member States. Therefore, the national level cannot be disregarded in

the regional processes. Another important remark by one of the informants is that even if a regional framework and policy would be achieved, it is important to remember that:

“What we want is the impact at the national and local level from this regional framework, it is not about having a regional framework in itself as a goal. The impact on the ground is the goal.” (KII 3).

Here is another challenge, the policy implementation (KII 2). Most ASEAN protocols and agreements are just nice on paper, but the implementation is often left to the individual countries (KII 1). For instance, with the 'Migrant Workers in Crisis Declaration', there will be guidelines to support the implementation of the declaration, however they will mostly be about the changes member states should make in their national policies and coordination across borders (KII 2). There is no regional implementation plan (ibid.). Several informants highlighted the struggles of making sure that the impact of regional collaboration has proper mechanisms to translate that at the national and local levels so that the impact trickles down and are connected back to the ground (KII 2, 3, 8, 12 13).

### 5.3 Social Pluralism

The aim with this section is to portray how different interests and values of stakeholders come across in the context of climate-related mobilities in ASEAN. However, it is important to emphasise that the perspectives I share in this section are based on the interviewees view of how interests and values take place within the ASEAN context. These are also subjective to interpretation as they are based on a rather outsider perspective and not from the AMS representatives themselves. Still, I hope that they will shed some light on the complexity of different interests and values taking place in the climate-environment-mobility nexus in Southeast Asia.

Most informants concurred in that there seems to be a lack of political will to engage on climate-related mobilities in the ASEAN context (KII 1, 3). KII 13 on the other hand believed that:

“The ASEAN member states and ASEAN as a region recognize the importance of the issues of climate related mobility in ASEAN (...) but so far, as I mentioned, ASEAN don't have any concrete activities in this

regard. I'm not sure whether it is because the lack of commitment from each member states or the political will from its member states on these issues” (KII 13)

Another informant was under the impression that governments in ASEAN are aware of the problems but questioned whether it becomes a priority for the governments (KII 1). KII 10's reiterated that perception within the Myanmar context, that the stakeholders think they have more important things to do due to the conflict situation, in terms of socio-economic support to people, so climate and environmental concerns have to wait. This also coincides with another informant's view that:

“Government say first we have to develop, we have to build dams and large infrastructure projects, Indonesia, is full of these projects, and environmental considerations are not at the forefront of the considerations (...) and then, of course, it's easier to displace large numbers of people to build a big infrastructure project. Because yeah, it's for the greater good as every government would claim” (KII 8)

This kind of development discourse also coincide with more economic oriented discourses. One informant viewed ASEAN as a business arrangement that brings people together to do business and there is where ASEAN makes progress, not on social, environmental, or political matters (KII 1). Additionally, one informant thinks ASEAN view movement of people is in terms of economic benefits where people on the move must be useful for them (KII 5). Thus, due to a lack of political will and other competing agendas the discussion on climate-related mobilities at ASEAN level can be summarized as:

“In Southeast Asia, you know, the conversation just isn't there or it isn't happening sort of in a way that addresses the full spectrum of issues.”  
(KII 9)

The silo-isation of different sectors among ASEAN also creates a distance between the relative stakeholders that should be engaged in addressing the climate-environment-mobility nexus. Thus, their interest is limited to within their specific policy concerns. I think both points competing agendas and distance in ideas, can be illustrated from the consultation process of the

'Migrant Workers in Crisis Declaration'. When I asked how stakeholders perceived the involvement of climate change and natural disasters in the declaration, the informant thought the stakeholders perceived it as a non-issue (KII 2). The issue was rather about including political conflict as a crisis situation in the declaration, with the political sensitivities around the situation in Myanmar dominating the discussions (ibid.). Considering this, climate change was non-political (ibid.). Moreover, it could also be seen as a non-issue for the ones participating in the consultation as they were not climate change and environment representatives and so the implications of adding that to the declaration was not considered (ibid.). This may imply that climate change and environmental issues are seen as something distant from the responsibilities of the labour sector that leads the implementation of the Declaration. The interviewee also claimed that we cannot expect the labour or immigration sector to lead the work on climate-related mobilities (KII 2). Instead, it would be more appropriate if the lead came from a climate change-related coordination body, where the people responsible for mobility should be part of the cross-sectoral work (ibid.).

Furthermore, policy workers are also pre-occupied with different interests within their own policy domains. One such topic is mobility, which can be seen as highly politicised across the world, including Southeast Asia (KII 10). Much of the sensitivities regarding migration revolves around governments pointing fingers and laying blame (KII 10), usually deriving from different interests between countries of origin and destination, which was evident in the delayed process of revamping the Migrant Workers Declaration into the Consensus (KII 8), where:

“At the end of the day, it comes down to the concept of sovereignty. They don't like internal interference in ASEAN. So, they say we don't want other countries telling us how we have to treat people in our territory, but the people in their territory are citizens of other states. Right. So that's why it goes beyond the pure national boundaries.” (KII 8)

In general, there is a big gap in ASEAN in terms of protection measures for refugees and people crossing borders that are in precarious situations (KII 5). The governance structure on migration in ASEAN is based on labour migration that must be preauthorised (ibid.). Countries of destination are very reluctant and protection measures only exists for regular migrants. However, most people that move across borders with a climate mobility element tend to be in precarious irregular situations (ibid.). Furthermore, countries that consider themselves as

destination, like Malaysia, Singapore, (and Thailand to some extent), have very big detention infrastructures sweeping everybody that are unauthorised, no matter if they are refugees, asylum seekers or whether they have a climate story in their background (KII 5).

Moreover, there is also an economic rationality in that countries of destination, like Malaysia, benefit from having undocumented illegal migrant workers, as they are easier to exploit, deport and to pay less when no protection measures are in place (KII 8). In theory a country like Thailand that is a country of origin, destination and of transit should be quick on making migration policies, however, different interests means that just because you defend your migrants abroad does not mean that migrants in your own country are well protected in comparison (Ibid.). In addition, there is not enough solidarity of countries of origin as well (KII 8). One informant illustrated this with an example from the Colombo Process,<sup>27</sup> where countries of origin could not agree upon a standard minimum wage as they ‘compete’ for the remittances. Consequently, mobility is a very contentious issue and adding a climate and environment component to it could also factor into it (KII 9).

Several informants concurred that, although there is an acknowledgment of climate change as a pressing issue for the region (KII 1, 3, 13) there is a general lack of ambition in ASEAN on addressing environmental and climate change concerns (KII 1, 9, 10). Many AMS are still heavily reliant on fossil fuels and many instances of environmental degradation in the region due to government actions and policies (KII 9). Hence, the broader lack of ambition and action on climate change may have implications for the lack of attention to human mobility within the climate and environment policy field (ibid). Another informant expressed that ASEAN, thus far, has focused much on the market driven or technology-based climate change mitigation side rather than the adaptation side (KII 13). The interviewee emphasised that ASEAN should help the most vulnerable people to the impact of climate change and that ASEANs interventions and projects should be based on the needs of local communities that are affected by climate change (ibid.).

In addition, many informants referred to the 2003 ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (hereafter referred to as the ‘Haze Agreement’), as it is considered the most prominent

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<sup>27</sup> The Colombo Process is a Regional Consultative Process where only countries of origin in Asia are members (KII 8).

policy in environment at the ASEAN-level (KII 1). However, many informants highlighted issues when it comes to the enforcement of the agreement (KII 1). Even though the ‘Haze Agreement’ was signed 20 years ago, you see some of the worst transboundary haze even this year and little progress has been made in implementation of the agreement (KII 1, 6, 11). Countries continue to allow peat lands to be burned seasonally (KII 6). It also comes down to a reluctance between member states as well, as one informant stated, Singapore is finding it difficult to implement the agreement because they do not get the support from Indonesia in terms of information sharing on land use and how it is being burnt (KII 1). One informant saw this as yet another example of that there is something in the mechanism of ASEAN that prevents them from acting collectively on climate issues (KII 6).

Furthermore, different interests and political tensions comes into play, as haze is seen as a ‘man-made’ kind of disaster (KII 6). There is also a responsibility attached to the issue, where the issue of assigning blame comes back in (ibid.). Several informants mentioned that there is a lot of blaming the other country going on when it comes to haze, instead of looking at what is happening in your own country (KII 8, 10, 11). One part of the issue is the sensitivities around assigning blame and when countries are being responsible for environmental risk which makes it difficult for them to discuss and treat it at the regional level (KII 6). Another issue is also the fact that there is a possibility to diffuse the responsibility, that contributes to the blame giving (KII 11). It is possible to dilute the responsibility of haze since the supply chain derives from many parts in the region and has many people’s fingerprints on it and is often an indirect cause (ibid.). The same applies to climate change, as it is a collective pattern of production and in fact a collective carelessness (ibid.). I would argue the same for climate-related mobilities, that since there is no clear party that is responsible, this cause a collective of carelessness around the issue.

Consequently, achieving progress in climate-related mobility governance in ASEAN seems rather challenging. However, there are some aspects worth highlighting where progress has occurred. One of these areas is disaster management. KII 12 thinks there is a lot of willingness to work on disaster risk reduction, and to some extent the displacement that takes place in that context. Another informant argued that since disaster management is straight forward, there are not really any contradictions in the area, and it is therefore not as politically sensitive (KII 10). Which is also why the informant considered AADMER to be successful, as it is tangible, helping people in need and is relatively non-controversial (ibid.). Another informant added that disasters might be seen as a haphazard and not anyone’s fault, which could be an important

watermark for ASEANs ability to respond (KII 6). In relation, to the responsibility part, it might align with that since there is no room for blaming one country or the other for causing the issue the sensitivities to act on the issue is removed. KII 10 concurred with the findings from the literature review and attributed the sense of urgency caused by the event of the Indian Ocean Tsunami as an enabler to create the AADMER. Hence, a sense of urgency or a very tangible event can instigate a political will to act on the issue (ibid.). The same was argued in the literature review for the development of the ‘Haze Agreement’.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

In this section I will begin with summarising the main findings from the analysis on the current state of climate-related mobility governance in ASEAN, to thereafter provide some suggestions for potential avenues for ASEAN to strengthen its approach to address the climate-environment-mobility nexus in Southeast Asia. The climate-related mobility governance in ASEAN cover many of the characteristics of a wicked problem. This summary will tease out some of the main findings from each of the three key tenets of a wicked problem.

In terms of the first tenet of a wicked problem, scientific uncertainty, I found through the analysis that there exist multiple fragmentations and gaps in reliable knowledge (Head & Alford 2015). One of them being that there is insufficient government-owned data to support the governance of climate related mobility governance in Southeast Asia. The other gaps considered different kinds of mobilities, where the connection between slow-onset processes and human mobility as well as cross-border mobilities in the context of climate and environmental change was emphasised by the interview participants. Although, the literature review did show that this types of mobilities do take place in the Southeast Asian region, more evidence might be needed to comprehend the interplay and magnitude of these dynamics. Much of the scientific uncertainties that are underlying the fragmentation gaps can be derived to the many causes, ongoing processes and complex social interactions that are inherent to human mobility in the context of climate and environmental change, which makes it challenging to conceptualise a problem definition and a problem solution to facilitate the governance of climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia.

Moreover, the findings based on the second tenet, shows that across ASEAN there is a general lack of mechanisms to address climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia. Hence, there is no

natural or political location within ASEAN's institutional structure and processes for climate-related mobilities to gain attention and be dealt with (Noordegraaf et al. 2019). Based on the policy review I found that, in line with the findings from the literature review, that the climate-environment-mobility nexus is not gaining recognition in ASEAN's policies. The silo-isation that exists within ASEAN's organisational structure, reinforced by the political culture of non-interference, makes it difficult to work cross cuttingly over the multiple related subsets of policy domains related to the climate-environment-mobility nexus. In addition, the lack of mandate to address climate-related mobilities served as a challenge within sectors. Moreover, there are not only challenges across sectors, within sectors but also with multilevel governance. The analysis found that ASEAN is very much driven by the national governments of the member states in order to achieve policy development. However, the implementation of the policies is also left to the governments themselves. Thus, there are many steps to translate policymaking in ASEAN from the regional, to the national, to the local and then eventually to the impacts on the ground. Lastly, based on the findings of the third tenet, there seems to be a lack of political will to address climate-related mobilities in ASEAN, due to multiple competing interests, where climate-related mobilities is not on the top of priorities, as economic, political and development interests are taking precedence. In addition, the political culture of non-interference also spurs further distance in ideas between policy domains and creates barriers to collaborate on the climate-environment-mobility nexus across sectors. Moreover, multiple competing interests can also be found within policy domains. In the migration sphere, different values and interests between countries of origin and destination causes a gridlock in policy advancement. In addition, countries of origin may also diverge on their interests as well. Thus, many of the challenges occur when there is divergence in interests within the policy area and where blame can be allocated on other parties, as with migration and with transboundary haze. In disaster management most progress has been achieved as disasters are being seen as something external to the intra-regional dynamics between AMS and not involved in the political sensitivities, which making it easier for ASEAN to collaborate. Additionally, vested interests and a sense of urgency has also contributed to the policy achievements within the disaster domain.

Hence, there are many challenges for ASEAN to comprehensively address climate-related mobilities in this region. I will now discuss what potential avenues exist for ASEAN to enhance their work, based on the suggested policy recommendations from the literature review. Firstly, a new framework that specifically address climate-related mobilities seems very unlikely, considering the many issues of conceptualising climate related mobilities as well as the



organisational limitations in ASEAN. Instead, there could be opportunities to utilise existing policy instruments and broaden them to tackle the climate-environment-mobility nexus. The Second Migration Outlook, with its focus on climate-related mobility can serve as an important starting point in understanding how different policy domains can expand their work on the climate-environment-mobility nexus.

## **7. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The purpose of this study was to understand how human mobility in the context of climate and environmental change is governed at a regional level in Southeast Asia, with the aim to understand how ASEAN is currently addressing the climate-environment-mobility nexus and what challenges and opportunities there exists to strengthen action on climate-related mobilities in this region. For research questions were outlined to guide the study. I will now provide an overview of how this study has answered these questions. Firstly, the study show that environmental and climate change has multifaceted implications for human mobility in Southeast Asia. The literature review covered many of these dynamics, ranging from development-induced displacement due to hydropower dam construction, to drought impacts on livelihoods shaping immobility and temporary mobility patterns, amongst other. Secondly, the study found that the climate-environment-mobility nexus is not adequately addressed in ASEAN, as the policy overview found limited references to this nexus. Thirdly, based on the findings from the semi-structured interviews, there exist a multitude of barriers for ASEAN to address climate-related mobilities. The barriers are caused by the complexities of climate-related mobility governance as well as the structural and political culture within ASEAN, limiting cross-sectoral collaboration on this issue. However, there exist potential avenues for ASEAN to engage on the issue by expanding their work in existing policy domains, for instance in disaster management as it is not as politically sensitive as other domains. Moreover, the Second Migration Outlook can act as a starting point for ASEAN to address many of the scientific uncertainties related to climate-related mobilities in the region and can hopefully provide insights in how different policy domains can expand their mandate to tackle climate-related mobilities in Southeast Asia.

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## 10. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A. List of ASEAN Policies

#### Development

- 2015 ASEAN Community Vision 2025
- 2016 ASEAN Social-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025

#### Disaster

- 2015 26th-Declaration on Institutionalizing the Resilience of ASEAN and its Communities and Peoples to Disasters and Climate Change
- 2016 ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management
- 2016 ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response
- 2020 ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework
- 2021 ASEAN-UN Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management IV 2021-2025
- 2020 ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021-2025
- 2021 ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster Responsive Social Protection to Increase Resilience
- 2021 ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, gender and inclusion in Disaster Management 2021-2025
- 2022 ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management

#### Climate Change/Environment

- 2018 ASEAN Multi-sectoral Framework on Climate Change
- 2022 ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC) Action Plan 2025
- 2022 ASEAN Joint Statement in Climate Change to the 27th Session of the Conference of Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP-27)
- 2015 Declaration on ASEAN post-2015 Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Agenda
- 2021 ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for Adaptation to Drought 2021-2025

#### Mobilities

- 2018 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers
- 2019 ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration  
Regional Plan of Action on Implementing the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration
- 2023 ASEAN Declaration on The Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations

#### Reports

- 2021 ASEAN State of Climate Change Report
- 2022 ASEAN Migration Outlook

## APPENDIX B. List of Interviewees

KII code	Description	Interview Date	Organisations or Affiliations: <sup>28</sup>
KII 1	Regional Network / CSO	May 28 <sup>th</sup> 2023	Academia  ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR)  ASEAN Secretariat  EU-funded project with ASEAN  International Labour Organization (ILO)  International Organization for Migration (IOM)  Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI)
KII 2	UN Staff	May 1 <sup>st</sup> 2023	
KII 3	Regional Network / CSO	June 1 <sup>st</sup> 2023	
KII 4	UN Staff	June 1 <sup>st</sup> 2023	
KII 5	UN Staff	June 6 <sup>th</sup> 2023	
KII 6	Expert	June 12 <sup>th</sup> 2023	
KII 7	Expert	June 14 <sup>th</sup> 2023	
KII 8	Expert	June 16 <sup>th</sup> 2023	
KII 9	UN Staff	June 20 <sup>th</sup> 2023	
KII 10	Expert	June 20 <sup>th</sup> 2023	
KII 11	Expert	June 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2023	
KII 12	Regional Network / CSO	June 26 <sup>th</sup> 2023	
KII 13	Expert	June 30 <sup>th</sup> 2023	

<sup>28</sup> This Column illustrate some of the organisations and affiliations the interviewees belong to.

## APPENDIX C. Interview Guide

### **Info:**

- Short information about the study.
- Inform about their task in the study.
- Anonymity, consent, voluntary, recording and ability to withdraw participation at any time.

### **Human mobility:**

In my study I intend to cover different patterns of migration and non-migration from forced to voluntary mobility. Thus, it can cover: forced and voluntary immobility, forced displacement, resettlement and relocation, seasonal and/or longer-term labour migration etc. I am aware that each setting and experiences are different so please focus on experiences and/or processes relevant to the context you engage with.

### **CRM in the region**

1. What do you perceive as the primary issues associated with environmental and climate change, in the Southeast Asian region (now and in the years to come)?
  - What impacts do you perceive in connection to human mobility?
2. What particular climate/environmental and human mobility challenges, from your experience, will the region face and how can these be adverted?

### **ASEAN and CRM**

3. What experience do you have working with ASEAN on issues related to climate-related mobilities such as migration, environment, climate change, development issues, disaster management, etc.?
4. To what extent do you think ASEAN consider the impacts of environmental and climate change on human mobility?

5. What do you perceive as the main challenges as well as opportunities for ASEAN associated with human mobility in the context of environmental and climate change in the region?
6. What are the most relevant policy advances and gaps in ASEAN in relation to climate-related mobility?
  - What current policies (development, disaster management, migration, climate, environment) exists that addresses this problem?
  - What difficulties does the region and ASEAN Member States face in the implementation of existing policies?
7. Where and how do you think ASEAN can improve the situation of climate-related mobilities?

**Round-up questions**

8. Is there any aspect of this that you think is important for me to be aware of that I have not already asked about?
9. Do you have any suggestions for relevant studies, projects, and policy documents on these topics?
10. Do you have suggestions for other key informants?



## APPENDIX D. Review of ASEAN Policies

Development		
Name of Policy	Mobility	Climate Change/Environment
2015 ASEAN Community Vision 2025	An inclusive community that promotes high quality of life, equitable access to opportunities for all and promotes and protects human rights of women, children, youth, the elderly/older persons, persons with disabilities, <b>migrant workers</b> , and vulnerable and marginalised groups, (p.16)	A sustainable community that promotes social development and <b>environmental protection</b> through effective mechanisms to meet the current and future needs of our peoples; (p.16)
		"A resilient community with enhanced capacity and capability to adapt and respond to social and economic vulnerabilities, <b>disasters, climate change</b> as well as emerging threats and challenges;" (p.16)
2016 ASEAN Social-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025	Tens of millions remain in extreme poverty. <b>Intra-ASEAN migration</b> is on the rise, from 1.5 million in 1990 to 6.5 million in 2013 <sup>2</sup> are increasingly <b>migrating to seek employment</b> opportunities. An estimated one in eight <b>migrant workers is a young person</b> between the ages of 15 and 24. Almost 50 percent of <b>international migrants are women</b> , who are increasingly migrating to seek employment opportunities. An estimated one in eight <b>migrants is a young person</b> between the ages of 15 and 24. (p.2)	A number of ASEAN Member States remain vulnerable to <b>natural and human-induced disasters</b> , which tend to disproportionately and adversely <b>affect the poor and low income populace</b> . Pollution and <b>resource degradation</b> are also increasingly serious problems in a number of ASEAN Member States. ASEAN is also among the most highly vulnerable regions to <b>climate change</b> and will need to find solutions to adapt to climate change in building a resilient ASEAN. (p.2)
	An inclusive community that promotes high quality of life, equitable access to opportunities for all and promotes and protects human rights of women, children, youths, the elderly/older persons, persons with disabilities, <b>migrant workers</b> , and vulnerable and marginalised groups; (p.3)	This will continue and build upon the gains of the Millennium Development Goals and rally broadbased support on addressing challenges to sustainable development such as poverty, rising inequalities within and among countries, violent extremism and <b>natural resource depletion and climate change</b> among many others. (p.2)

<p>This would entail the promotion of equitable access to opportunities for ASEAN peoples, and the promotion and protection of human rights of women, children, youths, the elderly/ older persons, persons with disabilities, <b>migrant workers</b>, ethnic minority groups, and vulnerable and marginalised groups, throughout their life cycle, guided by a life-cycle approach and adhering to rights-based principles in the promotion of ASEAN policies and programmes in the ASCC Pillar. (p.6)</p>	<p>A resilient community with enhanced capacity and capability to adapt and respond to social and economic vulnerabilities, <b>disasters, climate change</b> as well as emerging threats, and challenges; and (p.3)</p>
<p>Provide guidelines for quality care and support for women, children, youths, the elderly/older persons, persons with disabilities, <b>migrant workers</b>, ethnic minority groups, and vulnerable and marginalised groups; (p.6)</p>	<p>Increase competencies and resilience of relevant stakeholders with advanced technological and managerial skills so as to improve institutional capacity to address current challenges and emerging trends, such as <b>disasters, pandemics and climate change</b>; (p.5)</p>
<p>Enhance regional initiatives and stakeholder participation to promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination—institutionalised or otherwise—exploitation, trafficking, harmful practices, and violence and abuse against children, women, persons with disabilities, youths, <b>migrant workers</b>, the elderly/older persons, and victims/survivors of trafficking in persons, ethnic minority groups, and vulnerable and marginalised groups; (p.9)</p>	<p>Build an enabling environment to provide the <b>unemployed, poor and other marginalised</b> groups <b>equitable access to resources</b>, opportunities, and safeguard measures to prevent them from falling under the negative influence of violent extremism and threats; (p.8)</p>
<p>Enhance regional initiatives in accordance with the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers to improve the protection and promotion of the rights of <b>workers and migrant workers</b>. (p.10)</p>	<p>Promote regional inter-sectoral mechanisms towards a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach in enhancing quality care, wellbeing, gender equality, social justice, human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially the vulnerable groups, in response to all <b>hazards</b> and emerging social and economic risks/threats; (p.9)</p>

<p>Strengthen policies and strategies for the effective impact management of <b>population growth and migration on cities.</b> (p.12)</p>	<p>Promote sustainable financing mechanism for social protection, particularly universal health coverage, early childhood care and development, financial risk protection for <b>disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation</b>, and social pension, through strategic partnerships with private sector and other relevant stakeholders; (p.9)</p>
<p>Promote greater <b>people-to-people interaction and mobility</b> within and outside ASEAN;</p>	<p>Adopt good management practices and strengthen policies to address the impact of <b>development projects on coastal and international waters and transboundary environmental issues, including pollution, illegal movement and disposal of hazardous substances and waste</b>, and in doing so, utilise existing regional and international institutions and agreements; (p.11)</p>
	<p>Promote cooperation on <b>environmental management</b> towards <b>sustainable use of ecosystems and natural resources</b> through <b>environmental education, community engagement and public outreach</b>; (p.11)</p>
	<p>Strengthen human and institutional capacity in implementing <b>climate change adaptation and mitigation</b>, especially on <b>vulnerable and marginalised communities</b>; (p.12)</p>
	<p>Facilitate the development of comprehensive and coherent responses to <b>climate change challenges</b>, such as but not limited to multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approaches; (p.12)</p>
	<p>Leverage on <b>private sector and community</b> to have access to new and innovative <b>financing mechanisms to address climate change</b>; (p.12)</p>
	<p>Mainstream <b>climate change risk management</b> and GHG emission reduction on <b>sectoral planning</b>; (p.13)</p>

	Resilience is an essential aspect of <b>human security</b> and sustainable environment which is addressed by integrating policies, capacity and institution-building, stakeholder partnerships in <b>disaster risk reduction, humanitarian assistance, and community empowerment</b> , among others. (p.13-14)
	The objective of this Characteristic is to achieve an enhanced capacity to collectively respond and adapt to current challenges and emerging threats. This recognises that socio-cultural resilience has cross-pillar linkages within the ASEAN Community as an effective force for moderation for the common good, and one that is prepared for <b>natural and human-induced disasters</b> , and socioeconomic crises, while fully embracing the principles of comprehensive security. (p.14)
	Enhance regional mechanisms and capacities to enable ASEAN to respond together to <b>disasters</b> within and outside the region; (p.14)
	Promote regional standards, including methodologies and tools to assess, record, calculate the <b>disaster losses and damages, and share non-sensitive data</b> and create common information system, to enhance interoperability, ensure unity of action, and strengthen resilience; (p.14)
	Promote <b>local communities' resilience</b> by integrating principles of resilience in <b>risk reduction, preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation measures</b> ; (p.15)
	Promote policy coherence and interlinkages, and synergise initiatives on <b>disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation</b> and mitigation, humanitarian actions and sustainable development; (p.15)
	Harness <b>local wisdom and traditional knowledge</b> to foster a culture of <b>resilience</b> ; (p.15)

	Expand regional cross-sectoral platforms and establish shared strategies to respond to the impacts of <b>climate change</b> ; (p.16)
	Promote sound scientific and evidence-based policies on <b>climate change adaptation</b> ; (p.16)
	Promote and consider <b>indigenous and traditional knowledge</b> and practices in responding and adapting to the impacts of <b>climate change</b> . (p.16)
See quote to the right, ref. <b>migrant workers</b>	<b>Strengthened Social Protection for Women, Children, Youths, the Elderly/Older Persons, Persons with Disabilities, Ethnic Minority Groups, Migrant Workers, Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups, and People Living in At-risk Areas, including People Living in Remote and Border Areas and Climate Sensitive Areas, to Reduce Vulnerabilities in Times of Climate Change-related Crises, Disasters and other Environmental Changes</b> (p.16)
	Establish platforms to <b>empower people living in at-risk areas</b> to become <b>resilient</b> by reducing their <b>exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events</b> and other economic, social and <b>environmental shocks and disasters</b> . (p.16)
	Enhance cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination to ensure <b>food adequacy and accessibility at the household level</b> , especially <b>vulnerable households</b> , and ability to cope with <b>disaster, food price shocks and scarcity</b> by developing adaptive mechanisms and strategies; (p.17)
	Explore the possibility of establishing financial and insurance mechanisms and strategies for <b>disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation</b> . (p.17)

Climate Change/Environment		
Name of Policy	Mobility	Climate Change/Environment
2018 ASEAN Multi-sectoral Framework on Climate Change	With approximately 625 million people and a rising middle class, the population of Southeast Asia has been undergoing dynamic changes in <b>migration</b> and employment in recent years. Table 1 indicates the relevant statistics to food security in Southeast Asia. Most countries in the region have been experiencing <b>rural to urban migration</b> , given better employment opportunities and access to basic services in the metropolis (Amare et al. 2012). The <b>migration</b> of people has, one way or another, led to a decline in the labor force for the agricultural sector in the region and a shift in employment to the services and manufacturing sector. With a rapidly growing population in need of more food supply and a decrease in people in rural areas and workers in the agricultural sector, the region's food availability is definitely at risk. (pp.7-8)	
2022 ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change (AWGCC) Action Plan 2025	No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.	
2022 ASEAN Joint Statement in Climate Change to the 27th Session of the Conference of Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP-27)	No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.	

2015 Declaration on ASEAN post-2015 Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Agenda	No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.	
2021 ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for Adaptation to Drought 2021-2025	No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.	

Disaster		
Name of Policy	Mobility	Climate Change/Environment
2015 26th-Declaration on Institutionalizing the Resilience of ASEAN and its Communities and Peoples to Disasters and Climate Change	No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.	
2016 ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management	About 191 million people were <b>displaced</b> temporarily and disasters affected an additional 193 million people. (p.4) and In addition with ASEAN economic integration ushering greater <b>mobility</b> of professionals within the region, the impact of a disaster in one area would not only be felt by the community of the affected country but also by other ASEAN nationals residing in that area. (p.6)	
2016 ASEAN Declaration on One ASEAN One Response	No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.	
2020 ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework	The social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are uneven and felt more by certain segments of the population - the poor, workers in high-risk sectors and informal employment, <b>migrant workers</b> , older persons, women and children, among others. (pp.24-25)	
	One key challenge is to ensure that social assistance is accessible to those without social security or unemployment benefits, such as workers in informal and gig economies, as well <b>migrant workers</b> . Accessibility of social care services should also be ensured especially for those facing higher risks during lockdown and containment measures, owing to their age, gender, disability, economic status, and other factors. (p.25)	



The impact of COVID-19 on labour is mostly felt in sectors that are closely linked to export, services, tourism and labour migration. The high levels of informal employment in AMS in general, and in these sectors in particular, exacerbate the vulnerability of these workers for lack of social security. Workers in the gig economy are also vulnerable as social security is not afforded to them in most cases. These workers face increased risk of falling into poverty given falling demand. **The economic slowdown due to the pandemic has also led to a decline in wage or unemployment of migrant workers.** (p.27)

**Labour migration policies that could effectively protect migrant workers in time of pandemic or other crises** need to be pursued further. The implementation of the action plan for the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers is an important step. (p.27)

The COVID-19 global pandemic has restricted **cross-border movement of people**. The decline in transport operations, particularly aviation, are among the biggest challenges confronting policy makers. While a more digitalized economy is emerging, it cannot fully replace face to face and physical engagement. **Regional guidelines to facilitate cross-border movement** of essential personnel such as business travelers, and later to help the tourism and travel industry recover, are necessary. At the 36th ASEAN Summit, Leaders encouraged “the maintenance of necessary interconnectedness in the region by facilitating to the extent possible the essential movement of people, including business travels, while ensuring the safeguarding of public health in line with our efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.” (p.30)

<p>2021 ASEAN-UN Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management IV 2021-2025</p>	<p>The UN entities will work jointly and in cooperation to support the implementation the AADMER Work Programme (2021-2025.) The inter-agency collaboration will be structured through the UN Issue-Based Coalition on Building Resilience, including its work streams on health-DRR integration, risk analysis, resilient recovery and <b>disaster displacement</b>. UN members will also harness collective UN regional resources in other Issue-Based Coalitions E.g. Climate change mitigation, Inclusion and empowerment, Mobility and urbanisation and Human rights and gender equality, to strengthen the implementation of this priority programme. (p.19)</p>	
	<p>Under Prevention and Mitigation, AADMER Sub-Priority 2.1 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation: IOM can facilitate with DDWG members (IBC Building Resilience) discussions on <b>environmental displacement (slow onset, other)</b> as this is part of ongoing work and there is great interest by the group to engage on the topic. Includes academics, NGOs, Multilaterals, etc.</p>	
	<p>Under Prevention and Mitigation, AADMER Sub-Priority 2.6 Risk Governance, 2.6.1 Strengthened disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, 2.6.1.1. Dialogue and knowledge exchanges between policy makers, government actors and other key actors on risk governance organised: This can be integrated with DDWG Work on <b>displacement</b> (IBC Building Resilience) (UN Agency: IOM)</p>	

	<p>Under Prevention and Mitigation, AADMER Sub-Priority 2.6 Risk Governance, 2.6.1 Strengthened disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, 2.6.1.3. Tools for risk-informed and evidence-based policy making and decision-making developed/ promoted: Testing in Pacific with IDMC, PDD, IOM and could be presented for <b>displacement risk</b> and decision making as a tool for ASEAN (UN Agency: IOM)</p>	
<p>2020 ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021-2025</p>	<p>No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.</p>	
<p>2021 ASEAN Guidelines on Disaster Responsive Social Protection to Increase Resilience</p>	<p>Flexible design and financing schemes need to focus on the poor and vulnerable groups who are disproportionately affected by disasters and climate change, such as women, children and youth, older persons, <b>migrants</b>, and people with disabilities. In time of Covid-19 pandemic, they are also extremely at risk of falling into the property traps. Social protection will protect them from economic, disasters and climate shocks and help to recover and move out of poverty. (p.iv)</p>	
	<p>The annex contain: • a table setting out the different options and issues to consider for disaster-responsive social protection, including in contexts of fragility and <b>displacement</b>; (p.xi)</p>	

BOX 2

Social insurance and active labour market policies: responding to Thailand's 2011 floods The landfall of tropical storm Nock-ten in 2011 triggered severe flooding across 65 of Thailand's 76 provinces. This resulted in 815 deaths and affected almost 14 million people. More than 19 000 homes were destroyed and **2.5 million people displaced**. Significant damage occurred to manufacturing as the flooding was concentrated in industrial areas of the country. Total economic damage was estimated at USD 46.5 billion with the manufacturing sector alone accounting for USD 32 billion of this. To mitigate the impacts on those directly affected by damage to the manufacturing sector, **the government adopted several social protection measures**: (related to unemployment benefits, see p.9)

European Commission. forthcoming. *Social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus: a game changer in supporting people through crises*. This paper provides guidance on working with social protection in crisis contexts – particularly contexts of fragility and **forced displacement**. It provides an overview of global experiences and approaches to date, highlights challenges and suggest key criteria to inform decisions as to the most appropriate response options, provides guidance on key issues to consider, highlights key features and practical tips and identifies outstanding questions to inform future research. (p.12)

A tool to support such an assessment is included in Annex 5. The tool seeks to offer a uniform approach to guide decisions so that each country starts from a common set of criteria to inform and justify strategic decisions. Annex 3 also sets out the opportunities and challenges of different disaster responsive social protection approaches including in contexts of fragility and **forced displacement**. (p.16)

**BOX 11**

Working with civil society to support programme registration - In the Philippines following typhoon Haiyan a large revalidation exercise was needed to track down **displaced households** and replace documents to ensure they could receive their regular payments, to inform beneficiaries of the extra emergency top up payments, and to replace the named carers for newly orphaned children. The Department of Social Welfare and Development partnered with community-based organizations, such as Damayanng Maralitang Pilipinong Api (DAMPA), a federation of 245 organizations led by women, to revalidate beneficiary lists and communicate to beneficiaries. (p.32)

DRM systems are likely to have public communication systems such as community information networks, traditional media such as TV and radio and possibly SMS or mobile phone apps.<sup>58</sup> These can be used to complement the existing public communication system of the regular social programme. In the Philippines, in response to typhoon Haiyan, outreach through social welfare offices and parents clubs located and **informed displaced beneficiaries** of their eligibility for assistance.<sup>59</sup> (p.34)

<p>2021 ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, gender and inclusion in Disaster Management 2021-2025</p>	<p>Disasters exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and discrimination, including against women living in rural areas, ethnic minority women, women with disabilities, and <b>migrant women</b>.<sup>3</sup> As recognized by both global and ASEAN commitments, the impacts of disasters are not gender neutral, with women, children, the elderly, the poor, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups being among the most impacted.<sup>4</sup> (p.1)</p>	
	<p>The RPA on EVAW recognizes that diverse groups of women, including women living in disaster or conflict-affected and conflict-vulnerable areas and <b>refugee and displaced women</b>, suffer from discrimination and violence, making them especially vulnerable to violence. As a key action to address these forms of discrimination, the RPA calls for the incorporation of the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women (VAW) in the planning and delivery of DRR programmes and protocols, as well as in all humanitarian responses. (p.5)</p>	
<p>2022 ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management</p>	<p><b>No mentions of migration, relocation, displacement or mobility.</b></p>	

Mobilities		
Name of Policy	Mobility	Climate Change/Environment
2018 ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers	This Consensus <b>only covers migrant workers who are documented</b> and those who become undocumented through no fault of their own. (p.8)	<b>No reference to climate change or environment.</b>
2019 ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration		NOTING with deep concern the millions of children worldwide who are displaced from their homes, including by conflict, poverty, <b>disaster, climate change, and environmental degradation</b> , experience exploitation, deprivation and discrimination on their journeys within and across borders, and acknowledging the need for mechanisms to ensure the protection of their rights and access to services in all regions of the world, including the ASEAN region; (p.1)
Regional Plan of Action on Implementing the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration		The drivers of migration include: poverty, inequalities, social exclusion and discrimination, conflicts, insecurity and violence, <b>disaster</b> and persecution, economic and educational opportunities, intra-regional migrant labour flows, trafficking, internal labour migration, <b>the environmental impact of climate change</b> , and increased regional connectivity and integration. (p.2)
		Activity 1.1: Promote a review of legal and procedural gaps in the child protection system and barriers to the identification, referral, and protection of, and assistance to all children in the context of migration. This activity shall take into account new and emerging challenges such as the impact of emergencies including public health crises and <b>climate change</b> . (p.6)
		Activity 2.1: Identify gaps in access to basic services for children in the context of migration. <sup>26</sup> This activity shall take into account new and emerging challenges such as the impact of emergencies including public health emergencies and <b>climate change</b> . (p.7)

2023 ASEAN Declaration on The Protection of Migrant Workers and Family Members in Crisis Situations		MINDFUL of the ASEAN risk landscape that is increasingly complex due to the <b>layered compounding natural hazards and interconnected economies</b> which are exacerbated by <b>the impact of growing ageing population, rapid urbanisation, climate change and mobility of people;</b> (p.2)
		NOTING that for the purpose of this Declaration, “crisis situations” refer to public health emergencies, <b>natural disasters</b> , and other crises as determined by ASEAN Member States where the crises occurred. (p.2)



Reports		
Name of Report	Mobility	Climate Change/Environment
2021 ASEAN State of Climate Change Report	<p>Considering factors such as climate change affecting the degree, severity and duration of many natural hazards like droughts, floods and typhoons, and the <b>migration</b> of people to vulnerable regions such as coastal areas and flood basins, there may well be an increase in the impacts of natural hazards on business-as-usual scenarios in the future. (p.36)</p>	
	<p>High propensity to migration One of the benefits of regional integration in ASEAN has been the ability of <b>people to migrate</b> freely within the region. However, while <b>free mobility</b> has opened up new and gainful economic opportunities and cultural integration for millions of people, it also has the potential to stress certain pockets of the region that are already experiencing high population densities, with consequences such as natural resource degradation, competition and congestion. With large sections of the <b>migrant population</b> settling in locations that are highly vulnerable to disasters and sea level rise, <b>the growing level of internal migration</b> could soon represent a vulnerability for the region. There is therefore a need to <b>ease pressures caused by migration</b> as well as address potential problems that could lead it into causing vulnerability. (p.38)</p>	

4. Assess transboundary climate risks and actions: The ASEAN region is rapidly integrating, and such regional integration provides both economic opportunities and risks. In terms of risks, growing economic dependency across borders can worsen transboundary climate risks. Considering the examples of the 2008 world food price crisis and the more recent Bangkok floods of 2011, it is evident that risks are no longer limited by national boundaries. This is increasingly apparent for the ASEAN region. Taking into consideration the future regional integration prospects of the ASEAN region, it is recommended that the region conducts thorough transboundary climate risk assessments in areas of transboundary biophysical resources, **human mobility**, food trade, energy and biodiversity, as these tend to act as conduits of risk transfer from one location to another. (p.102)

2022 ASEAN Migration Outlook		<p>Other factors could also drive <b>future intra-ASEAN migration, such as environmental and political factors</b>. Several AMS rank <b>high in exposure and vulnerability to extreme weather events, which are linked to climate change</b>. From 2000 to 2019, Myanmar ranked 2nd, the Philippines 4th, Thailand 9th, Viet Nam 13th, and Cambodia 14th out of 180 countries the Global Climate Risk Index, which ranks countries based on the extent to which they have are affected by climate-related extreme weather events (Eckstein, Kunzel, and Shafer, 2021). <b>It is possible climate change can influence migration from these countries to other less vulnerable AMS</b>. Additionally, the domestic political conflict in Myanmar increases the flow of people traveling to Thailand for employment (Duangdee, 2021). (p.35)</p>
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