

August 2024 | Executive summary

Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities

Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017 - 2024)



Disclosure and copyright

This report is the main deliverable of a consultancy project commissioned by the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) and benefited from the guidance of **Ayesha Dinshaw** and **Heather McGray**.

<https://www.cjrfund.org/>

The report was authored by **Dr. David Durand-Delacre**, **Douwe van Schie**, **Humaira Anjum**, **Kariūki Werū**, **Dr. Robert Oakes**, **Ann-Christine Link**, **Dr. Lisa Thalheimer-Prężyna** and **Dr. Kees van der Geest** of the Environment and Migration: Interactions and Choices (EMIC) Division of the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) in Bonn, Germany. The recommendations provided in this report are the result of analysis and interpretations made by the EMIC team, based on interviews with CJRF grant partners and the review of project documents. Any errors, including in the interpretation and contextualization of direct quotes, are those of the author team.

<https://unu.edu/ehs/>

This report benefited from additional guidance and feedback of a Guiding Committee comprising CJRF grant partners and other thematic experts: **Ashish Barua**, Helvetas Bangladesh; **Robin Bronen**, Alaska Institute for Justice; **Aminul Hoque**, COAST; **Jackie Qataliña Schaeffer**, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium; **Mohammad Shahjahan**, Young Power in Social Action; **Salote Soqo**, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee; **Claire Poelking**, MacArthur Foundation; **Nilesh Prakash**, CJRF board member; **Alex de Sherbinin**, Columbia Climate School; **Amali Tower**, Climate Refugees.

Suggested citation: Durand-Delacre, David, Douwe van Schie, Humaira Anjum and others (2024) *Effective Support for Communities Experiencing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund grant portfolio (2017-2024)*. UNU-EHS and Climate Justice Resilience Fund.

CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Cover image: View from a boat in Kiribati © UUSC

Executive Summary

Scope of the report

The Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF) is one of the first major philanthropic initiatives framed explicitly around climate justice, and one of the few that works internationally on climate resilience. CJRF works by re-granting monies from diverse funders. Their “Phase 1” pool of funding (2016-2022) totaled nearly US\$25 million, enabling approximately fifty major grants to support women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples to build and share their solutions for climate resilience.

We put people, their rights, and their lived experience directly at the center of climate action. We envision a thriving planet built on participation, equity, human rights and justice, where people who have been disproportionately affected by climate change issues are recognized and resourced to lead solutions and act at the emerging frontiers of climate justice.¹

This report reviews 11 CJRF grants that address challenges arising from diverse climate mobilities.² The CJRF-funded projects were implemented by partner organizations working closely with communities, between 2017 and 2024 in Alaska, Bangladesh, and the Pacific. These 11 grants offer a rare opportunity to identify the kinds of community-led projects and initiatives that effectively address challenges arising from climate-related displacement, relocation, migration and immobility (so-called “trapped populations”), at a time when these are a growing concern for people around the world but few

funders of any size provide dedicated funding with this thematic focus.

The discussion and analysis in this report are based on in-depth review of grant documents (including application forms, progress and narrative reports, and project outputs such as advocacy materials, news coverage, and policy reports) as well as interviews with the project managers in each of the implementing organizations (also referred to as “CJRF grant partners” throughout). The recommendations and all analysis provided in this report are the result of analysis and interpretations made by the author team.

Purpose of the report

The report answers the following four questions based on CJRF grant partners’ experiences designing and implementing projects:

1. How do CJRF grant partners and affected communities address issues related to diverse climate mobilities?
2. What participatory methodologies did grant partners use in projects to address climate mobilities, and how effective were they?
3. What is the relationship between different types of climate mobilities and types of losses and damages, both economic and non-economic?
4. How did the characteristics of the grant program influence the project partners’ ability to address community needs, with what advantages and limitations?

¹ CJRF Vision Statement

² We use the term climate mobilities (CM) to describe the full range of human movement in the context of climate change, accounting for variations in distance, duration, degree of voluntariness and spontaneity, and including cases where people are unable to leave or choose to stay where they are. Climate mobilities encompass climate-related displacement, planned relocation, migration and immobility.

Based on these questions, the report distills recommendations to guide not only CJRF’s future grantmaking but also other philanthropic funders and international policy advocates supporting communities dealing with challenges and difficult decisions pertaining to climate-related displacement, relocation, and migration.

An inventory of activities to address climate mobilities

In addressing climate mobilities, communities face distinct challenges depending on the specific climate hazards they face, past development and

climate adaptation measures, the adequacy of governance frameworks, and other place-dependent considerations. Thus, the projects reviewed cover a wide range of situations, including work with already displaced people now living in highly-vulnerable situations, communities seeking durable relocation but not receiving the necessary assistance, or people seeking assistance to avoid movement. The projects consequently also involve a broad spectrum of activities, based on grant partner interviews and project documentation, which are categorized according climate mobility type (Table ES.1).

Table ES.1. Inventory of project activities, by climate mobility type

Climate mobility type	Related activities	Examples from the grant portfolio
Displacement	(1) to provide support for people coping with the negative impacts of displacement	Essential service provision (e.g. safe water and sanitation, electricity) Repairs to shelter Repairs to infrastructure (e.g. roads, embankments, sea walls)
	(2) to prevent first-time (or further) displacement	Microfinance programs Livelihood skills training Connecting displaced people with government services (e.g. health, education, social protection schemes) Support for relocation
Relocation	(3) to support relocation needs and risk assessments, decision-making, and planning	Relocation site selection / site suitability assessments Community needs assessments Community capacity-building for planning Advocacy for relocation
	(4) to implement a decision to relocate	Land purchase and registration Housebuilding, provision of building materials Essential service provision at relocation site (e.g. water tanks) Connecting relocating people with host community Connecting relocating people with government services (e.g. health, education, social protection schemes)
	(5) to cope with the negative impacts of relocation (whether historical, pending, partial or inadequately completed)	Adaptation measures in origin site (e.g. building evacuation center, sea wall repairs) Psycho-social support Cultural preservation and revitalization

Migration & immobility	(6) to assist the involuntary immobile to migrate	Migration Information Hubs Awareness raising on migrants' rights Livelihood skills training (opening new job opportunities)
	(7) to assist the voluntary immobile to stay	Livelihood skills training (to pursue similar but better adapted activities) Local risk reduction / adaptation measures Support to immobile populations for claiming entitlements
Cross-cutting community engagement	(8) Support for effective community consultation and leadership.	Forming community teams, youth, women's' and other groups to consult and let decide project activities. Regional and international convenings Indigenous-led monitoring Local/Indigenous authoring and peer-review of reports Local/Indigenous staff hires in project management roles Training and capacity-building for local staff and volunteers Financial compensation for time invested in projects

Principles to guide projects on climate mobilities

Based on this inventory, we provide cross-cutting recommendations for philanthropic funders seeking to design new grant making programs to address challenges arising from climate mobilities. While grant partners shared concrete examples of measures (Table ES.1), they also repeatedly emphasized several broader values and principles that guide their approach.

Recommendations for climate mobility projects include the following guidance:

- Begin with the recognition that colonial histories, development policies, and socio-economic inequalities are just as important to understand peoples' mobilities as the climate hazards communities face.
- Adopt a human rights and climate justice lens, to address the potential rights violations and injustices associated with climate mobilities, which cannot be fixed through technical interventions.
- People should not be excluded from participating in projects based on their mobility status. Some community

members may choose to stay where they are, and require support to do so. The perspectives and needs of host communities also need to be integrated into CM projects, to avoid creating new tensions or injustices.

- Projects should focus on reducing vulnerabilities and enabling choice, facilitating peoples' movement when they seek migration or relocation options, while supporting community members to avoid involuntary mobilities.

Participatory approaches and community leadership

CJRF emphasizes the importance of community engagement and leadership in the projects it funds. The modalities varied from project to project and included, for example, the organization of consultations and "courtyard meetings" to understand local peoples' needs and priorities concerning basic service provision after displacement. Moreover, grant partners worked to hand over planning and decision-making powers to local and Indigenous people, whenever possible. This included setting aside funds for local communities to hire local project managers,

and to support them with training and technical assistance. Other modalities for engagement included the creation of local and Indigenous peer review groups, who can provide feedback on project design and reports, increasing local ownership of projects in the process. Several partners noted that volunteer community labor, though in some places necessary and beneficial, is in others inappropriate without financial compensation. Regional and international convenings to facilitate cross-community exchange and learning were also mentioned as particularly valuable.

Some specific mobility-related needs and challenges stood out as requiring particular forms of community engagement. This was especially the case for relocation projects, for which crucial decisions, such as identifying which families should be relocated first, could not have been taken by the grant partner alone. For this, the grant partner created and trained local volunteers to form community teams, who were involved at all stages of this decision.

Recommendations include:

- Involve community members at all stages of project design, especially by allocating resources to hire local staff or create community groups with decision-making power.
- Create the conditions for grant partners to build trust with communities, by promoting local and Indigenous knowledge and integrating this into project plans and activities.
- Provide training and technical assistance to local staff and volunteer groups, to build up local capacity to address mobility-related challenges.
- Continue to support grant partners' and

communities national and international advocacy efforts, even if results are hard to measure.

Climate mobilities and Loss & Damage

Loss and Damage was the explicit focus of only two grants in the reviewed portfolio, both starting in 2022. We nonetheless retrospectively applied an L&D lens to our review, in an effort to understand the diverse ways in which climate mobilities may intersect with L&D. We do this for three reasons: (1) Although prior projects may not have used the language of L&D, they address similar climate change related harms; (2) Recent international climate negotiations, notably on the modalities of the “Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage”, may lead to new funding opportunities to address some CM types, specifically planned relocation and; (3) Growing interest in non-economic losses and damages, on which grant partners had thoughts and lessons to share even if this had not been central to their prior projects. It should be noted that while several of the grant partners see value in pursuing these discussions, others highlighted that the international Loss and Damage framework is not useful to the communities they support – as they expect no additional support or funding from adopting it.

Recommendations include:

- Provide spaces for community members to learn about the international Loss and Damage framework and to identify the opportunities for funding and advocacy it may open.
- Avoid artificially separating economic and non-economic losses and damages, as this does not always make sense in practice. Project interventions reviewed in this

report often address both simultaneously.

- Approach the topic of non-economic losses and damages with extra care, ideally with the help of trained professionals and people knowledgeable about local experiences and cultural sensitivities, to mitigate the potential for additional harm.

Effective grant making practice

The final section of the report focuses on identifying what, from the perspective of grant partners, makes a “good grant”. Grant partners shared their perspectives on a range of practical grant-related issues including goal-setting, funding scale and duration. Grant partners’ experiences suggest that CJRF’s flexible, trust-based grant making approach is responsive and adaptable to community needs in ways that many other grant funding organizations are not. However, it is not without challenges. Some grants were too short (1 year) to enable effective relationship-building or long-term impact in communities. Some grant partners expressed a need for further discussion of “success” metrics, particularly for long-term, hard-to-measure activities such as advocacy and policy change. The recommendations in this section are relevant not just to the CJRF’s future grant making but will be of interest to other funders aiming to work with community-based organizations.

Recommendations include:

- Embrace flexibility, as project goals, activities, budgets and timelines will necessarily evolve over time if projects are responsive to community inputs.
- Cultivate an understanding of grant partners’ and communities’ perspectives through active listening and participation

in consultations, site visits, and local peer-review of project plans and reports, among other potential measures.

- Provide long-term, uninterrupted grants, ideally three or more years, as projects require at least this time to build trust, genuinely engage with community needs, and deliver lasting change.
- Ensure reporting requirements are not too heavy, especially for small community-based organizations. Facilitate regional and international exchange and learning opportunities between grant partners.

Reading further

Readers unfamiliar with the challenges specific to climate mobilities and how they relate to adaptation, resilience, climate justice & human rights in practice.

→ Section 1

Philanthropic funders asking what activities and projects to fund to support communities facing climate mobility challenges.

→ Section 1 and 2

Policymakers, researchers and others interested in Loss & Damage, non-economic losses and damages, and the complex relationship between climate mobilities and L&D.

→ Section 3

Philanthropic funders looking to decolonize their funding practice.

→ Section 4