

# A FUTURE FIT FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE AND MIGRANT JUSTICE IN THE UK

BACKGROUND | STORIES | ACTION

Climate crisis is already driving people to move from their homes. If people seek safety and opportunity in places like the UK, they bring skills, perspectives, and resilience that can strengthen communities. Yet environmental groups and refugee support organisations often work separately, missing opportunities to address these connected challenges. By working together we can build campaigns and take action that benefits everyone. The challenges we face are interconnected, and so are the solutions - use this resource to explore ways we can work together for climate justice and migrant justice.

## A RISE IN CLIMATE-LINKED MOBILITY

The climate crisis intensifies existing reasons people move like economic inequality, political instability, and conflict. While climate impacts aren't recognised grounds for asylum under international law, climate's role in displacement is increasingly acknowledged.

We work with a Sanctuary Ambassador Network, many of whom have seen the impact of the climate crisis firsthand. These are some of their stories...

"In Afghanistan, we're not just running from one thing. War has destroyed our infrastructure, our government can barely function, and now climate change hits us hardest when we have nothing left to withstand it. Floods have uprooted thousands of families and made land impossible to farm. We depend on farming to survive, but how do you feed your children when the earth keeps shifting beneath your feet? Thousands flee to Pakistan or Iran thinking they'll find safety, only to end up in forgotten camps where there's never enough clean water and babies die from preventable diseases. My story is different, I made it to the UK and am now rebuilding my life. But even here, I see how climate change follows the vulnerable. I know other migrants who live in damp houses with broken heating. During winter storms, it's migrant workers who still have to make deliveries on icy roads or work in freezing fields. The same people who suffered back home suffer here too. Different country, same story—those with the least power bear the heaviest burden."

Shamim, from Afghanistan now in London

## JUSTICE & POLITICS

While climate change affects us all, it does not affect us all equally. Many seeking sanctuary in the UK come from communities that:

- ✿ Contributed minimally to global emissions
- ✿ Depend on predictable weather for agriculture
- ✿ Have fewer resources to adapt to environmental changes

This creates impossible choices between enduring worsening conditions or seeking safety elsewhere. With the UK's increasingly hostile narrative toward people seeking sanctuary, fear of "climate refugees" risks justifying harsher asylum policies. Yet climate vulnerability connects us all - the UK already experiences more frequent flooding, agricultural disruptions, housing pressures and rising food and energy costs. These realities make collaboration with climate and nature sector allies essential for policies protecting both people and planet.

"In my lifetime I have seen the seas rise, the hightide mark has doubled since I was a child. The Maldives is a low lying island nation, the highest point is just seven meters above sea level, so it wouldn't take much to wipe my country from the map. People don't understand what's at stake. It's not just land, it's the people too - me and my fellow islanders are the only people on earth to speak my language. Our culture, our history, our whole way of life is at risk. People who are greedy forget about what the natural environment provides for us, but I know the importance of speaking out. I speak out because I have to. Back home, we toppled a dictator when enough of us stood together. If enough of us who are already living with climate change speak up, maybe the world will finally listen. Not tomorrow. Today."

Kal, from Maldives now in London

"I grew up in Niger in the 1980s, when droughts were rare. Today, my homeland burns under temperatures that regularly reach 50 degrees. Our harvests once gave us everything we needed - sorghum, millet, beans, vegetables. Now with extreme drought followed by devastating floods, nothing grows as it should. When the harvests fail, there is nowhere to turn. The bitter irony cuts deep. Niger sits on wealth most countries would envy—uranium, gold and oil. Yet 80% of our people have no electricity. The uranium that powers Europe's homes comes from our soil, while our own homes remain dark. We have had 'independence' from France since 1960, but the cost is a crippling 'colonial tax' paid every single year. Children in Niger are starving, and yet the work of my brothers and sisters props up a country 2,000 miles away. Colonialism never went away for us. Every August 3rd - our independence day - Niger has a national tradition. Every citizen plants trees to fight desertification. Think about this: one of the world's poorest countries, a country with almost no carbon footprint, fighting desperately against a climate crisis we didn't create. We didn't have an Industrial Revolution. Most families don't own cars. Yet we pay the harshest price for the world's pollution. People don't migrate from Niger because they want to. They leave because the land that fed us for centuries can no longer support life. Here in Britain, I watch people debate climate change as an abstract future threat. For Niger, it's not the future. It's our past, our present, and—unless something changes—our death sentence."

Shams, from Niger now in Tees Valley

## TO CREATE REAL CHANGE, WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE EVERYWHERE HAVE:

- ✿ **The right to stay** Supporting communities to remain in their homes through climate adaptation and resources
- ✿ **The right to move** Ensuring safe passage and welcome for those who need or choose to relocate
- ✿ **The right to resist & advocate for change** This must see different groups and sectors working together, environmental, refugee support and community organisations joining forces. All efforts must have justice at the centre, ensuring those most affected lead the way in creating solutions.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which local environmental or climate groups could you partner with?
2. How can people with lived experience of displacement lead or support this work?
3. What skills and knowledge does your group have that could help environmental initiatives?
4. What inherited wisdom and adaptation strategies do newcomers bring that UK communities could learn?
5. How can environmental groups support refugee rights?
6. In what ways might our current approaches unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities?
7. How can your environmental advocacy acknowledge the uneven impacts of climate change across different communities?
8. What would putting justice at the centre of your work look like?

## WAYS TO START

1. Hold space to talk about climate change in your regular meetings
2. Reach out to local environmental groups to start conversations
3. Create spaces where different groups can share knowledge and resources
4. Support leadership from people with experience of seeking sanctuary
5. Join local climate justice initiatives and support to bring perspectives of people who have sought sanctuary
6. Host joint events with environmental and refugee support focuses
7. Challenge narratives that separate "environmental issues" from "human rights issues"
8. Call out narratives which present climate-linked migration as a threat. People move, they always have, they always will.

Migrant justice is climate justice. We can't stand in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary without tackling the climate crisis - and we can't truly tackle the climate crisis without standing in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary.