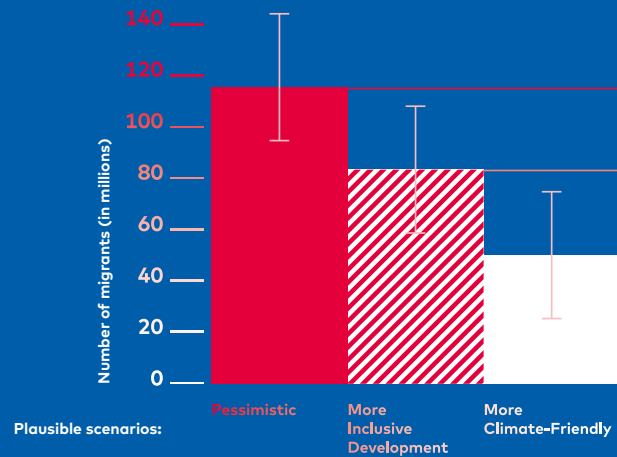


Projected number of climate migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America under three scenarios, by 2050



The climate moves us—it causes turbulence in daily politics, brings people into the streets, causes points of view to collide, and reminds us of how rapidly we are moving toward a future more complex and less predictable than that promised in decades past by an optimistic belief in progress. In fact, it is not only the future that is at stake. In the present, as a society and a species, we must confront the fact that quality of life in many regions of the world has declined precipitously because of climatically extreme conditions, water shortages, and storm surges.

Climate change, which inordinately affects the populations of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, is driving migration, including within the regions themselves. Migration can be a practical way of adapting to cli-

mate change, provided that it is accompanied by politically appropriate measures. Many urban and peripheral areas need to prepare for an influx of people by expanding housing and transport infrastructure, social services, and employment opportunities. Moreover, climate-threatened areas will continue to have many people in need of care. This reality calls for development strategies to support local people.

In an attempt to portray the interaction between the application of emission restrictions and a developmental approach as realistically as possible, with a focus on future trends, researchers at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), which cooperates with the City University of New York and Columbia University, outlines three »optimistic« and »pessimistic« scenarios respectively for the next 30 years. The purpose of outlining these scenarios is to help societies prepare for migratory movements caused by climate change. Internal climate migration will presumably continue to increase through 2050. The challenge for policymakers is to give those affected by climate change the ability to decide whether to leave their living environment or not—or at least not immediately. In view of a steadily growing global population and the irreversible nature of climate change, it is important to avoid pressuring this population to migrate, even if such pressure is well intentioned, and to work more intensively on a »Plan B« and »Plan C« that enable people to live in climatically »crisis-ridden« regions without jeopardizing their lives.

Even within Germany, increasingly severe climatic conditions challenge people to adapt to secure their livelihood. In order to be effective, strategies must be developed that balance the conflicting interests of nature conservation with the preservation of land in dialogue with the local population. In Friesland, for example, people have consistently struggled with storms, flooding, and drought for centuries and have found experimental ways of meeting these challenges.

Worsening conditions caused by climate change require swift and prudent action. In part, this involves conscious use of land against monocultures and sealed surfaces as well as the provision of infrastructure; however, these measures are no substitute for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and assessing how people in affected regions can be supported and whether certain areas, such as coastal regions, will be habitable at all in the future.