

# **RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

A project of American University's Center for Latin American and Latino Studies

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## *Executive Summary*

The Center for Latin American and Latino Studies (CLALS) at American University (AU) is undertaking a three-year program of workshops, research, publication, and engagement with stakeholders, dedicated to improving understanding of the relationship between religion and environmental displacement. Previous Center projects on religious approaches to environmental conflict and climate change, in contemporary Latin America and elsewhere, examined religious participation in public discourse and policy on environmental issues, including religious sources of environmental knowledge, religion's role in local, national and transnational environmental advocacy, as well as religion's influence in helping to articulate new forms of social justice. A major component of this work considered how religious knowledge informs local and community responses to environmental change.

In our current phase of work, we seek to extend these analytic dimensions in understanding intersections of religion with the environment, but now bringing them together with our Center's ongoing attention to the sources and impacts of migration in Latin America. In so doing, we are exploring relationships between two forms of religious advocacy in the Americas, on behalf of migrants and the environment. This project seeks to better understand religion's role at each phase of environmental migration, from departure or displacement, during transit, to arrival and adaptation. It examines how different religious traditions inform individual and community responses to environmental dislocations, including Christian, but also indigenous and Afro-Latino religious beliefs and practice. This project also explores the potential of religious voices and ideas for bringing greater public attention to solving the legal challenges now faced by environmental migrants.

We are pursuing this agenda by focusing on the following interrelated dimensions of religious engagement with environmental displacement: 1. the contributions of faith-based actors and religious ideas to international and national discussions and emerging normative frameworks addressing new governance and security challenges posed by environmental migration; 2. the participation of transnational faith-based non-governmental organizations as part of humanitarian interventions on behalf of migrants; 3. the role of religion and churches in receiving communities for addressing the needs of migrants, especially regarding resettlement and societal integration; and 4. the ways religious engagement is well-positioned to ameliorate intangible and collective dimensions of environmental dislocations beyond just the material needs of individual migrants.

This project builds upon existing research to stimulate new inquiry into the various forms of religious engagement with environmental migration in Latin America and the Caribbean. It will enrich collaboration among academic and practitioner networks. Findings will circulate as

scholarly publications, at academic conferences, and in formats and forums designed to inform regional stakeholders, including a policy report to be delivered to regional multilateral institutions. This project will also incorporate video journalism and social media projection.

*The Topic and its Context:*

Scientists agree that environmental change is significantly increasing rates of human migration. Between 2008 and 2014, an estimated 184.4 million people were displaced by natural disasters, or an average of 26.4 million people annually. Of those, 22.5 million were forced to relocate by weather- and climate-related hazards. The International Organization of Migration has indicated that the likelihood of having to move in response to a natural disaster is 60 percent higher than it was forty years ago. Additional growth in population movement responds to such slower-onset processes as the effects of sea level rise, desertification and agricultural decline. Climate change, no longer a future crisis, is a contributor to environmentally-induced human mobility throughout Latin America, a movement of people likely to increase substantially in coming decades. A 2018 World Bank study indicates that by 2050 worsening climate impacts could lead to 140 million new migrants just from sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America. The United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees has called the increasing human mobility in response to accumulating environmental pressures the defining issue of our time.

Through their ongoing engagement with environmental questions and with the plight of migrants, religious groups and leaders are beginning to take note of the emerging crisis of environmentally-induced displacement. In his widely cited 2015 encyclical, Pope Francis drew a direct connection between environmental instability and migration, increasing public awareness with a call to embrace environmental migrants and to strengthen the national and international norms protecting them. Prominent interfaith organizations such as the World Council of Churches have framed attention to environmental change as a question of "justice," applying a Liberation Theology-inspired "preferential option for the poor" to address environmental refugees from a pastoral perspective. Migrants' rights recently have been declared the most important issue for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Religious leaders in Latin America have worked with the Organization of American States to develop legal anti-discrimination instruments to support displaced populations. Faith-based humanitarian service providers, such as Refugee Highway Partnership, Exodus World Services, World Vision, and many others, are developing new policies and practices in anticipation of increasing environmentally-related migration in Latin America and elsewhere. On a more local level, churches in receiving communities throughout Latin America and the U.S. are responding to the needs of migrants escaping environmental catastrophes, helping them to adapt and cope with the trauma of displacement, dislocation, loss of identity or social cohesion, and challenges of resettlement.

Latin America and the Caribbean are already significantly affected by environmentally-induced migration, with three types of impacts contributing to large-scale human mobility: sea level rise, droughts and rapid-onset natural hazards (e.g. heavy rains, floods, and hurricanes). Slower developing impacts, such as desertification in Mexico or glacial melt in South America, will further degrade rural livelihoods and water availability, adding to migratory flows. The consequences of these events include permanent resettlement, which promises to become more pervasive as sea level rises. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, in recent years most countries in the region have experienced a surge in migration from environmental crises, including at least eight million people in South America between 2000 and 2015. In 2017-

18 alone unprecedented catastrophic flooding displaced well over half a million people in Peru. Migration-inducing natural disasters of this sort are happening with greater regularity, straining the capacity of responders.

Some parts of Latin America and the Caribbean are more affected than others. The Caribbean has seen a notable increase in unpredictable and severe weather events over the past two decades, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency invests a growing proportion of its resources toward mitigating environmental hazards. Hurricanes are now visiting considerable destruction throughout the archipelago. The extent of devastation and loss of life in the Bahamas from 2019's Dorian is still being assessed. Nearly 400,000 people left Puerto Rico because of the damage caused by 2017's Maria, with approximately 150,000 moving to Florida and elsewhere in the U.S. Meanwhile, recent studies by the International Organization of Migration and the World Food Program have demonstrated a direct link between changing weather patterns and migration in the "Dry Corridor" of Central America, encompassing Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. Experts point to deteriorating conditions in an area already suffering its worst drought in over a decade. At least 3.5 million people are in need of humanitarian aid because of failed harvests and acute food and water shortages. The offshore El Niño effect is expected to become more pronounced, leading to unpredictable rain patterns (encompassing both droughts and flooding) and more frequent extreme weather events. According to the World Food Program an estimated 12 percent of families in the affected parts of Guatemala have had at least one member migrate, and 60 percent of migrants surveyed from these areas during the unprecedented surge of migration to the U.S. in 2015-17 cited food insecurity, exacerbated by environmental change, as the main driver of their decision to move.

A major challenge for efforts to address increasing transnational flows of environmental migrants is that international and national normative and legal frameworks recognizing them and governing how to treat them remain underdeveloped. If it has circulated widely in the media, "climate refugee" is a term with no international legal standing. However, Latin America has been the region most responsible for advancing the international conversation toward developing a multilateral consensus, with procedures and mechanisms, to govern international migration. The region has been the principal convener and setting for most of the steps taken to date, from the 1984 Cartagena Declaration to the 2016 San José Action Statement.

Latin America is also the first and most proactive region to recognize environmental drivers for migration and movements of refugees, a state-of-affairs that has evolved from no mention in regional statements, to mention of slow-and rapid-onset environmental disasters as causes of migration, to the successive recognition of economic migrants, food insecurity as a source of migration, and finally, environmentally-induced migration. Countries in the region have also recently begun to provide limited legal protection across international borders in the absence of more "durable solutions," with Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia now offering temporary protected status for displaced "humanitarian" victims of environmental disasters.

Broadly, in Latin America religious advocacy around the environment and migration respectively has included at least the following components: 1. Christian theologies of migration, with their emphasis upon the status of the holy family as refugees, liberationist narratives of exodus, and pastoral obligations to strangers and foreigners; 2. religious uses of human rights discourse and practice (e.g. the right to "migration with dignity"); 3. the ongoing humanitarian work of faith-based NGOs, originally established in contexts of migration from other causes,

such as conflict, violence or economic necessity; 4. the history of advocacy and accompaniment of faith leaders on behalf of communities displaced by environmental disasters or large-scale development infrastructure projects; 5. and finally, indigenous and Afro-Latino religious traditions, as these inform often collective responses of communities to their forced displacement or planned relocation. This project seeks to illuminate how these dimensions interact as part of religious interventions around the emerging crisis of environmental migration throughout the region. In so doing, we can better understand how religious perspectives and advocacy might conflict with, complement, or enhance secular humanitarian responses or normative international and state-based approaches recognizing and protecting environmental migrants.

Given the historical importance of the Catholic Church and the growing influence of Evangelical churches in Latin America, faith-based actors have been active participants in discussions at the international, regional and national levels about the plight of migrants, who also figure prominently in church doctrine. Institutions like the Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the World Council of Church's Global Ecumenical Network on Migration and the Latin American Bishops' Conference, have made migrants a focus of their work. In explaining such efforts, Abrahamic religious traditions refer to doctrinal "theologies of migration," informed by stories about the call of Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, Israel's wandering in the desert and exile, or the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. In the elaboration of such theologies of migration, the identity of the People of God is inextricable from stories of the movement of peoples, families, risk, hospitality, and sanctuary. If church doctrine encourages believers to welcome and to take in the stranger and the foreigner, how might it specifically influence the priorities and practices of faith-based humanitarian responses and religious advocacy on behalf of migrants in multilateral arenas? For migrants from indigenous or religiously plural backgrounds, we also know that environmental changes can disrupt or transform place-specific cosmological concepts and sacred landscapes, but how these geographically-grounded cosmologies are being altered or upended by experiences of migration or collective displacement is little understood.

In multilateral settings Latin America is the only region to acknowledge the assistance and protection of refugees provided by "churches," as an integral part of the non-governmental response to the humanitarian challenges posed by migration. But these contributions have yet to be documented in detail. If we know that religious values and concepts have helped to articulate faith-based efforts on behalf of migrants in Latin America, our in-depth and case-based knowledge of the various ways this has taken place across the region remains uneven. Nor do we know how diverse theological concepts might be being brought together with religious ideas about planetary stewardship and sacred landscapes. We know that religious groups have directed their energies to environmental advocacy and to the accompaniment of migrants in the region, but we do not know enough about how religious approaches to migration and the environment are being brought together to confront the increase of environmentally-induced migration. Likewise, our previous work on religion's role in community responses to environmental conflict and climate change has established that religious belief and practice are privileged components of indigenous or place-based identities and, as distinguished from secular aid, can provide collective forms of social, cultural and moral support in coming to terms with environmental disruptions. But religion's adaptive significance for communities in contexts of environmental displacement or planned resettlement remains understudied.

## *Core Objectives*

This proposed project seeks to understand the role of religion as part of the emerging response to environmentally-induced displacement and migration in Latin America, including both the humanitarian response and multilateral and national dialogues, still in their early stages, dedicated to developing legal protections for environmental migrants. This project will explore the potential constitutive or catalyzing role of religious voices and ideas not only in bringing public attention to the challenges faced by environmental migrants – in the region most actively engaged with this problem – but also in helping to establish and add coherence to the normative bases for the category of environmental migrant, as an emerging subject of international and national governance. Furthermore, this project seeks to better understand the contributions of religious actors and ideas at each phase of the experience of environmentally-induced migration, from departure or displacement, through the journey itself, to arrival and adaptation. And it will explore the roles of different religious traditions as part of individual and community responses to environmental dislocations, including Christian, but also indigenous and Afro-Latino religious beliefs and practice. Building directly on previous projects concerned with environmental conflict and climate change, and giving attention to interrelated international, national and local scales of religious engagement across Latin America, this proposed project will privilege the following interrelated dimensions of analysis:

1. The contributions of faith-based actors and religious ideas to international and national discussions and emerging normative frameworks for addressing new governance and security challenges posed by environmental migration, particularly religion's role in bringing greater visibility and agency to what is too often an invisible and legally illegible, if increasingly prevalent, category of migrant;
2. The participation of transnational faith-based non-governmental organizations as part of humanitarian interventions on behalf of environmental migrants, especially along migratory routes, with attention not just to basic service provision but also to how religious and secular humanitarian capabilities might differ or create distinct opportunities;
3. The role of religion and churches locally, in receiving communities, and nationally, in host societies, for addressing the range of needs and challenges experienced by migrants as a dimension of typically long-term processes of transition, including those occasioned by resettlement or integration in new societal circumstances;
4. How religious engagement, and faith-based actors, might help environmental migrants address specifically collective and largely intangible concerns beyond a humanitarian focus on material well-being of individuals, including the potential loss of collective identity, social cohesion, and other non-economic social, cultural and moral dislocations, in particular, among displaced or resettled indigenous and Afro-Latino communities.

In what follows, we discuss in greater depth the relevance of religion for these dimensions of governance and security, humanitarian intervention, and community resettlement, across each phase of the migrant experience and in the context of environmentally-induced displacement in and from Latin America and the Caribbean:

### *1) Religion Engagement with Governance Challenges Posed by Environmental Migrants:*

As the ongoing immigration debate in the U.S. and efforts to come to terms with arriving migrants in Europe make clear, how to regulate international migration has become an urgent preoccupation for many states and societies. Without offering a comprehensive review of existing international and national governance mechanisms for migrants, we can note that a host of international or regional inter-governmental agencies exist, like the International Organization for Migration and the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees, dedicated to the elaboration and monitoring of frameworks such as the new UN Global Compact for Migration or, in Latin America, the 2014 Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action. These frameworks govern the flow of people across borders, classify displaced populations, establish the obligations of states, and categorize kinds of migrants (e.g. economic migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers), as well as the rights and protections they are afforded.

But national, regional, and international governance approaches to environmental displacement and migration are much less well-developed. For example, climate change has received sustained international attention on multiple fronts and for several decades. This includes the ongoing work of the multilateral UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which meets annually and, of course, the 2015 Paris Agreement. These accords have laid out obligations and goals for nation-states in order to meet the technical challenges of mitigating the causes of climate change (e.g. the need to lower the levels of greenhouse gas emissions) but have less to say about adaptation to the effects of climate change, and do not address environmental migration. This is beginning to change. Most notably, the Nansen Initiative, launched in 2012, is a UN-backed multilateral and consultative process to identify effective practices and build consensus around key principles to address the protection and assistance needs of persons displaced across borders in the context of disasters, including the adverse effects of climate change.

The Initiative builds directly on Latin American precedents such as the 2010 Cancún Agreement's call "to enhance understanding, coordination, and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration, and planned relocation." Taking aim at the legal gaps inhibiting recognition of environmental migrants, its main activity has been to establish "The Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change," endorsed by the UN in 2015. This agenda does not propose a binding international convention but advocates for the integration of effective practices by states and regional organizations into their own normative frameworks according to their specific situations and challenges. But what count as effective practices is an ongoing, at times hotly contested, issue, and remains a topic in need of empirical research. In addition, if we can note a growing corpus of research and writing on intersections of religion with migration, the bulk of this work addresses religious dimensions of displacement in the Eastern Mediterranean. As such, European anxieties about Islam currently play an outsized role in how religious differences are linked to migration discourses in ways that do not have good correlates in the Americas, with its plural Catholic, Evangelical, indigenous and Afro-Latino religious landscape.

Yet Latin America has led the way in recognizing environmental migrants as subjects of international law. Several countries have recently provided new legal protections for people displaced by environmental crises. Bolivia's 2013 Migration Law recognizes the need to protect "climate migrants." Ecuador's 2017 Organic Law of Human Mobility treats "environmentally-

induced migrants” as humanitarian victims, while Peru’s 2017 Migration Law identifies victims of environmental disasters as “humanitarian migrants.” In a few other countries, environmental migrants can be admitted on humanitarian grounds, though not as refugees, as with Brazil’s decision to temporarily accept approximately 65,000 Haitians in the aftermath of Haiti’s 2010 earthquake. In 1998 Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras, resulting in an estimated 150,000 migrants to the U.S. being given temporary protected status (which the present administration has pledged to end in 2019, provoking widespread objections from faith leaders). But most countries in Latin America, and elsewhere, have instead adopted loss and damage or disaster risk reduction policies, as represented by the 2013 Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage from Climate Change, which emphasize financial loss and material damage from displacement but do not address international environmental migration or recognize impacts of non-economic losses. A direct outcome of regional Latin American discussions, the Nansen Initiative briefly addresses such intangible concerns as “community ties, cultural values, traditions” along with attachment to place, while indicating the need for more research-based knowledge about these impacts.

Faith-based representatives have been participating in the Nansen process, and similar discussions at the Organization of American States, and have co-authored declarations with the UNHCR, such as the 2013 “Affirmation of Welcome” on protecting the forcibly displaced. But we know little about how religious frames and concepts have engaged international or national secular and legal views, and political positions, on environmental displacement. To what extent are different theologies of migration, for example, in dialogue with political, policy, and legal formulations about environmental displacement, and how persuasive have religious voices been with secular counterparts in this context, as compared with public debates about other forms of migration? Specifically, how might religious groups be utilizing or modifying secular normative concepts, such as loss and damage, the responsibility to protect, or formulations of justice or human rights, to promote attention to the specific needs of and losses incurred by environmental migrants, including non-economic losses?

In 2016 members of the Episcopal Church of El Salvador participated in the “Msgr. Romero Pilgrimage, the Migrant’s Passage,” following the route undocumented migrants take from Central America to the U.S. to celebrate the rights of migrants. Along the way they provided food to migrants, referred to as “pilgrims,” and, together with parishioners from San Diego, held an ecumenical service at the U.S.-Mexico border fence. In December of 2017 members of faith groups and human rights advocates assembled at the border fence near Tijuana for the twenty-fourth annual “Posada Without Borders” ceremony, a traditional reenactment of the “refugees” Joseph and Mary’s search for shelter before Mary gave birth to Jesus. For over fifteen years the group “Pueblo sin Fronteras” (People without Border”), which also runs a migrant shelter and works to support migrants’ asylum claims, has led the Migrant Caravan, accompanying Central American migrants to the border during Holy Week. The Caravan is organized after the Stations of the Cross, a procession celebrated by Latin American Catholics reenacting the final days of Jesus, from prosecution to the tomb. These activities are indicative of the sorts of interventions explored in “Ecologies of Migrant Care” project by the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics. They combine religious accounts of the migrant experience, and an intent to increase its public visibility, with specific justice and rights-based claims that contest sovereign state control of the border, border security, and associated models of citizenship. With attention to such cases, this project will explore how religious voices and activities aspire to influence

public understandings about migration by contrasting sacred geographies with the demands of secular geopolitics.

The 2003 joint U.S. and Mexican Bishops' statement, "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," celebrates human dignity as the basis of the right to life, right to support oneself and one's family, and right to migrate. The same concept of "dignity" also underwrites the secular regime of universal human rights. How do religious conceptions of dignity influence their secular counterparts? What impacts are such interventions having upon public perceptions of environmental migrants? Advocates have suggested that churches are uniquely well-equipped to help find a more effective language for the victims of climate change, adding moral, ethical, social justice, and more collective dimensions to legal definitions. The rights of migrants, when combined with the pastoral mission of hospitality to the foreigner, and religious injunctions to move beyond political divisions and to cross over the barriers that alienate human relationships, pose a potentially powerful challenge to a border geopolitics that often treats migrants as "aliens and criminals."

At the same time, in response to efforts by nation-states to secure their borders from illegal immigration, indigenous groups emphasize their right of access to sacred landscapes that overlap or straddle these geopolitical boundaries, contesting the legality of borders while asserting an alternative cosmologically-inspired account of their porosity. From previous work on the relation of religion to climate change, we know religion is an important ingredient in national and international climate forums. Evaluating the contributions of religious actors in domestic and regional deliberations about the governance of environmental migrants, this project will explore how moral-ethical features of religious discourse might contribute to and help to re-frame public understandings of this issue.

## *2) Religion as Part of the Humanitarian Response:*

In Latin America religious groups have long actively accompanied migrants and provided them basic services, including food, blankets, shelter, security, and legal services, while in transit. Many faith-based NGOs also provide relief for displaced groups in the aftermath of natural disasters, including food, water, medical services, temporary housing and schooling, and resiliency schemes for rural-to-urban migrants, among other services. In Latin America and the Caribbean faith-based humanitarian aid groups are disproportionately Christian and Catholic, though not exclusively, and frequently operate in the same arenas and participate in the same humanitarian networks as do their secular counterparts. However, there are several ways faith-based agencies have been differentiated from secular ones. Religiously-affiliated humanitarian groups are often praised for their capacity to mobilize adherents, establish bonds of trust with local communities, and use their moral authority to persuade donors and skeptical stakeholders. In addition, as locally-engaged transnational organizations, faith-based NGOs can serve as vehicles for the circulation of widely-shared religious concepts and ideas to local communities.

Some religious humanitarian groups are more closely aligned with religious institutions in ways that accentuate their distinct identities as faith-based actors, such as, for example, where houses of worship are made available for sanctuary. As an action of accompaniment, solidarity, and safe haven for migrants, and an assertion of sacred space, "sanctuary" is a concept derived from theological ethics and a religious response to immigration policy. It also offers the migrant as "pilgrim" potential benefits distinct from those of secular counterparts, such as a protective

social network and worship community. According to Church World Service, in the politically charged environment around immigration to the U.S. since the most recent presidential election, the number of sanctuary churches has climbed to more than 800, while the novel concept of a “sanctuary city” now describes well over 500 cities. How the concept of sanctuary continues to evolve as part of a renewed effort to change public perceptions of U.S. religious groups, viewed as anti-immigrant, and what impact it might have on approaches to immigration enforcement deserves more sustained attention.

The growing presence of religious actors on the international humanitarian scene has not escaped scholarly notice, and a significant body of research has documented these developments over the past two decades. There are notable disagreements, however, about how to account for the higher profile of faith-based NGOs. Some scholars frame this as the “resurgence” of religion – a reversion to the political importance of religion after the twentieth century’s experiment with secularism – while others point to the decline of the power of nation-states and the necessity of an array of civil society actors to fill the various gaps in social service provision. But we have much to learn about the activities of faith-based humanitarian service provision on the ground, including how religious and secular goals and capabilities differ or coincide, and how religious agencies might participate in longer-term and durable solutions to environmental displacement, in contrast to more typical short-term emergency response or disaster relief.

### *3) Religion as a Resource for Displaced People and Communities:*

As with the example of sanctuary, another relevant role for religion is its potential to help people displaced by environmental factors to address the risks and uncertainty associated with short- or long-term transitions. Religious participation has been cited as an important means to help migrants cope with the sociocultural dislocations they experience, including the loss of home, community, and accompanying sociocultural worlds. To this end, advocates have pointed to the advantages of religious involvement in promoting the voices, agency and needs of the grassroots, which are too often ignored by the larger humanitarian actors. How this specifically happens, however, deserves more systematic attention. How does religious engagement by migrants help to lessen trauma and loss or to provide a new source of post-displacement or diasporic community? And how might local churches function as anchor institutions in efforts to bridge relations between migrants and host communities or the wider society?

More empirical study is needed of the role of religion in processes of planned or forced displacement or resettlement. In such cases, typically, environmental migrants are permanently displaced from climate-altered landscapes, and unable to return to their countries or communities of origin. In this context, religion might play multiple roles in helping to reduce anxiety, restore collective identity and social cohesion, better connect affected people to systems of social support, and aid the resettlement and integration of migrants. With the exception of temporary protected status, in the U.S. we tend to treat migrants and refugees, politically and legally, as individuals, and have few mechanisms for recognizing the climate-induced displacement of groups and for addressing their collective needs. An important source of religion’s efficacy in contexts of environmental displacement, therefore, is likely that religious frames tend to emphasize the social while treating migration experiences in collective terms.

But across Latin America and the Caribbean those most vulnerable to the effects of a changing environment are poor, minority and indigenous communities. The San Blas Kuna are currently

making plans to relocate from their ancestral home, an archipelago of 360 islands off the coast of Panama, to the mainland. Within a generation, their archipelago will disappear beneath the rising seas, forcing most of the approximately 50,000 Kuna to move. There has been a years-long shared planning process together with Panama's government. Displacement means the Kuna will lose their connections to many religious and cultural sites now part of their island landscape. And a successful outcome for the Kuna will include preservation of their system of self-government, which involves traditional authorities charged with managing secular and religious activities. For the Kuna displacement is much more than geographic. It puts their entire cosmology under stress. This project will focus not just on Catholic and Evangelical responses to environmental migration but also address how minority and indigenous religious traditions are being transformed by, and responding to, the challenges of climate-induced displacement.

One potential benefit of greater attention to the religious dimensions of environmental migration is the ways religious concerns help to address attention to non-economic forms of loss and damage, including losses of biodiversity, territory, knowledge, social cohesion, heritage and cultural identity. Religious participation in contexts of displacement, therefore, can offer an alternative language and conception of value, which might potentially extend secular and normative frames for evaluating loss. Through a comparison of cases from different corners of Latin America and the Caribbean, this project will closely examine how religious discourses and practices help to expand or contract appreciation of the broadest range of migrant experiences, values, predicaments and concerns in the context of displacement.