



Climate humanitarian visa: international migration opportunities as post-disaster humanitarian intervention

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Received: 9 April 2019 / Accepted: 9 March 2020 / Published online: 25 March 2020

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Abstract

With global action being outpaced by climate change impacts, communities in climate-vulnerable countries are at increased risk of incurring climate-induced losses and damages. In the last few years, disasters from extreme weather events such as typhoons have increased and have breached records, with typhoon Haiyan being the strongest ever typhoon to make landfall. Such an event solicited global compassion and altruism where Canada and the USA, apart from doling out traditional humanitarian aid, also offered immigration relief opportunities to typhoon Haiyan victims who have familial connections to their residents. Drawing from these immigration relief interventions, this paper uses a sociopolitical approach in proposing a climate humanitarian visa that would be offered to climate change victims on the basis of transnational family networks and skilled labor. Noting that several countries such as in Europe have demographic deficits and labor shortages, such a scheme would benefit both climate change victims and receiving countries. To counter the risk of selective compassion against economically trapped populations, potential receiving countries could provide skills upgrading geared toward addressing their labor shortages through their existing development programs. While migration is only one strategy in a spectrum of responses to climate change impacts, a climate humanitarian visa could provide climate change victims a legal choice for mobility while invoking altruism, hospitality, and compassion from potential receiving countries, whether or not they historically cause climate change.

Keywords Climate change · Extreme weather events · Emigration · Displacement · UNFCCC

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this article (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-020-02691-9>) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

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1 Introduction

In the last few years, the frequency and intensity of disasters from extreme weather events have been increasing. Despite the uncertainty of scientific findings on the attribution of changes in cyclone frequency and intensity to anthropogenic climate change or human-induced forcing, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states with high confidence that increasing exposure of people and economic assets to weather- and climate-related disasters has been the major cause of long-term increases in economic losses (IPCC 2012; Knutson et al. 2010; Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018). Apart from causing damage to life and property, extreme weather events can displace people and also inflict intangible losses such as post-traumatic stress disorders or loss of sense of belonging (“solastalgia”) that follows after a disruption of familiar surroundings (Landoy et al. 2015; Tschakert et al. 2013). Generally, the less developed countries are more affected by extreme events compared to developed countries, and some countries like Haiti, the Philippines, and Pakistan are even repeatedly affected by such catastrophes (Kreft et al. 2015; Eckstein et al. 2018). In this case where sudden-onset events become commonplace, adaptation must not only be reactive (i.e., an immediate response) but proactive (i.e., long-term planned response) as well (Biagini et al. 2014).

One common reactive adaptation measure to sudden-onset climate change is migration. People migrate for complex reasons, and one push factor may be environmental threats (Black et al. 2011). While it is not a stand-alone solution to climate change impacts, migration has the potential to be a proactive adaptation measure and may be the most effective way to allow people to diversify income and build resilience where environmental change threatens livelihoods (Black et al. 2011; Hillmann et al. 2015). Despite having received increased attention in recent years, migration as an adaptation option has yet to be fully mainstreamed in multilateral climate policy. There is yet to be a legally binding migration treaty that climate change victims can invoke, and current legal and political solution approaches are inadequate and unable to provide suitable, just, and in-time assistance to the most climate-vulnerable groups (WBGU 2018).

In this paper, the feasibility of immigration opportunities as humanitarian aid for victims of extreme weather events is explored as an add-on to traditional humanitarian aid doled out by states after disasters. Inspired by the USA and Canada immigration relief measures for typhoon Haiyan victims in the Philippines, this paper uses a sociopolitical approach in constructing an international humanitarian migration model, which could be captured as a “climate visa” for those who were affected and have survived extreme weather events. In order to construct this migration model, a stocktaking of recent multilateral initiatives and mandates involving migration and climate change was conducted, and landmark immigration relief measures such as those of the USA and Canada were reviewed through a sociological lens.

The following section highlights relevant and recent climate change and migration multilateral mandates, which are important first steps in mainstreaming migration in climate policy. Section 3 reviews the sociology of immigration relief measures of the USA and Canada for victims of extreme weather events. Sections 4 and 5 introduces the climate visa as a potential humanitarian aid of concerned states for victims of extreme weather events while Section 6 provides an illustration of how to operationalize the climate visa. This paper concludes in Section 7 with a call for ambition and compassion from states, especially those historically responsible for climate change.

2 Climate change and migration mandates

The year 2010 was pivotal for the topic of migration in the international climate regime. The Cancun Agreements (Decision 1/CP.16), adopted by the Conference of Parties (COP) in COP 16, contained a decision to establish the Cancun Adaptation Framework and invited parties to enhance adaptation action by initiating several activities, one of which is to undertake “measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at the national, regional and international levels” (UNFCCC 2010). This invitation to parties takes into account common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and respective capabilities as well as specific national and regional development priorities, objectives, and circumstances (UNFCCC 2010).

The COP decisions after the Cancun Agreements and before the Paris Agreement (Decision 1/CP.21) did not contain any explicit reference to “climate change induced displacement, migration or planned relocation” (UNFCCC 2010). The other COP decisions, however, sought to address loss and damage arising from adverse impacts of climate change, including both extreme events and slow onset events. In COP 18, Decision 3/CP.18 acknowledged the need for further work to advance understanding and expertise on loss and damage including climate change impacts on migration, displacement, and human mobility. In COP 19, the COP established the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for loss and damage associated with climate change impacts (Decision 2/CP.19) in order to advance knowledge and understanding about loss and damage. Of note is paragraph 5.c.iii, which gives an impression of action other than dialogue or further study. It suggests enhanced action and support to address loss and damage in order to enable countries to take actions including that “where necessary, facilitate the development and implementation of additional approaches to address loss and damage associated with climate change impacts, including extreme weather events and slow onset events” (UNFCCC 2013). COP 21 was a turning point for the WIM, especially on displacement issues, as the COP requested the WIM to establish a task force to “develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change” (UNFCCC 2015). This paved the way for the establishment of the WIM’s Task Force on Displacement (TFD).

Article 8 paragraph 4 of the Paris Agreement also laid down more concrete suggestions for areas of cooperation and facilitation to enhance understanding, action, and support of parties (UNFCCC 2015). These include early warning systems, emergency preparedness, slow onset events, events that may involve irreversible and permanent loss and damage, comprehensive risk assessment and management, risk insurance facilities, climate risk pooling and other insurance solutions, non-economic losses, and resilience of communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems (UNFCCC 2015). Article 9 of the Paris Agreement, reminiscent of the CBDR principle invoked in the Cancun Agreements, called on developed countries to “provide financial resources to assist developing countries with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention” (UNFCCC 2015). Furthermore, the provision of financial resources should take into account “country-driven strategies, and the needs and priorities and needs of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and have significant capacity constraints” (UNFCCC 2015). Indeed, the poorer countries in the South may be unable to initiate sufficient adaptation programs. In countries whose very existence is

threatened by climate change, migration might be the only option for their communities (Biermann and Boas 2010).

Within the UNFCCC, an aspiration to globally address climate change impacts, including on migration, displacement, and human mobility, is quite apparent in every COP decision. While this aspiration has not been effectively translated to reality yet, there are global developments that potentially advance action on migration. In December 2018, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) has been adopted by UN Member States. The Compact, although not legally binding, is still a significant achievement (Newland 2019). The Compact exhibits, for the first time, a comprehensive set of consensual guiding principles for international cooperation on migration. It aims to “address migration movements, such as those that may result from sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters” (UNGA 2018). Considered as a soft law, the Compact has the same status as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and is an important step toward recognizing the role of climate change on migration (Newland 2019). The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in its role in the WIM’s TFD, has comprehensively summarized processes, policies, and frameworks relevant to human mobility and climate change. While IOM (2018) recognizes a clear increase in number of relevant processes, it notes that there are still significant gaps such as the lack of an international “hard” law with specialized provisions that climate-related migrants and displaced persons could invoke.

With global action being outpaced by the impacts of climate change, climate-vulnerable communities are left to survive on their own. If climate change is not reason enough to welcome the international migration of climate change victims, it can be argued for doing so on humanitarian grounds as has been mentioned in the GCM. An example would be the case of a family from the small Pacific Island State of Tuvalu granted New Zealand residency in 2014 after arguing, among other things, that the effects of climate change would have adverse impacts on them if they were forced to return home (McAdam 2015). The New Zealand Immigration and Protection Tribunal (IPT) ultimately permitted them to stay in New Zealand based purely on humanitarian and discretionary grounds, because of their strong family ties within New Zealand (McAdam 2015). A year after, in 2015, New Zealand deported a man (Ioane Teitiota) from the small island developing state Kiribati and refused his claim for recognition as a refugee and/or protected person (McDonald 2015). The IPT deemed that the risk of “arbitrary deprivation of life” of Teitiota and family was not substantial enough and that the Government of Kiribati had taken steps to address climate change; however, it did not exclude the possibility that “environmental degradation could create pathways into the Refugee Convention or protected person jurisdiction” (UN HRC 2020). Teitiota filed a case under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights monitored by the UN Human Rights Committee (UN HRC 2020), which upheld the ruling by New Zealand with some dissenting opinions. The UN HRC (2020), however, has established that “environmental degradation can compromise effective enjoyment of the right to life, and that severe environmental degradation can adversely affect an individual’s well-being and lead to a violation of the right to life.”

The case of Teitiota shows how the New Zealand IPT looked at both the circumstance of the individual and the sending country. Observing that the Government of Kiribati has a National Adaptation Programme of Action drafted in 2007, the New Zealand IPT deemed the country as proactive in addressing climate change impacts. However, there are limits to adaptation, and both sudden and slow onset events can trigger cross-border movement of individuals seeking protection from climate change-related impacts (UN HRC 2020). The

next section looks at how the USA and Canada responded to sudden onset events by providing immigration relief measures to victims of typhoons in the Philippines. These measures mainly required family ties for immigration application.

3 Landmark immigration relief measures after typhoon Haiyan and typhoon Ketsana

Typhoon Haiyan of 2013 is currently the strongest tropical cyclone to make landfall (Athawes 2018). Typhoon Haiyan particularly devastated the Philippines, becoming the country's deadliest typhoon on record. The USA and Canada were two countries that extended not only financial humanitarian aid but also immigration relief opportunities to disaster victims of typhoon Haiyan. Canada also extended immigration relief opportunities to Filipino victims of typhoon Ketsana in 2009. Apart from existing strong and friendly bilateral relations with the Philippines, particularly in administering development support, the USA and Canada host a considerable amount of Filipino residents. In the USA, the Philippines is the top three origin country of immigrants (Radford 2019), while it is the top country of birth of immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada 2016). Indeed, familial affiliation of those affected by climate disasters can reinforce cross-border migration through immigration relief opportunities provided by states (Mosuela and Matias 2015). Whether being a top origin country of immigrants played a role in the USA and Canada opening their borders to kin of Philippine immigrants affected by disasters remains to be seen as other top origin countries such as Mexico, China, and India have yet to post record breaking deadly typhoons such as Haiyan.

The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) of Canada prioritized the processing of application of family class applicants “under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (specifically, spouses, common law and conjugal partners, dependent children, parents, grandparents and orphaned family members)” who were proven to be “directly and significantly affected” by the disasters (IRB 2009). Expedited scheduling and processing as well as having a possibility to appeal on “humanitarian and compassionate grounds” were the benefits of the said immigration measure for the Philippines (IRB 2009). In addition, appeals from Filipino citizens temporarily living in Canada (i.e., visitors, international students, and temporary foreign workers) who were personally affected by the typhoon and who needed to extend their stay were said to be evaluated in a “compassionate and flexible” approach (Government of Canada 2014). In line with these measures, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) set up exclusive email addresses and a phone line to act on requests from applicants and their families (Government of Canada 2014). The latest publicly available figures were 2100 approved applications by September 2014, while a breakdown of 1097 approved applications in April 2014 showed 245 were temporary resident applications and 852 were for permanent residence (Dempsey 2014; Relief Web 2014).

In a very similar response, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) instituted immigration relief measures to Filipino nationals residing in the USA and their kin affected by typhoon Haiyan. However, it has not granted “Temporary Protected Status” (TPS) designation to the Philippines. One of the options accessible is a request for a change or an extension of non-immigrant status (i.e., visitor visas, student, and temporary employment status) for an individual currently in the USA who is out of status. This measure can support Filipino citizens

to reenter lawful status and avoid the negative immigration consequences of remaining in the USA beyond an authorized period of stay (i.e., when one's legal status has lapsed, a reinstatement to lawful status is usually not possible). Another relief measure that could be requested was expedited processing of immigrant petitions for immediate relatives of US citizens and relatives of lawful permanent residents (LPR) with current priority dates. Immediate relatives refer to a spouse, parent, stepparent, or a child and stepchild under the age of 21 of a US citizen and/or the spouse of a deceased US citizen. Some requirements need to be fulfilled: a step-parent or child will only qualify if the marriage creating the step-parent/child relationship occurred before the child's 18th birthday, and a US citizen must be at least 21 years old to file a petition for a parent. Other immigration relief measures for Filipino nationals affected by the typhoon involved extensions of grants of parole and advance parole, expedited processing of an advance parole application, expedited adjudication of an employment authorization application or off-campus employment authorization for F-1 students experiencing severe economic hardship, and assistance to LPR stranded outside the USA (Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security 2018; Reeves ILG 2013).

The case of USA and Canada provides an exemplary case of humanitarian post-disaster interventions through loosening tight immigration and state policies for admission (Mosuela and Matias 2015). They represent how states could or should treat those people affected by a humanitarian crisis and of the protection they should receive when they cannot all be protected within their own countries. These particular states view migration not only as a reactive strategy but also a proactive one. Instead of regarding migration as a last-resort option, these states utilize migration strategy as a way of adapting to climate-related hazard in the long term. The case of typhoon Haiyan shows a potential stepwise migration strategy in relation to international migration: the first step was a short-term reactive coping mechanism to immediately leave from typhoon ground zero and temporarily migrate to another part of the Philippines, which is a process called survival migration (Black et al. 2011; Cattaneo et al. 2019; Kleemans 2015). The longer-term immigration relief opportunities from USA and Canada constitute the second step of a proactive migration, which may be considered a profitable investment move (Cattaneo et al. 2019). Such a strategy allows for what the WBGU (2018) calls a humanistic alternative to authoritarian or nationalist planned migration as it enables individuals to freely decide on emigration. This also provides a legal migration route and could potentially curb criminal people-smuggling services that offer illegal and often dangerous routes of migration.

It is necessary to extend the analysis of the USA and Canada immigration relief opportunities to developing a model that other states can use in extending help after disasters from extreme weather events apart from or in addition to traditional humanitarian aid. With climate change, there is a growing awareness of communal risks such as environmental change brought about by extreme weather events. Economies, cultures, and politics have been integrating on a global scale such that mutual vulnerability is now worldwide (Penz 2000). This, thus, encourages a sense of shared future and a collective responsibility on a transnational scale among countries, referring to sustained and continuous pluri-local transactions crossing state borders (Faist 2012). Such a perspective might avoid controversial issues of liability and compensation, which is a sticking point in the international climate change regime. Invoking guilt as a strategy for action might not be productive, given that “people react poorly to being told something is their fault” (Andresen et al. 2011 as quoted by Cameron 2018).

4 Elements of potential immigration relief opportunities

In proposing an international humanitarian migration opportunity, countries may take the elements of transnational migrant networks and skilled labor into account as part of humanitarian post-disaster interventions within the context of cosmopolitanism and human rights. Cosmopolitanism treats all humans as part of one moral community, without distinguishing between countrymen and foreigners (Penz 2000). This paper proposes a “climate humanitarian visa” as a more progressive implication of cosmopolitanism wherein states take action not only in a charitable way but also bounded by moral duties in providing humanitarian assistance to the global needy, especially if the countries share common political values, a security agreement, and mutual strategic and economic interests.

In times of climate-related hazard, practices of cosmopolitanism surpassing the nation-state model show their relevance such as in the case of the USA and Canada and their respective alliances with the Philippines. Such practices provide fundamental bases for a more just global governance. Drawing on Penz (2010), strong practices of cosmopolitanism such as articulation of ethical values and relations between countries should be expressed globally. Bounded by moral obligations, states play an essential role in upholding moral community and humanity as a whole. One instrument advancing international ethical responsibility is opening states’ borders for the protection of the right to free movement, which is a basic right of human beings. Opening states’ borders pertains to both exit and entry to enable a certain category of people to move beyond their national territory. Cross-border movement should be an option following a climate disaster, especially when countries lack certain measures and resources to protect their citizens within their borders.

Migration is only one among many strategies for adapting to climate change (Cattaneo et al. 2019). It is important to highlight that such an instrument is proposed as an additional humanitarian intervention and not as a stand-alone be-all, end-all adaptation solution to extreme weather events since it is well-recognized that not everyone is able to migrate (Adger et al. 2015; Black et al. 2011). The USA and Canada schemes, for instance, considered only a particular group to be accepted, such as the kin of those legally residing in the USA and Canada. Moreover, only those who survived the typhoon benefitted from the schemes. By default, free movement entitlements are ignored for some climate change victims by an inevitable “selective compassion” entrenched in such humanitarian post-disaster interventions. However, migration may still be the most effective way to allow people to diversify income and build resilience where environmental change threatens livelihoods (Black et al. 2011). It is, therefore, suggested that additional measures such as functional early warning systems and stress-tested emergency evacuation plans be in place for those at risk of being trapped while climate change mitigation measures are concomitantly pursued (Black et al. 2011; WBGU 2018).

Extending the immigration relief schemes of the USA and Canada to include other individuals without familial networks would increase the potential benefits of international migration. Similar to the contributions of labor migrants, individuals migrating can help a community to remain viable in the long run if money remittances and goods are sent back to help build resilience such as the case of Africa where remittances to home communities even surpassed official development assistance since 2007 (Black et al. 2011). In the year 2018, remittances accounted for almost 10% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Philippines, which is the top four remittance recipient in the world (Central Bank of the Philippines 2019; World Bank 2019). In countries like the Philippines where wages from low-status overseas jobs outstrip potential earnings from white-collar work back home, immigration relief opportunities can be seen as an opportunity than as a liability (Constable 2007; Parreñas 2001; Paul 2019).

5 Proposing a climate humanitarian visa as an international humanitarian migration model

This paper's proposal for an international humanitarian migration model is based on the assumption that states put their national interests ahead of global interests, even in the disbursement of humanitarian aid. Warner et al. (2015) sees current humanitarian migration legislations to be a key gap across regions in the world because this only responds to emergency situations, with the assumption that recipients of these schemes will go back to their areas of origin once things get back to normal. While temporary visa waivers are common when a natural disaster happens, the immigration relief measures of the USA and Canada instituted after typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines show that some states are also open to welcoming permanent migrants.

The targeted beneficiaries of the immigration relief opportunities provided by the USA and Canada after typhoon Haiyan and typhoon Ketsana in the Philippines can be referred to as transnational migrants. These are defined as immigrants who build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement, simultaneously seeking to remain embedded in the everyday affairs of the homeland community while engaging in activities that define and enhance their position in the country of settlement (Faist 2012). Such mode of migration not only ensures the beneficial nature of immigration relief opportunities to countries of origin (in the case of remittances as cross-border transactions) but also poses as an invaluable resource in adopting humanitarian post-disaster interventions by receiving countries. Receiving countries can tap such transnational networks of current migrants to provide general support to newly arrived network-linked migrants who were granted a "climate humanitarian visa". Drawing on Hugo (2010), mobility is more probable to be considered as a choice in communities with a background of movement and dynamic migration networks. A priori migration may reinforce the adaptive capacity of transnational migrant networks by acquiring new knowledge (e.g., agricultural innovations) from the receiving country that may constitute additional adaptation strategies in the country of origin (Siar 2011). Transnational migrants, through their connections and web of networks, can propel diffusion of new technologies, management, and trade (Ouaked 2002). In addition, migration out of areas affected by recurring natural disasters reduces the amount of individuals exposed to the disaster and provides the area with an income stream that can help in rebuilding an area after a disaster has occurred (Cattaneo et al. 2019; de Moor 2011). In the case of typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, survivors who have cross-border migrant family members were able to get much-needed financial assistance from kin living abroad and were eligible to apply for the immigration relief schemes of the USA and Canada.

With several countries such as in Europe having a demographic deficit and labor shortages, economic competitiveness becomes contingent on importation of human capital and skilled labor (Adger et al. 2015; Black et al. 2011; Harper 2012). Extending immigration relief opportunities on a labor basis may help both first-time immigrants and their host country. Skilled labor opens opportunities for migrants to immediately integrate in the workforce and contribute to the host country. In the US immigration relief scheme, eligible applicants can obtain temporary authorization to remain and work in the USA for a set period of time. It may also be prolonged if the conditions in the country of origin do not change (Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security 2013; Seguritan 2014). The International Organization for Migration (IOM), for instance, recommends migration instruments, such as circular or temporary migration between developed and developing countries, as an adaptation response to climate-induced vulnerability (IOM 2009). This allows

climate-vulnerable communities to work seasonally or on a temporary basis in countries where their skills are in demand and for both parties (host country and migrants) to be sensitized to such a migration arrangement. Planned circular labor migration between countries could be agreed through bilateral agreements, with host states able to control the incoming movement (Vlassopoulos 2013). This also provides a layer of legal protection for the skilled labor migrants if their cross-border occupation is sanctioned by the government. An example of a skilled labor bilateral agreement is the Triple Win program of the German government, which recruits nurses from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Philippines to alleviate the nursing shortage in Germany while reducing unemployment in the nurses' countries of origin (GIZ 2019).

Kiribati has a relocation strategy, which includes the elements of transnational family migrants and skilled labor (Kiribati Office of Te Beretitenti 2019). As one of the low-lying island states in the Pacific that are at risk of inundation due to sea level rise, Kiribati's only recourse is to resettle its citizens should the worst case occur. By employing the concept of "migration with dignity", the Government of Kiribati is seeing its current overseas citizens (I-Kiribati) as opportunities that can enable the migration of those who would like to migrate now and in the future. They also see this as transnational migration increasing the level of remittances to the country. The second element of skilled labor aims to raise the level of skill qualifications available locally to that of Australia and New Zealand to make the I-Kiribati more attractive as migrants while also improving the level of standards within the country. On a practical level, the Government of Kiribati does not only look after the future of its citizens but also of their potential host country should relocation be necessary.

Based on the components of transnational family migrants and skilled labor, two routes of international humanitarian migration are proposed as responses to extreme weather events. The first is a family reunion humanitarian route, and the second is a skilled labor humanitarian route. The US and Canada typhoon Haiyan and Ketsana schemes for climate change victims demonstrate how states can support survivors of extreme climate events beyond doling out traditional humanitarian aid. Primarily targeting climate change victims who have familial ties to a priori migrants in their countries, the USA and Canada showed that they are willing to loosen visa restrictions or expedite visa applications to provide a safer residence for climate change victims who are at risk of recurring extreme weather events. Should a climate change victim not have familial ties to migrants in potential receiving countries, she or he can apply based on his or her labor skills. Both low- or high-skilled labor should be considered in humanitarian migration applications. The temporary and/or circular labor migration schemes such as those proposed by the European Union for third countries (European Commission 2007) or the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme implemented by New Zealand for foreigners can be a starting point in developing a program for skilled labor humanitarian migration (Brickenstein and Tabucanon 2013). In the case of Colombian temporary workers in Spain, the beneficiaries had support before and during their stay in Spain (de Moor 2011). They were also provided with training courses, which could potentially upgrade their skills. In order to circumvent the issue of selective compassion, especially in so-called trapped communities or those who cannot afford to migrate, receiving states should explore targeted skills upgrading of the very poor of the most vulnerable communities as one of their humanitarian interventions. This could be in addition to the usual development interventions where money is coursed through the grantee governments to, for example, build schools or subsidize courses. Targeted skills upgrading should offer training opportunities to fill labor shortages and assure the participants of employment after their training. Such a scheme could facilitate social mobility of potentially trapped populations and assist in building their resilience.

6 Operationalizing the proposed climate humanitarian visa

While there is no hard law or legally binding agreement that climate victims can invoke to grant them protection rights, there are soft laws such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and initiatives such as the Platform on Disaster Displacement (follow-up to the Nansen Initiative) that are relevant for victims of extreme weather events framed within the context of disasters. If CBDR or the polluter pays principle is employed, then countries with historically high emissions should take on the obligation of granting climate humanitarian visas. However, since a hard law that could apply to victims of extreme weather events is yet to be passed, the initial step would be to encourage – not to obligate – states to provide climate humanitarian visas. Such an approach would not only provide a legal route of migration but would also help states build experience in altruism, hospitality, and cosmopolitanism. As experiences build up, states would also be able to develop a proof of concept such as the study by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (2019) that shows almost 35% of refugees who arrived in 2015 were employed by October 2018 with 50% employed in skilled jobs. This is consistent with the longitudinal (years 1985–2015) macroeconomic study by d’Albis et al. (2018), which shows that inflows of asylum seekers are beneficial to Western European host countries’ economic performance or fiscal balance due to an increase in tax revenues (net of social transfers) (Maxmen 2018).

Potential receiving states could make use of their development agencies in offering skills upgrading for climate-vulnerable communities for shortage occupations in the receiving states similar to how the German development agency, GIZ, supports the Triple Win program by assisting with language skills, professional preparation, and cultural integration of the nurses even before their deployment (GIZ 2019). Shortage occupations can range from low- to high-skill requirements and can potentially accommodate the different skill levels of climate-vulnerable communities. New Zealand, for example, lists varied shortage occupations such as baker, pig or cattle farmer, vehicle painter, or university lecturer (New Zealand Immigration 2019). Such interventions, despite being developmental in nature (and not humanitarian), could contribute to a potential receiving states’ deliberation process whether to issue climate humanitarian visa should extreme climate events occur in the future. In any case, skills upgrading interventions could be considered part of the potential receiving states’ official development assistance and integrated in their respective development agencies’ programs.

Cross-border migration decisions are often complex and context specific; in several cases where potential migrants have strong place attachment, immobility may even become a choice (Cattaneo et al. 2019; Serdeczny 2017). A climate humanitarian visa should, therefore, enable individuals to decide freely on emigration, similar to the concept of “climate passport” proposed by the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU 2018). The climate passport, drawing from the Nansen passport issued after the First World War in 1922 up to 1938 for stateless refugees, is proposed as a humane climate policy instrument that would open up early, voluntary, and humane migration pathways to countries that are threatened by the potential loss of territory due to climate change (WBGU 2018). Settler states such as the USA and Canada have demonstrated, through their immigration relief measures, that they could be open in providing a new home for victims of extreme weather events associated with climate change. The US and Canada immigration relief schemes and this paper’s proposed international humanitarian model constituting a “climate humanitarian visa” could be seen as important precursors toward a “climate passport” especially when the time comes that issues of compensation within the context of climate change become a globally acceptable. Guided

by the principle of cosmopolitanism and encouraging compassion, a climate humanitarian visa can be seen as responsive to the urgency of climate change and mindful of raising ambition while retaining the interests of each sovereign receiving states.

7 Conclusion

Global action is being outpaced by the impacts of climate change, leaving climate-vulnerable communities at risk of incurring climate-induced losses and damages. In the international climate regime, migration is receiving increased attention. For example, the UNFCCC (through the WIM) established a Task Force on Displacement, which develops recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize, and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change. This paper argues for additional action on climate migration by looking into transnational migration opportunities for climate change victims of extreme weather events under humanitarian grounds. An international humanitarian migration model is proposed to supplement traditional in-country humanitarian aid by drawing on the US and Canada immigration relief schemes for the Philippines after typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and typhoon Ketsanain 2009. Transnational migrant family networks and skilled labor are crucial elements of such a model, as these lay down the groundwork for integration and support to the host country. To counter the risk of selective compassion against economically trapped populations due to lack of resources while increasing the benefits for host countries, it is recommended that potential receiving countries make use of their existing development programs in offering skills training and upgrading in sending countries especially for shortage occupations. In some countries like New Zealand, shortage occupations require a whole spectrum of skills ranging from baking, to farming, to academic lecturing. This paper supports the proposal of the German Advisory Council on issuance of a climate passport to climate change victims and sees the climate humanitarian visa – as demonstrated by the US and Canada’s post-disaster immigration relief schemes – as an important precursor to such a landmark climate adaptation tool while climate change mitigation is concomitantly pursued. All countries, especially those with historically and/or currently high emissions, are encouraged to be guided by the principle of cosmopolitanism, be ambitious with their compassionate stances, and consider offering immigration relief measures to countries hit by extreme weather events, in addition to doling out traditional humanitarian aid. Such interventions could potentially increase the economic competitiveness of receiving countries through increase in tax revenues, even with social transfers. By doing so, receiving countries show responsiveness to the urgent needs of climate change while building experiences in altruism, hospitality, and cosmopolitanism.

Acknowledgments The author thanks Cleovi Mosuela for co-writing the working paper version of the manuscript and Lourdes Tibig for inputs. The author would also like to thank three anonymous reviewers who provided comments that greatly improved the manuscript and Helen Mills Poulos for assistance during the revision.

Author attribution Denise Margaret S. Matias has conceptualized, mainly written, and fully revised the manuscript.

Funding information Open Access funding provided by Projekt DEAL.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The author declares no conflict of interest.

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