Concept Note

OVC 2025

Theme: Relocation, Migration, and Climate Justice

1. Introduction

Communities across Odisha are experiencing mounting challenges due to climate-induced hazards such as floods, heatwaves, cyclones, soil salinity, and coastal erosion. These recurring events have disrupted traditional livelihoods and settlement patterns, compelling populations to adapt through a spectrum of actions: migration, relocation, and in situ adaptation.

Odisha continues to witness both the promise and the challenges of mobility. Each year, thousands move out of the state in search of work, often under conditions of uncertainty and risk. Uneven regional development, inequitable resource distribution, and near-arid conditions in parts of western and southern Odisha have long sustained traditional forms of distress migration. However, in recent years, new drivers of distress have emerged in the coastal and delta regions—precipitated by rising sea levels, increased soil salinity, reduced fisheries resources, and erratic rainfall.

Concurrently, aspirational and opportunity-led migration are expanding, with people utilizing mobility to pursue better livelihoods, education, and security. Across this spectrum, decisions to move or stay are rarely straightforward. Some remain by choice, investing in adaptation at home, while others stay behind simply because they lack the means to move. Behind every migration story lie shifting roles: women sustaining livelihoods at home, youth venturing out for opportunity, and families constantly negotiating how gender and generation shape the experience of movement and return.

The OVC thematic track on **Relocation, Migration, and Climate Justice** places these intersecting realities in perspective. It explores how Odisha can shift migration from a coping response born of distress to a pathway that builds resilience, dignity, and long-term well-being. It aims to foster a shared understanding of the complex drivers of mobility and identify protection measures that support communities as they navigate changing environmental and economic realities.

2. Alignment with Odisha Vision 2036–2047

Odisha Vision 2036–2047 envisions an equitable, climate-resilient, and prosperous state built on regional balance, ecological integrity, and human well-being. This track aligns with the following key directions from the Vision:

- **Reducing regional disparities** through resilient livelihoods in climate-stressed districts.
- **Ensuring human security** and social protection for mobile, displaced, and migrant populations.
- **Fostering climate justice**, making adaptation strategies inclusive and participatory.
- **Strengthening urban-rural linkages** to manage migration and relocation with dignity.

Furthermore, this track aligns with the **State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) Phase II**, which outlines strategic actions for livelihood diversification and human security in climate-vulnerable regions. It also complements initiatives such as the **Odisha Migration Support Portal**, designed to enhance registration, welfare delivery, and coordination for migrant workers and their families.

3. Track Overview

As climate impacts intensify, patterns of mobility and relocation are reshaping lives and landscapes across Odisha. From coastal relocations to labor migration in the hinterlands, people are constantly

negotiating how and where to sustain their well-being. This track examines these movements not merely as symptoms of vulnerability, but as potential pathways for adaptation and resilience. It seeks to understand how policies, institutions, and community actions can collectively ensure that mobility contributes to justice, security, and human well-being in a changing climate.

Objectives

- **Reframe migration and relocation as adaptive strategies:** To understand how mobility, immobility, and planned relocation collectively shape adaptive capacity, resilience, and well-being in the climate-stressed geographies of Odisha.
- **Bridge evidence and governance:** To draw lessons from research, community practice, and policy frameworks for integrating migration and displacement into state-level climate and development planning.
- **Strengthen convergence among actors:** To build a shared understanding among civil society, government departments, research institutions, and international agencies regarding just mobility and adaptive futures.
- **Align local experiences with long-term vision:** To connect ongoing work in Odisha with the broader goals of Odisha Vision 2036–2047 regarding human development, regional equity, and climate justice.

Expected Outcomes

- **Knowledge Brief:** A synthesis of field evidence and conceptual insights on migration, relocation, and in-place adaptation as complementary resilience pathways.
- **Odisha Agenda for Just Mobility and Adaptive Futures:** A joint statement outlining actionable directions for policy, planning, and collaborative research.
- **Policy Inputs for Vision Implementation:** Specific recommendations for the *Odisha Climate & Development Policy Brief* and the *Odisha Climate Practitioners' Collective*, focusing on:
    - Integrating migration and relocation into climate adaptation frameworks.
    - Establishing portable, shock-responsive social protection systems.
    - Enabling local institutions and Gram Panchayats to plan for mobility and adaptation.
- **Collaborative Network Formation:** Strengthened partnerships among civil society organizations, research institutions, and government departments to sustain the discourse.

4. Session Plan

Session 1: Enabling Well-being and Strengthening Adaptive Capacity through Migration This session examines the possibilities inherent in mobility. It explores how migration, when supported by information, skills, and responsive institutions, can become a deliberate choice that expands well-being and adaptive capacity. Within this broader frame, planned relocation should be viewed not as displacement, but as an adaptive process that allows communities facing chronic risk to rebuild lives with greater security and opportunity.

Drawing on the experience of Gram Vikas' *Safe and Dignified Migration (SDM)* program and the *CLAPs* project led by IIHS (with collaboration from CMID and Gram Vikas), the session examines how migration, planned relocation, and in-place adaptation together contribute to resilient futures. The discussion will highlight how aspiration, agency, and foresight can transform mobility into a foundation for long-term well-being and dignity in rural Odisha.

Session 2: Addressing Precarity and Vulnerabilities through Policy and Systemic Action This session focuses on the realities of distress migration and the structural roots of precarity in Odisha, including poverty, indebtedness, and unequal access to land, water, and resources. These challenges

are being compounded by climate pressures, such as declining income from Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), agriculture, fisheries, and other livelihoods.

The session will address the emerging challenges regarding the mental well-being of migrants and families left behind, as well as the need to create access to an array of government schemes to mitigate forced vulnerability.

Key Discussion Areas:

- Identify critical policy and implementation gaps, including weak enforcement, fragmented institutional coordination, and limited coverage of vulnerable migrant and displaced populations.
- Explore and promote integrated, climate-just approaches that balance mobility with local livelihood creation—ensuring equitable access to resources, dignified work, and protection for all affected communities.

Session Outcomes:

- Strengthened understanding of how climate-linked mobility acts as a multiplier of vulnerability and forced migration.
- A shared analytical framework linking the reduction of vulnerability with adaptation, migration, and protection.
- Identification of actionable strategies to support safe, dignified, and climate-resilient mobility.
- Policy insights that inform Odisha's climate and livelihood planning processes.

5. Concluding Session

The concluding session will synthesize insights from the preceding discussions to weave a shared narrative of mobility and adaptation in Odisha. It will distill how lived experiences of moving, relocating, and staying intersect with institutional responses, and what this implies for the state's long-term resilience agenda. The discussion will focus on cross-cutting priorities: data systems that connect villages and worksites, welfare measures that are portable, and planning mechanisms that recognize mobility as an integral part of development rather than a failure of it.

The track will conclude with the articulation of the **Odisha Agenda for Just Mobility and Adaptive Futures**, synthesizing insights to inform the *Odisha Climate & Development Policy Brief* and guide the implementation of Odisha Vision 2036–2047.