

*“Advancing human security through  
knowledge-based approaches to reducing  
vulnerability and environmental risks”*



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# Ninth Coordination Meeting on International Migration, 17 – 18 February, New York



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## New Initiative:

**“Where the Rain Falls: changing agro-climatic risks, livelihood security, and human mobility“**

Dr. Koko Warner  
Head of Section, Environmental Migration,  
Social Vulnerability and Adaptation  
Bonn, Germany



- Established by the UN General Assembly in 1973.
- Bridge-function between the UN and the academic world;
- Think-tank for the UN system;
- Strengthens capacities relevant to promoting human security and development, particularly in developing countries;
- Platform for dialogue and ideas;
- UNU's Institute for Environment and Human Security is one of 14 Research and Training Centres and Programmes worldwide;
- Main goal of UNU is to contribute to *global sustainable development*.

# Main Focus of UNU Worldwide



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# Overview



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1. New initiative: “Where the Rain Falls: changing agro-climatic risks, hunger and human mobility“
2. 36 month research project looking at links between agro-climatic risks, food and livelihood security, and human mobility
3. Principle investigators: UNU and CARE International
4. Supported by:
  - North American foundation,
  - European corporation (corporate social responsibility and data units)

# Context of Rainfalls Initiative



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- People see changes in their environment. These changes affect their decisions about migration (research by EACH-FOR, GMF Study Team on Migration and Climate Change, IASC Task Force on Climate Change, sub-group on Migration and Displacement, etc).
- Need to understand interactions of variables (such as rainfall variability, livelihood and food security, and migration) to design appropriate options for government and policy support.
- Need for policy packages: Climate and environmental changes mix with other factors which drive migration
  - Main question is about alternatives for managing environmental stressors, with a mix of mobility, livelihood options, and social and other forms of capital for affected communities.
- Expand options: As the expected impacts of climate change become more apparent in the future, policy should focus on expanding adaptation options so that migration remains one of a wider spectrum of choices.



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“In the long-term, this [changes in rainfall patterns and rising temperatures] will be a main driver of migration; but we haven't started thinking about it yet because its outside of what we have dealt with in the past. We are still stuck on the old drivers getting wider and worse.”

Bill Swing, Director General of IOM  
UNFCCC climate negotiations in Copenhagen (COP15)

# Environmental change & migration: Thought Evolution



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- Early literature claimed direct, causal relationships
- Little consideration of household level, agency, intervening social factors, context
- Environmental wars did not materialize (no water wars, no waves of environmental „refugees“...but localized tensions)
- Academics debate Homer-Dixon´s hypothesis
- Media and decision makers still thinking along these lines, however
- More recent debates have crystalized among „sceptics“ and „alarmists“
- Emerging evidence-based research (such as EACH-FOR project) gathering knowledge about nuanced relationships

# Three proposed objectives



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**Objective 1: Conceptualize / Model the relationship** between changing rainfall patterns, food security, and different forms of human mobility.

**Objective 2: Assess the potential** for changing rainfall patterns to become a major driver of human migration and displacement within the next [two/three decades].

**Objective 3: Enable a range of stakeholders,** including southern civil society organizations, to influence key policies and plans.

# Thank you.



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**Dr. Koko Warner**

Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS)

Hermann-Ehlers-Str. 10

D-53113 Bonn, Germany

Phone: ++ 49 (0) 228 815-0226, Fax: ++ 49 (0) 228 815-0299

E-Mail: [warner@ehs.unu.edu](mailto:warner@ehs.unu.edu)

[www.ehs.unu.edu](http://www.ehs.unu.edu)