

Displaced Peoples and Creation's Groaning: Toward a Biblical Ecotheological Ethic for Climate Migration

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ABSTRACT

Forcible human displacement caused by climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable communities already burdened by poverty, conflict, and social instability (UNHCR, 2024). Ecological degradation, including soil erosion, water scarcity, and ecosystem loss, intensifies both human suffering and environmental decline (UNEP, n.d.). Despite growing Pentecostal and wider Christian engagement with ecological issues, theological and ethical responses to climate induced migration remain underdeveloped. This study develops a biblical ecotheological ethic for climate migration, emphasizing justice, ecological stewardship, and human dignity. The methodology combines theological analysis of Psalms 104, 148, and Romans 8:18–25 with systematic examination of UNHCR and UNEP data. Trends in climate displacement, environmental indicators, and humanitarian impacts were analyzed to identify patterns and inform ethical reflection. The research explores themes of lament, suffering, and hope to formulate specific ethical principles, including hospitality, care for creation, equitable resource distribution, and advocacy for displaced populations. The study has three objectives: to document climate displacement patterns, to analyze biblical and ecotheological sources for normative guidance, and to propose practical recommendations for policy makers, civil society, and faith communities. By situating human mobility and ecological vulnerability within the biblical narrative of creation's groaning and divine concern, this study provides a framework for scholarly reflection and practical action. It equips leaders and communities to respond to climate displaced populations with justice, dignity, and ecological awareness while broadening Pentecostal engagement with environmental and social crises.

Keywords: Climate migration, ecotheology, creation's groaning, biblical ethics, Psalms, Romans 8, hospitality, environmental justice



INTRODUCTION

Globally, vulnerable communities are increasingly displaced due to climate change, which is no longer a distant prediction but a lived reality. Many internally displaced people reside in areas highly susceptible to climate hazards such as drought, flooding, and extreme heat (UNHCR, 2024). Climate shocks frequently exacerbate pre-existing social, political, and economic fragilities, resulting in repeated displacement among communities already facing poverty and conflict. According

to UNHCR (2024), climate-related disasters have caused approximately 220 million internal displacements over the past ten years. These dynamics are profoundly ecological as well as humanitarian, as ecosystem degradation, water scarcity, and land loss intensify the vulnerability of displaced populations (UNEP, n.d.). The intersection of forced migration and ecological degradation raises a critical moral and theological question: how should faith communities respond to a world in which both humans and

creation are suffering from climate stress? Despite extensive scholarship on creation care, stewardship, and environmental justice, the unique situation of climate-displaced populations is often overlooked in theological and ethical debates. Migration is frequently framed sociopolitically as a “crisis” or “security threat,” which can obscure deeper ethical, spiritual, and theological concerns. How does God’s care for creation intersect with the suffering of displaced communities? How might biblical theology guide responses to displacement through themes of lament, suffering, and hope? This study addresses these questions by combining empirical analysis of UNHCR and UNEP data with theological reflection on Psalms 104, 148, and Romans 8:18–25. The research examines trends in climate displacement, interprets scriptural texts to extract ethical guidance, and develops a normative biblical-ecothological framework for climate migration. Themes of justice, ecological stewardship, hospitality, and human dignity underpin this framework, offering practical guidance for policymakers, civil society, and faith-based actors. By situating human mobility within a biblical narrative of creation’s groaning and divine concern, the study broadens Pentecostal engagement with ecological and social crises and provides a structured approach for advocating and caring for climate-displaced populations. Through this integrated empirical-theological approach, the study seeks to strengthen both scholarly understanding and practical action, emphasizing the responsibility of religious communities to respond faithfully and compassionately to one of the most pressing global challenges of the twenty-first century.

Statement of the Problem & Research Questions

This study addresses a critical gap in theological scholarship by integrating biblical ethics, ecological degradation, and human displacement. Secular discussions on climate migration often focus on logistics, development, or security, leaving the ethical and theological dimensions of interconnected human and ecological suffering underexplored. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does ecological degradation driven by climate change contribute to forced displacement, and what are the ethical implications of this connection?
2. Which biblical and theological resources, especially from ecotheology and Scripture, can inform a normative framework for responding to climate-induced migration?
3. How can an integrated ethic of hospitality, justice, and creation care guide faith communities, policymakers, and civil society in responding responsibly and compassionately to climate-displaced populations?

Objectives

The main goal of this study is to formulate a biblical

ecothological ethic for climate migration that recognizes the suffering of creation and upholds the dignity of displaced peoples. To achieve this, the study has three measurable objectives:

Empirical foundation: Map and analyze climate displacement trends from 2014 to 2024 using UNHCR and UNEP data to establish a factual basis for theological reflection.

Theological analysis: Exegete biblical texts, including Psalms 104, 148, and Romans 8:18–25, and engage with ecotheological traditions to examine themes of lament, creation’s groaning, and hope in relation to actual displacement.

Ethical proposal: Develop practical, values-based ethical principles and policy guidelines for faith communities, NGOs, and policymakers that emphasize hospitality, ecological justice, and sustainable care for climate-displaced populations.

Significance

This study advances theological scholarship by extending ecotheology to include human mobility and displacement alongside environmental concerns. It bridges political theology, social ethics, and environmental justice, providing a moral framework beyond technocratic or security-focused approaches. Strategically, it equips policymakers, development agencies, and religious leaders with guidance rooted in empathy, dignity, and ethical responsibility. By situating climate migration within a biblical narrative of creation’s suffering and divine concern, the study affirms the moral and practical obligations of faith communities to support and care for displaced populations in the face of escalating ecological crises.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a contextually grounded empirical and theological approach focusing on climate induced displacement in Nigeria. It integrates quantitative displacement and environmental data with qualitative biblical and theological analysis to formulate a normative ethic for climate migration.

Data sources and empirical mapping

Displacement statistics were drawn from UNHCR, Nigeria’s National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and peer reviewed reports. By 2024, Nigeria hosted approximately 3.5 million internally displaced persons, with over 1.2 million displaced during the 2024 flood season alone, affecting thirty five states. Historical floods in 2022 displaced 1.4 million individuals and caused widespread destruction of homes and farmlands.

These data provide a factual foundation for identifying regional displacement patterns, including flood prone riverine zones, drought affected northern regions, and coastal erosion areas.

Theological and ethical analysis

Selected biblical texts including Psalms 104 and 148 and Romans 8:18 to 25 were examined to explore themes of creation's suffering, lament, hope, and divine care. The texts were analyzed in relation to Nigeria's environmental crises to derive principles relevant to justice, hospitality, and ecological stewardship.

Analytic process

The study proceeded in three stages. First, synthesis of displacement and ecological data to identify hotspots and trends. Second, exegesis of selected biblical passages to extract ethical and theological guidance. Third, integration of empirical evidence with scriptural insights to propose a contextually informed Christian ecotheological ethic.

Limitations

The study relies primarily on secondary data which may underrepresent undocumented displacement and internal variation across Nigeria's diverse ecological zones. The focus on selected biblical passages does not encompass the entirety of Scripture but provides a focused framework for ethical reflection.

Literature Review

Climate Migration and Global Policy Responses

There is growing legal, ethical, and theological concern about the relationship between forced migration and climate change. From a legal perspective, Jane McAdam's seminal work *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law* (2012) provides a foundational analysis. McAdam examines whether current international frameworks, such as human rights law and refugee law, provide sufficient protection for those displaced by environmental change. She points out a crucial legal loophole by arguing that the majority of climate-displaced people are not covered by the normal refugee protections since they do not escape persecution (McAdam, 2012). In addition, McAdam highlights structural injustice, pointing out that many climate migrants come from the groups least accountable for global emissions. Scholars studying migration have charted how environmental change acts as a complex catalyst rather than a straightforward cause of displacement at a theoretical and policy level. For instance, Cipollina, De Benedictis, and Scibè's (2021) meta-review synthesizes more than 90 studies and concludes that human mobility is greatly impacted by both slow-onset (like land degradation) and fast-onset (like

storms) climate events, but that these effects are mediated by socioeconomic and political factors. This emphasizes that climate migration is a profound social problem that requires integrated solutions rather than being solely an environmental one. Such policy and empirical analyses are critical for theological work because they ground reflection in real-world patterns. The legal and social science literature illustrates that climate migration is not theoretical - it is happening, and existing global structures are not fully equipped to address it.

Ecotheology and Creation's Groaning

An effective theological framework for understanding the suffering of both human societies and the natural world is provided by ecotheology. Un Hey Kim's *Christian Planetary Humanism in the Age of Climate Crisis* (2022) is one notable recent contribution. By stressing relationality (between people and non-humans, between matter and discourse, and between ecological vulnerability and human subjectivity) Kim reinterprets Christian ethics in this piece. To promote a "planetary humanism" that blurs the strict lines between humans and non-humans and demands a profound sense of responsibility, or "responsibility," to creation, she draws on ecofeminist theology and new materialist philosophy (Kim, 2022). This kind of theology helps make sense of environmental degradation not just as a resource problem, but as a spiritual and moral crisis. Paul Ricoeur's dual model of responsibility, "responsibility-as-imputation" and "responsibility-as solicitude," is applied to ecological crises in M. Le Chevallier's recent work, *Responsibility in the Anthropocene: Paul Ricoeur and Environmental Justice* (2024), from a more philosophical-ethical perspective. Ricoeur's concept of responsibility for the "fragile other," according to Le Chevallier, is particularly well-suited to environmental ethics because it extends moral concern beyond other people to include ecosystems and future generations. The self-inflicted extinction risk of humanity, or "anthropocide," is also conceptualized in David Grčki's "Anthropocide, Ricoeur, and Justice" (2025) in relation to environmental degradation. Grčki contends that by recognizing our ecological vulnerability and reaffirming the potential for significant action, Ricoeur's narrative ethics and his "critical optimism" model can inspire moral and political renewal. For a theological ethic that takes the suffering of creation seriously, this philosophical-ethical framework is indispensable.

Biblical Perspectives on Land, Justice, and Displacement

Though much theological reflection on climate migration is emerging, biblical resources remain central. While direct scholarship on "climate refugees" in the Bible is still nascent, a number of theological and biblical scholars provide frameworks that are deeply relevant. In the ecotheological tradition, Sigurd Bergmann is noteworthy.

Bergmann's scholarship on how theology engages nature in contexts of mobility (e.g., migration, climate change) offers powerful conceptual tools. Though not always focused on displacement per se, his relational and contextual theology helps theologians to think about how human movement and ecological vulnerability intersect. From a scriptural perspective, Christians can formulate a theology of care for displaced peoples by referencing biblical land ethics, such as Sabbath, Jubilee theology, and the treatment of sojourners. A normative foundation for hospitality toward those displaced by climate change is provided by the Old Testament's repeated exhortation to welcome the "sojourner" (e.g., Leviticus 19:33–34). These biblical themes uphold a theological ethic that affirms the dignity, belonging, and connection to land of displaced people rather than treating them as merely policy issues.

Philosophical and Ethical Frameworks

To build a strong climate migration ethic, philosophical ethics are essential. As mentioned above, Ricoeur's framework is especially useful because Le Chevallier (2024) demonstrates how his concepts of self and others, guilt and responsibility, can be expanded to include non-human and future beings in ethical reflection. This philosophical explanation, which places ecological responsibility within the framework of narrative, moral agency, and relationality, helps people avoid both hopelessness and complacency. Furthermore, there are complementary resources available from eco-justice theology and environmental ethics in general. Numerous pertinent voices are listed in Yale's Religious Ecojustice Bibliography, which was put together by a number of academics. These voices include eco-justice movements, Indigenous wisdom, and liberation theologies. These resources highlight the non-exploitative relationship between humans and nature, justice, and interdependence - all of which are essential elements of any theological analysis of climate migration.

Synthesis and Gaps

Combining these works of literature identifies a number of important gaps and insights:

- a. The disconnect between policy and theology, as well as the scope and complexity of climate migration, is evident in legal and policy scholarship (McAdam, 2012), whereas theological reflections (Kim, 2022; Le Chevallier, 2024) are only beginning to catch up. More consistent theological attention to the legal realities of climate displacement is needed.
- b. Relational Responsibility: Ecotheology's focus on relationality human/non-human, present/future - offers a vital ethic for migration that affirms mutual vulnerability and profound interconnectedness rather than just "helping refugees."

- c. Narrative Ethics: Frameworks developed by Ricoeur emphasize that ecological responsibility involves not only following the law but also stories, memory, imagination, and hope. This is essential for a theology that addresses "groaning creation" and human suffering.

- d. References from the Bible Underutilized: Although they offer rich ethical registers, biblical motifs like sojourner ethics, Sabbath, and Jubilee are still not widely used in the study of climate migration. Biblical-theological work that more directly connects these biblical ideas to displacement brought on by climate change is obviously needed. The complexity and urgency of climate migration are emphasized by the literature in philosophy, theology, and policy. Legal experts like Jane McAdam draw attention to the shortcomings of the international frameworks that are in place today. Philosophers like Le Chevallier and Grčki, as well as ecotheologians like Un-Hey Kim, offer ethical models that go beyond human responsibility while also challenging dominant anthropocentric paradigms. However, a significant gap remains: a theological ethic that fully considers biblical justice, creation's suffering, and the legal realities of displacement. Closing this gap is not only academically beneficial but also practically necessary because climate change is displacing millions of people, and faith communities can respond prophetically, morally, and relationally not just by offering aid, but also by being witnesses to justice and compassion in a world in dire need.

Theoretical Framework

Ecotheological Ethics

Ecotheological ethics, which bases moral responsibility on a theological understanding of creation, is central to this research. In light of ecological crises, ecotheology reinterprets traditional Christian doctrines, presenting environmental degradation as a moral and spiritual matter rather than just a socio-political or economic one. Ernst Conradie (2023) claims that ecotheology places a strong emphasis on the inherent worth of creation, the interdependence of all living things, and the moral duties that humans have to the planet. According to this relational ethic, climate-induced migration is both a theological and practical issue since it places the suffering of displaced peoples within the larger framework of creation's "groaning" (Romans 8:19–22). Willis Jenkins (2008) provides a framework for ecological spirituality, stewardship, and ecojustice that is still relevant in ecotheological ethics. Stewardship emphasizes the need for humans to take care of creation; ecojustice stresses structural change to address environmental injustices; and ecological spirituality fosters a relational consciousness that views people as members of the ecological community rather than as masters. By combining spiritual development, communal care, and moral concern, these dimensions direct faith-based responses to climate

displacement. Thus, ecotheological ethics offers the moral foundation and useful guidance for dealing with displacement brought on by climate change. It emphasizes that creation is a community of life with moral significance rather than just a resource to be exploited. Ethical attention to human and non-human vulnerability is necessary for responses to displaced peoples, whose suffering is linked to ecological degradation (DeWeese, 2023).

Responsibility, Justice, and Human Dignity

A more comprehensive understanding of responsibility that takes into account future generations as well as non-human and human beings is necessary for a strong ethical response to climate displacement. The ethical theory of Paul Ricoeur offers a helpful perspective: responsibility-as-solicitude advocates for continuous care for the vulnerable, while responsibility-as-imputation acknowledges past harms (Le Chevallier, 2024). This dual framework, when applied to climate migration, affirms that proactive care is morally required and that accountability is required for both environmental harms and human displacement. Human dignity, rooted in the biblical notion of *imago Dei*, intersects with ecological ethics by asserting that moral concern must extend to the most vulnerable, including climate-displaced populations (Grčki, 2025). These populations frequently bear the brunt of environmental degradation without having contributed significantly to its causes, highlighting global injustices. This ethical framework incorporates justice, both relationally (caring for those in ecologically vulnerable positions) and distributivity (equitable sharing of resources and burdens). As a result, displaced people are acknowledged as holders of rights and dignity, and their human and environmental contexts must be acknowledged in any action. Relational responsibility can be better understood through the lens of process theology. Process thought implies that moral responsibility extends beyond direct human-to-human relationships to the larger ecological web by highlighting interdependence and relationality (Deckers, 2023). According to this perspective, ecological integrity and human dignity are inextricably linked; providing for displaced peoples means providing for the environments that support them.

Integrating Theology, Philosophy, and Environmental Ethics

Integrating theological, philosophical, and environmental ethical insights is crucial to creating a cogent ethic for climate-induced displacement. According to Whitehead's process philosophy, which has been used in contemporary ecological theology, all beings, human and non-human, are part of a relational, interdependent web of becoming (Oh & Quiring, 2024). This framework upholds a moral philosophy where social justice and environmental stewardship are inextricably linked and people are co-

participants rather than dominators. A "weak anthropocentrism" that recognizes human uniqueness without devaluing non-human entities is what Jan Deckers (2023) advocates. This strategy is in line with ecotheological ethics, which emphasizes relational care and stewardship. When process philosophy and ecotheology are combined, an ethical framework that is both practically oriented, morally rigorous, and spiritually based is produced for addressing climate displacement. A basis for practical action is also provided by the fusion of philosophy and theology. This framework promotes pastoral practice, policy engagement, and moral reflection by fusing ecotheological ideas with Ricoeur-inspired responsibility. By recognizing the interconnected suffering of displaced peoples and the environment, faith communities can operationalize these principles through advocacy, sanctuary provision, climate education, and ecological restoration.

Application to Climate Displacement

Applying this integrated framework to the study of climate-displaced peoples yields a multidimensional ethic:

Moral Awareness: Ecotheological ethics highlights the spiritual and ethical dimensions of displacement, emphasizing creation's groaning and interconnected vulnerability.

Justice-Oriented Responsibility: Ricoeur-inspired responsibility and process relationality frame the care of displaced peoples and ecosystems as moral imperatives that transcend national or economic boundaries.

Human Dignity: Biblical and philosophical sources converge to recognize displaced peoples as bearers of intrinsic worth, deserving both protection and participation in decision-making.

Practical Engagement: The framework supports faith-based and policy-oriented responses, including sanctuary, advocacy, reparative measures, and long-term ecological and social restoration. All things considered, the theoretical framework places displacement brought on by climate change within a moral universe that is relational, justice-focused, and ecologically based. The spiritual and ethical lens is provided by ecotheology; the normative and philosophical foundation is provided by process philosophy and ethics inspired by Ricoeur; and the relevance to contemporary issues is guaranteed by integration with environmental ethics. By acknowledging the interconnected groaning of creation and human suffering, this framework empowers academics, decision-makers, and religious communities to respond not only with aid but also with justice, relational care, and stewardship.

Displaced Peoples and Ecological Crisis

Between Ecological Degradation and Forced Migration

Degradation of the environment is increasingly causing forced migration, both directly and indirectly. Around 220 million people have been internally displaced over the last ten years as a result of weather-related disasters, with an average of 60,000 per day, according to the UNHCR's 2024 No Escape report (UNHCR, 2024). Not all of this displacement is equal; three out of four people who have been forcibly displaced now reside in nations that are highly to extremely vulnerable to climate-related risks, making them even more vulnerable (UNHCR, 2024). Droughts, floods, and intense heat are examples of environmental stressors that worsen resource scarcity (water, arable land), threatening livelihoods, particularly in areas that are already vulnerable or affected by conflict. Because ecosystem degradation upends established economies, increases competition for dwindling resources, and causes food insecurity, migration becomes not just a survival tactic but, for many, the only practical choice. Furthermore, a large number of people who have been forcibly displaced end up settling in marginally or environmentally stressed areas, such as refugee camps in arid or flood-prone regions or are compelled to stay there. These camps' presence can put stress on local ecosystems, further deteriorate the environment and erode long-term resilience. They are also frequently ill-prepared to handle the escalating climate risks.

Case Studies and Environmental Indicators of Climate Refugee Camps

Climate displacement increasingly manifests at the intersection of environmental degradation, socio-political fragility, and human vulnerability. Nigeria's Lake Chad Basin exemplifies this nexus, where desertification, fluctuating rainfall, and violent conflict have displaced over 3.3 million people (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2023). In addition to social disruption, environmental degradation compromises livelihoods, water access, and land productivity. Comparable challenges are evident globally in camps such as Dadaab in Kenya, Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, and Za'atari in Jordan, where ecological problems compound human suffering. Examining these cases through quantitative and qualitative indicators clarifies the urgency for integrative, justice-oriented interventions (IOM, 2023; Bose, 2024; Environmental Justice Foundation, 2024). These camps illustrate the interdependence of human and ecological vulnerability. In Nigeria, Lake Chad's ecological collapse drives mass displacement while simultaneously undermining agricultural and fishing livelihoods (Table 1). Local communities experience a cycle of environmental degradation, food insecurity, and social marginalization

(IOM, 2023). Similarly, Dadaab's semi-arid environment challenges water availability and soil stability, while high population density exacerbates environmental stress (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2024). In Cox's Bazar, environmental stressors such as landslides and deforestation directly threaten both refugees and host communities, highlighting the intersection of ecological risk and humanitarian need. Za'atari faces finite water resources and heat extremes that strain camp infrastructure, necessitating sustainable energy and community-led adaptation strategies (Bose, 2024). Collectively, these examples underscore that climate displacement is not merely a social or humanitarian phenomenon but an ecological and ethical challenge. Effective interventions must integrate ecological stewardship, participatory planning, and human dignity. Policies that enhance water security, promote renewable energy, rehabilitate degraded land, and support sustainable livelihoods simultaneously mitigate environmental risks and foster resilience among displaced populations. Integrating camp-level environmental indicators into planning ensures interventions are proactive, evidence-based, and contextually appropriate, emphasizing the inseparable fate of people and planet.

Analysis of Social and Environmental Consequences of Climate Displacement in Nigeria Social Consequences

Heightened Vulnerability and Poverty

Populations displaced by climate-related events in Nigeria experience heightened vulnerability due to limited financial, infrastructural, and institutional capacity. As of 2024, the UNHCR reports approximately 3.5 million internally displaced persons within Nigeria, predominantly in states such as Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. Displacement exacerbates pre-existing poverty, undermining livelihoods, education access, and healthcare availability. Many households rely on informal labor and small-scale farming, both disrupted by flooding, desertification, and riverbank erosion (UNHCR, 2024).

Protracted Displacement

Many displaced persons in Nigeria experience long-term displacement. Camps in Borno State, such as Bakassi and Muna Garage, initially intended as temporary shelters, have become semi-permanent settlements. Such protracted displacement affects social cohesion, intergenerational stability, and access to long-term development opportunities. These conditions illustrate a systemic vulnerability where environmental shocks intersect with chronic instability (Bose, 2024).

Governance and Protection Gaps

International frameworks do not formally recognize

Table 1: Environmental and Humanitarian Indicators in Selected Climate Refugee Camps.

Camp / Region	Country	Population	Key Environmental Risks	Ecological Indicators	Policy & Humanitarian Measures
Lake Chad Basin	Nigeria	3.3 million displaced (northeast)	Desertification, water scarcity, declining lake volume, soil degradation	Lake Chad shrunk >90% since 1960s; rainfall variability $\pm 25\%$; land degradation affecting 50% of agricultural land (IOM, 2023)	Climate-adaptive resettlement programs; livelihood restoration; water harvesting systems; early warning for floods and droughts
Dadaab	Kenya	~223,000 refugees	Drought, heat stress, land degradation, water scarcity	Average annual rainfall <250 mm; temperature extremes 35–42°C; 60% soil erosion risk zones (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2024)	Sustainable water management; solar energy adoption; participatory land-use planning; health and nutrition programs
Cox's Bazar	Bangladesh	~1.2 million Rohingya refugees	Cyclones, landslides, monsoon flooding, deforestation	8–12% slope erosion; 30–40 mm/month rainfall peaks; deforestation >70% surrounding hills; landslide-prone zones (Bose, 2024)	Reforestation; cyclone shelters; slope stabilization; participatory disaster risk planning; livelihood support
Za'atari	Jordan	~78,000 refugees	Water scarcity, heat stress, waste accumulation	Water availability <50 L/person/day; soil compaction from high density; temperatures 40°C summer peak (Bose, 2024)	Water conservation systems; waste management initiatives; renewable energy; community-led infrastructure planning

climate-induced displacement, leaving many Nigerian IDPs without legal protection. Although Nigerian law provides for disaster management, there is no comprehensive climate displacement policy. This regulatory gap limits access to formal support systems and exposes displaced communities to exploitation and neglect (IOM, 2023).

Health and Livelihood Threats

Flooding and drought-affected camps face severe public health risks. Overcrowded settlements experience inadequate sanitation, unsafe water, and heightened exposure to vector-borne diseases. The 2022 floods in the Niger Delta displaced over 500,000 people, resulting in cholera outbreaks and food insecurity. Heat stress, poor shelter quality, and malnutrition further compromise resilience and recovery (Bose, 2024; UNHCR, 2024).

Environmental Consequences

Ecological Strain from Settlements

Refugee settlements frequently occupy fragile ecosystems. Expansion of camps in northeastern Nigeria has resulted in deforestation for firewood, soil erosion, and depletion of water sources. Such impacts diminish local ecological resilience and threaten food security for surrounding communities.

Feedback Loops of Vulnerability

Environmental degradation reinforces displacement. Deforested areas around camps accelerate erosion, while water scarcity encourages unsustainable extraction practices, creating a cycle of harm that perpetuates both ecological and human vulnerability.

Heat Stress

Climate projections for Nigeria indicate significant increases in extreme heat days. UNHCR estimates that by 2050, northeastern IDP settlements could face double the current number of dangerous heat days, intensify heat-related illness and reduce productivity (UNHCR, 2024).

Loss of Ecological Knowledge and Land Connection

Displacement severs community ties to ancestral lands and indigenous ecological practices. In regions such as Borno and Adamawa, local knowledge of sustainable farming and riverine management is being lost, undermining long-term ecological stewardship.

Linking Ethical Principles, Scripture, and Policy

A normative framework derived from biblical analysis (Psalms 104 and 148, Romans 8:18–25) and empirical findings emphasizes hospitality, justice, creation care, and human dignity. Table 2 illustrates the integration of ethical principles with observed displacement realities and policy recommendations.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that climate displacement in Nigeria produces profound social and environmental consequences, including protracted displacement, increased poverty, health crises, ecosystem degradation, and the loss of ecological knowledge. When integrated with biblical ethical reflection, these realities demand responses that are compassionate, just, and ecologically responsible. Faith communities and policymakers are thus called to combine humanitarian assistance with

Table 2: Ethical Principles, Scriptural Basis, and Policy Applications.

Observed Indicator or Context	Empirical Data / Findings	Ethical Principle	Scriptural Basis	Policy Application
3.5 million IDPs across Nigeria	UNHCR 2024	Hospitality; Protection of displaced humans	Psalms 104:10–30	Strengthening legal protection, emergency shelter, and community support
Flood-affected camps in Niger Delta	500,000 displaced, cholera outbreaks	Compassion; Justice	Romans 8:22	Health interventions, early warning systems, disaster risk reduction
Deforestation around camps	Firewood collection, soil erosion	Ecological stewardship; Care for creation	Psalms 148	Implement sustainable energy, reforestation, and ecological restoration programs
Loss of traditional ecological knowledge	Severed land connection, disrupted practices	Cultural continuity; Solidarity	Romans 8:19–21	Integrate community knowledge into disaster planning and resilience programs
Heat stress projections 2050	Double dangerous heat days expected	Human dignity; Protection	Psalms 104:4	Cooling interventions, resilient shelter, water access, and heat preparedness programs

environmental stewardship, policy reform, and the restoration of community resilience, thereby operationalizing hospitality, justice, and care for creation.

Theological-Ethical Reflection

The ecological crisis and its connection to climate-induced displacement present profound moral and spiritual challenges for humanity. The degradation of ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and increasing frequency of extreme weather events disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly in low-income countries that have contributed least to global emissions (UNHCR, 2024). According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, over 23 million people were displaced by sudden-onset disasters in 2022 alone, and this number is projected to increase with accelerating climate change (IDMC, 2023). These crises raise urgent questions about human responsibility, justice, and care for creation, prompting religious communities to reflect on both theological and ethical imperatives.

Creation's Groaning and Shared Suffering

The New Testament passage Romans 8:19–22 offers a foundational theological lens for understanding ecological crisis and climate displacement. Paul writes that “the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:19–21, NRSV). This passage frames creation as participating in suffering alongside humanity, describing the natural world as groaning under human-induced pressures. Theologically, this groaning is not merely poetic imagery but signifies an ethical call to responsibility. Scholars have argued that acknowledging creation's suffering obliges humans to respond with restorative action rather than passive observation (Snyder, 2020). In this view, environmental destruction and climate-related displacement are intertwined. The forced movement of communities due to

rising sea levels, desertification, or extreme storms exemplifies the shared vulnerability of human and non-human life. For example, in the Pacific Islands, rising sea levels threaten the displacement of entire communities, highlighting the interconnected suffering of people and ecosystems (Barnett & Campbell, 2010). Recognizing this shared suffering encourages a moral framework where ecological justice is inseparable from social justice, emphasizing solidarity with those displaced as well as care for the ecosystems that sustain life.

Justice, Charity, and Ecological Responsibility

The moral response to ecological crisis and displacement cannot rely solely on charity; it requires justice. Charity, while necessary in the short term, often addresses only immediate needs without challenging structural inequities that drive vulnerability. Justice, in contrast, seeks to correct systemic imbalances and hold responsible actors accountable for harm (Caney, 2010). Climate justice frameworks highlight the inequitable distribution of ecological burdens: countries and communities that have contributed least to greenhouse gas emissions bear the heaviest costs. For instance, sub-Saharan Africa, which contributes only four percent of global emissions, faces severe droughts and flooding that displace millions, underscoring the ethical urgency of equitable climate responsibility (IPCC, 2022). Faith traditions can provide ethical grounding for such responsibility. Christian theology emphasizes stewardship of creation, a principle rooted in the belief that humans are caretakers of God's creation rather than absolute owners. This stewardship encompasses sustainable use of resources, mitigation of environmental harm, and proactive restoration of degraded ecosystems (Conradie, 2023). In practical terms, this could include policies and practices that reduce emissions, promote renewable energy, or restore wetlands and forests. From an ethical standpoint, restorative ecological practices are morally obligatory because they protect the most vulnerable humans and nonhumans, ensuring that future generations inherit a livable planet. In addition to ecological responsibility, justice demands reparative action for communities displaced by climate

change. This includes providing secure housing, livelihood opportunities, and legal recognition for climate-displaced people. For example, Bangladesh, which faces recurrent flooding and cyclones, has developed relocation plans for climate-affected communities that integrate ecological restoration, such as mangrove replanting, with social support systems (Dasgupta et al., 2021). Ethical action, therefore, encompasses both structural justice and immediate relief, demonstrating that faith-based ethics can align with practical policy interventions to protect human dignity and ecological integrity.

Hospitality and Ethical Treatment of Displaced Peoples

The biblical command to welcome the sojourner, as articulated in Leviticus 19:33–34, provides a critical ethical and theological guide for responding to displacement. The text instructs, “When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (NRSV). This passage positions hospitality not as optional kindness but as a moral imperative rooted in divine command. In the context of climate-induced displacement, this ethic of hospitality emphasizes the recognition of displaced people as integral members of communities rather than burdens. Faith-based responses inspired by this principle go beyond material assistance to include social integration, empowerment, and advocacy for the rights of displaced people. For example, faith-based organizations in Europe and North America have developed programs that pair climate-displaced individuals with host families, provide language and vocational training, and create spaces for social inclusion (Jenkins, 2008). These practices illustrate how theological ethics can inform practical interventions, ensuring that human dignity is maintained even amidst crises.

Hospitality in this context also intersects with ecological stewardship. Faith communities can host displaced populations in ways that minimize environmental impact, integrating sustainable building practices, renewable energy, and conservation measures into resettlement programs. This approach demonstrates the interconnectedness of ethical treatment of humans and care for creation, aligning with the broader biblical vision of harmony between people and the environment (Bergmann, 2022).

Faith-Based Call for Ecological Restoration and Human Dignity

A central dimension of theological-ethical reflection is the call for active participation in ecological restoration. Faith-based ethics does not only instruct believers to respond to human suffering but also to engage with the healing of creation. Restorative action affirms both the dignity of

humans and the intrinsic value of the non-human world. Practical engagement can take multiple forms, including reforestation, sustainable agriculture, watershed management, and advocacy for climate-resilient policies (Conradie, 2023). Theologians emphasize that ecological restoration is not merely instrumental; it is a moral and spiritual duty. William Horst (2025) observes that the notion of creation groaning in Romans 8 entails shared responsibility: human exploitation of natural resources creates suffering for both the environment and vulnerable human communities. Therefore, restorative action embodies solidarity with all creations, reflecting an ethical vision in which human flourishing is inseparable from ecological health. Furthermore, the faith-based approach to restoration integrates hope with ethical responsibility. In Romans 8, Paul’s message of eschatological renewal encourages believers to participate in the ongoing transformation of creation. This theological perspective frames ecological engagement as both an immediate ethical obligation and a long-term spiritual project, bridging practical action with moral reflection. In doing so, faith communities can offer holistic responses to climate-induced displacement that honor the dignity of humans, protect ecological integrity, and enact the justice demanded by God’s creation.

Biblical Ecotheological Reflections

Psalms: Lament, Advocacy, and Ethical Guidance

The poetic and theological richness of the Psalms offers a powerful resource for ecological reflection and ethical formation in times of climate crisis and forced displacement. Ancient hymns and laments invited believers to participate in creation’s praise and grief; today they can help faith communities reimagine their relationship with the natural world and with vulnerable human populations.

Affirmation of creation’s interdependence and divine order.

Psalms 104 and 148 present a vision of the cosmos as a vibrant, interconnected creation where all creatures (land, sea, sky) praise the Creator and depend on divine provision. Psalm 104 celebrates God’s sustaining care: springs that water the hills, beasts that forage, trees that shelter birds, and seas that teem with life. Psalm 148 summons all creation: mountains, seas, creatures great and small, to praise God. This cosmic symphony affirms that nature is not a backdrop for human dominion, but a community interwoven with human existence. As scholarship in ecotheology argues, Psalms like 104 and 148 challenge a utilitarian view of nature and invite believers to “live on the earth, within the given systems of the earth.” In contemporary contexts, such as climate-stressed regions in Nigeria, these Psalms can reshape

cultural attitudes toward land, water, and ecosystem services. For instance, in regions like the Niger Delta or the Lake Chad basin, where ecosystems are under pressure from oil pollution, desertification, flooding, and displacement, a Psalm-inspired ecological theology can foster humility, reverence, and sustainable practices grounded in spiritual identity rather than extraction or exploitation.

Lament as ethical and spiritual practice.

Beyond praise, the Psalms model lament a raw, honest, communal cry to God in the face of suffering, injustice, and ecological desolation. Psalms 44, 74, and 137 exemplify such lament. In Psalm 74, the psalmist cries out over destruction of sanctuary and desolation of land, appealing to God to remember mercy and act on behalf of the weak and oppressed. In Psalm 137, the exile laments lost homeland; Psalm 44 mourns collective suffering under oppression. These laments provide a scriptural precedent for ecological grief and solidarity with the dispossessed. Ecological lament acknowledges both human suffering and creation's suffering, refusing to separate the fate of land and people.

In modern terms, communities uprooted by climate disasters (floods, droughts, loss of arable land) can draw on the Psalms as a theologically grounded language of grief that refuses silence. Such lament can become a catalyst for advocacy: speaking truth to power, lobbying for restorative justice, engaging in communal prayer, and motivating ecological and social action. Ecological lament situates environmental destruction within moral and spiritual frameworks, urging humans to respond not merely with technical fixes but with repentance, solidarity, and renewal.

Romans 8: Creation's Groaning, Shared Suffering, and Integral Ecology

Romans 8:19–22 stands among the most expansive biblical texts on the relationship between humanity, creation, and divine redemption. Paul's claim that "the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now" presents a cosmic vision in which the suffering of the nonhuman world is inseparable from the suffering of human communities. In contrast to interpretations that spiritualize this passage, contemporary ecological theology emphasizes that Paul's language of groaning (*systemazein*) signals a profound solidarity between humanity and the wider creation. The apostle situates ecological distress within the drama of redemption: creation's agony is not terminal but teleological, oriented toward liberation and renewal.

Groaning as Creation's Testimony against Injustice

Paul's imagery of "bondage to decay" (Rom 8:21)

articulates the condition of a world affected by moral and structural disorder. Ecological theologians note that this language resonates with present environmental crises such as rising temperatures, ecosystem collapse, land degradation, and the displacement of vulnerable populations (Conradie, 2023). Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* (2015) similarly recognizes creation's groaning as a cry from the earth and the poor, insisting that ecological degradation is inseparable from economic and political injustice. The encyclical argues that the "misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves" (Francis, 2015, para. 6), echoing Paul's critique of human arrogance in Romans 1. This dual cry of the earth and the displaced reveals an integrated field of suffering. Paul's vision dismantles any division between environmental and humanitarian crises. The experiences of drought-driven migration, loss of ancestral lands, and the collapse of local livelihoods reflect creation's groaning under systems that exploit both people and land. *Laudate Deum* (Francis, 2023) reinforces this link, arguing that climate-induced displacement is a sign of spiritual and ecological dislocation that demands moral and political conversion.

Hopeful Labor Pains and the Work of Restoration

The childbirth metaphor at the center of Romans 8 does not suggest passive endurance but active anticipation. Theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1993) interprets this as a vision of "messianic transformation," in which both humanity and creation await liberation not by withdrawal from the world but through participation in its renewal. James M. Bridger (2013) likewise argues that Paul frames suffering as generative, a threshold toward new creation rather than resignation. This eschatological horizon does not excuse present inaction. Paul's call to live "according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:5) grounds an ethic of ecological responsibility. As *Laudato Si* emphasizes, Christian hope must become "a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle" (Francis, 2015, para. 222) expressed in concrete acts of protection, restoration, and solidarity. The suffering of creation becomes a summons to what Francis names *integral ecology*, a framework in which environmental, social, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing are mutually dependent.

Toward a Theologically Informed Environmental Praxis

Romans 8 thus provides a foundation for the church's engagement with climate-driven displacement and ecological crisis. Creation's groaning becomes an urgent theological witness against structural harm and a call to restorative action. By hearing this groaning, Christians join creation in its longing for liberation, becoming agents of healing who anticipate God's redemptive future through ecological stewardship, advocacy for displaced peoples,

and the pursuit of environmental justice in the present.

Principles for Ecological and Human Justice

Flowing from Romans 8's vision of creation's groaning and hope, a set of theological principles emerges to guide Christian engagement with climate displacement and ecological crisis. First, shared groaning grounds a spirituality of solidarity: the suffering of displaced peoples and the distress of ecosystems are intertwined, calling Christians to compassionate advocacy and reparative action for both human communities and the nonhuman world. This solidarity echoes *Laudato Si*, which urges recognition of "one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (Francis, 2015, para. 139).

Lament becomes a moral practice that names ecological destruction and human displacement while refusing resignation. Rooted in biblical lament traditions, it calls for repentance, structural transformation, and communal mobilization. Yet lament is held together with redemptive hope. Paul's metaphor of creation in labor invites sustained commitment to ecological restoration, just resettlement, and long-term advocacy shaped by expectation of renewal. Because human activity contributes to ecological harm, Romans 8 and contemporary ecological theology affirm responsibility for restorative practices such as reforestation, equitable land use, and protection of vulnerable populations. Finally, scriptural hospitality mandates justice for climate displaced people, integrating them into communities with dignity and long-term security. This integral ecology affirms that human and environmental wellbeing are inseparable dimensions of Christian witness.

Toward a Climate Migration Ethic

Drawing on the biblical and ethical foundation above, a climate migration ethic emerges, one that guides policymakers, faith communities, civil society, and individuals in responding morally and practically to climate displacement and ecological crisis.

Ethical Guidelines for Policymakers and Faith Communities Solidarity: Policymakers and faith communities must acknowledge that climate-induced displacement is a collective problem requiring collective responsibility. Resources, aid, and justice should be directed toward the most vulnerable, those least responsible for ecological damage but most affected by its consequences.

Justice-Oriented Ethics: Displacement is often neither random nor equitable; many climate-vulnerable communities contributed minimally to global emissions yet suffer disproportionately. Policies must address systemic inequalities, offering fair protection, resource allocation, legal recognition, and social support to climate-displaced people.

Precautionary and Preventive Ethics: Ethical response includes prevention, investing in climate adaptation, early warning systems, sustainable land use, infrastructure resilience, and environmental restoration to reduce future displacement pressures. Ecotheological stewardship implies minimizing harm and preserving creation for future generations.

Integration of Ecological Responsibility: Resettlement and humanitarian assistance must respect ecological limits. Host communities and environments should not be burdened with unsustainable settlement practices. Policies should include environmental impact assessments, sustainable energy, water management, and ecosystem rehabilitation.

Respect for Agency and Human Dignity: Climate-displaced people are not passive victims. They are agents with dignity, rights, and capacities. Inclusion of displaced people in decision-making processes regarding resettlement, livelihood support, and community integration is essential.

Integrating Ecological Responsibility with Social Justice

A climate migration ethic requires combining ecological care and social justice. Faith-based ecological stewardship initiatives can include tree planting, watershed restoration, sustainable agriculture, and promotion of renewable energy. These projects not only heal ecosystems but also provide livelihoods, enhance food security, and build resilience for host and displaced communities alike. Social justice demands that displaced people have access to adequate housing, healthcare, water, food, education, and employment. It rejects narratives that blame victims of climate change. A theology of justice insists that climate victims are not culpable but recipients of responsibility, they deserve solidarity, not stigma. Process-relational ethics, which emphasize interconnectedness and mutual vulnerability of all creations, support this integrative vision. Human wellbeing and ecological health are inseparable; care for one demand care for the other. Policies, interventions, and community programs must therefore reflect ecological awareness, human dignity, and social solidarity together.

Practical Interventions and Advocacy Strategies

Translating this ethic into action requires concrete strategies at multiple levels: policy, faith-based communities, and grassroots engagement.

Policy interventions

Develop climate-adaptive resettlement programs: Governments should plan relocation with ecological sustainability, livelihood support, access to services, and

social integration. Legal recognition of climate-displaced people: International and national frameworks need to recognize climate-induced displacement, extending protection, rights, and access to services. Equitable resource allocation: Ensure that climate finance and humanitarian aid prioritize vulnerable and displaced populations, particularly in low-income and high-risk countries.

Faith-based interventions

Hospitality ministries: Churches and religious organizations can open their spaces to displaced people, offer temporary housing or shelter, and support social integration and community building. Ecological stewardship projects: Faith communities can lead tree-planting initiatives, water-conservation projects, sustainable farming, and renewable energy adoption in both origin and host regions. Advocacy and education: Religious leaders can raise awareness on climate justice, climate migration, ecological stewardship, and human dignity. They can mobilize congregations, partner with civil society, and influence public policy.

Community-based strategies

Participatory planning: Include displaced people and host communities in planning resettlement, ecological restoration, and livelihood programs to ensure contextually appropriate solutions and respect for agency. Capacity building: Provide training in sustainable agriculture, water management, eco-construction, renewable energy, and disaster preparedness to empower communities and foster resilience. Networked support systems: Build partnerships among faith-based organizations, NGOs, local governments, and community groups to share resources, coordinate interventions, and sustain long-term recovery and ecological restoration.

Ethical reflection and pastoral care

Pastoral engagement: Use theological reflection, spiritual counseling, and community rituals to address ecological grief, trauma, displacement stress, and social marginalization. Encourage lament and hope: Incorporate practices of lament from the Psalms into worship and community life, acknowledging suffering while nurturing hope and commitment to justice. Promote solidarity and compassion: Foster community solidarity across displaced and host populations, emphasizing shared humanity, ecological interdependence, and mutual renewal.

Toward a Holistic Climate Migration Ethic

Climate-induced displacement is not merely a technical or logistical problem. It is an ethical test of solidarity across social, ecological, and theological boundaries. A holistic climate migration ethic brings together justice, solidarity,

ecological stewardship, participation and agency, theological grounding, and practical implementation. Each principle must be translated into concrete institutional and communal practices that protect the dignity of displaced people while safeguarding the ecosystems that sustain them.

Justice and Solidarity

Justice requires that those who suffer the greatest harms receive proportionate recognition and redress. Climate injustice is clear: many regions that have contributed little to global emissions experience the highest rates of climate vulnerability and displacement (IPCC, 2022; UNHCR, 2024). Justice therefore entails reparative measures and equitable allocation of resources for adaptation and recovery. Solidarity follows from justice. It is the moral stance of standing with displaced communities rather than acting for them at a distance. Solidarity is both relational and structural. It asks faith communities and states to commit resources, legal protections, and institutional reforms that remove barriers to durable solutions. Table 3 maps justice and solidarity with policy and faith-based practice.

Ethical Principles for Climate Related Displacement: Actionable Mappings for Policy and Practice

Ecological stewardship and meaningful participation provide a foundational framework for ethical responses to climate related displacement. Stewardship recognizes that human wellbeing and environmental integrity are inseparable. Humanitarian responses and resettlement initiatives may unintentionally intensify ecological pressures when they proceed without environmental assessment or landscape level planning. Effective stewardship therefore requires coordinated interventions across sectors that reduce the environmental footprint of refugee camps and newly established settlements while supporting ecological restoration in areas of origin (Tables 3 and 4). Participation refers to inclusive governance in which displaced persons serve as active contributors to relocation planning, livelihood recovery, and rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems. Research across diverse regions shows that participatory approaches reduce environmental harm, enhance social cohesion, and strengthen long term sustainability (International Organization for Migration, 2023).

In practice, stewardship and participation require water-wise infrastructure design, investment in renewable energy, and community directed reforestation. Inclusion of displaced representatives in planning bodies leads to greater local ownership, cultural coherence of interventions, and more durable outcomes. Such approaches also protect host communities from disproportionate ecological burdens and integrate traditional ecological knowledge into restoration strategies. Faith based and community organizations continue to play

Table 3: Ethical Principles Mapped to Scriptural Narratives and Policy Actions.

Principle	Representative Scriptural Text	Policy Application
Justice	Leviticus 19:33-34 call to protect the sojourner	Legal recognition and protection of climate displaced persons; climate finance linked to loss and damage
Solidarity	Philippians 2:4 exhortation to attend to the needs of others	Cross border cooperation for relocation; burden sharing frameworks
Ecological stewardship	Psalms 104 affirmation of creation's integrity	Integration of water wise design, renewable energy, and conservation in resettlement planning
Participation and agency	Communal governance patterns in Exodus	Inclusion of displaced representatives in decision making bodies

Table 4: Principles Linked to Faith Based Practice and Camp Level Environmental Indicators

Principle	Faith Based and Community Practice	Selected Indicator and Source
Justice	Legal clinics, advocacy for reparations, livelihood support programs	Documentation of status gaps for climate displaced persons IOM 2023 https://publications.iom.int
Solidarity	Sponsorship networks, inter faith support programs	Water stress reported in Dadaab by the Environmental Justice Foundation 2024 https://ejfoundation.org
Stewardship	Community led reforestation, solar energy projects	Forest loss of 9.58 percent in Cox's Bazar after mass arrivals Sarkar et al. 2023 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e18255
Participation	Inclusion of displaced leaders in planning committees	Projected rise in dangerous heat days at many global camps UNHCR 2024 https://www.unhcr.org

a significant role by offering practical support while advocating for equitable climate policies and recognition of the rights of those displaced by climate impacts.

RESULTS

Three principal findings emerge from the integration of ethical reasoning, scriptural interpretation, and empirical research on climate related displacement. First, justice-oriented frameworks lead to clearer legal and policy protection when states recognize climate displaced people, connect climate finance to loss and damage initiatives, and allocate adaptation funding equitably. This approach improves the predictability of protection pathways and provides a basis for reparations grounded in environmental responsibility. Second, solidarity strengthens both policy coherence and community reception. Cross border cooperation and burden sharing agreements help distribute responsibilities fairly among states. Simultaneously, faith-based sponsorship networks and inter religious welcome coalition's foster social inclusion and reduce xenophobic risks. When implemented together, these mechanisms promote humane relocation processes and reduce the likelihood of informal encampment. Third, stewardship and participation demonstrably improve ecological outcomes around large camps and settlements. Quantitative assessments show that major refugee hosting regions experience accelerated forest loss, water scarcity, and extreme heat exposure. For example, Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh experienced a 9.58 percent reduction in forest cover following large scale population arrivals (Sarkar et al., 2023). UNHCR projections indicate that many refugee sites will face approximately twice as many dangerous heat days by mid-century which threatens health and

infrastructure stability (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024). Evidence also shows that participatory decision-making increases acceptance of resettlement projects, enhances livelihood opportunities, and improves environmental restoration outcomes (Bose, 2024). Collectively these findings suggest that ethical principles of justice, solidarity, stewardship, and participation not only guide moral reasoning but also improve empirical outcomes for both displaced and host communities (Tables 3 and 4).

Camp Level Environmental Indicators

Forest cover change: Satellite studies report a 9.58 percent loss of forest area around Cox's Bazar following the Rohingya influx which demonstrates the ecological consequences of rapid population concentration (Sarkar et al., 2023).

Heat exposure: UNHCR anticipates a doubling of dangerous heat days across many refugee hosting regions by 2050 which increases risks of dehydration infrastructure failure and mortality (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024).

Water scarcity: Independent assessments identify escalating water stress in the Dadaab region driven by climatic variability and prolonged camp presence (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2024).

Environmental vulnerability across major sites: Comparative evidence from Bangladesh, Jordan, and Kenya reveals consistent patterns of land degradation, water stress, and heat risks that demand integrated adaptation strategies (Bose, 2024).

Theological Grounding and Practicality

Theologically grounded ethics matters because it supplies moral imagination, motivation, and communal structures for sustained response. Scripture motifs of lament, hospitality, and creation renewal provide resources for moral formation and advocacy. Romans 8 frames creation as groaning together with humanity; this is the basis for solidarity that spans species and generations. The Levitical command to welcome the sojourner anchors hospitality as moral duty and not optional charity. These theological resources motivate congregations to combine pastoral care, advocacy, and ecological action. Practicality demands that theological commitments translate into feasible programs. Faith communities should leverage existing infrastructure and social capital to provide reception centers, pastoral counseling, skills training, and ecological projects such as tree planting and watershed restoration. Governments should embed legal recognition and durable pathways within national disaster and migration law, invest in anticipatory planning and adaptation, and ensure equitable funding reaches the most affected communities (IPCC, 2022; UNHCR, 2024).

Integrating Social Justice and Environmental Responsibility

A holistic ethic integrates distributive justice with ecological constraints. This requires three linked policy priorities. First, prevention and adaptation must be scaled up so that fewer people are forced to move in the first place. This includes early warning systems, climate proof infrastructure, and livelihood diversification. Second, when movement is unavoidable, relocation must prioritize ecological sustainability and social inclusion. Third, longer term structural reforms are necessary to address the drivers of vulnerability such as land tenure insecurity, extractive economic models, and unequal access to resources. The combined aim of these priorities is to reduce the rate of forced displacement while protecting both people and places.

Implications for Philosophy Policy and Strategy

Philosophically, a holistic ethic challenges anthropocentrism by locating human dignity within a broader web of interdependence. This suggests that theories of justice incorporate ecological thresholds and relational obligations across species and generations. Policy wise, national and international frameworks should expand to recognize climate displaced persons, adopt anticipatory resettlement strategies, and fund loss and damage in ways that prioritize equitable recovery. Strategically, interventions must be multi scalar. Local faith communities are critical because they provide social cohesion and trust networks. National governments must provide legal frameworks and funding. International agencies should coordinate burden sharing and ensure

financing flows to adaptation and recovery. Research institutions and funders should evaluate interventions using both social and ecological metrics to prevent unintended harm.

Recommendations

For policymakers

1. Establish legal pathways and protections for climate displaced persons within national and regional frameworks.
2. Scale up anticipatory adaptation investments such as early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and ecosystem-based adaptation.
3. Create financing windows for loss and damage that prioritize community led restoration and livelihood rebuilding.

For faith communities

1. Develop ministries of welcome that combine pastoral care with practical support including housing, training, and legal assistance.
2. Lead ecological stewardship programs such as reforestation, watershed management, and renewable energy projects in tandem with resettlement planning.
3. Advocate publicly for climate justice and for policies that protect the most vulnerable.

For researchers and funders

1. Conduct longitudinal, mixed methods studies that evaluate both social and ecological outcomes of resettlement programs.
2. Investigate the efficacy of faith-based interventions and how theological formation contributes to durable responses.
3. Explore indigenous and local ecological knowledge as central to restoration and adaptation strategies.

Directions for Further Research

Priority research areas include long term ecological monitoring around resettlement sites, comparative policy analyses of national approaches to climate displacement, and empirical evaluation of participatory models that center displaced agency. Greater interdisciplinary work bridging theology ethics and environmental science will strengthen program design and moral clarity. Climate-induced displacement demands sustained moral imagination. The task is to translate compassion into justice and to translate lament into restoration. A holistic climate migration ethic rooted in solidarity, ecological stewardship, participation, and theological integrity offers a practical and moral roadmap. It calls faith communities, policy makers, scholars and citizens to act together so that both people and planet may flourish.

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