

A CLIMATE MOBILITY SCENARIO THROUGH ROLE PLAY

'A climate mobility scenario through role play' is created by WIDE in Austria in 2025

WIDE is an Austrian network of NGOs and individuals who engage for women's rights and feminist perspectives in development policies and humanitarian aid. <https://wide-netzwerk.at/wide-austria/>

This method is part of the online trainers hub, which is one of the key adult education tools developed in the multi-year collaboration entitled: **"Gender and Climate Justice: Knowledge for Empowerment", in brief COPGendered**. This project builds up tools and knowledge for learners to upskill themselves (in groups, individually or with a teacher) in the relationships between gender inequality and the climate crisis. This includes providing tools for adult education providers. The project which lasted for three years ended in November 2025.

The associations involved are in this project: WIDE+ (Europe), GenderCC-Women for Climate Justice/LIFE e.V in Germany, WIDE in Austria, GADIP in Sweden, KULU Women and Development in Denmark, Mundubat in Spain and CSCD in Bulgaria.

COPGENDERED PROJECT PARTNERS



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PICTURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS:

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This method raises awareness of the spectrum of mobilities in the context of climate change (displacement, migration, immobility). It encourages reflection on how age, gender, ability and other factors impact mobility options and decisions and how the concept of intersectionality is experienced. This is an activity that can serve as an introduction to further discussion on what societal changes are needed to support especially vulnerable people to cope with the impact of climate change.

SUMMARY

This exercise exemplifies the multicausality of migration in the context of a climate crisis: the complex mix of reasons why people move or stay and of how decisions to move or stay are taken. The method provides some basic characters/roles and scenarios which should be enacted by the participants as best as they can and as much as they like. There is always an option to just observe the play or invent new roles that people feel more confident to enact and fit into the broader context of the play. It is a method that encourages creativity and leads to a better understanding of the emotions that people with different discriminations and/or privileges experience.

Time needed: 90 minutes

Space needed: Room with open space and chairs

Number of participants: Best for a group of 20 to 30 persons

Age: Adult learners of all ages

Material needed: Printed handout with outline of the theatre play and printed cards with basic roles

Material provided in this guide: Set of generic roles and description of story

Citation: Daniela Grijalva-Paredes (WIDE Austria) and Paula Banerjee (International Association for Studies in Forced Migration/IASFM)

FACILITATION GUIDE

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

STEP 1: PREPARATION

The basic story and the roles should be set out in different hand-outs. In this guide, the story is included as part of the introduction.

STEP 2: INTRODUCTION

After you have welcomed the group and have everyone's attention, you start by explaining what you want to achieve with the roleplay. Explain that this exercise aims to create awareness of the complex reasons why people move or stay. It helps to reflect on how factors such as gender, age, ability and other factors impact on mobility options and decisions.

Explain to the participants that each will receive a card with a character of a theatre play, they will also receive a handout with the basic story of the play (main acts). Add that this exercise is not about great acting. It is about imaging and creating an understanding of how various persons (roles) would come to their decisions regarding moving from or staying in a place and how this decision affects them. It is an invitation to follow one's own intuition. Each group consists of six people (six roles) that will work together to make a small theatre production.

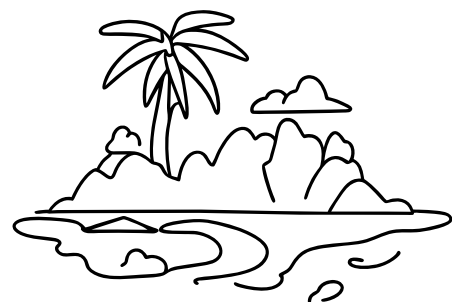


You can add that people can swap roles or adjust them or decide to change their role within their group. You can repeat this during the preparation for the play to encourage participants that you notice are shying away, to encourage them to take part. You can suggest that they create their own role that they would feel comfortable with and integrate it into the play, or you can suggest that they simply take part as an observer.

Explain the outline story of the play that the participants will find on the handout. Also explain the basic roles. It is advised to plan 10 minutes for this plenary explanation. You can suggest that when they are in their group, they can also plan some time for each person to reflect on how she/he/they want to act out their role.

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAY

Location of the play: The story starts in a small community on a tropical island facing a devastating storm and rising sea-level.



Story of the play:

- Act 1: The weather

The community is carrying on with its usual business. People comment on what they hear on the radio/TV/social media about the upcoming storms. Storms are brewing but have not yet landed. The island of [invent a name] is at high risk. Some people comment they have noticed how the sea level has risen, trees have exposed roots, building foundations are falling apart, plants are not doing well because of salty water. Others comment that the situation is not great, but they can get by. It is what it is.

- Act 2: The council

The storms are about to hit, and there are already severe rains. There is a community council to decide what to do. To leave or to stay? They discuss at length. Different actors present different options. There is no consensus for a community-wide relocation.

- Act 3: The goodbyes

Some members decide to leave and start preparing. They gather documents and information. They comment on their decisions, on preparations that they have made and on past experiences of people who have migrated. People say their goodbyes to those who stay - family, friends...- they also might say goodbye to land, mountains, ancestors... depending on their "world views".

- Act 4: The storm

Various perspectives. Those who are outside the island check the news about their island. It has been terribly hit by the rain and the tides. There is not much left of it. The young persons who stayed and could reach safer places check on the widow, her house is gone, she is nowhere to be found. Many people have died. There is no electricity.

- The end

Basic roles:

- An old widow, she will not move, she will stay and likely die in her home.
- A person who will move, who has contacts abroad, education certificates and a valid passport. She/he/they will likely get a job somewhat aligned to her/his/their skillset and aspirations.
- A person who will move, who has education certificates but has no contacts abroad or passport. She/he/they heard from a friend of a friend who can organize her/his/their migration. Unfortunately, later it will become evident that she/he/they was tricked and fell victim to human trafficking.
- A person who will stay, who has education certificates but has no contacts abroad or passport. She/he/they will stay on the island to help others who are still here and try to survive. The motto of this person is: "We have to find a way."
- Some young persons who will stay: They think the situation is safe for them, they own land, they will stay. They have packed their stuff and will relocate temporarily within the island.
- A narrator or "Off voice".



STEP 2 – DEVELOPMENT AND REHEARSAL IN GROUPS

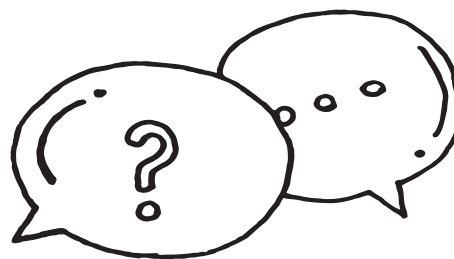
Groups of at least six persons work well. Give each group at least 30 minutes to set up their play and practise it. Ideally give them some more time for this part as they need to reflect on how they will perform the story and they might want to make changes after each rehearsal.

STEP 3 – PERFORMANCE

Each group performs the play they created.

STEP 4 – REFLEXION AND DEBRIEFING

For this you need at least 15 minutes. In this final step you encourage reflection on the content of the play. You can start by asking some people to reflect on how they experienced the play, what kind of emotions came up, for example by reflecting on each role. You can also ask them to reflect on the fact that it was not possible to reach a consensus for a community-wide relocation: Why did some people stay? What challenges did they face that prevented them from leaving?



After this initial reflection, you can then ask for suggestions for alternative policies and actions:

- A mobilities lens invites us to think not only of the right to migrate but also the right to stay and the right to return. How did gender, age and ability impact the options and decisions of the persons in the play?
- What roles could members of an organisation that aims to support vulnerable people (e.g. development and humanitarian aid organisations) have taken in this case?
- Would a single visa scheme for migration (based on the circumstance) have served all community members well?

CONCLUSION

The strength of this method lies in the experience of different people in a climate crisis connected to migratory patterns. It can complement more theoretical sessions, for example a keynote speech by an academic. It is a very good entry point to reflect on the emotions of people migrating or not migrating, as well as the perspective of people staying behind.