

# AMMPARO

Accompanying Migrants with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

## **The Migrant Journey** (Climate Change Focus) A Guide to Creating an Interactive Learning Experience

### WHAT IS THE MIGRANT JOURNEY?

The Migrant Journey is an interactive experience designed to educate participants about the factors driving people to flee their homes and seek refuge in the Americas. As people go through the journey, they learn why children and families are fleeing from their homes and the obstacles they face finding protection in other countries, including the United States. The Migrant Journey is an experience that congregations (or any other group) can use to learn more about the perilous journey that children and families are making every day.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO SET UP A MIGRANT JOURNEY EXPERIENCE

#### Materials and space:

- The printed descriptions of the characters for each section.
- A space with room for six stations in addition to a gathering space. The Migrant Journey is most effective when small groups of participants can walk from one location to another. But it is also effective in a large room where only the characters do so.
- If possible, use pictures at each station. You will need pictures representing:
  - Cameroon / South Sudan
  - Venezuela
  - Colombia
  - The Darién Gap
  - Central American Countries
  - Mexico
  - The U.S.-Mexico border
  - A U.S. community

#### Staff:

- One guide to take people through the Migrant Journey per every 15 people. Ideally, this person has a basic knowledge of the challenges of migrating to the Americas.

- We recommend setting up groups of 15 people to go through the Migrant Journey together and determine the number of guides accordingly. Participants can learn more at ELCA AMMPARO or ELCA Advocacy.

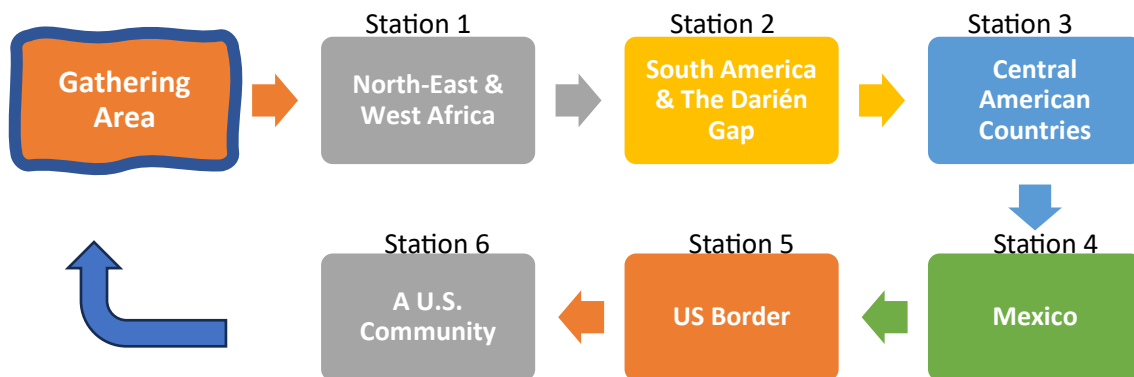
#### PREPARING FOR THE MIGRANT JOURNEY

1. Set up the stations, each representing a place that migrants encounter in their journey. Be creative!
2. Prepare the guides for the important role they play! They should read the script below to familiarize themselves with the journey. Through the Migrant Journey, guides will:
  - a. facilitate conversation;
  - b. describe each setting;
  - c. and make sure each person knows their role and when to speak.

Before starting the Migrant Journey, guides will:

3. introduce themselves and their role in the journey;
4. introduce people to the dynamics;
5. hand out roles; and
6. explain the reasons why children and families are forced to flee their communities

Diagram showing the suggested flow through the stations during the journey



#### SUGGESTED SCRIPT FOR GUIDES

The following is a general script that guides can use as they are guiding people through the Migrant Journey. Groups will begin the journey in East and Northwest Africa, travel through South America and Central America, move into Mexico, then to the U.S.-Mexico border and finish the journey in a U.S. community. Guides will take people through the journey, explain what is happening and ask questions to ensure this is an interactive experience. The Migrant Journey takes approximately 30-35 minutes to complete.

**[ See Script Below ]**

# STATIONS SCRIPT

## INTRODUCTION

5 mins

Welcome to the Migrant Journey! The Migrant Journey is a learning activity that takes you through the principal migration journey through the Americas. Beginning in Western Africa, through South America, Central America and Mexico, the journey leads to the United States.

By the end of the journey, you will understand some of the environmental and conflict related factors that force families and children to flee their communities, and about the dangers they encounter along the way. At the same time, we will consider the resilience and self-determination that drive people to seek a dignified life.

### **[ Hand Out Roles ]**

Several of you will be playing the roles of people along the Migrant Journey. These stories are based on real stories that we have received from the ELCA's global companions and AMMPARO partners who accompany children, youth, and women at key points along the Migrant Journey. Please help us honor these brave people by treating their stories with respect.

Human movement is not new—in fact there are multiple stories of human migration woven throughout the Bible. While people have differing opinions on immigration, the Bible clearly says that we should “welcome the stranger.”

Today, migration is influenced by many factors including political, social, economic, and environmental factors. Increasingly, climate change is making it harder and harder for people to have a dignified life.

The average global surface temperature has increased by [1.1°C](#) since the period between 1850-1900. Some experts project that by 2050 about [216 million](#) people will be displaced due to climate change impacts. In 2023, weather related events were responsible for [20.3 million](#) people being forced to move within their country. Let's map the adverse effects of climate change on human life.

### **[ Pointing to Climate Change Cascade ]**

The Climate Change Cascade shows how human activity through greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) is accelerating changes in the environment that are having a devastating impact on communities here and around the world.

While climate may not be the sole reason someone is forced to leave their home, climate change acts like a threat multiplier by exacerbating conflict and increasing human insecurity. Migration is often a last resort for people coping with the multiple stressors in their lives.

Unfortunately, there is little recognition of climate-displaced people in law, limiting the pathways people can use to escape harm and seek a better life. Currently, there are no U.S. laws that specifically protect climate-displaced people. Cyclical disasters and conflicts are not uncommon. These combined challenges may influence someone's decision to migrate to the U.S. for their survival.

It's possible to accompany people facing the effects of climate change in their daily lives. It's happening throughout the ELCA in many ways through various projects, programs, and initiatives with AMMPARO. We can learn a lot from people who have had this experience. Stories enable us to think and act more intentionally to support people facing these challenges.

*Let's begin.*

***Content Warning:***

*Warning: In the Migrant Journey, we'll cover serious topics like violence, discrimination, and difficult emotions. Some of these subjects might be intense, especially for those who've personally experienced them. Feel free to join in as much or as little as you're comfortable with.*



## **STATION 1: NORTH-EAST & WEST AFRICA**

**5 mins**

### **ROLES:**

- Cameroonian youth
- South Sudan youth

### **SCRIPT:**

We begin the Migrant Journey in North-East and West Africa, where many people are grappling with severe weather and violence stemming from clashes between multiple armed groups. What would make you leave your home and your country? (*Wait for answer.*) Let's learn from two youth—from Cameroon and South Sudan.

Please tell us your story.

	Cameroonian youth
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	South Sudanese youth
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**Questions for storytellers:** Do you want to leave your country? What will happen if you stay? If you leave, how will your family fare? Are you going to stay or leave? Most people will choose to make the journey. If someone chooses not to, they will likely have to spend all their time watching over their shoulders as the fighting wears on.

### **Helpful facts for this station**

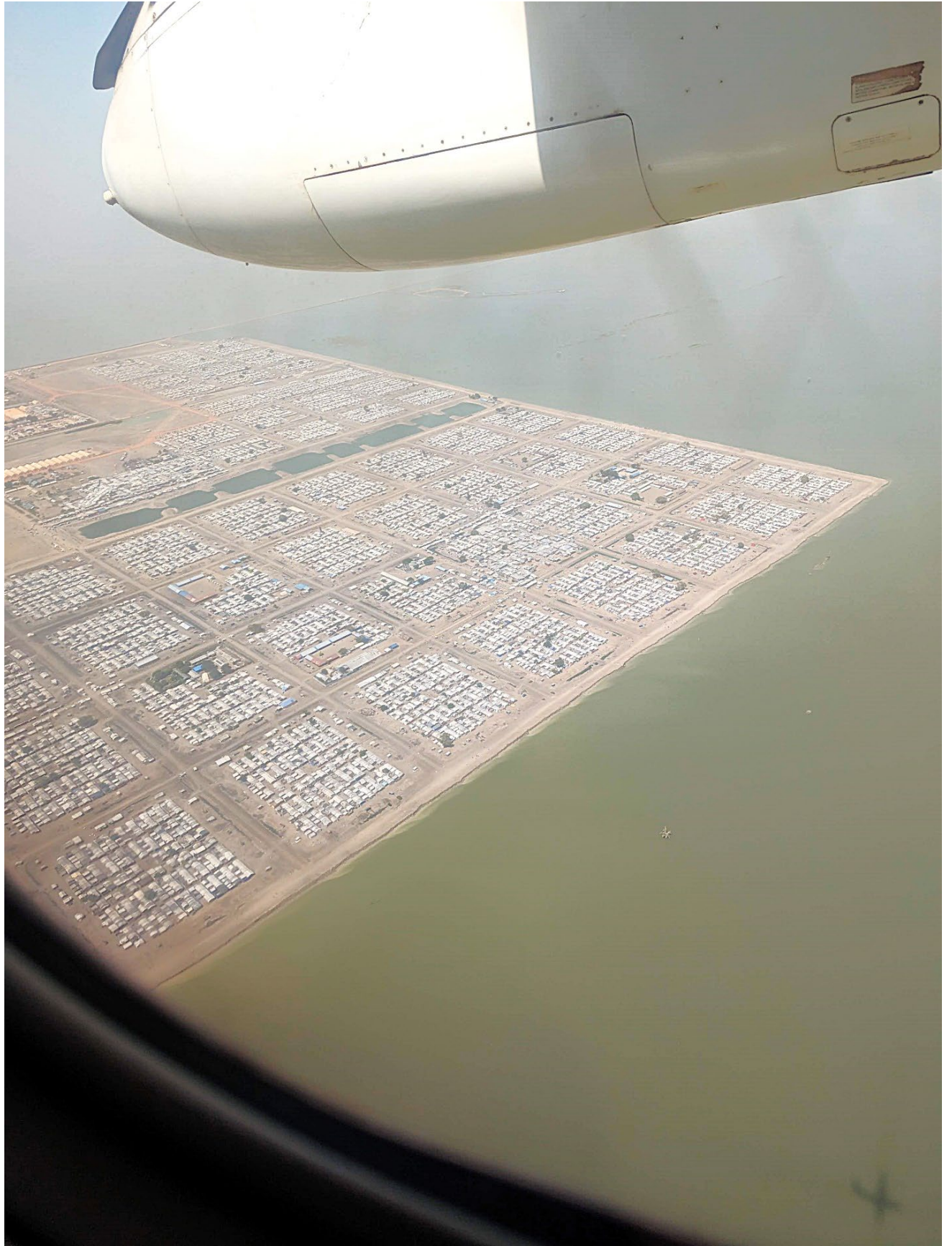
- According to the United Nations, over the past decades, the surface of Lake Chad, which feeds the far north of Cameroon, has decreased by [95%](#). Fighting continues over dwindling resources, generating violence, displacement, and vulnerability.
- The armed group, Boko Haram, began launching attacks in Cameroon in 2013, establishing a large presence in the Lake Chad basin.
- According to the U.S. State Department, the United Nations, and many other sources, violence plays a major role in why people are displaced.
- In 2022, after historic flooding in South Sudan, armed groups disrupted the delivery of aid to affected communities. Conflict and disaster led to [450,000](#) displacements across the country.
- The eruption of conflict in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces contributed to one of the highest global increases in new displacement with 7.1 million people displaced within Sudan, and over [1.3 million](#) people entering Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan, creating new challenges in these bordering countries.

### ***Transition to the next section***

While it looks differently for everyone, forced migration is often unsafe and difficult.

- Going to Egypt:
  - In Egypt, there is a high level of desperation among refugees, because refugees have no access to government services, struggle to find housing and jobs, and experience high levels of discrimination and violence. Even access to a SIM card to place call is tied to residency permits!
  - The organization Saint Andrew's Refugee Services (StARS) works to provide legal, psychosocial, and humanitarian assistance to unaccompanied children and vulnerable migrants who arrive in Egypt. You can always find helpers!
- Going to South America:
  - A key pathway is through the Americas. This typically involves purchasing a plane ticket to Brazil, Colombia, or Ecuador in South America and trekking to the border of Colombia and Panama.

***Let's continue the journey.***







## **STATION 2: SOUTH AMERICA & THE DARIEN GAP**

**5 mins**

### **SCRIPT:**

We are in standing at the edge of the Darien Gap, a 60-mile-deep jungle between Colombia and Panama. The Darien Gap is a key crossroads for thousands of migrants and refugees heading north. In the Darien Gap, we encounter someone from Haiti who used to live in South America, and someone from Venezuela.

- The person from Haiti tell us that they have spent more than 2 years on the road with their partner. They spent some time in Brazil but because of the racism they experienced they decided to attempt the treacherous journey through the Darien Gap. They are worried. They've heard stories of women being raped, organized crime, and many other hazards along the way. They're driven by a desire to create a better life for their family, and their baby who is on the way.
- The person from Venezuela tells us that they left because the economic situation in Venezuela was so bad, they had to skip meals so their kids could eat. At the Darien Gap, they remember that leaving Venezuela and becoming separated from their parents and sisters was heart wrenching. They're considering turning back with their two sons.

**Questions for everyone:** Do you want to continue or turn back? How much water do you need to keep you hydrated for 4-days, the average time it takes to cross the Darien Gap? (Answer: 8 liters)

### ***Helpful facts for this station***

- According to Panamanian government statistics, over [900,000](#) people crossed the Darien Gap from 2021-2023.
- So far in 2024, [1 in 5](#) people who have crossed the Darien Gap have been children. Families represent 38% of the groups traveling through the Darien Gap.
- The number of Haitian migrants to Brazil and Chile rose sharply after Haiti's earthquake in 2010. Many were eager to stay, but factors like harsh immigration laws, anti-Black racism, lack of employment prospects, and marginalization made staying in Brazil and Chile difficult.
- As early as 2015, many Haitians departed and made their way north. Then, in 2020 Haitian migration [accelerated significantly](#).
- Migrants may pay smugglers to guide them through. Those smugglers are known to abandon, rob, extort, and commits acts of sexual assault. This is largely done with impunity.

### ***Transition to the next section***

Some migrants who make it to Costa Rica are able to take refuge in the migrant shelter of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church. Many intend to keep going until they can reach their destination, journeying to a major border crossing between Nicaragua and Honduras, called Trojes.

***Let's continue the journey.***

## **STATION 3: CENTRAL AMERICA**

**7 mins**

## ROLES:

- Guatemalan youth
- Nicaraguan mother
- Honduran youth

## SCRIPT:

As we enter Nicaragua, we're going to hear from a mother who comes from a rural village in the northwest region.

Nicaraguan mother

**Questions for storytellers:** Do you feel like you really have a choice? Are you going to stay or leave even if it means separating from the rest of your family?

### **Helpful facts for this station**

- Nicaragua is among the countries most affected by extreme weather events, and it ranks 21<sup>st</sup> in the 2022 World Risk Report.
- [111 of the 156](#) municipalities in Nicaragua are exposed to extreme climate-related events.
- About [40 percent](#) of Nicaragua's population lives in a rural area. Many people grow crops to eat but the climate is becoming less predictable.
- The Dry Corridor, a vast area across Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala is extremely vulnerable to climate change. Nicaragua's coasts are also very vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms.

### **Transition to the next section**

After crossing through Trojes, we're going to hear from an Honduran teenager who lives in the part of the Dry Corridor that stretches across Honduras. His family relies on farming. His eighteenth birthday is a few months away.

Please tell us your story.

Honduran youth

**Questions for storytellers:** What do you think? Do you think you're making the right decision? What will happen if you leave? What will happen if you stay?

### ***Helpful facts for this station***

- Many people from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, in the Dry Corridor of Central America, have been affected by both drought and heavy rainfall and have had to leave in search of better life opportunities.
- As of October 2021, the number of food insecure people in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras had grown three-fold to [6.4 million](#), up from 2.2 million people in 2019.
- An estimated [3 million](#) people in Central America could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030.
- Violence, lack of opportunities, poverty and environmental degradation are interrelated.
- Families often get loans or borrow against their house to pay for a guide called a coyote. The more money you pay, the more comfortable you might be, but the journey isn't safe for anyone. In 2021, the average was USD [\\$7,500](#) per person.

### ***Transition to the next section***

Journeying through Guatemala, we're going to hear from an Indigenous Guatemalan teenager.

Please tell us your story.

	Guatemalan youth
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***Questions for storytellers:*** What do you think? Should you continue to endure hardship with your grandparents or seek a better life outside of Guatemala? Your mother might be able to apply for the Central American Minors program if you decide you want to go to the U.S. and you'll be able to avoid having to travel all on your own through Mexico.

### ***Helpful facts for this station***

- Indigenous identity is quite important to Guatemalans. 44% of the population is Indigenous (either Maya, Xinka, or Garifuna) and [24](#) different languages are spoken other than English.
- The CAM program allows them to bring their children and accompanying family members to the United States as refugees or on parole if they are from Guatemala, Honduras, or El Salvador. Parents initiate the process in the United States, while their children wait.
- Children often lack support going through the program on their own. It has other limitations, but it might save someone from having to take the dangerous route through Mexico.

***Let's continue the journey.***











## **STATION 4: MEXICO**

**5 mins**

### **ROLES:**

- Mexican Shelter Director

### **SCRIPT:**

Our storytellers have now walked across rivers, deserts and mountains. They've found a shelter in southern Mexico where they can shower and sleep. Let's see what we can learn from the shelter director.

Mexican Shelter Director

### ***Questions for storytellers:***

- To the Mexican Shelter Director: How do you feel when you see these individuals, families, and children come this way? How do you hope that people will remember their experience here at your shelter?
- To migrant storytellers: In a simple phrase, what do you feel when you see the shelter director? Why?

### ***Helpful facts to know for this section***

- In addition to the dangers of hopping on a train or walking long distances, migrants say they encounter kidnappings, killings, theft and many forms of violence as they journey through Mexico.
- Sexual and gender-based violence is a common way that women are attacked. Rape is so common that doctors in Central America report that most women & teenage girls get birth control before they make the journey.
- Mexico has increased enforcement along their southern border with Guatemala, both at the urging of President Biden, and because it has been tightening its borders. Mexico's National Guard, a civil force, that was created to go after drug cartels, has been used primarily for immigration enforcement activities.
- Many of the shelters that provide services to migrants in Mexico are faith-based and have been providing food and shelter to migrants for many years. They have had to adapt in the last few years because so many people are requesting asylum (refugee status) in Mexico. Migrants who have filed asylum claims need a place to stay for weeks/months while their claim is being processed by COMAR (Mexican Commission for Assistance to Refugees).
- In June 2024, Mexico granted refugee status to about 4,000 people, a decrease of more than 65% compared to June 2023.

***Transition to the next station***

Temporary shelters generally have a two-day maximum for people to stay, so you still have a long road ahead of you. As you travel along the road your bus is stopped by a local police officer. He demands you give him something of value or else he will send you to an immigration detention center. You immediately search your bags for anything of value to pass.

You still need to get through almost all of Mexico with no money. You hope another police officer doesn't stop you before you reach the U.S. border.

***Let's continue the journey.***





## **STATION 5: AT THE MEXICO-U.S. BORDER**

**5 mins**

### **ROLES:**

1. U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent

### **SCRIPT:**

We are now at the U.S.-Mexico border. While in years past many migrants tried to avoid law enforcement once they crossed the border, today children and families generally turn themselves in to authorities to begin the legal process of seeking asylum. As migrants wait on the Mexico side, many will try to seek an appointment to come to the border using the smartphone app, CBP One. Let's see what one border patrol agent thinks of all this.

Please tell us your story.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent

### ***Questions for storytellers:***

- To U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent: How do you feel about the number of children and families arriving at the border? Do you think you can tell if they left their homes out of fear and should qualify for asylum?

### ***Questions for everyone:***

- Currently, up to 1,450 individuals can request an appointment to present themselves to border patrol. The demand for an appointment is so high that the wait time can take several months. Generally, people who can wait are trying to wait for an appointment.
- If you pull out your phone, I'd like to challenge you to download today's NYTimes Wordle. The first person to complete it will receive an appointment.

### ***Helpful facts for this section***

- There are approximately 700 miles of fence on the border. Areas that do not have a fence are either private property, a river or a wildlife preserve.
- Existing U.S. law says that anyone can seek asylum, regardless of how they arrived in the United States.
- Even though the law is clear, policies frequently change. Migrants often know very little about the asylum process and who can qualify. They may rely on inaccurate information from social media and close contacts.
- There have been three significant policy changes at the southern border under the Biden Administration:

- Title 42: Title 42 was used between March 2020 and May 2023 over 2 million times to expel asylum seekers. It was used under a public health pretext in response to COVID, but it mostly affected asylum seekers.
- Post-Title 42: Following the end of Title 42, the administration began pursuing a “stick and carrot” approach which involved applying new asylum restrictions under the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways regulation. *Under this rule, someone who crosses the border is considered presumptively ineligible for asylum if they crossed another country without first seeking asylum there.*
- Current Day: On June 4<sup>th</sup>, the Biden Administration announced a regulation titled “Securing the Border” which adds new asylum restrictions. These new restrictions apply when the number of people crossing the border exceeds a certain number. *Under the rule, someone who crosses the border between ports of entry is ineligible for asylum except in very narrow cases.*
- The laws treats unaccompanied children, families with children, and single adults differently.
  - Children & Families: Since 1997, the Flores Settlement Agreement has set the basic standards of care of all children in immigration custody, including unaccompanied children. A new regulation recently codified the standards for children in the care of the Department of Health and Human Services. The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRRA) ensures that unaccompanied children in federal custody are not the victims of trafficking or other types of abuse and provides protection over the rights of children.
    - Unaccompanied children are typically held in detention for a short period of time before they are transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement under the Department of Health and Human Services to hopefully be reunited with a family member while they navigate the immigration process. Sometimes children are provided care by a foster parent.
- After crossing the border, individuals and families with children are transported from the border to processing facilities, spending up to 3-days in federal custody. Families with children are not detained for longer under this administration.
- There are a few different possible outcomes as people await processing:
  - They could be transferred to ICE custody and detention.
  - They could be processed for removal, in other words, deported.
  - They could be released on parole and enrolled in an alternative to detention program
- Individuals who are released are typically enrolled in an alternative to detention program. Usually in the case of a family, the head of household is the one enrolled in the program.
- There are various types of technology: ankle and wrist monitors, smartphone app, and telephonic reporting.
- Asylum seekers will have an opportunity to present their case for asylum to an Asylum Officer or Immigration Judge.
- Being granted asylum is difficult. Individuals must prove they were targeted, have reasonable fear of future persecution and that their country could not protect them. They must also prove

they were targeted because of their race, religion, national origin, political opinion or membership in a social group.

- Asylum applicants must wait on average 4.2 years before a final decision from an immigration judge.
- The circumstances that led many of the migrants we've journeyed with are not recognized as compelling reasons to seek asylum. There is a growing effort to recognize the plight of climate-displaced people and the extenuating factors that forced them to flee their homes.

***We're nearing the last destination—the United States. Let's keep going!***







## **STATION 6: U.S. Communities**

**5 mins**

### **ROLES:**

- U.S. Senator

### **SCRIPT**

Unfortunately, there is little recognition of climate-displaced people in law. The U.S. immigration system is out of date. We need immigration reforms to better protect the rights of people on the move. The ELCA, through social statement and resolutions, calls on us to welcome newcomers, and advocate for just immigration, refugee, and asylum laws and policies.

The U.S. government must play a key role in increasing the resilience of individuals and communities and enhance protections for people displaced because of climate change. Let us pay a visit to Senator Newman in his legislative office. First, we'll hear what his position is on all of this.

Please tell us your story.

 U.S. Senator
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### ***Questions for storytellers & group:***

- To Senator: What are some solutions to the issues you've heard about?
- Final questions for the group: What do you think of the Senator's position? What do you want to say to your U.S. Representative/Senators?

### ***Helpful facts for this section***

- In Fiscal Year 2024, Congress approved a budget for Homeland Security. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will receive a 13.5% increase from last year, and Customs and Border protection will receive 19% increase from last year.
- The FY24 Homeland Security budget provides for 41,500 detention beds, up from 34,000.
- The FY24 Homeland Security budget provides for 22,000 border patrol agents, and an additional 150 CBP officers.
- The budget is a moral document that lays out the priorities of a nation.
- In May 2023, the House of Representatives passed The Secure the Border Act (H.R.2) which would overhaul existing asylum law, establish new authorities to expel asylum seekers, detain families, and reestablish Remain in Mexico. The bill would also block funding for humanitarian organizations, and roll-back protections for abused, abandoned, and neglected children. The bill was widely seen as a harmful and inhumane package of reforms.
- In September 2023, Senators introduced the Senate companion bill (S.2824) to the House Secure the Border Act. The bill had 32 Senate co-sponsors as of December 2023.
- In May 2023, a group of Democratic and Independent Senators introduced a Bipartisan Border Bill framework that makes reforms to the asylum system and to border management. It

contained a mix bag of reforms that would help some immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for a long time but cause harm to the existing asylum protection. It failed in Senate votes twice.

- The Biden Administration has deployed various strategies to address climate-induced migration including:
  - White House: In October 2021, the White House published a historic report on “the Impact of Climate Change on Migration” listing governmental action to address climate-related migration.
  - USAID: The United States Agency for Aid and Development is working on increasing the resiliency of communities and increasing focus on climate-related migration.
- In November 2023, Representatives Velasquez and Senator Markey reintroduced legislation that would devise a new Global Climate Resilience Strategy and create a new program for people who have been displaced by environmental disasters or climate change.

### ***Transition to the next section***

People are at risk of environmental disaster and climate change even while living in the United States. Extreme weather is contributing to new internal displacements. The Great American Climate Migration refers to the displacement of about [30 million](#) Americans over the next half-century due to climate change. Historic and systemic racism has resulted in decades of marginalization and exclusion of Black and brown people. Infrastructure is usually worse in poor and non-white communities.

- In January 2023, heavy flooding in Southern California devastated hundreds of farm workers, including many who are undocumented workers. Undocumented immigrants do not have access to the wider safety net or assistance from FEMA net many rely on after disasters.
- In September 2023, a powerful storm led to widescale flooding in New York. Many immigrants live in the boroughs most heavily impacted by flooding.
- In 2023, blazing hot temperatures hit multiple states. [36](#) workers died from heat related illness, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Farmworkers are organizing to expand heat protections.
- In 2022, Oregon adopted expansive smoke and heat protection rules, ensuring that workers receive personal protective equipment and more breaks. According to the National Climate Assessment, temperatures are rising in the Northwest. Rising temperatures are related to more drought conditions which set in motion more extreme wildfire seasons.
- In October 2022, Hurricane Ian prompted many migrants to travel to Florida to seek employment in disaster recovery, often for very low wages, like \$15 an hour. Storms often have huge losses that require a massive labor force. Migrants are often seen as necessary in clean-up efforts but are not valued for their essential work.

### ***Questions for storytellers & group:***

- To Senator Newman: What are some solutions to the issues you’ve heard about?
- Final questions for the group: What do you think of the Senator’s position? What do you want to say to your U.S. Representative/Senators?









## Cameroonian Youth

I am a young person from Northern Cameroon. My family has been farming and fishing in the Lake Chad. Due to climate change, the lake's water levels have shrunk and both farming and fishing became increasingly impossible starting 5 years ago as the Sahel across West Africa has been affected by ongoing drought. Statistics show that the waters of Lake Chad have shrunk by 90% in 34 years. When drought conditions became severe, clashes over diminishing water resources broke out between herders, farmers and fishermen.

Boko Haram has been in our region, recruiting young people from our communities for 10 years, and the violence from Boko Haram became acute in our village. So I had to go into hiding to save my life as they were recruiting young people. With the violence around us due to Boko Haram and violent clashes over water, my family was forced to flee south along with over 36,300 people to a more central region inside Cameroon.

Unfortunately, Boko Haram is also present in this region and I had to remain in hiding. With no options to help support my family as I need to stay in hiding, I knew it was urgent for me to leave once again and reached out to a cousin in the US who sent me money to make the journey to Colombia. I have decided to make the journey to the US where I hope to be safe from the violence and make a better living to support my family back home. Now at the airport, I just met 2 other people on my plane who had made the same decision as I did.



## South Sudanese Youth

I am a young woman from a farming family who grew up in Bentiu in South Sudan, a land once filled with life and fertile fields where we could grow not only food for ourselves but to sell to support ourselves as well. Three years ago, widespread flooding began, and our village was drowned by water that has never subsided to this day! Only a small section of our town with some houses remained above the water but our fields were drowned underwater for the last three planting seasons, so now we have no way of supporting ourselves.

With no hope of returning to farming, our land still underwater and no real economic alternative, our family was forced to leave our village for a camp for internally displaced persons. In this camp, food is limited causing malnutrition and health issues and young persons are being forced into marriages.

Recently, I have received much pressure to marry as my family no longer feels it can provide for me, and I have suffered physical violence from my father because I won't agree to this. I have no desire to marry at all and now feel forced to leave the camp to escape this violence. I know of people from this camp who have made the journey to leave; some planning to go to Cairo and I feel I must go too.

## Honduran Youth

I'm a Honduran teenager. Together with my parents, we live in a rural community in one of the hottest and driest parts of the country – this part of Honduras is known as the Dry Corridor.

My father is a small landowner – with around 1.5 acres that he has cultivated for as long as I can remember. The principal crops have been corn, sorghum and beans. Until recently, the annual crop yields provided what our family needed to eat, and to have some extra to sell. With that money, we could cover other necessities. As an example, in good times, our annual corn harvest got as high as 50 truckloads.

Then, we began to feel the effects of climate change. Access to water resources has always been a challenge in this part of Honduras, but the situation has gotten even worse in recent years. With decreasing rainfall, we've experienced a severe drop in crop yields for five straight planting seasons. Our family no longer has enough to eat, nor is there anything left over that can be sold to generate some cash income.

Like most of our neighbors, we struggle daily just to survive. The effects of climate change are making us poorer and poorer. Other families have concluded that their only option is for someone in the family to make the migrant journey. Because of his age, that's not a viable option for my father, but I'm young enough and healthy enough to attempt the long journey north. I'll have to make lots of sacrifices, among them saying goodbye to my parents and leaving behind the only life I've ever known.

If I make it, I'm sure that I'll be able to look for a different future and eventually find a way to help support my parents. I haven't made a final decision yet, but I'm close.

What do you think? Am I making the right decision?

## Guatemalan Youth

I'm an indigenous Guatemalan teenager. I was born in a rural village close to Guatemala's border with Mexico. My maternal grandparents raised me after my mother left for the US when I was 2. My father died when I was quite young. Even though my grandparents are poor, they have taken great care of me.

With their love and support, I was able to finish elementary school. While in school, I also helped my grandfather grow corn, beans and vegetables on the farm plots he owns. There was nothing I enjoyed more than working alongside my grandfather in his fields. So much so that, when I finished 6<sup>th</sup> grade, I decided to rent a piece of land to grow corn and beans on my own.

I had high hopes for a good harvest – enough to share with my grandparents and some extra to sell so that I would have my own money. Those hopes were dashed by a severe drought that reduced my harvest to a single sack of corn. Despite the setback, I was determined to try again. My grandfather helped me out by letting me grow vegetables on a smaller piece of land close to our house.

After a promising start, extreme climate conditions intervened once again. This time it wasn't a drought, but rather torrential rains that caused the river that ran by our house to overflow its banks. All the vegetables that I had so carefully planted and tended were washed away. I now realize that climate extremes are going to continue making life difficult for farm families like ours who live off the land. It's either too much rain or none at all.

I've begun thinking seriously about leaving Guatemala and making the migrant journey to a place where I'll have the chance to learn more and engage in the work I love – farming the land. I think there will be sacrifices that I'll have to make, but I'm still not sure.

What should I do? Continue enduring the hardships here with my grandparents? Or seek a better future outside of Guatemala? I understand that I could ask my mother to apply for CAM status for me, but who knows whether she will or if it will even be granted? So maybe taking the migrant journey is best.

## Nicaraguan Mother

My husband and I are natives of this area and were raised in farm families. Growing our own food is part of who we are. It's at the center of our life together, even though subsistence farming has never been easy.

Climate change has made life more difficult than ever. It's getting hotter and drier in our community. Our biggest problem is the lack of water to grow our crops. It no longer rains at the right times during the planting season. If the location of our farm plots was different, we could pump water from a stream or river. But we're not so lucky.

Our only alternative is to dig a well. The well would have to be at least 150 ft. deep. This is an expensive project that will cost around \$30,000 ... for a mechanical drilling service, plus a pump, plus solar energy to run the pump, plus pipes to bring the water to the surface, plus a storage tank.

No one in our community makes more than the equivalent of \$200/month. Even if we could save every penny of our monthly earnings—**which we can't**—it would take us at least 12 years to save the money we need.

The only way to save money even faster is by emigrating to a country like the U.S. where wages are higher, even if we take low-paying menial jobs.

It looks like our only option is for one of us to make the migrant journey. My husband is less excited about the idea than I am. If one of us decides to emigrate, it will have to be me. I'm willing to make the sacrifice, but I'm still not sure.

What should I do?

## Mexican Shelter Director

I am the director for an organization that provides services for migrants in Mexico. I began working with migrants as a volunteer through my congregation 25 years ago.

While the organization has been a migrant shelter since the 1990s, it had to begin providing legal representation and housing outside of the shelter a few years ago when more people began seeking asylum in Mexico.

I used to do a lot more office work, but the shelter is so swamped that I now have to assist in cases and provide psychological support.

The work has taken an emotional toll on me because I don't always find out what happens to the people when they leave the shelter. I am committed to my work because my faith calls me to it.

## U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agent

I am a first-generation U.S. citizen from Mexico. My parents came to Arizona long before my brothers and I were born. I always wanted to be a police officer, but I grew frustrated with the hiring practices in your city, and then someone suggested that I would be a great Border Patrol Agent.

My skills in Spanish helped me get the job, and I am proud to have been an agent for two years.

Last year, the job was even more stressful as many children and families were apprehended and processed. While I feel sorry for the children, I don't think their parents should be bringing them. I think people should come via legal means.

## U.S. Senator

Last year, I voted for a bill to expand the detention of families. It seemed like the right thing to do at the time to pacify many of my anti-immigrant constituents before the election.

While I think that it is heartbreaking to see families traveling together, I think that resources are better spent to help U.S. families. I know many of the families are seeking asylum, but I also wonder if these families are just saying that so they can stay in the country.

I know that asking for asylum when you arrive in the United States is legal, but I can't imagine things are bad enough in people's home countries to merit receiving asylum.

I'm even planning to take a vacation in Guatemala! I'm excited to try the coffee there. I have heard that this year the harvest is pretty low...

I keep hearing from faith-based groups that we have the responsibility to protect vulnerable children and families and, while my own faith-community has led me to be sympathetic to the migrants' stories, I don't think that my constituents would support immigration reform.