WHO IS COUNTING AND WHO IS BEING COUNTED?

The Complexity of Environmental Migration and Displacement

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1. Complexity
We know very little about the interplay between:

- Patterns of Forced Migration
- Socio-economic Vulnerability
- Ecological Systems
- Environmental Change

... ????

... ??

... !?
The Phenomena is not Monolithic

Environmental Pressure
- Sudden onset hazard event (Haiyan)
- Slower onset hazard event (Somalia)
- Process of environmental change (Tuvalu)

Spatial Frame
- Long/Short distance
- Rural/Rural Circular Rural/Urban (Mali)
- Internal/Cross-Border

Temporal Frame
- Short-term (one night, weeks, months) (majority)
- Recurrent
- Protracted
- Permanent (Bougainville relocation)

Causal Frame
- Direct/Indirect
- Forced/Voluntary
- Spontaneous/planned relocation

Policy Frame
- Migration as adaptation/SDGs
- Disaster risk management
- Climate security

Credit: The Raoul Wallenberg Institute.
The Definition and Labels Game

- Environmental Refugee
- Forced Environmental Migrant
- Environmental Migrant
- Environmentally Motivated Migrant
- Climate Refugee
- Environmentally Motivated Migrant
- Climate Change Refugee
- Environmentally Displaced Person
- Disaster Refugee
- Environmentally Displaced Person
- Environmental Displacee
- Eco-refugee

Ecological Displaced Person and Environmental Refugee-To-Be (ERTB)
## The Numbers Game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Estimated Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR (2002)</td>
<td>24 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El-Hinnawi (1985)</td>
<td>50 million by 2050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Almeria Statement (1994)</td>
<td>135 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myers (2005)</td>
<td>200 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicholls (2004)</td>
<td>50-200 million by 2080</td>
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<td>Friends of the Earth (2007)</td>
<td>200 million worldwide by 2050</td>
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<td></td>
<td>50 million in Africa alone by 2050</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian Aid (2007)</td>
<td>250 million by climate change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>645 million by dams and projects</td>
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</tbody>
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The Numbers Game

“Water scarcity, increasing ocean levels, desertification, the decreasing productivity of arable lands and the demographic boom in certain regions will definitely result in additional massive migration flows, even at the intercontinental level... According to estimations and predictions, by 2050 approximately 200 million migrants will have taken to the road owing to environmental causes... That is why border protection will be the most important factor for ensuring security in the future” (Hungarian representative to the UN Security Council 2019 meeting on climate change)
New displacements by conflict and disasters in 2020

The country and territory names and figures are shown only when the total new displacements value exceeds 20,000. Due to rounding, some totals may not correspond with the sum of the separate figures. The boundaries and the names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDMC.

- **Floods**: 156m (49%)
- **Storms**: 119m (37.4%)
- **Earthquakes**: 33.5m (10.5%)
- **Wildfires**: 3.4m (1.05%)
- **Droughts**: 2.4m (0.74%)
- **Volcanos**: 1.8m (0.55%)
- **Ext. Temp.**: 1.1m (0.36%)
- **Landslides**: 1.1m (0.36%)

**11.1% geophysical**

**88.9% weather related**
Migration. Failure or Effective Adaptation?

• Estimates are based on the assumption that migration is failure to adapt.

• Equating exposure with vulnerability with a decision to move.

• Migration is an autonomous adaptation strategy rather than an organised process.

• It is shaped by and dependent on individual circumstances, specific context and the risk-trade offs involved.
# Migration: Drivers and Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>Rationality and risk aversion or risk trade-offs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Geographers</td>
<td>Space-distance or gravity models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>Monetary push factors (poverty) and pull factors (opportunity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Scientists</td>
<td>Key drivers, triggers and mechanisms in terms of ecosystems degradation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Environmentally induced migration falls between these disciplines
- Individual circumstances, characteristics, perception and institutional factors
- Race, ethnicity, wealth, home ownership, education, age and gender
- Economic viability
- Legal and political frameworks (e.g. Global Compact, EC New Past of Migration and Asylum)
Pathways of Linkages

**ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION**

- **DEGRADATION OF RESOURCE BASE**
  - Increased impacts of natural disasters
  - Less ability to absorb impacts
  - Decreased resilience

- **ALTERATION OF NATURAL PROCESSES**
  - Global environmental change
  - Changes in hazard patterns

**VULNERABILITY**

- Loss of traditional coping practices
- Less access to livelihoods
- Rapid urbanisation

**HAZARDS**

- Drought
- Extreme weather events
- Wind storms
- Floods
- Wild fires

**INCREASED RISK**

- Desertification
- Deforestation
- Coastal areas degradation
- Regression of glaciers
- Sea level rise
- Biodiversity loss
- Siltation
Conceptual Framework – Drivers of migration and the influence of environmental change
Environmental change does not undermine human security in isolation of broader factors:

- Poverty.
- Governance.
- State support to communities.
- Access to economic opportunities.
- Effectiveness of decision making processes.
- Social cohesion within and surrounding vulnerable groups.
Responses

• Facing severe environmental degradation people can:
  ➢ Stay and mitigate the effects.
  ➢ Do nothing and accept a lower quality of life.
  ➢ Leave the affected area.

Control - Adapt - Flee
Counter Phenomena

• Increased environmental stress does not necessarily lead to increased out-migration.

• Environmentally induced migration tends to be short distance, cyclical or temporary and rarely crosses international borders.

• It is not the poorest of the poor who migrate overseas or cross into neighbouring countries.
2. Challenges

- **Mandates**
  - Differing temporal and spatial mandates
    - Climate scenarios in 2100 vs. adaptation measures now

- **Uncertainty**
  - Length and robustness of records
    - Gaps in data coverage of temperature, precipitation and sea level rise
  - Synchronicity and feedback loops between physical and socio-economic scales
  - Past climate performance is not a reliable predictor
  - Non-linear processes of CNH systems

- ** Attribution**
  - Climate change vs. Climate variability
    - Anticipatory and adaptive response become unsustainable
  - Overlaps between human activity and natural processes

- **Surprise**
  - Non-linear change in eco-system services
  - Non-linear changes in human and social systems
3. And so what?
Mobility vs. Immobility

“We don’t have statistics about climate immobility like we do for migration”

“Involuntary immobility is a policy concern because these are people who need to go, want to go, but who are unable to do so. They’re effectively trapped.”

“We don’t have statistics about climate immobility like we do for migration”

“Climate mobility and immobility are not separate things; they are two sides of the same coin”

“While most policymakers are focused on the ‘problem’ of climate migration, we’re still trying to convince people that the presence of immobility doesn’t mean the absence of vulnerability”

Caroline Zickgraf

Leaving no one behind!

Credit: The Raoul Wallenberg Institute.
Solutions?

Durable Solutions to Displacement

- Return
- Local Integration
- Resettlement

IASC Durable Solutions Guidelines

- Safety and security
- Adequate Standard of living
- Access to livelihoods
- Restoration of housing, land and property
- Access to documentation
- Family reunification
- Participation in public affairs
- Access to effective remedies and justice
Adaptation and Protection

- Move away from equating those at risk with those who will actually move.
- No use in attempting to establish any direct causal pathways.
- Less obsession with numbers and more focus on where migrants might go in the future and why.
- Research on a local rather than a global scale is needed.
- See climate change as a risk modifier rather than having a multiplier, additive or synergistic effect on migration.
- Avoid framing migration as a security concern.
- Apocalyptic narratives depoliticise climate governance, stigmatise migrants and detract from looking at root causes and policy alternatives.
- Shift the discourse away from migration as a “threat” to human security to migration as a “means of achieving it”.
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