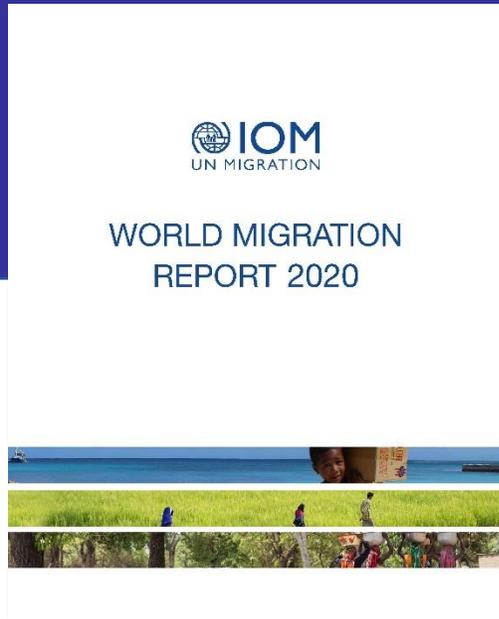


Infosheet No 9

Human mobility and adaptation to environmental change



Millions of men, women and children around the world move in anticipation or as a response to environmental stress every year. Disruptions such as cyclones, floods and wildfires destroy homes and assets, and contribute to the displacement of people. Slow-onset processes – such as sea-level rise changes in rainfall patterns and droughts – contribute to pressures on livelihoods, and access to food and water, that can contribute to decisions to move away in search of more tenable living conditions. Advances

in meteorological and other sciences which inform about the dynamics and pace of climate change indicate that disruptions ranging from extreme weather events to large scale changes in ecosystems are occurring at a pace and intensity unlike any other known period of time on Earth. Anthropogenic climate change is expected to increasingly affect migration and other forms of people moving to manage these changing risks.

This chapter provides an up-to-date overview of environmental change and the spectrum of human mobility. It first explores different perspectives on environmental change and migration, ranging from the view that human mobility including migration is a security issue, that it is an issue of protection, and that it is a matter of adaptation and managing risks associated with environmental change. The chapter then provides examples of environmental migration from empirical research around the world. It then summarizes recent developments in the international policy sphere on the topic. The conclusion draws out the implications for research, policy and practice.

FRAMING OF THE ISSUE

Three main framings of environmental migration and human mobility in the context of climate change have emerged in academia, the media and in policy circles: (a) irregular migration related to environmental change and resource shortages as a border security issue, particularly for areas of destination; (b) protection of environmental migrants; and (c) environmental migration as a form of adaptation and climate risk management, reflecting the political sensitivities of migration.

Three different ways of framing interactions between environmental change and migration

	Securitization	Protection	Adaptation and climate risk management
<i>Key concepts</i>	Irregular migration	Human rights	Adaptive capacity; Remittances; Averting, minimizing and addressing the adverse impacts of climate change.
<i>Migrants as:</i>	Factor of instability in the face of resource shortages (climate as a threat multiplier)	Lacking agency	Agential
<i>Normative implications</i>	National borders should be controlled to reduce risks to society, resources, and culture in areas of destination	If people move they must be able to do so in dignified, safe conditions within protection frameworks	Human mobility can be one of a spectrum of responses to climate impacts and risks
<i>Policy arenas</i>		Platform on Disaster Displacement; Global Compact on Refugees.	UNFCCC Cancun Agreement; UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement; Global Compact for Migration.
<i>Examples in reports and literature</i>	IPCC AR5 chapter on human security and migration; UNSG Climate as a threat multiplier.	Kelman et al., 2015; Nansen protection framework.	McLeman and Smit, 2003; IPCC special report on land and climate change; IPCC AR6.

The chapter highlights examples of migration and environmental change drawn from around the world. It builds on the three ecological zones identified in the Foresight Report (i.e. mountainous, dryland and coastal) which face disruption related to climate change. The examples address a variety of adaptive responses to these environmental disruptions, ranging from migration for work to diversify income to national policy to promote anticipatory forms of migration.

Ecology	Geographical focus	Migration pattern	Geographical focus	Migration pattern
<i>Mountains</i>	Himalayas and Central Asia	Circular migration and pastoralists	Peru	Circular migration
<i>Drylands</i>	Senegal	International migration for remittances	Mexico	Migration possibly beneficial to health
<i>Coastal areas and islands</i>	Pacific Islands	Migration with dignity	United States of America	Planned relocation
<i>Urban areas</i>	Kenya	Resilient cities to cope with urbanization	Bangladesh	Urbanization brings employment and agency for women

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