

Climate Change & Migration

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Causes of Migration

Causes of climate change induced migration & displacement

- 1 **Weather disasters** such as storms, floods or droughts threaten people's lives, assets and income basis.
- 2 **Loss of biodiversity and damages to ecosystems** render livelihoods that depend on natural resources untenable.
- 3 **Increasing water stress** (lower rainfall, melting glaciers that feed rivers), **decreasing harvests or degradation of pasture land** undermine people's income basis.
- 4 **Sea level rise** and storm surges will make low-lying islands and coastal zones uninhabitable – through inundation and salinisation of arable land, wells and groundwater aquifers.
- 5 **Increasing scarcity of natural resources**, water or arable land will spark new conflicts.



Types of Migration

There are various types of climate change induced migration and displacement

- 1 **Climate Refugees** that flee an acute threat (e.g. floods), usually with the possibility and intention to return shortly after the crisis has passed. Typically these people will remain in their country or region.
- 2 **Climate Migrants** that are forced to move temporarily or permanently due to the impacts of gradual changes that render their livelihoods untenable (e.g. long-term desertification but also temporary droughts). These people will usually stay in their countries but may be forced to cross borders depending on the specific context.
- 3 **Climate Exiles** that permanently lose their homes, e.g. as a result of sea level rise and disappearing islands and that have no chance (over human time scales) to return to their lands.

Climate change will usually not be the sole reason for migration, but will become an increasing factor motivating or forcing people to move.

What scale are we talking about?

Predicting numbers is inherently difficult

- 1 **Multiple causes** for migration make it difficult to predict numbers of climate change induced migration and displacement.
- 2 **Scale of climate change** is one of the key factors in assessing numbers. We're currently on track for 4°C warming, but governments have agreed to limit warming to 2°C.
- 3 Predictions into the future are always to be treated with care.



People affected by climate change induced migration or displacement by 2050

WBGU 2007	25-60 million
IPCC 2007	150 million
Stern 2006	150-200 million
Myers 2005	212-250 million
IOM 2008	Up to 1 billion

Addressing Climate Migration

A possible regime to address climate migration would include several components:

- 1 **Limiting climate change** to no more than 1,5°C warming, in order to reduce pressure to migrate!
- 2 **Adapting to change** to adjust livelihoods to changing climate allowing people to stay, reduce and prevent risks, and assist people in recovering from disasters.
- 3 **Ramp up international system of humanitarian assistance** when disasters have struck, protecting people that flee from disasters.
- 4 **Increase regional co-operation** to address (and provide assistance) to cross-border migration
- 5 **A new international legal instrument** to clarify status and rights of affected people, mandate joint international action, motivate regional co-operation and enshrine obligations for countries.



Addressing Climate Migration

A possible regime to address climate migration would include several components:

- 1 **Limiting climate change**
 - ¶ **Warming must be kept below 1.5°C**, in order to keep climate change (and consequences including migration) at manageable levels.
 - ¶ **Current trends in emissions** are worse than even in the most pessimistic scenarios from a few years ago.
 - ¶ **Pledges for emission cuts** by countries made after Copenhagen suggest warming of more than 3°C, possibly 4°C.
- 2 **Adapting to change** to adjust livelihoods to changing climate allowing people to stay, reduce and prevent risks, and assist people in recovering from disasters.
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- 1 Limiting climate change to no more than 1,5°C warming, in order to reduce pressure to migrate!
- 2 Adapting to change to adjust livelihoods to changing climate allowing people to stay in place and assist people in need when disasters have struck from disasters.
- 3 Ramp up international system of humanitarian assistance (to cross-border assistance) to cross-border assistance) to cross-border assistance)
- 4 Increase regional co-operation (to cross-border assistance) to cross-border assistance)
- 5 A new international legal regime to protect rights of affected people and motivate regional obligations for countries

2 Adapting to change

- ¶ **Cancun Agreements** include migration as an (extreme) form of adaptation that developed countries should provide funding for.
- ¶ **National Adaptation Strategies** could integrate both planned relocation to respond to gradual change (e.g. desertification) as well as measures to prevent and reduce risks (that create additional driver for migration)
- ¶ **Kyoto Adaptation Fund** equipped with far too little money to even finance most urgent adaptation measure, let alone whole relocation programmes.
- ¶ **Green Climate Fund** not yet operational. Will need innovative sources of finance!



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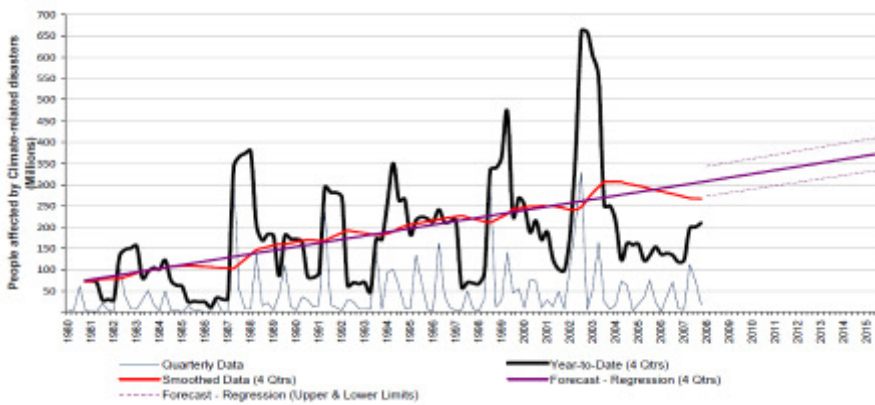
3 Ramp up humanitarian assistance

- ¶ **Existing institutions and mechanisms of international humanitarian assistance** may provide certain support and protection of climate refugees.
- ¶ **By 2015, an annual 375m people** will be affected by climate related disasters (50% increase compared to past decade average). Only some of these will become climate refugees, but humanitarian system not able to handle expected increase.
- ¶ **Status and rights of affected people unclear** – climate refugees are not covered by Geneva Convention.



Addressing Climate Migration

People affected by climate-related disasters 1980 to 2007 (millions) with forecast to 2015



Source: CRED EM-DAT Global natural disaster occurrence and impact: 1980–2007.



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- 2 Adapting to change to adjust livelihoods to changing climate allowing people to stay in their homes and assist people who cannot.
- 3 Ramp up international and regional assistance to help people who are displaced from disasters.
- 4 **Increase bilateral co-operation**
 - ¶ **More Cross-border co-operation** will be needed in cases where climate impacts becomes an increasing factor forcing people to flee across borders (climate refugees),
 - ¶ **Bilateral co-operation** may play an increasing role in accepting climate migrants or climate exiles as permanent immigrants and rebuilding their livelihoods.
- 5 A new international regime on the rights of affected people, with a focus on action, motivation and legal obligations for countries.



Addressing Climate Migration

- 1. Limit...
- 2. Agree...
- 3. Enshrine...
- 4. Mandate...
- 5. A new legal instrument?**

- ### 5 A new legal instrument?
- ¶ Clarify international status and associated rights of (groups of) climate refugees, migrants or exiles.
 - ¶ Agree on joint international action to assist and protect people forced to migrate or flee from gradual change or sudden disasters.
 - ¶ Enshrine obligations by Parties, e.g. in relation to financial support to assist in internal relocation programmes, or bilateral co-operation
 - ¶ Mandate additional work as needed, e.g. clarifying approaches of statelessness.
 - ¶ Instrument could be a protocol to the UNFCCC, with membership on voluntary basis (to start with). A separate UN convention may be less effective (danger of overburdening with issues outside a narrow focus).



Addressing Climate Migration

- ### Additional issues that need consideration
- 1 **Issue of Statelessness:** what happens when a country loses its entire territory due to sea level rise?
 - 2 **Role of the Human Rights Council:** would it be given a role in the regime e.g. linked to the new instrument? Would this be mainly an advisory role, given its expertise on the issue of migration? Expand its mandate?
 - 3 **Role of the Geneva Convention:** Most commentators believe amending the CRSR would be a political minefield. However, are there any links to the CRSR that a new instrument should create?
 - 4 **Host country laws & regulations:** What changes need to be agreed internationally to address existing legislation in potential host countries for climate migrants, refugees and exiles?
 - 5 ...



Thank you for your attention

