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IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation internationale pour les migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

# **Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence**

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*Barcelona, November 4th, 2009*



# Outline

- Presentation of some findings from edited volume  
**“Migration Environment, and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence”, IOM 2009.**
- **Overview of current research**, concepts, data, drivers, consequences, policy challenges.
- Suggestions for **enhancing the evidence base**



# New IOM book “Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence”

1. Introduction: Enhancing the Evidence Base, *Frank Laczko and Christine Aghazarm*
2. Challenges to measuring the migration and environment nexus, *Dominic Kniveton et.al.*
3. Collecting data on migration and the environment, *Richard Bilsborrow.*
4. Researching environmental change and migration: evaluation of the EACH-FOR methodology and application in 23 case studies, *Koko Warner, et.al.*
5. Migration and natural disasters, *Asmita Naik.*
6. Migration and slow-onset disasters: Desertification and Drought, *Michelle Leighton.*
7. Managing environmentally induced migration, *Susan Martin.*
8. The role of legal and normative frameworks for the protection of environmentally induced people, *Roger Zetter.*



# Ways in which climate change may affect migration

- **Intensification of natural disasters** (number of recorded disasters has doubled from approximately 200 a year to over 400 a year over the past two decades)
- **Increased warming and drought** that affects agricultural production and access to clean water.
- **Rising sea levels** make coastal areas uninhabitable and increase the number sinking island states (44 % of the world's population live within 150 kilometers of the coast).
- **Competition over natural resources** may lead to conflict, and in turn displacement.



# Background Facts: The Environment and Migration

- **Most migration occurs within and between developing countries**, just over a third move from South to North.
- Today there are **214 million international migrants; 740 million internal migrants** (UNDP, 2009).
- The scale of current or **expected environmental migration is unknown** (estimates vary from 25m to 1 billion persons) but most of this migration is likely to be in the South.
- Most **reliable data** linked to extreme environmental events/natural disasters; numbers displaced have more than doubled over 20 years, but **data on impact on migration very limited**.



# Contested Area of Research: Few empirical studies

Studies tend to fall into two categories:

(A) work done by “minimalists” who suggest that the **environment is only a contextual factor** in migration decisions

(B) “maximalists”, who claim that the **environment directly causes people to be forced to leave** their homes (Fraser, et. al 2008).

Review of studies over past 50 years, 321 publications, including 153 articles in peer-reviewed journals and 29 books found **very few examples of studies** which investigate the effects of environmental factors on migration based on quantitative multivariate methods.



# Framing the policy issues

- Migration can have **both positive and negative impacts on environment and development.**
- “The literature on climate change and migration is generally very pessimistic about mobility arising from climate change” (**Swedish Commission on climate Change and Development**).
- But little recognition yet that migration could be part of an adaptation strategy in response to environmental/climate change.
- Main focus of **policy discussion on extreme events** and how best to provide assistance to and improve the legal protection framework for those who are displaced.
- Policy framework for dealing with emergencies exists but **developing a strategy to address the impact of gradual environmental change may be more complex** and requires linking development, environment and migration policies in a more coherent manner.



# Establish Migration and Climate Change Data Commission

- No internationally accepted definition for people moving due to environmental reasons – **clearer definitions of what is being measured needed.**
- **Make better use of existing data sources** – EM-DAT emergencies disasters database global data-set, but includes little on-the-ground monitoring of impacts on displacement/ migration.
- **Add environment questions to migration surveys, censuses, and vice-versa.**





## Enhancing the knowledge base: some suggestions

- Promote research on how **migration can be part of an adaptation strategy; National Adaptation Programmes of Action**, useful entry point.
- Assess national capacities **to protect persons environmentally displaced** – there is considerable scope for adapting or building on existing norms and instruments to protect forcibly displaced.
- **Build capacities** of researchers and policy-makers in developing countries.
- Shift the migration and environment research agenda towards a **stronger focus on internal migration**, and more emphasis on **South-South migration**.



# Conclusions

- **Likely impact** of climate change/environmental degradation **on migration highly uncertain**
- It is unhelpful to frame the climate change and migration research **agenda solely in terms of the potential negative impacts**
- Climate change and migration policies should be **closely linked to development cooperation efforts** and not viewed as separate fields
- A more informed policy debate requires much **greater investment in data collection, new studies, and research capacity-building.**



# Migration as a form of adaptation

## Purpose of D

Seeks to encompass population movement or displacement:

- Temporary or permanent; internal or cross-border
- Regardless of whether voluntary or involuntary
- Due to sudden or gradual environmental change