



# Environment-induced Population Displacements

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## Outline

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- Focus: population displacement / mobility related to environmental events
- Conceptual and methodological issues
- Climate change, security concerns and policy issues
- Based on
  - PERN's cyberseminar on Environmental-induced Displacements (background paper and conclusions)
  - Adamo and De Sherbinin (forthcoming). The Impact of Climate Change on the Spatial Distribution of Populations and Migration



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## A working definition

*“Environmental migrants are persons or group of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad” (IOM. 2007. Discussion note: migration and the environment Pp.1)*



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## IOM Scenarios

The propensity to migrate in relation to environmental change	The impact of migration on the environment	Interactions between migration, environmental change, human security and conflict
A. Migration at less advanced stages of gradual environmental change	E. Migration's impact on the environment in areas of destination	G. Human security challenges of environmental change and migration
B. Migration at advanced stages of gradual environmental change	F. Migration's impact on the environment in areas of origin	H. Conflict potential of environmental change and migration
C. Migration due to extreme environmental events		
D. Migration due to large-scale development and land conservation		



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## A continuum

- Factors: intensity of hazard, vulnerability of exposed population and availability of assistance

<p><b>Migrant-like situations:</b> greater control over the process and less vulnerability, even if people are moving in response to deteriorating conditions.</p>	<p><b>Environmentally driven displacement:</b> compelled but voluntary; more control over timing and direction and less vulnerability than refugees; but less control and more vulnerability than migrants.</p>	<p><b>Refugee-like situations:</b> very low level of control over the whole process and very high degree of vulnerability</p>
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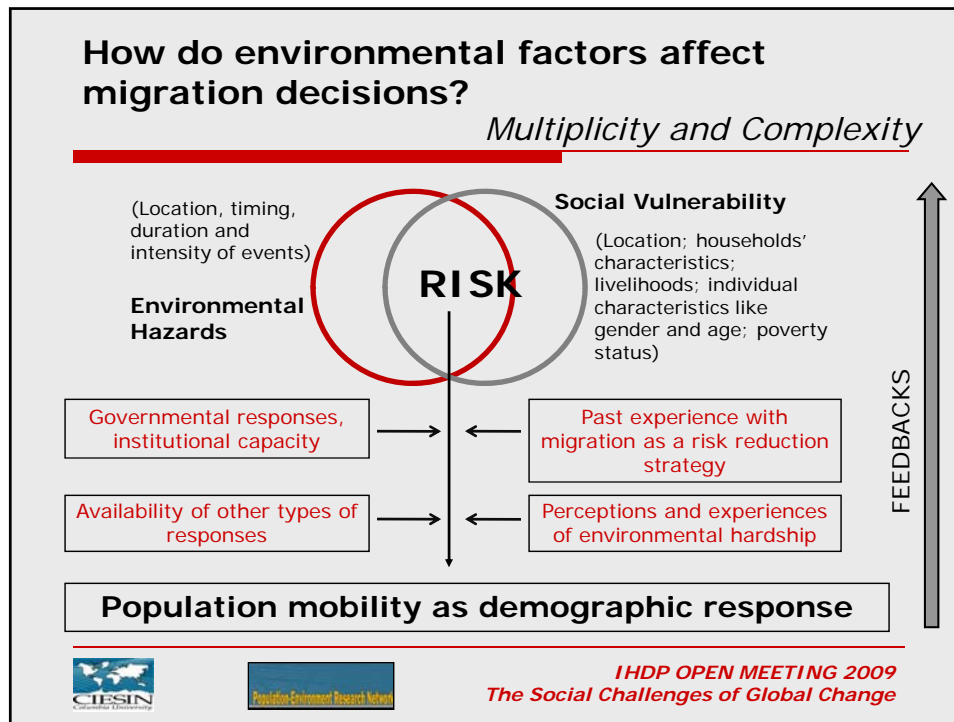
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## The movements

- Changes in
  - Composition
  - Destinations
  - Type of mobility
- Relevance of previous migration patterns and networks
  - Mostly internal and short term
- Who is impacted and who is likely to leave



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## Critical Understandings

- Multiple factors influence migration decisions.
- Environmental factors rarely act alone.
- It is difficult to separate them from other factors.
- It is difficult to determine and quantify cause-effect directions.

## Data issues

- Scarcity of adequate data.
  - Numbers are often controversial.
  - 'Creative' calculation methods.
- People at risk of sea-level rise by 2050: 162 million (Myers 2002).
  - People at risk of droughts and other climate change events by 2050: 50 million (Myers 2002).
  - People potentially at-risk of being displaced because of desertification: 135 million (Almeria Statement 1994)
  - Number of people who have fled because of floods, famine and other environmental disasters: approximately 24 million (UNHCR 2002:12)
  - Environmentally displaced people by 2010: 50 million (UNFCCC 2007).
  - Refugees due to by climate change by 2050: 250 millions (Christian Aid 2007).
  - People estimated to become permanently displaced "climate refugees" by 2050: 200 millions (Stern 2006).



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## Potential Effects of Climate Change

- IPCC's on 'climate' migration:
  - Negative view: involuntary forms of displacement and relocation.
  - Positive view: powerful adaptation strategy.
- Sea level rise, changes in water availability (e.g. droughts), extreme weather events.
- On-going, heated discussions of magnitude of people involve.
- Level of development, socioeconomic status, poverty as predictors.
- **Regional, local variations**



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## Two Scenarios of Security Concerns

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- Scenario G: Concerns about human security challenges (the security of individuals, households and communities), coping and adaptation capabilities
- Scenario H: concerns about the conflict potential of environmental-induced displacements.



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## Policy Issues

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- Implications for the origin and receiving communities, and consequences for the displaced population.
- IOM's suggestion (2007): to tailor policy interventions to the stage of environmental degradation
  - facilitating migration in the early stages of the deterioration process
  - mitigating forced displacement at irreversible stages
  - anticipating the problem by promoting sustainable development.
- The crossing of international boundaries need to be anticipated for both the nations more likely to be affected (for example Small Island States) as well as for the less likely ones, since international cooperation will be required.



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## Final Remarks

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- Careful weighting of theory, data and methods in the determination and evaluation of magnitudes, flows, selectivity and even naming terms.
- These issues demands attention to the mounting policy and human security concerns that emerge from accelerate global climate change.
- Interdisciplinary research and communication between researchers and policy makers have to be enhanced.
- Ideally, the understanding of how populations respond to climate-based uncertainty and disasters would be part of talks about ways to avoid exposure to or to mitigate the effects of catastrophic events.



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