

MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

working title, UNESCO 2010

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Background

Climate change is a major concern for the international community. Among its social and human dimensions, its impact on migration is the object of increasing attention from both policy-makers and researchers. Greater resource scarcity, desertification, risks of droughts and floods, and rising sea levels could drive millions of people to migrate. Yet, despite the interest in the links between climate change and migration, research and policy development on the issue remain limited. There are uncertainties surrounding the mechanisms at stake, the number of persons affected and the geographical zones concerned and there is disagreement between those who stress the direct impact of the environment on population flows and those who rather insist on the social, economic and political contexts in which such flows occur. Most importantly, the impact on policy-making remains largely unexplored.

This book will provide a comprehensive overview of the climate change – migration nexus. It will provide **empirical evidence** on the links between climate and migration by bringing together case studies and analysis from different disciplines. It will investigate the **key policy issues** raised by climate change and migration, including states' policy responses and the views of different institutional actors; critical perspectives on the actual relationship between the environment and (forced) migration; the concepts and notions that are adequate to address this relationship; gender and human rights implications, and finally international law and responsibilities.

"We are not just changing the environment. Climate change is altering the geopolitical landscape. (...) We see it in rising sea levels. We see it in increased migration from the dry lands"

U.N. Secretary-General
Ban Ki-moon, September 2009

Core messages

- The international community needs to address the social and human dimensions of climate change, taking full account of the relevant ethical principles.
- The international framework for the management of migration flows in relation to climate change needs to be further developed.
- Experts from both the natural and social sciences need to work more closely together to understand the impact of climate change on migration.
- Better data on the social and human dimensions of climate change needs to be collected to monitor environment-related migration.

Migration can constitute an appropriate and manageable adaptation strategy; it can also mean precipitous flight for survival.
The difference is crucial.

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