Migration, Development and Environment

Migration, Development and Environment:
Migration Processes from the Perspective of Environmental Change and Development Approach at the Beginning of the 21st Century

Edited by

Robert Stojanov and Jiří Novosák

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21st century, migration, development and environment undoubtedly belong to the most prominent issues on the political agenda. Naturally, it is not possible to address all relations of these three issues in one book. On the contrary, the focus of this book is only on two partial aspects – on environmentally-induced migration and on the relationship between migration and development.

Environmentally-induced migration, or more frequently environmental migration, is a relatively new scientific domain. How to define environmentally-induced migration? What are the differences between environmental and economic migrants? Is environmentally-induced migration forced or voluntary? Where are the hot-spots of environmentally-induced migration? These are only some questions which are considered in the first part of the book which includes the following chapters.

Janos J. Bogardi et al. provide an introduction into the topic of environmentally-induced migration. The chapter sketches out the history of the term, discusses various approaches to defining the term, and reviews main causes of environmentally-induced migration. Furthermore, the authors summarize the most important regions affected by the causes of environmentally-induced migration. Some policy recommendations are given as well.

Óscar Álvarez Gila deals with environmentally-induced migration from the historical point of view. In the chapter, he describes the relationship between environment and migration and he analyses the role of historical scientists. He agrees that current environmental deterioration, and especially climate change, creates serious threads which may induce an unprecedented migration flow from the affected regions. However, he also claims that people and civilizations reacted to the challenges created by changing environmental conditions already in the past and that migration was only one possible answer.

Michael Bartoš et al. deal with amenity migration as a specific form of environmentally-induced migration which is only in an early stage of development, especially in Central Europe. Several illustrations are given of amenity migration in the Czech Republic. The authors conclude that the potential of amenity migration to influence local development in peripheral areas is rather high. *Jan Klíma* analyzes causes of migration, using historical approach and the African country of Cape Verde as a case study. In this way, it is possible to study environmental causes of migration in broader relations.

The remaining chapters of the first part of the book concern two case studies of environmentally-induced migration. *Klára Kavanová* and *Robert Stojanov* deal with he Chernobyl area in Belarus which was seriously affected by a nuclear accident in 1986. Emigration from the area was a solution how to escape the contaminated environment. However, not all people left the area. And just interviews with both, environmental migrants and "area-stayers", make the chapter worthwhile. In the following chapter, *Robert Stojanov* describes the impacts of environmental change on migration in China. Besides a general review, he illustrates the issue using the Three Gorges Dam region as a case study.

With increasing socio-economic disparities, the development of economically less developed countries became one of the most prominent political issues. International migration may represent one of the strategies how to solve at least some problems of these countries. And just the relationship between migration and development is the leitmotif of the second part of the book which includes the following chapters.

Ronald Skeldon systematizes the knowledge of migration policies. The policy context of international migration, the challenges between state structures and international migration, the basic differences in international migration policies between the Western regions and East Asia, some aspects of skilled and unskilled migration and the relationship between migration and development are sketched out in the chapter.

Graeme Hugo emphasises the role of the transnationalism paradigm in contemporary international migration research. He claims that the paradigm shifted the focus away from the permanent relocation to the linkages maintained by immigrants with their country of origin. However, most migration policies are developed, at least implicitly, within the permanent migration paradigm. Therefore, a mismatch between

international migration research and policy arises. Graeme Hugo stresses especially the disaccord between the existing statistics on international migration and the transnationalism paradigm. In this respect, he demonstrates the advantages of the unique data set created by the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Jiří Novosák and *Marie Říhová*'s chapter is focused on the relationship between migration and development. The impacts of skilled migration, remittances and return migration on the development of source countries are discussed and some practical stories from Central Europe are given. The authors conclude that despite an increasing interest a lot remains to be done in Central Europe to really utilize the fruitful benefits of migration for the development potential of source countries.

Raluca Prelipceanu deals with brain migration. She summarizes brain circulation in post-communist Romania and the main strategies employed by Romanian brains in order to circulate in the European space. Moreover, she highlights the role of brain circulation in facilitating a transfer of information, values and practices from the Western European countries to Romania. She concludes that it is necessary to revise the traditional view on high-skilled emigration as the loss for the state of origin.

Markéta Seidlová and *Michal Urban* analyze the attitudes and behaviour of Romanian migrants in three European metropolises - Rome, Paris and London. Based on a questionnaire survey in the three cities, the authors describe several aspects of migration and integration behaviour of their respondents. Overall, a highly desirable probe into the lives of Romanian migrants abroad is provided.

Tomáš Konečný deals with the relationship between international migration and trade. Unlike previous studies, he is interested in the trade diverting effects connected of migration. Using a new dataset of 19 OECD countries and a simple matching model, Tomáš Konečný finds that while immigrant networks facilitate trade between host and source countries, they simultaneously hurt trade with other trading partners. In the last chapter of the book, *Petr Jelínek* points to a rather limited effectiveness of the Czech development assistance and concludes with a call for a better control mechanism.

PART I

ENVIRONMENTALLY-INDUCED MIGRATION

CHAPTER ONE

ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION: AN OVERVIEW AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

JANOS J. BOGARDI, FABRICE RENAUD,
OLIVIA DUN, KOKO WARNER,
TAMER AFIFI

The turn of the 20th to 21st century is clearly associated with the phenomenon of globalisation. Goods, capital, and jobs are migrating with ever increasing ease, what Niamir-Fuller and Mann (2007) term the 'mobility society'. Yet also an uneasiness is emerging. First and foremost, while products are welcome, it is more difficult for people to move across borders to seek out jobs or better livelihoods. Despite the fact that migration is as old as humanity, having shaped and enriched civilization, and, irrespective of numerous examples of human solidarity, there is also a deep rooted suspicion, if not fear, towards "newcomers" due to a mixture of reasons. While we live in a 'mobility society', the right to move seems to be strongly biased (Niamir-Fuller and Mann 2007). UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's appeal for a more positive outlook on migration in his address to the High-Level Dialogue of the General Assembly on International Migration and Development in September 2006 was not only timely but also very important.

There is a growing number of migrants worldwide and both observed evidence and scientific expectation indicate that more and more of them are on the road or at sea to flee from the loss of their livelihoods due to environmental reasons. The interlinkage of environment and human security is perhaps nowhere else more pronounced. When degrade nature strikes back, when ecosystem services become exhausted, and when hazard events devastate large stripes of land, then environment literally turns against humans. The apparent ecological imbalance or denuded land can be identified as a security threat.

It is difficult enough to acknowledge that humans do harm to humans, though history has ample proof. However, at least since 1951 with the Convention on the Status of Refugees, there is a framework within which aid, assistance and protection can be given to those who have had to leave their native country due to persecution by others including acts of violence, coercion or harassment. It is even more difficult to visualise that we harm ourselves by destroying the ecological basis of our own existence. Environment may not force anyone to cross an international border, but no one can close their eyes to the terrible similarities between people running for their life threatened by guns and those who are threatened by drought, famine, hurricanes, floods or a tsunami.

The decision to leave one's place of usual residence, should circumstances permit such deliberations by individuals or groups, is a very complex process. Some "visible" reasons, mainly economic ones, seem to prevail in the decision making process. While no one leaves for a single reason, we felt the need to address the fuzziness and even prejudices associated with the notion of 'environmental migration', particularly since amongst the professional community dealing with various issues of migration there is a sizeable reluctance to 'accept' the concept of environmental refugees (but not necessarily environmental(ly forced) migration). Policy makers developing policies on this issue need good estimates on numbers, origins, destinations and patterns (e.g. whether migration is seasonal, temporary, permanent, internal or international) of people on the move due to environmental reasons as well as an improved understanding of the issues at hand. This paper is an attempt to scope out some of the initial facets of this complex feature of migration.

Environment and human security: is migration the link?

Environmental issues have been seen in the broader context of human security since the end of the Cold War, which marked the end of both the political bipolarity and the narrow, mainly military notion of security concepts and perceptions predominating the security discourse at that time (Brauch 2005). In this respect, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 was a critical point in mainstreaming environmental issues at the international level especially because it heralded the development of various UN Conventions dealing with environmental issues, for example, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity

and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) (itself not part of the UNCED process, only coming into force in 1996 despite the fact that desertification had been recognised by the UN system as a major environmental threat exacerbating poverty for over 30 years - particularly since the 1977 United Nations Conference on Desertification (UN 1994)). These conventions directly and specifically address environmental issues that have great bearing on societies worldwide and contribute indirectly to improving several of the dimensions of human security.

However, to date, these initiatives and others that attempt to deal with environmental problems in order to limit their socio-economic consequences have not succeeded in stopping or slowing the ongoing overall degradation of our ecosystems (as noted by the MA 2005a), irrespective of genuine efforts and partial successes. As a result migration may increasingly emerge as a coping capacity or adaptation mechanism in response to worsening environmental conditions. Several scholars expect the number of "environmental migrants" to swell (e.g. Myers 2005).

In parallel, the topic of migration has also received much attention at the international level and in particular has always been addressed through passionate and, at times, controversial debates both in receiving countries and countries of out-migration. Statistics from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) show that in 2005 there were an estimated 191 million migrants worldwide, up from 176 million in 2000 and representing roughly 3 per cent of the global population (IOM 2007). Of these, the IOM estimated that 15-20 per cent were illegal migrants (approximately 7 to 8 million in Europe and just over 10 million in the USA). The global number of refugees (the extreme form of migration) in 2005 reached an estimated 8.4 million persons (UNHCR 2006a). Migration and issues related to asylum seeking remain high on the political and policy agenda of many countries, particularly during election periods.

With the exception of when a person's life is directly threatened, the decision to migrate is often made because of a variety of "push" and "pull" factors. Rarely is the decision to migrate made due to a single reason. Among the root causes of migration are economic factors (poverty, unemployment), social factors (poor welfare or education), environmental factors (degradation of ecosystems, environmental disasters), and/or degraded security conditions (disrespect for human rights, persecution of

minority groups, armed conflicts and so forth) (Boswell and Crisp 2004). Migration is often also in response to perceived or actual differentials and disparities between regions or countries (GCIM 2005), although other factors such as demography, and the level of poverty also play pivotal roles (Hatton and Williamson 2003). The September 2006 UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development [1] (UN 2006a and 2006b) highlighted that poverty is one of several factors forcing or encouraging people to migrate and that it is "essential to address the root causes of international migration to ensure that people migrated out of choice rather than necessity" (UN 2006b: 2). While it is important to understand the root causes of international migration, it is also necessary to understand the root causes of internal migration. This is because firstly, internal migration can sometimes be an intermediary step leading to international migration and secondly, because the poorest may not often have the means to migrate internationally. Moreover, it is thought that many of those displaced by environmental factors would often be displaced or migrate within the boundaries of their own country rather than abroad.

In the past couple of decades, since environmental degradation started to be included as a potential threat in the concept of human security, and in particular since the publication of a paper by El-Hinnawi (1985) on environmental refugees (in e.g. Castles 2002), there has been increasing debate as to whether environmental degradation is a major cause of migration throughout the world. Despite the fact that more than twenty years have elapsed since the publication of El-Hinnawi's paper, debate is still ongoing with respect to definitions of what constitutes an "environmental migrant" or in extreme cases an "environmental refugee", the number of migrants and routes taken by the migrants, and whether or not it is wise or necessary to develop a new category of migrants and/or refugees at all.

[1] "In its resolution 58/208 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly decided to devote a high-level dialogue to international migration and development during its sixty-first session in 2006. The purpose of the high-level dialogue is to discuss the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development in order to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize its development benefits and minimize its negative impacts. Additionally, the high-level dialogue should have a strong focus on policy issues, including the challenge of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)." (UN *Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division* 2007, *International Migration and Development Section*).

This topic is not only timely because of the current heightened attention being paid to the process and potential impacts of climate change, but also because of the current emphasis placed by many countries on the subject of migration, and moreover because the United Nations is currently re-thinking its strategy with respect to the theme of migration through the High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development mentioned above. There are, at the moment, no specific distinctions being made in the UN debate on migration in terms of the "push" or "pull" factors: so, environmental migrants are not recognised specifically within this debate yet. As there is a broad consensus that migration is most likely to increase substantially in the future, there is the urgent need to prepare potential immigration target countries to cope with the expected influx of migrants.

From concept to definition

Black (2001: 2) noted that the concept of environmental refugees was introduced by Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute in the 1970s. It was subsequently addressed in a November 1984 briefing document of the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development (Black 1998: 11, Kibreab 1997: 21) and entered into common usage after a 1985 United Nations Environment Programme policy paper written by E. El-Hinnawi entitled 'Environmental Refugees'. There has been several attempts to promote the idea that a new category of refugees (the extreme case of population movement) is needed in order to protect people who have to move because of environmental factors (e.g. Conisbee and Simms 2003). However, the evidence put forward so far to link environmental factors to forced migrants/refugees has not been regarded as convincing. Detractors of the concept criticise the lack of scientific and factual rigor. In addition, there is no accepted definition of what an "environmental migrant/refugee" is. It is therefore important to develop more precise terminology in order to provide the professional basis for in-depth, policy-relevant debate.

The definition for the term refugee is provided under Article 1A of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees amended by the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter referred to as the Refugee Convention) which states that a refugee is any person who:

> owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to

> such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR 2006b: 16).

It can be seen that there are four key parts to this definition, namely:

- The person must be outside their country of nationality or former habitual residence.
- The person must fear persecution.
- The fear of persecution must be for reasons of one of the five convention grounds (race, nationality, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion).
- The fear must be well-founded.

The 1969 Organisation of African Unity/African Union Convention (OAU Convention) which governs specific aspects of refugee issues in Africa and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees (the Cartagena Declaration) which concerns Latin America (Jambor 1992) build upon the 1951 Refugee Convention definition of a refugee to also include people who have been compelled to flee their countries due to events which have seriously disturbed public order (Jambor 1992). It is perhaps this definition of a situation of seriously disturbed public order that comes closest to some form of official international recognition which could potentially encompass those compelled to leave their country of origin due to environmental factors. However, these Conventions only apply to individuals living within the African and Latin-American continents and do not draw attention to environmental issues specifically.

A key element of refugee recognition is that a person is outside their country of nationality or former habitual residence. Definitions with respect to "environmental refugees" generally have in common the fact that they do not distinguish whether the persons migrating or fleeing have crossed an international border. However other than this commonality, definitions vary greatly, including whether displacement of environmental refugees is temporary or permanent in nature. For example, El-Hinnawi (1985: 4 in Bates 2002: 466) defined environmental refugees as:

> those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life [sic]. By 'environmental

> disruption' in this definition is meant any physical, chemical, and/or biological changes in the ecosystem (or resource base) that render it, temporarily or permanently unsuitable to support human life.

Jacobson (1988: 37-38) identified different types of environmental refugees:

- Those displaced temporarily due to local disruption such as an avalanche or earthquake
- Those who migrate because environmental degradation has undermined their livelihood or poses unacceptable risks to health
- Those who resettle because land degradation has resulted in desertification or because of other permanent and untenable changes in their habitat

Myers (1993: 752) defined environmental refugees as:

> people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their erstwhile homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, and other environmental problems. In their desperation, they feel they have no alternative but to seek sanctuary elsewhere, however hazardous the attempt. Not all of them have fled their countries; many are internally displaced. But all have abandoned their homelands on a semi-permanent if not permanent basis, having little hope of a foreseeable return.

Bates (2002: 468), taking into account the definitions of others over the preceding years, offers an intentionally vague definition to take account of the transformation of the environment to one less suitable for occupation by humans, stating that environmental refugees are people who migrate from their usual residence due to changes in their ambient non-human environment.

It is evident from the above-mentioned definitions that even though the term "environmental refugee" is used, the authors encapsulate population movements that are not of the refugee type, at least not as per the definition of 1951 Refugee Convention. In addition, of the four aspects of the 1951 Refugee Convention mentioned above, the one that would be most difficult to define in the context of "environmental refugees" is the fear of persecution. Unless it is assumed that "nature" or the "environment" can be the persecutor, the term refugee does not appear suitable for describing those displaced by environmental factors. However, in this paper the term "refugee" is retained to characterise those cases

when people precipitously flee their place of residence because of an environmental stressor regardless of whether or not they cross an international border.

In international refugee law, environmental conditions do not constitute a basis for international protection. We argue, to the contrary, that environmental conditions should be considered as one element forcing people to flee their places of origin and as such should be afforded – under certain conditions - similar rights and protection as refugees fleeing because of other causes.

How to frame the debate?

Given the lack of precise definition as to what constitutes an environmental migrant/refugee and the emotionally charged issue of migration, it is not surprising that the links between environmental change and forced migration is a topic which is causing much public and scientific debate. There are three main dimensions to the debate surrounding the notion of environmental migrants/refugees (e.g. Castles 2002):

- First, there is the definitional debate over the terminology "environmental refugee" and who can be classified under such a definition as has been highlighted above.
- Second, there is the debate over whether such people even exist, i.e. can environmental factors be identified as a root cause of displacement?
- Third, there is the debate over who will provide protection to such a category of people should they exist.

With respect to the first two aspects of the debate, we propose three categories of migrants/refugees to be considered for future policy actions. With respect to the second aspect, the evidence presented below points towards environmental factors as being major push factors for forced migration. Concerning the third aspect, this paper also gives specific recommendations for immediate steps.

Even critics of the concept of environmental migrants/refugees such as Black (2001) contend that should environmental refugees be included in a future international convention, the scientific and empirical basis of the fluxes and specific needs will require further elaboration. Similar points of view were elaborated in a brief review on the subject presented by Flintan

(2001). Castles (2002) argued that the environmental refugee terminology and conceptualisation is inadequate but nevertheless did not dismiss the possibility that environmental factors can be very important for triggering migration in certain circumstances. This latter possibility is also highlighted by Oliver-Smith (2006) who argued that nature (as opposed to the environment which is understood to be the co-existence of nature and society) could be a single cause of migration, although up to now it has not been, but was rather one of several factors triggering migration. No one can disagree that there is a need to address these issues more scientifically and systematically, but the fuzziness of the concept as it stands now, and the difficulty in estimating the number of people concerned or identifying migration routes should not be a reason not to act and move forward.

Despite the lack of precise definitions, several authors have attempted to determine the number of environmental migrants/refugees. However, this is a rather complicated exercise because of the diversity of factors that come into play, as highlighted above, and their complex interactions (Döös 1997). Quantifications are further complicated by the fact that these migrations are mostly internal (at least in the initial phase). Nevertheless, estimates of environmental migration fluxes have been published. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2002: 12) for example, estimates there are approximately 24 million people around the world who have fled because of floods, famine and other environmental factors. In 1994, the Almeria Statement (see Almeria Statement 1994) resulting from the International Symposium on Desertification and Migrations mentioned that 135 million people could be at risk of being displaced as a consequence of severe desertification. Myers (2002 and 2005) estimated that 25 million people in 1995 had migrated with a possible doubling of that number by 2010 with a potential of 200 million environmental refugees due to global warming impacts later in the 21st century. In a 2002 paper by a Green Party member of the European Parliament it was estimated that the number of people displaced by climate change in China alone was 30 million (Lambert 2002). All these figures, their estimation methods and the underlying assumptions behind them are criticised and debated. Estimating the number of environmental migrants/refugees on a global scale are fraught with difficulties. It is important to recognise that patterns of migration and displacement and therefore policies will evolve and intermingle differently with social, economic and political factors depending on whether the environmental hazard is a slow-onset event or fast-onset event. An understanding of the

scope of this issue is better examined by focusing on more concrete environment-human couplings such as:

- Environmental (land) degradation and migration
- Climate change and migration
- Disasters and migration

Resource degradation and migration

With respect to loss of ecosystem services, the cause-effect relationship between, for example, desertification and migration has been flagged at various conferences worldwide and by different stakeholders. This was particularly true during the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD) in 2006. Despite quantification difficulties and lack of definition clarity, both the IYDD and related conferences (in particular Almeria II of 2006 but also Almeria I which was held in 1994) deal exclusively with the links between desertification and migration, are crucial benchmark events marking the emergence of political concern about this issue and reflect the need for comprehensive action.

It is estimated that close to two out of three families from the Malian region of Kayes have a member of their household who has emigrated overseas (Togola 2006). For the same country, persistent droughts have forced people from the North to migrate to other West African regions. West Africa is the main recipient of migrants from Mali (Togola 2006). However, the specific proportion of people migrating out of Mali because of desertification was not specified by Togola (2006).

A second example can be taken from Mexico. A paper commissioned by the United States Commission on Immigration Reform looked at the interlinkages between unsustainable land and water use and migration from Mexico to the USA. The report concluded that migration was probably due to a set of factors that includes large wage differential between the two countries and extensive migrant networks in the USA ("pull" factors) but also emphasised the fact that, based on Mexican Government's data, approximately 900,000 people leave arid and semi-arid areas every year because of their inability to make a living from the land due to dry conditions and soil erosion (Schwartz and Notoni 1994).

A review by Leighton (2006) showed that migration induced by desertification and droughts in Africa, Latin America and Asia served as a

coping mechanism as remittances are subsequently used by the local communities to complement their normal incomes. Actually, migrants transferring remittances are a significant force, and the amount of remittances transferred to developing countries has steadily grown in the past decade, well exceeding US$100 billion worldwide by 2005 (IMF 2005). The World Bank estimates that global flows of migrant remittances increased 43.5 per cent from 2001, reaching US$204.5 billion in 2004 (IBRD 2006).

Climate change and migration

The concept of environmental refugees received considerable attention when the Pacific Island state of Tuvalu announced that it wanted to hold industrialised countries such as Australia and the USA liable for causing sea level rise due to their high levels of greenhouse gas emissions (Seneviratne 2002, Lambert 2002). More recently debate on this issue has been raised again in Australia due to the release of the Stern (2006) review on the Economics of Climate Change, the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007a), and a report by the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) on climate change in the Asia-Pacific, which stated that "degraded landscapes and inundation of populated areas by rising seas may ultimately displace millions of individuals forcing intra and inter-state migration" (Preston et al. 2006: 4). This latter report also highlighted that "challenges to human security are difficult to anticipate, but there is currently little awareness of the implications and regional management frameworks for addressing climate change-induced security and migration issues are lacking" (Preston et al. 2006: 4).

Tuvalu, a small island state in the Pacific Ocean, has a peak height which rises just 5 metres above sea-level (Schmidt 2005). The island currently often experiences flooding when tides are high and the further threat of sea-level rise could have devastating impacts (Schmidt 2005, Patel 2006). There are scientists that argue that localised activities in Tuvalu such as beach mining and construction of buildings, road and jetties along shorelines may also be playing a role in contributing to coastal erosion and loss of land on the island and that not all encroachment of the sea water in Tuvalu can be attributed to climate change impacts (Patel 2006, Connell 2003, Davissen and Long 2003). However in recent months, reports such as the one by Preston et al. (2006) and IPCC Report on Climate Change (IPCC 2007a) are now confirming that warming of the