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Future Trends Series - GR:REEN Project

Title of the report

Demographics and Climate Change: Future Trends And their Policy Implications for Migration

Area

Demography

Reporter

The Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty

Type of the Reporter

Think tank

Periodically updated?

Yes

First issued year

2003

Latest update

2010

Official website

<http://www.migrationdrc.org/>

Language available

English

Short summary

This publication analyses the potential impact of future demographic trends and climate change on migration patterns in developing countries. The final aim of the study is to identify recommendations for future policy-making in international development and to find gaps in research in order to develop future research priorities. Future patterns in demographic change and climate change trends are identified to the horizon of 2050. The study also underlines the way demography and climate change combined influence future migration patterns.

Key trends

- The United Nations estimates the global population to rise between 7.8 and 11.9 billion people by 2050. Between 2000 and 2050, over 98 per cent of population growth will take place in the less-developed regions of the world. From 2030, the population of more developed regions is expected to start decreasing.
- Migration “corridors” can be identified from South Asia and the Middle East & North Africa to the Gulf; from Central Asia to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries; and from Latin America & the Caribbean, and East Asia & the Pacific, to North America.
- In the last decades of the 21st century, there will probably be between 235 and 415 million international migrants in the world. By 2050, international migration is expected to increase by 40 per cent.

- Urbanisation is another key demographic trend. It has reached 47 per cent in 2000 and is predicted to reach almost 60 per cent by 2030. This trend is particularly observable in East and South-East Asia as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa where almost half of the population is expected to live in cities by 2030.
- From 1906 to 2005, changes have been observed in the global climate, including an increase in global surface temperature by $0.74^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0.18^{\circ}\text{C}$. This has resulted in an increasing level of precipitations, severe drought and intensification of tropical cyclones and snow levels. It is expected that climate change will have significant consequences on future migration patterns as increased drought risk, heat waves and water stress in tropical and sub-tropical dry land areas will be “push” factors for migration in affected regions. At the same time, increased flood risk induced by sea level rise particularly in low-lying coastal areas will highly affect areas such as East Asia and East Africa.
- The 21st century will witness increasing migration to larger cities threatening the basic standard of living of migrants.

Suggestions

- Migrant-supporting policies that are linked to climate change might include an incorporation of migration into the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) that has been created for less developed countries to identify priorities in adaptation to climate change.
- Migration and climate change should be inserted in national development plans, such as Country Strategy Papers.
- Policies aiming at ensuring the social protection of the most vulnerable migrants should be further developed with a particular focus on migration within Africa and South Asia. Those measures should include an improvement in terms of the portability of social benefits across borders and have a particular focus on the protection of migrants moving from rural to urban areas within developing countries.
- Policies ensuring the protection of migration to slum areas of large cities with a particular focus on the provision of basic housing, safe water, basic health and education and access to employment.
- Policies should be developed in order to prevent conflict and diffuse tensions related to cross-border migration in politically sensitive areas.
- Policies should expand the definition of a ‘refugee’ in order to include environmental factors such as climate change. Creating a consensus on this is vital for the future of climate-induced migration.
- Policies should be developed to assist the relocation of affected populations (this recommendation is complex as migration is considered as “forced migration”)
- Research should focus further on local and regional data related to migration and climate change addressing both the causes and consequences of migration of affected areas.

Methodology

Research from primary and secondary sources

Reference to other trends reports? If yes, which reports?

- M. Bonell, “Possible impacts of climate variability and change on tropical forest hydrology”, *Climatic Change*, 39(2-3): 215-272, 1998.
- O. Brown, “Climate change and forced migration: observations, projections and implications”, a background paper for the 2007 Human Development Report, 2007.
- UNESA - Population Division, “World Population Prospects: the 2006 Revision Population Database”, New York: United Nations, 2007, online at <http://esa.un.org/unpp/>
- UNPF, “State of the World Population: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth”, New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2007.