

# Migration, climate change and the multiple drivers of mobility: current debates, empirical evidence and implications for policy

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## Key issues covered in this presentation

- Agreements and disagreements on the impacts of climate change on migration
- The wider context and how it affects livelihoods and vulnerability to climate change
- Duration, directions and compositions of migrant flows: recent empirical evidence from Bolivia, Senegal and Tanzania
- Policy implications at local, national and global levels

## What we know (and what we don't know) on the links between migration and climate change

- Migration will increase – but unlikely to be mass movements
- A better understanding of the differences between displacement, voluntary (economic) mobility and distress migration
- A better understanding of destinations (internal and x-border rather than international) and durations (linked to the reason for moving)
- But it is still difficult to make accurate predictions that take into account trends and events (tipping points)

## Current views on migration

- Widespread negative perceptions of rural-urban and international migration and an increase in restrictive policies (usually with limited success)
- Migration as a failure to adapt to climate change or migration as a key adaptive response to CC but also to socio-economic, cultural and political transformations
- A tendency to view migration in isolation rather than as an element of livelihood strategies, especially income diversification

## The wider context (1): urbanization

- Cities and towns in Africa and Asia will absorb virtually all population increase in the next 40 years – 2.3 billion people – reflecting economic growth
- Rapidly growing urban centres are often in areas at risk (low elevation coastal zones)
- It is currently estimated that at least 900 million people live in ‘slums’ highly vulnerable to disasters and impacts of climate change
- Poor rural-urban migrants suffer from increased vulnerability to CC due to lack of planning for urban growth

# Landslides and floods kill 95 in Rio de Janeiro, March 2010



## Floods in Bulacan, Philippines, October 2011



## The wider context (2): natural resources and agriculture

- Access to natural resources (land, water) for smallholder farmers is reduced by the impacts of climate change; but also by:
- ‘Land grabs’, biofuels and biomass production (for high-income nations)
- Construction of infrastructure for mitigation (hydroelectric dams) and adaptation (water reservoirs; protection against floods and sea level rise and storm surges...)
- Lack of local non-farm employment to reduce dependency on natural resources

## Climate change, migration and livelihood responses in Bolivia, Senegal and Tanzania

- All environmentally fragile areas with long-standing tradition of mobility
- The impacts of CC (rainfall variation and associated impacts) are compounded by non-environmental crises to become 'precipitating events'
- These include: closure of mines in Bolivia; collapse of international prices for cash crops and infrastructure building in Senegal; land commoditisation in Tanzania

## Diverse migration responses: seasonal mobility

- Important for the poorest groups, often to make ends meet
- Typically rural to rural, male-dominated
- Linked to rain fed agriculture, lack of local non-farm income generation but also persistence and resilience of family farming
- Responds to demand from family farmers in different ecological zones where out-migration results in seasonal labour shortages but also cash to pay labourers (itself a major transformation)

## Migration responses 2: temporary migration

- More likely to be directed towards local and national urban centres, or across borders
- Involves women and increasingly young people, partly because of the nature of jobs and partly because of social networks
- International migration links: investments in small and medium-sized towns attract internal migrants working in construction and services
- Temporary migrants as a group at risk: living and working conditions

## Migration as adaptation: poverty, vulnerability and use of remittances

- In all locations, the most vulnerable households are those that do not receive remittances
- In poorer areas, remittances are often as food rather than cash and important for household food security
- Remittances tend to support consumption
- Investment in agriculture is low in areas with limited potential, but higher in areas of commercial agriculture
- International migrants however prefer to invest in smaller urban centres (where land is cheaper) often resulting in their rapid expansion

## From understanding to action: policy implications for sustainable development

- Reducing vulnerability to climate change can only be achieved through sustainable development
- More information on the diversity of mobility and its role for sustainable livelihoods is needed at global, national and local levels
- This requires a major shift in perceptions of migration
- The role of local governments and governance systems is increasingly recognised as central, but their capacity in the Global South is low (especially in small towns)

## The responsibilities and role of the Global North

- High GHG emitter countries have a clear responsibility with regards to climate change
- Support wide-ranging adaptation programmes in the South, especially community-based initiatives
- Support forward-looking urban planning that takes into account the needs of the poor in cities and towns in the South
- Ensure that mitigation does not result in increased vulnerability and displacement and/or distress migration (eg infrastructure and land grabs)

Thank you for your attention