

CLIMATE INDUCED MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT

Introduction

Climate induced migration refers to the movement of individuals or households compelled by environmental changes such as rising temperatures, sea level rise, droughts and land degradation. Unlike traditional migration driven by economic or political factors, climate migration is often involuntary and reactive. As the global climate crisis intensifies, climate induced displacement is becoming one of the most urgent humanitarian and development challenges of our time.

The World Bank's 2021 Groundswell Africa report projects that by 2050, up to 12 million Ugandans approximately 11% of the population could become internal climate migrants due to slow onset environmental changes such as drought, land degradation and water scarcity.



These movements are driven by declining agricultural productivity in rural areas, reduced access to water resources and shifting ecological viability across regions. The IOM – Makerere University study on climate related migration in Uganda confirms both sudden disasters (floods, landslides) and gradual degradation force significant displacement in regions like Bududa, Katakwi and Amudat.

In South Asia, Bangladesh and India face massive internal migration risks due to rising sea levels, recurring cyclones and river floods.

Key drivers of climate – induced migration

- Sea level rise
- **Extreme weather events:** Hurricanes, cyclones, floods and wild fires displace millions temporarily or permanently.
- **Drought and water scarcity:** Affects agriculture, water supply and livelihoods.
- **Desertification and land degradation:** Reduces arable land, leading to rural depopulation and conflict over remaining resources.
- **Food insecurity:** Climate impacts on agriculture can cause famine, undernourishment and migration especially among vulnerable populations.

2. About Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA)

The Advocacy Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture (ACSA) is a legally registered national network of 29 civil society organisations (CSOs) operating in 46 districts of Uganda. It collaborates with smallholder farmers to promote sustainable agriculture, market development, environmental conservation, and undertakes research and advocacy to influence favourable agrarian policies. With a mission “to empower civil society organisations (both church and non-church actors) working with smallholder farmers to advocate for a favourable agrarian policy environment for sustainable communities”, ACSA envisions “smallholder farmers living in a sustainable environment.” ACSA’s core areas include advocacy and lobbying, capacity building, research and documentation, networking, and partnership development. The coalition’s objective is to ensure that member organisations and their affiliated smallholder farmers (SHFs) engage in profitable enterprises. Under this mandate, ACSA undertook an in-depth analysis of Uganda’s coffee sector to inform stakeholders and policy actors.

3. What Happens?

The impact of climate induced migration is wide ranging and affects individuals, communities, countries and ecosystems. It has social, economic and environmental impacts.

Social impacts

- Loss of homes and communities
- Cultural erosion: Indigenous and traditional ways of life are disrupted, in which cultural heritage is lost.
- Social tensions: Sudden population shifts can strain between migrants and host communities.
- Health risks: Overcrowded camps or settlements often have limited sanitation,

- healthcare and nutrition.
- Security concerns: Migration across borders can fuel diplomatic strains especially where asylum systems are weak.

Economic impacts

- Loss of livelihoods: Farmers, fishers and herders often lose their means of income due to drought or floods.
- Urban pressure: Rapid urban migration increases unemployment, housing shortages and slum growth.
- Increased poverty: Many climate migrants move with limited resources and face marginalisation in new areas.

Environmental impacts

- Urban sprawl: Unplanned settlements on the outskirts of cities lead to deforestation, pollution and ecosystem disruption.
- Pressure on natural resources including land which may lead to degradation.



4. Who is most affected?

Group	Outcome
Low-income populations	Least able to adapt or relocate, often trapped.
Women & children	Face higher risks of violence, exploitation and poverty.
Indigenous communities	Loss of ancestral lands and cultural identity
Urban poor	Face worsening slum conditions and job competition.

5. What can be done?

Addressing climate induced migration requires a mix of prevention, protection and planning targeted at both the causes of displacement and the needs of displaced people and host communities. The government of Uganda in collaboration with CSOs can make this happen.

- Invest in climate resilient livelihoods including adapting to drought tolerant crops and climate smart agriculture. Diversify income sources e.g. agro-forestry, eco-tourism and sustainable livestock.
- Strengthening water and land management through establishing irrigation systems, soil conservation and watershed protection. Having community led water harvesting and flood control systems.
- Integrating migration into national climate and development plans for example relocation frameworks.
- Build skills and provide remittances support to migrant's families.
- Promote regional cooperation through sharing data and early warning systems among neighbouring states.
- Ensure access to land, healthcare, education and safe water to migrants and host communities.
- Improve early warning systems through community-based monitoring for floods, landslides or drought. Use mobile alerts and local radio networks for rural areas.

- Strengthen disaster risk governance through training local response committees, ensure local governments have resources and decision-making power.
- Support host communities through investing in infrastructure and services in areas receiving migrants, create jobs etc.
- Train the youth in green economy and climate resilient skills, conduct gender sensitive research on how climate migration affects women and marginalised groups.

6. Academic and systematic studies on climate induced migration

Here are some insightful articles and research resources on climate induced migration covering global case studies.

Climate change and migration: A review and new framework for analysis. This 2024 review offers a nuanced framework integrating perceptions, socio economic context and adaptation approach. It highlights diverse migration drivers and cautions against simplistic narratives of inevitable displacement.

Environmental migration? A systematic review and meta-analysis. A comprehensive review synthesizing hundreds of studies across different climate scenarios. It identifies knowledge gaps and quantifies climate's influence on mobility.

Health and migration in the context of a changing climate. Assesses how both slow and sudden onset climate shocks affect health outcomes for migrants and host communities.

Climate anomalies, land degradation and rural out migration in Uganda. Longitudinal household environmental data shows that heat stress drives both temporary and permanent migration, more than soil degradation or deforestation.

FAO: Enhancing resilience in communities at risk of climate induced migration (2024 – 2025): Highlights interventions in Uganda and Nepal: climate adaptive agriculture training, diaspora engagement, strengthening policy capacities and youth empowerment to reduce displacement pressure.

World bank Groundswell (2021): Predicts that by 2050, some 216 million people worldwide may be forced to migrate internally due to climate stress, with Africa potentially contributing 86 million of them unless mitigation strategies are adopted.

Brookings Institute analysis: Estimates that approximately 22-24 million displaced people in the late 2010s were due to sudden climate events and frames migration as a multidimensional driver intensifying food insecurity, resource scarcity, conflict and displacement across South Asia and beyond.

Climate induced migration in the Global South: an in-depth analysis. Summarises empirical relationships between rising temperatures, water stress, sea level rise and migration, noting that rural internal migration is likely to increase significantly in arid and coastal zones.

MDPI (2024): Climate induced migration in India and Bangladesh: Reviews case studies from South Asia examining displacement due to cyclones, floods and salinity intrusion and discusses adaptation mechanisms and vulnerabilities.

7. References

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