

NEW CHALLENGES TO HUMAN SECURITY: ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND HUMAN MOBILITY

INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF DIPLOMACY

Environmental changes shape internal and external patterns of human movement around the globe—both sudden, large-scale displacement and the more difficult to track slow-onset migration. These changes in many cases put human security at risk. Increasingly, climate change and man-made environmental shifts have profound implications for global patterns of mobility and resettlement. To explore how climate change drives migration, and discuss how global patterns of mobility and resettlement are likely to affect stability and security around the world, in the fall of 2016 the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy convened a working group on “New Challenges to Human Security: Environmental Change and Human Mobility.” Experts in climate change, migration, and security policy joined a number of senior policymakers to explore the nexus between climate change and human security, focusing on environment-linked migration and its implications for policy.

The ISD working group produced a set of **Guiding Principles** for policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and international institutions to incorporate into their near-term planning:

- ❑ **Define “environmental migrants”** – Universally accepted definitions of people who leave their homes for environmental reasons, distinct from other forms of migrants and refugees, are important for a host of legal, economic, and security reasons.
- ❑ **Collect more data** – Which groups and societies are hit the hardest, and which resiliency interventions are the most effective? More research is also needed on where people are heading—or where we think they will go.
- ❑ **Consider the advantages of “planned relocation”** – Planned relocation will likely become more necessary—and more common, as environmental changes make it impossible for people to remain in some locations. The high costs and complexity of moving entire communities proactively, however, warrant further study and planning.

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Founded in 1978, the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, an integral part of the Walsh School of Foreign Service, brings together diplomats, other practitioners, scholars and students from across and beyond Georgetown University to explore global challenges and evolving demands of diplomatic statecraft, to better understand the nexus of theory and practice, and to enhance and expand an appreciation of the role of diplomacy as a critical tool in national policy.

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- ❑ **Make development assistance more adaptive** – National governments, NGOs, and international organizations can work together to become more flexible in designing projects that assist communities that are most threatened by climate change.
- ❑ **Create regional agreements** – Environmental migrants are likely to traverse multiple international boundaries, with potential legal and security ramifications. Regional agreements may be needed to allow for more fluid and workable migration, particularly in the event of large-scale displacement.
- ❑ **Develop regional “safety valves”** – There may be a need to plan collectively for one nation or nations to serve as a safe haven for environmental migrants within a region, and create workable incentives for these safety valve nations.
- ❑ **Manage resources and infrastructure needs effectively** – Some communities at risk may be able to stay in place, if local infrastructure and resource management can be strengthened. Communities receiving environmental migrants may also face compounded challenges to existing resources and infrastructure.
- ❑ **Steer people where their needs can best be met** – With most environmental migrants heading to urban areas along the coast, the working group recommends the identification of regions and cities to serve as suitable landing spots for environmental migrants—and creating “pull” mechanisms that steer environmental migrants to these cities/regions.
- ❑ **Focus on migrants’ needs in the receiving communities** – Most environmental migrants head to nearby urban areas, which may also face similar environmental challenges. And there may be significant ethnic or cultural challenges due to large numbers of incoming environmental migrants.
- ❑ **Prioritize the creation of jobs within receiving cities** – There is an ongoing urban population explosion, particularly within coastal areas that are already highly vulnerable to climate change and environmental stresses. But this “urbanization without growth” too often does not include new jobs or economic growth—offering environmental migrants few work opportunities.

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