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## CLIMATE CHANGE, MOBILITY AND MIGRATION: HOW SHOULD GOVERNMENTS RESPOND?



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### The effects of climate change on internal mobility

They can occur through 3 transmission mechanisms:

- 1) Natural disasters: account for 90% of extreme weather conditions and lead more often to displacement that can be reversed
- 2) Gradual climate changes affecting people's livelihoods: lead to a more permanent change of residence



- 3) Degradation of subsistence base (for example, economic hardships): leads to indirect effects of climate change and can lead eventually to a change of residence

The concept of “natural disaster” is a social construct: its number is now increasing, not only because they are becoming more frequent but because now more people come to be affected by it. In fact, there is a clear increase in reports of events and between 2008 and 2021 a total of 342 million people have been displaced. Research shows that there is an upward trend in the frequency of natural disasters and in the number of people affected by them; while there is no clear trend regarding the number of people affected compared to the events reported, but the number of people who die of natural disasters is less compared to the past. Furthermore, floods and storms provoke most of the displacements.

Most people who have been displaced by natural disasters tend to return to their place of origin (since 2008, only 2% of the people did not return home after a disaster), because international and national aids are ready to be used in case of natural disasters. Instead, in the case of wars and civil wars there is no interest on the part of governments to take back displaced people (like in Syria), so reconstruction efforts are difficult.

### **The reasons behind gradual displacements**

These can include upstream and downstream floods, soil erosion making crop production impossible and making people lose their subsistence space, lack of fresh water, and melting of permafrost in some world regions.

Examples:

- Southern Europe and the Black sea: they are becoming dryer
- Brazil: desertification of Amazonia
- Increase in likelihood of hurricanes originating between Australia and Java, then traveling Indian ocean and hitting people in Eastern Africa (Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique)
- River deltas

Important to keep in mind: the number of people in cities is increasing, reaching 2.4 billion in 2020.

From the countryside to the city, a person gets away from food and water stress but he/she is likely to get more affected by floods or heat waves.

There is high uncertainty about the future because 6 scenarios arise with a big gap between the higher and lower scenarios (also in the number of people affected), therefore it is very difficult to assess where to allocate the money or if it is going to be enough.

### **Ways of prevention**

- Less greenhouse gas
- Permanent resettlement as islands in the Pacific and Indian oceans will be too affected (Indonesia is moving its capital away from Jakarta)
- Changing subsistence base (in the UAE or Las Vegas they found the business model to make a living out of a dry area)
- Adaptation and mitigation (in the Netherlands you can live with floods, and high tides but you need political will and financial resources to make it happen)



- Insurance and capital market instruments (crop insurance)
- Make the regions resilient as an alternative to migration

In migration, there is an interaction between climate, conflict and economic aspects and sometimes migration and displacement mobility are just unavoidable.

We should also change our model of development by combining economic growth, environmental respect and social welfare in order to limit emissions, but in Europe there is not only a lack of awareness of business alternatives to promote sustainable development. There is also a slow rate of change in the approach we have for some social sectors and resistance to moving towards new approaches.

Last but not least, Europe has the responsibility to help developing countries because they do not have the financial capacities to do so as they are the most affected by climate change. And also, we should understand that migration is not something “bad”, as the European population is getting older and it could help us keep our position in the world, as well as sustain our dynamism and economic growth.