

MSc Public Policy

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Assessment: Annotated bibliography

Title: Migrants in the face of climate change and how to safeguard them?

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# Migrants in the face of climate change and how to safeguard them?

## INTRODUCTION

Climate change, as recognised by all, is the biggest elephant in the room. There are reports, panels, international agreements, and so forth to abate and mitigate its consequences. International agreements like the 2015 Paris Climate agreement pledges to keep the global temperature to 1.5 C (Milman, Witherspoon, Liu and Chang, 2021). The more the globe heats, the further distant a liveable planet becomes for humanity. At 1.5 degrees Celsius, severe heat waves will affect 14% of the world's population every five years (ibid). At 2C, this amount will have risen to over a third of the world's population (ibid). With this information at hand, migration caused because of climate change is the important climate change consequence that requires world attention. There is a wide-ranging debate on the topic 'climate-induced migrants', and the below-annotated bibliography tries to cover these debates and also attempts to understand how or what steps can be taken by countries at the international and local level to protect migrants affected from climate change and its long-drawn effects.

Podesta, J., 2021. *The climate crisis, migration, and refugees*. [online] Brookings. Available at: <<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-climate-crisis-migration-and-refugees/>> [Accessed 25 July 2019].

While conceding the link between migration and climate change, the author makes an interesting case for international intervention to secure the safety of climate migrants. He makes his case by citing startling data from World Bank reports and National Public Radio, which claims that by 2050, three regions (Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia) will have produced an additional 143 million climate migrants (World Bank Group, 2018), and the sudden-onset weather disasters, such as flooding, forest fires following droughts, and stronger storms, prompted one-third of the 68.5 million people to move in 2017 (National Public Radio, 2018). Thus, the humanitarian catastrophe will be compounded by climate change's slow onset. The blog concludes by proposing solutions to these problems: Climate migrants can be classified as refugees by UNHCR, or the Sustainable Development Goal 13 can be utilised profusely to protect them. Besides these efforts, the author advises providing food, water, irrigation infrastructure, and other resources to countries experiencing significant climate change effects. The blog, however, does not explain how to identify climate migrants or how to distinguish between persons who migrate primarily because of climate and those who travel because of other considerations.

Mayer, B., (2016). *The concept of climate migration: advocacy and its prospects*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

This book puts the debate of defining climate migration in perspective. The author identifies that climate change induces migration but explains the difficulty involved in conceptualising the term Climate migrant. Climate change is about probabilities and frequencies, not the all-or-nothing causal relationship, which makes it difficult to attribute migration to climate change. However, a vague definition can be developed using Walter Kalin's suggested distinguishing five scenarios of "climate change-induced displacement" based on the situation that most directly pushes individuals to move, but this list is not exhaustive. This vague definition could develop the statistical impact of climate change on migration and this might have significant political implications. Mayer rejects the notion

of completely discarding climate migration, arguing that it is vital to building international solidarity and that climate migration can be seen as a human face in climate change. All of this draws international attention to the problem and aids in the reform of global governance that is sensitive to a humanitarian crisis. This book fills in the conceptual gaps in the climate migration discussion and amplifies other relevant research and the above blog on how to protect climate migrants.

Nishimura, L., 2015. 'Climate Change Migrants': Impediments to a Protection Framework and the Need to Incorporate Migration into Climate Change Adaptation Strategies. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 27(1), pp.107-134.

Nishimura argues in this paper that there is no international governance that expressly accounts for climate-related migration, and also there is no academic consensus on how to treat climate migrants. Considering this, the author investigates why there is still no international framework in place to address climate change-related migration. She emphasises the following factors: the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) lacks the resources and mandate to address the misery of millions; there is a lack of political will to form new legal obligations and accept responsibilities; the rhetoric of security prevents developed countries from responding to climate migration, and Civil society and other global advocacy networks are only effective when the issues are specific, have a clear causal chain, and can identify guilty parties- neither of which is possible in this case. As a result, the author argues that in order to create an effective protection framework; it is necessary to discuss migration as an adaptive mechanism strategy rather than focusing on security rhetoric; any migration framework should accommodate human rights, the voices of those affected, and should not be used solely as a political tool. These solutions may not address all the underlying issues, but they are offered as a starting point for beginning protective measures.

Gibb, C. and Ford, J., 2012. Should the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognize climate migrants?. *Environmental Research Letters*, 7(4), p.045601.

Several papers suggest that a framework on climate migration should be added to the UNFCCC. This article examines if it's workable to do so and, if yes, how and what are the potential risks. The author argues that just because climate migration cannot be defined, this doesn't prevent it, just like terrorism, from international protection. The answer to the above question is yes, as UNFCCC has a mandate to address the adaptation issues, and climate migration is regarded as an adaption to climate change. However, it risks ineffectiveness as the framework doesn't have any legal imposition and, the restricted funding offsets its effectiveness. Thus, UNFCCC can include climate migrants by focusing on developing a clear mandate; securing permanent funding; involving different stakeholders; developing an appropriate unit of measurement for analysis; considering both migrants and non-migrants; and building a comprehensive strategy. The author is affirmative about the international action because global policy stands the chance to stop climate migration from escalating into a humanitarian crisis. The paper, in chorus with similar papers, suggests migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change and for developed countries to look away from security rhetoric.

Dimitra Manou, Baldwin, A., Dug Cubie, Mihr, A. and Thorp, T.M. (2018). *Climate change, migration and human rights: law and policy perspectives*. Abingdon: Routledge.

In chapter 6 of this book, Simperingsm discusses the state responsibility to prevent climate displacement. This Chapter adds to other articles and blog in the bibliography in creating an understanding of climate migrants, their protection and how states can prevent it. The chapter

emphasises it is exposure to climate hazards combined with the vulnerability of individuals that leads to displacement. In order to reduce the risk of displacement, all the measures adopted should respect human rights in full capacity. The author focuses on HLP (housing, land, and property rights) as a sector that, if insufficient, exacerbates the vulnerability of those who are already marginalised. The state must work to close gaps in this right by ensuring that there is no discrimination in the housing market, that housing is affordable and accessible, that the tenure system is secure, and that adequate housing is provided in vulnerable locations. Besides these actions, planned relocation could be employed as a strategy only if all other alternatives have dried up. As when planned relocation is involuntary, human rights issues should be taken care of. For effective prevention, the state must build a system that ensures accountability, review, reform, and draws on international standards and guidelines.

Helbling, M., 2020. Attitudes towards climate change migrants. *Climatic Change*, 160(1), pp.89-102.

After examining many aspects of Climate Migrants, this article focuses on a new aspect. It addresses how people feel about climate migration. This article examines would there be a human resistance, if all the above steps of international cooperation were implemented. Helbling explains people accept the climate migrants in few numbers but, debate emerges when the number increases - a survey was conducted in Germany to analyse the attitude. Individuals are comfortable accepting climate migrants as long as it comes at a low cost and is perceived as a moral obligation of Western countries, according to the findings. It is crucial to stress, however, that Germany's position cannot be applied universally. The paper does not explain what might be done to improve acceptance, as the number of climate migrants is growing every year.

## CONCLUSION

This annotated bibliography raises the debate of whether international organisations can be effective in persuading states to take on obligations. To conclude, Mayer (2016) proposes a framework for defining climate migrants filling the definition vacuum, and other sources suggest actions to safeguard climate migrants, such as the UNFCCC Framework, state-level policies, and others, could be implemented using his approach of definition. Also, Helbling's survey results could help develop strategies to build a positive attitude vis-à-vis accepting climate migrants.

## Work's cited

Mcdonnell, T., 2021. *NPR Cookie Consent and Choices*. [online] Npr.org. Available at: <<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/06/20/621782275/the-refugees-that-the-world-barely-pays-attention-to->> [Accessed 2 November 2021].

Milman, o., witherspoon, a., Liu, R. and Chang, A., 2021. *The climate disaster is here – this is what the future looks like*. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/ng-interactive/2021/oct/14/climate-change-happening-now-stats-graphs-maps-cop26>> [Accessed 2 November 2021].

Rigaud, Kanta Kumari, de Sherbinin, Alex, Jones, B., Bergmann, J., Clement, V., Ober, K., Schewe, J., Adamo, S., McCusker, B., Heuser, S. and Midgley, A. (2018a). Groundswell. *Worldbank.org*. [online] Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461>

