



Abstract

High levels of human mobility brought on by global megatrends such as population growth, urbanisation, globalisation, coastward migration, environmental degradation, resource depletion, and sprawling of slums in developing countries are likely to be reinforced by climate change, making it plausible that human mobility will increase significantly during the 21st Century. Within the academic, development and international community there is no uniform view how this potentiality should be faced, but projections typically agree that the majority of this migration can be expected to occur in developing countries characterised by high levels of poverty and vulnerability. Moreover, it can be observed that a significant amount of climate change related migration is already underway.

A review of the literature reveals knowledge gaps with respect to both interdisciplinary and local-level research that expressly invites the perspectives of climate migrants. This dissertation responds to these gaps both by drawing on literature in several fields of inquiry, and by intentionally engaging with migration affected populations to identify what preferred solutions they envisage. Taking a humanitarian preparedness approach, this research seeks to identify what migrants want so that appropriate policy instruments for equitable macro-managed migration processes can be discussed, developed, drafted and legislated well before they are needed. To this end, this research aims to learn from various forms of current migrations which may or may not all be climate induced. At its simplest, this thesis argues that policy preparedness is the a priori policy posture of choice.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Bolivia, Bangladesh and the Maldives, this research repositions climate migrants at the centre of a scholarly debate that has largely marginalised or even patronised them. It concludes: (1) inviting the contributions of migrants leads to preferable migration outcomes; (2) policy maker foresight is an important success factor; (3) targeted service provision can enable more positive migration outcomes; (4) many migrants wish to stay in their countries / communities, thereby highlighting the importance of in situ adaptation; (5) nomenclature is a non-problem in the minds of most migrants; (6) accountable and responsive government institutions have a key role to play in enabling anticipatory migrations; (7) education is the sine qua non for all future migration preparedness.