

# Current Environmental Changes and Forced Population Mobility: A Literature Review.

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## Current Environmental Changes and Forced Population Mobility: A Literature Review

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**Summary:** The aim of this article is to draw attention of the current scale of forced environmental migrations worldwide. There have been a number of attempts over the decades to enumerate environmental migrants and refugees. Jodi Jacobson (1988) is cited as the first researcher to enumerate the issue, stating that there were already up to 10 million 'Environmental Refugees'. Drawing on 'worst-case scenarios' about sea-level rise, she argued that all forms of 'Environmental Refugees' would be six times as numerous as political refugees. (1988: 38). Myers argued that the causes of environmental displacement would include desertification, lack of water, salination of irrigated lands and the depletion of bio-diversity. He also hypothesised that displacement would amount to 30m in China, 30m in India, 15m in Bangladesh, 14m in Egypt, 10m in other delta areas and coastal zones, 1m in island states, and with otherwise agriculturally displaced people totalling 50m (Myers & Kent 1995) by 2050. Forced environmental migrations are one of the greatest problems that international community must face in next years. The issue of forced environmental migrants was also pointed out by many others scholars (e.g. Etienne Piguet; Francoise Gemenne; Bogumil Terminski; Koko Warner and many others). We present the most important theoretical approaches to the issue of forced environmental migrations.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, more than 42 million people were displaced in Asia and the Pacific during 2010 and 2011, more than twice the population of Sri Lanka. This figure includes those displaced by storms, floods, and heat and cold waves. Still others were displaced by drought and sea-level rise. Most of those compelled to leave their homes eventually returned when conditions improved, but an undetermined number became migrants, usually within their country, but also across national borders. Climate-induced migration is a highly complex issue which needs to be understood as part of global migration dynamics. Migration typically has multiple causes, and environmental factors are intertwined with other social and economic factors, which themselves can be influenced by environmental changes. Environmental migration should not be treated solely as a discrete category, set apart from other migration flows. A 2012 Asian Development Bank study argues that climate-induced migration should be addressed as part of a country's development agenda, given the major implications of migration on economic and social development. The report recommends interventions both to address the situation of those who have migrated, as well as those who remain in areas subject to environmental risk. It says: "To reduce migration compelled by worsening environmental conditions, and to strengthen resilience of at-risk communities, governments should adopt policies and commit financing to social protection, livelihoods development, basic urban infrastructure development, and disaster risk management". Additionally, it is maintained that the poor populate areas that are most at risk for environmental destruction and climate change, including coastlines, flood-lines and steep slopes. As a result, climate change threatens areas already suffering from extreme poverty. "The issue of equity is crucial. Climate affects us all, but does not affect us all equally," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told delegates at a climate conference in Indonesia. Africa is also one of the world regions where environmental displacement is critical largely due to droughts and other climate related eventualities. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, more than 42 million people were displaced in Asia and the Pacific during 2010 and 2011, more than twice the population of Sri Lanka. This figure includes those displaced by storms, floods, and heat and cold waves. Still others were displaced by drought and sea-level rise. Most of those compelled to leave their homes eventually returned when conditions improved, but an undetermined number became migrants,

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