

Roundtable on Climate Change and Human Mobility

Friday, October 7, 2011, 12:00 pm — 2:00 pm

The Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC

Summary

Following a panel discussion on Climate Change Adaptation and Displacement, Migration and Planned Relocation,¹ the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement organized a roundtable for researchers and practitioners working on issues of climate change and human mobility to update each other on current and planned research and activities in the field.

Beth Ferris, Co-Director of the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement welcomed participants to this informal roundtable discussion and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to report on current and future research initiatives in the area of climate change and human mobility.

The discussion was wide-ranging and included a combination of reporting on research initiatives underway and suggestions on how to strengthen cooperation in activities related to climate change and human mobility.

Richard Scott from IOM reported that IOM has been involved in the issue of climate change and migration for many years. He shared a list of IOM's publications on climate change and migration, noting that the first publications on the issue were from 1992. IOM holds an annual series of workshops on migration and as part of this series IOM held a workshop earlier this year on 'Migration, Climate Change and Environmental Degradation', which was attended by over two hundred people from around the world. IOM's workshop serves as a forum to discuss these issues. The executive summary of the meeting is available at: (<http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/climate-change-environmental-degradation-and-migration/lang/en/cache/offonce>).

Richard noted that there is a need to expand the data that is available and increase the understanding of the relationship between migration and environmental factors. It is important to know what others are doing in this field. At present IOM is carrying out a mapping exercise to see which donors (and which agencies within donor structures) are interested in funding

¹ Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, "Conversations about Climate Change Adaption: Displacement, Migration and Planned Relocation", Panel Discussion, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 7 October 2011, http://www.brookings.edu/events/2011/1007_climate_change_adaption.aspx

work in this area. Strategic use of donor funds is important and organizations need to share information with each other on this issue. He suggested that it would be useful for the groups present to continue sharing information.

Niels Harild works on issues of forced displacement at the World Bank. He noted that the issue of climate induced displacement is related more to development than anything else. He emphasized that the sooner the issue becomes centered around development the better, otherwise we will certainly fail.

The gorilla in the room, he noted, is population growth. It is not on the agenda and no one discusses it. And yet if we don't deal with the impact of population growth, our efforts may be in vain. For example, if the population in the Horn of Africa had remained the same as it was fifty years ago, then perhaps the present drought may not have led to drought related displacement at the magnitude we see today as the carrying capacity of the land would have been sufficient.

He also reported that in a few weeks the World Bank will publish a study on IDPs in Georgia. This study was carried out in coordination with the government and a number of development partners including, USAID, the EC, Danish Refugee Council and others and will soon be available. A regional study on displacement in the European-Central Asian region will also soon be published.

Tejaswi Velayudhan from the Center for Global Development reported that at the Center Michael Clemens is the lead specialist on migration and development. An often overlooked aspect is that migration is a powerful tool for development. Recently a paper was published by Royce Murray and Sarah Williamson looking at how the US can provide better humanitarian assistance in natural disasters.

(http://www.cgdev.org/section/initiatives/_active/migration_tool_disaster_recovery) The report took Haiti as a case study and looked at ways migration could be used as a tool to support development in Haiti. One of the reports' key suggestions is to granting parole and to shorten the waiting time for many of the Haitians who have family in the US and are waiting to emigrate.

Christopher Molitoris, also from the Center for Global Development mentioned that the Center is trying to meet with key stakeholders on this issue. Recently they met with Haitian migrants and congressional officials in Florida to discuss the political feasibility of the parole suggestion. They found there are two areas where politicians are willing to spend their political capital. The first is with a Haitian family reunification program. The second is opening H2A/H2B visas to Haitians. These visas allow non-immigrant workers to enter the US for agricultural work. Over 50 countries are on the list but Haiti is not one of them. Their key point is that migration has a huge potential for development.

Andrea Lari from Refugees International (RI) reported that the Bacon Center for the Study of Climate Displacement, an initiative of Refugees International, analyzes data and carries out research on gaps in assisting people displaced by slow and rapid onset disasters. They have a three-year work plan which establishes their goals and objectives. Their first goal is to push the US government to clarify the structure and policies in place to address climate-induced displacement. Their second goal is to push the government to adopt policies that mitigate the

effects of climate-induced displacement. Their third goal is to improve the response and protection of vulnerable persons by the UN and other international actors. They hope to increase UNHCR's engagement with people affected by disasters and to examine how the cluster approach deals with climate-induced displacement. Their fourth aim is to identify how RI can contribute to durable solutions for those displaced by natural disasters and climate change. Alice Thomas is the person at RI working on these issues.

Ronak Patel from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI) noted that the initiative strives to fill the gaps in the data on humanitarian issues. They have carried out work on gender-based violence in the Congo and are addressing the issue of rapid urbanization. Through their research they have seen that rural populations are moving to cities as a result of climate change. HHI is working to develop a research agenda looking at rapid urbanization and climate change as a synergistic relationship. They are organizing a conference on December 9-10, 2011 on these issues which will also be webcast. HHI needs help looking at the gaps, and looking at risk-assessment vulnerability.

Susan Martin from the Institute for the Study of Migration (ISIM) at Georgetown University reported that ISIM has three papers coming out in the next few months. The first is by Koko Warner and Susan Martin which looks at how the UNCCC and other fora have developed an interest in migration. The second is by Philip Martin, a labor economist from UC Davis, who looks at how development actors in rural sectors address migration. The third is by Sarah Collinson at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) which looks at institutional frameworks and examines where there are weaknesses in addressing humanitarian concerns. In addition, ISIM is beginning work on a larger project which will examine legal, political and institutional frameworks for cross-border movements. One of the issues they will examine is whether there is something about climate change which necessitates new policy instruments. As it stands now there is a whole range of gaps not just within the climate change framework but also in the refugee regime and the labor regime. A major issue in this discussion is one of equity. Does climate change demand a unique response or do we need a more integrated response? Do people displaced by climate change have a special claim to the international community that conflict-displaced persons do not have?

Edward Carr from USAID highlighted the research finding that the motivation for migration differs within communities and there are difficulties in aggregating issues. He is interested in the issue of displacement as it relates to the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD). He noted for example, that there is large-scale migration out of Somalia, but not from similarly affected areas in Ethiopia and Kenya. These differences in migration patterns, call for a focus on specific motivations for migration as a means for guiding future interventions.

Mahfouz Tados recently worked at a research institute in Kuwait where he looked at environmental issues such as bioterrorism, desertification, and climate change. He noted that the issue of remittances is closely related to the issue of climate change. In Kuwait the population is 3.6 million of which 2.4 million are non-Kuwaitis. A lot of remittances leave Kuwait for Jordan, Sri Lanka and other countries. He suggested we could look at how these remittances are being used by the members of displaced families in their home countries.

Andrea Berringer from Louisiana State University discussed four current research topics, including responses to displacement in the face of the added threat of climate change, governance systems for international responses, impact of rising sea levels in the Caribbean, and how the potential pull of diaspora communities can impact responses to climate change.

Robin Bronen from the Alaska Immigration Justice Project described research on village relocations in Alaska resulting from climate change. Extreme weather events and the destruction of permafrost as a result of global warming have accelerated rates of erosion, making it impossible for some communities to continue living where they are. She noted that up to 31 villages in Alaska may need to be relocated. Within the US government there have been multi-level working groups trying to examine the frameworks for addressing these issues and studies by the Government Accountability Office have confirmed the need for villages to be relocated. In her paper, published in the NY Law Review (www.law.nyu.edu/ecm_dlv2/.../ecm_pro_069609.pdf), she examines the shortcomings in the current legal framework for addressing such situations. She has also conducted research in Papua New Guinea and is in the process of developing a project to bring together communities from Papua New Guinea and Alaska who face climate change effects.

In a comment to Robin's presentation, *Michael Cernea* from the Brookings-LSE Project noted that we typically think climate change will affect third world countries but we don't pay attention to how it affects the US, especially in Alaska.

Robin Mearns from the World Bank made the point that various forms of migration and ancillary issues crop up in social development. Looking institutionally, migration is an issue that often falls through the cracks. The World Bank has a long way to go on migration issues but there are increasing signs of convergence on migration issues from a variety of departments within the World Bank. There is a group led by Dilip Ratha in the World Bank on the role of remittances and development. He also noted that the issue of gender and development is a high priority for the World Bank going into the Durban talks with Jeni Klugman, the Director for Gender and Development, working on those issues. There is good movement towards this at high policy levels. Social development colleagues are working with people in the field of disaster risk reduction. The problem is within the development sector, which is fragmented between rural and urban development experts. Although there has been progress in recent years, much remains to be done. We need to look at engaging at the country and regional level. He also mentioned that conversations surrounding displacement from REDD were confined to discussion possible future displacement rather than existing displacement.

Beth Ferris shared that the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement continues to work on natural disasters and holds regional workshops on natural disasters and human rights in different regions. The project is also developing a new course for government officials on natural disasters and human rights to be held in Sanremo, Italy in 2012. The project is interested in looking at housing, land, and property issues as they relate to natural disasters, in develop guidelines for evacuations and in working with others to develop guidelines for planned resettlement and relocation. The project also plans to do work on climate change mitigation projects and displacement. Another area of work is assisting seven Pacific Island States to assess and develop laws and policies to deal with climate change and displacement. This initiative was

spurred by a workshop in Fiji where participant countries expressed a lack of laws, expertise and resources on those issues.

Sarah Jackson from UNHCR stressed UNHCR's interest in continuing to collect more information on the issue to help shape policy.

Kathleen Newland from the Migration Policy Institute reported that the institute is looking at lessons emerging from micro-situations and if they are appropriate at the macro level.

Joel Charny from InterAction noted that there is a problem in the NGO community with organizations interested in migration as a result of climate change as they all seem to be on the humanitarian side. There was a recent event on this topic and only humanitarian actors attended, not the development community. The absence of development actors is quite evident from InterAction's perspective.

Peter Benda pointed out that the US government has had the same problem. He and his colleagues in the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (Office of International Migration) made a concerted effort to get NGO development actors to attend a meeting they convened in the run-up to last year's Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), but no-one from the development community (as opposed to NGOs concerned with migration and refugee issues) attended.

Anita Malley from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) made the point that despite there being no difference from USAID's perspective on responding to people affected by all types of disasters, there is a challenge within the USG to ensure that development assistance supports durable solutions for IDPs. Climate change is an opportunity to get the displacement problem right by connecting the issues of displacement and development.

This statement prompted a discussion about the role of UNDP on these issues. Beth Ferris inquired about UNDP's work in the area of climate change and mobility, saying that it would be useful to have UNDP present at the next roundtable. Andrea Berringer responded that their work had been on an ad hoc basis, but that it was slowly being addressed more consistently. Richard Scott noted that they were in fact working with UNDP on mainstreaming migration into development, which includes a climate change perspective. Kathleen Newland stated that UNDP and the EU have a joint initiative on environment and migration, but noted that it was ring fenced and separate from their regular activities.

In the discussion, participants raised a number of issues. *Daniel Garrett* from the Department of State argued that our current institutions are inadequate to respond to the speed of changes underway. He suggested addressing water usage as an adaptation measure and called for bringing in scientists to work alongside development actors to think outside the box. Kathleen Newland respectfully disagreed by saying that in the short term approaches to mitigating climate change would not need to be particularly innovative, like e. g. soil conservation and reforestation. For example, statistics show that half of all food spoils before it is consumed, if that problem could be addressed it would give us a cushion for adaptation. Maybe it is time to think of dealing with food spoilage as adaptation to climate change. Edward Carr questioned how effective a legal framework will be in responding to the issue in states where institutions are

so weak and suggested that in these situations, it made more sense to work with traditional authorities.

Robin Mearns suggested looking at the recent world development report on climate change (http://wdronline.worldbank.org/worldbank/a/c.html/world_development_report_2010/abstract/WB.978-0-8213-7987-5.abstract). He also argued that “we’re doing development differently” (e.g. social protection programs). In addition, he mentioned current research at the World Bank on adaptation including index based crop insurance and other indices.

Michael Cernea asked if such an approach didn’t equate to selling the same merchandise under a different label and made the argument that just calling something adaptation might be harmful. The point was acknowledged by Robin Mearns who also agreed with Kathleen’s comment that there is already knowledge of what needs to be done.

At the end of the roundtable, *Chaloka Beyani* offered two broad reflections coming out of the discussions, first, a consistent call for the involvement of development actors. He noted that problems arise from viewing migration in isolation or just as undesirable movement between states. Secondly, , he made the point that the climate change discourse is quite different from that used by human rights, development and humanitarian actors and there is a need for consistency in using concepts. Sustainable development, for example, should contain elements of adaptation.

He also pointed out the possible role for regional banks, many of which have climate change policies and wondered whether it would be possible to build on recent IOM-Asian Development Bank talks.

Given the wealth of research shared by participants, the question of how to best share articles and research among people working in this field was voiced. Peter Benda from the State Department asked if Brookings had considered creating a one-stop shopping center for these articles and research. Beth Ferris asked participants about existing projects of collecting research on climate change and human mobility with Ronak Patel noting that his institute (HHI) was using Basecamp to organize upcoming seminars, which had been useful. They agreed to discuss the matter further after the roundtable.

Beth Ferris closed the meeting by thanking participants and noting that Brookings will convene a similar roundtable for researchers in spring 2012 with a special effort made to ensure the participation of development actors.