



Engendering Climate Change-Induced Migration

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Several water-related conflicts are ongoing in the Mediterranean and North Africa (MENA) region e.g: between Jordan and Israel regarding the Jordan river water; between Israel and Syria regarding the control of the water resources of the occupied Golan Heights; between Israel and Lebanon on [the Litany River](#); riparian conflict regarding the division of [the Nile water](#); between Syria and Iraq due to the [Turkish GAP project](#).

Since the 1960s population growth together with constantly decreasing water flow has triggered an increase in water usage in agriculture in areas where water scarcity is endemic. This situation has condemned other sectors and households to further [water scarcity and food insecurity](#).

Climate change triggers increased weather variability which in turn leads to extreme water related events as droughts, floods, cyclones, and tornadoes, which account for [90% of natural disasters](#). Environmental disasters have been singled out as a cause of migration, particularly [internal migration](#). In 2015 the number of international migrants worldwide numbered 244 million. Women made up 48.2% of this global share, with 52% in Europe. In water related environmental disasters, displaced people tend to relocate in wetter countries where better economic opportunities are to be found. Hence, the receiving country water resources quantity is a factor pulling refugees.

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Gender and migration

Gender, i.e. the role of the individual in relation to the household's livelihood, is a crucial element in the migration decision making process which is shaped differently by local cultural norms, age, class ethnicity. Gender should not be confused with, or limited to, women. In fact, while between 1960 and 2015, the number of female migrants doubled, it is essential to explore how both men's and women's gender roles enable or hamper migration from its start to the integration in the receiving country.

While the nexus between gender and climate-induced migration is still unclear and only a few studies give country-specific examples, the different phases of migration can be outlined according to their gender causes and consequences.

The stages of climate-induced migration and the role of gender

In the pre-migration stage, the decision to migrate is often triggered by the loss of livelihood. In this phase women put in jeopardy their nutrition to feed their children and husband. This situation has long term adverse consequences on women's health in general and particularly on pregnant women. Moreover, male unemployment and poverty have been shown to cause gender-based violence. Whether women or men are more likely to migrate depends on an array of factors. For instance, insecurity in land tenure in Bangladesh showed that the women there are more likely than men to migrate because of crop failure and flooding.

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On the contrary, droughts in Ethiopia reduce women's mobility for marriage-related migration, while the opposite was seen in [Mali and in Nigeria](#). Men tend to migrate due to droughts and rainfall variability and men's suicide rate is higher as are fatalities from flooding.

Generally, seasonal migration is [dominated by men](#) as a strategy to diversify their household income by migrating when farming becomes uncertain. Women, on the other hand, use gardens/small-scale agriculture; different seeds and collect [forest products](#) to counterbalance climate variability.

The migration stage is often initiated by men who move to be able to meet their families' subsistence needs. However, it is important to bear in mind that those that have resources – land or capital – to begin with are most probable candidates to migrate. Remittances are used to employ labor to ensure land's productivity while the male head is [absent](#). In this phase, women's workload increases not only because their husband or son/s are away, but also because, due to climate variability, they have to wander further to collect water and fuelwood. Yet, male absence also means that women do not get access or the same right to participate in natural resource management forums. On the bright side, women's control over the household income grows as men migrate.

Given that women's mobility is limited in the Global South, they are less likely to evacuate or to migrate in the aftermath of natural disasters. Hence, women migrate later than men and when they do, they leave behind children with other family members. This phenomenon has been defined as feminization of migration. Additionally, women suffer more than men from the psychosocial impacts of migration because they have to take care of family members while

disregarding their own distress and they are also victims of sexual violence in camps where internally or internationally displaced people are housed.

The post-migration stage entails integration. The possibility of attaining such a condition depends on an array of factors such as inclusion in the job market which has been shown to be more difficult for women. In fact, women can become more dependent on their husbands if they try to maintain conservative gender roles in the host country. On the contrary, women's social mobility, economic independence and autonomy can improve if the receiving country's labor market needs employees in the service sector, where women tend to be more occupied. Women's occupation can change intra-household gendered roles within the household, which does not necessarily mean more equality for women who, after work, have to do a second shift.

Conclusion

Finally, studies of the gendered aspects of climate change migration are limited. Future research should bridge existing knowledge gap by investigating how gender enables or hinders migration and how gender roles are enacted in the three stages of migration.

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