

## UNDERSTANDING LARGE MOVEMENTS OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

GMG multi-stakeholder interactive panel in preparation for the  
*GA Summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants*

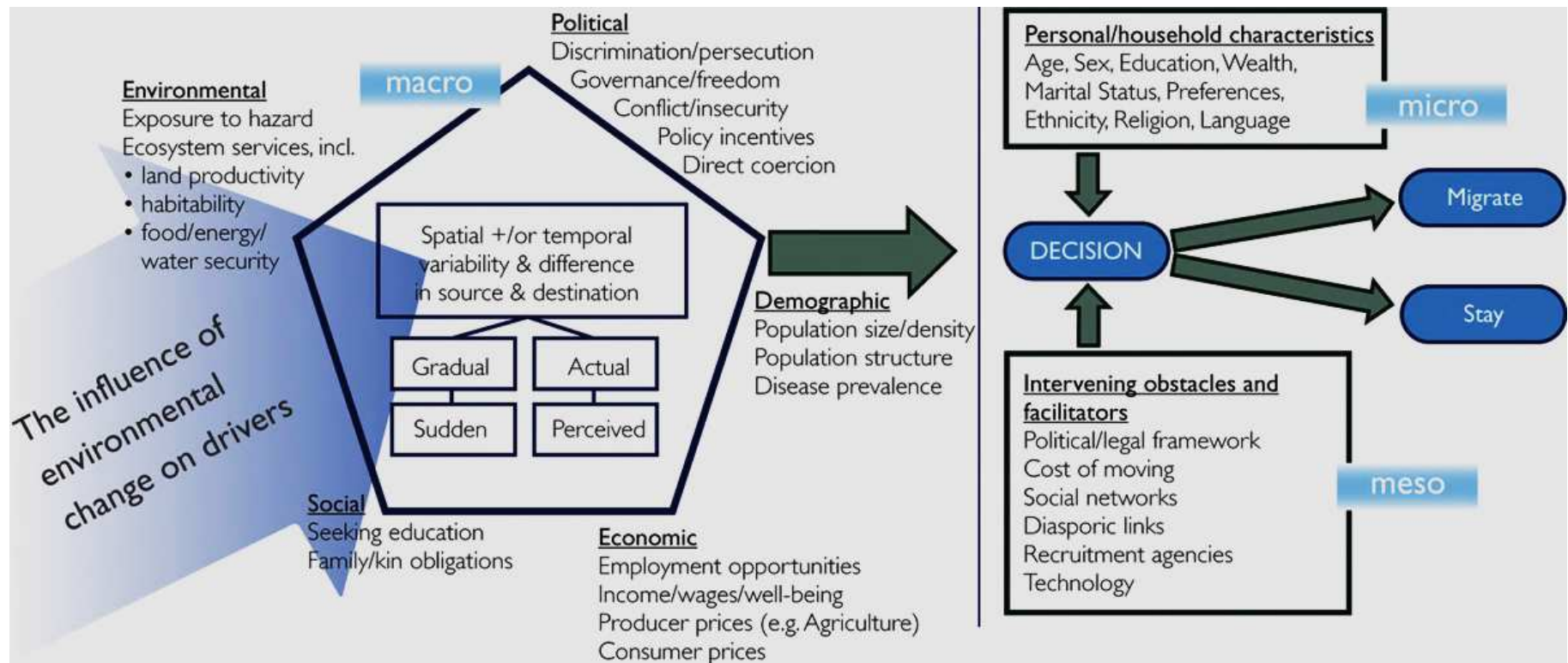
# Migration, Displacement and Climate Change

Susana B. Adamo  
CIESIN, Columbia University  
[sadamo@ciesin.columbia.edu](mailto:sadamo@ciesin.columbia.edu)

April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016

# A conceptual framework for migration and environment

- Human migration is potentially influenced by environmental factors, but ultimately shaped by a **complexity of forces** including social, economic and cultural processes.
- Framing the migration-environment discussion in terms of drivers of migration, including but not limited to environment



Source: Black, R., W. N. Adger, et al. (2011). The effect of environmental change on human migration. *Global Environmental Change-Human and Policy Dimensions* 21: S3-S11.

Based on Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change (2011) Final Project Report The Government Office for Science, London

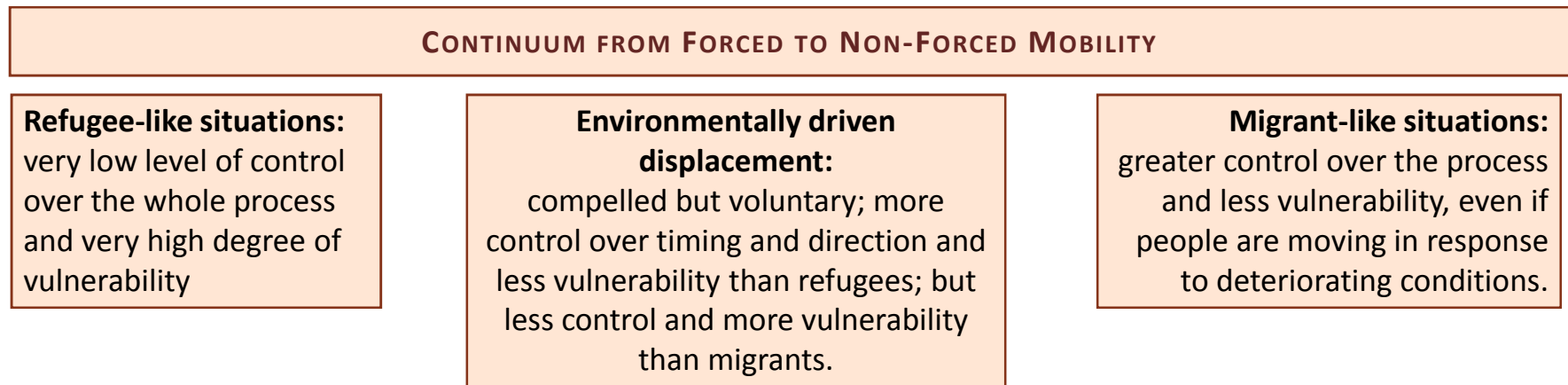
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/287717/11-1116-migration-and-global-environmental-change.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287717/11-1116-migration-and-global-environmental-change.pdf)

# Climate change as driver of migration and displacement

- “Migration and resettlement may be the most threatening short-term effects of climate change on human settlements. People may decide to migrate in any of the following cases:
  - **loss of housing** (because of river or sea flooding or mudslides);
  - **loss of living resources** (like water, energy and food supply or employment affected by climate change);
  - **loss of social and cultural resources** (loss of cultural properties, neighborhood or community networks, particularly in the case of a devastating flood)” (IPCC 1990 AR [www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/far/wg\\_II/ipcc\\_far\\_wg\\_II\\_chapter\\_05.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/far/wg_II/ipcc_far_wg_II_chapter_05.pdf))
- Three main climate change impacts
  - *Sea level rise*: rising average sea level, salt water intrusion in aquifers;
  - *Water availability (increase/decrease)*
  - *Extreme weather events*: droughts, heat waves, violent storms, floods
- **Impacts scenarios to vary substantially by geographic location**

# Defining concepts

- **Environmental Migrants:** persons or group of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad (IOM (2007). Discussion note: migration and the environment. [www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/evolving\\_global\\_economy\\_2728112007/MC\\_INF\\_28\\_8\\_EN.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/microsites/IDM/workshops/evolving_global_economy_2728112007/MC_INF_28_8_EN.pdf))
- **Cross-border displacement in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change:** refers to situations where people flee or are displaced across borders in the context of sudden- or slow-onset disasters, or in the context of the adverse effects of climate change (Nansen Initiative Definitions. <https://www.nanseninitiative.org/secretariat/>)



Based on Hugo, G. (1996) Environmental concerns and international migration. *International Migration Review*, 30, pp.105-131; Bates, D. (2002) Environmental refugees? Classifying human migrations caused by environmental change. *Population and Environment*, 23, pp.465-477; Renaud, F. et al. (2007) Control, adapt or flee. How to face environmental migration? *InterSecTions*, No.5, pp. <http://www.ehs.unu.edu/file.php?id=259>

# Why not refugees?

- The term “environmental refugees” is considered legally nonbinding  
(Warner K: Global environmental change and migration: Governance challenges. *Global Environmental Change* 2010, 20(3):402-413)
- The term has been increasingly questioned on the basis that it leads to a reductionist view of the complexity of real-life situations (Tacoli C: Crisis or adaptation? Migration and climate change in a context of high mobility. *Environ Urban* 2009, 21:513-525)
- Affected people may not want to be identified as refugees because of the implicit hopelessness and defenselessness of the term (MortreuxC, Barnett J: Climate change, migration and adaptation in Funafuti, Tuvalu. *Global Environ Change* 2009, 19:105-112)
- “*Climate Refugee* is often being used in the media to define a person displaced in the context of disasters like droughts, sea level rise as well as extreme weather events like hurricanes, tsunamis or earthquakes. This concept does not exist in international law and is not endorsed by the Nansen Initiative” (Nansen Initiative. Disaster-induced cross-order displacement <https://www.nanseninitiative.org/secretariat/>)

# Some policy considerations

- To consider the consequences for the displaced population, particularly in the cases of sudden displacement and displacements located toward the ‘forced’ end of the involuntary/voluntary continuum;
- To consider the implications of environmentally induced displacement for the origin and receiving communities;
- Tailored responses:
  - “Tailoring” implies a clear understanding of the nexus between environmental change and population mobility (IOM 2007)
  - It requires a “redirection of research toward clarifying conceptual approaches and answering basic questions” (Oliver-Smith, A. 2008. *Researching environmental change and forced migration: people, policy and practice*. Position paper presented at the Research Workshop on Migration and the Environment, Bonn. Page 102)
- Life cycle approach to policy: Pre-migration: prevention, mitigation and adaptation to environmental hazards; Migration / displacement: different types of movements; Return or resettlement; Integration into home or new location (Martin, S. 2010. Climate change and international migration. Washington, DC. GMF. Pag. 1-2 <http://www.ehs.unu.edu/file/get/7103> )

# The Nansen Initiative's recommendations

- The Protection Agenda addresses the protection and assistance needs of cross-border disaster-displaced persons by exploring potential measures that States may voluntarily adopt and harmonize to admit such persons relying on humanitarian considerations and international solidarity with disaster affected countries and communities.
- It identifies effective practices to manage disaster displacement risk in the country of origin to prevent displacement by i) reducing vulnerability and building resilience to disaster displacement risk, ii) facilitating migration out of hazardous areas before disasters strike, iii) conducting planned relocation and iv) responding to the needs of internally displaced persons.
- It lists priority areas for future action at national, (sub-) regional and international levels.
  - Collecting data and enhancing knowledge on cross-border disaster-displacement
  - Enhancing the use of humanitarian protection measures for cross-border disaster-displaced persons, including mechanisms for lasting solutions, for instance by harmonizing approaches at (sub-)regional levels;
  - Strengthening the management of disaster displacement risk in the country of origin

# Climate Change and Displacement in the COP21

- Included in the section on “Loss and Damage” of the Paris Agreement:
  - “49. *Also requests* the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism to establish, according to its procedures and mandate, a task force to complement, draw upon the work of and involve, as appropriate, existing bodies and expert groups under the Convention including the Adaptation Committee and the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, as well as relevant organizations and expert bodies outside the Convention, **to develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change**” (<http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/10a01.pdf>)