

Asia Security Initiative Policy Series
Working Paper No. 20
February 2012

Climate Change and Migration in Southeast Asia: Responding to a New Human Security Challenge

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Abstract

Migration and displacement are among the range of pressures on people and their communities likely to arise from the economic, social and environmental consequences of climate change. Despite fragmented data, the climate security literature has focused on the potential for climate change-induced migration to trigger social tensions and conflict within states and across borders. A human security approach seeks to ensure that people are placed at the centre of concerns about mobility and migration in response to climate change. This requires more than identifying those who are vulnerable to migration pressures. It necessitates an understanding of how migration and mobility choices are made, how vulnerabilities can be managed in ways that are participatory and responsive to local needs and circumstances, and how local, national and regional policy responses can strengthen the knowledge base and improve collaborative platforms for action.

This Policy Series presents papers in a preliminary form and serves to stimulate comment and discussion. The views expressed are entirely the author's own and not that of the RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies. The paper is the result of research conducted under the Asia Security Initiative programme on internal challenges supported by the MacArthur Foundation. Visit www.asicluster3.com to find out more about this initiative. More information on the work of the RSIS Centre for NTS Studies can be found at www.rsis.edu.sg/nts.

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Recommended Citation:

Elliott, Lorraine, 2012, *Climate change and migration in Southeast Asia: Responding to a new human security challenge*, Asia Security Initiative Policy Series No. 20, Singapore: RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies.

Biography

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Introduction

The proposition that climate change will or could generate international security concerns has become prominent in public discourse over the last few years. Various think tanks, government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have produced reports on climate change, conflict and national security in which they argue that migration could be a major factor in the chain of events that link climate change to violent conflict. Popular discourse has accepted the concept of ‘climate refugees’, although the term is controversial in academic and policy circles. The usual objection is that it runs the risk of undermining the legal meaning of ‘refugee’ in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) prefers the term ‘environmentally induced migrants’, defined as ‘persons or groups 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’.¹

Given Southeast Asia’s vulnerability to climate change, the issue of climate change-induced migration is an important environmental, social and political challenge for the region’s peoples and governments. The question is whether this is also a security issue and, if so, for whom? This paper starts with an overview of the securitisation of climate change and migration – the speech acts by which actors make authoritative claims about the connection between climate change, migration and insecurity. It then explores how climate change and migration have been securitised in Southeast Asia, both from without and from within. It suggests that adopting a human security approach that involves a discursive move from migration to migrants will enhance the potential for ensuring security for those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. It finishes with some policy options.

Climate change and migration: Security from what?

As part of a move to examine security in what are usually referred to as ‘non-traditional’ terms, ‘environmental security’ and, more recently, ‘climate security’ seemed to offer new answers to the questions ‘security for whom, and from what?’. The background to this broadening and deepening of what it means to be secure, and what might constitute a threat, is well known and need only detain us briefly here. The context was the political changes that accompanied the winding-down and then the end of the Cold War, and the growing impact of globalisation in its economic, political, social and environmental manifestations. In the face of asymmetric and networked non-state threats, intra-state conflict and state failure, and extremes of wealth, poverty and disadvantage, academics and policymakers alike were impelled to re-examine what it meant to be secure. Security came to

¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), ‘Discussion note: Migration and the environment’, 94th session, MC/INF/288, 1 November 2007, 1–2.

be defined variously as protection against existential threats, freedom from fear and harm, and human survival.

Against this backdrop, governments, international organisations and NGOs directed their attention to climate change as a security issue and a likely source of conflict, presenting climate change as a threat multiplier that would overstretch societies' adaptive capacities and create or exacerbate political instability and violence. This reasoning is an updated version of predictions made by scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s that environmental degradation could contribute to instability, the 'disruption of legitimised and authoritative social relations'² and 'civil turmoil and outright violence'.³ In the more extreme versions of this argument, the stresses associated with climate change, including migration, have come to be implicated in political radicalisation, extremism and 'conditions that will extend the war on terror'.⁴

The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests that in some parts of the world, climate-related disruptions of human populations are likely both within states and across national borders, with sudden sharp spikes in rural to urban migration in some countries, and the exacerbation of shortfalls in food production, rural poverty and urban unrest in others.⁵ The category of 'environmental migrant' – those who 'choose, or are forced, to migrate as a result of damaging environmental and climatic factors'⁶ – has considerable conceptual and demographic reach. It includes sudden-onset migration of the kind that occurs in the face of environmental disasters; and slow-onset migration where uneven patterns of people movements arise over time as a result of land degradation, deterioration of coastal ecosystems, or loss of river vitality. This latter category also encompasses those whose move is permanent (for whatever reason) and those – more likely – who engage in seasonal and adaptation migration that are cyclical and temporary.

In the face of UN projections of millions of environmental migrants by the year 2010,⁷ the consequences of climate change-induced migration pressures have featured prominently as

² Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, 'On the threshold: Environmental changes as causes of acute conflict', *International Security* 16, no. 2 (1991): 78.

³ Norman Myers, 'Environment and security', *Foreign Policy*, no. 74 (1989): 24.

⁴ The CNA Corporation, *National security and the threat of climate change* (Alexandria, VA: The CNA Corporation, 2007), 17.

⁵ Rex Victor Cruz et al., 'Asia', in *Climate change 2007: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ed. M.L. Parry et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 488.

⁶ Andrew Morton, Philippe Boncour and Frank Laczko, 'Human security policy challenges', *Forced Migration Review*, no. 31 (2008): 5.

⁷ UN General Assembly, 'Statement by the President of the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly at the Thematic Debate on Climate Change and the Most Vulnerable Countries', New York, 8 July 2008, <http://www.un.org/ga/president/62/statements/ccvulc080708.shtml>

a key security risk and as a trigger for instability, conflict and violence.⁸ While ‘the causal chains ... have so far rarely been substantiated with reliable evidence’,⁹ the analysis is reasonably uniform: that climate change-induced migration is highly probable, that the numbers involved will be in the millions, and that this will almost certainly result in, or at the very least be implicated in, some form of social conflict and instability.

The argument in much of this literature is that climate change-induced migration will result in tensions between those displaced within their own country and the communities into which they move, as well as between so-called climate ‘refugees’ (who cross an international border) and receiving states. The pathways for social unrest and violence are usually presented in terms of competition for scarce resources or economic support (or jobs), increased demands on social infrastructure, cultural differences based on ethnicity or nationality, and ‘the fearful reactions it [migration] often receives and the inflammatory politics that often greet it’.¹⁰ In a conspicuously Malthusian approach, Rafael Reuveny identifies competition, ethnic tension, distrust and existing socioeconomic fault lines as key channels through which climate change-induced migration can be linked to conflict.¹¹ Internal and cross-border climate migration is assumed to be more likely to result in social unrest, conflict and instability when it occurs in countries or regions that face other forms of social instability (or have a recent history of such instability), that possess limited social and economic capacity to adapt, and, from a human security perspective, where migrants have inadequate ‘social support mechanisms or [in]sufficient resources to assimilate or establish stable communities’.¹²

Two particular dimensions of the ways in which climate migration has been made a security issue are notable. The first relates to the rhetorical or discursive devices that are used by actors in articulating their security claims. While ‘slow-induced migration’ is the more likely outcome in the context of climate change,¹³ the language – the speech acts of security – in the climate security and climate migration literature conjure up an image of processes that are likely to be out of control and therefore highly threatening. Thus, Kurt Campbell et al. worry about ‘massive migrations ... potentially involving hundreds of millions of people ...

⁸ High Representative and the European Commission (HREC), ‘Climate change and international security: Paper to the European Council’, S113/08, 14 March 2008, 4.

⁹ Ragnhild Nordås and Nils Petter Gleditsch, ‘Climate change and conflict’, *Political Geography* 26, no. 6 (2007): 627.

¹⁰ Dan Smith and Janani Vivekananda, *A climate of conflict: The links between climate change, peace and war* (London: International Alert, 2007), 3.

¹¹ Rafael Reuveny, ‘Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict’, *Political Geography* 26, no. 6 (2007): 659.

¹² Benjamin L. Preston et al., *Climate change in the Asia/Pacific region: A consultancy report prepared for the Climate Change and Development Roundtable* (Aspendale: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), 2006), 49.

¹³ Francois Gemenne, ‘Climate change and forced displacement: Towards a global environmental responsibility?’ (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, California, USA, 22 March 2006), 3.

perhaps billions of people'; and 'a significant portion of humanity on the move'.¹⁴ They suggest that 'uncontrolled migration' would be 'more likely to overwhelm the traditional instruments of national security (the military in particular) and other elements of state power and authority'.¹⁵ In its report on climate change and international security, the High Representative and European Commission talk of a 'vicious circle of degradation, migration and conflicts'.¹⁶

The second point is that the dangers and threats associated with climate change-induced migration are articulated in terms of the possible detrimental impacts on the security interests of the US, Europe and others. One of the key findings of a report by CNA, a US-based research and analysis organisation, was that the predicted effects of climate change 'have the potential to disrupt *our* way of life and to force changes in the way *we* keep ourselves safe and secure by adding a new hostile and stressing factor into the national and international security environment' (emphasis added).¹⁷ The Europeans have worried that 'migratory pressure at the European Union's borders and political instability and conflicts could increase in the future'.¹⁸ The UK Ministry of Defence anticipated that the 'resulting risks to near neighbours' of climate-related mass migration, humanitarian crises, international crime and, potentially, international terrorism, 'will demand wide-ranging defence and security responses'¹⁹ – the 'from us' is silent but pronounced. Indeed, many of the reports draw attention to likely increased demands on the military capacity of the richer countries. While it worried about knee-jerk reactions that would be unsuccessful in the long run, the Oxford Research Group raised the likelihood that 'the protection of national and maritime borders and the detention of illegal immigrants is likely to become an increasing priority' for agencies such as police, customs and (where relevant) the coastguards.²⁰

Securitising climate change migration in Southeast Asia: Security for Whom?

Climate change could affect existing patterns of migration or create new ones within Southeast Asia, a region often perceived in the climate security literature as a 'hot spot' for climate change-induced migration. This is in part because the region is already 'migration active' with increasing internal mobility and cross-border migration, much of it absorbed

¹⁴ Kurt M. Campbell et al., eds, *The age of consequences: The foreign policy and national security implications of global climate change* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Center for a New American Security, 2007), 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ HREC, 'Climate change and international security', 4.

¹⁷ The CNA Corporation, *National security and the threat of climate change*, 44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹ UK Ministry of Defence, *Global strategic trends 2007–2036, 3rd edition* (Swindon: Ministry of Defence, Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre, 2007), 54.

²⁰ Chris Abbott, *An uncertain future: Law enforcement, national security and climate change*, Briefing paper (London: Oxford Research Group, 2008), 9.

within the region.²¹ A report prepared for the US National Intelligence Council, for example, (which comes with the disclaimer that it does not represent US government views) anticipates both internal and cross-border migrations. It foreshadows 'large-scale migration from rural and coastal areas into cities' (identifying Vietnam as the country most in need of resettlement planning on this count) and suggests that this form of internal displacement will 'increase friction between diverse social groups already under stress from climate change'.²² It also anticipates that 'climate change may drive cross border movements of Vietnamese and Indonesians to Malaysia, Cambodians and Laotians to Thailand, Burmese to Thailand and Malaysia, and Filipinos throughout the region'.²³ While this analysis recognises the humanitarian consequences that could arise from the impact of climate change on the rural poor, on women, and on groups that are already marginalised, its focus remains the 'destabilising impacts' of climate change-induced migrations.²⁴ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has also contributed to this analysis, with studies that identify so-called climate change migration hot spots in coastal and river delta regions, and in large urban conurbations, in Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.²⁵

The security challenges associated with climate change have only recently become prominent in regional discussions, predominantly under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The 2008 ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue identified climate change as a threat multiplier that was part of an increasingly broad threat spectrum. Defence officials worried about the financial implications (among other things) of the requirement for 'new capabilities to address these non-traditional threats'.²⁶ The 2009 Dialogue included climate change in its discussions about a new security paradigm for the Asia-Pacific, a theme picked up at the 6th ARF Security Policy Conference that same year. Yet, ARF defence officials were clear that the military would play a significant role in meeting non-traditional threats and would need to 'continuously prepare itself for the extended missions'.²⁷ Climate change has also featured in the exchange of views on non-traditional security issues at meetings of the ARF's Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy. The Blueprint for the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) also confirms the need to

²¹ Jeff Ducanes and Manolo Abella, *The future of international migration to OECD countries: Regional note – China and South East Asia* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2009), 1.

²² CENTRA Technology, Inc., and Scitor Corporation, *Southeast Asia: The impact of climate change to 2030: Geopolitical implications*, CR 2010-02, Conference report (Washington DC: National Intelligence Council, 2010), 4.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁵ In each case, the impacts of climate change on migration are likely to be intimately linked to existing patterns of migration and mobility.

²⁶ ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 'Co-chairs' summary report of the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue', Ottawa, Canada, 2 April 2008', reproduced in *ASEAN Regional Forum Documents Series 2006–2009* (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2010), 197.

²⁷ ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 'Report of the ARF Defence Officials' Dialogue, Phuket, Thailand, 18 May 2009', reproduced in *ASEAN Regional Forum Documents Series 2006–2009*, 335.

address non-traditional security issues that are vital to national and regional resilience. It refers in general terms to environmental as well as other aspects of development, to transboundary challenges and to disaster management and emergency response but makes no specific reference to climate change or to migration.

ARF member states came to view the nexus between climate change and security as sufficiently important to convene a special seminar on the topic in Phnom Penh in March 2009 and another in Brussels in November 2010. In a statement to the IOM's 2011 workshop on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration, made on behalf of the ARF, Philippine Ambassador Enrique Manalo reported general agreement among ARF member states that forced migration was among the transboundary threats presented by climate change.²⁸ The Ambassador's statement was explicit, however, in identifying climate change-induced migration as a human security issue and even went so far as to suggest that 'the military's perspective must be shifted from traditional security to non-traditional security when dealing with these challenges'.²⁹

A human security model, which takes people (or peoples) as the security referent, questions the taken-for-granted assumptions and analyses within the policy community about climate change, migration, threat and (in)security. This approach views forced migration from unsustainable or uninhabitable lands as a potential source of insecurity for the migrants themselves, thus challenging the representation of 'climate refugees' or 'climate migrants' as a potential source of pressure on, or threat to, states. Migration can also generate other human insecurities, including loss of income and social capital, disruption to traditional coping mechanisms, and increased vulnerability for already marginalised groups, including the poor, women and children.

Migration is not the only strategy for responding to climate change. People may choose to stay in their communities and seek to adapt to the impacts of climate change. They may also choose to stay, accept the costs of climate change and do nothing.³⁰ Those who do move are more likely to go where there are already family or other community groups – and thus some degree of social capital. Migration patterns often involve temporary movements, with people returning to their point of departure rather than moving permanently. This challenges the image of millions of people on the move, driven to desperate and undirected choices in response to the impacts of climate change. From a security perspective, these patterns of migration need not be a destabilising factor. As the NGO International Alert points out, it is not 'the process, but the context and the political response to immigration that shape the

²⁸ Enrique A. Manalo, 'Results of the "ASEAN Regional Forum: Security implications of climate change"' (statement to the International Organization for Migration workshop on Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration, Geneva, 30 March 2011), 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

³⁰ For an examination of the conditions under which people may or may not migrate in response to climate change, see, for example: Reuveny, 'Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict'.

risks of violent conflict'.³¹ That context, as William Clark notes, is 'immensely broad and complex and includes patterns of land distribution, family and community structure, and economic and legal incentives, including systems of property rights'.³² Therefore we need to explore and understand the complexities of migration as a response or adaptation strategy in the face of the social, economic and environmental consequences of climate change, the factors that impel it, as well as the factors that enable individuals and communities to adapt in ways other than moving or migrating. As the ADB has argued, 'solid analysis and greater knowledge development and sharing on climate-induced migration are essential to inform policy makers of the issues at stake'.³³

Security by what means?

While the more extreme of the responses to predictions about climate change-induced migration have advocated the use of military force and the application of 'fortress' models to protect borders (usually for Western countries against those from the more environmentally disadvantaged countries), this too is likely to increase instability and uncertainty, and to continue to penalise those who are already most vulnerable. In any case, it is a strategy that responds to outcomes and consequences rather than addressing and seeking to prevent the causes of environmental disadvantage and vulnerability.

Non-traditional security challenges such as climate change require non-traditional security responses, and sensitivity to multiple and interlocking types of insecurity. Rather than simply mainstreaming climate change into security discourses, a more conscious effort is required to link the challenges of climate change and human insecurity with adaptation, social resilience and disaster risk management as well as with sustainable development strategies and plans. Efforts to address climate change, migration and security are increasingly contextualised by the inclusion of migration concerns in the negotiation and policy processes under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Until recently, migration concerns were conspicuously absent from formal UNFCCC agreements and decisions. However the Cancun Adaptation Framework, adopted at the 16th Conference of the Parties in December 2010, reversed that inattention to a decision that invited Parties to:

... enhance action on adaptation under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances, by undertaking, inter alia, the following:

...

³¹ Smith and Vivekananda, *A climate of conflict*, 16.

³² William A.V. Clark, 'Social and political contexts of conflict', *Forced Migration Review*, no. 31 (2008): 22.

³³ See Asian Development Bank (ADB), 'Climate-induced migration' (2011), <http://beta.adb.org/themes/climate-change/climate-induced-migration>

(f) Measures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at the national, regional and international levels.³⁴

Within the security literature, this move from a politics of security to a politics of adaptation and resilience-building would be read as a *de-securitisation* of climate migration in the Asia-Pacific. Reading this move instead as '*human* securitisation' (or perhaps even 'counter-securitisation') has the potential to sustain the tactical attractions of the language of security and the urgent attention that this brings to a problem while also redirecting security policy to securing the lives, livelihoods and, wherever possible, the lands and homes of those in the region who are most vulnerable and most insecure as a result of the threats of climate change.

From a policy perspective, understanding how to achieve human security (rather than just how to define it) is a complex challenge. We know that in the Asia-Pacific, as elsewhere, it is too late to rely only on strategies to reduce or mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. As noted above, policies on climate change and migration therefore need to be grounded in a clear understanding of the complexities of migration as a strategy for adapting to the social, economic and environmental pressures of climate change. Those responses will recognise the factors that impel migration (including how climate change interacts with existing migration pressures) and the factors that enable individuals and communities to adapt in ways other than moving or migrating.

Climate change and migration: Principles and policy options

Analysis from other parts of the world experiencing high levels of vulnerability to climate change indicates that action is needed at all levels to obviate the need for migration on the one hand and to 'manage migration flows, including the facilitation of migration as an adaptation strategy' on the other.³⁵ It is imperative that steps are taken to reduce vulnerability and build social resilience by strengthening the ability of communities to cope with and adapt to significant social disruption or external stresses and disturbances such as those associated with climate change. Policy responses should be sensitive to equity concerns and the social dimensions of vulnerability in identifying those who are most likely to be subject to mobility and migration pressures, both within states and across borders. Those equity issues will range across a number of possible areas of disproportionate impact that take into account the fact that migration choices are not available to all. Equity issues are likely to focus particularly on gender difference, on the complex geographical patterns of migration of urban and rural communities, and on the impact of poverty in the nature and

³⁴ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 'Decision 1/CP.16 The Cancun agreements: Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention', FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1 (15 March 2011), para 14.

³⁵ Africa, Climate Change, Environment and Security (ACCES) Dialogue Process, *Climate change and security in Africa*, Vulnerability discussion paper (Brussels: ACCES Dialogue Process, 2010), 32.

timing of migration choices. This version of a livelihoods model should consider (among other things) existing migration strategies, including those that are often temporary and seasonal, or rely on short-distance rather than cross-border movements. It calls for a 'realistic analysis of [people's] livelihood strategies [to] provide an adequate understanding of how they live' at the local, household and individual level,³⁶ and how they are therefore likely to respond to climate change-induced migration pressures.

In situations where migration is the most likely outcome, resettlement planning needs to be based on governance arrangements that are transparent and accountable. Governance – understood here as processes of problem-solving, political coordination and rule-making that involves multiple sites of authority at multiple scales – is central to the way in which climate change impacts can be managed and through which resilience choices and human security outcomes can be enhanced. This is not just a question of institutional design, or the policies and strategies adopted or implemented under the auspices of regional organisations. It requires that 'resettlement strategies ... protect people's lives and livelihoods'³⁷ and support community-based responses. This version of human security is invested with an explicitly normative focus on those who are most marginalised from institutional decision-making – the poor, women, children, the elderly, migrants, indigenous peoples, and others who are socially marginalised through discrimination and prejudice. Poorly conceived resettlement strategies can undermine rather than enhance social resilience and, without recognition of issues of equity and rights, can make the poor poorer and those already vulnerable more vulnerable.

The human security approach to migration as an adaptation strategy suggests that governance should encompass more than top-down technocratic responses. Rather it should rely on bottom-up policymaking that engages with and listens to the voices of those who are most at risk and most disadvantaged by climate change. It stresses the importance of consultation with local communities and their involvement in the design and implementation of locally based adaptation and mitigation projects. These equity and governance principles should inform decision-making on a range of strategies and policy options that will result in reliable and effective local, national and regional strategies for managing migration and mobility, and for ensuring the security of those whose migration and mobility choices are impelled or complicated by climate change.

Knowledge development

The co-chair's report from the 2009 ARF meeting on climate change and security notes that the 'potential implications for security, in all its non-traditional aspects, arising from climate

³⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Food Security and Livelihoods*, Thematic brief (Rome: FAO, n.d.), 1.

³⁷ Susan F. Martin, *Climate change, migration and adaptation* (Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2010), 1.

change ... warrant further deliberations' because those implications are 'not yet fully clear'.³⁸ This applies to migration impacts as equally as it does to other implications and trends. Two overlapping lines of inquiry are warranted. First, how do the impacts of climate change interact with existing patterns of migration? As Preston et al. point out, very little is known about how climate change will interact with other migration pressures and incentives.³⁹ Second, further work is required to understand the extent to which climate change is likely to impel further migration. While effort has been made to identify so-called climate migration hot spots in general terms, this knowledge relies on the assumption (referred to as 'co-variance') that individuals and households in the same locality will experience climate change impacts in similar ways and will therefore make similar migration choices. But research on local communities has indicated that migration choices – when to move, to where and for how long – may well be idiosyncratic, that is, only remotely connected to, or related to, those of neighbouring individuals or households.⁴⁰ Therefore knowledge development needs to respond to the need for 'robust data on migration patterns, drivers and networks'.⁴¹

Security scenarios

The 2009 ARF meeting on climate change and its security implications identified the importance of understanding if and when the impacts of climate change – and migration counts among those impacts – 'may produce instability and affect security issues including human security'.⁴² Their suggestion is that that understanding might benefit from the development of regional scenarios and studies. A number of assumptions, explored above, have been made about the triggers and pathways that link climate change-induced migration to insecurity and the conditions in which social unrest and violence are more likely to occur. Yet, as a vulnerability brief prepared for the Africa, Climate Change, Environment and Security (ACCES) Dialogue Process in Africa points out, 'the causal relationship between security and migration is clearly established (the millions in refugees and IDP [internally displaced person] camps as a result of war are a sad testimony) but when the sequence is inverted, the link between migration and security is far less clear'.⁴³ In his presentation to the ARF seminar on the international implications of climate change held in Brussels in

³⁸ ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 'Co-chairs' summary report of the seminar on "International security implications of climate-related events and trends", Phnom Penh, 19 March 2009', reproduced in *ASEAN Regional Forum Documents Series 2006–2009*, 378.

³⁹ Preston et al., *Climate change in the Asia/Pacific region*, 49.

⁴⁰ For more on this distinction between covariance and idiosyncratic models, see United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), 'Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in Asia and the Pacific', Note by the Secretariat, 65th Session, E/ESCAP/65/29 (5 February 2009).

⁴¹ 'Facing the challenge of environmental migration in Asia and the Pacific', *ADB Briefs*, no. 9 (September 2011): 4.

⁴² ARF, 'Co-chairs' summary report of the seminar on "International security implications of climate-related events and trends", 378.

⁴³ ACCES Dialogue Process, *Climate change and security in Africa*, 28.

November 2010, the head of the IOM stressed that ‘there is little empirical evidence’ to support claims that migration as a result of climate change leads to conflict.⁴⁴

In sum, then, analysis of the links between climate change, migration and conflict is often based on assumptions rather than evidence, and remains isolated from studies on climate change and migration in the region. The recent work undertaken for the ADB on likely mobility and migration patterns arising from climate change would serve as a useful starting point for further, careful analysis on how those patterns might or might not connect with complex forms of insecurity including social unrest and conflict.⁴⁵

*Planning for migration with dignity*⁴⁶

Despite the range of uncertainties about patterns of migration and, indeed, situations of social tension or conflict that might result from climate change impacts, comprehensive and coordinated planning is required to develop strategies for enhancing individual and community choices about relocation (including choices not to migrate) and to facilitate the social and practical dimensions of resettlement when it does occur. This is less about managing the physical relocation (in terms of logistics) and more in terms of training for skills development, managing resource allocation, exploring alternative livelihoods and income streams, and enhancing capacity in receiving communities. Smith and Vivekananda suggest, for example, that the kinds of climate insecurities that arise from shorter growing seasons and declines in agricultural yield could be ‘redressed through a redistribution of resources’ rather than leading (apparently inexorably, in some analyses) to ‘violent struggle for control of dwindling resources or to large scale migration’. If livelihood choices contract in low-lying coastal areas, forcing people to move, they encourage planning so those who are affected can be ‘looked after and get alternative economic opportunities’ in ways that reduce the chances that they will feel ‘neglected [or] resentful’.⁴⁷ If migration is to be understood as an adaptive measure (or what a report prepared for the ADB refers to as a ‘proactive diversification strategy’)⁴⁸ rather than characterised as a response based on desperation, then more research is also needed on the kinds of ‘underlying support systems such as

⁴⁴ ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ‘Co-chairs’ summary report of the seminar on “International Security Implications of Climate Change”, Brussels, 18–19 November 2010’ (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2010), 3.

⁴⁵ See Asian Development Bank (ADB), *Climate change and migration in Asia and the Pacific – draft edition* (Manila: ADB, 2011)

⁴⁶ This concept of ‘migration with dignity’ has been central to climate change relocation policies in Kiribati, focusing on preparing people for relocation in a way that preserves their dignity and also minimises the burden on receiving areas or countries; see Office of the President of Kiribati, ‘Adapting to climate change’, *Climate change in Kiribati* (2010), http://www.climate.gov.ki/Kiribati_climate_change_strategies.html

⁴⁷ Smith and Vivekananda, *A climate of conflict*, 8.

⁴⁸ ADB, *Climate change and migration in Asia and the Pacific*, 63.

transport, banking for flow of remittances, as well as informal trans-local and transnational social networks that may facilitate access to opportunities'.⁴⁹

Country programmes

All countries in Southeast Asia have developed institutional frameworks for addressing climate change. Some have developed specific national climate change adaptation plans and others have incorporated climate change concerns (with varying degrees of attention to adaptation) into development plans or environmental protection strategies.⁵⁰ Few, however, include attention to migration or mobility. Effective country-level programmes on climate change and migration will require a better understanding of local adaptation needs and capacities in the face of migration pressures. A key starting point for enhancing this understanding is to map and evaluate existing efforts across the region and to identify their strengths and weaknesses (in effect, a SWOT⁵¹ analysis). Considerable emphasis has also been placed on the importance of linking climate change not just to security and adaptation policies and programmes but also to 'disaster risk reduction and management, early warning and rapid response capabilities, [and] disaster prevention through development assistance'.⁵²

Regional collaborative platforms

The 2010 ARF seminar on the international security implications of climate change explored options for setting up regional collaborative platforms to promote the understanding of climate change and security linkages and which might include universities and research centres from within the ASEAN region as well as from outside the region. Further efforts in this regard will help provide governments with what the co-chairs of the ARF seminar call 'reliable and compatible primary data on issues linked to climate change effects on human security'.⁵³ Generating data of this kind is not, however, a one-off process. Regular updating is crucial to ensure that data and analyses remain relevant and reliable.

⁴⁹ Bernadette P. Resurreccion, Edsel E. Sajor with Elizabeth Fajber, *Climate adaptation in Asia: Knowledge gaps and research issues in Southeast Asia* (Nepal: Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET)-International and ISET-Nepal, 2008), 3.

⁵⁰ See Koh Kheng Lian and Lovleen Bhullar, *Adaptation to climate change in the ASEAN region*, draft (4 October 2010), 10–15, <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/laws/environment/docs/hong-kong/Adaptation%20to%20CC%20ASEAN%20%28KL%20Koh%20AND%20Lovleen%20Bhullar%29.pdf>

⁵¹ A SWOT analysis is a framework for evaluating the Strengths and Weaknesses of a project, as well as to identify potential Opportunities and Threats.

⁵² ARF, 'Co-chairs' summary report of the seminar on "International Security Implications of Climate Change", 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Regional cooperation

The ADB identifies ‘dialogue and deliberation’ at a regional level as crucial for enabling ‘knowledge sharing, risk pooling and security provision for environmental migrants’.⁵⁴ However dialogue and deliberation are a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective regional cooperation on climate change, migration and patterns of insecurity including human insecurity. Governments need to work cooperatively to reach agreement on regional priorities for managing mobility and migration, and to identify national and regional lead agencies and local partners, including NGOs, who together can develop and manage protection frameworks. One option is to use the ASEAN Climate Change Initiative (ACCI), which is specifically intended to function as a consultative platform to strengthen regional coordination and cooperation on climate change, to improve the region’s capacity for mitigation and adaptation efforts, and to articulate the region’s interests and priorities in international negotiations.

Conclusion

From a human security perspective, national and regional strategies for identifying and responding to the migration and mobility choices that individual and groups have (or, in many cases, do not have) in response to climate change will not be able to guarantee effective outcomes if they rely on top-down decision-making and technical responses that overlook the concerns of those who are most vulnerable. As the discussion here has indicated, policies on climate change-induced migration and mobility need to be people-centred, not just people-oriented. They need to be engaged with, and responsive to, the vulnerabilities and security needs of local communities and they need to establish governance arrangements that are inclusive and transparent. Social resilience and human security approaches to climate change-induced migration also need to involve actors who are not usually included in either the development or the delivery of more traditional modes of security – NGOs, civil society, local governments, development agencies and a range of other regional and international organisations. While these demands create complexity for decision-making and for policy implementation, the challenges identified in this paper need to be addressed and overcome if people, communities and societies – and indeed states – are to be more secure and more resilient in the face of climate change.

⁵⁴ ‘Facing the challenge of environmental migration in Asia and the Pacific’, 5.