



IOM International Organization for Migration  
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations  
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

## Migration, Climate Change and the Environment

### Key Figures

#### *Current migration flows*

- There are no reliable statistics for the number of environmental migrants in the world today. IOM has no independent estimates of current or future migration flows due to environmental factors.
- Estimates of displacement induced by natural disasters: at least 36 million people were displaced by sudden-onset natural disasters in 2008. Of those, over **20 million** were displaced by sudden-onset **climate-related disasters**.<sup>1</sup>
- While estimates may vary, it is certain that the number of people displaced by natural disasters is many times bigger than the number displaced by conflicts. As a reference, 4.6 million were newly internally displaced due to conflict in 2008.
- It is likely that many more are displaced due to other climate change-related drivers, including slow-onset disasters, such as drought and sea level rise; however, there are no current estimates of their number.
- Over longer timescales, gradual environmental changes tend to have a greater impact on the movement of people than natural disasters. For instance, over the last thirty years, twice as many people have been affected by droughts as by storms (1.6 billion compared with approximately 718 million).<sup>2</sup>

#### *Forecasts for future migration flows*

- The most widely cited figure predicts **200 million** people moving or being permanently displaced by 2050 due to environmental factors.<sup>3</sup> This number is roughly equivalent to the estimates of the total of international migrants in the world today (214 million).
- The point to acknowledge is that there is great uncertainty about the figures: forecasts for the number of environmental migrants by 2050 vary by a factor of 40 (between 25 million and one billion).
- While precise figures may not be available, climate change forecasts allow for the conclusion that there is significant potential for migration and displacement. For example, with almost 2/3 of the world's population living within 100 km of the coast and 30 of the world's 50 largest cities being located on the coast, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) prediction of sea level rise between 0.18m and 0.59m by the end of the century is significant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) / Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) 2009 Monitoring disaster displacement in the context of climate change

<sup>2</sup> International Emergencies Disaster Database (EM-DAT)

<sup>3</sup> Norman Myers, Oxford University 2005; Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change 2006

<sup>4</sup> IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) 2007 Synthesis Report – Summary for Policymakers