Internal Climate Migration

What is the issue?

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- There is presently an increased internal migration across the world due to political and economic instability.
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- Beyond this, the internal migration due to climate change is potential of getting to be a major concern for nations.
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What is the looming danger?

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- Some of the slow onset climate events would be droughts, effects from sea level rise and water shortages.
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- These may certainly drive many more to leave their homes and move to safer places.
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- Such migration may be a choice in the initial stages.
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- However, as the stress becomes more severe, the decision to move may be forced.
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- E.g. people are compelled to leave their island nations in the Pacific and Indian Oceans with gradual rise in sea levels
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- These climate exiles are an ongoing process.
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- Notably, it would likely increase out-migration over time.
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Which regions are vulnerable?

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- A recent report by the World Bank on internal climate migration highlights the possible migration reality.
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- In Latin America, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa over 140 million people would be forced to move within borders by 2050.
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- This would be as a result of slow onset climate events alone.
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- In the worst-case scenario, about 40 million of these migrants would be in South Asia.
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- This is the most populous of the regions studied, with a number of climate change effects anticipated.
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How would South-Asia be affected?

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- South Asia is characterised by **rain-fed farmland** in large parts of the region.
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- Variability in the **monsoons** and **warmer temperatures** is sure to lead to **crop failures**.
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- This will lead to **migration** from the Gangetic plains and from the rice-growing northeast of Bangladesh and the inundated coasts.
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- The numbers on forced internal migration in South Asia could increase six-fold between 2020 and 2050.
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- This will continue to rise beyond 2050 without appropriate climate action.
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- But even with inclusive development and climate-friendly scenarios, tens of millions would still be forced to migrate.
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- This normally makes people **migrate to big cities**.
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- However, those along the coast such as Mumbai, Chennai, Chittagong and Dhaka will themselves be vulnerable.
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- **Storm surges** and other effects from **sea level rise** make these coastal cities unfavourable.
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What are the concerns?

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- The **poor** would be the worst affected by these slow onset events.
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- Most of them would migrate out of rural areas to nearby urban settlements such as **cities and the peri-urban surroundings**.
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- Such "**hotspots**" of in and out migration would be stressed for natural resources, public services and livelihoods.
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- In India, the areas between Chennai and Bengaluru could be the potential spots.
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- In India, there are already signs of **unplanned and frontier-led growth** in peri-urban areas.
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- Planning that ignores the **ecosystem services** provided by local natural resources generates further problems for the vulnerable.
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- The implications of internal migrations will significantly affect **development** in these areas and the lives of vulnerable people.
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What should be done?

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- **Policy** - Understanding migration patterns, getting socioeconomic data on migration and appropriate planning are essential.
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- Current climate modelling methods are not accurate at high resolutions for local decision-making.
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- Policies to reduce GHG emissions are of utmost urgency.
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- **Cities** - The peri-urban areas, expected to be hotspots, already have many

problems.
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- These include water shortage, waste management, nutritional deficiency, limited services and poor infrastructure.
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- Thus, integrating internal migration with ongoing development planning is vital.
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- **Ecosystem** - Ecosystems, part of the natural resources in peri-urban areas, ought to be protected as “special ecological zones”.
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- This is crucial to ensure that as urban settlements expand, they don’t spoil the ecosystem services.
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- **Social** - Ignoring issues of social justice and equity in adaptation can lead to serious governance failure.
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- Skill building, job training and education and job opportunities for locals and migrants thus have to become a focal point.
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- Rights for those who are forced to migrate would be fundamental in these preparations.
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Source: The Hindu

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