Desertification, Climate Change and Migration

Perspective on the African Continent

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Desertification Can Lead to Internal and Cross-Border Migration

- Increases the incidence of poverty—a key determinant of migration—among subsistence farmers/pastoralists.
  - Soil fertility declining, resulting in lower crop yields and less viable grazing areas;
  - Reduced household incomes from agriculture requires families to consider other employment options, including through migration.
  - Economic investment in migration is used as a coping strategy to replace or supplement household income.
Sub-Saharan Africa Vulnerability

- 3/4 of all agricultural drylands are now degraded to some degree.
- 70% of poor live in rural areas and most in dryland areas.
- Desertification already affects viability of these lands, food production and agricultural employment.
- The more than 348 million children under age 14 will enter the job market---lack of opportunity will likely increase incidence of migration.
Current Migration Trends

- 17 million forced migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa and 3 million refugees (2005)

- 4.6 million African migrants living in Europe
  - 2/3 are from North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia)
  - 1/3 from Sub-Saharan Africa settling in
    - France (275,000)
    - England (250,000)
    - Germany (155,000)
    - Italy (138,000)

- In addition, there are est. 7 to 8 million illegal/irregular immigrants living in EU, mostly in France, Italy and Spain
Climate Change Impacts Migration

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ("IPCC") has determined:

climate change will play a significant role in reduced agricultural outputs and migration, particularly in Africa (2006).

By:

- Reducing the area suitable for agriculture;
- Reducing the length of growing season; and
- Reducing yield in semi-arid and arid areas.
How severe will the impacts be?

IPCC Predictions:

• In some countries, yields from rainfed agriculture could be reduced **by up to 50%**.

• Climate will intensify existing migration problems.

• Significant challenges in addressing/mitigating problems:
  - Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents because of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity.
Areas of Greatest Vulnerability

- West Africans largest number of SSA migrants:
  
  Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria key countries; growing patterns from Mali, Cape Verde and Somalia.

- 3/4 of poor in western and central Africa — 90 million people living in rural areas--- dependant on agriculture for livelihood.

“[t]o a significant extent, water will be the most important determinant of these population movements.”

Jeffrey Sachs, Scientific American, June 1, 2007.
Morocco has experienced a 10-fold increase in Sub-Saharan Migrants (latest recorded statistics 2000-2005).
240,000 yr smuggled into Europe

Migrant Smuggling Routes

Can Remittances be Reinvested to Improve Adaptation Capability?

- Remittances to Africa: 14 billion annually

- Annual remittances a growing trend in Sub-Saharan Africa
  - 4.9 billion in 2000
  - 6.1 billion in 2004 (23% increase)
  - 8.1 billion in 2005 (32% increase from previous yr)

- 10% increase in the share of remittances as a factor of GDP = 1.6% decline in the number of people living in poverty.

- 10% increase in the share of international migrants = 1.9% decline in the share of people in poverty = US1.00/day.
Recommendations

- Reform laws and policies on forced migration:
  - Recognize drivers of poverty-migration to address issues more acutely

- Adopt programs on climate adaptation that:
  - Target dryland areas where desertification already present and migration is rising but perhaps not yet an established pattern;
  - Improve adaptation capacity of people in rural drylands to temper climate impacts;
  - Improve infrastructure in poor rural areas as this may reduce likelihood of migration.

- Implement Policies supporting small-scale agriculture
  - EU/US subsidies distort prices in African markets
  - Assist small-scale farmers in long-term planning and with distribution systems