IOM UN MIGRATION

COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #34: Environmental migration and displacement

Understanding the migration & mobility implications of COVID-19

These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as analysis develops.
If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.

New research & analysis on environmental migration & COVID

More than a health crisis? Assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on climate migration by Dina Ionesco and Mariam Traore Chazanoël

Climate, migration and COVID-19 (video presentation) by Alex Randall

Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis by Lorenzo Guadagno

Managing disasters amid COVID-19 pandemic: Approaches of response to flood disasters by Mikio Ishiwatari, Toshio Koike, Kenzo Hiroki, Takao Toda and Tsukasa Katsube

Building resilience against biological hazards and pandemics: COVID-19 and its implications for the Sendai Framework by Riyanti Djalante, Rajib Shaw and Andrew DeWit

Strengthening Prevention with Better Anticipation: COVID-19 and Beyond by Emily Munro

Cities and Covid-19: Food access for vulnerable communities in practice (forthcoming webinar)

COVID-19 and environmental mobility

Environmental stress underpins migration decisions for millions of people globally every year. However, as with other drivers, movements related to environmental stress have largely stopped as governments around the world have enforced mobility restrictions in response to COVID-19.

For further information on environmental migration and displacement, IOM's Environmental Migration Portal includes relevant news, research and policy briefs on the topic.

Small Island States facing dual crises

Small island countries face the immediate effects of environmental change and now grapple with global COVID-19 pandemic. Food insecurity, the drop in tourism and environmental risks may have continued impacts on labour migration and remittances to small islands in the years ahead.

Health care and displaced persons during disasters

Hospitals already overwhelmed by COVID19 may not be able to take care of those affected by disasters, while some measures after disaster events such as mass shelters may become untenable, as they could become hotspots for the further spread of COVID-19.

Displaced and stranded populations due to disasters

As countries devote significant resources to responding to COVID-19, concerns that other disaster preparedness efforts are taking a backseat are mounting. Disaster events have consistently been the largest drivers of displacement. According to the latest data, IDMC estimates that 24.9 new displacements occurred as a result of natural disasters in 2019. Should disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes or wildfires strike during the COVID-19 pandemic, mobility restrictions will hamper effective emergency assistance. Read more in snapshot #8 on displacement events and snapshot #26 on stranded migrants.

Governance of environmental change and mobility during the pandemic

While historic, the temporary drop of greenhouse gas emissions due to government stay-at-home policies will not alter the underlying forces driving environmental change and mobility. Experts have emphasized that long-term climatic transformations do not occur from *ad-hoc* policies during a pandemic, but from coordinated work at all levels of governance.

International environmental governance

The pandemic disrupted the annual United Nations climate conference, including the migration-related discussions and the Task Force on Displacement.

Regional-level policy reviews are due to take place on the topic of The Global Compact for Migration, a crucial international agreement. These dialogues could be delayed.

National-level governance

Long-term exposure to air-pollution has been linked to greater vulnerability to COVID-19, leading France to increase support in mobility systems that do not depend on fossil fuels.

Sub-national and municipal level governance

Informal settlements can be found in many cities where rapid labor migration from rural to urban places has occurred without complete administrative and regulatory oversight. Since informal settlements typically feature densely-packed houses with ad-hoc access to city services, many fear that the residents of informal settlements face dual exposures to public health and environmental risks.