



CLIMATE MIGRATION - GS III MAINS

Q. Climate migration is an emerging disaster in the present global scenario. Discuss the measures needed to be taken to address the challenges faced by the climate migrants. (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *Overlooked crisis*

What's in the news?

- In recent times, climate migration has become a prominent concern, but there remains a notable absence of a comprehensive legal structure to safeguard individuals compelled to leave their residences because of progressively intense weather-related catastrophes.

Climate Refugees:

- According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), "climate migration" refers to the movement of individuals or groups primarily compelled to leave their homes due to environmental changes induced by climate change.
- This movement can be temporary or permanent and may occur within a country's borders or across international boundaries.

Causes of Climate Migration:

1. Sudden-Onset Disasters and Displacement:

- Internally displaced people often flee to safer areas within their countries following sudden-onset disasters like floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, yet returning home becomes challenging due to infrastructure destruction and loss of livelihoods.

2. Disasters and Vulnerability:

- Vulnerable populations, lacking resources and residing in high-risk areas, are disproportionately affected by disasters, leading to displacement and difficulties in recovery.

3. Slow-Onset Disasters and Migration:

- Slow-onset disasters such as droughts and desertification degrade land and water resources, making it hard for people to sustain livelihoods and prompting migration in search of better opportunities.

4. Sea Level Rise and Coastal Communities:

- Rising sea levels pose a threat to coastal communities, resulting in permanent displacement as homes and farmland become submerged.

Challenges Faced by Climate Migrants:

1. Precarious Livelihoods:



- Climate migrants often experience loss of skills and assets, hindering their ability to find new jobs and rebuild livelihoods. They may also end up in informal work sectors with low wages and poor conditions.

2. Integration and Social Challenges:

- Access to basic services like healthcare, education, and housing can be limited for climate migrants, leading to social exclusion. Cultural and linguistic barriers further complicate their integration into new communities.

3. Legal Status and Protection:

- Climate migrants face challenges as there's no clear legal framework to protect them, and they do not qualify for refugee status under current international law. Displacement can also increase the risk of statelessness.

4. Psychological and Health Impacts:

- Displacement and loss due to climate change can cause psychological distress and trauma among migrants, often with limited access to mental health services. They may also be exposed to new health risks in their new locations.

Limitations of Policies:

1. Global Compact for Migration:

- While acknowledging climate change as a factor for human mobility, the Global Compact for Migration does not explicitly address climate refugees, reflecting challenges in reaching consensus on this issue at the international level.

2. Identification of Climate Refugees:

- Identifying and categorizing individuals or communities affected by climate change as refugees is a key challenge due to the complex nature of climate-induced displacement.

Steps Taken to Address Climate Migration:

1. Investment in Infrastructure:

- Countries like Bangladesh are investing in coastal embankments and flood-resistant infrastructure to protect communities from rising sea levels and storm surges.

2. Planned Relocation and Resettlement:

- Island nations like Kiribati are exploring planned relocation options for their populations at risk due to rising sea levels, involving careful considerations of land acquisition, cultural preservation, and livelihood opportunities.

3. Disaster Preparedness:



- Implementation of early warning systems for floods and cyclones in countries like India and Vietnam allows for timely evacuation of vulnerable areas and minimizes casualties and displacement.

4. Regional Cooperation:

- Regional frameworks like the Kampala Declaration on Protracted Displacement provide models for regional cooperation in addressing climate migration challenges.

Way Forward:

1. Mitigation Strategies:

- Aggressive mitigation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are crucial in slowing climate change impacts.

2. Legal Frameworks and Protection:

- Developing legal frameworks to protect climate migrants, such as extending refugee status or creating new protection categories, is essential.

3. Investment in Sustainable Development:

- Investing in sustainable development and climate-smart agriculture can create opportunities for adaptation and reduce the need for migration.

4. Labour Migration Schemes:

- Encouraging labour migration among countries as an adaptation measure can mitigate the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities.