



The African Union's Adaptability and Resiliency to Climate Change and Associated Population Displacement

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Issue Background

There is a mass migration of people across Africa. Migrants are fleeing from extreme poverty, food scarcity, poor governmental institutions, and war. In consequence, migrants have congregated within institutionally developed African nations and some, as few as ten percent of all migrants, manage to migrate to Europe. This constitutes a salient population displacement issue (AUC 2018; Mbaye 2019).

Climate change is worsening the impacts on Africa's ecosystem services and economic paradigm. It is a serious threat that is going to exacerbate the mass displacement of people across the continent and solidify the conditions for an international refugee crisis in the near future. Africa is presented this critical issue in addition to contemporary mass migration that has resulted in rapid urbanization, squalor, and regional instability. Africa is now menaced by the inevitability of exponential population growth and deficient regional economic growth that stretches national governments too thin. The opportunity is presented for multilateral cooperation on this transnational issue and the African Union is positioned to address it (AUC 2018; Mbaye 2019; Rigaud et al. 2018).

Contemporary Poverty and Migration

34 percent of the total population in Africa lives in absolute poverty, denoted as living under US\$1.90 per day. As represented in **Figure 1**, the African nations with 60 percent or more of their populations living in absolute poverty, are: Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and South Sudan (The World Bank 2015). Poverty has been the primary reason for migration across Africa. Those in poverty migrate to urban centers, to more stable African nations, or trek common mass migration routes to Europe. Two of the most common mass migration routes to Europe include traversing along the Nile River through the Sudan or daring through Boko Haram territories within Northern Nigeria. In contrast, intracontinental migration routes lead to Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa. These nations champion vast refugee camps and host 21 percent of all the world's refugees. As also visualized within **Figure 2**, the net rate of people per year that have migrated into or out of these African nations, is overall positive as compared to most other African nations (AUC 2018; The World Bank 2019).



% of a Nation's Population in Poverty

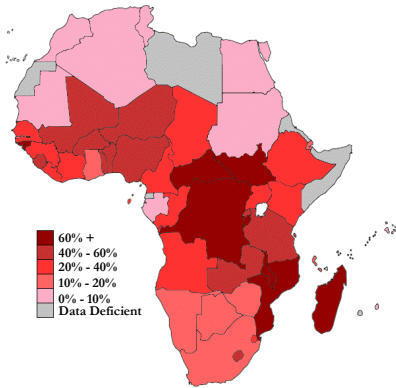


Figure 1. A heat map of Africa indicating the percentage of a nation's population that lives in absolute poverty - less than US\$1.90 per day as of in 2015 (Brys et al. 2019; The World Bank 2015).

National Net Migration Rate (#/yr)

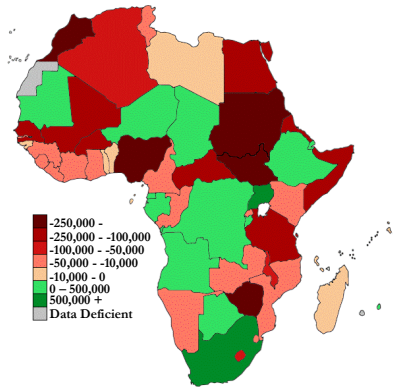


Figure 2. A heat map of Africa indicating the net rate of people that have migrated into or out of a nation using 2017 data. Net is denoted as total immigrants minus total emigrants (Brys et al. 2019; The World Bank 2019).

Pop. Displacement from Climate by Region

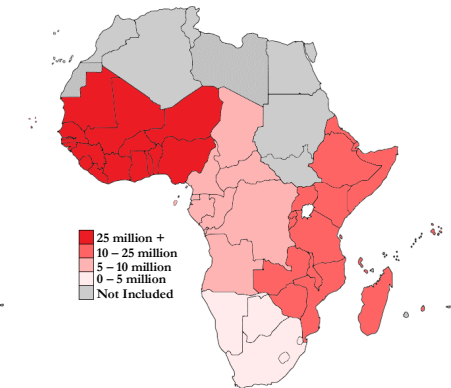


Figure 3. A heat map of Africa indicating the millions of people that are predicted to be displaced due to climate change by 2050, via Sub-Saharan regional analysis (Brys et al. 2019; Rigaud et al. 2018).

Future Climate-Induced Migration

By 2050, approximately 71.1 million people in Africa are predicted to be impacted by climate change to a severe extent, as to force them into poverty and justify migration. This is dubbed climate-induced population displacement, as climate change will inevitably limit ecosystem services and create other anthropogenic conflicts to justify migration. As regionally represented in **Figure 3**, more than 25 million people out of the 71.1 million total that are predicted to be displaced due to climate change, will be from Western Africa. This is because of poor governmental institutions, expanding desertification, predicted sea-level rise among coastal megacities, organized terrorist activity, and deficient economic opportunities within this region (Kirwin & Anderson 2018; Rigaud et al. 2018).

The African Union

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Fifth Assessment Report denotes that climate change is a global commons issue that is in dire need of multilateral attention and cooperation. Transcending political boundaries to address climate change and its direct influence on mass migration, is paramount (Dalby 2019; Edenhofer et al. 2014). The African Union, officially founded in 2002, is positioned to tackling Africa's mass migration

issue. In 2018, it officially established *The AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa: Plan of Action*. The Plan of Action outlines the tasks that the African Union Commission would have to gradually undertake between 2018 and 2030, to effectively manage the continent's mass migration issue and its future exacerbations. Included within the plan, are: recommendations on how the 55 member states can manage their respective migration realities, an encouragement for the member states to enact policies and regional laws, a motion to identify stakeholders, and a requirement to identify the national origins of migrating people, their transit routes, and their intended destination states (AUC 2018).

The Need to Address Climate Change Adaptation and Resiliency

Adaptation is the ability to prevent or avoid the impacts from climate change and resiliency is the ability to bounce back from those impacts (Black et al. 2011; C2ES 2019; Levina & Tirpak 2006). In relation, enforceable migration and climate policies are of concern; it is questionable whether the 55 sovereign member states are truly legally bound towards addressing these issues. The language utilized within the Plan of Action is passive and does not define any legitimate provisions for enforcement of related climate adaptation or resiliency policies (AUC 2018; Bedzigui 2018).



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