

Abstract

Climate-induced migration is an increasingly pressing issue in many African regions, as rising temperatures and extreme weather events have caused the displacement of vulnerable populations. This is especially so in Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa, particularly Kenya and Ethiopia, where extreme weather events have led to rangeland degradation, crop failures, water shortages, and food insecurity. Hence, there is a perceived need to understand these processes better. Against this background, this paper reports on a study investigating the processes associated with climate-induced migration in Kenya and Ethiopia. The research method used consisted of an expert-driven assessment approach, which assesses the causes of climate-induced migration in Kenya and Ethiopia and its human and social implications on local communities. Data were collected from 110 experts residing and working on climate and migration-related issues in Ethiopia and Kenya via e-mail, whose knowledge of the current situation has enabled the identification of some important trends. The results show that climate change is a primary trigger of migration both internally and externally. The high number of migrants, many of whom living within levels of poverty in their home areas is straining resources and services in the receiving regions. Their presence is also leading to increased competition for jobs and resources. Additionally, it has increased urban poverty, as many migrants have little access to living space and health care. This paper provides a welcome addition to the literature in that it lists the causes and implications of climate-induced migration and, by doing so, fosters a better understanding of the current crisis and its implications. The implications of this paper to the overall knowledge of climate change and migration are twofold. First, it highlights the need for governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders better to understand the complex linkages between climate change and migration. Secondly, it shows the usefulness of better recognising how climate change can drive migration and the other factors shaping the decision to migrate. The paper concludes by stating the urgent need for policies and programmes that support climate change-induced migrants. Also, it draws attention to the usefulness of promoting sustainable development in their origin countries and destinations, so that migration is not necessarily perceived as the only response to climate change. A further conclusion is that there is a perceived need for providing access to resources such as education, health care, and livelihood opportunities and establishing mechanisms to ensure a safe and dignified return for those who choose to do so.