

Report reveals climate change could displace 216 million by 2050



The impact of climate change in places such as Mozambique are among the leading sources of new flows of refugees and internally displaced people [File: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP Photo]

Washington, September 14 (RHC)-- Climate change could push more than 200 million people to leave their homes by 2050 unless urgent action is taken, the World Bank has warned.

In a landmark report published in Washington, the international financial institution called on states to reduce global emissions and bridge the development gap to avoid the effects of slow-onset climate change such as water scarcity, decreasing crop productivity, and rising sea levels.

“All these issues are fundamentally connected, which is why our support to countries is positioned to deliver on climate and development objectives together while building a more sustainable, safe and resilient future,” Juergen Voegelé, vice president of Sustainable Development at the World Bank, said in a statement.

Under the most pessimistic scenario, the World Bank’s Groundswell report predicts more than 216 million people across six world regions could be on the move by 2050, leading to “hotspots of internal climate migration” by 2030 that will continue to spread and intensify by 2050.

Sub-Saharan Africa has been identified as the most vulnerable region due to desertification, fragile coastlines and the population’s dependence on agriculture. Up to 86 million people are projected to move within national borders in the worst-case scenario.

North Africa may see 19 million “climate migrants” moving, equivalent to roughly 9 percent of its population. In the most climate-friendly scenario, with low emissions and sustainable development, the world could still see 44 million people being forced to leave their homes.

The findings “reaffirm the potency of climate to induce migration within countries”, said Viviane Wei Chen Clement, a senior climate change specialist at the World Bank and one of the report’s authors.

The first part of the Groundswell report, focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, was published in 2018. The sequel, which includes projections and analysis of internal climate migration for East Asia and the Pacific, North Africa, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, was published on Monday.

The report did not look at the short-term impacts of climate change, such as the effects of extreme weather events, and did not examine climate migration across borders. “Globally, we know that three out of four people that move stay within countries,” Kanta Kumari Rigaud, a lead environmental specialist at the World Bank and co-author of the report, said.

Among the actions recommended were achieving net-zero emissions by mid-century and investing in green development in line with the Paris agreement. The report comes before the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, known as COP-26, scheduled to take place in November.

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