

MIGRATION

Rapid climate change is affecting societies through its impacts on the necessities of life: food, water, energy, housing, transportation, ecosystem services and health. It is associated with making certain regions uninhabitable that could potentially affect some 400 million people. A changing climate coupled to changing migration patterns threatens to bring groups of people into conflict, potentially creating power struggles, violence and displacement that can easily spread and intensify¹.

Unequal adaptive capacity in the world as a whole is also posing certain challenges to our local community. Poorer 'neighbouring'² countries³ connected to, and yet beyond Malta's borders, are projected to be overly affected by the impacts of climate change through environmental and socio-economic catastrophes, resulting in the flow of refugees⁴.

Back home, climate change impacts are challenging the resilience of our community and its ability to adapt. Serious investments are needed to apply adaptation measures, coupled to initiatives and innovation, which in turn will be in jeopardy by negative pressures on our health, environment, economy and infrastructure. A case in point is Malta's potential to sustain its internal food production, which is expected to decrease due to climate change. This could lead to increased cost in food imports and reduced livelihood, fueling emigration.

Salient impacts:

- 1. Evidence points towards climate- and environmentally- induced migration becoming one of the major policy challenges of this century. Adequate planning for and management of this phenomenon will be critical for human security.*
- 2. Estimates of the potential number of climate change migrants vary hugely. Better data, analysis and better prediction in is urgently required order to provide a sound basis for appropriate responses.*
- 3. Global environmental change is expected to have particular impacts on islands around the world, including Malta.*
- 4. Malta needs to manage the increasingly complicated issues of additional incoming flows of refugees triggered by environmental degradation as a result of climate change.*
- 5. Expected local climate change impacts could lead to a 'brain drain' characterized by emigration of highly skilled Maltese just when Malta is most vulnerable, needed to deal both with the associated damage and adaptation measures.*

¹ Tribes and other groups have been in conflict in Darfur largely as a function of resource competition, relative deprivation and dwindling subsistence opportunities in the face of rapid population growth and environmental degradation. Environmental change in the highland of Ethiopia contributes, in a variety of ways, to encouraging migration. Nigeria is experiencing increasing incidence of disease, declining agricultural productivity, increasing number of heat-waves, unreliable erratic weather patterns, flooding, declining rainfall in already desert-prone areas in the north, causing increasing desertification, decreasing food production and destruction of livelihoods by rising waters in coastal areas. Climate change is already making some of this land uninhabitable, threatening people's basic needs and triggering displacement.

² in the physical, economic or migratory sense

³ The African continent has been identified as one the high risk areas with a potential 184 million people in danger before the end of 21st century as a result of climate change through floods, famine, drought and resulting conflicts.

⁴ According to the Refugee Studies Centre based in Oxford, migration from northern Ghana is a strategy for dealing with structural environmental scarcity rather than degradation.

Phenomenon ⁵	Internal displacement	Emigration	Potential brain drain
Increased air temperature		Increased emigration to areas with better living conditions.	<p>Increased emigration to areas with better living conditions.</p> <p>Brain drain could be worst in sectors such as health and education, for which there is a good demand overseas. This will cause great local damage by removing skilled, highly educated citizens needed to cope with challenges related to climate change adaptation and economic growth.</p> <p>Increased stresses on economy since Malta must keep up to date with and adapt technologies that will raise living standards while also protect its population against adverse impacts resulting from climate change.</p>
Increased frequency of heat-waves			Same as above
Increased torrential rains, flooding and severe storms	Search for alternative accommodation which are not prone to such scenario		Same as above
Sea level rise	Search for alternative accommodation which are not prone to such scenario		Same as above

⁵ Climate refugees to Malta (constituting part of the immigration phenomenon) are in turn forced by specific climate change impacts affecting their homeland.