

Climate Migrants (Voices to be Heard): Crowdsourcing as New Pathways for Ideation and Excogitation

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The UN Climate Change Conference COP28 is just around the corner, and it's hard to believe that a year has already passed since COP27. At the previous conference, countries were urged to take extra measures to combat climate change, and five crucial points were identified as key takeaways. These included establishing a dedicated fund to address losses and damages, reaffirming the commitment to limit global warming to 1.5°C, ensuring the accountability of businesses and institutions, increasing financial support to assist developing nations, and shifting the focus toward implementing these changes. With COP28 set to take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, it's essential to reflect on the progress made since the last conference and the work that still needs to be done to tackle the urgent issue of climate change. The COP28 conference is encouraging an accelerated, imperative climate action plan that aligns with the Paris Agreement's goals and unites the world in agreeing on bold, practical solutions to the most pressing global challenge—climate change.

Indeed, countries have been wrestling with several challenges, the most important of which is climate change, since the mid-20th century. As per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the planet's health and human well-being are threatened by climate change. The consequences of climate change include a range of severe and potentially catastrophic events, such as droughts, water scarcity, wildfires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, storms, and declining biodiversity, and Climate change has caused internal displacement and cross-border migration due to sudden or progressive changes in the environment. Between 2008 and 2016, an average of 21.5 million people were forcibly displaced each year due to weather-related events, such as floods, storms, wildfires, and extreme temperatures, according to the UN's refugee agency, UNHCR. The World Bank (2018) reported that Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America could be dealing with 140 million internal climate migrants by 2050 due to droughts, failing crops, rising sea levels, and storm surges.

In reviewing snapshots of climate hazards' effects on refuging and migrating, several cases have been highlighted, such as the tropical cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Malawi, and Zimbabwe which uprooted people from their homes and sent them looking for shelter. Moreover, the UNHCR has provided protection for Rohingya refugees in Southern Bangladesh to mitigate the effects of monsoon storms and flooding. As one of the main focal points of global climate-related rural-to-urban migration, Bangladesh is a deltaic country suffering from floods and erosion that have caused Bengalis (a total of 165 million) to escape rural areas and settle in small urban regions that are vulnerable to the killer cyclones off of the Bay of Bengal. The situation in Bangladesh is a major concern. It's worth mentioning Pakistan, where severe flooding has caused 8 million individuals to seek safety in camps, cities, with their relatives and friends, or on the roads. Climate change repercussions such as heat waves and droughts in Pakistan impose extra pressure on

farmers to leave rural areas, which, of course, exacerbates economic conditions in the receiving cities, increases demands for public goods and services, and deepens inequalities.

Europe has not been immune from the effects of climate change and migration. A case in point is Moldova, which is racked by deepening droughts, and the weak states' inability and the Ukrainian refugee crisis to respond to them effectively has made it one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in Europe. Farmers and environmentalists have expressed concerns about the recurrence of droughts in villages and agricultural areas, which will have negative effects on crop production and food security. On the other hand, large, advanced economies such as Germany have not been immune to the devastating effects of climate change. In 2021, for instance, the country experienced a devastating flood that claimed the lives of 200 people and displaced many more. Similarly, the United States has also been hit hard by the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events such as wildfires, hurricanes, and heat waves. These events have caused significant damage to infrastructure, and they led to the displacement of 3 million people in 2022.

Although Africa's per capita emissions are lower than the global average, the continent is being disproportionately affected by increasing global temperatures and the resulting climate-related consequences. The effects of drought, desertification, and cyclones are causing food shortages, displacement, and migration, among other issues. The United Nations Climate Change has highlighted these challenges in its 2023 report. For instance, Ethiopia has been grappling with the effects of climate change for a long time. In the past 50 years, the country has faced 15 severe famines. Currently, many farmers and their families are struggling due to changes in weather patterns, which have caused difficulties such as water scarcity and lower crop yields, leading to increased food insecurity among the population. Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for Ethiopians, and the worsening impact of climate change is likely to force thousands more to migrate to South Africa and Europe.

Environmental migrants constitute a broad cross-section of vulnerable groups globally. Still, they are not given much recognition at national and international levels. For instance, there is no consensus as to what constitutes a climate refugee. The definition of a refugee in the 1951 Refugee Convention does not cover displacement due to extreme weather events and their aftermath. Consequently, climate migrants do not receive sufficient protection, as they are not adequately recognized in global governance. The Global Compact on Refugees, for example, does not include climate migrants in the refugee categories, making it challenging to find a sustainable solution to refugee problems without international cooperation. The International Migration Organization (IOM) points out that the lack of data on environmental migration is due to the methodological challenges and the difficulty of quantifying environmental migration. The IOM urges increased participation of all stakeholders in decision-making related to climate change and migration, including public and private partners, civil society, women, youth, indigenous peoples, migrants, displaced persons, and affected communities. In this context, it is crucial to provide avenues for individuals affected by climate change or those interested in the impact of climate change on human security to participate in policymaking at national and international levels. Involving vulnerable climate migrants facilitates their just transition and stimulates responsive policies and programs that address their needs.

Participation is a crucial aspect of climate change policies and actions, particularly when discussing environmental migration, its potential, and the conditions required to make it effective. However, participation also poses associated risks, such as elite capture or the exclusion of

marginalized groups. The idea of participation assumes that individuals or entire communities cooperate or engage in collective action. Participatory approaches rely on certain assumptions, including communities' homogeneity, the availability of time for engagement, and the desire and ability of all individuals to participate effectively. However, these assumptions do not hold true in all situations. In this case, it is essential to explore new, innovative ways to organize participation in the current era of social media, in which people can access services through ICT approaches to bring about social change in climate change issues.

In the realm of policymaking and climate change, crowdsourcing is a powerful tool that allows people to participate in the planning and implementation of climate action and infuses transparency into governments and global governance. Inclusiveness, accountability, and transparency are the guiding principles of crowdsourcing, according to Aitamuroto and Chen (2017).

Digital crowdsourcing platforms provide information on policies and facilitate access to discussion platforms, whether they are specialized platforms for experts or public platforms for discussing climate change issues. By enabling participants to share their concerns and generate solutions that fit their problems and context, crowdsourcing ensures that their voices are heard.

Concerning speaking up about climate migrants' devastating realities, crowdsourcing provides knowledge about their situations and enables the international communities to better address their needs.

In the present era of collective intelligence and the ease of creating digital platforms, social media giants such as Twitter and Facebook have become massive repositories of information. The text and comments posted on these platforms generate a lot of deliberation and unique ideas, making them important sources of big data. The organized process of crowdsourcing regarding environmental migration issues ensures that affected people all over the world are represented. Yet, establishing crowdsourcing tools on the Internet, social media and smartphone applications requires serious data analysis and synthesis using artificial intelligence and machine learning, such as natural language processing. Then, these analyzed outputs are directed to official policymakers relevant to the needed climate change actions.

In the epilogue, crowdsourcing presents new opportunities for ideation and discussion on the issue of the environmental migration crisis. These pathways offer a platform for individuals to come together and brainstorm ideas to tackle the crisis. By tapping into the collective knowledge and experiences of a diverse group of people, we can find innovative solutions to this pressing issue. Crowdsourcing can be a powerful tool for generating ideas and encouraging dialogue, leading to better-informed decision-making and effective implementation of solutions. Let us embrace these new pathways and work together to address the environmental migration crisis.