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What is the Asian Development Bank's position regarding environmental migration?

We (the Asian Development Bank) recognize that it exists. Environmental migration is a much more appropriate term than climate change migration because then you have to go into the concept of whether climate change exists to begin with.

The ADB's position is that it exists but that it is very hard to distinguish it from other drivers of migration. Climate change migration is very intertwined to some of the drivers of regular types of migration such as poverty.

Does the ADB have any official policy paper on environmental migration?

Yes, in fact the paper is currently being drafted and a final version will be released in the next month. With our position paper we are trying to join the conversation and turn it away from the dogmatic politicians and the dramatic press. We recognize that it exists but it is also not the apocalyptic visions that are often portrayed. It is a very real problem in certain areas such as desertification in China and floods in Thailand.

How have governments responded to environmental migration?

Some governments have done a good amount of work on this subject. People have been receptive to it but because migration in general is such a politically fraught topic it is very complicated.

Who is helping out?

There is not a lot of support. The IOM (International Organization for Migration), UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency), Red Cross...

They all have a role and are providing resources within their area of responsibilities. Some governments have put in a lot of resources for host communities – places where you have crisis and conflict. Especially in the past millions of Afghans would move to Pakistan and they were hosted and provided with jobs

The migrants are helping themselves with whatever resources they have available, they rely on the communities of migrants from their place of origin.

How should environmental migration be tackled?

This challenge of environmental migration should be seen and addressed in the broader context of migration because a lot of the drivers are so intertwined that separating out you might want to deal with migrants more generally rather than deal with a special group.

If you take the issue of migration in general, migrants who are migrants for whatever reason find themselves in difficult circumstances facing discrimination and lack of rights

What communication agenda needs to be crafted around the issue of environmental migration?

The discourse needs to be changed so that migration can be used as an enormous tool of development. The Center for Global Development¹ has done some research on how migration can (by freeing borders) dramatically increase world wealth, in both receiving and sending communities. If it can be used to improve people's lives, it is not bad. If it is managed well it can be a boost for the development.

¹ Investigator's note: <http://www.cgdev.org/section/topics/migration>