



Navigating Complexity: Climate, Migration, and Conflict in a Changing World

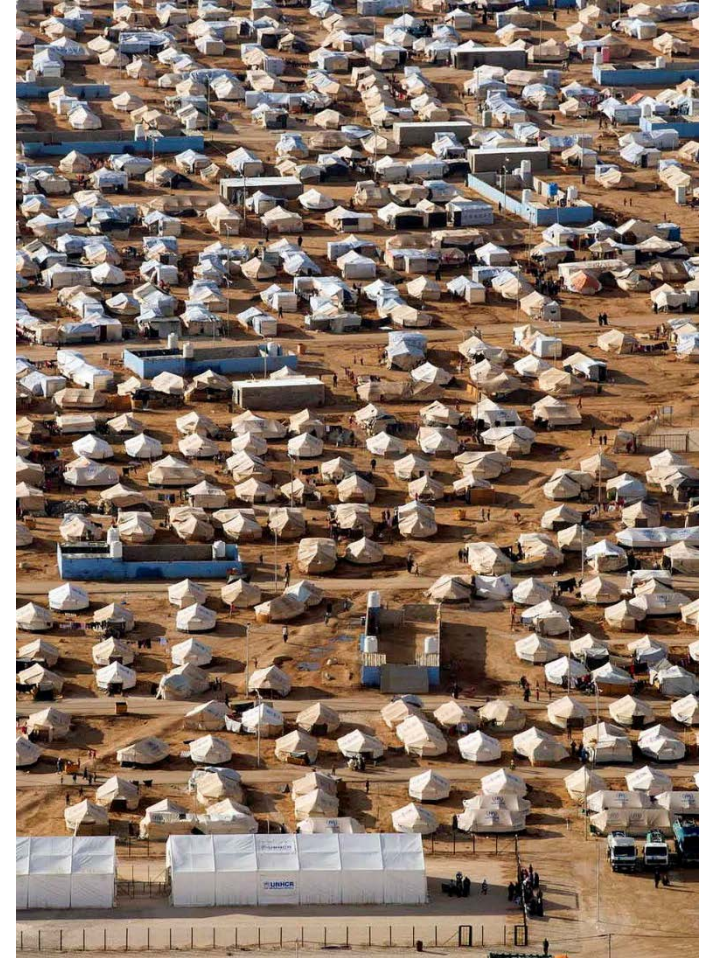
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Background



- “Pictures of war, flight, famine, and human ruin may be replacing the iconic and controversial ‘polar bear on the iceberg’ as the central public images representing the consequences of climate change,” John Wihbey, *Yale Climate Connections*, 2015
- 2015: Request from USAID’s Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation for a summary of the state of the research
- August 2015: Expert workshop at the Wilson Center



Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan, December 2012, UN Photo

Basics

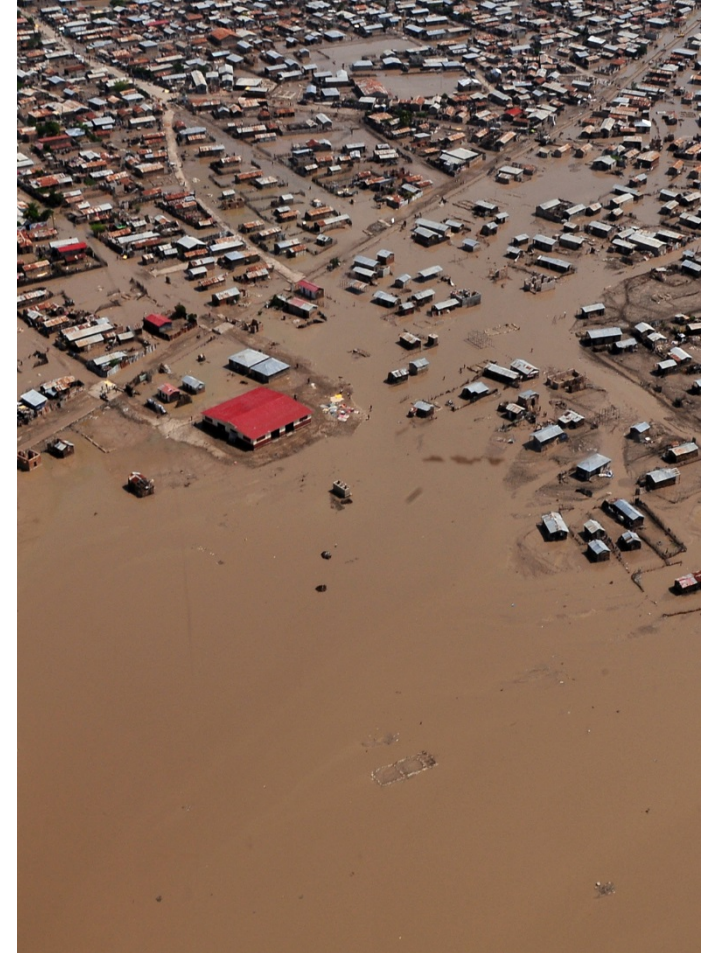


There is relatively broad consensus that...

- Climate change will lead to more migration
- Climate change is a threat multiplier for conflict

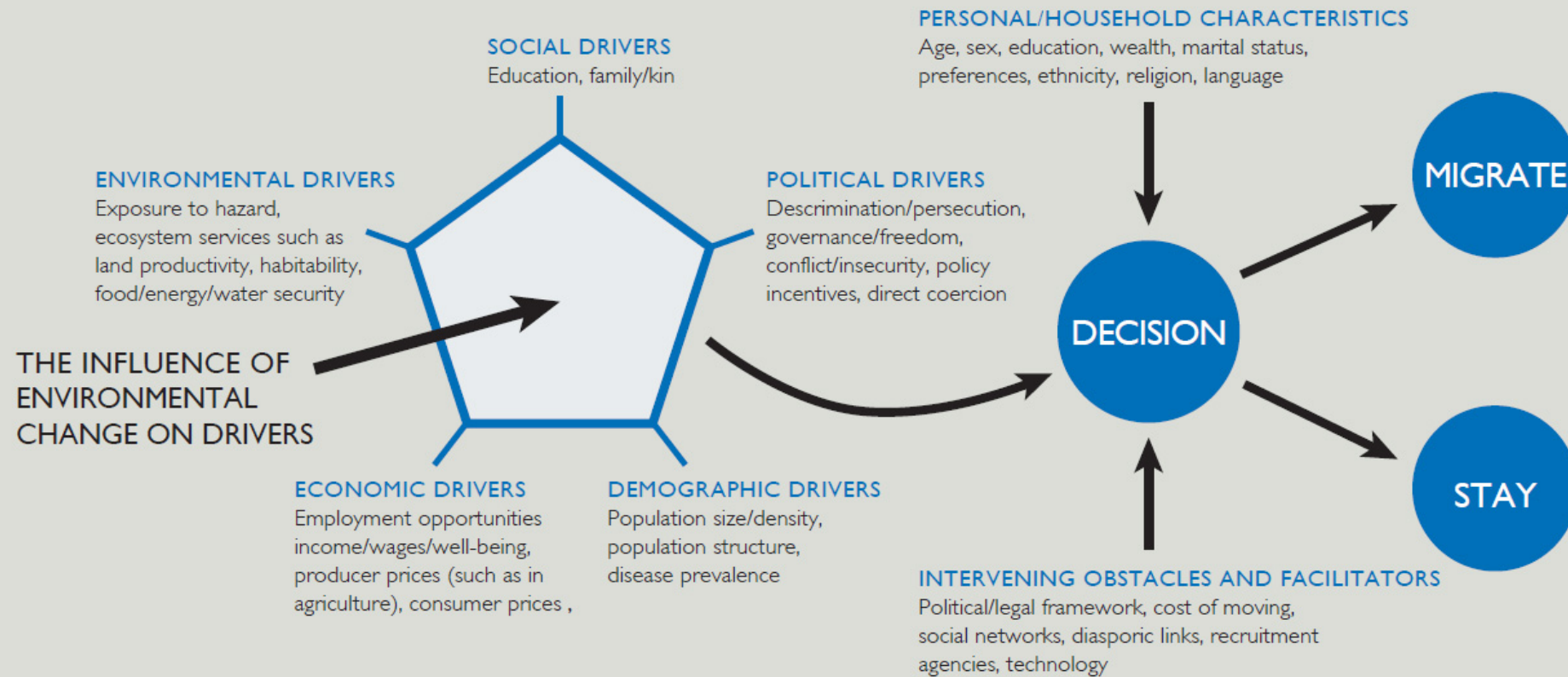
Questions remain on...

- How, where, to what degree



Port-au-Prince, September 2008, William S. Parker/U.S. Navy

Why is it so complex?



[Figure: Black et al. 2011]

Migration facts



Contrary to popular belief...

- Most migration is internal
- Most international migration is between developing countries
- Migration is more often a result of violent conflict rather than a contributor
- Because of the costs of moving, it is often those with comparatively greater resources who move
- Displacement related to a natural disaster tends to be short term and rates of violence are even lower than usual
- “Climate refugee” label is easy shorthand but misleading
- In sum: Migration is often a rational coping mechanism for households and individuals, can help relieve other pressures



North Darfur, August 2011, Albert Gonzalez Farran/UN Photo

But still a major concern



- Even if conflict is a rare outcome, it is the outcome we are trying to avoid
- The U.S. intelligence community, U.S. and foreign militaries, IPCC, and G7 have all warned about the security implications of climate-related migration
- “Backdraft”: Poorly implemented or designed policies can create problems; lack of policy can also be destructive
- The future may not look like the past

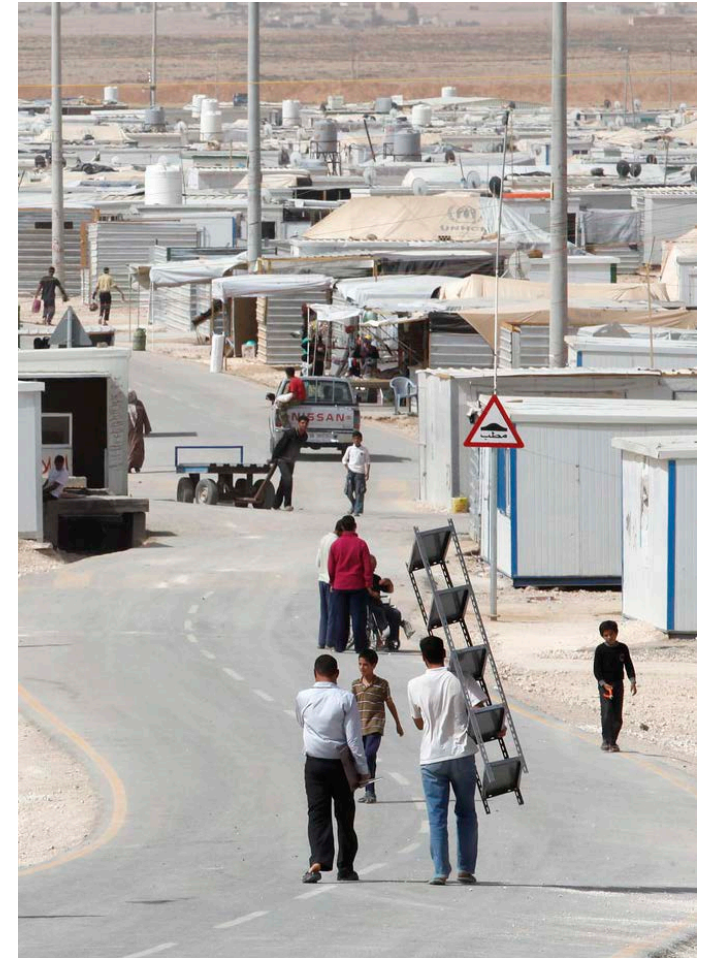


Peacekeepers in Abyei, Sudan, May 2011, Stuart Price/UN Photo

Conflict lessons from case studies



- **Context is king:** Not just exposure to climate change that make a people or place vulnerable (Syria)
- **We should not allow climate change to obfuscate responsibility:** Climate change should be seen as a test rather than an excuse for poor governance (Syria)
- **Some forms of adaptation are tenuous:** Policy changes in Darfur and Syria contributed to destructive results
- **Barring certain forms of adaptation will not necessarily stop adaptation** but may force groups to pursue more destructive alternatives (Darfur)

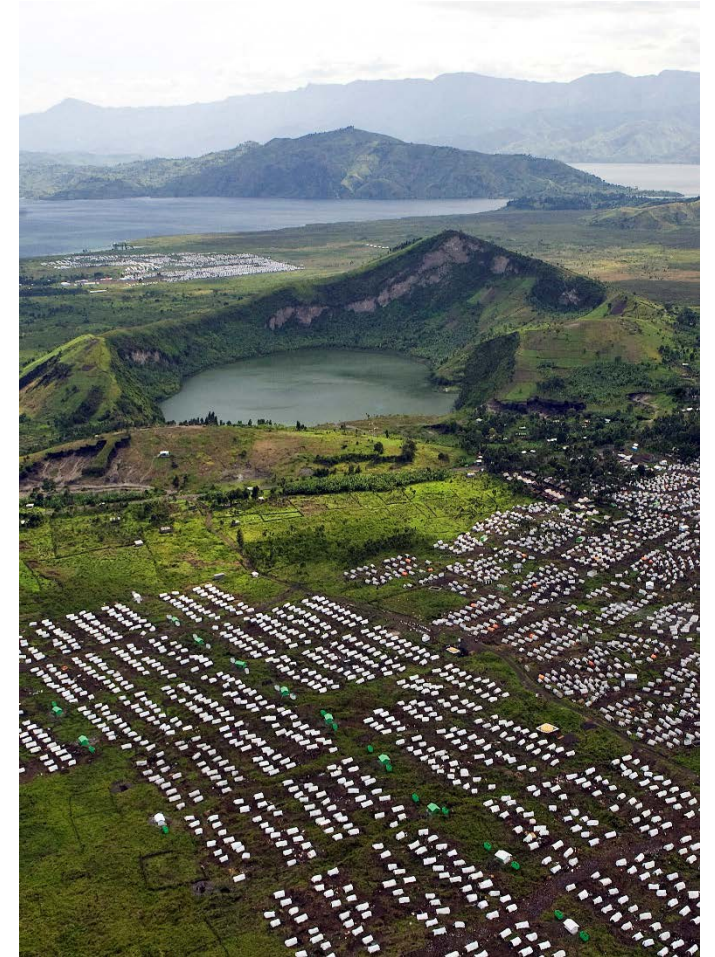


Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan, June 2014, Dominic Chavez/World Bank

Conflict lessons from case studies



- **Strengthen inclusive, local forms of resource management** to ensure disputes remain negotiable (Darfur, Senegal, Guinea)
- **Clarity, predictability, rigidity, and exclusivity in resource rights are not necessarily useful in all situations.** A degree of ambiguity and communal ownership of resources was historically a key part of diffusing tensions in Darfur.
- **More and better data is needed** on migration, climate effects, and their interactions. This is a priority area identified by Nansen Initiative and Platform on Disaster Displacement.



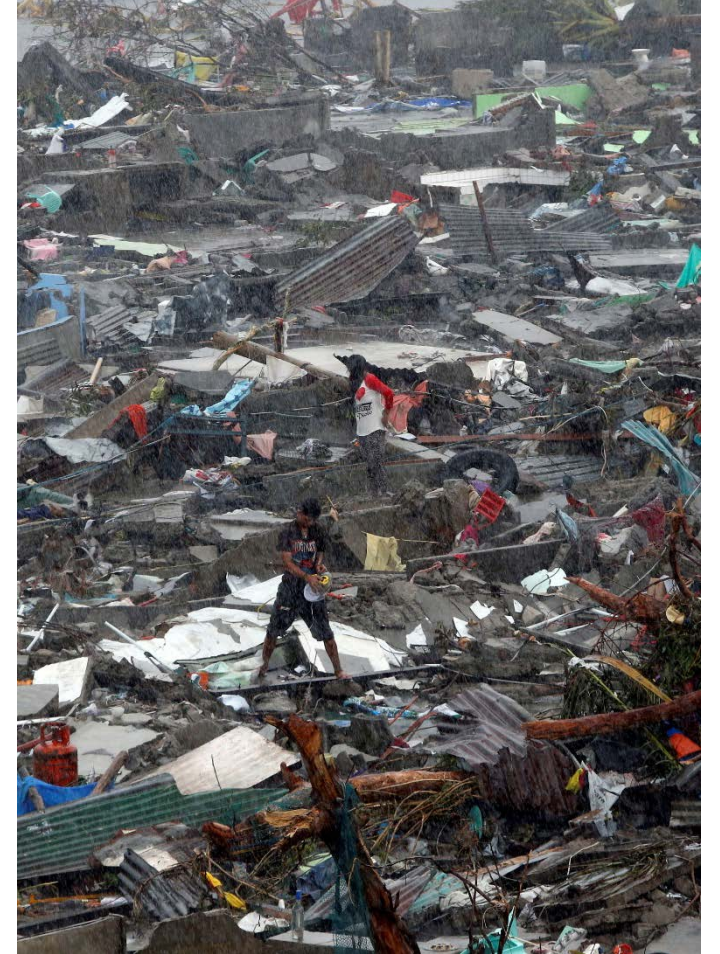
Mugunga I and II camps, DRC, April 2008, Marie Frechon/UN Photo

Next steps



Policy guidance

- Consider the conflict/peace effects of development and humanitarian programming and take steps to “climate proof” and “conflict proof”
- Commit to designing and implementing integrated responses
- Devote resources to better understanding this nexus, collecting better data
- Avoid simple narratives that may obscure important nuance



Tacloban City, Philippines, November 2013, Eric De Castro/Reuters

Thank you!

For more information:
NewSecurityBeat.org
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And download the report at WilsonCenter.org:
www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/navigating-complexity-climate-migration-and-conflict-changing-world