

Water Crisis and Human Migration; elucidating the ‘cause-impact’ connexion

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Concluding Remarks

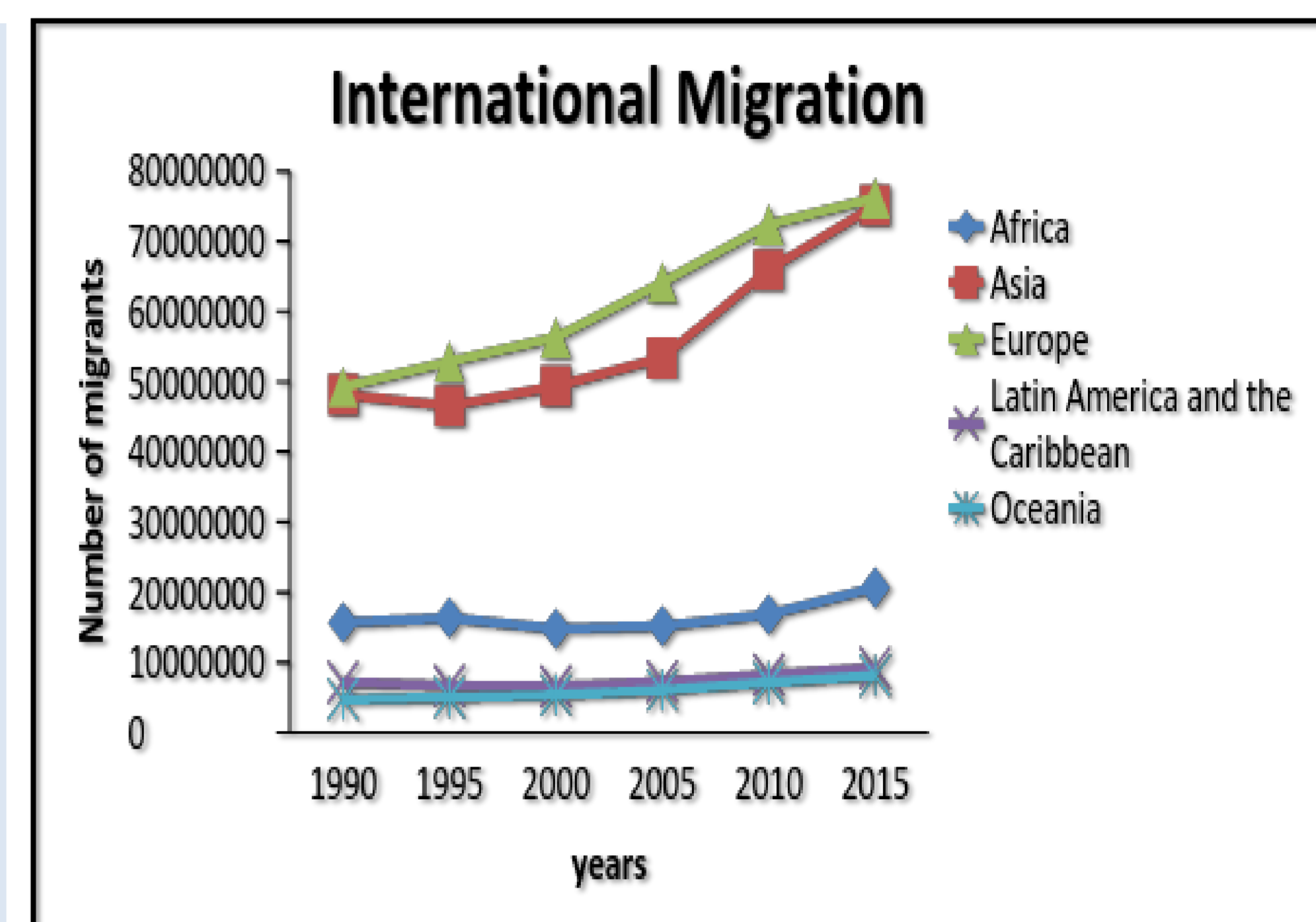
- The Global Risk Report 2015, underlines how the **water crisis** and water based shocks, including **migration** is presenting new risk and vulnerability scenarios for the sustainability and **human development agenda**.
- Perceptions and **measures** in the migration discourse are more **focused** on the ‘**response**’ context
- Increasing evidence that **migration** patterns can **trigger** political and civil conflicts and countries consider migrants as threat to national and international **security**.
- It calls for the need of concrete evidence that supports the ‘**causality**’ of human **displacement** related to the **water and climate dynamics**.
- The **2030 Agenda**, SDGs and targets reflect some bits of migration-related objectives, **urging** UN Member States and the communities to **address** the development goals, among others, by migratory context.

Context

Global community is in the midst of numerous environmental burdens - **the migration story is one big fragment of that argument**. Historically, considered as an adaptation approach to economic opportunity or seeking asylum to elude a political conflict, the push and pull dynamics of migration in the recent times has augmented due to diversification of threat and risk scenarios in the environment and climate context. Existing records show several million ‘environmental migrants’, and claims that this number will rise to tens of millions within the next 20 years, or hundreds of millions in the next 50 years. ‘From an adaptation strategy, migration is becoming more or less a survival strategy.’

Global Scale Synthesis; Multi-Scenario Causality

1990 to 2015 the total number of global migrants increased from 152.6 million to 243.7 million (82.4 million to 140.5 million in developed regions, and 70.2 million to 103.2 million). The origin of migrants; the highest number of migrants came from south-south origins, followed by south-north migrants. Drivers of migration vary from environmental, social, economic, demographic, and political often these drivers work together to push people from their origins (UN Migration Report 2015).



Cumulative migration flows at the global level (UN Migration Statistics, 2015)

Approach

We adopted a case study approach to generate a narrative and analytical explanation for three scenarios (water quality; water quantity and water extreme triggered displacement) while commenting on migration flow, trend and patterns at multiple scales (local to global) and contexts.

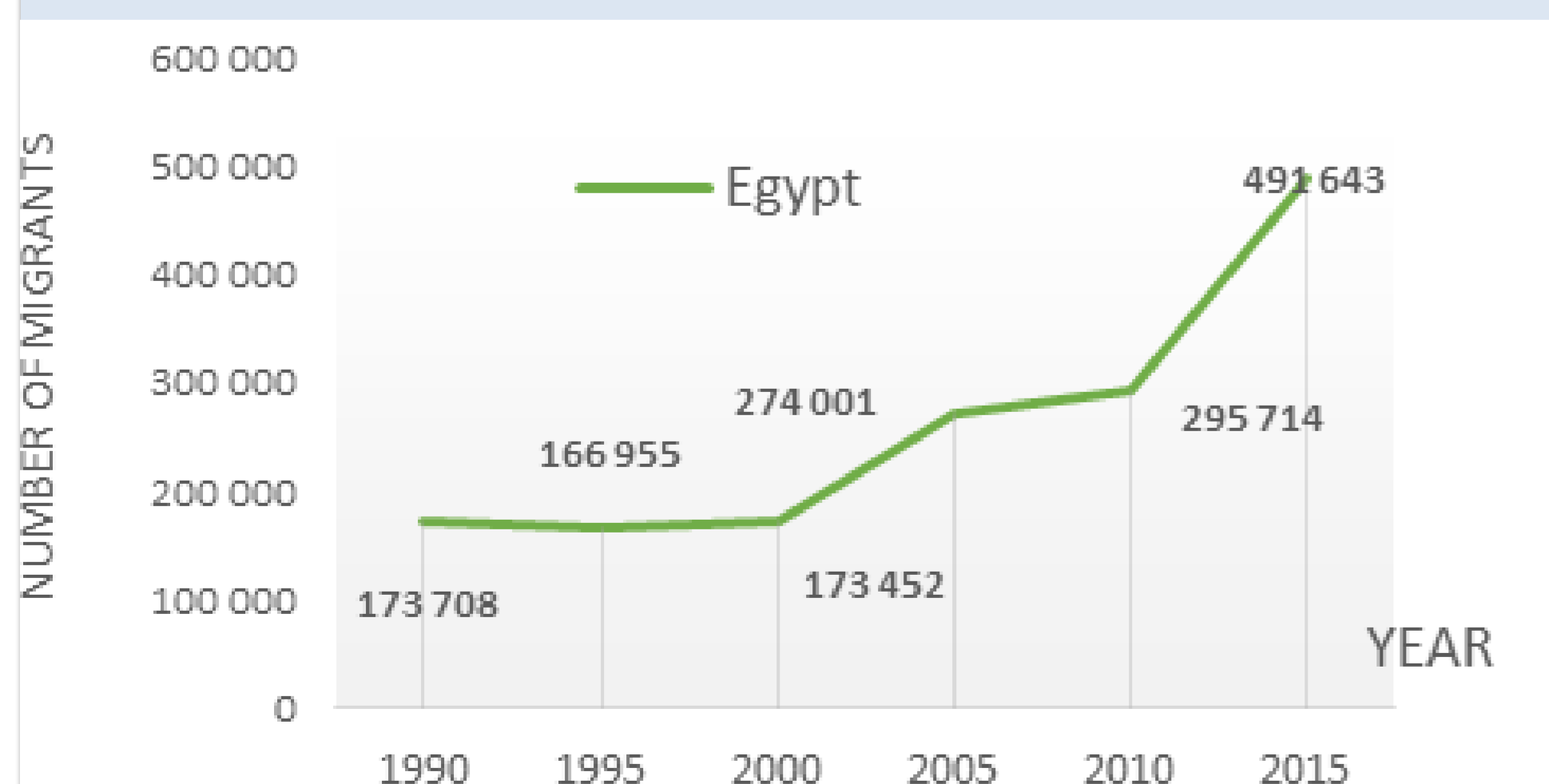
The drivers of migration, voluntary or non-voluntary displacement are multifaceted, could range from water stress, water quality issues, severe water extreme events such as floods and droughts. Classical understanding of migration or human displacement remain focused on political and economic drivers-whilest, in current times- environmental and climate crises has resulted in newer pathways, trends and patterns. in the migration, both for internal displacements and refugees.

Water Related Migration Scenarios (Regional/National/ Trans boundary/Local scale)

I - Water Quality

Let us understand the water quality scenario; unsafe drinking-water and sanitation is estimated to cause 842000 diarrheal deaths each year and nearly 240 million people are affected by schistosomiasis [chronic disease] contracted through exposure to infested water (WHO, 2016).

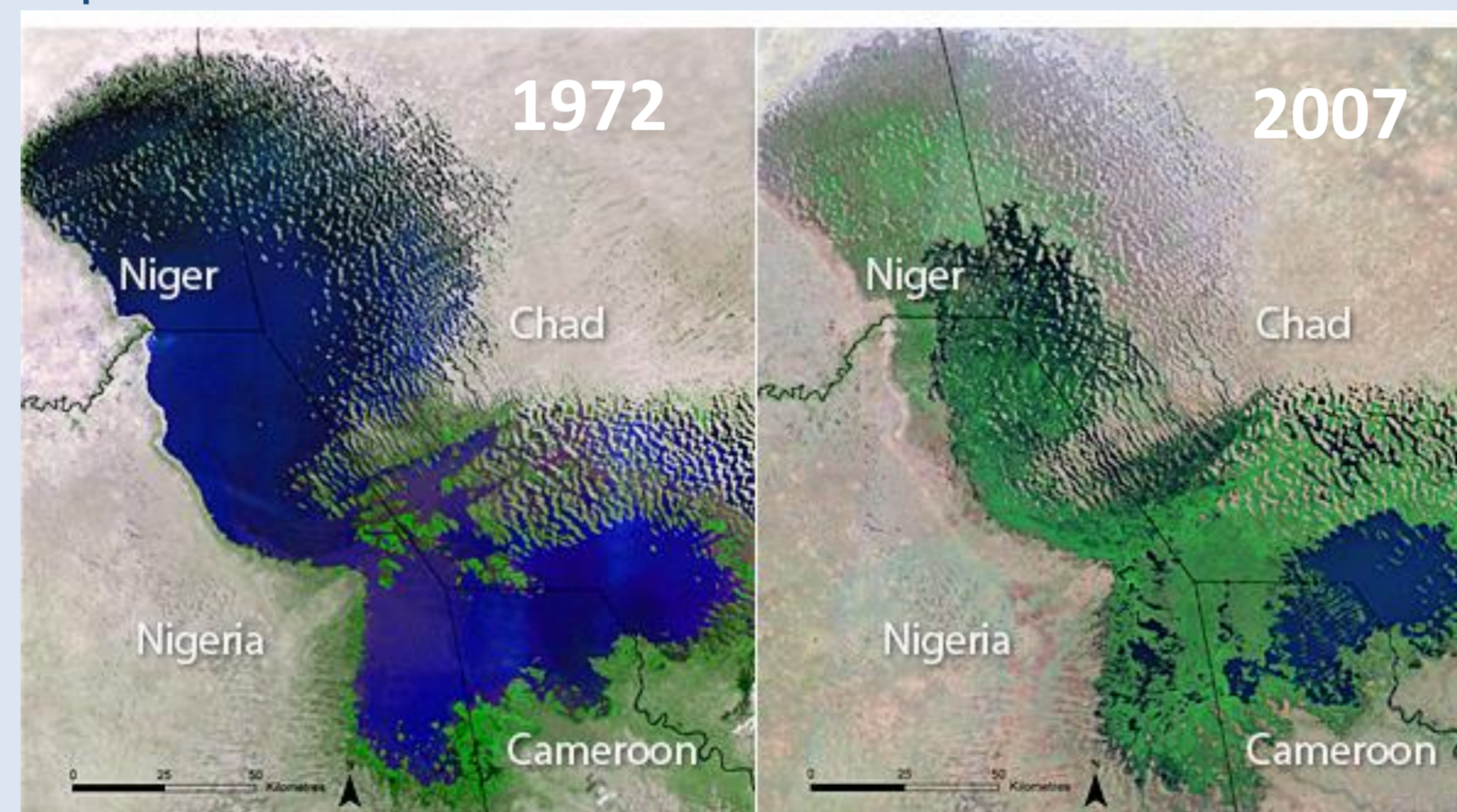
Evidence exist to prove that water quality (mainly pollution) related issues act a key driver for people to relocate within our outside territorial boundaries exacerbating the human displacement challenge.



Water crisis and migrant's statistics in last two decades (1990-2015) in Egypt – is staggering- reports attribute degradation as a key driver (UN Migration Statistics Report 2015).

II - Water Quantity

Lake Chad in the African region, in four decades, the water body has almost vanished, contracted by a massive 95% between 1963 and 2001, due to impact of climatic variability and high demand for agricultural water and caused transboundary migration, displacement and conflicts in different resource users.



III Water Extreme

In the global south, mainly Asia, cross border migration trends and patterns are concerning.

Hydro-climatic variability [floods, cyclones, salt water infusion, sea level rise and tidal surges] is established as a key driver of human displacement -the numbers point to 50 to 120 million will be affected in Bangladesh, that in turn can trigger massive cross border migration trends and patterns.

Mozambique is tackling both flooding and drought. In 2001, 2007 and 2008, heavy rains caused heavy flooding along the Zambezi River in central Mozambique and the 2007 flood alone has displaced more than 100,000 people - voluntary or facilitated (by government) migration (Warner 2010). Nigeria is rapidly losing land to desertification (more than 1350 miles) , 70 percent of Nigeria's population depending on agriculture- this is a warning sign. In 2012, massive flooding in Nigeria displaced more than 2 million & affected more than 7 million overall (International Organisation of Migration, 2014).

GAPS and NEEDS

The emerging new reality of human displacement across borders is an alarm for the global community to seek solutions that can address **pluralistic paradigms** in the migration flow, both at the **cause and response** context. In the **2030 Agenda** for Global Transformation, of 169 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, **only two talk about migrants**, and close to **none reflect on refugees**. It is therefore pertinent that governments of States at both ends of the spectrum (sending and host countries) to ensure that **up-to-date data, information and knowledge** is available for policy makers and development actors/agenda for smart planning to address the **large magnitude of crisis in the migration context with appropriation and efficiency**.

Note:

UNU-INWEH would like to solicit support and partnership discussions in relation to its new program, ‘Water Security and Nexus’, as key output the project intends to develop a comprehensive geospatial investigation on how water quality, quantity and water related disasters (three scenarios) possibly impacts assets, livelihoods and decisions related to migration. Please contact authors for discussions.

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