

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Sheffield
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 21 - Politics and International Studies
<b>Title of case study:</b> Reshaping the Global Policy Agenda on Environmental Change and Migration
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Professor Andrew Geddes' research on international migration has directly impacted upon the thinking of officials and the subsequent reshaping of policy at national and international levels concerning connections between environmental change and migration. Impact has occurred in several countries and at different governance levels. The result is that <b>a previously deterministic policy debate about environmental change triggering mass flight is now based on a changed and far more sophisticated understanding of the evidence with different assumptions now informing policy development.</b> Geddes was appointed in 2009 by the UK Government's Chief Scientific Advisor to be a member of the 6-member Lead Expert Group overseeing the 'Foresight' report Migration and Global Environmental Change: Future Challenges and Opportunities (MGEC) for the UK Government Office for Science, published in 2011. The report and associated work has had major international reach and has informed policies and practices in UK government departments (DFID, DEFRA) and the agendas and operations of the European Union (especially the Commission), World Bank and within the UN system.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The research from which the impact arises rethinks links between migration and global environmental change. As a result of his extensive research experience (R1), Geddes was invited by the UK Government's Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir John Beddington, to join the Lead Expert Group (LEG) overseeing the MGEC report. As a member of the LEG, Geddes' contribution was as follows. <b>First</b>, responsibility for commissioning work (state of science reviews, methods paper and policy papers) for the MGEC evidence base that had a public policy/governance focus. <b>Second</b>, leading workshops in London in September 2010 on migration, climate change and governance attended by academic experts and officials from key government departments (Government Office for Science, Department for Energy and Climate Change, Home Office) and an international stakeholder workshop in Istanbul (February 2011) that tested the project's conceptual framework. <b>Third</b>, contributing to the drafting of the final report, including Chapter 2 specifying the conceptual framework plus text for a number of other chapters that explored policy and governance aspects of the findings. <b>Fourth</b>, lead- or co-authoring 6 articles in refereed journals arising directly from the MGEC report and editing a special issue of the journal <i>Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy</i> (R2-R6). <b>Fifth</b>, presenting the MGEC research at events including the United Nations Annual Inter-Agency Meeting on International Migration at UN Headquarters in New York and to the European Commission's Joint Research Committee in Brussels. <b>Sixth</b>, preparing policy briefs taking forward MGEC findings for the European Commission (analysing 10 South Mediterranean countries) and for the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia region.</p> <p>Instead of starting from the impact of environmental change, Geddes' research contribution begins from impacts of existing migration to link environmental change to other 'drivers' of migration, such as economic, social, political and demographic change. This reconceptualises the debate by showing that the effects of environmental change are more likely to occur through interaction with these other drivers. <b>The direct implication is that environmental change cannot be thought of as a simple triggering factor leading to mass migration.</b> This conceptual framework fundamentally rethinks the underlying nature of the issues in three key ways that directly challenge existing thinking:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Movement towards and not away from risk.</b> Migration is driven by interaction between economic, social, political, demographic and environmental factors. Rather than simply triggering mass flight, environmental change will interact with these other migration drivers. The result is that migration is likely to occur – much of it within states – that is towards and not away from risk. For example, this will take the form of migration to large and growing urban centres in which new migrants are then exposed to environmental risk and hazard such as in informal settlements in large cities located in low lying coastal areas.</li> <li><b>2. Trapped populations.</b> Rather than serving as a simple trigger mechanism, environmental</li> </ol>

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change can reduce people's ability to migrate by eroding resources (e.g., financial and social) with the effect that millions of people are potentially trapped in areas where they are exposed to serious environmental risk, but lack the capacity to move.

3. **Migration as adaptation and not as failure to adapt.** The MGEC report developed evidence and analysis of how and with what effects planned migration that anticipates slower onset environmental change can reduce or offset the effects and impacts of more problematic forced migration or displacement.

### 3. References to the research

- R1. C. Boswell and A. Geddes (2011) *Migration and Mobility in the European Union*, London: Palgrave.
- R2. R. Black, W.N. Adger, N. Arnell, S. Dercon, A. Geddes and D. Thomas (2011) 'The effect of environmental change on human migration', *Global Environmental Change*, 2011, 21(S4). doi: [10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.10.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.10.001)
- R3. A. Geddes, N. Adger, N. Arnell, R. Black, D. Thomas (2012) 'Migration, environmental change and the challenges of governance', *Environment and Planning C*, 30(6): 951-67. doi: [10.1068/c3006ed](https://doi.org/10.1068/c3006ed)
- R4. A. Geddes and W. Somerville (2012) 'Migration and environmental change in international governance: the case of the European Union', *Environment and Planning C*, 30(6): 1015-28. doi: [10.1068/c1249j](https://doi.org/10.1068/c1249j)
- R5. A. Geddes and A. Jordan (2012) 'Migration as adaptation? Migration and environmental governance in the European Union', *Environment and Planning C*, 30(6): 1029-44. doi: [10.1068/c1208j](https://doi.org/10.1068/c1208j)
- R6. A. Geddes, N. Adger, N. Arnell, R. Black, D. Thomas (2012) 'The implications for governance of migration linked to environmental change: Key findings and new research directions', *Environment and Planning C; Government and Policy*, 30(6): 1078-82. doi: [10.1068/c3006c](https://doi.org/10.1068/c3006c)

### 4. Details of the impact

The research has raised awareness and reshaped policy agendas of governments and international organisations so as to reduce or prevent the risk of harm that could arise from previous understandings of so-called 'climate migration' as a narrowly defined security issue. The research has reached a wide array of inter-connected governmental and non-governmental communities, many acting as multipliers on one another. The depth of the change of understanding has been significant, with a consequently substantial shift in approaches to governance. Impacts on four groups of user communities can now be specified:

*UK Government:* The Health and Wellbeing section of the Climate Change Risk Assessment Evidence Report (CCRA) for the **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** draws implications for the UK government and uses the MGEC report in its analysis of risks around climate change and migration. The CCRA is the UK's first assessment of potential climate change impacts and is a statutory assessment laid before Parliament in January 2012. The CCRA reflects on the implications for the UK of future migration linked to environmental change if large overseas areas were to be severely affected by climate change. The CCRA gives direction to the National Adaptation Programme laid before Parliament in 2013. The CCRA Evidence report draws directly from the MGEC report to note that if immigration to the UK is affected, especially in the event of 'catastrophic' climate change rendering large overseas areas uninhabitable, then the influx of new immigrants might change the proportion and composition of ethnic groups in Britain with implications for UK demographics and for health needs (p. 189). The **Department for International Development** (DFID) Adaptation Team used the MGEC framework related to migration as a form of adaptation to environmental risk to change awareness and reshape policy agendas on the impact of cash transfers for poor people in vulnerable environments (S1, p.5). DFID used the report as the basis for a workshop (March 2012) in Ghana with the Foresight team and the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana to consider the Report's implications for the Government of Ghana and to assess approaches to migration as an adaptation strategy. The MGEC report's analytical framework was used to initiate research in Ghana on the impact of cash transfers.

*European Union:* EU-level approaches previously had a narrow security focus with, for example,

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the Commission's former High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Javier Solana, delivering a paper to the Council in March 2008 entitled **Climate Change and International Security** focused on 'environmentally triggered additional migratory stress' (page 10) with potential for exacerbation of existing conflicts, creation of new conflicts (e.g. over resources), triggering of border tensions and scope for large-scale displacement. The MGEC report challenged this 'securitised' conception of the issues. Geddes presented the MGEC findings to the **Joint Research Committee of the European Commission** (December 2011) and participated in a bilateral meeting between the **Director General of the European Commission Home Affairs Unit**, Mr Stefano Manservigi, and the UK Government's Chief Scientific Advisor, Sir John Beddington, in which specific implications of the report's findings for the EU were discussed, particularly migration as an adaptation strategy. Following this meeting and workshops with the Foresight team, in April 2013, the **European Commission** produced a Staff Working Document (SWD) on **Climate Change, Environmental Degradation, and Migration accompanying the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change** (S2). The SWD referred extensively to the MGEC report (on 19 occasions). For example, on p.8, the SWD identified the change in awareness stimulated by the MGEC report when noting that: 'Early analyses of the impact of climate change and migration were based on an overly deterministic understanding of the relationship between the risk of environmental degradation faced by populations and the likelihood that they would migrate. In contrast, more recent research such as the UK government's Foresight study has taken a more sophisticated approach, paying greater attention to both the adaptive capacity of persons in low income countries, and the factors behind decisions to migrate'. The SWD then referred directly by name (S2, p.12) to a policy brief prepared by Geddes that applied the MGEC report to 10 South Mediterranean Partner Countries and explored implications of environmental change for issues such as urban governance, vulnerability and 'trapped populations'. Directly using Geddes' policy brief, the SWD noted that contrary to previous assumptions about potential mass migration and displacement the 'options for longer-distance and international migration within the Southern Mediterranean countries and beyond are likely to be reduced by the effect of environmental change and its interaction with other migration drivers, in particular for the poorest groups in society. Therefore, persons migrating may not be the most vulnerable or the most affected by environmental change' (p.12). Thus the European Commission took forward MGEC findings that challenged simplistic notions of mass flight and developed a more sophisticated understanding of the policy challenges. The SWD then fed directly into the Commission's Communication of May 2013 on **Maximising the Development Impact of Migration: The EU contribution for the UN High-level Dialogue and next steps towards broadening the development-migration nexus**, p. 3 of which referred explicitly to the SWD to note a key MGEC conclusion that 'climate change and environmental degradation are already exerting an increasing influence on migration and mobility, with current evidence suggesting that in the future most movements will occur either within or between developing countries'.

*International organisations (UN system, World Bank):* Geddes presented the MGEC report to the UN Inter-Agency meeting on International Migration at UN Headquarters in February 2012. The MGEC report has significantly influenced the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** thinking and work in seeking to place migration issues higher on the international agenda. For example, the Foresight project contributed to the launch of the Nansen Initiative (launched by the Swiss and German governments at the UNHCR's Executive Committee on October 2 2012) by preparing a report entitled *The Nansen Initiative, UNHCR and the Foresight Report on MGEC*. The Population Division of the **United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)** has cited the report to support discussions in the inter-agency Global Migration Group. The MGEC report served as the basis for a discussion of migration and environmental change in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on International Migration and Development prepared for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly in Autumn 2012. The Secretary-General's report made specific reference to the MGEC report when it noted that: 'Environmental change is seldom the sole reason for people to move, but is often one of the reasons to migrate, alongside political, social, economic and demographic factors' (S3, p.8). The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** recognised that the MGEC report contributed to new and emerging understandings of linkages between poverty, the environment, and migration as well as building synergies between global processes such as the **Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD)** and the **United Nations Framework Convention on**

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**Climate Change** (UNFCCC) process (S1, p.2). The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** used the Report for the in-depth analysis to inform its own regional study and to serve as an important reference point (S1, p.2). Geddes co-authored a report applying the MGEC report to the **World Bank's Europe and Central Asia region**. The MGEC report has contributed to debate, policy and practice regarding regional migration issues, and has been used to brief senior World Bank policy makers and a wider audience. The World Bank are using the MGEC report and policy briefing paper co-authored by Geddes to set empirical background conditions for policy at regional and country level and to foster discussion within relevant sector units within the World Bank, and in turn with client countries. It is also using the MGEC report in the development of its corporate strategy and global advocacy (S1, p.2)

*Public engagement:* The MGEC report was covered extensively in the national and international media to reshape debate about links between migration and environmental change. For example, *The Guardian* newspaper had previously published articles such as the following in 2008 that noted potential for 'mass migration arising from climate change with climate change as one of the major drivers of this phenomenon ... Europe must expect substantially increased migratory pressure' (cited in R4). Immediately following the launch of the MGEC report, *The Guardian* reported the issues very differently when noting that: 'Hundreds of millions of people may be trapped in inhospitable environments as they attempt to flee from the effects of global warming, worsening the likely death toll from severe changes to the climate'. The article referred directly to Geddes, as follows: 'Trying to stop migration from global warming may be the wrong approach, the scientists warned. Andrew Geddes, professor of politics at the University of Sheffield, said: "Policies that just seek to prevent migration are risky." Instead, governments should attempt to anticipate movement and find ways to improve conditions, both in the places people are likely to move to, and those they are likely to move from' (S4). In addition, the MGEC report and its key findings were covered in articles in major international news outlets for example by the **New York Times** (S5), **Reuters** (S6), **Financial Times** (S7), and **BBC News** (S8) website. The MGEC report also reshaped debate amongst NGOs about links between climate change and migration. For example, the report *Communicating Climate and Migration* by the **UK Climate Change and Migration Coalition** (S9) noted that: 'Several factors appear to have brought it to public attention over the past year, most notably the famine and drought in Somalia, the Durban climate summit and the UK Government Foresight report' (p.6).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1. *Foresight One Year Review Report*, London: Government Office for Science corroborates the impact of the MGEC report and Geddes' contribution to it.
- S2. European Commission Staff Working Document (2013), *Climate change, Environmental Degradation, and Migration*, SWD (2013) 138 final corroborates the impact of the MGEC report on European Commission thinking and refers directly to the impact of Geddes' research.
- S3. United Nations General Assembly (2012) *International Migration and Development. Report of the Secretary General*, Sixty-seventh session, July 2012 corroborates claim about impact on UN thinking through direct reference by UN Secretary General to MGEC report (page 14).
- S4. *The Guardian*, October 20 2011 corroborates the impact of Geddes' research by quoting him directly on the effects of environmental change on migration: <http://tinyurl.com/qfzqafx>
- S5. *The New York Times* October 20 2011 corroborates the claim about the international impact of the MGEC report.
- S6. *Reuters* October 19 2011 corroborates the claim about the international impact of the MGEC report: <http://tinyurl.com/oscr7mc>
- S7. *Financial Times* October 20 2011 corroborates the claim about the international impact of the MGEC report: <http://tinyurl.com/lamvwr1>
- S8. *BBC News* October 20 2011 corroborates the claim about the international impact of the MGEC report: <http://tinyurl.com/3ebcra2>
- S9. UK Climate Change and Migration Coalition (2012) *Communicating Migration and Climate Change*, London: UKCCMC corroborates the claim about the impact of Geddes' research on NGOs and non-state actors involved in campaigning about migration and climate change issues.