

CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION AND YOUTH RESILIENCE: EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief explores the pressing issue of climate-induced migration in Ghana, particularly its impact on youth. With young people constituting 73% of the population aged 15 to 34, they are among the most vulnerable to climate-driven migration. Climate stressors such as erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and coastal erosion are forcing youth, particularly from rural areas, to migrate in search of better opportunities. While urban centers like Accra and Kumasi appear attractive, they present challenges including overcrowded housing, strained infrastructure, and informal employment.

Through case studies like Fuveme, a coastal community experiencing severe erosion, this brief highlights the immediate threats of climate change on livelihoods, education, and social stability. Despite the urgency, Ghana's National Youth Policy (2022-2032) lacks comprehensive strategies to integrate climate resilience into migration management. This gap leaves young people without adequate support in adapting to environmental changes and economic shifts.

To address these challenges, this policy brief calls for investments in climate-smart infrastructure, youth-led resilience initiatives, and stronger public-private partnerships. Leveraging technology for migration trend analysis, empowering local governments, and creating sustainable economic opportunities will enhance youth resilience. The inclusion of young voices in policy discussions, particularly at global platforms like COP30, is essential in shaping a sustainable future. Ghana must seize this opportunity to transform climate-induced migration from a crisis into a pathway for development.

1. Introduction

1.1 Role of Climate Change in Exacerbating Vulnerabilities

Climate change has emerged as a significant driver of migration, fundamentally altering ecosystems, livelihoods, and socio-economic structures while being shaped by social, cultural, and political contexts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlights extreme weather events including prolonged droughts, devastating floods, and unpredictable rainfall patterns as critical triggers of migration on a global scale. According to the United Nations, by 2050, an estimated 216 million people worldwide will be displaced due to climate-related stressors, underscoring the urgent need for proactive adaptation strategies.

Ghana is increasingly experiencing the consequences of climate-induced migration, with rising temperatures, soil degradation, and erratic rainfall severely affecting agricultural productivity. This is particularly evident in rural communities, especially in northern Ghana, where subsistence farming remains a primary economic activity. Unpredictable weather patterns have led to declining crop yields, depleted water resources, and escalating food insecurity.

Faced with limited employment opportunities and deteriorating environmental conditions, many young people, who form a substantial segment of Ghana's population, see migration as a survival mechanism.

However, migration as an adaptation strategy presents new challenges. Urban centers such as Accra, Kumasi, and Tamale are experiencing an unprecedented influx of rural migrants, overwhelming already strained infrastructure, housing, and public services. Informal settlements continue to expand, and competition for low-paying, precarious jobs intensifies, exacerbating socio-economic inequalities.

Research and Advocacy by the Youth Bridge Foundation on 'The Nexus between Climate induced-migration, Peace and Security.'

In 2024, the Youth Bridge Foundation undertook an in-depth exploration of the intricate relationship between climate change, peace, and security through a documentary titled *The Nexus Between Climate-Induced Migration, Peace, and Security*. This research focused on the Fulbe, a nomadic pastoralist group whose livelihood is heavily dependent on access to fodder and water resources that are increasingly threatened by climate change. As climate-induced droughts and erratic rainfall patterns diminish these essential resources, the Fulbe are compelled to migrate in search of sustenance.

In Ghana, this migration has led to complex interactions between the Fulbe and local communities, often resulting in tensions over land and water access. These tensions sometimes escalate into violent confrontations, reinforcing the link between climate-induced displacement and social unrest. Our findings confirmed what has been widely reported, that is, climate change is not just an environmental issue but a critical driver of instability and conflict.

Peace and security are fundamental pillars of global development, yet climate change is emerging as an unprecedented disruptor, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new socio-political challenges. The case of the Fulbe is just one example of how climate change influences migration patterns, resource conflicts, and community relations. It underscores the urgent need for proactive policies and adaptive strategies to mitigate the broader consequences of climate change on human security.

As climate change continues to redefine geopolitical and socio-economic landscapes, it is imperative that we pay closer attention to its cascading effects on human lives. Understanding these nexuses between climate change and migration, climate change and conflict, and climate change and socio-economic stability is crucial to designing holistic interventions that ensure resilience, sustainability, and peace in affected communities.

The 2021 Population and Housing Census revealed that individuals between the ages of 15 and 34 constitute 73% of Ghana's total population. This demographic reality highlights the urgent need to integrate climate resilience into national migration policies. By developing comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of displacement while ensuring sustainable development, Ghana can harness the potential of its youthful population to drive climate adaptation, economic transformation, and long-term resilience.

2. The Impact of Climate Change on Migration

2.1 Key Impacts

Erratic rainfall patterns have significantly disrupted agricultural cycles, leading to widespread crop failures and food insecurity. Farmers, particularly in rural areas dependent on rain-fed agriculture, struggle to sustain their livelihoods as unpredictable weather conditions hinder planting and harvesting schedules. As a result, many young people, who rely on farming as their primary economic activity, are compelled to migrate to urban centers in search of alternative employment opportunities. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events further exacerbates this challenge, intensifying the pressure on rural communities and accelerating the pace of climate-induced migration.

Prolonged dry seasons have intensified water scarcity, creating additional hardships for both agricultural and domestic use. Rivers, lakes, and underground water sources that once sustained farming and daily life are depleting at an alarming rate. As access to clean and reliable water becomes more difficult, agricultural productivity declines, forcing families to abandon their ancestral lands in search of more favorable conditions elsewhere. This widespread resource depletion not only disrupts food production but also triggers conflicts over access to dwindling water supplies, further driving migration trends.

Land degradation has emerged as a critical factor in climate-induced migration, as soil erosion, deforestation, and desertification continue to deplete the fertility of arable land.

Once-thriving agricultural regions are becoming increasingly barren, limiting opportunities for rural livelihoods. Without sustainable land management practices, many young people see little hope for economic stability in their communities and are forced to migrate to urban areas or even abroad. This mass movement of people places additional stress on cities, exacerbating unemployment, housing shortages, and resource scarcity in already overburdened urban centers.

While most climate-induced migration in Ghana occurs internally, there is a growing trend of international migration due to worsening environmental conditions. Young people, facing dwindling prospects in rural areas, increasingly seek opportunities abroad, particularly in regions perceived to offer better economic stability. Countries in North Africa and Europe have become key destinations, though migrants often encounter significant risks, including exploitation, unsafe travel conditions, and legal uncertainties. This shift toward international migration underscores the urgent need for sustainable climate adaptation policies that address the root causes of displacement while creating viable opportunities for youth within Ghana.

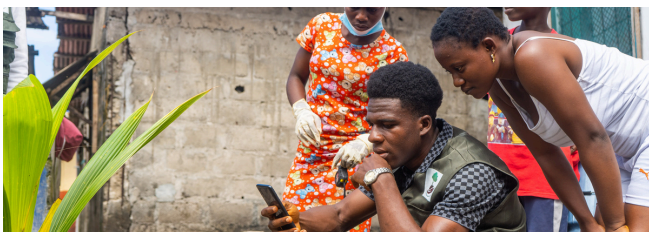
3. Youth and Climate-Induced Migration

3.1 Drivers of Migration

Economic Hardship

Economic hardship remains a primary driver of youth migration, as limited employment opportunities and declining agricultural productivity push many young people toward urban centers. In rural areas, subsistence farming is the predominant livelihood, yet unpredictable weather patterns, poor soil conditions, and a lack of financial support for agricultural innovation have made it increasingly difficult to sustain. With few alternative industries available, young people are left with no choice but to migrate to cities in search of work. However, the urban job market is often oversaturated, leaving many migrants trapped in low-paying, informal employment that offers little economic security.

Educational Aspirations



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Educational aspirations also play a significant role in migration patterns, as many rural communities lack access to quality schools, vocational training centers, and higher education institutions. Limited educational infrastructure, insufficient teaching staff, and inadequate learning resources force ambitious young people to relocate to urban areas where they can pursue better academic and career opportunities.

Unfortunately, this migration often places financial strain on families, and in some cases, students struggle with high living costs, overcrowded schools, and limited job prospects upon graduation.

Environmental Pressure/Climate Change

Environmental pressures, including prolonged droughts, frequent floods, and worsening soil degradation, have increasingly forced youth to seek alternative livelihoods outside their home communities. Agriculture, which serves as the backbone of rural economies, has become highly vulnerable to climate variability. Unreliable rainfall and desertification have diminished crop yields, while floods have destroyed homes and farmlands. As traditional means of earning a living become less viable, migration becomes an adaptive strategy for survival. Many young people relocate in search of stable income sources, but without sustainable employment opportunities in their new environments, they often face precarious conditions.

Urbanization

Urban attraction serves as another major factor influencing migration decisions. Cities are often perceived as hubs of opportunity, offering the promise of higher wages, better infrastructure, and access to essential services such as healthcare and education. However, the realities of urban migration frequently fall short of expectations. Many migrants arrive to find overcrowded and informal settlements, where poor living conditions, inadequate sanitation, and exposure to social risks such as crime and exploitation are common. Despite these challenges, the allure of city life continues to draw young people, reinforcing the need for policies that promote balanced regional development and sustainable livelihood opportunities in rural areas.



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4. Case Studies of Climate-Induced Migration in Ghana

4.1 The Impact of Sea-Level Rise on Fuveme, Volta Region

Fuveme, a coastal community, exemplifies the devastating effects of climate change. Rising sea levels and erosion have destroyed homes and livelihoods, forcing youth to migrate. Many face limited job prospects in urban areas, leading to social disintegration. This case highlights the urgent need for climate adaptation measures in coastal regions.

Kekeli Fiazuku, a young woman from Fuveme, a coastal village in Ghana's Volta Region—witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of climate change. Between 2010 and 2020, rising sea levels and coastal erosion transformed her once-thriving community into a narrow strip of sand, leading to the loss of homes, schools, and vital infrastructure.

As the encroaching sea claimed more land, Kekeli like many others, was forced to relocate inland, abandoning their ancestral home and primary livelihood of fishing. The displacement not only disrupted their economic stability but also severed deep-rooted cultural and social ties.

Determined to support her community amidst these challenges, Kekeli took proactive steps to aid fellow displaced women. She established an association aimed at providing alternative vocational training and economic opportunities for female fishers affected by the environmental crisis. This initiative also included a resilience fund (though not much) to assist members during future climate-related adversities.

Kekeli's leadership and advocacy brought international attention to the plight of climate-induced migrants in Ghana. Her efforts have been recognized nationally, highlighting her role in building resilience against climate change.

Kekeli's story further highlights the need for comprehensive climate adaptation strategies in Ghana's coastal regions. It highlights the importance of empowering youth, especially young women, to lead community-based solutions in the face of environmental challenges.

4.2 Socio-Economic Impacts Across Demographic Groups

Youth

Youth face economic instability due to limited job opportunities, forcing migration to urban areas where they often encounter low-paying, informal work. Without sustainable employment, poverty cycles persist, restricting their long-term financial security and social stability.

Women

Women bear increased responsibilities when male family members migrate, managing households and farms with limited access to financial resources. This economic strain deepens gender inequalities and leaves many women vulnerable to exploitation. Empowering women through financial inclusion and skill development is crucial for resilience.

Children

Children experience disrupted education as migration and displacement force families to relocate. Many struggle to reintegrate into new schools, while others enter child labor to support their families. Ensuring educational continuity and support for displaced children is essential to breaking cycles of poverty.

Aged

The elderly suffer from reduced social support as younger generations migrate, leaving them isolated and struggling to meet basic needs. Without adequate healthcare and community assistance, their vulnerability increases. Strengthening social protection systems is vital to safeguarding their well-being in changing demographic landscapes.

5. Policy Implications and Recommendation

5.1 Identifying Policy Gaps

A critical gap in the National Youth Policy is the lack of integration of climate adaptation strategies within migration planning. Despite the growing impact of climate-induced migration, there is insufficient support for initiatives that promote climate-smart livelihoods, leaving many young people without sustainable economic opportunities. Additionally, the policy does not adequately address the strain on urban infrastructure caused by youth migration, resulting in overcrowded housing, limited access to essential services, and increased unemployment in cities. Addressing these gaps is essential for building resilience and ensuring a comprehensive approach to youth migration management.

5.2 Comprehensive Policy Approach Community Resilience

A comprehensive policy approach to climate-induced migration must prioritize enhancing community resilience through strategic investments in climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable water management, and adaptive infrastructure. Strengthening agricultural practices with drought-resistant crops, efficient irrigation systems, and soil conservation techniques will improve food security and economic stability. Additionally, upgrading water management infrastructure will ensure reliable access to clean water, reducing the vulnerability of rural communities to prolonged dry seasons and erratic rainfall.

Leveraging Technology

Leveraging technology is essential for effective migration management and climate adaptation. Artificial intelligence (AI) can be utilized to analyze migration trends, predict displacement patterns, and inform data-driven policy interventions. Social media platforms serve as powerful tools for raising awareness about climate adaptation strategies, educating communities on resilience-building measures, and connecting affected populations with resources. Integrating technology into policy frameworks will enhance early warning systems and improve the responsiveness of interventions to climate-induced displacement.

Green Jobs

Developing green jobs is a key component of a sustainable migration strategy, ensuring that young people have viable economic opportunities within their communities. Expanding the renewable energy sector through solar, wind, and bioenergy projects can create employment while promoting environmental sustainability. Additionally, investing in climate-smart agriculture, such as agroforestry and organic farming, will not only provide long-term economic benefits but also enhance ecological resilience. By fostering industries that align with climate adaptation goals, policymakers can reduce the push factors driving youth migration.

Strengthening Education

Strengthening education is crucial to addressing migration pressures. Equipping young people with the skills needed for sustainable livelihoods, improving rural education infrastructure, including better-equipped schools, vocational training centers, and access to digital learning, will enhance opportunities for youth to build careers within their local communities.

Educational programs should integrate climate adaptation, agricultural innovation, and technical skills training to prepare young people for the evolving job market. Through the expanding access to quality education, policymakers can empower youth with the knowledge and resources necessary to contribute to local development and reduce the need for migration.

5.3 Collaborative Initiatives

Public-Private Partnerships

Collaborative initiatives play a vital role in addressing climate-induced migration through fostering partnerships that mobilize resources for youth empowerment. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are essential for bridging funding gaps and creating opportunities for employment and vocational training. Leveraging the expertise and financial capacity of the private sector, governments can support youth-led enterprises, develop sustainable job programs, and provide technical training in climate-resilient industries. Encouraging corporate investment in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and eco-tourism will not only create employment but also drive economic growth while aligning with climate adaptation goals.

Local Governance Empowerment

Empowering local governance structures is equally critical in ensuring youth participation in decision-making processes related to migration and climate resilience. Local authorities must actively engage young people in policy formulation, urban planning, and climate adaptation strategies to ensure that their needs and perspectives are reflected in governance frameworks. Establishing youth advisory councils, participatory budgeting initiatives, and community-based resilience programs can enhance civic engagement and foster innovative and locally driven solutions. Strengthening the role of municipal governments in climate adaptation will enable more targeted interventions that address both rural-urban migration challenges and long-term sustainable development.

5.4 Proposal by the Youth Bridge Foundation

The Youth Bridge Foundation remains committed to advancing youth participation in climate resilience and migration policy, aligning with international and continental frameworks such as:

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which recognizes youth engagement as a critical component of climate adaptation and resilience-building.
- The Paris Agreement, which underscores the necessity of global cooperation to limit temperature rise and strengthen adaptation efforts, with a focus on empowering youth to contribute to climate action.
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), which upholds the rights to development and participation in governance, highlighting the fundamental role of young people in shaping climate policies and ensuring sustainable migration management
- The African Youth Charter, emphasizing youth empowerment and climate action.

- Aspirations 1 and 6 of the African Union Agenda 2063, which call for "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development" and "An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of its youth and women."

The Youth Bridge Foundation advocates for targeted capacity-building programs designed to equip young people with the necessary skills to adapt to climate change. Training initiatives should focus on climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy technologies, and sustainable water management practices, enabling youth to develop resilient livelihoods within their communities. Additionally, technical and vocational education programs can provide practical skills in green industries, fostering long-term employment opportunities that reduce the need for migration due to economic hardship.

Youth-led solutions are essential for addressing climate-induced migration in a way that is both innovative and locally relevant. By establishing platforms for young people to actively contribute to policy discussions, decision-making, and program implementation, the Foundation seeks to empower youth as key stakeholders in climate resilience strategies.

Supporting youth-driven research, social enterprises, and community-based projects that will ensure that migration challenges are met with solutions tailored to the specific needs of affected populations.

Advocacy and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in influencing policy change and fostering a deeper understanding of climate migration issues. The Youth Bridge Foundation emphasizes the importance of amplifying youth voices through public forums, media engagement, and storytelling initiatives that highlight real-life experiences of climate-induced migration. By integrating youth perspectives into national and international dialogues, these campaigns can drive more inclusive policies and greater governmental accountability in addressing migration-related challenges.

Strengthening international collaboration is a key component of the Foundation's strategy to enhance youth resilience initiatives. Building networks with global institutions, climate organizations, and development agencies will provide young people with access to funding, technical expertise, and exchange programs that broaden their opportunities. Engaging in cross-border partnerships that will ensure that Ghana's youth benefit from best practices and emerging innovations in climate adaptation, positioning them as leaders in sustainable development on a global scale.

5.5 Call to Action

This is a pivotal moment for Ghana to integrate youth resilience into climate and migration policies. Policymakers, development organizations, and local governments also have specific roles in transforming climate and migration policies into actions.

Government of Ghana

- Integrate Youth-Led Strategies into Climate Adaptation and Migration Management through the establishment of mechanisms that ensure youth-driven initiatives are central to national climate policies and migration governance.



- Invest in Rural Development to address Migration Drivers at the source which can be done by implementing targeted programs that enhance rural infrastructure, create sustainable livelihoods, and strengthen local economies to reduce the need for migration.
- Utilize Technology to Create Innovative Climate Resilience Solutions. In today's world, we should leverage AI, big data, and digital platforms to analyze migration trends, enhance early warning systems, and promote awareness on climate adaptation.
- Support Youth-Led Organizations in policy formulation and recommendation, providing funding, technical assistance, and institutional support that address climate-induced migration and resilience.
- Improve Urban Infrastructure for Climate Migrants through the enhancement of sustainable housing solutions, better sanitation services, and expanded public transportation to accommodate rural-urban migration flows.
- Encourage Youth Representation in International Climate Negotiations. It is critical to ensure youth inclusion in UN delegations, climate summits, and regional policy discussions to amplify their voices on a global stage.

Private Sector & Development Partners

- Support Green Innovation and Entrepreneurship through the establishment and ease of accessibility of funding schemes and incubators for youth-led enterprises in sustainable industries such as renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture.
- Foster Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), collaborating with government and civil society to implement large-scale youth employment programs in climate-focused sectors.
- Promote Research and Data-Driven Solutions through avenues such as funding studies on climate migration trends to inform evidence-based policymaking.
- Encourage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Climate Resilience by significantly investing in community-based adaptation projects to reduce displacement risks.

Civil Society Organizations & NGOs

- Amplify Youth Voices in Climate Governance through advocacy for inclusive policies through campaigns, research, and stakeholder engagements.
- Develop youth-friendly resources, workshops, and digital tools for climate adaptation training to augment the expansion of climate education & awareness.
- Provide mentorship and funding opportunities for community-driven projects that address climate resilience and migration challenges that are particularly youth-led.
- Strengthen Cross-Sectoral Collaborations through Partnership with government agencies, academia, and local communities to create holistic adaptation strategies.



Youth & Community Engagement

- Engage in policy dialogues, climate action campaigns, and local governance initiatives.
- Use digital platforms and social media to raise awareness and drive collective action on climate resilience.
- Pursue education and vocational training in climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, and environmental management.
- Establish youth-led coalitions that address migration pressures and climate adaptation at the grassroots level.

International Institutions & Regional Bodies

- Strengthen Global Youth Representation by ensuring youth participation in climate negotiations, migration policy discussions, and adaptation financing frameworks.
- Support knowledge-sharing platforms across African nations to address climate-induced migration collectively.
- Scale Up Funding for Youth-Led Adaptation Initiatives by Increasing financial resources for projects that equip young people with climate resilience skills and economic opportunities.

Conclusion

Climate-induced migration is more than an environmental issue, it is a socio-economic crisis that disrupts livelihoods, fractures communities, and deepens existing inequalities, especially among young people. Without swift and decisive action, the growing impacts of climate change will continue to force vulnerable populations from their homes, strain urban infrastructure, and erode economic prospects.

This policy brief underscores the urgent need to embed youth-led strategies within climate adaptation and migration management frameworks. Investing in rural development to tackle the root causes of migration, alongside coordinated efforts by governments, the private sector, and civil society, is essential for building lasting and resilient solutions.

Furthermore, by aligning with international frameworks, Ghana has a unique opportunity to transform the challenges of climate-induced migration into avenues for resilience and inclusive growth. Youth engagement in climate governance must evolve from token participation to meaningful policy influence, empowering young people as co-creators of a sustainable future.

The moment calls for bold leadership, inclusive policy design, and substantial investment in youth-driven climate solutions. Ghana must embrace this challenge, turning a looming crisis into a catalyst for transformative progress. The decisions made today will shape whether future generations inherit a nation that is resilient, equitable, and sustainable.

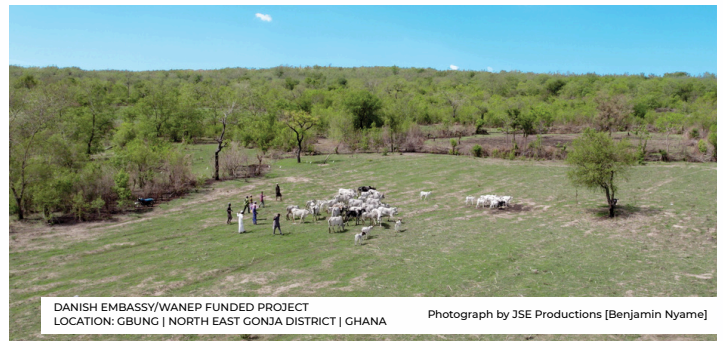
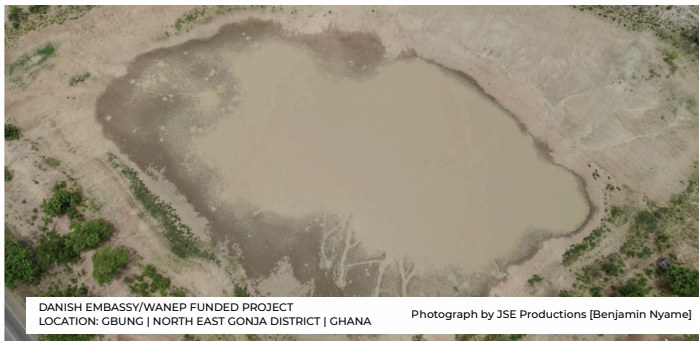
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ABOUT YOUTH BRIDGE FOUNDATION



The Youth Bridge Foundation (YBF) is an independent non-profit organization committed to youth development across the continent of Africa and the Diaspora. We strive to achieve this purpose and mandate through cutting-edge and evidence based youth research, sustained advocacy, training and mentorship.



To harness the potential of the youth to become responsible and participating citizens for sustainable development.



A youth focused NGO working to equitably harness the potentials of the youth by equipping them with appropriate capacity, platforms and resources that shall enhance their socio-economic and mental well being; and to advocate for inclusion and responsiveness to youth development needs and rights by those responsible for upholding such rights.

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