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MAD- 2020
Day - 5
Geography

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Question:

Climate change has become an undisputed reality of our times. The greatest single change of climate change might be on human migration – with millions of people replaced and referred to as “Climate Migrants” Discuss the issues and suggest remedial measures for their settlement.

Answer -

Introduction (setting up the context) -

Recently released IPCC report proved that climate change is an undisputed reality. The report mentioned an increase of 1.1 Degree Celsius in global temperature from 1960's to 2019, which is further expected to increase by 4 Degree Celsius by 2100.

Thus, **climate change is deeply knitted with Migration in ways such as -**

1. According to UNHRC, **due to climate change** around 25 people million are displaced every year around the world and around 40 Lakhs in India alone.
2. **Climate change induced disasters, which trigger migration** for example – Cyclone Gita of Samoa, Fani of India, Draughts in Afghan and flooding in Philippines.
3. **Resource crunch** in several regions caused due to climate change which in turn leads to water and food scarcity also trigger migration to a large extent. For example, **in the Island nations of Pacific region.**

Therefore; although Climate refugees do not really fit into any of the legal definitions of a refugee ; It can be said that “ **Environmental migrants** are persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad.”

When displaced the major issues faced by climate migrants are -

1. **Social Issues -**

- a. **Humanitarian Crisis** – travelling long distances with no security creates havoc, Example Central American Migration due to droughts
- b. **Discrimination, exclusion, and prejudice by natives,** Example – Racism faced by African Migrants.
- c. **Increasing Inequalities** – As poor bear the disproportionate burden of disasters and climate induced migration.

2. **Political Issues -**

- a. **No legal or statutory positions-** Climate migrants are not even recognized by UN bodies, thus impacting their rights in host nation.
- b. **Rise of Xenophobia and harden stance of rightists on migrants,** example – Brexit decision to curb inflow of climate migrants, walls constructed at US-Mexico border

3. Economic Issues -

- a. Competition among migrants and residents for limited resources.
- b. Migrants are often caught up in informal economy.

Example for Both: intra- and inter-state competition for food, water, and other resources, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa

4. Cultural Issues -

- a. Migrants face cultural shock and psychological stress at displaced location.

Thus, remedial measures need to be taken to the earliest such as -

1. Mitigation and adoption to climate change -

- a. Finalizing the Paris Climate deal and other such international conventions and treaties which can arrest the advancing climate change phenomenon.
- b. Adaptation of projects with Climate Change eg : Indian river interlinking project such as Ken-Betwa which can tackle draughts and flood simultaneously and thus arrest the climate change induced migration.
- c. Increasing the level of awareness and understanding of how environmental factors affect migration, and how they also interact with other migration drivers such as demographic, political and economic conditions.

2. Resolving climate migrants' issues -

- a. Providing the legal status to migrants under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992).
- b. Integrating The Global Compact of Migration with the concept of Environment refugees.
- c. Setting up a specialized and separate fund for the Climate Migrants such as the Pacific Possible Program of the World Bank, or setting up an International Compensation Commission for the same.
- d. Humanitarian assistance and protection for those on the move already, are also tools states can use.
- e. Proactive involvement of NGO's eg: Indian Devamitra NGO has been working for rehabilitation and social inclusion of climate migrants.
- f. Diversifying the infrastructure plans for the future with the additional component of Climate Migrants and its accommodation- so that there is no disruption in the future.

Conclusion: In the phase of rising global uncertainties and increasing climate vagaries regional powers like India, Canada, EU should collectively ensure a more humanitarian, inclusive and responsible treatment of refugees.