Migration as part of adaptation strategies to environmental limitations–case study of Ait Youl and Mhamid oases (Southern Morocco)

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The Dades-Draa valley used to be an area where agriculture was main source of income. Since the second part of 20th century it has changed into one of main emigration areas in Morocco as a consequence of population growth, limitations in agriculture development and other socio-economic pull factors.

This paper on case study of two oases: Ait Youl and Mhamid in the Dades-Draa Valley, explores how the environment determines migration from rural areas of Southern Morocco. The results are based on micro census, detailed semi structured questionnaires and in depth interviews made with household heads in both oasis.

Results show that the destruction of crops in the last 10 years in semi arid high mountain valley were due to: i) floods, ii) stones accumulation on farmlands, and iii) plant disease. In the desert arid area the destruction of corps was caused by: i) insufficient amount of water for irrigation, ii) aeolian sand accumulation on farmlands, iii) plant disease and iv) hot wind. As the households’ income from agriculture is strictly related to environmental barriers or environmental changes, household members are pushed to income diversification. Results show that the agriculture is no more main source of income for rural households. In majority of households, in both regions, at least one person migrated internally because of economic reasons.

Furthermore, the results suggest that actions aiming at minimising degradation of the natural environment would not result in significant decrease of the migration rate. This is because once the migration process commences, it is self-perpetuating due to numerous socio-economic factors (complementary to limitations of natural environment), and very difficult to hold back.

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