



# TASK FORCE ON DISPLACEMENT

First Phase of Implementation  
June 2017 – April 2019

*SUMMARY REPORT OF OUTPUTS OF ACTIVITY II.3:*

## UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM'S MANDATES WITH RESPECT TO AVERTING, MINIMIZING AND ADDRESSING DISPLACEMENT RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE: CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

1

*Context*

2

*Methodology*

3

*Summary of findings*

4

*Identified gaps*

5

*Potential areas of  
recommendations*

### View other summary reports:

Activity  
I.1

*National  
policies and  
institutional  
frameworks*

Activity  
I.2

*Knowledge  
related to slow  
onset event*

Activity  
II.1

*UNFCCC  
bodies/work  
programmes*

Activity  
II.2

*International  
processes,  
policies and  
legal frameworks*

Activity  
II.4

*International  
and regional  
guidance  
and tools*

Activity  
III.1-3

*Data collection  
and monitoring*

## Acronyms

Excom	Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDD	Platform on Disaster Displacement
TFD	Task Force on Displacement
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
WIM	Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts

*This summary report was produced by PDD and ILO.*

*Full report is available [here](#).*



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## 1. CONTEXT

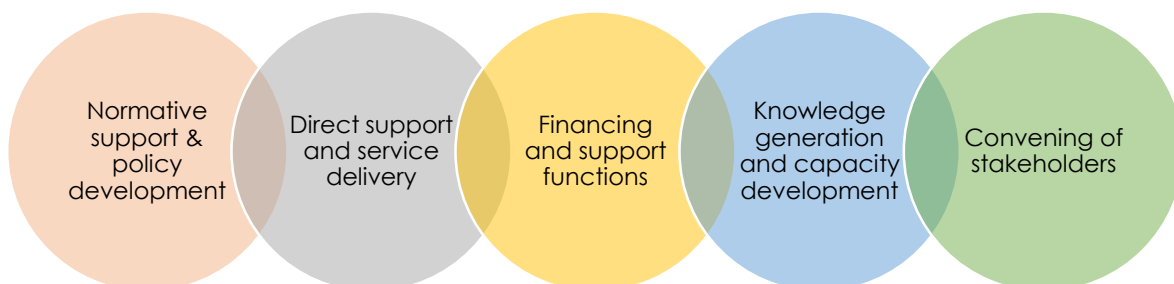
This study assesses institutional frameworks and mandates within the UN system relevant to the TFD's overall objective to "develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change," considering "both cross-border and internal displacement."

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The historical review and assessment of UN entities' institutional frameworks and mandates are based primarily upon a desk review of the respective entities' strategic frameworks and plans, annual reports, and websites.

The mapping exercise includes UN entities in the Chief Executives Board, and in particular those contributing to the 2017-2020 United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action (Strategic Approach) in thematic areas that include displacement and those included within the system-wide review of the development system.

The study assesses how UN entities convey their respective organization's mandate with respect to disaster displacement related to climate change, and how these mandates contribute to "addressing disaster displacement" and "averting and minimizing displacement" with respect to five functional areas:



The categorizations are made loosely, and do not purport to be comprehensive or precise. Examples illustrate the spectrum of activities relevant to disaster displacement related to climate change. The study also does not attempt to evaluate the quality or level of implementation.

## 3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The history of the UNFCCC negotiation process provides an indication of the support affected Parties may need in terms of future efforts to address displacement, particularly with respect to assistance to displaced people, capacity building support for migration management and planned

relocation, and accessing climate finance/compensation. Notably, the TFD includes representation from observer organizations, recognizing the value of their previous contributions on human mobility issues to the UNFCCC process.

Since 2013, the implications of displacement related to disasters and climate change have been considered within numerous contexts, including humanitarian response, development, human rights, ethics, environmental change, and disaster risk reduction. Importantly, the Strategic Approach, the UN's highest-level strategy on climate change, addresses displacement and migration in three of its eight impact areas: normative guidance on climate change; data and observations; and nexus of climate change, sustainable development, peace and security, human rights and humanitarian issues.

The review found that overall functional capacity is present in the UN system to support States in their efforts to avert, minimize and address disaster displacement related to the adverse impact of climate change—although UN entities may not specifically distinguish the work as a response to displacement or climate change. Disaster displacement, including related to climate change, is addressed system-wide through a spectrum of activities, such as: disaster risk reduction, infrastructure development, livelihoods to build resilience, emergency assistance, addressing cultural loss, migration management, planned relocation assistance, and assistance to access climate finance.

The study found either direct and indirect references to displacement and migration issues to climate change in over half of the forty UN entities' recent strategic policy documents.

### Direct references:

UN entities act as secretariats and provide substantive support to States for international agreements and processes relevant to disaster displacement and climate change	ILC, IOM, ISDR, OCHA, UNDP, UNFCCC, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNHCR
ESCAP, FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNU-EHS	UN entities directly reference climate change, displacement and migration-related issues in their strategy documents
UN entities have priorities regarding assistance to displaced people in disasters, recognizing climate change as contributing to hazards that lead to disasters	ILC, OCHA, UN-Habitat



UNDP, UNFPA,  
UNICEF, UNISDR, UN  
Women, WFP, WHO,  
World Bank

UN entities' strategies identify displaced people as a vulnerable group requiring specific attention in their broader work related to climate change, humanitarian response to disasters, or disaster risk reduction

### Indirect references:

UN entities' strategy documents identify disaster displacement and climate change in their organizations' contextual analysis to understand the potential impact of their work

WMO, UNEP,  
UNOPS, IFAD

UNCDF, UNIDO,  
ECA, ECLAC,  
ESCWA, UNECE, ITC

UN entities recognize the relevance of displacement and climate change to their work, but do not clearly present them as integrated issues in their strategy documents

One only highlights the relevance of its work to displacement generally

UNAIDS

ITU, UNCTAD,  
UNCTBTO, UNDESA,  
UNODC, University  
of Peace

Other UN entities' functions address underlying processes or provide support functions that contribute or could contribute to overall efforts to avert, minimize or address displacement related to climate change

For other UN entities, their role is marginal

UNWTO, UNRWA

UNDP, UNFPA,  
UNICEF, UNISDR, UN  
Women, WFP, WHO,  
World Bank

UN entities' strategies identify displaced people as a vulnerable group requiring specific attention in their broader work related to climate change, humanitarian response to disasters, or disaster risk reduction



The UN's disaster risk management and humanitarian response system is most clearly designed to respond to the needs of displaced people in the event of disasters linked to climate change, both slow and sudden-onset. Development, finance, research, cultural, regional and other specialized entities also have a role to play in areas such as early warning, policy development, reducing the negative impacts of displacement, finding durable solutions and reducing the risk of future displacement.

UN entities' potential contributions to averting displacement or minimizing disaster displacement risk related to climate change are particularly vast and difficult to define. All efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals arguably contribute to building more resilient societies that are thus less vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including displacement. Despite this challenge, this study highlights a number of activities, largely carried out by development actors, that fall within such efforts.

## 4. IDENTIFIED GAPS

The UN currently lacks a system-wide lead, coordination mechanism, or strategy on disaster displacement, including related to climate change. The most comprehensive planning document amongst UN entities specifically on disaster displacement, as recognized by the Strategic Approach, is the PDD's workplan. Yet, this state-led forum is outside the UN system, has limited capacity, and is time bound in duration. As a result, functions and activities related to disaster displacement and climate change are dispersed across entities and processes, and such efforts are not necessarily aligned or based upon comparative advantage. The specific needs of displaced people may be overlooked, potentially leading to protracted displacement situations, because many UN entities view displaced people as a sub-set of the larger populations they serve. The lack of overall leadership also impedes the UN system's ability to provide effective country-level programme support for States most affected by displacement related to climate change, and to ensure coordinated contributions to relevant international frameworks and processes.

At the country-level, leadership over the Protection Cluster in disaster situations remains unpredictable, as it depends upon an agreement between UNHCR, UNICEF and OHCHR in conversation with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator after a disaster occurs. This uncertainty over leadership often results in inadequate financing for protection-related activities for internally displaced persons. The review also highlights a gap in terms of dedicated responsibility for normative and policy development on the specific protection needs of disaster displaced people, including related to climate change, and in particular for those that cross international borders. The mapping also notes the absence of designated responsibility for meeting the protection and assistance needs of displaced

people when they cross international borders in the context of climate change and disasters. Also, while UNESCO has highlighted the issue of cultural loss associated with disaster displacement related to climate change, little was found in relation to operational programming at the country-level.

Finally, future reviews should explore to what extent UN entities have the necessary level of financial and human resources to predictably and systematically carry out their mandated functions, where they exist, related to disaster displacement.

## 5. POTENTIAL AREAS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

While the lead role of the UNFCCC processes with respect to negotiating the global response to climate change is widely acknowledged and respected, the majority of the work on disaster displacement, including related to climate change, is taking place outside the UNFCCC. At the same time, the UN is in the midst of ongoing efforts to improve system-wide coordination and programme delivery. This presents multiple opportunities to highlight the importance of supporting the UN's potential capacity to provide a wide-ranging set of assistance to help affected States avert, minimize and address displacement related to climate change.

### Recommendations

Welcome the inclusion of displacement related to climate change within the United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action.

Request the UN Secretary General to develop a UN strategic plan on disaster displacement, particularly related to climate change, that includes:

- a description of UN entities' respective mandates, activities, and level of dedicated financial and human resources
- plans to address the overall leadership and coordination gap to ensure harmonized UN support to affected States, and coordinated contributions to ongoing relevant international processes.

Highlight, as appropriate, the critical importance of considering measures to avert, minimize and address disaster displacement related to climate change within ongoing discussions to achieve UN system-wide coherence through reform of the UN development system, including within the proposed Funding Compact.

Contribute to ongoing discussions on how to improve UN system's response to internal displacement, highlighting the importance of addressing disaster displacement related to climate change.

Seize opportunity to advocate for the inclusion and recognition of climate change in the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants, encouraging i) both agreements to address human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change; ii) the designation of clear roles and responsibilities in the new governance framework for international migration.

Seek to align UNFCCC measures averting, minimizing and addressing disaster displacement related to climate change with the outcomes of broader UN system-wide reforms.

With respect to UN entities' respective contributions to supporting States in their efforts to avert, minimize and address displacement related to climate change, welcome:

- The wide recognition of disaster displacement as an important issue and encourage UN entities to prioritize it within their work.
- UNHCR's Strategic Framework and efforts to address legal and policy gaps related to cross-border displacement related to climate change and disasters, and UNHCR's efforts to strengthen leadership for the protection of internally displaced persons; Recognize UNHCR's advisory role to protect and assist in cross-border disaster-displacement situations.
- IOM's efforts and role in research, policy development and support with respect to integrating migration within climate change adaptation and DRR strategies, and its emergency response for internally displaced persons in disasters.
- ILO's strategy to promote dialogue and address fair and effective international labour migration governance related to climate change and disasters, including through ILO's Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market, and Recommendation 205 that addresses employment and decent work measures for displaced people.
- UN entities' efforts to: i) help States access climate finance and ii) prioritize development financing for projects addressing climate change, highlighting that such financing should further prioritize projects that avert, minimize or address disaster displacement related to climate change.