

Implementation of the Workplan of the Task Force on Displacement under the
Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM)
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Pillar II: Policy – International/Regional

Activity II.3

**The United Nations system’s mandates with respect to
averting, minimizing and addressing displacement related to climate change:
Considerations for the future**

Summary Report

Produced by the Platform on Disaster Displacement
and the International Labour Organization

May 2018

1. Context

This study assesses institutional frameworks and mandates within the United Nations (UN) system relevant to the Task Force on Displacement’s (TFD) 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.”

This report begins with an overview of the evolution of policy developments within the UN system related to climate change and disaster displacement (Part II) that led to the current institutional frameworks and mandates within the UN system (Part III). It concludes with an analysis of options for facilitating the coordination of key processes relevant to disaster displacement and climate change (Part IV).

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 (CEB), 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: normative support and policy development; direct support and service delivery; financing and support functions; knowledge generation and capacity development; and convening of stakeholders. 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 Task Force 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. UN entities also 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) Several UN entities directly reference climate change, displacement and migration-related issues in their strategy documents. (ESCAP, FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNHCR, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNU-EHS) Many others have priorities regarding assistance to displaced people in disasters, recognizing climate change as contributing to hazards that lead to disasters (ILC, OCHA, UN-Habitat), or their 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. (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNISDR, UN Women, WFP, WHO, World Bank)

Indirect references included strategy documents that identify disaster displacement and climate change in their organizations' contextual analysis to understand the potential impact of their work. (WMO, UNEP, UNOPS, IFAD) Some 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. (UNCDF, UNIDO, ECA, ECLAC, ESCWA, UNECE, ITC) One only highlights the relevance of its work to displacement generally. (UNAIDS) Other entities lack any specific reference to disaster displacement and climate change in their strategy documents. However, their 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. (ITU, UNCTAD, UNCTBTO, UNDESA, UNODC, University of Peace) For others, their role is marginal. (UNWTO, UNRWA)

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.

The 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 Platform on Disaster Displacement'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 multiple 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: i) a description of UN entities' respective mandates, activities, and level of dedicated financial and human resources, and ii) 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 the UN system's response to internal displacement, highlighting the importance of addressing disaster displacement related to climate change.
- Seize the 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, and 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 related to climate change as an important issue by many UN entities, and encourage others to prioritize it within their work.
 - Welcome, in particular, UNHCR's Strategic Framework and efforts to address legal and policy gaps related to cross-border displacement in the context of climate change and disasters, and UNHCR's efforts to strengthen leadership for the protection of internally displaced persons in disasters; Recognize UNHCR's advisory role with respect to protection and assistance in cross-border disaster-displacement situations.
 - Welcome, in particular, 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.
 - Welcome, in particular, ILO's strategy to promote dialogue and address fair and effective international labour migration governance in the context of 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 in disasters.

- Welcome and encourage 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.ⁱ
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