

Synthesizing the state of knowledge to better understand displacement related to slow onset events.

Task Force on Displacement - Activity I.2

WIM Excom
13-16 March 2018

Scope

- Assessing knowledge (state of knowledge, knowledge gaps and opportunities).
- Displacement, as a predominantly forced form of movement (voluntary migration falls outside the scope of this paper, although clear distinction between migration and displacement is often blurred in the context of slow onset events).
- Slow onset events (not sudden onset).

Objectives

- Provide a short synthesis of the state of knowledge on displacement related to slow onset events.
- Enhance understanding on the impacts of slow onset event on displacement, dynamics of displacement related to slow onset events, scale of displacement related to slow onset events and approaches and tools to address displacement related to slow onset events.
- Formulate key opportunities around the main knowledge gaps on displacement related to slow onset events.

Progress to date

- Literature review completed with the support of the University of Neuchâtel and the Hugo Observatory.
- Broad contribution from civil society (Advisory group on human mobility, PDD Advisory committee, Climate Action Network, UNFCCC constituencies, and reference group).
- Detailed outline circulated and approved.
- Zero draft circulated for inputs.
- Report to be finalized by the end of March to serve as a background document for the May Task Force on displacement meeting.

Preliminary findings and opportunities on how slow onset events increase risks of displacement

- Slow onset events can turn into rapid onset event (eg. when sea level rise turn into flood) prompting displacement.
- Slow onset events can erode community's and land's capacity to withstand rapid onset event prompting displacement.
- Slow onset events can hinder the availability of and access to basic human needs : fresh water, food, shelter, energy production and disrupt livelihoods prompting displacement.
- Slow-onset events can be a hidden aggravating factor in many contexts, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, increasing exposure to hazards and acting as a threat multiplier for other drivers of displacement (such as conflict).
- Opportunity to better document the impacts of slow onset events on displacement risks (interaction with human activities, interaction with other drivers of displacement, impacts by type of slow onset, etc.).
- Opportunity to better identify specific location and population vulnerable to slow onset event and inform decision makers on displacement risks.

Preliminary findings and opportunities on the dynamics of displacement related to slow onset event

- In slow-onset events contexts, the difference between forced displacement and voluntary migration can be difficult to distinguish.
- The perception of gradual changes and associated risks may vary depending on the context and the ability of the household to mitigate the risk.
- Displacement relate to slow onset events is more likely to be rural to rural, protracted or even permanent when displaced persons are not able to return to an irreversibly inhabitable area. It is most often internal displacement but can also turn into cross-border displacement.
- Opportunity to enhance understanding of :
 - specific protection needs of people displaced in slow onset contexts, including for protracted and permanent displacement;
 - challenges of host and receiving communities as well as immobile populations;
 - differentiated perceptions of risk.
- Opportunity to improve enablement of vulnerable populations in decision making and driving solutions.

Preliminary findings and opportunities on the scale of displacement related to slow onset events

- Lack of data for displacement related to slow onset events and difficulty to make global quantitative projections.
- The challenge lies in:
 - the time lag between the event and the mobility gradual response,
 - the multiple interlocking factor of slow onset-related displacement,
 - the difficulty to select indicators and variables,
 - the availability and accessibility of data.
- Opportunities to address the data gap include : improve access to the available data basis, enhance cooperation on data collection and harmonize data sets, key variables and methodologies, improve disaggregated data collection, including though innovative approaches, etc.

Preliminary findings and opportunities on approaches to reduce risks of and address displacement related to slow onset events

- Various ways of reducing exposure and vulnerability of populations to slow onset events (eg. Sustainable development plans, adaptation programmes and disaster risk reduction strategies, Systematic observation, communication and early warning systems).
- Movement in itself can be an approach to prevent displacement in specific conditions, eg migration in dignity and planned relocation as a last resort.
- A number of options exist to protect people displaced in the context of slow onsets (IDP guidelines, temporary protection , human rights protections, etc.).
- Opportunities to enhance understanding of:
 - How to implement these approaches in practice
 - What are the implementation gaps and how to address them
 - Efficiency of existing protection measures in concretely addressing protection needs
 - Post displacement assessment and achievement of durable solutions.