




his brief reflects the intervention, feedback and recommendations from the 19 November 2020 virtual regional exchange under the title *Managing Risk and Addressing Disaster Displacement: Challenges, Effective Practices and Solutions in the Asia-Pacific*, organized jointly by the Asia-Pacific Disaster Displacement Working Group, the Asia-Pacific Issue-Based



Forced displacement related to disasters, including the adverse effects of climate change, poses some of the biggest human rights, humanitarian and development challenges facing States and the international community in the 21st century. Each year, millions of people are displaced in the context of disasters caused by natural hazards such as floods, tropical storms, earthquakes, landslides, droughts and flooding, with most of this “disaster displacement” taking place within countries. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported that in 2019 alone there were 24.9 million new internal displacements associated with disasters across 140 countries, the majority of them linked to weather- and climate-related natural hazards. In her recent report to the UN General Assembly 2020, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons focused on the people displaced by the adverse effects of slow onset climate change and how States and other stakeholders can better protect the human rights of IDPs. Notably, more than 80 percent of documented disaster displacement between 2008 and 2019 occurred in Asia, making it a particularly salient issue for the region.

Driving this phenomenon is the combination of highly densely populated areas and a high level of exposure to a range of hazards, including earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, typhoons and volcanic eruptions. An increasing number of people in the region are also compelled to move or are displaced because of slow-onset events and processes, such as the effects of sea level rise, desertification and environmental degradation linked to the adverse effects of climate change. Countries will increasingly experience the limitations of current climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts, leading to both more severe and a greater number of disasters and in response, more displacement.

Disaster displaced populations face a multitude of protection and assistance needs, which are often linked to the type of natural hazard

leading to displacement (e.g. whether sudden-onset vs slow-onset) and the forced nature of the movement. Similar to conflict contexts, people displaced by disasters may not be able to return to their homes or places of habitual residence for a long period of time, if ever, leading to protracted displacement, relocation or settlement elsewhere and the need for long-term solutions.

In recognizing and forecasting the risks related to specific characteristics determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards and the potential for displacement in a given context, prevention and preparedness measures can be taken to minimize their impact and build the groundwork for protection, sustainable responses and solutions. This includes both disaster risk management systems and actions (contingency planning, early warning systems, evacuation shelters) but also should include more robust integration of risk into development planning, including building codes, land use planning, critical infrastructure strengthening, and many other areas. In practice, a range of both direct and indirect factors can complicate these efforts, ranging from existing legal and regulatory barriers to the permanent loss of land or livelihoods as a result of sea level rise or riverbank erosion.

Protecting internally displaced persons, especially those in situations of particular

vulnerability, and achieving durable solutions to displacement in the context of disasters and climate change requires robust preparedness and sustained cross-sectoral partnerships and coordinated action long before disaster strikes, with the primary responsibility resting with national authorities. Engaging only during the immediate disaster response is often too late to establish necessary relationships within and between governments and counterparts, circumventing the potential for an integrated approach to addressing risk, needs and solutions across a range of sectors. Ensuring displaced people or those at risk of displacement actively participate at all stages of planning, assessment and decision making on matters related to reinforcing communities' resilience and adaptive capacity to future shocks, and improving disaster preparedness, mitigation and responses across policy areas

are key. Across Asia, while hazards continue to pose a significant challenge to the coping capacity of countries, notable progress has been made in setting up early warning systems and managing pre-emptive evacuations. The success of both India and Bangladesh in limiting loss of life through large scale pre-emptive evacuations in the lead up to Cyclone Amphan in May 2020 is one such example.

In light of the breadth, range and innovative experiences of States within Asia in preventing, responding to and resolving displacement from both rapid and slow-onset disasters, it is critical that the perspectives of this region on disaster displacement are presented to the High Level Panel on Internal Displacement to support its recommendations.

INSIGHTS

While each speaker laid out specific recommendations from his or her context and experience around systems and mechanisms to improve displacement prevention, protection, response and solutions, there were some overarching recommendations that recurred throughout the consultation and suggest a common perspective on the key priorities for internal displacement.

1. Enhance Legal and Regulatory Frameworks to Integrate Displacement

Policy and regulatory frameworks must be strengthened at national and sub national levels to ensure strategic and effective approaches to disaster displacement. Many countries brought these frameworks and strategies as best practices, and all speakers agreed on the importance of integrated, multi-sector and local level capacity to address displacement issues. While a focus on IDPs for the event was clear, the frameworks discussed went further into looking a local planning and contingency mechanisms, local risk-aware investment and construction, adaptation planning, resilience building, and risk sensitive settlement planning, in the context of disasters and climate change.

2. Data and Evidence for Policy on Displacement

Speakers agreed that data and evidence, including on different forms of human mobility, but also on hazard and risks profiles and scenarios for disasters continued to play a major role in national capacity to address displacement. Mongolia is focused on tracking mobility and including displacement into national statistics for development to ensure no one is left behind Bangladesh is working with its disaster management committees to ensure decentralized mechanisms to track and feed data to the national level. Similarly, the

for displaced people were adequately addressed in crises.

6. Cross-sectoral Coordination at the National Level to Address Complex Issues

While each Government represented has a different national structure, speakers agreed on the importance of inter-ministerial or cross-sector coordination structures. Whether via a single Ministry in the lead, a Disaster Management Agency, or otherwise, coordination on key issues came up throughout discussions. Frameworks and policies were important in facilitating that coordination, but many pointed out that implementation in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach supported unified efforts and lowered overall resource costs to prevent, respond, and find solutions for displaced populations. Coordination at the national level on management, finance, technical expertise, and integration with development and services of



The people of Tulangan village, in East Java province Indonesia, work together to rebuild the houses of residents that were damaged by the tornado in 2018.
© Shutterstock.com/Ded_Roesyad109