

Internal displacement in a changing climate

Call for contributions for the 2020 Internal Displacement Conference and the 2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement

The challenge

The number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) worldwide has reached an all-time high. And every year, millions of new displacements, of instances where people are forced to flee their homes in conflicts and disasters, occur across the globe. These millions – year in, year out – reveal the systemic nature of displacement risk.

As in previous years, disasters triggered the majority of new displacements in 2019, almost 25 million or two-thirds of the total, and most were linked to weather-related hazards such as storms, floods and droughts. For the first time, a highly conservative estimate of 5.1 million IDPs at the end of the year shows protracted disaster displacement is a reality and growing concern across the globe. Both figures, new disaster displacements as well as numbers of IDPs, highlight the role that not just hazards, but vulnerability and exposure play in driving displacement. To date, this risk equation, i.e. displacement is a function of hazard, exposure and vulnerability, is not sufficiently understood and addressed.

Climate change interacts with all parts of this risk equation. Its negative effects can increase the intensity and affect the frequency and seasonal patterns of the hazard events that force millions to flee each year. Environmental degradation linked to climate change can also act as a threat multiplier, affecting already fragile natural resource bases, putting additional pressure on already exposed and vulnerable local and regional economies and ecosystems. However, the interaction of social, economic and environmental drivers of displacement means that climate change must be understood as just one factor in a complex system where hazards, vulnerability and exposure combine to generate displacement risk.

Disasters also increasingly affect countries and communities that are already struggling with conflict and violence, further heightening impacts on people's protection, livelihoods and overall well-being. Problematically, even in such contexts, crisis risk, including disaster risk, is still seen largely as external to development policy and planning. And where disaster risk is considered within development planning, the risk of associated displacement may not be included. The result of these omissions is the continuous creation of displacement risk, manifesting in the numbers IDMC reports every year.

The opportunity

However, there are also promising developments in building resilience and developing approaches to reduce this risk. Several countries are investing in addressing disaster displacement risk and have successfully integrated displacement concerns into climate change adaptation and disaster management strategies. Their experience of years of planning and implementing displacement policies and programmes offers valuable lessons.

2021 also presents a milestone and opportunity for global policy development and action for sustainable development and for reducing the risk of future displacement crises. The year will see progress reviews for several international frameworks of direct relevance to internal displacement.

Governments will report to which extent they have met two important targets in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, i.e. developing disaster risk reduction strategies that recognise and make provisions for addressing disaster displacement (Target G). National climate negotiators will come together in 2021 for the first global stocktake as outlined in the Paris Agreement and the Taskforce on Displacement under the UNFCCC will have to present a progress report on addressing displacement in the context of climate change. In 2021, the High-Level Political Forum, the main follow-up process to the SDGs, will review progress against some of the global goals of most direct relevance to internal displacement and to the well-being of IDPs.

The High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, set up by the UN SG in 2020, will report on its work at the 2021 General Assembly and is expected to consider the interaction between climate change impacts and internal displacement. Outcomes from the conference and new insights from the 2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement will be made available to the Panel, seeking to inform its work.

Thematic focus for 2020 – 2021

Against this backdrop of challenges and opportunities, *IDMC is dedicating its 2020 Annual Conference on Internal Displacement and 2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement to exploring the relationship between climate change and displacement.* Opportunities for simultaneously addressing the negative impacts of climate change and internal displacement will be at the centre of both the discussion at our annual conference and the analysis of our Global Report.

For more than a decade, IDMC has been at the forefront of unpacking the relationship between environmental and socio-economic drivers of displacement and is documenting efforts in risk management and prevention. By putting a focus on the systemic nature of displacement this year, we seek to inform policies, strategies and programmes with a better understanding of the drivers of displacement and will provide a platform for sharing of lessons and good practice in reducing displacement risk.

We invite contributions in the form of background papers that address the issue of internal displacement in a changing climate through two main angles:

1. Enhancing the understanding of the relationship between climate change and displacement, by examining, across different country and regional contexts, how social, economic, political and environmental factors interact with climate to generate displacement, potentially exacerbating its severity and impacts; and
2. Sharing examples of good practice in reducing risk and finding sustainable solutions to internal displacement in a changing climate.

1. Understanding the relationship between climate change and developmental factors in driving displacement risk and aggravating its impacts.

Papers are invited that analyse the systemic nature of displacement risk and the many factors that shape risk levels and displacement impacts. Contributions should present qualitative and quantitative assessments of factors of vulnerability and exposure, show advances in measuring the scale, duration and impacts of displacement, unpack how environmental and climate change interacts with sudden-onset disaster displacement, or assess the local impact of climate change.

Making sense of the systemic nature of displacement risk

There is growing evidence that the negative impacts of climate change exacerbate existing drivers of displacement and may also be in the process of becoming a driver in its own right. In addition, global and regional supply chains and investment flows increase the concentration of economic activity and assets, and thereby the exposure of people. Despite important gains in achieving the sustainable development goals, in many countries and regions vulnerability is not being reduced fast enough to counter this rising exposure, driving displacement risk. To address this, how increasing exposure of populations, persisting vulnerability and multiple hazards generate displacement needs to be better understood.

Contributions are invited that examine the interplay of hazards, exposure and vulnerability, presenting new findings on how climate change impacts interact with other environmental, social and economic drivers of displacement. Papers that analyse these interactions at local and national levels, as well as new approaches to quantifying their outcomes at regional and global levels are particularly welcome.

Measuring the scale, duration and impacts of displacement

There has been an increasing number of methodologies and tools aiming at assessing the scale of displacement, measuring for how long people are displaced, when and why they return – or not – to their places of origin, as well as what are the social and economic impacts of displacement on IDPs, host communities and local and national governments.

Measuring displacement and its impacts is a first step towards the creation of evidence-based policy. We call for contributions aimed at showcasing the value that data can have in better understanding the complex interaction between climate change, developmental factors, and displacement.

Understanding the interaction between slow- and rapid-onset disasters and resulting displacement

While more severe hurricanes, floods and storms may be the visible face of climate change, slow-onset processes such as drought, desertification, land degradation and erosion, sea level rise, salinization and glacier melt can contribute to the steady accumulation of risk that may result in displacement. There is only limited understanding of how these slow-onset processes increase the risk of rapid-onset hazards; and how they may contribute to generating conditions of fragility in resource-poor areas, potentially increasing the risk of conflict, violence, and further displacement.

A particular focus will be put on small island developing states, who are at the forefront of climate change and are already suffering the impacts of increased frequency and intensity of storms and

floods, droughts, loss of territory due to sea-level rise and submergence, and rising temperatures. All of these contribute to current and future displacement risk while many island states are also struggling to diversify vulnerable economies that are subject to potentially high fluctuations in demand as well as vulnerable to climate and other environmental shocks.

We invite contributions that shed light on these interactions across different hazard contexts, and explore displacement drivers and dynamics in dry and arid areas, regions suffering coastal erosion or land degradation. Papers that draw on the lessons learned by small island developing states on how to assess and manage human mobility and displacement risk in a prospective and inclusive manner, for example from preparedness planning and community relocation, will be particularly welcome.

[Understanding how the risk and impacts of disasters and the effects of climate change manifest at the local level](#)

Many of the countries affected by displacement are experiencing rapid urbanisation; in some, displacement itself is contributing to urban growth and expansion. In other contexts, displacement is rather a rural phenomenon that is affecting marginalized communities that are however essential to supporting agricultural production, food security and broader economic growth and social development.

All too often, both the data and the analysis on the risk and impacts of disasters and the effects of climate change are aggregated and presented at the national level. In reality, however, such risks and impacts have a local manifestation that often goes unnoticed. Internal displacement, as both an impact of disasters and a driver of future risk, should be looked at from a more local perspective. We invite contributions aimed at unpacking the urban and rural dimensions of disaster displacement risk and the local specificities that climate change impacts can have across different geographies.

[2. Reducing risk and finding sustainable solutions to internal displacement in a changing climate](#)

Contributions are sought that share lessons from local, national and regional investments in prevention and of policies and operational approaches that reduce the risk of displacement. Papers that examine positive examples of political commitment to account for and address disaster displacement, and of successful capacity building and institution building in displacement contexts are particularly welcome. Contributions may showcase approaches and analyse lessons learned from local contexts, e.g in reducing urban displacement risk, or national, regional and global processes.

[Generating political commitment to address disaster displacement and reduce risk](#)

While some decades ago disaster displacement was not prominent on global, regional and national policy agendas, it has gained some prominence over recent years and is beginning to shape both national discourse and local action. Several countries have developed policies that recognise the disaster displacement and the role that the negative impacts of climate change can play. Forward-looking strategies, including resettlement guidelines and migration policies, become part of national adaptation planning seeking to prevent negative impacts of future displacement. Others are beginning to develop national and regional agreements to ensure the protection of those displaced in disasters and fleeing within countries and across borders.

We seek contributions that discuss what incentives exist for political actors to push the displacement agenda in national policy debates and to advocate for investment in response and displacement risk reduction. Papers are invited that showcase examples where enhanced political commitment has catalysed concrete action and generated positive impact for those displaced by disasters.

[Improving evidence for policymaking and programming](#)

Data on the scale, patterns, duration, severity and impacts of disaster displacement still has significant gaps. Those attempting to generate solid evidence face significant challenges, including lack of coordination and common standards, lack of disaggregated data by age, sex and location, as well as poor interoperability across datasets. In fact, even the basic definitions of what constitutes displacement in a disaster context and how it ends are not commonly agreed.

However, advances have been made in recent years, not least by governments who are integrating displacement into their disaster risk management and response strategies and beginning to systematically account for disaster displacement. More detailed reporting on pre-emptive evacuations and new methods for estimating the duration of displacement have shown the increasingly protracted nature of disaster displacement, opening up new thinking about durable solutions in such contexts. New assessments of the social and economic impact of internal displacement, particularly in disaster contexts, have advanced our ability to account and plan for the socioeconomic consequences of internal displacement and better respond. The way displacement affects productivity, labour markets, security, education and health, and of the differentiated impact of displacement on different population groups are critical aspects to integrate into contingency planning as well as for long-term recovery and development.

We seek contributions that show how better accounting for disaster displacement risks and impacts can improve policies and programmes on human mobility as well as disaster risk management strategies.

[Strengthening capacity and resources to address disaster displacement](#)

Strengthened capacity to address displacement and reduce risk can include more and better accounting systems, a dedicated staffing and institutional setup, or more financial resources to address the drivers and the impacts of climate change and disaster displacement. Research, capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, the empowerment and financing of local-level action, and the inclusion of IDPs in shaping their own solutions are among the factors that can generate positive and lasting change. Interdisciplinary programmes and platforms for coordination between DRR practitioners, academics, climate change experts and policy makers also increase the collective ability and resources to reduce the risk of disaster displacement.

We invite submissions that focus on examples of good or promising practices in building local, national and regional capacity to prevent and respond to disaster displacement, from national policy development to local programmes. Contributions that can explain the key ingredients for sustainable strengthening of capacities and which present lessons for scaling up or transfer to other contexts are particularly welcome.

Addressing and reducing urban disaster displacement

Urbanisation trends of the last decades have created new governance challenges in cities, including the challenge of managing complex planning processes, infrastructure and service provision, and disaster risk in many mega cities and large urban centres across the globe. Cities already struggling with limited planning and service capacities now face new challenges from the negative impacts of climate change. In addition, populations forced from their lands due to sea-level rise, salinization and eroding livelihoods, moving into and living in informal urban settlements are particularly exposed and vulnerable to future displacement risk. With ever more assets and people concentrated in hazard prone towns and cities, the risk of displacement increases too.

Contributions are invited on new approaches to urban planning, land use and rural development that encompass prevention, improved responses to displacement and long-term strategies for the local integration of displaced populations in cities. Papers with concrete lessons for improved urban risk governance and planning are particularly welcome.

Submission of abstracts

Submissions are invited on one or several of the above themes with the aim of contributing to the 2020 Internal Displacement Conference and/or the 2021 Global Report on Internal Displacement. Authors should use the **submission form**: bit.ly/IDMC_submissionform, **no later than 15 August 2020**. Selected contributors will be informed via email by 31 August 2020.

Authors of proposals that lend themselves to being featured at the 2020 Internal Displacement Conference, hosted by IDMC on October 1st, will be invited to prepare a conference presentation or to participate in a panel discussion.