



THE
NANSEN
INITIATIVE

DISASTER-INDUCED CROSS-BORDER DISPLACEMENT

CLIMATE CHANGE, DISASTERS AND HUMAN MOBILITY IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Nansen Initiative South Asia Regional Consultation

Khulna, Bangladesh, 3 – 5 April 2015

DISASTERS
CLIMATE CHANGE AND
DISPLACEMENT  **EVIDENCE
FOR ACTION**

PARTNERS



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CONCLUSIONS

More than 90 participants representing governments of ten countries from South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, and Sri Lanka;¹ as well as representatives from the Nansen Initiative, including its Chairmanship, Steering Group, and Group of Friends; and representatives from regional and international organizations, UN Agencies, civil society organizations and research institutions, met in Khulna, Bangladesh from 3 – 5 April 2015 for the fifth Nansen Initiative Regional Consultation under the theme “Climate Change, Disasters and Human Mobility in South Asia and the Indian Ocean.” The participants expressed their appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting and the Chairmanship of the Nansen Initiative and IOM Bangladesh for supporting this important consultation. They particularly appreciated the opportunity to experience first-hand the challenges faced by victims of disasters and climate change living in Dacop Sutarkhali Union, Bangladesh, and recognized their plight.

The participants welcomed the Nansen Initiative, which is a state-led,² bottom-up consultative process intended to build consensus on a protection agenda that addresses the needs of people displaced across borders in the context of sudden and slow-onset disasters and the effects of climate change. These conclusions from the South Asia and Indian Ocean Regional Consultation, along with those from other regional consultations, will be submitted to the Nansen Initiative Global Consultation that will take place in Geneva in October 2015, and shared within relevant regional and international fora, including the UNFCCC negotiations and the World Humanitarian Summit.

Participants recognized that South Asia and the Indian Ocean region is exposed to a **wide array of natural hazards** with the potential to trigger human mobility, including sudden-onset hazards (e.g. tropical cyclones, flash floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, avalanches and glacial lake outburst floods), as well as slow-onset ones (e.g. sea level rise, desertification, droughts, riverbank erosion). Participants emphasized that climate change is already a reality for States in the regions, and expressed concern that, given countries’

high exposure and current adaptive capacity, they will increasingly face the adverse effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, salt water intrusion, coastal erosion, glacial melting, drought, and variable intensity and frequency of rainfall patterns and monsoon seasons. Participants recognized that disasters have no regard for national borders, and so emphasized the importance of bilateral, regional and international cooperation in addressing related human mobility challenges. At the same time, the participants noted that despite the similar problems in the region, their magnitude and nature are country specific due to their different geographical conditions and specificities.

Noting the multi-causal nature of displacement, participants expressed concern that the **impacts of climate change** combined with rapidly growing, densely populated urban areas, population growth, and pre-existing vulnerabilities linked to social inequalities and poverty are likely to increase displacement and migration in the future, including across international borders. They highlighted that such effects threaten affected persons’ full enjoyment of human rights, including by damaging housing and infrastructure, restricting resource avail-

¹ The Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and Pakistan participated as observers.

² The Nansen Initiative Steering Group includes Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Germany, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, and Switzerland.



ability, and negatively impacting livelihoods and food security, especially for small, agrarian, and marginalized households in low-lying and mountain areas. Participants stressed the particular consequences of climate change and natural hazards on Small Island Developing States, such as coastal erosion, coral bleaching, and salt water intrusion, and recognized that most of the related displacement is likely to be internal. Participants also expressed concern that such impacts may cause substantial economic losses and erase decades of development advances.

Participants acknowledged natural hazards have resulted in significant **displacement** in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region, with an estimated 46 million people displaced by sudden-onset disasters in South Asia between 2008 and 2013. For example, participants recalled the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami that killed tens of thousands of people and displaced well over one million people in Sri Lanka, India, and the Maldives. Participants also highlighted the 2007 and 2009 cyclones Sidr and Aila, which displaced hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh, the 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan, and the prolonged drought of 1997-2004 in Afghanistan. They also recalled the 2014 landslide and river block in Sindhupalchok, Nepal, and the 2015 landslide in Ab-barik District, Badakhshan Province, Afghanistan. The participants recalled that the vast majority of displacement and migration in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region has been internal. However, cross-border

movements have been reported in the wake of both slow and sudden-onset disasters in some of the South Asian countries.

Participants recognized the importance of national and regional disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, including through the SAARC Environment and Disaster Management Centre and the SAARC Agriculture Centre, as key elements for building capacities, enhancing regional collaboration and mitigating and reducing displacement risks. Participants also recognized the multiple opportunities to address displacement, migration and planned relocation with **disaster risk reduction** processes following the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: 2015 – 2030, and as part of the 2015 UN-FCCC **climate change** negotiations and the post-2015 development agenda. They emphasized that States have the primary responsibility to develop climate resilience and prevent and reduce disaster risk, and that bilateral, regional and international cooperation can play an important role in providing sustainable support to complement national action and in addressing transboundary risk, including internal and cross-border displacement. Participants also highlighted the common but differentiated responsibilities and the respective capabilities of States for responding to climate change and its adverse impacts, including the implications of climate change on human mobility and the importance of accessing mitigation and adaptation financing to address such challenges.

Participants noted **protection challenges** facing displaced persons in disaster contexts, including lost housing and infrastructure, livelihoods, and the psychological impact of disasters thereof. They noted that disasters exacerbate preexisting vulnerabilities, particularly for women, children, older persons and disabled persons, and the potential risk of human trafficking and smuggling after disasters. Participants highlighted that States have the primary responsibility to provide protection and assistance to displaced persons in disaster contexts, noting that States in the region already respond to the needs of internally displaced persons and have made substantial progress in their capacity to do so in the past ten years. They also recognized the critical role that the international community, civil society, the private sector, and other actors have been playing in responding to the protection and assistance needs of displaced persons. Participants also identified national legal frameworks and policies, international human rights law, UN Conventions and Declarations as essential for protecting displaced persons' rights. They also took note of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. However, participants highlighted the challenge of identifying such displaced persons, particularly in the context of climate change impacts, the lack of an international framework addressing cross-border disaster-related displacement, and the lack of or weakness of international institutional arrangements and mandates on the issue.

Participants recognized that the availability of economically active population in South Asia has led to its emergence as an important source of international migrants to the Middle East, North America and Europe, and also within the regions. They noted that while many migrants move voluntarily to access education, employment opportunities, the negative impacts of natural hazards and environmental degradation on livelihoods, health and human life have also led South Asian people to migrate both within the region and beyond. Participants acknowledged that managed properly, **migration** can be a positive **climate change adaptation measure** that creates livelihood opportunities, supports economic development, supports disaster response through remittances, and thus reduces future displacement. However, participants expressed concern that the poorest and most vulnerable communities often lack adequate support to make migration a positive adaptation strategy.

Participants recognized that natural hazards have led some governments in the region to relocate communities for reasons of safety or because land was lost or became uninhabitable. For instance in the Maldives in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami as well as the mountainous areas of Nepal and Afghanistan. Participants noted the challenges of identifying appropriate land, ensuring adequate livelihood opportunities and providing social and infrastructure support in relocation processes, emphasizing the importance of inclusive, voluntary and participatory approaches that consult and engage local communities in the planning and implementation process.

Participants observed that knowledge, **data and analysis** on the nexus between climate change, disasters, and human mobility in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region are growing but still insufficient to fully inform relevant policy making and governance at all levels.

Participants acknowledged that prevention, preparedness, and responses to human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change require action to be taken at community, sub-national, national, regional and international levels.

Participants recommended linking the Nansen Initiative consultative process with the United Nations. They further identified five areas where inclusive and comprehensive action is needed:

1. DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

- ① Build on the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 to integrate displacement, migration and planned relocation within national and regional disaster risk reduction plans and strategies. In particular, encourage the SAARC processes and regional centres to appropriately integrate all aspects of the Sendai Framework, including human mobility, into its programmes and activities.
- ② Include displacement, migration as adaptation, and planned relocation within national, sub-regional, regional and global development plans/initiatives, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation strategies to strengthen resilience.
- ③ Include disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies at all levels, particularly as they relate to displacement, migration as adaptation, and planned relocation, within national, sub-regional, regional and global development plans/initiatives to strengthen resilience.
- ④ Enhance understanding of the dynamics of vulnerability and consequent mobility of people within the DRR and climate change adaptation and mitigation plans, including disaster-related displacement and migration and related poverty.
- ⑤ Utilize participatory planning within DRR and climate change adaptation and mitigation processes to promote resilient communities.
- ⑥ Build capacities of relevant authorities and institutions at all levels, including through awareness raising and training, on the integration of human mobility in DRR, climate change adaptation, and development planning, emphasizing the importance of information, consultation, and participation of affected communities.



7 Consider the development of regional climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes, as appropriate, and building upon national and international programmes and initiatives, including by taking into account the need for integrated river basin management.

8 Establish, share and strengthen monitoring and early warning information regarding disasters, including through the use of mapping and geospatial technology, at national, sub-regional and regional levels. This would be important to continuously assess vulnerabilities of people and communities, and also their risk of displacement.

9 Increase per capita investment in DRR as compared to funding for disaster response, and facilitate access to climate change adaptation and mitigation and disaster risk reduction funding and technical assistance, in particular for Small Island Developing States and LDCs.

2. PROTECTION OF DISPLACED PERSONS IN CONTEXT OF DISASTERS AND THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

1 Recognize that disaster displaced persons, and in particular women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, need protection and assistance during the emergency relief phase, as well as ongoing support during the recovery and reconstruction phase, such as through the provision of adequate infrastructure and social services. Ensure the smooth transition from the emergency to the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction by enhancing cooperation between humanitarian and development actors.

2 Ensure that disaster displaced persons, or those at risk of displacement in disaster-prone areas, are provided with information about their rights and opportunities for genuine consultation and participation throughout all stages of disaster planning and response processes, particularly at the community level.

- ③ Develop national policies and standard operating procedures, adapted to the national context, that address the protection needs of internally displaced persons, and which provide simple, practical guidance regarding prevention, preparedness, evacuation, response, and finding durable solutions in a variety of disaster contexts.
- ④ Acknowledge that in situations of cross-border disaster-displacement, such people have specific protection needs and should, in a humanitarian spirit, receive admission, stay on temporary basis, social protection, and shelter, which are linked to finding durable solutions.
- ⑤ Consider the development of bilateral and regional arrangements, as appropriate, within existing regional frameworks, on cross-border disaster-displacement, emphasizing the humanitarian nature of such arrangements, to agree upon practical mechanisms regarding the admission, stay, and durable solutions, particularly in the context of sudden-onset disasters.
- ⑥ Integrate disaster and climate-related human mobility into relevant global processes, i.e. the UNFCCC negotiations, the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the World Humanitarian Summit process.
- ⑦ Recognize the importance of support by the United Nations and relevant international organizations, where appropriate, in terms of legal and policy development and the operational response to disaster displacement.
- ⑧ Strengthen the institutional and technical capacity, and provide adequate resources, to provide protection and assistance for disaster displaced persons at all levels.
- ⑨ Prepare for the specific human mobility scenarios facing Small Island Developing States and climate vulnerable countries in the context of disasters and climate change, including challenges related to legal status, identity and culture.

3. MIGRATION AS ADAPTATION

- ① Recognize that internal and cross-border migration may be a way for people affected by disasters and the adverse effects of climate change to avoid or adjust to deteriorating environmental conditions that could otherwise result in a humanitarian crisis and displacement in the future.
- ② Facilitate migration of disaster and climate change affected people by engaging directly with local populations and vulnerable, affected communities to support safe and orderly migration that benefits all, in particular by providing pre- and post-departure training and support.
- ③ Develop policies at all levels on migration as a form of adaptation to climate change and disasters, recognizing that the poorest and most vulnerable may need additional assistance to make migration a positive adaptation strategy.
- ④ Consider the development arrangements at various levels, as appropriate, on migration as a potential adaptation measure, emphasizing the humanitarian nature of such arrangements, which include practical mechanisms regarding travel, admission and stay.
- ⑤ Recognize the multi-faceted links between migration and development, and support migrants and their families through financial literacy and related measures, skills development, and other measures to increase their resilience and reduce disaster risks.
- ⑥ Collaborate and cooperate among Member States on safe, orderly and responsible management of labour migration from South Asia, as agreed in the Declaration of the 18th SAARC Summit.
- ⑦ Encourage the ratification of relevant international instruments or conventions to protect migrants such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.



4. PLANNED RELOCATION

- ❶ Consider timely planned relocation as a measure of last resort where other disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation measures are insufficient to protect people from natural hazards, and encourage the development of national and local relocation policies and mechanisms.
- ❷ Ensure that planned relocation processes include engagement and awareness raising with affected communities regarding planning and implementation, taking into account cultural ties and attachment to land.
- ❸ Ensure that such process include adequate provision of livelihood opportunities, housing, secure land tenure, basic and social services, and infrastructure, and are sensitive to local contexts.

5. DATA COLLECTION AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

- ❶ Enhance data collection on disaster-related human mobility, and expand upon current research and knowledge to improve understanding on the relationship between climate change, disasters, and human mobility, including respective displacement risks, to inform relevant policies.
- ❷ Create and build upon existing regional and international information sharing mechanisms on disaster risk and weather forecasting among States to support early warning mechanisms at all levels.
- ❸ Encourage exchange of information, dialogue and learning on relevant new scientific techniques and innovations, particularly related to agriculture, livelihoods, health and education.
- ❹ Provide relevant authorities at all levels with enhanced information and understanding of mechanisms and related access to international financial institutions supporting disaster risk reduction, disaster response and humanitarian assistance, and climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

DISASTERS
CLIMATE CHANGE AND
DISPLACEMENT



**EVIDENCE
FOR ACTION**

This is a multi-partner project funded by the European Commission (EC) whose overall aim is to address a legal gap regarding cross-border displacement in the context of disasters. The project brings together the expertise of three distinct partners (UNHCR, NRC/IDMC and the Nansen Initiative) seeking to:

- 1 › **increase the understanding** of States and relevant actors in the international community about displacement related to disasters and climate change;
- 2 › **equip them to plan for and manage** internal relocations of populations in a protection sensitive manner; and
- 3 › **provide States and other relevant actors tools and guidance** to protect persons who cross international borders owing to disasters, including those linked to climate change.

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