# Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs on *Internal displacement in the context of the slow-onset adverse effects of climate change*

## Inputs and references for further reading for selected issues presented in the Call for contributions

## ***Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, June 2020***

1. *Examples of national and/or regional laws and policies relevant to internal displacement in the context of disasters and climate change.*

Since the Sendai Framework for DRR, many governments have improved their disaster damage and loss accounting systems. This has allowed to paint a more accurate picture of the phenomenon of disaster displacement, a basis for effective policies and response. Examples can be found in the [2019 Africa Report on Internal Displacement](https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201912-Africa-report.pdf) and the [2020 Global Report on Internal Displacement](https://www.internal-displacement.org/grid2020/).

Many governments have created guidelines and policies on disaster and climate induced displacement in recent years, including resettlement guidelines and policies for adaptive migration (e.g. Vanuatu, Fiji, Kenya).

1. *Available data and evidence on internal displacement linked to slow-onset natural hazards in the context of the adverse effects of climate change (globally or in a specific region or country), trends and/or challenges and gaps with regards to data collection, analysis and use.*

First ever estimates of the number of new displacements associated with drought were published by IDMC in its [2018 Global Report on Internal Displacement](https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/downloads/report/2018-GRID-region-americas.pdf). There are still many challenges with monitoring drought displacement, but there are new and [innovative approaches to understanding and quantifying displacement related to slow onset disasters](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/monitoring-methodology-for-displacement-associated-with-drought), and more needs to be invested into these efforts. IDMC’s online global repository of disaster displacement data, monitoring and reporting on nearly 2,000 situations of sudden and slow-onset disaster displacement per year and producing the global standard data set and metrics on this topic. In addition, we have produced [first global estimate on total number of people living in displacement](https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/) triggered by disasters; as part of this quantifying housing destruction and assessing spatial and temporary trends.

*Using system dynamics analysis to understand the impacts of climate change*

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’s fifth assessment report (AR5) confirms that climate change is a major driver of sea-level rise, ocean acidification, increases in sea surface temperature and depletion of oceanic oxygen, which will affect low-lying island communities severely. Given the threat this poses to people’s homes and other infrastructure and the displacement it is expected it to trigger, [IDMC is using system dynamics analysis to understand the ways in which factors interconnect and the causes and ultimate trigger of displacement.](https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201905-disaster-displacement-global-review-2008-2018.pdf)

An example of the inter-relationship of factors can be seen in the context of ***climate change impacts on low-lying small island states***:



As climate change increases temperatures around the world, sea surface temperatures increase and oxygen levels in the oceans are reduced. This kills coral reefs, which reduces tourism income and also fish stocks, making it harder for people to make a living from traditional activities. At the same time, sea-level rise intrudes on beaches, driving visitor numbers down further. It also harms groundwater and soil quality, and agriculture suffers, meaning that both land and sea provide less food. Faced with a loss of income, growing threats to their homes and increasing difficulty in growing or catching food to eat, people may conclude that leaving is their only option. They become displaced by a range of factors that combine to make remaining at home increasingly difficult to the point of impossibility

New techniques are currently being explored to [detect disaster displacement more comprehensively and to capture spatial and temporal trends](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/disaster-displacement-a-global-review). In addition, it will be important for the report of the SR to highlight that several critical and policy-relevant questions need to be asked now: for example, how many people have been displaced? From where and to where? How long are they displaced for? What are the sex and age other demographic/socioe-economic characteristics of displaced populations? What is inhibiting people currently displaced by disasters from returning home?

New data is also being generated on the risk of disaster-related displacement, including [displacement estimates under different climate change and developmental scenarios](https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/201912-climate-change-flood-risk-paper.pdf). Developing a tool to estimate how many people will be displaced by forecast hazards and observed hazards is a priority in order to support early warning systems and rapid responses to disaster displacement.

In addition to estimates and modelled numbers of new displacements, more in-depth evidence exists from empirical research conducted by IDMC, for example in [Iraq](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/when-canals-run-dry-displacement-triggered-by-water-stress-in-the-south-of-iraq), [Niger](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/they-call-it-exodus-breaking-the-cycle-of-distress-migration-in-niger), [Somalia](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/no-land-no-water-no-pasture-the-urbanisation-of-drought-displacement-in-somalia) and [Ethiopia](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/durable-solutions-drought-displacement-ethiopia).

1. *The impact of climate change-related internal displacement on the enjoyment of human rights by specific groups, such as indigenous peoples, minorities, children, older persons and persons with disabilities.*

IDMC has developed new research tools to assess the [economic impacts of internal displacement in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/measuring-the-costs-of-internal-displacement-eswatini-ethiopia-kenya-and-somalia). The Somalia case study unpacks and quantifies how drought-related displacement can affect IDPs and host communities’ access to health, education and other human rights. Further, initial surveys IDMC and Facebook have conducted with displaced people in Japan and Australia have also indicated potentially differential impacts on men and women. These include decisions whether to evacuate, where and how to evacuate and when to return home.

To understand the differentiated impact of displacement on the human rights of specific groups, concerted efforts must be made to collect data disaggregated by sex, age and other characteristics including socioeconomic status, ethnicity and disability. IDMC has produced first estimates on the number of IDPs [disaggregated by age groups](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/number-of-idps-by-age-at-the-end-of-2019) includes disaggregation for people living in displacement from disasters (first ever estimates), showing the number of children and older people in disaster displacement.

Less well documented are the psycho-social impacts of displacement on those who have lost their home and property as well as the health impacts on those living in protracted displacement, often in unsanitary conditions. The disruption of education and the loss of documentation and ability to participate in social and political processes has also been reported as protection concerns.

1. *Analysis of the response of States and the international community to:*
   1. *prevent the conditions that might lead to displacement and prepare for internal displacement in climate change contexts, including early warning, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction.*

Several countries, such as the Philippines, have established relatively effective monitoring systems to better understand who will be most affected by weather-related events and disasters in general, for how to help the most vulnerable.

Early Warning Systems including hazard monitoring and evacuation drills have successfully prevented loss of life through displacement (Cyclones Bulbul and Fani in Bangladesh and India in 2019). Pre-emptive resettlement of communities highly exposed to disasters and climate change impacts is already taking place in countries like Fiji, Bangladesh and Colombia. Such measures will successfully avert future impacts.

1. *provide effective remedies, overcome protracted displacement and support durable solutions for them.*

 In Ethiopia and Somalia, governments, UN agencies and NGOs argue for donors to take more risks and engage in durable solutions involving humanitarian, development, and peace actors. The message is that donors and partners cannot continue to provide emergency assistance when the needs are clearly for long-term solutions given the protracted nature of some of the displacement issues, for example, in cases of drought in the Horn of Africa.

In drought displacement contexts such as Iraq, Ethiopia, Somalia or Niger, a number of policies and programmes have already been successful, including training in entrepreneurship for female heads of household to prepare them to set up small and medium-sized businesses, the provision of start-up grants, the establishment of communal farms for agro-pastoralists to plant cash crops, the re-establishment of pastoralist livelihoods by  providing goats and other livestock, and vocational skills workshops.

An important debate in Ethiopia, for example, is currently taking place about whether to include the option of restocking into livelihoods resilience strategies in support of pastoralist communities. One the one hand restocking could prompt return to a pastoral and semi-nomadic way of life for pastoralists displaced to urban areas, on the other hand towns and cities often enable better access to services such as education, healthcare and water, improving living conditions and reducing vulnerability.

1. *The impact of health crises such as the current one related to COVID-19, and of the measures taken to respond to them, on climate change-related internal displacement, including their impact on: a) displacement patterns, b) climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, c) preparedness and disaster risk reduction, and d) humanitarian assistance and protection to internally displaced persons.*

IDMC has started to document the different ways in which internal displacement intersects with the current health and resulting socio-economic crises and how IDPs are affected by it. These [regular global updates and new impact analysis](https://www.internal-displacement.org/crises/coronavirus) may inform the report.

1. *Any other information stakeholders wish to share regarding internal displacement in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.*

It is important to recognise that **the effects of climate change can exacerbate already existing inequalities, vulnerabilities and exposure**, with direct implications for displacement risk. The existing literature is consistent in demonstrating that slow-onset environmental factors are just one in a range of considerations that influence people’s decision to move. They are often not even the dominant factor, which means that development policy and investment options exist for prospective risk reduction and effective responses.

Therefore, rather than focus on climate change as a stand-alone driver or trigger of displacement, it is more useful to analyse how its effects interact with such pre-existing conditions and how policies and programmes can build resilience and reduce the risk of displacement by reducing the vulnerability of hazard-prone regions, communities and markets.

 A key problem with making the case for the prospective management of this type of displacement risk is that the critical nature of slow-onset events only tends to become apparent when a crisis point is reached. It **may not be useful in this sense to distinguish between slow and sudden-onset events** that trigger displacement, because slow-onset processes often manifest in extreme weather events and trigger sudden-onset crises. For example, sea-level rise can result in more serious storm surges and drought and desertification can exacerbate flooding due to diminished run-off and absorptive capacity of soils.

The Call for contributions to the upcoming report of the Special Rapporteur states that slow-onset events and processes linked to the adverse effects of climate change can result in displacement. We encourage the report to acknowledge and unpack the different ways in which displacement comes about in such contexts and show how the **different displacement processes and dynamics each have specific implications for existing rights frameworks**, policy options and operational response. The basic analysis for this has been done in 2019 with a [substantial review of existing literature](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/WIM%20TFD%20I.2%20Output.pdf) that was conducted by IDMC in consultation with more than 100 experts and institutions as part of the work plan of the Taskforce on Displacement under the UNFCCC Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage.

Finally, **displaced people are often portrayed as victims** of slow-onset events in need of assistance and protection, **but the literature provides many examples of how they can be drivers of community-based solutions**. For many communities, return is a desirable durable solution, but it is less likely in situations where slow-onset climate processes are at play because they tend to be all but irreversible. Integration then becomes a major issue that requires more attention and resources, and importantly, the leadership of affected communities. In such contexts, as in many other displacement situations, working with grass-roots and community groups is essential for sustainability. This will be particularly the case in regions where slow-onset environmental degradation and the adverse effects of climate change lead to the uninhabitability of areas with settlements, making return an unviable option for those displaced.

1. *Information on how slow-onset effects of climate change are inter-related with conflict, i.e. how climate change and conflict combine to act as drivers and causes of internal displacement, and what specific combined effects they have on internally displaced persons.*

The effects of climate change interact with conflict, violence and displacement risk in various ways, with both drivers and impacts converging, as for example in the Lake Chad region or parts of Central America. Increasingly, IDPs in conflict situations are also affected by disaster impacts, triggering onward displacement, such as in IDP camps in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria. Examples that can be used for the report of the Special Rapporteur are featured in the Africa Report on Internal Displacement in [2017](https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2017-africa-report-on-internal-displacement#:~:text=12.6%20million%20people%20living%20in,cent%20of%20all%20new%20displacements&text=1.1%20million%20people%20displaced%20by%20sudden%2Donset%20disasters) (pp. 36-37) and [2019](https://www.internal-displacement.org/africa-report) (p. 32 onwards).