

Climate, Migration, and Displacement Platform

8 May 2020

TO: UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

FROM: Climate, Migration, and Displacement Platform

RE: Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Internally Displaced People

We thank the panel for the recent call for submissions to support the work of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. We appreciate the very broad engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders including civil society.

*The **Climate, Migration, and Displacement Platform** includes representatives of a wide range of more than 30 civil society organizations and stakeholders from the climate change, migration governance and humanitarian spaces who have been working together to improve approaches to climate migration and displacement issues since 2018.*

We are writing to you to emphasise the urgent need to address the impacts of climate change on internal displacement as well as on internally displaced people themselves, as part of a wider effort to promote climate justice for all. In this regard, we also strongly endorse the submission made by the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD) on “Internal Displacement in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change”.

The urgency to address this problem now is rooted in the following factors:

Displacement due to disasters is likely to increase due to climate change:

Almost every second, a person is displaced by disasters. On average, 25 million people flee disasters each year. The majority are displaced due to extreme weather, like floods and storms. As global temperatures increase, we expect more extreme weather and as a result, an increase in the number of people displaced. Analysis by NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) indicates that by the end of the century, as many as 50 million people could be displaced every year by flooding alone. The vast majority of such displacement – as with displacement linked to other factors – for many years has been internal (numbers from PDD/UNHCR). Slow onset events such as sea level rise, glacial retreat and increasing loss of biodiversity will also force millions out of their homes. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggests that by the end of the century, higher seas are likely to displace or affect 680 million people who live in low-lying coastal zones, along with 65 million citizens of small island states.

The most climate vulnerable, who also bear the least responsibility, are hardest hit:

Many of the countries that will be worst affected by climate change are developing countries. In many of them, a large portion of the population already live in severe poverty, with a limited capacity to adapt to climate change, build resilience, prepare for disasters, and to recover from them. Similarly, in countries with weak governance, and a lack of peaceful decision making mechanisms, climate change could serve as a driver of violence and conflict, making people prone to displacement.

Those who have already been forcibly displaced, as well as those who have migrated due to climate-related loss of livelihood, are often especially vulnerable to extreme weather events. Those who have migrated from rural areas to informal urban settlements trade one kind of environmental vulnerability for another when they live without adequate housing and other infrastructure and services. Moreover, in the current pandemic context, many internal and international migrants have had to return to environmentally-degraded and precarious situations in their communities of origin, putting them and their families, who may have depended on remittances, at risk.

As many of the most vulnerable countries are least responsible for contributing to climate change, developed countries have a responsibility to not only reduce their emissions significantly, but to also provide climate finance and to support resilience building, community-based adaptation, and humanitarian response to disasters in those countries that are hardest hit. Within societies, the population segments particularly vulnerable and their differentiated needs need to be given strong attention in all measures, including with regard to gender differentiation and empowering women and girls.

There's nothing natural with disasters. Invest in disaster risk reduction:

With extreme weather events predicted to become more frequent and severe in many parts of the world, we need to invest in ways to reduce the risk of disasters. Floods, storms and droughts are not automatically turned into a disaster. We can limit the impact through disaster risk reduction, early warning systems and life-saving early action, like pre-emptive evacuations and access to reliable weather forecasts, and by building resilience in affected countries. Investing in resilience measures that address the particular needs of IDPs and other vulnerable newcomers to urban areas should be a priority.

Respond with urgency to the need to combat climate change:

To avoid a massive increase in displacement risk, we need to ensure swift implementation of the Paris agreement and take the necessary steps to limit global warming to 1.5°C. With current policies and practices, we will not reach this goal, and we will face severe food insecurity, water shortages, losses and damages, and large-scale displacement with disastrous humanitarian consequences. Even if we successfully implement the Paris Agreement, flood displacement, for example, is likely to double by the end of the century, and if we fail to act, it will be a lot worse. In a worst-case scenario, the number of people displaced by floods alone may increase fivefold by the end of the century.

Stepping up climate finance and using resources more flexibly:

Since signing the Paris Agreement, member states have been in a stalemate over committing to financing its implementation, particularly when it comes to supporting necessary measures to be taken by developing countries, relating to their actions on adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage. Unless this chronic problem is addressed, the catastrophic effects of climate change on displacement, as described above, will continue and worsen. In addition, it is imperative to create dedicated loss and damage financing within climate finance and its architecture to support States in climate-induced disaster displacement and provide solutions to end such displacement. Such resources should, in particular, support efforts to help IDPs shift to new forms of livelihoods (including agricultural and livestock production) when they cannot return to their former lifestyles due to adverse impacts of climate change. Additional measures to support this at national level should include the flexible use of budgets allocated to relevant line ministries to prioritize support to displacement-affected communities when disasters strike; and allocating resources to local

governments/authorities hosting substantial numbers of disaster IDPs or returnees in accordance with the needs of the de facto population rather than based on official population numbers. The HLP should also explore the role of global mechanisms which can generate additional resources and which are for example being proposed in the context of the UNFCCC work on climate change induced displacement.

People affected by climate change need different mobility options:

The fact that the overwhelming majority of displacement occurs internally is, to a great extent, a function of a lack of options for those affected. While the first priority for most people would of course be for them to be able to remain, and have the root causes of their displacement effectively addressed (including though measures outlined above, and in the PDD submission), we also have to face the reality that some may not be able to return home – either for a period of time, or even permanently. Therefore, States should consider more comprehensive solutions that provide more comprehensive protection and a perspective for solutions to those forced to move by climate change. Measures to address this should include short-term humanitarian visas, dedicated long-term admission and stay for those unable to return, as well as access to labour migration pathways, and other tools to ensure safe and sustainable mobility while maintaining dignity. The recently agreed Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) gives helpful guidance in this regard, and should be taken into consideration when drafting recommendations on internal displacement in the context of climate change.