

## WHAT DOES UNHCR DO ALREADY TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE?



The presence of large groups of refugees or displaced can have a negative impact on the environment. UNHCR's Environmental Guidelines have been developed to prevent and mitigate deforestation, depletion of water supplies and the disappearance of wild food resources.

### UNHCR projects include:

- Promotion of energy efficient stoves, solar stoves, lights, and ethanol stoves where appropriate
- Environmentally friendly shelter construction
- Sustainable agriculture in refugee and IDP camps
- Reforestation in refugee and IDP camps as well as surrounding areas
- Environmental education and awareness raising among refugee and IDP populations

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## CLIMATE CHANGE IS A HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM

Where people flee,  
**UNHCR** is there to help



## NINE OUT OF TEN NATURAL DISASTERS ARE CLIMATE RELATED

In the last 20 years, the number of natural disasters has doubled. Each natural disaster sends people fleeing their homes, sometimes even crossing national borders.

Observers predict that in the next 50 years as many as 250 million to one billion people might be forced to move due to climate change. At a minimum, this means 6 million newly displaced each year.

People will move within countries and across borders. They will leave suddenly in large numbers when disaster strikes or move gradually from areas where arable land and water become scarce. Armed conflicts over resources will provoke flights.



## WHO WILL PROTECT AND ASSIST THOSE DISPLACED BY CLIMATE CHANGE?

Governments are primarily responsible for protecting and assisting those affected. Where governments lack the resources to respond, international solidarity and burden sharing will be essential.

### UNHCR engages in disaster prevention and relief when:

- Refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR are affected
- UNHCR has the emergency stocks and the capability to help
- Within the UN Cluster Approach for internally displaced people (IDPs), UNHCR has assumed the global lead for the Protection Cluster and co-lead for the global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM) and for the Emergency Shelter Cluster

In 2004, after the Tsunami, UNHCR airlifted 400 tonnes of aid and shelter to 145,000 people in Indonesia and to 100,000 people in Sri Lanka.

In 2006, UNHCR airdropped 200 tonnes of relief supplies for thousands of refugees cut off by massive flooding in Kenya.

In 2008, UNHCR moved 430 tonnes of shelter and basic household supplies into Myanmar to help 130,000 cyclone victims.

## WHAT SHOULD THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DO TO MEET THE HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES?

**Understand the problems ahead:** More analysis is needed about potential locations and proportions of displacement as well as about small sinking island states and the future status of their citizens.

**Prevent and mitigate the humanitarian consequences of climate change:** States, IGOs, NGOs and grass-roots community-level organizations need to focus on the humanitarian consequences.

**Fund adaptation:** Affected communities need financial support to adapt to the effects of climate change, so human displacement can be minimized and managed.

**In line with its rights based approach, UNHCR promotes the following measures:**

- Clarify responsibilities of States, IGOs and NGOs and encourage burden-sharing
- Uphold human rights norms to protect vulnerable groups (e.g. the young, the elderly, ethnic minorities, indigenous people)
- Encourage states to provide for the entry and temporary protection of people affected by climate change
- Fill legal/protection gaps for climate-induced cross-border movements
- Prevent statelessness