



UNHCR
The UN
Refugee Agency

UNHCR, THE ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE

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Cover photo: Ethiopia / Somali refugees fleeing drought and insecurity. J. Ose / June 2012

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Kenya / Flooding in Dadaab / Some 78,000 refugees in UNHCR's IFO and Dagahaley camps were affected by the flooding. UNHCR oversees three camps in this region of 160,000 mostly Somali refugees.

© UNHCR / B. Bannon / 2011



1. WHY IS CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER DISPLACEMENT A CONCERN TO UNHCR

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres has staunchly and consistently advocated for States to take the issue of climate change seriously and expressed his view that this is a megatrend that will compound others, such as food and water insecurity and competition over resources. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has observed that climate change will, in combination with other factors, drive more displacement in future. States have begun exploring the legal gap regarding people who might cross borders as a result, but who would not be covered by the 1951 Refugee Convention.

1.1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS AS DRIVERS OF DISPLACEMENT AND CONFLICTS

The IPCC gathers thousands of scientists from all over the world and provides a clear and up to date view of the current state of scientific knowledge relevant to climate change. For the first time, in its fifth assessment report in 2014, IPCC Working Group II, which considers the vulnerability and exposure of human and natural systems, explicitly recognized that “Climate change over the 21st Century is projected to increase displacement of people” and “can indirectly increase risks of violent conflicts in the form of civil war and inter-group violence by amplifying well-documented drivers of these conflicts such as poverty and economic shocks”.¹

¹ http://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/images/uploads/WG2AR5_SPM_FINAL.pdf

Impacts of Climate Change on Displacement

- Major extreme weather events have in the past led to significant population displacement, and changes in the incidence of extreme events will amplify the challenges and risks of such displacement.
- Many vulnerable groups do not have the resources to be able to migrate to avoid the impacts of climate change.
- Migrants themselves may be vulnerable to climate change impacts in destination areas, particularly in urban centers in developing countries.
- An increasing incidence and changing intensity of extreme weather events due to climate change will lead directly to the risk of increased levels of displacement.

Climate Change and Armed Conflict

- Some of the factors that increase the risk of violent conflict within states are sensitive to climate change (e.g. low per capita incomes, economic contraction, and inconsistent state institutions).
- Poorly designed adaptation and mitigation strategies can increase the risk of violent conflict.
- People living in places affected by violent conflict are particularly vulnerable to climate change.
- Conflict strongly influences vulnerability to climate change impacts.

Figure 1:
Intergovernmental Panel
on Climate Change
5th assessment report
findings²

Source:
ipcc-wg2-AR5 Chap12

1.2 HOW MANY PEOPLE COULD BE DISPLACED AS A RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE?

The dynamics of the interaction of mobility with climate change are multifaceted and motivations are complex. Environmental conditions and altered ecosystem services are just some among the many reasons why people move. Climate change impacts may play a role in these decisions, but direct causation is difficult to establish. As an example, the major influx of Somalis into Kenya in 2012 and 2013 was motivated as much by the drought and famine affecting Somalia as by the death and disruption at the hands of Al Shabab and armed groups. “The drought made the conflict worse. Everyone became afraid of everyone. Some raiders came and took away the little food we had raised on our farm. Now we are in a very hard time: the people at home face conflict and famine. They are starving. If we could go back, we would have only dry land and death to greet us”, said a pastoralist from Somalia in Shedr Camp, Ethiopia.³

In view of this complex causality, estimating future global displacement is fraught with uncertainty. However, there is significant quantitative and qualitative data on past displacement associated with natural hazards and disasters. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre’s (IDMC) 2015 Global Estimates report, “Since 2008, an average of 26.4 million people per year have been displaced from their homes by disasters brought on by natural hazards. This is equivalent to one person being displaced every second.”⁴ Figure 2 shows that people are twice as likely to be displaced now than they were in the 1970s. Unless strong climate mitigation and adaptation measures are implemented worldwide, alongside disaster-preparedness and disaster risk reduction measures, this trend is expected to increase.⁵

² https://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/images/uploads/WGIAR5-Chap12_FINAL.pdf

³ T. Afifi, R. Govil, P. Sakdapolrak and K. Warner, *Climate Change, Vulnerability and Human Mobility: Perspectives of Refugees from the East and Horn of Africa*, UNHCR and UNU-EHS, No. 1, June 2012, p.46 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/East%20and%20Horn%20of%20Africa_final_web.pdf

⁴ <http://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2015/global-estimates-2015-people-displaced-by-disasters/>

⁵ IPCC 5AR, WG2, Volume 1, Chapter 12, (2014), available at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/wg2/>

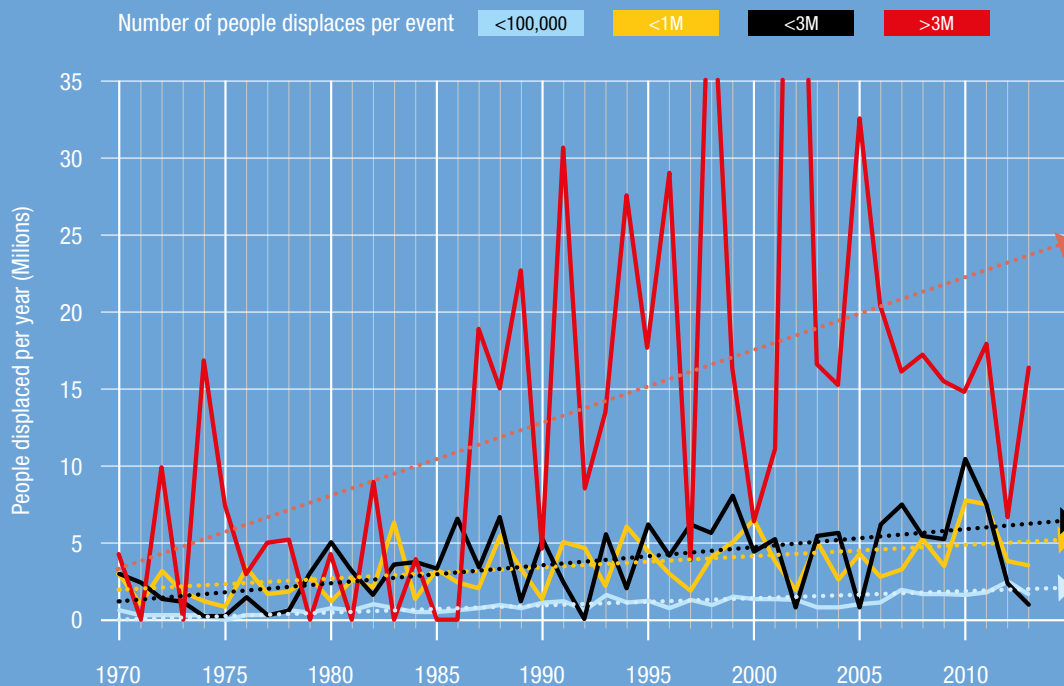


Figure 2: Global trend in absolute displacement risk 1970 – 2013

Source: IDMC, 2015

1.3 WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR UNHCR?

At present, displacement risk is largely driven by the fact that more and more vulnerable people are living in disaster-prone areas. The majority of the 59.5 million people of concern to UNHCR⁶ are situated in ‘climate change hotspots’ around the world. They face the risk of secondary or repeated displacement due to natural hazards and the effects of climate change.

Countries already experiencing conflict are especially vulnerable to forced displacement in the context of disasters, rendering both the humanitarian needs and responses in such situations even more complex. Climate change and disasters can also exacerbate social tensions and act as an accelerator of armed conflict, which may result in displacement, for example, by exacerbating competition for scarce natural resources, such as water and land. Such people are entitled to UNHCR support.

Enhancing the resilience of people of concern and the communities hosting them is also a concern to UNHCR as a means to avoid secondary displacement. Beginning in the 1990s, UNHCR became increasingly aware of the environmental challenges associated with hosting a large population in a small area. Competition over scarce natural resource, such as firewood, water and grazing land, has the potential to generate animosity and occasionally to spark friction or conflict between refugees and host communities.

⁶ UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2014*, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/556725e69.html>



Philippines / Tanauan / Typhoon Haiyan / Extent of damage of super typhoon in Tanauan, Leyte.

© UNHCR / R. Rocamora / November 2013

2. HOW IS UNHCR ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER DISPLACEMENT?

The risk of climate-related displacement can be reduced through effective adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development planning—especially when these are integrated. Investments in resilience, for example, can help communities withstand climate-related shocks and stresses, and help communities recover more quickly when disasters do occur.

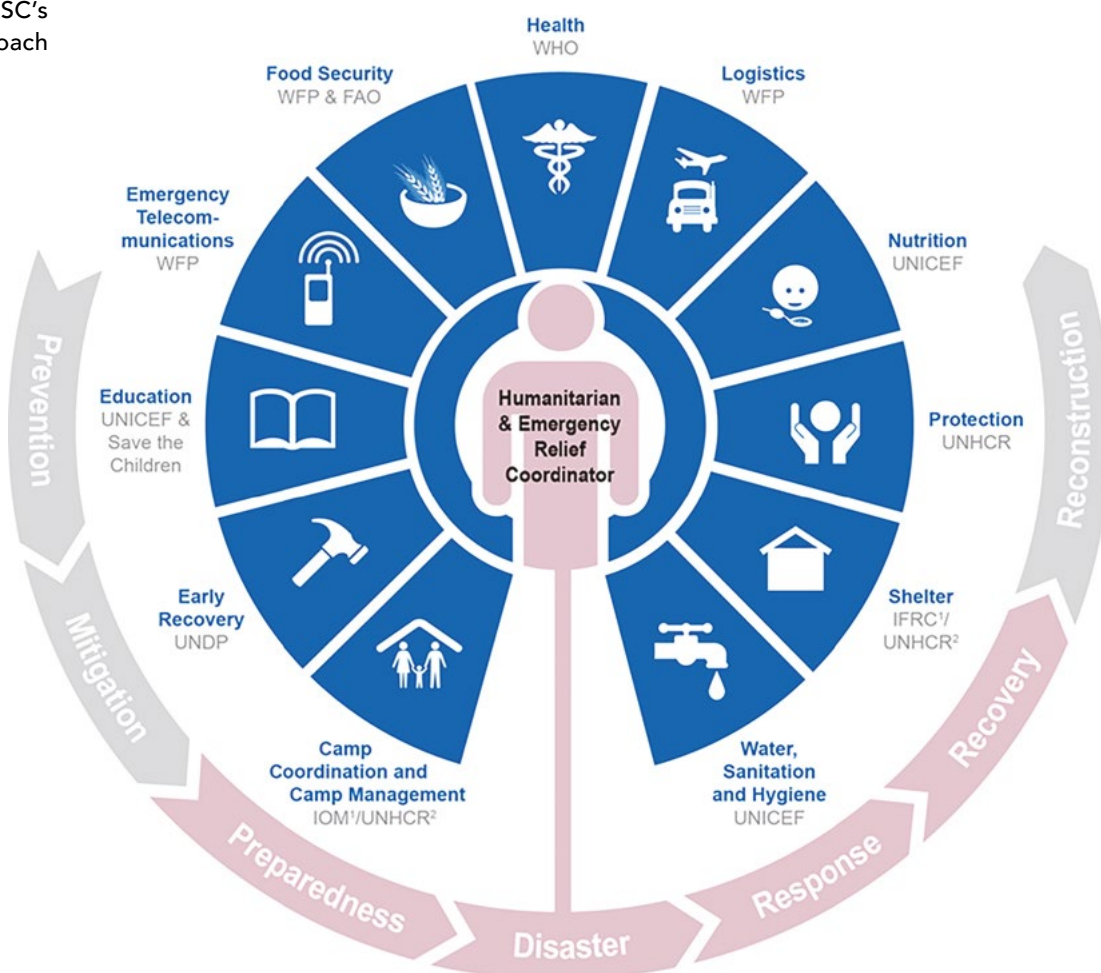
Measures to better protect, assist and find durable solutions for internally displaced persons in disaster contexts are also important elements of addressing displacement more generally.

Rather than calling for a new binding international convention on cross-border disaster-displacement, UNHCR supports an approach that focuses on the integration of effective practices by States and (sub-) regional organizations into their own normative frameworks and practices in accordance with their specific situations and challenges.

2.1 PROTECTING INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTERS

It is widely agreed that the vast majority of people displaced by disasters and the impacts of climate change will be internally displaced,⁷ since they are likely to remain within their own countries. People who are displaced within their countries are legally protected by international humanitarian and human rights law, as reflected in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and, in the case of Africa, by the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention). Internally displaced persons – whether they return to their homes, settle elsewhere in the country, or try to integrate locally where they are displaced – usually face continuing problems and risks, and require support beyond the acute crisis period of a disaster. Achieving a solution is therefore a gradual and complex process requiring timely and coordinated efforts to address humanitarian, development and human rights concerns, including measures to prepare for or prevent further displacement.⁸

Figure 3: IASC's cluster approach



⁷ As defined by the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, IDPs are individuals or groups of people “who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence [...] and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.” See the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998. In line with international human rights and international humanitarian law and, by analogy, with refugee law, the Guiding Principles set out the rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of IDPs in all phases of displacement, providing protection against arbitrary displacement; protection and assistance during displacement; and during return or internal resettlement and reintegration, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/43ce1cff2.html>

⁸ IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, April 2010, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/50f94cd49.html>

Governments are primarily responsible for the people displaced within their borders. When they lack resources to respond, the international community can, at their request, provide support and humanitarian assistance. The primary mechanism for the coordination of humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)'s cluster approach. Under the "cluster approach", UNHCR leads the Global Protection Cluster. However, at the country level in disaster situations or complex emergencies without significant displacement, the three protection-mandated agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF and OHCHR) will consult closely and agree which agency among the three will assume the role of Cluster Lead Agency for protection. The decision depends on which agency is best placed in a particular context to assume this responsibility based on factors such as a request by the affected State, expertise and well-established presence in country as well as assets that can be readily deployed.

UNHCR played a major role in protection of the populations affected by, among others, droughts in Somalia in 2011 and 2012, floods in Pakistan between 2010 and 2012, storms and flooding in Myanmar in 2013, and typhoons in the Philippines (Washi/Sendong in 2011/2012 and Haiyan/Yolanda in 2013).⁹ Most recently, in 2015, UNHCR assisted cyclone and flood victims in Myanmar's Rakhine and Kachin states, assisted victims of the devastating earthquake in Nepal and relocated 50,000 flood-affected refugees in Ethiopia.

2.2 THE NANSEN INITIATIVE – A 'PROTECTION AGENDA' FOR CROSS-BORDER DISASTER DISPLACEMENT

Those who cross borders in the context of climate change and disasters would not normally qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The 1951 Refugee Convention speaks in terms of "a well-founded fear of persecution" on the basis of five grounds: race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. Therefore, the Convention does not normally apply to the situation of persons displaced across borders by disasters and climate change and there are at present no widely accepted principles or rules governing their entry and stay in another country.¹⁰

Figure 3: Event that led to the launch of the Nansen Initiative

Given the legal gap for protection of cross-border disaster displaced persons, in February 2011, UNHCR together with States and relevant stakeholders organized the **Bellagio Roundtable** on Climate Change and Displacement that emphasized the need to formulate a "global guiding framework" on displacement relating to climate change.

In June 2011, Norway's **Nansen Conference** on Climate Change and Displacement generated 10 Nansen Principles recognising that "a more coherent and consistent approach at the international level is needed to meet the protection needs of people displaced externally owing to sudden-onset disasters.

UNHCR played a key role in supporting the **launch of the Nansen Initiative** on Disaster-Induced Cross-Border Displacement, which derived from pledges made by Switzerland and Norway during the 2011 Ministerial Meeting of UN Member States on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The pledge was welcomed by several states and provides the basis of the Nansen Initiative.

⁹ As an example, UNHCR reached nearly half a million survivors of Typhoon Haiyan (Philippines 2013) with vital supplies. UNHCR continues to assist the most vulnerable typhoon survivors, in particular indigenous peoples like the Badjao, more information available at <http://www.unhcr.org/52f0c8e36.html>

¹⁰ There is a case for refugee protection in situations where harmful action or inaction by a Government in dealing with climate related events is related to one or more of the Refugee Convention grounds (such as denial of humanitarian assistance to a minority group) and could, as a result, be considered persecution.

The Nansen Initiative is a bottom-up, State-led consultative process with multi-stakeholder involvement. Its objectives are not to draft a convention or a soft-law instrument, but rather to build consensus among interested governments on key principles and elements regarding the protection of persons displaced across borders in the context of disasters and to set a protection agenda for future action that will feed into formal existing processes at domestic, regional and international levels.¹¹

UNHCR has been an observer in the Steering Group of the Nansen Initiative, which initiates, oversees and steers the process, and is an active member of the Nansen Consultative Committee, which informs the process through research and expertise in a range of disciplines. UNHCR's strong institutional support for the Nansen Initiative has been underpinned by a grant from the European Union and the generous co-funding from Switzerland and Norway, for which the Office is extremely grateful. This funding is shared with the Norwegian Refugee Council and its Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (NRC/IDMC).

Nansen Initiative Regional Consultations in the Pacific, Americas, Africa and Asia have highlighted that disaster displacement has devastating impacts on people and their communities, raises multiple protection concerns and undermines the development of many States. The formal close of the process took place at a 'Global Consultation' of States on 12-13 October 2015 in Geneva. The Global Consultation led to the endorsement by 110 countries of an Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change ('Protection Agenda'). The Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda consolidates effective practices by States and (sub-) regional organizations and presents a toolbox of potential policy options that includes: 1) preventing people from being displaced in the first place; 2) helping people move in a safe, regular and planned manner before disasters make forced movements inevitable; and 3) providing protection when displacement cannot be avoided and people are forced to move.

UNHCR has, from the very beginning, been a staunch supporter of the Nansen Initiative and is committed to continuing to work with relevant partners to maximize support to States. Among the most important lessons derived from the Nansen Initiative is that States can prevent and prepare for increased displacement in future when the right policies are in place. Stepping up adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts needs to go hand in hand with mitigation. And the protection dimension must be central in these endeavours.

2.3 PLANNED RELOCATION AS AN ADAPTATION STRATEGY

More and more people live in regions and locations highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. When these impacts make life unsustainable in particular areas declared as highly disaster prone or too dangerous for human habitation, or when return to original habitats is precluded, people are sometimes left with no choice but to flee. Yet, for the most vulnerable, even this option might not exist and they can become trapped in areas that threaten their lives. Planned relocation of populations can protect them from risks and impacts related to climate change. Planned relocation is already occurring in some parts of the world. Sometimes affected populations themselves are pressing authorities to assist them to relocate. Planned relocation should be considered when all other options have been discarded. When planned relocation related to climate change cannot be avoided, its scale should be minimized and should always involve consultation with affected communities.

UNHCR, the Brookings Institution and Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM) have been working with relevant stakeholders to draft guidance to the effect that planned relocation is a participatory rights-based process, involving both relocating

¹¹ For additional information regarding the Nansen Initiative, visit <http://www.nanseninitiative.org/>

and host communities, and taking into consideration their specific needs, rights and conditions of vulnerability.

UNHCR, Brookings Institution and Georgetown ISIM organized a consultation on this issue on 12-14 March 2014 in Sanremo, Italy. The consultation brought together 43 experts from a range of fields (adaptation, development, development-induced displacement and resettlement, disaster risk management, civil protection, environment and climate change, humanitarian assistance and human rights) from 21 countries, drawn from governments, international and non-governmental organizations and academia. The consultation generated preliminary recommendations and some guidance on planned relocation, but most importantly it helped clarify the complexity and cross-sectoral nature of the issues involved.¹²

An expert meeting was held in Washington on 13 February 2015 to focus specifically on definitions of terminology.

The Brookings Institution, in partnership with UNHCR and Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of International Migration (ISIM), convened a small expert consultation in Bellagio, Italy in May 2015 to further develop guidance for governments on carrying out planned relocations in the context of climate change and disaster. The guidance was issued on 7 October 2015.

UNHCR is liaising with States to support their planning for relocation in their National Adaptation Plans due to the necessity of ensuring advance planning. UNHCR contributed to a joint publication with the United Nations University and the Nansen Initiative on National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) that was released for the June 2014 session at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹³

2.4 UNFCCC PROCESS AND THE ADVISORY GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN MOBILITY

In June 2008, the IASC established a Task Force on Climate Change. UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and a number of like-minded partners were instrumental in advocating for cross-border displacement to be addressed in this context. The heads of key agencies made joint submissions as “a coordinated signal” to States parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) about the high likelihood of migration and displacement linked to disasters and climate change, and the willingness of specialized agencies to support them in crafting effective responses.

These efforts led to the adoption of Paragraph 14 (f) of Decision 1 CP/16 of COP 16 held in Cancún in 2010.

Paragraph 14 (f) invites all States parties to enhance action on adaptation under the Cancun Adaptation Framework by undertaking, inter alia, “[m]easures to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate at the national, regional and international levels.”

¹² Final Report Planned Relocation, Disasters and Climate Change: Consolidating Good Practices and Preparing for the Future, 2014, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/54082cc69.html>

¹³ Joint policy brief between the United Nations University, Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and the Nansen Initiative <http://ehs.unu.edu/file/get/11800.pdf>

This landmark decision provides a basis for further action to address displacement prompted by disasters and climate change, and for developing adaptation strategies such as migration and planned relocation.

In 2012 the Doha decision 3/CP.18 paragraph 7 (a) (vi) encouraged “further work to advance the understanding of and expertise on loss and damage, which includes [...] enhancing the understanding of [...] how impacts of climate change are affecting patterns of migration, displacement and human mobility”.

Thanks to these decisions, a first generation of research, policy and advocacy work, as well as operational responses, were developed and initial recommendations identified. Further recognition in the Paris Agreement to be considered at COP 21 in December is now necessary to consolidate existing findings and recommendations, and to provide States with solid tools to guide their work in this area.

Joint work on this issue with a range of important partners is continuing through the Advisory Group on Human Mobility and Climate Change, coordinated by UNHCR – with participation of IOM, UNU-EHS, UNDP, NRC/IDMC, Refugees International, Sciences Po-CERI, and the Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED). The Group shares the most recent available knowledge, provides technical support to UNFCCC Parties and ensures that human mobility is taken into consideration in global climate negotiations. To date, the Group has made a large number of submissions to the UNFCCC, organized events and press conferences, and gained the confidence of climate change stakeholders. See for example the Recommendations from the Advisory Group on Climate Change and Human Mobility COP 21 Paris, France (March 2015).

Such joined-up advocacy has proved its effectiveness. Parties to the UNFCCC now recognize the Advisory Group as a reliable source of expertise and close coordination with the Nansen Initiative Secretariat has contributed to ensuring coherent positions.

In Paris COP 21 it is time for explicit recognition within the UNFCCC that climate change will lead to increased internal and cross-border displacement of people and that therefore human mobility should be included in climate change mitigation and adaptation policies. Climate change-induced displacement is not inevitable and may be mitigated where the right policies (adaptation, facilitated migration, planned relocation, disaster risk reduction) are developed and effectively implemented.

In particular, the Advisory Group strongly encourages States to take measures, including in their National Adaptation Plans, in close consultation with communities at risk of displacement, to prevent and mitigate forced internal and cross-border displacement in the context of climate change by implementing adaptation strategies that support affected populations to remain where they live; strengthening the resilience of communities that have to move or are already displaced, as well as the communities that host them; planning for and facilitating of voluntary internal and cross-border migration as an adaptation strategy; and, as a last adaptation option, planning for consent-based relocation.

Finally the Group advises that, where needed, countries have adequate access to climate change adaptation funding for human mobility related programs and activities.



Pakistan / Earthquake damage / 3. Stunned survivors who have lost everything survey the destruction, Balakot, North West Frontier Province.

© UNHCR / B. Baloch / October 2005

3. HOW IS UNHCR ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE OF ITS PERSONS OF CONCERNS

Given that persons of concern to UNHCR are present in locations that are often referred to as ‘climate change hotspots’ all over the world, its operational engagement on adaptation with populations of concern and communities that host them has been a feature of its work since the late 1990s and has intensified over the last decade. This includes the promotion of: renewable energy sources at UNHCR-run camps, the use of energy-efficient technologies; and promotion of small-scale forestry development. At the Headquarters level, UNHCR has developed a “green fleet policy” and a “green procurement policy” to guide environmentally sensitive procurement of resources.

Humanitarian operations need to consider energy access and environmental management to enhance the well-being and protection of affected populations, and the sustainability of operations. Most refugees rely on their surrounding natural environment for food, water, livelihoods, shelter and fuel. A large population can put substantial pressure on the surrounding resources, with consequences for persons dependent on the environment. Additionally, limited access to sustainable energy can have severe repercussions on the socio-economic situation and safety of refugees.

UNHCR, mandated to protect the rights and well-being of refugees, has implemented measures to address these issues, including providing refugees with fuel-efficient stoves, solar street lighting solar lanterns, and implementing environmental activities such as land rehabilitation. More recently, UNHCR’s engagement in energy, including renewable energy, has expanded and is receiving increasing attention globally. UNHCR has developed its first Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) 2014 – 2018. This will allow UNHCR to have a more comprehensive response to energy issues, applying cutting-edge approaches, ideas and technologies.

3.1 SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

The tragedy of forced displacement can be compounded by environmental degradation. Environmental management is a concern for UNHCR as it directly impacts on the well-being and livelihoods of refugees. It is also relevant in all phases of our work, from emergencies to rehabilitating the environment when a camp or settlement is closed.

Effective environment management can increase the resilience of refugee and host communities. A UNHCR survey in 2015 found refugees and internally displaced persons were exposed to 150 disasters in 16 countries during 2013 and 2014, confirming their vulnerability to disasters associated with natural hazards. Floods, landslides, severe storms, fires and other disasters affected some 380,000 people. One of the main factors of vulnerability is high population density, which often results in rapid environmental degradation, increasing the risks for natural hazards, such as floods.

UNHCR's sustainable environmental management programmes cannot be achieved without the active involvement of refugees and internally displaced persons. To promote and guide these programmes, UNHCR advocates four principles of action:

- 1. Integration** – Ensuring that energy and the environment feature in other related programmes or activities such as site planning, education or sanitation
- 2. Prevention before cure** – Taking action as early as possible to minimize potentially large-scale challenges and irreversible effects
- 3. Cost-effectiveness** – With limited resources at its disposal, UNHCR must always maximize the efficiency of its assistance programmes
- 4. Local participation** – Involving refugees, internally displaced persons and local communities in the development and management of energy programmes and environmental activities is fundamental to creating livelihood opportunities and managing natural resources in a sustainable manner

3.1.1 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

A number of UNHCR operations are confronted with the challenge and consequences of deforestation, particularly as a consequence of droughts or flash floods. UNHCR is collaborating with Governments and partners to promote reforestation and sustainable agriculture in refugee-hosting areas facing deforestation.

UNHCR gives priority to environmental conservation and sustainable natural resource management in its field operations during a camp's existence and following its closure by:

- Strengthening the management and conservation of natural resources, through reforestation, rehabilitation, and land management;
- Promoting sustainable land use, agriculture, and livestock management, leading to more harmonious coexistence with the host community and improved livelihoods;
- Establishing Community Environmental Action Plans to improve environmental management in camps and surrounding areas.

UNHCR is supporting the planting and management of trees in countries in which it operates. Some of the forests that have been established are already providing construction materials, firewood and other resources for the benefit of both displaced people and host communities.

3.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to ensure that its interventions are appropriate, effective, cost-efficient, and maximise impacts, UNHCR promotes the use of environmental management tools in refugee operations, including environmental impact assessments and monitoring.

UNHCR and CARE International developed the Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the Environment in refugee-related operations (FRAME) in 2005.¹⁴ Planned and tested with partners in many countries, FRAME produced tools and guidelines that helped managers and field practitioners to address environmental issues and concerns, from contingency planning to camp closure and rehabilitation. Using lessons learned through the application of FRAME in the last decade, UNHCR is currently updating and revising these tools to address emerging environmental hazards and introduce new response strategies based on the latest science and best practice.

The SAFE Strategy advocates for appropriate measurement to design context-specific energy and reforestation programmes. Additionally, in 2014 – 2015 a robust monitoring and evaluation framework for natural resources management and energy activities will be developed and UNHCR and partner staff trained to use it.

3.1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

In order to build the capacity of UNHCR staff, partners and government counterparts, UNHCR has developed and conducted a number of national and regional environmental management and energy learning workshops. By including counterparts from government departments, such training strengthens local capacity and promotes sustainability.

Similarly, through promoting Community Environmental Management Plans, UNHCR seeks to work with refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities to build awareness on environmental issues. Working closely with communities gives UNHCR a greater understanding of their environmental challenges. This also enables the communities to support the conception, design and implementation of such interventions.

3.1.4 GUIDELINES ON ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

UNHCR regularly updates and disseminates its Environmental Guidelines and other guidance on environmentally sustainable operations, “green” procurement and sustainable consumption and behaviour.

The **UNHCR Environmental Guidelines**, developed in 2005, described the basis for incorporating environmental factors into specific UNHCR guidelines and programmes. Environmental issues are cross-sectoral by nature, and environmental considerations have to be introduced in a consistent and coordinated way into all relevant sectoral activities.¹⁵ These guidelines are also currently being updated.

Building upon the 1997 Environmentally Friendlier Procurement Guidelines, UNHCR began implementing a **Green Procurement Policy** in 2012. The policy aims to ensure that social and environmental factors are combined with financial considerations when making purchasing decisions. “Environmental considerations form part of the evaluation and selection criteria, which could cover, depending on goods and services to be purchased, their manufacture, transport, packaging, use and disposal. UNHCR applies these guidelines not only to purchases, whether by UNHCR or implementing partners, but also to in-kind donations.¹⁶

¹⁴ To learn more on FRAME, please visit : <http://www.unhcr.org/4a97d1039.html>

¹⁵ UNHCR's Environmental Guidelines, 2005, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendocPDFViewer.html?docid=3b03b2a04&query=unhcr%20environmental%20guidelines>

¹⁶ UNHCR's Green Procurement Policy, available at: http://www.cinu.org.mx/negocios/registro_acnur.pdf

Ethiopia, Dollo Ado/
Kobe refugee camp/
Kadija picks up one of
her solar lamps, just
outside of her house.
Kadija is a refugee from
Somalia.

Photo: Petterik Wiggers/
Panos Pictures/ January
2014



3.2 SAFE ACCESS TO FUEL AND ENERGY (SAFE)

Safe and reliable access to energy for cooking, lighting, and powering, is a basic need for everyone. For many refugees, cooking a meal or having light at night is a daily struggle. Without light, refugees cannot walk around safely in the evening and are more likely to be exposed to safety risks such as sexual and gender-based violence. The lack of a sustainable source of energy also results in women spending hours searching for firewood instead of engaging in livelihood, educational, social and other activities. Children who accompany their mothers cannot attend school. Additionally, the use of already scarce resources can result in environmental degradation and tension between refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities.¹⁷ According to a UNHCR survey, the vast majority of refugees in the camps in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda rely on wood for cooking. They spend an average of 31 hours a month on firewood collection. Thirty percent of these refugees reported coming into a conflict with the host community, as a result of these activities.

Through the SAFE Strategy, UNHCR aims to ensure that all refugees are able to satisfy their energy needs for cooking and lighting in a safe and sustainable manner, without fear or risk to their health, well-being and personal security. Given the need to address SAFE in humanitarian operations, and its cross-cutting nature, the SAFE Strategy gives guidance to UNHCR in order to approach energy challenges in a comprehensive manner, using cutting-edge technologies and ideas.

The SAFE Strategy has been rolled out in Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda in 2014, and Djibouti, Nepal, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda in 2015, with more countries to be added from 2016 – 2018. These operations have started pilot programmes, including biogas, solar cookers, and ethanol stoves. Current partnerships will be strengthened, and new ones, particularly with academic institutions and the private sector, will be forged.

¹⁷ UNHCR Global Strategy for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE), 2014 – 2018, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/energystrategy>

3.2.1 ETHANOL FOR COOKING IN ETHIOPIA

Since January 2006, the Gaia Association in Ethiopia has been an implementing partner working to supply ethanol and ethanol stoves to Somali refugees in the three refugee camps in the Jijiga region of Ethiopia. By the end of 2014, the entire three camps, which consist of around 6,000 families, received ethanol stoves. The stoves burn without smoke or soot, are easy to use, highly efficient and affordable to run. They are stable and the fuel is stored safely in a non-spill tank, limiting the risk of fire. They are portable, so refugee women can choose to cook wherever they like in their homes or even outside. The ethanol is procured from a local sugar factory and transported to Kebribeyah and Awbare for distribution to refugees, who receive ethanol based on their family size.

This project has reduced firewood collection, increased security for women and children, improved indoor air quality in refugee homes, freed up time for children to attend school, and has had a positive impact on the natural environment surrounding the camps.

3.2.2 FUEL EFFICIENT STOVES IN CHAD AND IN REFUGEE CAMPS

In 2013, Chad received funding for energy as part of the UNHCR Light Years Ahead initiative. With these funds, the Chad operation was able to procure solar street lights, solar lanterns and set up workshops to produce Afrah stoves. The Afrah stoves are fuel-efficient stoves, made by and distributed to Sudanese refugees in east Chad.

The production of these stoves creates livelihood opportunities for refugees who fabricate them, with 38 refugees already trained and employed in this field. Members of the host community are also taking part in this activity. They have produced a total of 11,646 stoves.

The stoves can reduce protection and safety risks associated with firewood collection. Additionally, this reduces deforestation, preserving the natural resources used for other livelihood opportunities for both the refugee and host communities.

3.2.3 THE IKEA FOUNDATION: BRIGHTER LIVES FOR REFUGEES

The IKEA Foundation has been supporting the work that UNHCR does on renewable energy in providing sustainable access to energy for refugees. The Brighter Lives for Refugees campaign ran in IKEA stores globally from February to March 2014 and in early 2015, raising 18.5 million Euros. It will run again for 3 weeks in December 2015. For every IKEA LEDARE light bulb purchased during the campaign, the IKEA Foundation donates €1 to UNHCR for specific projects on access to education and renewable energy in UNHCR refugee camps in Ethiopia, Chad, Bangladesh, Sudan and Jordan as well as Nepal, Kenya, Burkina Faso and Pakistan.

3.2.4 CARBON FINANCING IN RWANDA

In October 2013, UNHCR engaged in its first carbon financing venture with a climate protection organization in Rwanda. This agreement enabled the distribution of fuel-efficient stoves to refugees in Rwanda, with the aim of addressing the cross-cutting impacts that using harmful cooking fuels and inefficient open fires have on the well-being and protection of refugees.

UNHCR is distributing around 11,000 fuel-efficiency stoves to refugees in Rwanda. The carbon credits generated through this scheme are used to purchase additional fuel-efficient stoves for refugees in Rwanda.

Through the use of carbon reduction certificates, the carbon agreement will support energy access for refugees in Rwanda while also working to mitigate the carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.



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