DISPLACEMENT, CLIMATE AND THE DATA GAP

Climate Training

KIT

For key concepts and terms please refer to Fact Sheets 1, 2 & 3

Key messages:

▶ Good data is essential for understanding and addressing the needs of climate-displaced persons.

▶ While a lot of data is available, there are some significant gaps and inconsistencies which create challenges for developing appropriate laws, policies and programs to prevent and address climate-related displacement.

▶ A number of recommendations have been put forward to improve the quality and consistency of data, including the implementation of a standardised framework for collecting displacement data.

▶ Recommendations are also made for improving displacement data and knowledge management within the IFRC.

One of the significant barriers to addressing issues of climate-related displacement is the lack of consistent and comparable data to fully understand the scale of displacement which is directly or indirectly caused by climate change and to gain a clearer picture of the specific needs this generates. Accurate data at all levels enables the development of better-informed laws, policies and approaches; facilitates prevention, adaptation, preparedness and response measures; and helps to identify and monitor ongoing challenges.

What we know

There a number of data sources which capture, with varying degrees of accuracy, the numbers of people displaced as result of different types of disasters, some of which may be attributed to climate change.

▶ **Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)**: One of the most comprehensive sources of data is managed by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). While the GRID is primarily focussed on situations of internal displacement from sudden-onset hazards, it monitors statistics from 145 countries, tracking the primary causes of displacement (such as the type of hazard or conflict), the numbers of people currently living in situations of protracted displacement and the numbers of new displacements. It also monitors global trends such as rural to urban displacement, as well as policy and operational practices.

▶ **Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)**: Covering locations where IOM is active, the DTM gathers and analyses data to disseminate critical multi-layered information on the mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of displaced and mobile populations. This may cover all types of displacement such as internal, cross-border, disaster and conflict situations.

What we know and don't know

▶ **EM-DAT**: This is the International Disaster Database from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED). It collects and compiles information on disasters from UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, insurance companies, research institutes as well as secondary data from press agencies. EM-DAT data does not include war, conflict or conflict-related famine as disaster events, but may be useful in determining displacement from events which may have a link to climate change.

▶ **IFRC GO**: The IFRC launched the GO platform in 2018 as a publicly available data source that provides information on disasters that have triggered an IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund, emergency appeal or Red Cross Red Crescent Movement-wide appeal. Within this database are operations that are classified as "population movement" and, although there is no systematic tracking, also includes displaced populations as part of other disaster operations.

A more complete list of the data sets used for monitoring disaster displacement is listed in the IDMC's 2019 report **Disaster Displacement: A global review, 2008–2018**.

There are also numerous databases which collect **research reports and other documentation related to climate-related displacement**. While these are qualitative in nature, they have also been used for compiling statistical data or identifying common trends. To list just a few, these include:

▶ **Platform for Disaster Displacement Resources**: Collates research, laws and policies addressing displacement, disasters and climate change, as well as the relationship between disasters, climate change and human mobility more generally.

▶ **The Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Evidence for Policy (MECLEP)**: Project implemented by IOM from 2014–2017 on how migration, including displacement and planned relocation, can benefit adaptation strategies to

environmental and climate change. It involved research (desk reviews, household surveys and qualitative interviews), capacity-building, dialogue and knowledge-sharing activities in six project countries: Dominican Republic, Haiti, Kenya, the Republic of Mauritius, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam.

▶ **Pacific Climate Change and Migration (PCCM**): This includes documentation from a three year project (2013–2016) funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the purpose of: increasing protection of individuals and communities that are vulnerable to climate change displacement and migration through targeted national and regional policies; and increasing labour mobility opportunities for Pacific Islanders, through well-managed labour migration schemes.

▶ **The Environmental Migration Portal**: This is IOM's searchable research database including migration and environmental country assessments including information on key policy processes and developments, capacity-building efforts, research and publications, and operational projects addressing the migration, environment and climate change (MECC) nexus.

▶ **The Helix Project**: An EU-funded collaborative research project assessing the potential impacts of climate change. Scientists from 16 organisations worldwide have worked together to develop a number of future scenarios of the natural and human world as a consequence of 1.5°C, 2°C, 4°C and 6°C global warming. The results are being communicated to decision makers and the public to help understand what kind of climate change impacts to avoid and make adapting to the changing climate more understandable and manageable.

▶ **The CLIMIG database**: A bibliographic database compiled by the Institute of Geography at the University of Neuchatel updated weekly which lists the publications that deal with environment-related migration.

What we know and don't know

What we don't know

There is **no international system** in place to capture comparative data on climate-related displacement. While many countries and organisations are providing data to the best of their ability, there are significant differences in the terms and criteria being used. In particular, many displacement statistics include temporary evacuations, which may distort the true picture of those in need of longer-term assistance to find durable solutions. These challenges are acknowledged in much of the literature of climate-related displacement, including by the IDMC and the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement.

The 'missing' displaced

The IDMC considers that its data on the numbers of people internally displaced by disasters is a significant underestimate. This is because a lot of available information from disaster situations does not specifically capture the numbers of people displaced. Instead this information must be extrapolated from other data such as "affected populations", "destroyed or damaged houses," "evacuees" or "homeless" people.

Who is 'displaced'?

Some data sets do not distinguish 'displacement' (which is usually forced or involuntary) from 'migration' (which is primarily considered voluntary, and is often cross-border). Indeed, these distinctions can be difficult to determine as the reasons for displacement often involve a complex set of factors, which varies from individual to individual. Additionally, as noted in Fact Sheet 2 of this series, there is no consistent terminology: the World Bank for example, uses the term "internal climate migration," whereas others may use terms such as "climate and disaster displacement" or "climate migration" or "climate-related disaster displacement." This makes it difficult to compare reports and data sets to collect consistent information about the specific nexus between climate change and displacement.

Where are they displaced?

Displaced populations are often in a state of flux and as such it is difficult to maintain accurate numbers. Some may remain in one place, perhaps close to their original home; others may experience secondary displacement in multiple locations, including across international borders. While it is relatively easy to collect and monitor data when displaced people are located together in camps or temporary settlements, it is far more challenging to identify displaced people when they are living with friends and family, have rented a property or moved long distances or into an urban area. Thus data sets can be skewed towards displaced people who are 'visible' and leave large numbers of people untracked.

How long have they been displaced?

The needs of displaced people vary significantly depending on whether they are in situations of acute displacement, stable displacement or protracted displacement (see Fact Sheet 3 of this series for more details). Some people may have evacuated temporarily for a matter of hours or days before returning to their homes. They may be displaced for weeks or months while they rebuild their homes or settle elsewhere. Others may be unable to find a durable solution and remain displaced for a decade or more. The data does not often distinguish between these different types of displacement, nor does it use the same criteria, making it difficult to build a complete and consistent picture of the situation.
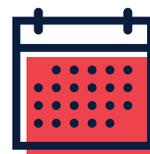
Is the displacement climate-related?

While it is clear that climate change has a significant impact on displacement, the direct causal links between climate change and specific displacements are not always as clear. For example, a typhoon may be far more intense than is usual, but determining whether this is a result of climate change requires a deeper analysis of scientific data.

What can be done?

Similarly the long-term effects of climate change leading to displacement may not be well-documented or are 'hidden' within other datasets on agricultural productivity, inflation, labour markets, poverty demographics, urbanisation and other categories.

Other data gaps and inconsistencies include:

▶ **Disaggregated data** by gender, age, income, people with disabilities and other important information is often missing from disaster and climate-related displacement data.

▶ **Language variances**: Aside from differences in terminology, much of the available data at national and local level is not in the same language and must be translated before it can be integrated in wider data sets, which leaves open the possibility of misinterpretation and makes the process very time consuming.

▶ **Other groups affected** by climate-related displacement, such as host families, host communities and host countries, as well as those people remaining behind, are not often captured in current data.

▶ **Longitudinal data**, which captures information about the same people at different points in time. This is especially useful for understanding the experience of protracted displacement and the barriers for durable solutions.

▶ **Quantitative data**: While significant quantitative data exists for internal displacement for sudden-onset disasters, other situations, such as cross-border disaster displacement and slow-onset climate events, such as sea level rise or drought, have tended to rely more on qualitative data from narrative reports and case studies and lacks reference points for comparison.

▶ **Displacement vs adaptation**: There are times when movement prompted by climate change may be a successful adaptation strategy, and have positive outcomes on people's lives. The data however may still capture this as 'displacement' which assumes the many negative impacts and/or implies a failure of resilience and adaptation measures.

▶ **Future estimates** about potential displacement enable better preparedness and response. Some organisations are already capturing this type of data. For example the IDMC's Disaster Displacement Risk Index enables predictions based on country, disaster type and the number of people currently and expected to live in risk or hazard-prone areas. However, future estimates of displacement are also affected by the success of disaster and climate resilience, preparedness and adaptation efforts, which should also be factored in to ensure greater accuracy.

Sources: PDD (2020). Internal Displacement in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change; IDMC (2019) Disaster Displacement: A Global Review 2008–2018 and UNFCCC (2018) Report of the Taskforce on Displacement.

What can be done?

There have been a number of recent proposals and recommendations for improving the collection of data and knowledge base on disaster displacement, which are also highly relevant in the context of climate-related displacement. Some of these include:

Adopt a standardised framework

▶ In 2020, the UN Statistical Commission endorsed the implementation of the **International Recommendations on IDP Statistics (IRIS)**, These aim to establish an internationally standardised framework to translate internal displacement and solutions into a measurable statistical concept that helps to strengthen evidence to inform public policy and national responses in the long-term.

▶ Such a framework requires collaboration between governments, humanitarian and advocacy bodies to collect data using an agreed methodology, which includes needs and impacts of climate-related disaster displacement. Consistent and quantifiable data makes for more effective decision making and support for displaced people.

What can be done?

Increase collection of disaggregated data

▶ Data, including on displacement, should be disaggregated according to gender, age, and disability as part of DRR assessments and preparedness activities, climate change adaptation efforts, as well as development interventions.

Holistic data

▶ Analyse the situation of displacement as a whole, including not only displaced persons but other displacement-affected groups. This should include locations where people are seeking refuge such as the type of accommodation and living arrangements, whether they are in evacuation centres, renting a home or staying with friends, family or host communities.

Durable solutions analysis

▶ Conduct comprehensive durable solutions analyses, adapted to the local and country context, to inform effective responses.

Increase longitudinal data

▶ Increase the capture of longitudinal data of displaced populations to assess progress in achieving durable solutions and to inform future efforts. This will assist in identifying long-term migration and displacement trends.

Local engagement in data collection

▶ Data should be collected at the lowest administrative level possible, and include local people in the development and planning of data capture activities, as well as encouraging ownership and understanding of its impact, to improve the quality and relevance of data.

Mobility decisions, triggers and drivers

▶ Develop data capture measures that provide insight into understanding mobility decisions, triggers and drivers. For example, using a ranking scale to allow displaced people to indicate the extent to which each factor influenced their decision-making. This would also give better insight into motivations based around culture, identity or specific needs leading to more effective and context-specific assistance.

This type of data would also reinforce resilience efforts and support people in moving either reactively or pre-emptively in response to climate events.

Use of technology

▶ Data collection should include the better use of technology such as satellite imagery and mobile phones and social media.

Tracking movement in response to slow-onset hazards

▶ Greater investment is needed to systematically record pre-emptive evacuations, spontaneous and planned movements, planned relocations and returns which take place before, during and after slow-onset hazards such as drought.

Sources: PDD (2020). Internal Displacement in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change; IDMC (2019) Disaster Displacement: A Global Review 2008–2018 and UNFCCC (2018) Report of the Taskforce on Displacement.

Displacement data and the IFRC

A recent report on **Strengthening IFRC Responses to Internal Displacement in Disasters: Challenges and Opportunities** considered among other topics, the challenges of data and knowledge management in the context of displacement. While the focus of the report was on internal displacement, the findings and recommendations are equally applicable to climate-related displacement more generally. Some of the findings included:

▶ A lack of consistency in capturing data on displacement as part of Emergency Appeals, including disaggregating information on host families, rural and urban contexts and those in settlements other than camps.

▶ Some of the current data collection, planning and monitoring tools used for resilience and preparedness programs do not adequately capture displacement risks.

Displacement data and the IFRC

▶ A balance must be found between creating data collection systems which are overly complex and burdensome, versus the need to collect adequate and consistent data to enable analysis and effective response to displacement.

The recommendations included:

▶ Conducting further consultations on opportunities to systematically integrate internal displacement into emergency and programme data collection tools.

▶ Reviewing criteria, terminology and example indicators on displacement to support Emergency Appeal preparation and programming.

▶ Integrating displacement considerations into key IFRC guidance and tools for resilience and DRR.

▶ Conducting a knowledge, attitude and practice baseline mapping across IFRC and National Societies, to document comparative progress, to be undertaken every 3–5 years.

References and further reading

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