

Understanding Climate-Forced Displacement

What Is Climate-Forced Displacement?

- Climate-forced displacement reflects the spectrum of climate change-induced events that diminishes a person's ability to protect themselves or to sustain their livelihoods, culture, and way of life, and the forced nature by which an affected person is displaced and/or relocated
- Is caused by rapid climate change-induced events like floods and hurricanes or by slow-onset events like rising sea levels, droughts, and melting permafrost
- Can be permanent or temporary, occur within a country or beyond borders, planned or spontaneous
- People who are forcibly displaced by climate change do not self-identify as "climate refugees" and are not offered the legal protections of refugee status

The Physical, Social, and Economic Threats of Climate-Forced Displacement

- Climate-forced displacement threatens the rights and human dignities of communities and individuals at risk (health, water, housing, education, cultural practice, freedom of movement, etc.)
- While loss of jobs and social cohesion due to climate change impacts may force communities to leave, access to jobs and the ability of communities to maintain their social cohesion are amongst the factors that help communities decide where they can resettle
- Currently, there are no dedicated climate funds earmarked to help communities relocate or to compensate for the loss and damage they've experienced
- When communities are forced to relocate, the costs are typically financed through local initiatives (federal, state, arrangements between two countries, or through community-based revenue)

By The Numbers

25.3 M

Average number of people per year that have been forcibly displaced since 2008 due to natural, rapid-onset disasters alone

200 M

Estimated number of environmental migrants in the world by 2050

Data on the numbers of people impacted by slow-onset climate impacts is hard to find



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Key Strategies to Address Climate-Forced Displacement

- The right to self-determination must be upheld and respected. This means that community decisions to build protections in place and relocate are centered in decision-making
- States most responsible for carbon emissions must pay for their contributions, and states that access these funds must ensure that those who are directly affected have equitable access and are meaningfully engaged in decision-making processes
- States must fulfill their responsibility to uphold the rights of people who are at risk. A variety of international treaties and principles offer guidance on protecting their rights
- Vulnerable countries should consider existing international frameworks to help them develop equitable and rights-based strategies to address climate-forced displacement.

These include:

UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States

Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

UN Declaration on Human Rights

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures (includes several relevant thematic mandates)

Platform on Disaster Displacement

UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

UN Migrant Worker Convention

State-based humanitarian policies

An Example of
Climate-Forced
Displacement

Carteret Islands

Papua New Guinea

About

2,000

villagers being forced to relocate due to the ongoing impacts of sea level rise

2005

Year the Carterets decided to manage their own relocation to mainland Bougainville. Some villagers have relocated, while some still remain on the islands

13

Years passed since this community decided to relocate. Still working to secure land and financial resources to help the rest of their community relocate



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