

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

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IOM'S COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO DISASTER DISPLACEMENT

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Introduction

1. The international community is at a critical juncture in its endeavor to address displacement. The challenges are complex and multifaceted. IOM has been at the forefront of efforts to address disaster displacement for almost two decades, and its work has yielded significant achievements.
2. As the global leader on disaster displacement management within the United Nations humanitarian coordination system (through the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Global Cluster and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee) and through the support that it has provided to States, IOM has played a crucial role in establishing coherence and ensuring engagement with regard to key processes aimed at improving the way in which displacement is addressed. These include the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, the Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the decisions and bodies of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP), such as the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts and its Task Force on Displacement, of which IOM is a designated expert member.
3. This paper builds on the decades-long commitment of IOM to the field of disaster displacement. It highlights the Organization's comprehensive approach to achieving qualitative improvements with a view to preventing, minimizing and addressing situations of disaster displacement, while offering sustainable solutions to internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Definition of disaster displacement

IOM defines disaster displacement as the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to leave their homes or places of habitual residence because of a disaster or in order to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard. IOM believes that displacement caused by disasters can be considered a type of environmental migration.

Why is this approach relevant today?

4. The prevalence and severity of disasters, both those related to the climate or the environment and those caused by humans, have led to large-scale internal displacement and migration across the globe. In 2022 alone, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre identified 32.6 million displacements as a result of disasters, of which 716'000 were driven by geophysical hazards and 31.8 million were weather-related. According to the [report](#) on the human cost of disasters issued by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) in 2020, over the last 20 years, the number of climate-related disasters has doubled, with affected individuals increasingly found in countries that already have a humanitarian response plan in place.
5. Furthermore, climate change has exacerbated – and will continue to exacerbate – hazards and disasters. It can also hinder the ability of individuals to migrate or can render them immobile or trapped. In its [2022 report on climate change](#), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlighted that, in the coming decades, some people and communities may remain vulnerable to the impacts of climate change if they are unable or unwilling to move away.
6. Natural hazards, such as floods, cyclones and droughts, are predicted to increase in the near future owing to the worsening effects of climate change. In 2022, multiple large-scale disasters

occurred, including drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, floods in Pakistan and more intense cyclones in Bangladesh and the Philippines. These events resulted in millions of people being displaced. In its updated *Groundswell Report*, issued in 2021, the World Bank noted that, without decisive climate action, more than 216 million people could be forced to relocate by 2050, with many of them potentially becoming internally displaced.

IOM's approach to disaster displacement

7. The IOM approach to addressing disaster displacement is based on the understanding that no disaster is natural;¹ rather, disasters are socioeconomic phenomena resulting from the impact of natural hazards on human populations and settlements, which can lead to displacement. The intensity and scale of disasters and the corresponding displacement are an expression of the dynamic interaction of human vulnerabilities and the built environment – including infrastructure – with different hazards, such as floods, earthquakes, droughts and cyclones. This perspective is widely embraced by scientists and technical experts from IOM, UNDRR and other organizations in their efforts to save lives and prevent loss and damage.

8. IOM takes a holistic approach to addressing displacement, which is implemented through a wide range of interventions that encompass preparedness, humanitarian response and sustainable development with a view to achieving sustainable solutions. IOM also brings its extensive migration and mobility expertise and experience to its comprehensive approach to disaster displacement. As IOM addresses the full spectrum of mobility, including forced, voluntary, internal and cross-border mobility, it is able to offer insights on the interlinkages between these different forms of movement as part of the policy advice and operational support that it delivers to help prevent, minimize and resolve disaster displacement.

9. IOM recognizes that States hold the primary responsibility for addressing disaster-induced displacement; they must therefore be at the forefront of action to avert, minimize and address the phenomenon and to find sustainable solutions. To help States fulfil that leadership role, IOM provides both policy and operational support through an evidence-based, holistic and people-centred approach which aims to address the various factors that contribute to and result from displacement and seeks to promote the well-being and dignity of those affected by displacement.

10. Policy engagement with governments, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and affected communities is a key part of IOM efforts to address displacement. This includes activities to help governments, including local authorities, design and implement comprehensive, coherent and evidence- and rights-based policies to advance good migration governance. Another crucial aspect is the provision of support with a view to integrating displacement and broader mobility issues into national strategies for disaster risk reduction and adaptation, as well as into development policies. This work plays a critical catalytic role in minimizing loss of life and human suffering, and it lays the foundation for sustainable solutions.

11. To be effective, these plans and policies need to be combined with adequate investment in the collection and analysis of data in order to ensure that they are developed and implemented on the basis of evidence. Sound preparedness and response measures must be included, including early warning systems, pre-emptive evacuation plans and mechanisms for the provision of humanitarian assistance, such as shelter, water, sanitation and health care. The participation of displaced persons in broader development programming and existing social protection systems is also key.

¹ According to UNDRR, a natural hazard becomes a disaster when it combines with exposure and vulnerability to cause injuries and loss of life, in addition to economic losses.

12. Strong partnerships are integral to the work of IOM. They require coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders, including civil society groups, humanitarian organizations, local communities and, most importantly, the populations affected by displacement. Throughout the entire displacement cycle, IOM remains committed to ensuring that its actions are responsive to the needs of communities and respectful of their dignity.

13. A key underlying tenet of the IOM approach is the need to protect the rights of displaced people, empower them to participate in decisions that affect their lives, help them claim their rights and equip them with the resources and galvanizing agency to drive long-term recovery processes. To achieve this, IOM applies the principle of accountability to affected populations, including through the use of its community-based planning approach, which empowers local governments and civil society leaders to take the lead on conducting inclusive assessments and implementing planning, recovery and resilience-strengthening processes. Through this approach, community assessments and profiles are developed to identify underlying drivers of displacement, such as poverty, inequality and lack of access to basic services and infrastructure. Community-driven interventions are then established to address those issues by promoting long-term, sustainable solutions to displacement while also reducing the risk of future disasters, including by enhancing protections, strengthening health services and providing safer shelter and diversified livelihood opportunities.

14. IOM is also actively engaged in awareness-raising and advocacy efforts. It brings evidence and experience to the table in regional and global dialogues to ensure the adequate reflection of displacement issues and the acknowledgment and inclusion of the needs of displaced persons.

15. A key element of this approach is the collection, management and analysis of high-quality data. IOM is constantly developing and strengthening its data collection processes, monitoring systems and, increasingly, forecasting capacities in order to better anticipate and understand the scope and nature of disaster displacement. Information gathered through these tools can then be used to inform decision-making, programme design and advocacy efforts.

16. Throughout all phases of displacement, IOM gathers comprehensive data – disaggregated by age, culture, socioeconomic status and other factors – and performs analyses of humanitarian needs and structural vulnerabilities in order to develop a vision of collective outcomes that takes into account the wide range of vulnerabilities experienced by displaced groups. IOM is thus able to develop tailored interventions that respond to the specific needs of displaced populations by promoting resilience and facilitating recovery.

Achievements and key learning at the operational level

17. IOM has a direct operational presence on the ground, working hand in hand with communities and governments, notably through its camp coordination and camp management activities, which play a crucial role in ensuring that responses to disaster displacement are dignified, comprehensive and sustainable. These interventions encompass a wide range of activities, including obtaining and disseminating information on risks and mitigation, supporting contingency planning for essential services during shocks, facilitating infrastructural upgrades and serving as a liaison for specialized services in affected communities.

18. Investment in prevention and in supporting the development of preparedness or anticipatory action plans by local authorities is an important component of the IOM approach to disaster displacement. Not only do such activities provide for a more effective, coordinated response to protection risks, but they also enable potential solutions to be explored, with communities, before crises occur. This can increase the impact of interventions and reduce the length of displacement. Preparing for displacement allows for trust and partnerships to be built and formed over time and for

clear and agreed-upon roles and responsibilities to be allocated among stakeholders. IOM has strengthened its capacity to prepare for and support communities' resilience to shocks, notably through the development of the [Guidance Note on Preparedness for Emergency Response in IOM](#) and an emergency preparedness toolkit that includes step-by-step guidance on community-based disaster preparedness.

19. The IOM crisis response is guided by a people-centred, multidisciplinary approach, with a focus on addressing people's needs, empowering people to exercise their rights, reducing the vulnerability of displaced communities and incorporating the perspectives of displaced populations into national and local preparedness, recovery, development and resilience plans. IOM also plays a crucial role in helping Member States strengthen critical systems, such as health care. This includes activities to ensure that health systems are prepared to handle increased displacement; are responsive to the needs of migrant, mobile and displaced populations; and can effectively address public health concerns across the entire mobility continuum.

20. Drawing on its many years of experience, IOM has developed and refined a number of integrated, multilayer, area-based programming approaches in order to effectively address the diverse needs of populations impacted by disaster displacement. Following the devastating floods of 2022 in Pakistan, for example, IOM played a leading role in coordinating the shelter sector and the housing and settlements recovery working group. Through close collaboration with partner organizations, IOM was able to develop recommendations that formed the basis of a comprehensive reconstruction strategy, which prioritized resilience and sustainability in the face of ongoing climate challenges and the future risk of flooding.

21. Changes in the hydrological cycle caused by climate change have a direct impact on the quality and quantity of water resources, which can jeopardize public health. In response, IOM has oriented its water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes to prioritize adaptable and climate-resilient infrastructure and services with a view to mitigating the impact of disasters. For instance, in Yemen, IOM responded to the severe water scarcity by conducting a comprehensive analysis of groundwater in the Marib basin, in coordination with the local water authority. This analysis was used to guide not only WASH interventions but also capacity-building for local authorities, by providing a road map of recommendations for developing a comprehensive and sustainable resource management strategy while at the same time ensuring access to water for host communities and internally displaced populations.

22. Last but not least, an understanding of the vulnerabilities and needs of affected populations is crucial if humanitarian responses and disaster risk reduction efforts are to be effective. The IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix provides key data and tools to help inform the responses of governments and field responders. In 2021, for example, a [drought-related displacement analysis for Somalia](#) was issued, which utilized drought-related and displacement data collected since 2017 to inform preparedness measures and disaster risk reduction planning. The analysis helped anticipate and identify potential hotspots for displacement, thereby proactively guiding response efforts.

Achievements and key lessons learned in efforts to strengthen governments' capacities

23. IOM recognizes that its work in addressing disaster displacement must go beyond the operational response to also include consistent and purposeful capacity-building and policy work. Drawing on its operational experience and expertise, IOM has played a critical role in shaping policy conversations at national, regional and global levels to ensure that displacement concerns and solutions are integrated into disaster risk reduction strategies, training, policies, national adaptation plans and other relevant frameworks.

IOM support for national and local authorities

One of the key elements of the Organization's work to address the impact and repercussions of disaster displacement is its global leadership role within the CCCM Global Cluster. As a co-lead, IOM works closely with national and local authorities to support the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs, the planning of evacuation measures and the coordination and management of displacement sites and to promote early discussions on the closure of displacement sites and the achievement of durable solutions.

24. The *Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster* have become a cornerstone of IOM efforts to raise awareness, advocate action, build capacities and enhance preparedness with regard to inclusive disaster risk reduction and emergency planning at local and national levels. The Guidelines continue to provide a valuable reference for policymakers and practitioners working on migration and disaster management.

25. Over the past decade, IOM has provided tailored and localized training for governments and local stakeholders in countries such as Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand and in various countries in Southern Africa and Latin America, as well as for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management. This capacity-building work has resulted in the integration of displacement management education into various curricula and stand-alone training courses at national and regional levels.

26. In the context of disaster displacement, addressing housing, land and property issues and securing investment in the social safety net are critical, as the failure to do so severely disrupts individuals' resilience and their ability to exercise their right to adequate housing – including the right to security of tenure – both during displacement and in the pursuit of durable solutions. In addition to providing operational support in disaster-affected areas, IOM has facilitated capacity-building on housing, land and property issues for the Global Shelter Cluster and has developed resources for cluster partners.

27. Lastly, two key elements of the support provided by IOM to States in addressing disaster displacement are its activities to leverage national adaptation plans and to encourage the use of the Migration Governance Indicators. By using these indicators and integrating displacement prevention measures into national adaptation plans, governments can prioritize investments in infrastructure, early warning systems and other interventions that reduce the risk of displacement and protect communities from the impact of disasters. Additionally, national adaptation plans can be used to help coordinate efforts across sectors and stakeholders in order to ensure a comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction and displacement prevention.

Conclusion and next steps

28. In summary, the comprehensive approach taken by IOM to disaster management comprises critical steps to reduce the negative impacts of disasters on vulnerable populations and promote more resilient and sustainable communities. Promoting greater integration between different modalities of intervention across the various phases of the displacement cycle is a key institutional commitment in support of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. With its long-standing operational expertise, evidence-based approach and strategic partnerships, IOM continues to lead the way in implementing effective disaster response and climate adaptation measures, by highlighting the critical role of data and innovative solutions in safeguarding the well-being of vulnerable populations in the face of environmental crises.

Recommendations for Member States

- Ensure that the multiple dimensions of disaster displacement are addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. To comply with the spirit of the Sendai Framework and Objective 2 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and to fulfil the mandate of IOM within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee system, it is crucial that States address the full spectrum of the impacts of environmental degradation, disasters and climate change. IOM is eager to collaborate with Member States to explore ways to implement best practices and tackle challenges related to environmental migration, in areas such as migration pathways, structural prevention and preparedness measures, and early actions for responding to displacement. IOM believes in saving lives and in empowering and informing individuals and communities to make choices about their mobility in the context of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters.
- Invest time and effort in mainstreaming environmental migration considerations – namely, the strengthening of migration pathways and the foreseeable rise in disaster displacement associated with the impacts of climate change– into national adaptation plans and across a wide range of policy areas related to climate, disaster response, migration and sustainable development.

Recommendations for IOM

- Contribute to efforts to strengthen and coordinate policy, notably by finalizing the draft technical guidance on mainstreaming human mobility into national adaptation plans and by submitting that guidance to the Task Force on Displacement under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts; and strengthening the data set for the Migration Governance Indicators by incorporating a comprehensive outlook on displacement considerations and solutions.
- Continue to scale up disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction efforts, including early warning systems and the anticipatory action frameworks of the Central Emergency Response Fund. This should include activities to increase Member States' capacities to manage displacements and mass movements, such as through the implementation of robust systems of data collection, analysis and forecasting; the introduction of effective displacement management protocols and systems; the strengthening of situational analysis capacities through inter-agency country diagnostics; the analysis of gaps in early warning systems; and the development and enhancement of national guidelines on pre-emptive evacuation and permanent relocation measures.
- Support the work of the Transitional Committee – which was established by COP27 – to identify new, streamlined funding arrangements for loss and damage in which displacement is included. For example, data collected from the scaled-up deployment of the disaster displacement indicators developed by IOM and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the reporting of disaster displacement impacts to the new disaster accounting system developed by UNDRR, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Meteorological Organization could be used to inform decision-making by, among others, the Transitional Committee and the Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.
- Expand research and engagement with national partners on social protection systems, social safety nets, inclusive policies and frameworks and social cohesion to ensure that displaced populations are able to access and benefit from multisectoral services.

- Build on the progress made by ensuring that a multisectoral approach is used across all phases of the displacement cycle, including preparedness, humanitarian response, development and disaster risk reduction. IOM is committed to assist in the building of resilience and in promoting adaptation strategies to avert, minimize and address disaster displacement and other forms of climate-induced human mobility. This will ensure that populations affected by, or at risk of, displacement are protected, prepared and resilient in the face of the growing threats caused by climate change.