



MIGRATION, RISK AND RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF SUDDEN AND SLOW-ONSET DISASTER

Building upon the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted on 19 September 2016, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) will set out a range of principles, commitments and understandings among Member States regarding international migration in all its dimensions. The GCM should make an important contribution to global governance and enhance coordination on international migration. For the consideration of Member States, the “Thematic Papers”, developed by IOM, outline core topics and suggestions to inform actors involved in the 2017 consultation process that will lead to the inter-governmental negotiations and final adoption of the GCM.

INTRODUCTION

An average of 25.4 million people per year were displaced by disasters¹ triggered by natural hazards in the period 2008-2015.² The impacts of such hazards are increasingly magnified by climatic and environmental change factors, and by the compounding effects of fast-paced urbanization, population growth and rising inequalities. Amongst the direct human and economic costs borne by affected communities and countries, disasters frequently result in large-scale population movements which can lead to reduced access to essential services and livelihood options, and increased exposure to violence, poverty and insecurity for both the displaced populations and their host communities.

Disasters and environmental degradation also threaten to reverse development gains and hamper progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. As environmental degradation and climate change are expected to increase the frequency and intensity of sudden-onset hazards, and to worsen the impacts of slow-onset hazards, the implications with respect to human mobility are projected to be significant.³

It is because of this that migration, including displacement, is principally understood as a negative impact that can give rise to new risks and vulnerabilities for people on the move. While this can and is often the case, migration should also be seen as a means to reduce risk and promote resilience, and to address the conditions of extreme vulnerability associated with populations who are unable to move out of harm’s way.

The GCM should therefore support migration, disaster risk reduction and resilience⁴ strategies taking into account two particular objectives. First, to adopt disaster risk reduction as a strategy to support broader efforts to address the drivers and mitigate the impacts of unmanaged, large-scale migration, including displacement. Second, to recognize migration as a fundamental human process that can increase risk but that can also support adaptation and resilience in contexts of sudden or slow-onset disaster, whether natural or man-made.



EXISTING PRINCIPLES

Agreed in March 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) outlines global commitments to reduce risk and promote resilience. It is the first global agreement on disaster risk reduction to incorporate clear references to migration and displacement. It not only recognizes the centrality of displacement in the disaster risk reduction context, but also clearly acknowledges the role of migrants in supporting prevention, preparedness, response and recovery and in promoting resilience.

The Sendai Framework calls for focused investments within and across sectors by States at local, national, regional and global levels in the following four priority areas:



The need to build resilience to disaster is a central theme in a number of subsequent international processes and agreements. The 2030 Agenda, also adopted in 2015, recognizes and reaffirms the urgent need to reduce the risk of disasters as part of its commitment “to leave no one behind”. It also acknowledges that shocks and stresses can reverse years of development gains and efforts to eradicate poverty by 2030. The 2030 Agenda makes direct references to the Sendai Framework and outlines 25 specific targets related to disaster risk reduction and resilience in 10 of the 17 SDGs, with the following core target on resilience:

*‘By 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters’.*⁵

As an outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016, the biggest donors and aid providers signed up to the Grand Bargain which commits to “significantly increase prevention, mitigation and preparedness for early action to anticipate and secure resources for recovery”.⁶ Further, the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD),⁷ launched on occasion of the WHS, seeks to address the protection needs of people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change. In particular, the PDD will follow-up on the work started by the Nansen Initiative,⁸ in particular to implement the recommendations of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, a toolbox to better prevent and prepare for displacement and to respond to situations when people are forced by disasters to find refuge, within their own country or across the border. Also of significance, the New Urban Agenda,⁹ agreed in Quito in October 2016, commits to strengthening resilience in cities by implementing better urban planning, quality infrastructure and improving local responses.¹⁰



The Sendai Framework also calls on the UN system to support the implementation of these priorities coherently with the 2030 Agenda and other relevant international agreements. This led to the creation of the UN Plan of Action on Disaster Reduction for Resilience (UN Plan of Action),¹¹ which provides the UN system with a common framework to strengthen system-wide coherence; build UN system capacity to deliver coordinated, high-quality support to countries on disaster risk reduction; and, ensure that disaster risk reduction remains a priority for UN organizations.

ISSUES

Understanding migration risk and resilience in the context of disaster

Effective disaster risk reduction policy and practice can make a vital contribution to helping at-risk populations prevent, mitigate or adapt to disaster-related risks that otherwise can result in large-scale unmanaged migration, and that make migration, including displacement, a necessity. Such policy and practice also includes improving the capacity of States and vulnerable societies to anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impacts of disaster through strengthened preparedness to adverse events and through fostering resilience by building back better in recovery and reconstruction.

Migration is of central relevance for disaster risk reduction.¹² The ability of at-risk populations to make timely and strategic choices to move on a temporary, longer-term or circular basis before, during and after a sudden or slow-onset disaster will to a large degree determine their level of resilience to its impact. For example, while unmanaged, large-scale migration often generates new sets of personal risks and vulnerabilities, planned and well-organized movement of individuals has the potential to help people preserve and access resources to cope and recover in the face of adversity. Whether undertaken through organized evacuation assistance, a planned Government relocation programme, or traditional migratory patterns, safe and orderly movement of individuals can be essential in helping people protect life and assets, access assistance and livelihood opportunities and progressively return to normalcy as conditions allow.

Although issues of displacement and migration are now more comprehensively reflected across key international agreements and frameworks relevant to disaster risk reduction, such as the Sendai Framework, the subsequent incorporation of risk reduction elements into national development planning and programming within and across sectors is still far from systematic.¹³ In addition, more can be done by States to facilitate the inclusion of migrants in disaster risk reduction planning, as well as to recognize and harness the potential benefits of migration as a means to anticipate, cope with and recover from sudden and slow onset disaster. This would also require more concerted efforts to integrate mobility elements into dedicated risk reduction strategies and programmes at national and sub-national levels.

Furthermore, as another constraining factor, donors and operational agencies typically separate humanitarian and development work, which has resulted in sometimes fragmented approaches to reducing risk, with programming often operating based on different planning cycles. Taken together, these factors are a barrier for more integrated, impactful approaches that are crucial to sustainably reducing risk and associated displacement. Steps are being taken to bridge the “humanitarian-development divide”, with the aim of achieving greater interoperability between humanitarian and development actors, including in efforts to reduce disaster risk. Nonetheless, a continued lack of coordination between the two communities of practice will, if not concertedly addressed, continue to



limit the effectiveness of current disaster risk reduction efforts and hinder the development of new approaches to mobility in the context of disaster risk.

SUGGESTED ACTION

In light of the impacts that sudden and slow-onset disasters have on contemporary migration dynamics, including displacement, and given the existing gaps and challenges outlined above, the following suggested actions should be considered as part of the development of the GCM. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with those of the following IOM thematic papers: (a) Addressing the Situations of Migrants in Countries in Crisis; and (b) Migrants and Migration Policy in the Context of the Adverse Effects of Climate Change and Environmental Degradation.

- 1) Invest in risk analysis and disaster prevention.** It is recommended that the GCM includes effective risk reduction measures that reduce existing risk exposure of people to disaster-induced displacement and prevent future risk. Such measures should include undertaking more systematic analyses of existing hazards, vulnerabilities and exposure as a basis for designing effective disaster risk reduction and management responses at the local level, focusing, in particular, on disaster-prone and fragile country contexts, as well as on approaches that are inclusive of international migrants and other marginalized groups. Measures should also include ‘risk-proofing’ housing, settlements and critical infrastructure; supporting diversified and resilient livelihoods that may adopt mobility strategies; promoting national and sub-national initiatives to develop early warning capacity and associated systems needed to generate and disseminate timely and meaningful warning information, as well as providing appropriate planned relocation assistance in the absence of feasible in situ risk reduction options.¹⁴
- 2) Develop disaster risk reduction policies,** strategies and plans that recognize displacement as a core dimension of disaster risk, while harnessing the potential benefits of migration in reducing risk and building resilience; support specific initiatives to strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms for risk reduction that amplify the voice of migrants and diaspora, civil-society, the private sector, as well as women, youth and other vulnerable groups.
- 3) Improve capacity to anticipate,** respond to, and recover from the impacts of disaster-induced displacement through strengthened disaster preparedness. The GCM should incorporate commitments to ensuring the delivery of rapid, effective and risk-sensitive emergency assistance in the event of disaster-induced displacement. Such commitments will require more systematic investments in contingency planning, pre-positioning of relief supplies, arrangements for coordination, evacuation and risk education, and associated training and field exercises. Of central importance will be strengthened capacities to manage displacement flows following disaster events, including by enhancing Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) capacities of Member States, and improving mobility data collection and analysis capabilities in line with international standards and best practice.¹⁵
- 4) Ensure the inclusion of international migrants** in disaster preparedness for response and recovery action, in line with the recommendations and guidelines produced by the Migrants in Countries in Crisis Initiative (MICIC).¹⁶ The GCM should also reflect the need for improved national-level capacities to conduct mass evacuations that adhere to international standards and principles.¹⁷ The GCM should incorporate clear commitments to improve preparedness and response capacities to



address cross-border disaster displacement, in line with the Protection Agenda of the Nansen Initiative.

5) Improving disaster resilience in recovery and reconstruction. As recovery typically begins in the immediate aftermath of disaster, driven by the efforts of the affected communities themselves, recovery strategies oftentimes reproduce risk conditions that had precipitated displacement in the first place. As a core principle, the GCM should incorporate commitments to invest early in strengthening the resilience of recovering societies to withstand future sudden and slow onset disasters and associated movement pressures. Such support will require that shelter, housing, public infrastructure and services restoration investments are planned in a risk-informed manner. ‘Building Back Better’ should also consider mobility and migration as part of livelihood regeneration strategies, and incorporate such strategies within wider community-based disaster risk management initiatives to reduce livelihood vulnerability and foster resilience.

¹ Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016, IDMC and NRC, 2016..

² A **“hazard”** can be defined as “a process, phenomenon or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, social and economic disruption or environmental degradation”. A **“natural hazard”** can be understood as a hazard that is geophysical (e.g. earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic activity), hydrological (e.g. avalanches and floods), climatological (e.g. extreme temperatures, drought and wildfires), meteorological (e.g. cyclones and storms) or biological (e.g. disease epidemics and insect/animal plagues). Furthermore, a **“disaster”** can be defined as “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts”. Report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction, UN, 2016; The International Disaster Database, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED).

³ A **“slow-onset disaster”** can be defined as one that emerges gradually over time and that could be associated with, for example, drought, desertification, sea-level rise or epidemic disease. A **“sudden onset disaster”** is one triggered by a hazardous event that emerges quickly or unexpectedly and could be associated with, e.g., earthquake, volcanic eruption, flash flood, chemical explosion, critical infrastructure failure or transport accident. Report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction, UN, 2016.

⁴ Disaster risk reduction is focused on ‘preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development’. Closely related to disaster risk reduction is the concept of resilience, which constitutes: ‘the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management’. See United Nations, *Report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology relating to disaster risk reduction*, (New York, 2016).

⁵ Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (target 1.5), UN, 2015.

⁶ The Grand Bargain - A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, 2016.

⁷ A State-led process addressing the protection needs of people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change. The main objective of the PDD is to follow-up on the work started by the Nansen Initiative consultative process, and to implement the recommendations of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, endorsed by 109 governmental delegations during a Global Consultation in October 2015, <http://disasterdisplacement.org/>.

⁸ Launched in 2012 by Switzerland and Norway, the Nansen Initiative was a State-led consultative process to build consensus on a Protection Agenda addressing the needs of people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change, <https://www.nanseninitiative.org/>.



⁹ The New Urban Agenda aims to set global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities through drawing together cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors at all levels of government as well as the private sector.

¹⁰ Risk and resilience are also prominent themes in the Rio+20 outcome document, the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

¹¹ Full name: UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience: Towards a Risk-informed and Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development. The updated plan was adopted by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in 2016.

¹² Human Mobility in a Socio-Environmental Context: Complex Effects on Environmental Risk, L. Guadagno / IOM, 2017.

¹³ Disasters Derail Development. So why aren't we doing more about them? How better incentives could help overcome barriers to disaster risk reduction in development programming. Background paper prepared for the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015. UNISDR / OECD, 2014.

¹⁴ The Sendai Framework highlights the need for national and local authorities to “formulate public policies, where applicable, aimed at addressing the issues of prevention or relocation, where possible, of human settlements in disaster risk zones, subject to national law and legal systems.”

¹⁵ Mobility data collection and analysis capacities will allow authorities to better understand the evolving needs of migrants, including displaced populations on site or en route, as basis for tailoring appropriate response and recovery interventions.

¹⁶ MICIC is a government-led, multi-stakeholder consultative initiative to improve responses for migrants in countries experiencing conflict or natural disaster. The MICIC Initiative has produced voluntary and non-binding guidelines to protect migrants in countries experiencing conflict or natural disaster.

¹⁷ For example, the Comprehensive Guide for Planning Mass Evacuations in Natural Disasters (“the MEND Guide”) produced by the CCCM Cluster. The Guide serves as a key reference to assist planning bodies at national, regional, municipal, and other levels – both urban and rural – in the development and/or refinement of evacuation plans in accordance with emergency management principles.