



# Platform on Disaster Displacement

## Update on Progress since the World Humanitarian Summit

### Executive Summary:

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The [Platform on Disaster Displacement](#) (PDD) was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 as a successor of the Nansen Initiative. It is a state-led and multi-stakeholder driven initiative aiming at providing greater protection to people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change.

The platform's main goal is to help states implement the [Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda](#), which was endorsed by over 100 governmental delegations during a global consultation in October 2015. The Protection Agenda is a toolbox for states to better prevent and prepare for displacement before a disaster strikes, as well as to better respond to situations when people are forced to find refuge, either within their own country or across an international border.

People who are forced to cross a border in the context of a disaster and the effects of climate change have limited protection when they arrive in another country. Rather than calling for a new binding international convention on cross-border disaster-displacement, PDD supports an approach that focuses on the integration of effective practices by states and (sub-)regional organizations into their own normative frameworks in accordance with their specific situations.

[Disaster displacement](#) is an issue that cuts across various sectors of work and policy areas and is often a reflection of development failures. For this reason, PDD brings together a multiplicity of actors, including states, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia to jointly advance on addressing the protection needs of people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change. There are however remaining gaps, particularly on data and knowledge, protection measures, institutional and operational mandates, and funding sources. Beyond the PDD steering group and advisory committee, more champions from humanitarian, development, disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change action and human rights policy and action areas are needed who integrate human mobility considerations in their strategies and plans and promote it at the international level.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was authored by the Coordination Unit of the Platform on Disaster Displacement ([www.disasterdisplacement.org](http://www.disasterdisplacement.org)). The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

## Highlights of achievements

The most significant progress has been the launch and rapid operationalization of the Platform on Disaster Displacement by [Germany and Bangladesh as Chair and Vice-Chair](#), as a new implementation arrangement for the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, succeeding the Nansen Initiative (co-chaired by Switzerland and Norway). The recognition by the international community and states that the topic of disaster displacement deserves continuity and needs to be addressed and actively mainstreamed into key policy processes in line with greater implementation through concrete activities at the regional level has been significant.

*“Forced displacement related to conflict but also to disasters and the effects of climate change is among the most important challenges of the 21st century. The international community will only be able to reduce forced displacement and human suffering by enhancing its cooperation and promoting concerted efforts at all levels.”*

**Germany**

The PDD was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 and started to work on 1 July 2016. The platform is built on three pillars: a [steering group](#) comprised of 17 states and the European Union, a [coordination unit](#) based in Geneva, and an [advisory committee](#) of representatives of international and regional organizations as well as academia with expertise in disciplines relevant to disaster displacement such as humanitarian, development, migration, refugee protection and climate change action, disaster risk reduction and human rights.

The steering group held its first meeting in Geneva in September 2016 and has been convening regularly since then. The advisory committee has been constituted at its first meeting in October 2016. Through multi-stakeholder consultations, the *PDD 2016-2019 Strategic Framework and Workplan* has been developed and was adopted by the steering group on 15 January 2017.

[The workplan](#) covers the chairmanships of Germany (2016-2017) and Bangladesh (2018-2019) according to four strategic priorities: (i) improve data and knowledge on disaster displacement, (ii) promote effective practices to reduce displacement risks and protect people who have been displaced in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, and (iii) mainstream the topic within and across global policy processes in different sectors, ranging from humanitarian to development, including disaster risk reduction, climate change action, migration, refugee protection, human rights, the environment and others, and lastly, (iv), support normative and policy development in gap areas.

PDD’s work at the global policy level is translated into concrete activities at the regional level thanks to regional secondments and partnerships with key actors, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Several activities have already been completed and progress is well under way on all four strategic priorities of the platform. To select just one example among the achievements: PDD successfully supported the formulation, adoption and roll-out of the Central and North-American [Guide to effective practices for RCM member countries: protection for persons moving across borders in the context of disasters](#) (also known as the RCM Guide) in November 2016. In March 2017, PDD with the governments of Costa Rica and Panama, organized a first-ever, bi-national, disaster displacement workshop, based on the RCM Guide. The objective was to create standard operating procedures (SOPs) for situations of cross-border disaster-displacement. These SOPs will be tested through a simulation exercise in August 2017 at the border of Costa Rica and Panama. This model could be replicated in the future in other regions.

To give a few examples of PDD’s role in global public policy processes, PDD is participating in the Task Force on Displacement under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and has provided input to its strategic approach and workplan. PDD has also been accepted as an observer to the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and has contributed to roundtables both in Dhaka (2016) and Berlin (2017).

Among its priorities for 2017 – 2019, PDD will advocate for the protection needs of people displaced in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change in the elaboration of global frameworks such as the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## The main barriers/ challenges to progress

Disaster displacement is an issue that cuts across traditional sectors and policy areas. This ranges from humanitarian to development actors but also disaster risk reduction, climate change action, human rights, migration, refugee protection and many other domains. The main challenge to progress is hence finding ways to coordinate effectively within and across a multitude of parallel mechanisms and processes, at global, regional and national levels.

PDD seeks to address this challenge by bringing together a multiplicity of actors from all relevant spheres of work and disciplines which has proven beneficial in addressing the protection needs of disaster displaced persons. This includes, for instance, advocating for the need to factor human mobility concerns into development, disaster risk reduction and climate action plans and practice, and on the other hand to include climate change and disaster risk deliberations in migration and refugee governance frameworks at the international and regional levels. Another challenge is to implement these normative and policy frameworks at the regional and local levels which requires funding, technical capacity and political leadership.

*“It is critical to agree on ways to share responsibility based on a better understanding of the impact of forced displacement. Forcibly displaced persons need to benefit from appropriate measures to promote their socio-economic integration.”*

**European Union**

## Measuring progress

PDD adopted its 2016-2019 strategic framework and workplan, developed by the coordination unit based on the recommendations of the advisory committee members and endorsed by the steering group. This multi-stakeholder process allowed for the identification of joint priorities and subsequent planning of necessary activities for implementation. The workplan lays out the outputs and activities that PDD seeks to implement in the time frame 2016-2019 under the chairmanships of Germany and Bangladesh. It provides timelines and identifies the key stakeholders in charge of implementing the proposed activities as well as the support steering group members may give. It also highlights the regional or global scope of the activities. In order to give the necessary support to regional and sub-regional level activities, secondments and/ or regional focal points have been put into place, for instance, in Central America. Both the multi-stakeholder development of the workplan and the decentralized implementation approach are examples of best practice. The coordination unit liaises regularly with all implementing partners, notably IOM and UNHCR. Using pre-established targets and indicators, the coordination unit

reports at regular intervals to the steering group and the chair on the progress of workplan implementation.

## **Gaps between the actions of stakeholders and advancing the initiative**

The Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda identified four gap areas between the actions of stakeholders and those that are further needed to address cross-border disaster-displacement. These continue to exist and are addressed by PDD's strategic framework and workplan:

Knowledge and data gaps on the causes, dynamics and magnitude of disaster displacement persist. Better tools and systems are needed to collect, monitor and analyse reliable data on displacement in the context of disasters.

A legal gap in the protection of disaster displaced persons has also been identified. While at least 50 states have developed tools and practices to admit and/or refrain from returning persons in the aftermath of disasters, those that are forced to flee in the context of disasters have limited protection and legal options regarding admission and stay in international law. To help address this legal gap, these effective tools and practices already used by states could be further enhanced and integrated by states and (sub-)regional organizations into their own policies.

There are also institutional and operational gaps. Even though many of the relevant international organizations are working on the issue of disaster displacement, not having a clear and comprehensive mandate to do so, weakens the predictability and preparedness of their responses.

Finally, funding mechanisms for measures to address cross-border disaster-displacement lack clarity. There is also limited experience with accessing adaptation finance sources for human mobility challenges.

By identifying these gaps, sharing effective practices and encouraging learning, PDD works to better protect those displaced in the context of disasters and climate change.

## **Examples of good practice that could help to advance the initiative**

- Germany, Bangladesh and other steering group members: commit to global and regional championship in and across policy areas such as humanitarian assistance, development, DRR, human rights, climate action etc. to promote the work of the PDD.
- Costa Rica and Panama: host workshops for the development of standard operating procedures, operationalizing the RCM Guide including dissemination of the guide, capacity building and training as well as a binational simulation exercise.
- Switzerland: give funding support to workshops and activities of the PDD workplan including funding of a secondment (PDD Regional Adviser in Central America) to enhance regional capacity for policy work as well as workplan implementation.

## Recommendations

1. Committed leadership is needed to strengthen the protection of cross-border disaster-displaced persons. More actors, like the PDD steering group and advisory committee members, need to champion the topic of disaster displacement in multi-stakeholder settings and integrate human mobility considerations in their strategies and plans, including, humanitarian, development, DRR or climate change plans.
2. Better data collection and monitoring systems are required as well as funding mechanisms to prevent, reduce and respond to disaster displacement and protect disaster displaced persons. Building on initiatives, partnerships and fora at the national, bilateral and (sub-)regional levels such as regional consultative processes on migration, regional platforms on DRR, etc., there are many opportunities to strengthen regional engagement and implement activities on the ground.
3. More awareness and acknowledgement of displacement in the context of disasters and climate change as well as the lack of international legal options for persons in such situations should be nurtured through advocacy and communication efforts, supporting training and capacity building of decision makers and practitioners.

### About this paper

All stakeholders who made commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in support of advancing the Agenda for Humanity were invited to self-report on their progress in 2016 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) ([agendaforhumanity.org](http://agendaforhumanity.org)). The information provided through the self-reporting is publicly available and forms the basis, along with other relevant analysis, of the annual synthesis report. The annual synthesis report will be prepared by OCHA and will highlight trends in progress, achievements and gaps that need more attention as stakeholders collectively work toward advancing the 24 transformations in the Agenda for Humanity. In keeping with the multi-stakeholder spirit of the WHS, OCHA invited partners to prepare short analytical papers that analyze and assess self-reporting in the PACT, or provide an update on progress on initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.