



Platform on Disaster Displacement

Update on 2017 Progress

Background and Executive Summary

This paper was prepared by:



Launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, the [Platform on Disaster Displacement \(PDD\)](#) has been following-up on the work started by the Nansen Initiative to implement the recommendations of the Nansen Initiative Protective Agenda, endorsed by over 100 governmental delegations during a Global Consultation in October 2015.

PDD is a State-led and multi-stakeholder driven initiative that strives to provide greater protection to those displaced across borders in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change. Disaster displacement is a cross-cutting issue and its effects are seen in a number of sectors and policy areas ranging from humanitarian to development, from Human Rights to disaster risk reduction (DRR), from environmental policy to migrant and refugee protection. PDD's Advisory Committee consists of international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia and others working to reduce disaster displacement risks and advance the protection of those displaced. PDD engages partnerships with key actors, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In 2017, under the chairmanship of Germany and vice-chairmanship of Bangladesh, PDD made major achievements in including disaster displacement in global policy processes in the fields of migration and refugee protection, Climate Change, Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. At the same time, activities from [PDD's workplan](#)² were implemented in several regions, notably Central America. With the help of partners, work on PDD's strategic priorities advanced, with certain constraints persisting, such as legal/institutional, operational, data/knowledge and funding gaps.

Since its launch in 2016, PDD has stressed the importance of strengthening the coordination between UN agencies and their commitment to address disaster displacement as a cross-cutting issue. In order to accurately portray the extent of the problem, continued efforts are needed to improve data and monitoring on the subject.

¹ This paper was authored by the Coordination Unit of the Platform on disaster displacement (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.

² The PDD workplan lays out the outputs and activities that PDD seeks to implement in the time frame 2016-2019 and in accordance with PDD's four Strategic Priorities: address knowledge and data gaps; Enhance the use of identified effective practices and strengthen cooperation among relevant actors to prevent, when possible, to reduce and to address cross-border displacement at the national, regional and international levels; Promote policy coherence and mainstreaming of human mobility challenges in, and across, relevant policy and action areas; Promote policy and normative development in gap areas.

Data sources

This paper is based on the work of PDD's Coordination Unit in collaboration with its 18-member Steering Group and 100+ member Advisory Committee. In this year's reports on WHS commitments through the Platform for Action Commitments and Transformation (PACT), three States (France, Germany and Switzerland), the European Union (EU) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported specifically on their engagement with PDD in the context of two transformations: reduce and address displacement (3A) and anticipate, do not wait, for crises (4B). In addition to PDD's Steering Group members, ten other stakeholders reported on reducing and addressing disaster and climate change related displacement more broadly.

Achievements to date

In PDD's effort to follow up on the work started by the Nansen Initiative and implement the recommendations put forth in the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, 2017 has been a year of achievement, in several regards:

Promoting Policy Coherence and Normative Development in Gap Areas

As a State-led Platform, PDD has been **engaging effectively with global policy processes** relevant to disaster displacement. One particularly important engagement was in contributing to the preparatory phase of the elaboration of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration including through the drafting of [key messages](#) with Steering Group members. PDD has also engaged with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a member of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) Task Force on Displacement, which met for the first time in May 2017 to formulate its workplan. PDD also assisted States in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

One concrete example is the 5th Global Platform for **DRR** in Mexico. The “Cancun Communiqué” refers to disaster displacement and the Chair's Summary stresses that “the development of DRR strategies should consider regional and cross-border perspectives and include provisions that aim to prevent displacement attributed to disasters and reduce displacement risk, address the protection needs of displaced people and promote durable solutions to displacement”.

There were also advances in the policy domains of **Human Rights and Humanitarian Assistance**.

The Human Rights Council Resolution on Human Rights and Climate Change (HRC/35/L.32) adopted (by consensus) during the 35th Session in June 2017, explicitly recognizes the human rights implications of climate change on “migrants and persons displaced across international borders in the context of the adverse impacts of climate change”. It notes the work of the PDD and its efforts to follow-up on the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda. The resolution mandated OHCHR to organize an intersessional panel discussion on “human rights, climate change, migrants and persons displaced across international borders” that was held in October 2017 with the participation of the Envoy of the Chair of the PDD, Prof. Walter Kaelin.

On the humanitarian side, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted a Resolution (E/2017/L.24) on “Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations”. The resolution contains strong and relevant provisions on

disaster displacement. The ECOSOC Resolution is a good example of joint efforts by PDD Steering Group members in ensuring common messaging in negotiated resolutions to achieve greater recognition of the importance of displacement in the context of disasters and climate change, including the protection needs of affected people. The 2017 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment dedicated a high-level panel to the topic of displacement in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Enhancing the Use of Effective Practices at the Regional Level

PDD's work does not stop at the policy level. In 2017, PDD supported the **regional implementation of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda** on three continents. In Central America, PDD, together with IOM and the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), supported the formulation, adoption and rollout of the [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 2016. Based on this, in March 2017, PDD supported Costa Rica and Panama in organizing a workshop to map out and prepare for a joint response to situations where people flee across their shared border in the context of a disaster. The outcome of the workshop was a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that were tested in [a simulation exercise](#) in August 2017 involving officials from both countries. In this context, both countries' analysis concluded that cross-border population movements could arise, with persons seeking protection, medical assistance, shelter and food. Within these circumstances, the participants had to implement the SOPs and organize and prepare protection and assistance mechanisms for cross-border disaster-displaced persons. In August 2017, PDD, RCM and IOM organized a training for government officials from the RCM member countries. Based on the success in Costa Rica, the Government of Chile expressed interest in developing [a guide on admission and stay](#) for the South American region within the work of the South American Conference on Migration (SACM), and a first workshop was held to this end in October 2017.

In July, PDD supported the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and the International Office for Migration (IOM) in a Regional Consultative Process (RCP) meeting in the Horn of Africa. The RCP concepts refer to informal, non-binding mechanism with an overall objective of facilitating dialogue and regional cooperation in migration management, by creating a platform through which information is exchanged, best practices are shared and solutions to common challenges are pursued. This [9th IGAD RCP](#) meeting with a focus on Climate Change and Human Mobility was co-organized by IGAD, PDD and IOM in Nairobi with the objective of increasing awareness on disaster displacement and building a common understanding on protection gaps and opportunities for action. A study was commissioned on "Climate Change and Human Mobility in the IGAD Region" and a follow-up meeting ([10th IGAD RCP](#)) was held in November in Addis Ababa.

In September, in Asia, PDD co-organized a [Regional Knowledge Forum](#) with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the Government of Nepal, the Nepal Institute of Development Studies and IOM on "Human mobility in the context of climate change, disaster risk reduction, and SDGs in the Hindu Kush Himalayas". This was an opportunity for policymakers and experts from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan to discuss and develop action plans for the integration of human mobility in national policies on climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development across the region. In December 2017, PDD along with the Stockholm Environmental Institute organized a [Roundtable on disaster displacement in Southeast Asia](#).

Addressing data and knowledge gaps

As per its strategic priorities, PDD has continually made efforts to **address data and knowledge gaps**. To do this, a number of studies were conducted, including a study on “Slow-onset Effects of Climate Change and Human Rights Protection for Cross-border Migrants”, commissioned by OHCHR. Furthermore, a Data and Knowledge Working Group, co-chaired by IOM and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), was established in May 2017.

Throughout the year, PDD has contributed to **increased recognition of disaster displacement** in international fora, through a variety of communication materials and in side events etc. This includes a video for the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, the use of social media and information provided on the website: disasterdisplacement.org.

Additional Reporting from the PACT on WHS commitments

In their PACT reports, the three States and the EU, all of which are PDD Steering Group members, presented varying degrees of action with regards to disaster and climate-related disaster displacement. During its Chairmanship of the PDD, **Germany** contributed actively to the integration of disaster displacement in policy processes (i.e. Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment and COP23). In supporting PDD, Germany enabled stakeholders (e.g. the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, the Norwegian Refugee Council) to work across sectors of humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction, climate change action and development. In their reporting, both the **EU** and **France** indicated their active roles as PDD Steering Group Members. In addition to being on the Steering Group, **Switzerland** highlighted their efforts in feeding findings of the Nansen Initiative into relevant regional and international processes and fora, in order to strengthen policy coherence across thematic areas. They also supported the implementation of the Nansen Initiative Protective Agenda through funding activities such as workshops and trainings in selected regions.²

In their PACT report, under transformation 4B: anticipate, do not wait, for crises, **OHCHR** mentioned their role as a PDD Advisory Committee member. As part of their engagement, OHCHR organized an intersessional panel discussion in the Human Rights Council (HRC) on Human Rights, climate change, migration and persons displaced across international borders. They submitted the HRC panel discussion’s summary report to the UNFCCC Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) Taskforce on Displacement and to the negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. OHCHR pledged to continue to engage with the PDD and other relevant groups and processes to mainstream human rights into climate change action.

The obstacles/impediments to progress

PDD’s main objective remains to address the **legal protection gap** for disaster displaced persons. Although a number of States have developed tools and practices to admit and/or refrain from returning persons in the aftermath of disasters, such practices need to be scaled up, replicated and applied more systematically and predictably.

² Other stakeholders, including Canada, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Turkey, the International Organization for Migration, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam International and Save the Children, also reported on their support to projects within the broader realm of disaster displacement. For more information, please visit <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/explore-commitments/indy-commitments>.

The Platform is composed of a Steering Group of 17 States plus the European Union. But a total of over 100 States have endorsed the Protection Agenda in 2015. PDD and the international community at large should **find more and better ways to engage with other stakeholders**. This includes State support beyond those involved in the Steering Group (such as Chile and Panama mentioned above) and reaching out to regional and political groupings, such as Arab, francophone or Caribbean States.

Need for **stronger regional engagement**. With its regional advisor in Central America, PDD is able to cover and coordinate, to a certain extent, the requests for assistance by governments to help implement the Protection Agenda and include disaster displacement in their relevant policies and practice. However, more should be done, especially in those regions where PDD is not present, such as the Pacific, Africa and Asia, among the world's top hotspots of disaster displacement.

Coordination issues. A key gap and challenge highlighted by the Nansen Initiative is the need to bring together and link multiple policy and action areas that to date have been uncoordinated in order to better address cross-border disaster-displacement and its root causes. This is also true within the UN System, as many organizations have overlapping mandates, or lack specific mandates to assist and protect disaster displaced persons, leading to fragmented, uncoordinated and unpredictable responses.

Recommendations

The preparedness and response capacities to meet current and emerging disaster displacement challenges are generally insufficient and States in particularly affected regions should be supported in their efforts to **strengthen capacity to manage and reduce the risks of displacement**, including prevention of displacement when possible. There will also be instances when cross-border disaster displacement cannot be prevented or avoided, and ongoing **efforts to develop protection mechanisms and frameworks**, including by PDD and at regional level, that can permit admission and stay of cross-border disaster displaced persons on humanitarian grounds, should be supported.

In order to best “reduce and address displacement” as highlighted in transformation 3A, the **UN system needs to have a strategic approach to disaster displacement** and develop a plan to address overall leadership and coordination gaps. Since disaster displacement is multi-causal, efforts to prevent and address displacement and reduce displacement risk require systematic work across sectors, mandates and areas of expertise. An integrated approach is also required in order to ensure that protection needs are addressed throughout the displacement cycle (prevention, preparedness, protection during displacement, and the transition to durable solutions).

Continued efforts are needed to **improve data collection and the monitoring of disaster displacement numbers, trends and risks**. Data on slow onset events and processes is generally scarce and the data that exists, mostly on sudden onset events, is generally not disaggregated to account for age, gender, duration of displacement, etc. Little is known about the protection impacts of displacement on communities and regarding lasting solutions.

A better understanding of the **nexus between disaster displacement and conflict/violence** is also needed. In certain contexts, drivers of displacement are difficult to disentangle, which has impacts on the protection available to displaced persons.

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 2017 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) (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.