

Draft Concept Note

Annual Thematic Meeting of the Platform for Disaster Displacement (PDD)

Striving together for addressing displacement due to slow and sudden-onset disasters

Dhaka, 24-25 February 2019
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Context:

Disaster displacement and human mobility linked to environmental factors are phenomena of human history since time immemorial. Indeed, the principal reason of the outward migration of ancient homo sapiens from African continent was indeed their efforts to cope up with the adverse effects of mainly slow onset, accumulating into sudden-onset very often, natural phenomena hampering sources of food and livelihood for a growing population. This is indeed a basic instinct of human being to search for a better living, and migration has always been an important means to do so. This still continues today, though the root causes of migration and displacement has significantly enhanced over the history due to man-made causes including climate change and consequent environmental degradation due to heavy industrialization. At present world, this is indeed a big challenge to trace and govern the migratory flow emanating from climate change and subsequent more frequent disasters, both slow and sudden-onset in nature, and to address the protection needs of cross-border displaced persons due to these reasons.

The regions of South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, with its enormous diversity, have a long history of human mobility, including internal displacement and migration within countries as well as across borders. During the annual thematic meeting, this region may prove to be a case for sharing of experiences and ideas. Consequently, human mobility within the context of natural hazards and the effects of climate change takes various forms in this region. Year after year, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific experience most displacement in such contexts. Altogether, these regions at present has 8.6 million displaced people due to sudden-onset disasters amounting to 46% of the global total, and is having new displacements in 2017. An estimated 46 million people were displaced in South Asia alone by sudden-onset disasters during 2008-2013, though the actual number of people moving internally and across borders in South Asia is not known. On top of this, we can only imagine the huge number of people displaced or moving in the context of slow-onset disasters and events, as well as displaced several times in the context of climate change. In light of projected population growth, continued environmental degradation and the predicted increase in the frequency and intensity of disasters linked to climate change, it is anticipated that population movements in the context of disasters and climate change in South Asia, South East Asia and in the Indian Ocean Rim are likely to increase over the next decades. The challenges ahead are likely to be enormous, as a recent World Bank Report, entitled 'Groundswell – Preparing for internal climate migration', projects that without concrete climate and development action, in South Asia alone, more than 40 million people could be forced to move within their countries to escape the slow-onset impacts of climate change.

By now, all South Asian, South East Asian and Pacific countries have national disaster risk reduction, development, humanitarian assistance, migration, climate change adaptation and human rights laws and policies relevant to the protection of displaced persons and the management of population movements in disaster contexts. The Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, agreed upon by more than hundred countries in 2015, also serves as a good framework, though being legally non-binding document. Within each country, various national organizational mechanisms, at times coordinated by national and disaster risk management offices, bring together a diverse range of organizations; Many countries in these regions have adopted laws that specifically require the State of proactively implement disaster prevention and risk reduction activities.

The experience and engagements of Governments, international organizations and agencies and NGOs in these regions can be examples of best practices specially for developing countries of other regions, including Africa and Latin America, and vice versa, in the spirit of mutual learning and cooperation. This is particularly important for implementing 'Target E' of the Sendai Framework, which is to formulate or align existing DRR Strategies at the national and local levels with the Sendai Framework, as a unique opportunity to ensure including provisions on disaster displacement. A comprehensive approach to address the displacement issue and reduce its magnitude, both for slow and sudden onset events, is required as these natural events are very often intertwined. Additionally, protection of people already displaced is also of ample importance to ensure their eventual return and rehabilitation, if possible, specially through addressing the protection gaps. These are only possible through a wide range of policies, including those on DRR, climate change action and migration but not limited to, at national, regional and international levels.

Background

At the international level, the '*New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*' highlights the determination of the States Members of the United Nations to address the root causes of the large displacements of refugees and migrants, and commits to "combating environmental degradation and ensuring effective responses to natural disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change" (paragraph 43), assisting "migrants in countries that are experiencing [...] natural disaster" (paragraph 50), as well as effectively protecting the human rights and "the specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations" (Annex II, paragraph 8), a category including those moving or forced to displace in the context of disasters and climate change.

This has also been reflected in the finalized texts of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The GCM has recognized that disasters, the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation are some of the root causes of migration and taken note of PDD's role in this area, in particular in support of developing coherent approaches to address the challenges of migration movements in the context of sudden-onset and slow-onset disasters. GCR also accepted that the protection gaps for environment-induced displaced persons are to be addressed. For this reason, the role of the IOM, the agency in central coordinating role in the implementation of the GCM within the UN System and the UNHCR needs to continue works on the disaster and climate changed induced displacement issues.

Earlier, the Nansen initiative built necessary consensus, through numerous consultations at all levels, among more than one hundred countries to come up with the Nansen Protection Agenda, the first ever multilateral document on the protection needs for disaster displaced people across international borders. As the successor of the Nansen Initiative, the PDD's core

goal remains as the enhancement of global awareness on the challenges posed by the cross-border displacement of persons due to disasters and environmental degradations. As well as the crucial role the Nansen Protection Agenda can and should play to address this issue in national, regional and global levels. The Nansen Initiative did not seek to develop new legal standards, but rather built on existing effective practices and the much needed consensus. The next phase is expected to be, in the context of the Protection Agenda, to proceed towards new laws, soft law instruments and binding instruments at different levels.

The role bestowed on the PDD in the GCM is likely to further reaffirm the purpose of the Platform and the need of international community's continued efforts to address and ensure adequate protection of disaster displaced people, including the adverse effects of climate change and people at risk of such displacements.

General objective:

The thematic meeting would aim at exploring issues related to human mobility (displacement, migration and planned relocation) in the context of both sudden-onset disasters (like tropical cyclones, tidal bore, tsunami, earthquake, landslide, volcanic eruption etc.) and slow-onset events and processes (like sea level rise, river erosion, flood, drought, etc.), many of which are inter-related and are results of environmental degradation due to climate change. The meeting will also discuss how protection can be best ensured for displaced persons and persons at risk of displacement through effective DRR and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies in national, regional and international levels, in South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific, which can also be beneficial for other regions for adopting or improving their existing national and regional strategies. This exchange during the meeting will enable the member states to move further forward together and in a collaborative manner towards achieving a global governance of disaster and climate change related displacements..

Specific objectives:

1. To analyze the effects of sudden-onset events like tropical cyclones, tidal bore, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, land slide etc. on human mobility and the ways and means of further enhancing preventive, adaptive and mitigation policies related to such mobility for better protection of displaced persons or persons at risk of displacement.
2. To analyze the effects of slow-onset events like sea level rise, river erosion, flood, drought etc. on human mobility and the ways and means of further enhancing living conditions of displaced persons by ensuring preventive, adaptive and mitigation policies related to such mobility.
3. To examine on how sudden and slow onset events are interrelated and not fully distinguishable from each other, and thus the needs of identical and different approaches for different types of natural events and subsequent human mobility, to ensure better protection for displaced population and persons at risk of displacement.
4. To produce some 'take away' from the discussion and exchange of best practices and ideas through a 'Dhaka Declaration'.
