



Global Network of
Civil Society Organisations
for Disaster Reduction

COP27 & Displacement

Reflections on the importance of understanding the connections between climate change and displacement in the climate negotiations

Introduction

GNDR is a network of 1400 civil society organisations around the world; this includes 11 members who have implemented our pilot programme “Making Displacement Safer” which seeks locally-led participatory research, innovation and influencing to address disaster risk faced by displaced communities living in urban areas.

The project has made significant progress towards its objectives in facilitating the discovery and scale-out of innovative locally-led DRR solutions for displaced populations in urban areas. Part of this process has included research to understand the unique disaster risk challenges faced and this paper has been developed from that learning that further evidences [GNDR's Call to Action for COP27](#), highlighting the perspective of those who have been displaced due to the climate or face the risk of displacement from natural hazards.

Disaster displacement refers to situations where people are forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, as a result of disaster or in order to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard. Climate change is a risk driver that is increasing displacement. For over a decade, those displaced by disaster have outweighed the number displaced by conflict - by between 7-24 million more each year. In 2021 there were 23.7 million new displacements caused by disaster and 14.4 million caused by conflict.¹

Loss and damage by climate change is causing and increasing the severity and longevity of disaster displacement. More than 32 million IDPS live in situations with a severity rating of ‘very high’, accounting for over 70 per cent of the IDP population.² The average length of displacement is 20 years. With one in four displaced persons ending up in informal settlements, often on the edge of cities, it is critical that

¹ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022/>

² Severity of internal displacement, 2021 report - page 12

<https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/severity-of-internal-displacement-2021-report>

factors of their reality are understood to ensure displacement risk is mitigated and, for those already displaced, durable solutions are found.

This paper is a reflection of how we've listened to displaced communities (GNDR Call to Action #1), how the local context affects loss, damage and displacement impact and requires local investment (GNDR Call to Action #2) and how empowering civil society to strengthen effective climate actions on the ground (GNDR Call to Action #3) through their engagement on the issue can bring about meaningful change.

Global context

185 GNDR members globally surveyed in 2021 in regards to the challenges faced by the displaced communities that they work with stated that climate change is the most significant factor that is increasing disaster risk for communities already displaced.³ For example, in Tonga, "The impacts of climate change are numerous and may both trigger displacement and worsen living conditions or hamper return for those who have already been displaced. Limited natural resources, such as drinking water, are becoming even scarcer."

Nearly 5,000 displaced persons have shared the risks of their daily reality with us through GNDR's 'Views from the Frontline' research⁴. It explores perspectives of disaster risk, consequences of the risks if realised, actions that could be taken and barriers as to why these potential actions are not happening from those most at risk. It also asks questions on the policy enabling environment to understand if, in the case of this round of research, if displaced persons had been consulted in development, review or feedback for policies, plans and activities that address disaster risk; if they are given access to financial resources to reduce the risks they face; and, thirdly, if they have access to timely and useful information to address risk. This research, amongst other activities, was implemented to clearly demonstrate the impact being faced by those living at the frontline of risk; to create a sense of urgency to the climate negotiations; and, thirdly, to support those at the local level to share their experience, expertise and recommendations on climate-induced displacement.

The study found that 67% of displaced persons state they are affected by disasters years after their displacement. 30% state loss and damage of housing is the most significant ongoing impact, followed by loss of livelihood (18%), loss and damage of agricultural crops (17%), illness and injury (15%), relocation/displacement (12%) and death of a loved one (5%).

This is a global issue. In El Salvador and Honduras, displaced communities living on the outskirts of urban areas had moved there due to results of climate change. The threats they continue to face are, in Honduras, heavy rainfall (25.3%), extreme weather events such as storms, hurricanes, tornadoes and typhoons (20.4%) and deforestation (12.9%) and, in El Salvador, drought (50%) and flash floods (35%).

³ Taking from "Share your story" survey engagement with members - as part of the Making Displacement Safer programme funded by USAID, April 2021

⁴ Views from the Frontline - as part of Making Displacement Safer programme funded by USAID, findings launched May 2022; <https://www.gndr.org/impact/making-displacement-safer/explore-forced-displacement-data/>

In South Sudan, two million have been internally displaced due to conflict arising from ethnic divides since 2013. Inter-communal violence and recurrent natural hazards such as floods and drought have further aggravated displacement. Focusing research on displaced communities on the edge of Juba, and along the River Nile, it is the consequence of climate change and ongoing hazards to health that are alarming. They are at high risk of secondary displacement. Despite these communities being aware of floods, they choose to live in the informal settlements because the hope of economic benefit and improving livelihoods, for example through small vegetable gardens and fishing along the river bank, is vital in comparison to what they might stand to lose should risk be realised. Loss and damage includes the loss of food and water security. "The rate of malnutrition is very high among the displaced persons especially among children, lactating and pregnant mothers. Pit latrines are filled up but people still have to use them and they have to cook just near those latrines. There is a high chance for an outbreak of diseases here".

Loss and damage should not only be connected with the initial trigger of displacement that forces people to lose their homes. Many who are displaced by disasters continue to live at risk of further loss. Unfortunately, this disaster risk was realised in Nepal. "Our settlement is on the bank of Bagmati River. Living in a scare of flash flood especially during the rainy seasons is usual phenomenon of the settlers here.", says Kamala. "As in the previous years, we suffered from yet another flash flood on September 6, 2021. It severely affected almost all the households in the settlement as flood water in Bagmati River entered through the weep holes and construction joints of the embankment and inundated 1st floor of the houses. It damaged our property including carpets, bedsheets, food items and others positioned at ground floor of house."

Call to action, a case study from Niger

Conflict in Niger has forced people to leave their homes. However, climate change has exacerbated this displacement as those displaced face flooding and drought that affects their ability to seek a durable solution that brings to an end their state of displacement.

DEMI-E is a Nigerien national non-governmental organisation with a mission to "Contribute to building the resilience of rural and urban communities through the implementation of self-managed development initiatives". Taking part in GNDR's 'Making Displacement Safer' programme, DEMI-E carried out participatory research and conducted an 'Urban Living Lab' to develop innovative solutions to challenges faced by displaced persons living in Diffa.

Niger has been at war with Boko Haram for six years. This armed conflict is destabilising the south-east of the country, which was once the lifeblood of the entire region. Local tension exists and violence is exacerbated by non-state armed groups on populations already suffering from floods and recurrent droughts. Both conflict and disasters have led to the displacement of populations.

Since 2017 the waters of the Komadougou River and heavy rains have wreaked havoc with hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs surviving on external assistance. The use of local vigilance committees

and Boko Haram's reprisals against those who collaborate with the army maintain a heavy atmosphere where local vengeance and disaster risk are dangerously intertwined.

10,000 people from 65 villages have no access to land or any source of income and live exclusively on humanitarian assistance. They are exposed to all climatic and anthropic hazards as they live in precarious shelters without any modern facilities. Basic social services (health centres, water points, hygiene and sanitation facilities, roads, etc.) are very inadequate.

Falmata says, "We used to live very happily in our village without any problem with our fields, cattle, shops, well built houses. In our village women made weekly contributions in each neighbourhood and these contributions were used as IGA funds or assistance in case of extreme need. This practice was very successful and helped us to fight against poverty. Then one day armed men burst into our village. They were shooting in all directions and this created general panic. People were running around and the bandits were setting fire to the houses, burning and killing indiscriminately. That's how our whole village was emptied in a few minutes. The women had abandoned their children and the men in their flight left their wives and children to their fate. No one was able to take any possessions with them. We settled here in Awaridi with the solidarity of relatives and acquaintances, we put down our mats and managed as best we could. Our biggest difficulty here is the lack of food because we no longer have any source of income: we have no fields to grow crops, no trade, no income-generating activity...The environment around us is completely degraded, we can no longer find firewood and we can't afford gas. We need to find land to cultivate the fields because here we do not have access to land; we need to provide business or IGA funds to make the households autonomous."

DEMI-E feels that Niger's government represents a good example of disaster management policy, however, policies on disaster displacement need to be strengthened. "Movements in the context of drought are yet to be recognized as displacement in the Niger, and accordingly other actors are responsible for supporting such populations. The 2012 National Policy on Climate Change (draft) has no reference to displacement or IDPs but notes transhumance movements likely to exacerbate conflicts over resources. The Niger 2035 – Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth: A Prosperous Country and a Prosperous People has no references to displacement or IDPs. Improved coherence will address the multiple challenges caused by loss, damage and displacement at local and national level."

Empowering civil society to strengthen effective climate actions on the ground

In solidarity with frontline communities, GNDR supports and aims to hold the UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement within the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) to account, specifically in relation to listening to local voice, finance reaching the local level, and urgently and meaningfully addressing loss and damage. As they "Enhance the understanding of and expertise on how the impacts of climate change are affecting patterns of migration, displacement and human mobility; and the application of such understanding and expertise"⁵, [GNDR's call to action](#) provides

⁵ Operating under 'Action Area 6:

locally-led, sustainable and whole-of-society practical approaches which can be adopted to minimise and avoid loss and damage.

We've no time to lose. The world has already lost 8 islands in the western Pacific with 2 more on the brink of disappearing; the World Bank predicts that the collective South Asian economy (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) will lose 1.8 percent of its annual GDP due to climate change by 2050 with the living conditions of 800 million people to seriously diminish and prompting mass migration; and, in the last 2 decades over 480 million people were displaced globally by 7,000 climate related disasters killing an estimated 1.23 million people and causing 2.97 trillion dollars in economic losses.⁶ Whether loss of life, livelihoods, assets, food and water security, rights, peace and security, homes, cultural, social networks it is clear that those most at risk stand to lose the most. The time to act is now.

Contact us

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⁶ CDP webinar