

20<sup>th</sup> issue

# World Disasters Report

Focus on forced  
migration and  
displacement

## Communication pack

# Super summaries Focus on forced migration

## CHAPTER 1: Forced migration: the dynamics of displacement and response

Migration is a growing phenomenon that affects virtually every country. Whilst many migrants move voluntarily – perhaps looking for economic opportunities or for different lifestyles – others do not have a choice. More and more people are forced to flee their homes and communities because of many factors including conflicts, persecution, disasters and poverty. Their plight is the focus of the 2012 *World Disasters Report*.

There are more than 72 million forced migrants. About 15 million of these are considered refugees by the United Nations. Almost a million more are asylum seekers. About 26.4 million are internally displaced by conflict. A further 15 million were forced out of their homes by disasters, and at least 15 million more by development projects.

The 2012 *Report* considers the many and complex causes of forced migration. It explores the compounding and often aggravating impact that politics has on the vulnerability of people forced from their homes, and it offers recommendations for governments, the international community and humanitarian organizations on the steps that can be taken to find long-term and sustainable solutions to what is often viewed as an intractable problem.

## CHAPTER 2: Vulnerability and protection: reducing risk and promoting security for forced migrants

When people are forced to flee their homes, they become significantly more vulnerable to violence and their livelihoods are undermined. At the same time, because of the limitations of legal frameworks, and because of “increasingly restrictive migration regimes”, forced migrants are typically less protected against violence.

Although wars have declined over the past 25 years, and deaths from civil war are only one quarter of what they were in the 1980s, violence and conflict still affect one in four people globally.

Responsive and responsible tools and policies are needed to address shrinking protection space in regions of conflict and as a result of restrictionism in the industrial world.

The *Report* notes that most humanitarian organizations now mainstream protection in their response to forced migration and humanitarian emergencies, with a significant development being the adoption in 2011 of protection principles into the Sphere standards.

But the *Report* notes that more needs to be done. It urges humanitarian actors to provide better support for what it calls ‘community self-protection mechanisms’. In

essence, it urges organizations to understand and then support how communities are organizing their own protection.

### **CHAPTER 3: Health on the move: the impact of forced displacement on health**

Not surprisingly, forced displacement triggers major public health challenges. When people are forced to flee their homes, they are also disconnected from the elements necessary to good health. In addition, the causes of migration can bring with them immediate health threats. Think, for example, of the health crises that often follow sudden onset disasters.

However, it is the combination of these acute threats with chronic and underlying health issues that explains the sometimes very high mortality rates of refugee and displaced populations. Put simply: people displaced by disasters or conflict are often already unhealthy, with only very limited access to health care. Their migration, and the crisis that led to it, makes their health situation much worse.

Refugee camps can enable humanitarian actors and authorities to tackle health issues. However, “camp life is toxic from a health perspective”, bringing with it a new raft of concerns, including dramatically increased risks of sexual and gender based violence and (often as a result) increased rates of HIV and AIDS.

Responding to the diverse health needs of forced migrants requires enhanced professional standards alongside the mainstreaming of refugee health care into national appraisals of health risk and strategy by governments hosting significant numbers of refugees.

The relative neglect of reproductive, maternal and child health requires humanitarian actors to make this a strategic and operational priority. There is growing awareness of the prevalence of mental ill-health in the lives of displaced communities and their needs for psychosocial support. A blue-print for mental health in complex emergencies argues for integrating activities by health providers, humanitarian workers and local healers.

### **CHAPTER 4: Forced migration in an urban context: relocating the humanitarian agenda**

Communities forcibly displaced by factors such as disasters or conflict are increasingly ending up in urban areas, not in refugee camps. Migration towards cities is not a new trend, but it is one that is increasing. The world's urban population is expected to increase by 72 per cent between 2011 and 2050.

Without support, these communities often end up facing a ‘secondary disaster’ that comes from living in unplanned and informal settlements that lack necessary social services and that are often built in areas vulnerable to floods or other types of disaster. They may also face hostility from existing residents who face the same vulnerabilities and can see migrants as opponents in the pursuit of scarce resources and government support.

Urban migrants can also face hostility or even persecution from authorities, which are already overwhelmed with the challenge of meeting the needs of the existing urban poor. The negative attitude of authorities towards displaced people can also prevent them from harnessing the economic benefits the migrants' presence can create.

The *Report* notes that humanitarian actors and governments are still to figure out how to best support displaced people who have sought refuge in urban centres. Urban displaced people are, for example, often particularly vulnerable to violence and crime. Governments and humanitarian actors urgently need to develop policies that afford these communities better protection.

## **CHAPTER 5: Development and displacement: hidden losers from a forgotten agenda**

There is a well-developed international humanitarian system to respond to people displaced by conflict and disaster, but millions are displaced every year for other reasons.

It is estimated that at least 15 million people are displaced each year by development projects, such as the construction of dams or urban renewal projects that often involve the clearing out of informal settlements. The figure of 15 million is more than likely an underestimate because governments usually avoid collecting these kinds of data, and donors carry out little monitoring.

The *Report* focuses on what it terms the 'hidden losers' of development-induced displacement. Displacement as a result of a development project is typically planned, with the planning often including resettlement schemes. However, marginalized groups – marginalized because of gender, race, caste or age – can often miss out on compensation and protection schemes. Even those who are resettled usually experience a decline in economic wellbeing and the fracture of their social networks.

While humanitarian actors have considerable experience in responding to displacement, they have little understanding of displacement resulting from development projects. The *Report* calls on these actors to reach out to their development counterparts and to share expertise.

However, governments are ultimately responsible for preventing the arbitrary displacement that is too often the result of development projects. The *Report* urges governments, with support from international organizations, to develop and implement laws and policies that uphold the rights of people who are displaced.

## **CHAPTER 6: Who pays? Who profits? The costs and impacts of forced migration**

Forced migration produces significant economic impacts and costs for displaced populations, their communities of origin and those that host them, and humanitarian actors and donors. In 2010, international humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons exceeded US 8 billion dollars. However, this figure only represents funding from OECD countries. It does not include money spent by host governments or private funding to NGOs.

Between 2006 and 2010, about 5 per cent of official development assistance went to forced migrants and host communities. But despite this enormous global budget, there is very little economic analysis of outcomes. As the *Report* notes, no business would escape this scrutiny. The *Report* calls for improvements to the humanitarian funding regime with better co-ordination of funding streams and by strengthening links between funding, programming and needs assessment.

The *Report* highlights that migration is often a response to disruption or threats to livelihoods. It goes on to argue that by responding to migration as a crisis – by focusing first on meeting the basic needs of migrants, and only engaging in livelihoods support once a situation has ‘stabilized’ – humanitarian actors and their donors can often interrupt the coping mechanisms of communities and even perpetuate their vulnerability.

There should be more emphasis on mobilizing longer-term development funding and integrated development approaches that address the needs of displaced people and local communities. By reframing humanitarian crises as developmental opportunities, humanitarian actors could contribute to economic recovery and growth that would benefit both the displaced and their hosts.

## CHAPTER 7: Forced migration and the humanitarian challenge: tackling the agenda

The complex nature of contemporary disasters and conflicts creates the potential to uproot very large numbers of people. Forced migration is now a global phenomenon, presenting vast challenges to governments, donors, international institutions and humanitarian actors.

The *Report* highlights the struggles of the humanitarian system to adequately respond to the needs of forced migrants. It was this inability in the context of disasters that prompted humanitarian reforms in 2005 and that led to the creation of the cluster system. In the years since, and despite undeniable progress, international response still fails to keep pace with the changing character of forced migration.

With the UN and other agencies now seeking to reinvigorate the reform process (through a process known as the ‘transformative agenda’), the *Report* calls on humanitarian actors to work more closely with governments (who are increasingly leading their own humanitarian operations), and to engage better with affected communities (and to focus on supporting their resilience, rather than responding in ways that are prescriptive and potentially detrimental to the recovery efforts of migrants).

The majority of refugees and IDPs are in protracted displacement and the *Report* calls on governments to better facilitate solutions to these conditions by relaxing restrictions on the economic activities of refugees and by helping migrant and host communities integrate quickly. Finally, it notes that these necessary improvements in the response to forced migration are made more urgent by climate change, that is expected to contribute to an increase in slow-onset disasters and indirectly to the movement of large numbers of people.



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